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Addiction is, at its root, about pronouncing a sentence. This sentence might be, as its etymology suggests, an expression of an idea: *ad + dicere*, “to speak, say.” Or it might be, as in its legal definition, an assignment, such as sentencing someone to prison; following the term’s origin in Roman contract law, an addict was an individual, usually a debtor, who had been sentenced or condemned. *Addictus* is thus one assigned by decree, made over, bound, or—in one mode of such commitment—devoted.

What, then, does William Prynne mean when he warns against “those who addict themselves to Playes” or cautions readers to avoid those men who strive “earnestly to addict themselves to their trade of acting”? For modern readers he seems to view the theater as a drug, lulling its audiences into narcotic passivity. And indeed, the theater does at times stand as a site of addiction, which, Circe-like, has the power to entrap playgoers: plays are drugs, actors are drug peddlers, and audiences are unwitting victims or eager consumers. Yet this pejorative (even demonic) reading of the word “addict,” while arguably at stake in Prynne’s description, ignores the word’s broader semantic and conceptual history. Eighteenth-century writers deploy the word in its modern signification—“the compulsion and need to continue taking a drug,” a usage appearing in 1779 in the work of Samuel Johnson—but sixteenth-century writers instead drew largely on the concept of addiction from its Latin origins to designate service, debt, and dedication.

Unearthing this hidden history behind early modern invocations of addiction, this book offers two primary insights. First, and most important, it illuminates a previously buried conception of addiction as a form of devotion at once laudable, difficult, extraordinary, and even heroic. This view has been concealed by the persistent link of addiction to pathology and modernity: current understandings of addiction connect it to globalization, medicalization, and capitalism. Surveying sixteenth-century invocations reveals instead that one might be addicted to study, friendship, love, or
God. Prynne cautions that one might addict oneself to stage plays, but his warning rings differently if addiction in the sixteenth century signals a form of pledged dedication. Within Prynne's caution lies the potential for sincere praise for the act of addiction itself. Rather than rebuking a mode of potentially excessive attachment (addiction), he instead cautions audiences against the wrong kind of addiction: to the false idol of the theater, where actors lure spectators into a form of devotion that should belong to God.

Second, this book uncovers an early modern understanding of addiction as a form of compulsion that resonates with modern scientific definitions. Specifically, the project traces how early modern medical tracts, legal rulings, and religious polemics stress the dangers of addiction to alcohol in terms of disease, compulsion, and enslavement. Early modern debates about tobacco, gambling, and sex also deploy, at times, the language of compulsion and vulnerability that comprises early modern addiction. But this book concentrates on alcohol for two reasons: first, the historical evidence on excessive, habitual drinking is more abundant than for other substances; and second, the scholarship on early modern drinking is well established, providing a critical framework for my own contribution. Certainly, the scholarship on good fellowship and the conviviality of sixteenth-century tavern culture contrasts with an emphasis on the compulsive nature of addicted drinking. Yet a host of early modern writers deploy a language of addiction to describe how the choice and inclination of good fellowship in drinking shifts, through habit and custom, into the necessity of habitual, excessive drunkenness.

The relationship between these two understandings of addiction is not solely oppositional nor can it be so easily mapped onto historical narratives, such as a shift from sixteenth-century devotion to eighteenth-century compulsion. Both meanings of addiction appear in the early modern period. What unites these apparently opposed discourses is a shared emphasis, both rhetorical and experiential, on addiction as an overthrow of the will. Being open to a form of strong inspiration, often described as ravishment, the addict is indeed breathed into by the spirit. This spirit might be God, it might be love, or it might be alcohol. But in an experience of ravishment, the addict is inhabited by another, be it a person, object, or idea.

Addiction is, in its spiritual potential, a form of devotion. Early modern lexicographers helped illuminate this relation by using the terms as synonyms. Glossing "addiction," dictionaries turn to the words "devotion" and "dedication," just as in defining "devotion" they deploy the terms "addict" and "addiction." Even as the word "devotion" is most immediately associated with religious worship, it also functioned—as its connection to addiction reveals—indепendently of a Christian framework. This is because devotion, like addiction, accounts for a position of loyalty to something or someone: one gives oneself up, as a devotee or addict, zealously and exclusively.⁶ Nonreligious use of the word draws on its Latin root: dévovire (to devote), designated an "earnest addiction or application" and a form of "enthusiastic attachment or loyalty." To be devoted is to be "zealously attached to or addicted to a person or cause."⁷ One exhibits devotion to a king, to a beloved, to an action, or to a pastime. Both addiction and devotion are forms of service: to be devoted is to exhibit "attached service," to be at someone's command or disposal. Finally, devotion, like addiction, concerns speech: vowing in the case of devotion, and pledging in the case of addiction.

For if early modern addiction concerns an individual subsumed in relation to another, it also involves a dependence on declarative speech.⁷ Addiction not only designates a committed relationship of the addict to the substance, spirit, or person to whom he or she is devoted, but also hinges—as noted above—on a verbal contract or pledge. While modern definitions of addiction seem to bear little trace of the term's etymology and early definition, this project uncovers these historical origins, participating in what Jeffrey Masten has called a "renewed historical philology."⁸ In his appeal to consider words and their histories, he writes, "We have not sufficiently attended to etymology—the history of words (the history in words)," urging scholars "to be more carefully attuned to the ways that etymologies, born of their associations with 'origin,' persist in a word and its surrounding discourse."⁹ In the case of the word "addict," its etymological connection to speaking and pledging, as well as its expression of devotion, might appear entirely buried in modern uses of the term. But this range of meanings persists in early modern usage. Drawing attention to addiction as an utterance uncovers how speaking forth is fundamental to the addictive process. It also reveals such pledging as a challenge to self-sovereignty, as the addict commits to another person or object. Forms of addictive speech—be they pledges, vows, or contracts—track this challenge in their divide between imperative and reflexive articulations: one is attached or compelled by an authority or, alternately and relatedly, one devotes oneself, as with Prynne's caution to those who "addict themselves" to plays or to acting. If Roman and modern invocations of addiction draw largely on the imperative form, in the sixteenth century the reflexive construction proves dominant: addiction represents an exercise of will even in the relinquishing of it, a form of speaking commitment and devoting out loud or in
writing. Definitions of “addict” from the period chronicle this interplay. The addict is defined both as the person conscripted by an external authority into service to someone or something, and as the person who devotes and assigns himself or herself to such service.

The result—the layering of Roman, early modern, and modern uses of the term “addict”—is what Roland Greene deems “a semantic palimpsest,” in which different meanings of a word appear “in different degrees of availability. Palimpsests suggest one fashion of meanings coexisting with one another, with older ones showing through what comes later.” With its origin in contract law overwritten by its devotional invocations, which are then also overwritten by medical uses, the word “addict” offers one such semantic palimpsest, what Masten deems the history of and in a word. My emphasis on the semantic meanings of addiction—its definition as offered, for example, in a range of early modern dictionaries, and in Latin, French, and English—is coupled in this project with attention to the word’s conceptual reach. I read, that is, “both the semantic integers that one finds in a dictionary” and “the concepts that shadow them,” as Greene puts it in his study of key words.

Uncovering addiction both as devotional ravishment and as a form of speech helps account for the question that began this project: why is early modern drama so often preoccupied with addictive states? The answer comes, in part, in the parallel between the addict and the early modern actor. Transforming himself in gesture, speech, and dress and adopting the words of another, the actor is bound to his character, to other actors, to the playwright, and to the audience. The actor is, in precise accord with the definition of addiction, assigned and obligated. The apparently oppositional definitions of addiction—as devotion versus compulsion, an exercise of the will versus a relinquishment of it—come together onstage in the figure of the dramatic actor speaking to an audience. The actor at once commands his audience, while also being vulnerable before it. In being “abnormally exposed, abnormally dependent upon us,” as Michael Goldman puts it, the actor enters a form of voluntary service that compels him to transform, erase, or shatter himself in relation to another. Dramatic performance is, in these terms, addicted relation: “The drama shapes and is shaped by its expressive instrument: the body, mind, and person of the actor,” W. B. Worrhen writes of this process.

This link between the actor and the addict has been anticipated by those scholars theorizing acting’s relationship to inspiration. The actor, breathed into by the author’s script, balances technique with inspiration; she at once releases herself to express passion and trains in her craft. This view of acting was made famous by Konstantin Stanislavsky, who counseled the actor to uncover “inspiration” and “creativity” in order to inhabit the role most fully. But the role of the passions and inspiration in acting predates this modern method. Early modern actors were imagined to release and transform themselves, not only through affect and gesture, but also through bodily comportment. In the process, they also transform the audience and the theater space, the scene of connection between the one and the many. The link between the body and spirit, the actor and audience—both inspired by the playwright and each other—results at times in the “unsettling resemblance between inspiration and disease,” as Joseph Roach notes, citing seventeenth-century medical views. Transformation as intersubjective connection instead appears, particularly to a viewer like Prynne, as troubling infection. From this vantage point of acting as both inspiration and disease, the links between acting and addiction seem less unexpected than inevitable. Acting presents a “dramatic paradox” for the Renaissance audience, caught between the actor’s creation and his potentially blasphemous deception, or infectious power. The actor, in the creative act, is “both divine and demonic,” Worrhen argues, “as a magical extension of human potentiality and as a monstrous deformity of it.” The doublessness of the actor, like the doubleness of the addict, moves between devoted and compelled, inspired and diseased.

Ultimately addiction, like acting, offers a challenge to models of self-sovereignty, a through-line in this project’s argument. If self-sovereignty is often posited as requisite for a life of health and well being, such self-possession eludes the addict. Free will, agency, self-care, and autonomy are given over, often by the addict’s active choosing, much as the actor embraces a role or an audience is overtaken by it. Outside of the boundaries of the imagination, such a position of willed compulsion has been largely pathologized by medical experts. It has also been politicized by social theorists: at its extreme, such relinquishment of personal freedom can be taken to justify, as Mary Nyquist illuminates, enslavement or the grounds of the natural servility of some individuals or communities. Yet the valorization of individual autonomy and self-possession can also risk upholding isolation at the expense of community or connection. There is, legal theorist Jennifer Nedelsky writes, “something profoundly and I think irreducibly mysterious about the combination of individuality and ‘enmeshed,’ integrity and integration that constitutes the human being.” Early modern models of addiction offer one way of rethinking subjectivity through what has arguably proved the ideological and ethical impasse of self-sovereignty and individuality. Lauren Berlant describes the
impasse in these terms: the “sovereignty described as the foundation of individual autonomy” overidentifies self-control with the “fantasy of sovereign performativity and state control over geographical boundaries. It thereby affords a militaristic and melodramatic view of individual agency by casting the human as most fully itself when assuming the spectacular posture of performative action.”

If, as Berlant suggests, we conceive of human agency in concert with militarized action, celebrating productivity and the exercise of control, then it is no wonder that scenes of being that challenge individual sovereignty might invite condemnation and medicalization. Deep attachment or devotion holds the potential to gesture beyond isolated and isolating modes of life. Addiction offers one such model. Drawing attention to addiction as utterance and ravishment, this project illuminates the fundamental dispersal of agency at the heart of addiction itself. In doing so, this project explores how the early modern mode of addictive release might be admired and imitated for offering a form of related living based on connection rather than isolation and on community rather than individuality.

This book begins to tease out such philosophical and ethical resonances of addiction by turning, in the introduction, to the first uses of a word: “addict” and its derivations. The word’s use clusters in three arenas: faith, love, and drinking. Analyzing addictions to faith and love, the first half of this project reveals how such addictions require dedication and an exceptional vulnerability that eludes many seekers. To be an addict demands the simultaneous exercise and relinquishment of the will, a paradoxical and challenging combination. One must consent to give up consent, and banish the will, to addict oneself fully. This form of addiction is at once laudable and dangerous, for the addict undergoes a transformation, a ravishment, in pursuit of the addictive object. Examining this process of self-shattering, the project’s first chapters expose how addictive release overtakes individuals, bringing them into deep relation with another.

As sixteenth-century audiences actively sought and embraced such addiction to God and love, however, they were also warned of addiction’s danger for physical, spiritual, and communal integrity: exceptional attachment or commitment to improper forms exposed the threat of addiction. This book examines, in its second half, such allegedly dangerous addictions, turning to Berlant’s theory of “cruel optimism” to understand how an object initially attracting attachment might impede an individual’s flourishing. In its study of such cruel attachments, “those binding kinds of optimistic relation we call ‘cruel,’” this portion of the project pays particular attention to alcohol as a secondary addiction. The turn from hopeful attachment in friendship, partnership, and community to a compulsive mode of addiction exposes alcohol as an available elixir, one that seems to offer the promise of community and the devotional attachment charted in this book’s first half. Yet this study of drinking also anticipates modern notions of addiction. Early modern theological, medical, imaginative, and legal writing directly references habitual drunkenness as addiction, insisting on its link to disease and tyranny and resonating with the work of later medical researchers. Even, then, as my study of alcohol is yoked to this book’s primary argument—uncovering early modern addiction’s association with devotion and pledging—my work also contributes to the voluminous scholarship on modern addictions, demonstrating the relevance of the early modern period for more familiar notions of addiction as compulsive drug taking. My hope is that this book might encourage future projects on other addictive relations from this period since, as suggested above, tobacco-taking, gambling, and sex, as well as witchcraft and swearing, appear, at times, as compulsive and ravishing activities. Beyond the necessary limits of this book, I am eager to see what studies my foray into the topic might help encourage.
Introduction

Addiction in (Early) Modernity

The scholarship on addiction is vast and capacious. So, too, are the critical bibliographies on early modern faith, love, and drinking. This book, which is indebted to these large fields, charts a path directly between them, clearing the way to a previously obscured area: early modern addiction. This area has remained largely invisible for two reasons. First, critical discourses on addiction tend to emphasize the concept's modernity, as this introduction's opening section reveals. Second, the scholarship on early modern devotion, love, friendship, and drinking—the addictions charted in this project—attends to a wealth of historical evidence beyond what might appear the philological curiosity of addiction's appearance. The study of early modern addiction thus brings together what are otherwise distinct scholarly approaches to the study of modern addiction on the one hand and to early modern practices of faith, love, and good fellowship on the other.

Addiction and Modernity

In her essay “Epidemics of the Will,” Eve Sedgwick explores addiction precisely as a feature of modernity. Just as Michel Foucault theorizes how same-sex acts preceded the formation, in the nineteenth century, of the identity of the homosexual, so too with the addict. First came the acts—the drinking, the smoking, and the gambling—then came the character designation of the addict. As Sedgwick writes, “In the taxonomic reframing of a drug user as an addict, what changes are the most basic terms about her. From a situation of relative homeostatic stability and control, she is propelled into a narrative of inexorable decline and fatality,” being given “a newly pathologized addict
habitat drunkenness is itself a disease. His dissertation was published in 1804 as An Essay, Medical, Philosophical, and Chemical, on Drunkenness, and Its Effects on the Human Body, and in it Trotter notes, “In medical language, I consider drunkenness, strictly speaking, to be a disease.” This disease manifests in illnesses attendant on overdrinking, including “universal debility, emaciation, loss of intellect, palsy, dropsy, dyspepsia, hepatic diseases, and all others which flow from the indulgence of spirituous liquors.” Nearly simultaneously, Benjamin Rush in America (one of the original signatories of the Declaration of Independence and a man deemed the founder of American psychiatry) published An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind (1785), in which he also defines drunkenness as a disease: “Drunkenness resembles certain hereditary, family and contagious diseases.” Rush’s work theorizes the trajectory from choice to compulsion: “The use of strong drink is at first the effect of free agency. From habit it takes place from necessity. That this is the case, I can infer from persons who are inordinately devoted to the use of ardent spirits being irreclaimable, by all the considerations which domestic obligations, friendship, reputation, property, and sometimes even by those which religion and love of life, can suggest to them.” As with Trotter, he names the diseases stemming from drunkenness, including jaundice, dropsy, epilepsy, gout, and madness.

The work of Trotter and Rush ushered in a “new paradigm,” as the medical sociologist Harry G. Levine writes. This new paradigm “constituted a radical break with traditional ideas about the problems involved in drinking and alcohol.” Specifically, opinion shifted on habitual drunkenness (and in turn on opium use and other addictive behaviors) to a disease model, the key feature of modern definitions of addiction. As the historian of science Roy MacLeod notes: “It was too easy to view alcoholism simply as immoral excess, its cure, simple moral restraint, and its expense, a personal responsibility.” As a result, he writes, “the transformation of public attitudes from the conception of alcoholism as a moral sin to its recognition as a nervous disease required concerted effort.” In understanding the shift in viewpoint on excessive drinking, scholars not only stress the moralizing of earlier periods, as MacLeod does here, but they also point to earlier conceptions of drinking as a matter of choice. Levine, for example, discusses how “during the 17th century, and for the most part of the 18th, the assumption was that people drank and got drunk because they wanted to, and not because they ‘had’ to.” He elaborates: “In the modern definition of alcoholism, the problem is not that alcoholics love to get drunk, but that they cannot help it—they cannot control themselves.”
This paradigm shift in the study of addiction is of a piece with other scientific discoveries of the period. Roy Porter argues: “Building to some degree on the work of precursors such as Erasmus Darwin, nineteenth century doctors set about investigating the pathology of excessive drinking, exploring its associations with conditions such as dropsy, heart disease, cirrhosis of the liver, ... nervous disorders, paralyses.”

MacLeod also recognizes this new nineteenth-century paradigm and charts the general impact of this breakthrough over the course of the century:

Not until the last half of the 19th century did the scientific appreciation of alcoholism become general. Only then, under the guidance of a few doctors and reformers, was the image of the drunkard as a disorderly, ill-disposed social unit gradually transformed into one of a neglected patient suffering from a mental disease with well-marked clinical features. Reformers, who sought to remove the moral stigma from alcoholism and to treat the alcoholic by medical means, led the advance guard of a movement to promote prevention and cure on a public basis.

As part of these reform movements, the first temperance societies appeared in England in the 1830s, and Parliament passed the landmark Habitual Drunkards Act in 1879. That legislation is, in terms of this addiction narrative, the culmination of efforts by physicians and reformers who shifted the notion of inebriation from social condemnation to scientific understanding. In doing so, they redefined a habitual drunkard from a sinner to someone with a disease akin to lunacy.

More-recent historians have put pressure on the pioneering nature of Trotter and Rush’s conclusions. The research of both Porter and Jessica Warner on the eighteenth-century gin craze exposes a notion of diseased drinking in the century before Trotter and Rush. The work of Phil Withington and others on intoxication tracks the “modern obsession” with substance abuse, even as it illuminates how contemporary concerns about intoxication have “enduring roots in the past.” Yet even though the dating of addiction might vary, and even as historians illuminate the long history of intoxication, a broad consensus remains that addiction constitutes a modern discovery, one connected intimately to familiar features of modernity: the rise of Enlightenment individualism, medicalization, global trade, nation states, and capitalism. Current advances in neurobiological research further reinforce the link of addiction to modernity by suggesting how addiction’s discovery is ongoing and dependent upon modern technologies: using newly available scanning devices, such as PETs and fMRIs, to trace precisely how the addicted brain operates, neuroscientists have exposed the long-lasting changes in brain function caused by addiction, including “the pathological usurpation” of the brain’s reward-circuit learning. As a result of such usurpation, the rewired, addicted brain releases dopamine in response to the anticipation of drug taking, rather than merely as a result of drug ingestion.

Finally, literary histories have underscored addiction’s modernity by studying the emergence, in the late eighteenth century, of the inspired writer-addict. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey stand as early examples of addict-writers, with Coleridge linking literary inspiration and drug consumption in his famous preface to “Kubla Khan.” From the Romantic’s tincture of opium through Eugene O’Neill’s and Tennessee Williams’s alcoholism to Jim Morrison’s acid trips and William Burroughs’s heroin addiction, writers offer autobiographical chronicles of how drug addiction might fuel or fall creativity. The addict-writer holds a clear place in the imaginative landscape of the twentieth century, articulating what seems to be a particularly modern, or postmodern, condition of stasis and excess. “Addiction,” as Janet Ferrell Brodie and Marc Redfield write, “belongs as a concept to the social and technical regimes of the modern era.” Their cultural history draws attention to the ideological ramifications of addiction, a concept that is “little more than a century old.” Chronicling drug abuse, Stacey Margolis calls addiction “a particularly modern form of desire.” Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts argue that “addiction emerges directly alongside modernity,” and Jacques Derrida speaks of our “narcotic modernity.” These accounts draw on the perception of the modern bodies as uniquely pathologized and incapacitated, precisely as Sedgwick illuminates. Specifically, the modern subject, imbricated in a global economy, finds addiction at once an expression of powerlessness and pleasure.

Yet even as modern medical and psychological research illuminates the workings of addiction in entirely new ways, and even as writers from Coleridge onward experience addiction more acutely than in the past, addiction is not a singular feature of modernity. As this introduction’s final section reveals, a model of addiction as compulsion and disease existed earlier than the nineteenth century. Overturning the notion that addiction was “discovered” only a century ago, or even two or three centuries ago, this project demonstrates an early modern awareness of alcohol addiction as a disease along the lines charted
Addiction as Devotion

One of the early examples of the term "addiction" comes, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, from a line in Shakespeare's Othello: in celebrating a military victory, the play's Herald tells the soldiers "each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him" (2.2.5-6). In other words, each man can choose to follow whatever activities he pleases. Yet the term "addiction" is deployed widely before this Othello reference, and the play's engagement with theories of addiction—as Chapter 4 will discuss at length—is more complex than the lexicographical gloss credits. Addiction is not, it turns out, mere inclination.

Invocations of addiction begin to cluster in printed texts from the 1530s, as in the work of George Joye, who produced the first printed translation of several books of the Old Testament. The prophetes Isaye, translated into englyshe (1531) offers one of the earliest usages of the term, in a context entirely familiar to modern readers. Joye warns, "Wo be to the haunters of dronkenes which royse etly to drinke, continueinge in it tyll nighte being hot with wyne: in whose banktes there are harpes and futes tabether & pype washed with wyne." These "haunters of dronkenes" will suffer divine retribution: "The helles have opened their unsaciable throtes and their mouthes gape beyonde mesure that thither mought descendye pryde, pompe, riches and al that are addicte to these vices." Joye's warnings at once recall the familiar medieval and early modern schema of the seven deadly sins and predict the century's broader legislative and conceptual interest in pathological addiction.

While the invocation of drinkers, "addicte to these vices," anticipates both the modern definitions of "addiction" in relation to substances and the railings of puritans who attack drunkenness, Joye uses the term more expansively as well. In The Psalter of Dauid in Englyshe (1534), he warns of mortal men "addict to this worlde" and against the ungodly who are "addicte unto wykedness," and "addicte and all gien to wickedness." He also praises the faithful follower of God as an addict, asking God to "make faste thy promyses to thy servant which is addicte unto thy worshippe." Further, in The Unite and Scirme of the Olde Chirche, Joye insists on the unity Jesus preached, with the faithful "addicte unto none but to christ." He writes Jesus hoped that his apostles "thorow love might consent and godly agree being all one thinge in chrishe, and that there be no dissenescions nor sectis in his chrishe unto no creatures being addicte unto none but to christe his spouse dedicans he himself." This range of the term's appearance—to signify excessive drunkenness, inclination to wickedness, overattachment to worldly pleasure, as well as devotion to God and Scripture—suggests its broad association with forms of attachment. Furthermore, the term's appearance in early translations of the Bible and polemics surrounding the Reformed faith indicates its link to religious controversy. Specifically, in the context of post-Reformation England, the term appears most frequently to describe one kind of dedication: to God and the church. In the wake of theological debates following Henry VIII's break from Rome, addiction becomes a sign of study, commitment, and piety, as well as a signal of false attachment to, and dangerous tyranny of, the Pope or Antichrist. Thus, in the 1540s the term appears repeatedly in church histories by writers such as John Bale, Polydore Vergil, and Thomas Becon. Bale, for example, writes of those "addict to their supersticiouns," and specifically those "Antichristies addict to the supersticious rytes of the heythens in their sacrificies, their ceremonies, their observations, their holy dayes, theyr vygils, fastinges, pryanges, knelings & all other usages contrary to the admonishments of Crist." Here addiction signals an attachment to material aids to worship, which were associated with the Roman church. Vergil, too, condemns those "wholly addict to the honoryng of their false goddess," while praising those "men of the laye sort geven and addicted to prayers." The answer, as Philip Nicolls counsels his readers, is to "addict youre selves to the meaneyng of the scripture." Reformed writings overtly celebrate addiction as an intense mode of devotion and commitment, even as they express concern for misguided addictions to the improper faith. Following the etymology of "addition" as ad + dicere (to speak, to declare), these writings trumpet a model of addictive living that is at once an invitation and a prescription. The Elizabethan "An Homelie
Addiction requires a natural disposition and ability; it is not purely a matter of hard work or instruction. As John Huarte writes in *The examination of mens wits* (1594), if a "child have not the disposition and ability, which is requisite for that science wherunto he will addict himselfe, it is a superfluous labour to be instructed therein by good schoolemasters." Therefore, even as religious prescriptions follow the etymological invitation of addiction as a mode of speech or a form of command that they offer to their pious readers, these writers also understand addiction as an inclination that the individual both does and does not control. Their readers might attempt the form of addictive devotion counseled in the texts, but as theologians expound—most prominently Jean Calvin, as Chapter 1 discusses in detail—addiction is also perceived as a form of grace. Lancelot Andrews states how only by "being so visited, redeemed and saved, we might wholly addict, and give over our selves, to the Service of Him who was Author of them all." Roger Edgeworth, too, invokes election and addiction, writing how only certain men are chosen for priest: "Election and imposition of a prelates hande," a future priest "is piked out & chosen among the moe to be addict and appoynted to God, and to be a minister of God in the Churche or congregacion." The ability to addict is both a gift and an effort. For William Baldwin it requires following in Christ’s footsteps:

Wherwith although I be afflicft,
In wurch I take all lovyngly:
Beyng for Christes sake addict
To suffre al paynes wylyngly,
Continually.

Baldwin’s metered rendition of the *Psalms*, like Sternhold and Hopkins’ *Booke of Psalms*, engages a broadly pious audience. As hymns that might commonly appear in church, these psalms offer one way in which the language of addiction-as-devotion appeared in everyday life, independent of study of Reformation theology. Addiction was at once intoned in the church and echoed in the streets.

Finally, addiction is a form of service, as emphasized in the English College of Douai’s translation of the book of Psalms, which offers “a general and very fitte prayer, when we addict ourselves by a firme resolution to serve God.” Further, the speaker protests that “even by the mortal hate of the wicked I saw, that Gods law is most excellent, and therefore addicted myself so much the
more to lone [love] it and to hate al wicked ways." Thomas Taylor’s parable of the sower and the seed similarly counsels that the faithful say “in their hearts, Thus much wealth I will attaine unto, and when I have done that, I will repair my selle to the service of God.” 53 Paul, in his letter to Titus, impresses upon his audience the value of addicted service, at least in Erasmus’s version of the text. The epistle begins with lines in which Paul casts himself as an addict: “I Paul my selle the addict servant & obeyer, not of Moses lawe as I was once, but of God the father, and ambassador of his sonne Jesus Christ.” 54

For most of the sixteenth century, addiction, in its link to God and service, was not a problem; it was an achievement. To be an addict indicated commitment, vulnerability, hard work, and courage. To be an addict meant to devote oneself entirely to a calling—to be addicted to scripture, to scholarship more generally, or to Christ. Nevertheless, in its derided invocations, such addiction might signal enthralment, the relinquishment of good sense and true faith: one might be addicted to the pope or superstitious practices, or one might, as Joyce suggests, be addicted to alcohol. Thus addiction appeared both laudable and dangerous, a commitment to salvation or degeneration. Furthermore, the term “addict” contains at once a sense of obligation (as in its Latin origin, in contract law), as well as a sense of choice (to bequeath or give). These alternate, competing, but connected senses of addiction—as compulsion and choice, as the right path or the reprobate one—resonate with the philosophical and theological questioning familiar to readers of Reformation literatures: what is the role of free will in faith? If the godly seek to will away the will, hoping to receive grace, addiction encapsulates this struggle in the desire to give oneself over to a higher power. The struggle remains, ultimately, an active, unresolved one, because the concept of addiction leaves profoundly unsettled this question of devotional agency: the addict might will himself or herself toward God; equally, however, as the voluminous literature on pious living suggests, an earthly authority might attempt to command or dictate (dicare) such dedication, or God might offer it through grace.

Addiction as Abuse

The profound uncertainty surrounding both the agent propelling addictive devotion (be it the believer or an external authority) and the object of devotion itself (the godly or heretical path) invites wary understandings of addiction’s power. Thus, in addition to the view of addiction as an extraordinary form of commitment, sixteenth-century religious polemics warn against the dangers of fervent attachment to the wrong object. Such warnings take the form of cautions against idolatry and of a more general fear of material forms of worship associated with Catholicism. Thomas Bilson, writing in support of the English church, claims that Catholic “writers were all addicted to images,” while William Charke criticizes the “willful addiction to the olde translation” of the Bible. 55

The investigation of errant addiction is particularly evident in the works of John Foxe, who derides those who “addict themselves so devoutly to ye popes learning,” singling out individual stories of those “worshiping of Idoles” to which they are “addict.” 56 Depicting the adoration of icons as a kind of addiction, Foxe writes, as in the case of the Catholic Lord Cobham: “If any man do otherwise abuse this representation, and give the reverence unto those Images, which is due unto the holy men whom they represent . . . or if they be so affected toward the domb Images, that they do in any behalfe addict unto them, either be more addicted unto one Saint then another, in my minde they doe little differ from Idolatrye, grievously offending against God the author of all honor.” 57 Foxe links addiction and abuse here, deriding those believers who mistakenly “abuse” representations and “addict” themselves to “domb images” or “one Saint then another.” Such a form of addiction is a grievous offense, for it establishes a deep but improper commitment to idols over God.

The Reformers’ concern with addiction to physical forms of worship connects to their suspicion of addiction to physical pleasures more broadly. The Elizabethan “An Homilee against glutony and drunkenness,” for example, directly links improper forms of worship and glutony: “Nether woulde we at this day be so addict to superstition, were it not that we so much esteemed the fillying of our bellies.” 58 Such a concern for idolatry and appetite appears from the inception of reformist movements in England. Henry VIII writes in A glasse of the truthe against those worshipers exhibiting “a great lacke of grace, and an overmoche addiction to pryate appetites.” 59 Attachment to physical pleasures produces, these authorities speculate, misguided religious faith, or vice versa.

The suspicion of material devotion expands from the attacks on papal dictates, iconography, and other earthly aids to worship into the preoccupation with addictive worldly lures. And in the process, puritan railers condemn lust, gaming, tobacco taking, stage plays, and any number of other material pleasures. Early modern historians have called this phenomenon the Puritan
Reformation of Manners, because “pious pleadings” in the 1580s led, by the seventeenth century, to what Keith Wrightson has deemed “a programme of national significance,” regulating behavior from tavern haunting to May games.66 “Scores of pamphlets and printed sermons,” Martin Ingram concurs, gesture toward “a national movement,” one that is innovative in its reach: “Save for preaching from the pulpit and the circulation of statutes, proclamations and town ordinances,” he writes, “there was no late fifteenth-century equivalent.”67 This reformation of manners had a dramatic legislative and administrative impact on the early modern landscape, an impact achieved largely by the vehemence of the reformers and their “narrowness of concern.”68 The legislative effect was particularly felt in the arena of drunkenness, which was increasingly perceived as a national problem. Beyond tavern regulation, early modern legislators developed laws against drunkenness itself, following the decade of puritan attacks on drinking and tavern haunting. As A. Lynn Martin puts it, “If the moralists are to be believed, drunkenness reached plague proportions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in England.”69 Indeed, the early modern period saw the passage of England’s first national law against drunkenness itself, after a forty-year parliamentary battle. The “modern” discovery of addiction and the resulting legal regulation with the 1679 Habitual Drunkards Act (discussed above) was in fact mirrored centuries earlier with the 1666 Statute Against Drunkenness.

Concerns about drunkenness have, of course, a long history, extending from classical literature forward.64 From Beowulf to Langland, medieval writers chronicle drinking rituals and abuse. The English abbot and homilist Aelfric of Eynsham, anticipating later puritan detractors, cautions that “drunkenness is a vice of such magnitude that ... drunksards are not able to obtain the kingdom of God.”65 And The Trinity Homilies compare the glutinous man to a swine in language resonant with early modern descriptions: “Some men pass their lives in eating and drinking, as swine, which foul themselves, and root up and sniff ever foully.”66 Yet even as medieval examinations of drinking accord with early modern discussions on drunkenness as beastly, ungodly, and dangerous, their framework differs notably, frequently hinging on the language of the seven deadly sins and the eight sins before them.67 The deadly sin of gluttony—with attendant drunkenness—attracted special attention as a gateway sin, a point Chaucer’s Parson makes clear in The Canterbury Tales: those guilty of gluttony, as he puts it, “may no synne withstonde.”68 From the character of Gluttony in medieval dramas such as The Castle of Perseverance to Langland’s extended tavern portrait in Piers Plowman to the Parson’s and Pardoner’s tales about the seven deadly sins in Chaucer, the warnings against drunkenness are often predictable: the drinker fails to attend church, saps family’s finances, endangers health, and commits other sins as a result of being drunk.69

As powerful as this medieval framework of the deadly sins might be, by the sixteenth century writings on drunkenness shift away from the schema to a more pointed view of drunkenness as disease and reprobation.70 From Shephard’s attack on Catholic curates in “Doctor Double Ale” to Skelton’s infamous misogyny in “The Tuning of Elynoyr Rumming,” allegations against drinkers offer satirical portraits of corruption and hypocrisy.71 What had been deemed errancy and sin, in need of salvation and forgiveness, is increasingly figured as compulsion, the inability to shift away from drinking. To John Downname, as for other puritan writers, those who “addict themselves to much drinking” prompt a spiritual, economic, and legal crisis.72 William Perkins thus warns his allies “not to addict ourselves to drinking,” while William Pryyne chillingly writes, “The people given to idleness and vaine discourse doe in these days addict themselves more to drunkennesse, surfitting, Playes and wantonesse, than to divine things.”73 Writers bolster their arguments with medical diagnoses, anticipating the modern notion of addiction as compulsive, pathological attachment. Texts such as The Drunkards Cup, Diet for a Drunkard, The Drunkard’s Character, and The Condition of a Drunkard speak of drunkenness as a physical disease and as a defining identity much earlier than current narratives on the rise of “modern” addiction suggest.74

Downname elaborates on the two ways that drinkers abuse themselves: “First by drunkenness, when by immoderate swilling and tippling they are deprived of the use of their reason, understanding, and memory; so as for the time, they become like unto beasts. Second, by excess, when as they addict themselves to much drinking, and make it their usual practice to sit at the wine or strong drink.”75 While “drunkenness” and “excess” might seem synonymous to modern audiences, for Downname they are distinct. “Drunkenness” describes the phenomenon of overdrinking, regardless of how often—drunkenness produces, he says, substance-related problems (deprivation of “reason, understanding, and memory”). “Excess” denotes habitual overdrinking or compulsive use (a "usual practice" of excess, as men "sit at the wine or strong drink"). Thus, both singular drunkenness and habitual drinking are part of the dangers of alcohol. Addiction appears, Downname claims, when the drinker can no longer abstain: “They who addict themselves to this vice, doe finde it so sweet and pleasing to the flesh, that they are loath to part with it.”76
Downeame's concern for those addicts of alcohol stands in contrast to the widespread Galenic prescription of alcohol in promoting good health. Alcohol's role in that regard was especially crucial since daily beverages such as beer and ale provided both clean water and calories to their consumers. Indeed, as Louise Hill Curth and Tanya M. Cassidy write, "Alcohol, consumed in moderation, was thought to be an important ally in the fight against disease. Ale, beer, and wine were all touted for their preservative properties."28 Excessive and habitual drunkenness challenged the Galenic prescriptions for self care and provoked increasing concern from medical, legal, and religious authorities, prompting examination, as Jennifer Richards illuminates, of precisely what constituted "enough."29 This concern is expressed not only in sermonizing writings but also in historical chronicles such as Holinshed's, where he notes the role of beer in the English diet and the resulting "ale knightes so much addicted thereunto, that they will not cease from morow untill even."30

Addicted drinkers suffer, many writers argue, from disease. The daily bouts affect the drinkers' brains, leading to greater toleration for alcohol. John Hoskins, in concert with his contemporaries, describes how wine gives "the braine a blow, that like a subtil wrasiter, it may supplant the feet afterwards."31 While these authors had none of the modern tools, such as brain-scan technology, that are available to twenty-first-century neurobiologists, they nevertheless anticipate modern research in their preoccupation with the drunken brain, as well as the drunken body. Further, these writers catalogue a set of diseases familiar to modern researchers and chronicled in Trotter and Rush's work, cited above. The drinker, Downeame and other critics of drunkenness argue, "is brought unto grievous diseases, as dreyesies, gouts, palsyes, apoplexies, and such like."32 This catalogue of diseases appears in nearly all discussions of drunkenness in this genre of religious polemic.33 Drunkenness leads to such "diseases in the body of man, as apoplexies, falling sickneses, palsyes, drop-sies, consumptions, giddinesse of the head, inflammation of the blood and liver, distemper of the brain, depravation of the sense, and whatnot," as the anonymous author of A looking glasse for drunkards (1627) writes.34

Of course, this language of disease does not indicate that early modern notions of diseased alcoholism map easily onto modern ones. To early modern writers, drunkenness is also a sign of errancy, not least because, as Roy Porter argues, "sickness was largely seen as personal, internal, and brought on by a faulty lifestyle... Careful attention to all aspects of 'regimen' or lifestyle, would prevent 'disease' (literally 'dis-ease') in the first place."35 Yet ultimately these authors find the language of vice and condemnation insufficient, an important point considering that later addiction studies label the early modern period as a strictly moralizing one in its descriptions of drunkenness. Wrestling with the agent behind the lure of drinking, reformers alternate between blaming the drinker and the power of alcohol. Ostensibly the "drunkard" brings this infirmity "upon himself." Yet equally, in trying to account for the radical changes in a drinker's condition, these writers turn to language on the overthrow of the subject: what had previously signaled dedicated commitment when directed at God indicates instead a form of slavery when linked to alcohol. As we learn in The odious, despicable, and dreadful condition of a drunkard, "drunkards" suffer from a "slavish condition," tied to the "tap-house."36 The language of tyranny and enslavement illuminates the strange condition of drunkenness, in which a subject is both himself and not himself. Arguably "the outcome of weakness or self-indulgence on the part of the paradigmatically 'free' agent," drunkenness resonates in these writings with a condition problematically deemed to be voluntary slavery, the socially and politically stigmatized failure of mastery on the part of an individual. "When a higher faculty of the free self falls subject to a lower faculty, or when the free self as a whole becomes hopelessly enamedored of inferior, mundane pursuits," Mary Nyquist writes, "ethico-spiritual 'slavery' is the inevitable result."37 This peculiar notion of slavery's voluntarism allows the drinker some agency: the drink not is a slave in a political or legal sense, but rather is reflexively attached and ravished by an object or activity of choice, becoming diseased and abused in the process.

In their complex invocations of drunkenness as a disease of body and spirit, these early modern theologians are at the heart of a historical irony: it is the largely religious preachers who explore the empirical connection between habitual drunkenness and a set of disorders linked, today, with alcoholism. Yet in the context of twentieth-century addiction discourse, these writers will be dismissed as ignorant moralizers, as proto-temperance fanatics, and as biased evangelicals, even as their writings anticipate modern medical definitions of addiction far more precisely than the work of their contemporary physicians. Physicians will eventually speak of drunkenness as disease, but not until fifty years after these religious writings. Notably, Dr. Everard Maynwarine takes up the concern with drunkenness. In his Viwa sana et longa the preservation of health and prolongation of life proposed and proved (1669), he writes "that drunkenness is a disease or sickness, will appear in that it hath all the requisites to constitute a disease, and is far distant from a state of health... the eyes do not see well, nor the ears hear well, nor the palate relish, etc. The
speech falters and is imperfect; the stomach perhaps vomites or nauseates; his legs fail ... an unwholesome corpulency and ... plentitude of body does follow: or a degenerate ... and a decayed consumptive constitution ... as well as imbecility of the nerves.” Maynwaringe, like the godly polemicists before him and modern researchers after, links excessive drunkenness to precisely those diseases that continue to be associated today with alcoholism. Indeed, as Jessica Warner has illuminated, these pamphlets directly anticipate the work by the addiction pioneers Trotter and Rush centuries later: “We ultimately owe our own habit of identifying heavy drinkers as addicts and alcoholism as a disease not to physicians but to the clergymen of preindustrial England.” This is because, she argues, “it is in the religious oratory of Stuart England that we find the key components of the idea that habitual drunkenness constitutes a progressive disease, the chief symptom of which is a loss of control over drinking behavior.” Yet, as Christopher C. H. Cook has argued, “under the influence of the Enlightenment, the vast interdisciplinary literature that surrounds addiction and alcohol studies has come to exclude theology.”

Drinking and Good Fellowship

The embrace of one form of addiction, to God, and the censure of another, to alcohol, creates the appearance of an oppositional logic structuring the conceptions of addictive attachment. But the story of early modern addiction is more complex than mere opposition. For against the puritan concern about addictive drinking as a form of diseased compulsion lies a contemporaneous discourse on drinking as laudable commitment to community and nation. When examined through the ubiquitous early modern conversations on good fellowship, certain aspects of drinking culture—namely, the community ties, friendships, and national allegiances—parallel the devotional addiction to God or love, a point taken up in Chapter 3 of this project. Mark Hailwood’s recent study provides a succinct definition of this capacious category of good fellowship and, in doing so, highlights its links to drinking and to loyalty to community: “It was an activity structured by a number of rituals—toasting, drinking contests, games and gambling, songs—and by a series of behavioural conventions that encouraged liberal spending, heavy but controlled drinking, and the maintenance of a jovial—or ‘merry’—disposition and atmosphere. These rituals and conventions expressed a number of values: courage, self-control, loyalty, financial prosperity and independence, a pride in hard work, a bold defiance of dominant gender norms.”

In sharp contrast to the godly condemnations of diseased drinking, the rituals of good fellowship and its attendant values, including “courage” and “loyalty,”attest to the cultural benefits of drinking culture. Exclusive friendships sustain drinking communities in times of strife. In his poem “Good Fellowship,” for example, Hugh Crompton’s speaker trumpets his dedication to communal drinking:

Fill, fill the glass to the brim,
’Tis a health unto him
That refuses
To be curb’d, or disturb’d
At the power of the State,
Or the frowns of his fate;
Or that scorneth to bark or to bite at our Muses:
And that never will vary
From the juyce of the Vine, and the cups of Canary.

The emphasis on exclusive loyalty—one who “never will vary” in his drinking—appears in a range of writings on good fellowship that are structured around those who “refuse” to be daunted in their commitments to each other. Thomas D’Urfe’s “The Good Fellow” offers a similar rallying cry:

A pox on the times,
Let ’em go as they will,
Tho’ the taxes are grown so heavy:
Our hearts are our own,
And shall be so still,
Drink about, my boys, and be merry.

The speaker upholds his unity with his drinking “boys,” who still claim ownership of their loyal “hearts” even in times of political isolation. “To quaff is fellowship right and good,” writes William Hornby; such drinking fellowship helps “maintain friendship and nourish blood.” Even the critics of good fellowship recognize its connection to forms of loyalty and devotion. Thus drunkenness goes, William Prynne writes, “under the popular and lovely titles of hospitality, good-fellowship, courtsey, entertainment, joviality, mirth,
generosity, liberality, open house keeping, the liberal use of Gods good creatures, friendship, love, kindnesse, good neighbour hood, company-keeping, and the like."96

The language of good fellowship resonates with a model of addiction in urging one's release into a spirit—the spirit of alcohol—as a sign of loyalty, with the alehouse functioning as an alternate family.97 "To consider seventeenth-century drinking," Adam Smyth writes, is "to consider friendship, community, conviviality."98 Tavern drinking helped establish affiliation and loyalty, often to a community structured around shared gender, class, regional, or political affiliations made evident in drinking habits.99 Since one's choice of alcohol helped to signify one's class status, drink functioned as a mode of social recognition.100 Drunkenness, or claims of drunkenness, might serve as a way for the gentry to distance themselves from those impoverished visitors who haunted the alehouse; or drinking could help designate political affiliation, either through the types of beverage consumed or the spaces of consumption.101 Smyth's collection, A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality, elucidates the range of such sociable drinking, from the English versions of Anacreontic verse studied by Stella Achilleos, to the ballads analyzed by Angela McShane, to the drinking communities illuminated by Michelle O'Callaghan, Marika Keblusek, and Charles C. Ludington. A range of studies of admirable drunkenness also expose the flourishing of carnivalesque ritual and the politics of mirth, both dependent on drinking culture for political and social union.102

Despite the seemingly opposed (and equally voluminous) cultural responses to drinking from puritan critics and inspired tavern hauntings, both groups share an embrace of the spirit as connection to community and fellowship. Ravishment, be it through transforming God on the one hand or inspired drinking on the other, reshapes the devoted addict.103 Indeed, these drinkers of divine and alcoholic spirits wrestle over the claim to good fellowship itself, as the godly attempted to assert their form of pious "good fellowship" in their communities of the faithful. The link of good fellowship to drinking thus provoked particular ire, with puritan critics calling out the deception of secular calls to "good fellowship" that served merely as a synonym for drunkenness. As Henry Crosse claims in Virtues common-wealth (1603): "If we looke into the monstrousnesse of sinne in this age, we may see every abomination sport it selfe, as though there were no God. Drunkennesse is good fellowship." Indeed, he warns, one might "carrie the verie badge of good fellowship upon his nose."104 As William Perkins asks, in dismay, "Is not drunkennes counted good fellowship?"105 George Benson also derides the "drunkennesse of good fellowship," while Thomas Cooper condemns how "drunkenesse is counted good fellowship."106

The oppositions and countercurrents in discourses of drinking help reveal such ideological clashes between the godly and the good fellow as less directly oppositional than paternal or sororal, two intimately connected, if fractious, impulses. Further, it is precisely in the vexed responses to drunkenness that we see addiction's range and pliability. Both devotional and compulsive at once, drunkenness provoked the variety of cultural responses that are at stake in early modern addiction and then are buried in later centuries. For even as conversations on excessive habitual drinking increasingly insist on drunkenness as a disease and pathology, they nevertheless retain the notion of addiction as a laudable pastime, a form of good fellowship that proves constant amid cultural changes.

Project Outline

Each of this project's chapters wrestles with addiction in relation to devotion, compulsion, agency, and authority. To do so each chapter offers a discussion of addiction in a different arena, moving from theology and lexicography to medical writings and puritan polemic to legal tracts and national politics. In the process, rather than concentrate solely on those texts that repeatedly deploy the word "addiction," I instead select texts that pose the broader philosophical issues at stake in invocations of addiction, drawing particularly on the imaginative richness afforded in the study of literary texts.107 "While other discourses may be compromised by ambiguity, literature," Roland Greene writes, "is drawn to it—and can fashion it into something new, granting the premium of fresh perspective to old problems."108 Sermons attempt to convert readers; literature, by contrast, serves to "entertain," both in the sense of offering a pleasurable pastime and in the sense of considering new ways of thinking about familiar issues. Through concentration on a literary text in concert with cultural and political writings, each chapter illuminates an aspect of addiction's rich possibilities.

When The English Faust Book describes Faustus as "addicted" to study, and when Marlowe's Doctor Faustus depicts necromantic study as "ravishing," these texts draw on classical and Renaissance notions of addiction as a beneficial and laudable form of commitment. Tracing the invocations of addiction in classical
and theological writings ranging from Cicero and Seneca to Calvin and Perkins, Chapter 1 overturns modern, pathological conceptions of addiction by exposing the concept’s classical and Renaissance meanings. More specifically, the chapter establishes how the influence of Calvin and Calvinist-minded Cambridge divines appears in Doctor Faustus, not just in the drama of election—as has long been argued—but also in the play’s preoccupation with the challenge of commitment. Dedication, the play reveals, paradoxically requires both effort and surrender. If early modern theologians encourage such release, Marlowe illuminates addiction as a process of both wonder and terror.

This project’s second chapter moves from theology to lexicography, and specifically to Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night, examining addiction through the figure of the devoted lover. In relinquishing self-sovereignty in favor of another, the lover transforms into an addict, an achievement unavailable to other, more self-serving characters. For an embrace of devotional addiction is an embrace of the magic and serendipity of love, a process uncontrolled by human will. Furthermore, this foregoing of control requires dedicated commitment; it is a sustained process of giving oneself repeatedly through time. This mode of loving contrasts with what might appear, to modern readers, to be the more obviously addictive practice in the play: drunkenness. Yet this chapter delineates the difference between addiction and drunkenness precisely through a comparative study of Olivia, Viola, and Toby: Toby is too much himself to allow addictive transformation.

Henry IV stages the complex and contradictory invocation of addiction as both the laudable attachment chronicled in Chapters 1 and 2, and a compulsion, anticipating the modern era. Chapter 3 studies Falstaff as an admirable addict, dedicating himself to Hal. The play’s markedly self-possessed rulers throw his mode of attachment into sharp relief: Hal, like his father before him, rises through the addictive energies of dedicated men only to abandon them. With his addictive relation forestalled and his devotional pursuit failing. Falstaff turns from Hal to the material conditions of their friendship, namely drunken good fellowship. As a result of this shift, the lauded ability to release oneself as an addict appears less dedicated than compelled, resonant with contemporary attacks on drunkenness as disease, examined in this chapter. The very language that designated loyal commitment comes to signify a form of bondage and is used to chronicle the compromised will of the drinker.

The project’s fourth chapter turns from reflexive addictions—those actively chosen and embraced—to imperative addiction, studying Othello’s staging of incapacity through legal debates on responsibility. While Othello’s love for Desdemona represents a form of laudable addiction as he dedicates himself to another, Iago’s polluting attachment results in a transformation of addiction, from Othello’s primary devotion to his new wife to his secondary addiction to his villainous ensign. Prompted to murder by love and loyalty, Othello proves both compelled and free to act. His criminal action, mitigated by incapacity, is anticipated in a much more minor key by Cassio earlier in the play. Read through early modern legal debates on drunken incapacity, Cassio’s actions—like Othello’s—should receive the full force of the law. Shakespeare, however, challenges such strict legal responsibility by staging addiction’s double bind: how can one be both strictly responsible and non componere mentis, or incapacitated? The legal insistence on responsibility even at moments of madness contrasts with Shakespeare’s more nuanced interrogation of addictive possession, in which the addictive propensities of both Cassio and Othello stand as a form of heroism: they open themselves to others and allow themselves to become possessed, in stark contrast to the excessive exercise of the will showcased in Iago.

This project’s fifth and final chapter, rather than analyzing addiction through one exemplary play, instead turns to a single addictive practice: health drinking. This binge-drinking ritual helped to bolster beleaguered communities, as drinkers pledged themselves through expressions of loyalty and faith. Studying this addictive practice through a generic and historical range—surveying drama and poetry over an eighty-year period from the 1580s through 1660—reveals both the longevity of addiction as devotion and the variability of attitudes toward one addictive practice. Health drinking was initially condemned in the 1580s and 1590s as a deplorable and foreign practice, but by the 1630s it was celebrated for its loyalist potential in uniting politically isolated royalists. Health drinking exposes, then, not simply the range of attitudes toward addiction as a mode of attachment, but divergent responses to one addictive practice that appears at once compulsive and dedicated. The book thus ends with a chapter that, despite its methodological distinction from the rest of the book, condenses many of the paradoxes evident throughout: early modern addiction represents choice and tyranny, devotion and disease.

Each of the project’s chapters takes up, as suggested above, a different arena of addiction discourse. Showing the range of addiction’s reach, each chapter save the last is also rooted in a popular play that deploys addiction discourse in an especially rich and nuanced staging. Most specifically, the plays under discussion dramatize the addict-actor relationship, which is
explored in this book's preface, by simultaneously reinforcing and challenging their connection: Mephistophilis's power over Faustus, Viola's over Olivia, Iago's over Othello, and to a complex and different degree, Hal's over Falstaff's. Each of these relations expose the intimate connection—and opposition—of acting to addiction. Through a counterfeiting character who uses theater to his or her own ends—through a character who can claim, with Viola and Iago, "I am not what I am"—the play's hero transforms. Willing away his or her will, the hero shapes him or herself into an addict, one bound, tied, and obligated to the play's counterfeiting actor. In devotional relation, this heroic addict proves both sincere and dependent, in contrast to the potentially duplicitous freedom exercised by the counterfeiting actor. Yet this counterfeiter, who deploys deceit over sincerity, is of course played by an actor who is himself—in his own relation to the play's script—an addict, a figure bound to enact his own role onstage, just as the play's addict, in his sincerity, is an actor who counterfeits.

Refractions the relation of actor and addict, the plays under discussion defend theater through the resulting dramatic effects: pitting the character of the counterfeiting actor against the devoted addict, these plays uphold the addict who, in his or her sincerity and vulnerability, is overcome. The addict, whether in the form of Faustus, Olivia, Falstaff, or Othello, asserts the power of theater to move and transform the audience against the theatrical rival, a condensation of anti-theatrical concerns. In pitting—or even reconciling—the actor and the addict, the counterfeiter and the devotee, these plays draw on the model of addiction to recuperate the theater and produce devotion from the audience, shaping an actor-addict so sincere and dependent upon us that we allow ourselves to be moved.

Chapter 1

Scholarly Addiction in Doctor Faustus

Faustus, being of a naughty mind and otherwise addicted, applied not his studies, but took himself to other exercises.

—The English Faust Book

What does it mean to say, as The English Faust Book does in 1592, that Faustus is "addicted"? Faustus, it seems, should apply himself to the study of divinity but is otherwise inclined, embracing alternate fields as the infamous version of the legend by Christopher Marlowe depicts in detail. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus opens with Faustus weighing the merits of divinity, a field in which he "profits," "the fruitful plot of scholarship". But his very talents snare him, for "excelling all" his peers, he becomes "glutted" with "learning's golden gifts" and begins to seek another form of scholarly sustenance, ultimately "surfeit[ing] upon cursed necromancy" (1.1.18, 24, 25).

If Faustus's appetite for scholastic heights differs from narcotic addictions, his surfeit nevertheless resonates with modern notions of addiction as pathology. As Deborah Willis writes in her study of the play, "It is not hard to draw an analogy between Faustus's evolving relationship to magic and modern narratives of addiction." Marlowe's play, she argues, anticipates modern, medical definitions of the addict in staging the diminishing will of the individual in the face of compulsive behavior. Yet early modern addiction, as this chapter will explore, also appears in Faustus and in a series of sixteenth-century tracts to be beneficial and even laudable. As a result of what could be called compulsive addiction, but which one might equally deem devotion or dedication, Faustus proves an able and talented scholar, adopting a profession for his "wit" and excelling in it (1.1.1–2, 11). He thus fulfills the Latin root of the word
Heywood writes of Alleyn, he is a “Proteus for shapes, and Roscius for a tongue
/ So could he speak, so vary.”

In his attachment to sack, Falstaff proves not only resistant as a political subject—a welcome position in Henry’s corrupt England—but also, increasingly over the course of two plays, debilitated as a transformative actor. Even the most convivial activities become dangerous when compulsory, a point Hal makes at the start of the plays: “If all the year were playing holidays, / To sport would be as tedious as to work” (7 Henry IV, 1.2.194–95). So Shakespeare faced a theatrical choice: he could remain trapped in a form of compulsory conviviality, representing his devoted knight in his form of good fellowship, night after night, through multiple plays. Or Shakespeare could—and did—find a way of deepening Falstaff’s character: through his fall into a contemporary, topical concern surrounding habitual drinking and disease, presenting such addiction through an awareness of its dangers and an appreciation of its devotional commitments. The banishment of Falstaff is potentially moralizing, but it also emerges out of the play’s dogged portrait of the knight’s fidelity. The plays illuminate the costs of addictive fellowship within rejection, the tenacious attachment to Hal at the expense of self. Falstaff thus develops from the comic Vice, the braggart soldier, the carnivalesque drinker, and the fool into a tragic figure: he is the isolated drinker, a type increasingly familiar from medical pamphlets, puritan tracts, and state laws; and he is the abandoned addict, longed for his devotional object. In facing the choices between conviviality and tragedy, the playwright ultimately chose his own craft, upholding theatrical range even at the expense of his most popular character.

As a result of such dramatic transformation Shakespeare banishes, even as he generated, one of the theater’s best roles and one of its most novelistic characters, both in terms of tragic trajectory and comic range. Falstaff becomes Shakespeare’s legacy, a characterological testament to his dramatic talents. The play’s end thus stages a heartbreaking spectacle: Falstaff—the man who “fore-swear[s] thin potations and addict[s] himself to sack”—is condemned. The audience, of course, desperately wishes it were otherwise. But in depicting Hal’s rise as sovereign, Shakespeare represents the point at which deep attachment—living in unerring, persistent devotion to another—proves too threatening to endure, and that point is Falstaff’s addiction.

Chapter 4

Addiction and Possession in Othello

The locus of addictiveness cannot be the substance itself, and can scarcely ever be the body itself, but must be some overarching abstraction that governs the narrative relations between them.
—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

With the Venetian troops in Cyprus and the Turkish fleet destroyed at sea, the Herald reads Othello’s general announcement, inviting “each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him” (2.2.9–6). This addiction, as analyzed in this project thus far, might be to study or to God; it might be to love or to friendship. Or it might also be, as the scene in Othello proceeds to reveal and this chapter explores, addiction to drinking. Regardless of what “revel” the addict chooses, the Herald’s phrasing insists that he or she will be “lead,” drawn out by the agentive force of addiction itself. Even if the choice of one’s addiction signals liberty, as the Herald’s invitation seems to suggest, it also betrays subservience before one’s own desires or leanings. Compressed into this short invitation lies one of the play’s more pressing questions: if a character is led to drunkenness, violence, or murder, where does responsibility for such action lie? Does it lie with the individual who carries out the action? Or does it come from the force that “leads him” and overtakes him—whether it be in the form of alcohol, love, or some other passion?

Such questions about addiction and responsibility have remained unaddressed in this book so far. The first chapters of this project considered largely reflexive addictions: the devotions in Doctor Faustus, Twelfth Night, and the Henriad were actively chosen and embraced. But as noted in Chapter 1 of this project, addiction—and the other key terms associated with addiction, like
conviction, commitment, and compulsion—might represent choice, or they might signal an external dictate. One might be committed to a spouse, or to an asylum; one might have a conviction as a viewpoint, or as a criminal record; and one might be compelled by an idea, or by the law. In turning to imperative addiction, this chapter explores individuals controlled, or at least guided by, an external force. Such imperative addictions, in their transformative power, result in criminal outcomes, at once determined by the play’s tragic genre and the compulsive nature of the addictions themselves. The Herald might invite soldiers to “sport and revel,” but addiction within tragedy concentrates on overpowered choices leading to criminal acts. The tragic will proves, as Mariana Valverde puts it in her study of addiction, “diseased” or misled, compromising the choice to act in the first place. The result is that an addict is at once agentive and subjected, thus frustrating the essential task of assessing responsibility.

Othello stages criminal action mitigated by the incapacity of addiction. Othello is prompted to murder in the name of love and loyalty, compelled yet also choosing to act. Possessed by another, Othello commissions or attempts to execute the murder of Cassio, Desdemona, Iago, and himself. He understands his actions as his own, and yet as doubly foreign: he names the external prompter as Iago, but he also externalizes his own criminality, as the turbanned Turk or a possessive madness. In its broad consideration of agentive selfhood, Othello engages the early modern conception of addiction as a form of possessive devotion that overcomes the consenting subject. Othello’s love for Desdemona demonstrates the admirable, extraordinary capacity of the addict to dedicate himself to another. Yet other forms of addiction come to challenge Othello’s primary devotion to his new wife. One might call his addiction jealousy, and indeed, such an addiction appears prominently in one of Shakespeare’s potential sources for the play, John Pory’s translation of A geographical historie of Africa, by Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan, christened Johannes Leo Africanus. Africanus describes people exceedingly “addicted to jealousy,” as well as those “addicted to witchcraft.”

For some critics, a predisposition to jealousy—or what Africanus calls an addiction to jealousy—is exactly what Othello displays: he becomes most himself when jealous. Othello could also be called, in keeping with Africanus, addicted to magic or witchcraft in his association with the charmed handkerchief, a family heirloom. Yet Shakespeare shapes Othello as startlingly independent from social and characterological compulsion: a newlywed allegedly free from sexual desire, a Venetian Moor initially self-assured and calm in the face of his city’s hysterical racism, and a former bondslove who secured his own freedom, Othello excites precisely the expectation of escape from tyranny and compulsion, whether physical or environmental.

In contrast to the Historie, then, Othello’s addiction is not to jealousy or magic; his devotion is distinct from humoral predisposition. As elaborated in Chapter 2, a humoral predisposition amplifies a preexisting state. Addiction, by contrast, challenges agentive selfhood. Othello, in loving Desdemona, addicts and shatters himself. He begins the play in the state of devoted love, already redefined and transformed even if he only reluctantly admits this. Attacked for his marriage, conscripted through love into what Ian Smith has described as “an internal ‘race war’ initiated by the play’s resident racist, Iago,” Othello is eventually convinced that his devotion is misplaced and counterfeit. As a result he shifts his pledge of love from Desdemona to the enigmatic he mistakenly imagines to be honest and true. Ultimately, in shifting his addiction from his wife to Iago, Othello destroys the lives of those he loves, at once compelled and yet seemingly free to act otherwise.

The extraordinary devotional capacity of Othello—his predisposition as an addict—proves, in a corrupt environment, his undoing. The play heightens Othello’s drama by staging a form of addictive undoing not once but twice, anticipating Othello’s tragedy by staging Cassio’s earlier on. The play’s early scene of drinking, in which Cassio’s intoxication leads to brawling, explores how excess compromises the will and draws authority into question. Why offer such a meditation on drunkenness, stretching from the scene of Cassio’s health drinking through the remainder of the play? Why feature drunkenness as a source of criminal wrongdoing in a play about much deeper and more troubling forms of villainy? Through unexpected discussions on the origins of drunken habit, the play investigates the tangled relation of addiction to responsibility and capacity posed in the play’s more dominant plotline. The surprising outcome of the drunken brawl—even in the absence of clear resolution—lies in the sympathy shown toward Cassio as an excessive drinker, one who experiences the double bind of the addict, who is at once taken to be strictly responsible for his guilt and also figured as non componens, or incapacitated. Cassio may well be, as James Siemon argues, derelict in his duty and supported by “intrinsically unqualified female agents” who trespass codes of military masculinity. Yet nonetheless the play invites us to consider his innocence, due at least in part to his incapacity from both drink and the plotting of Iago.

This sympathy toward—and interpretive sophistication in presenting—
Cassio's plight is in sharp contrast to the contemporaneous conversations on drunken responsibility within early modern criminal law. Early modern legal theorists, as this chapter's first section will explore, insist upon strict responsibility when it comes to addictive action. Specifically, criminal acts undertaken by drunken defendants do not excuse but exacerbate guilt. Shakespeare's more complex understanding of the addict's conundrum—at once actor and acted upon—pushes against these contemporary legal views, asserting the transformative power of addictions against the law's insistence on strict responsibility: how can an addict be deemed guilty when he is no longer himself, when his actions have been determined by another? Staging drunken criminality allows exploration of these questions by putting pressure on conceptions of individual will and mens rea at stake in early modern (and modern) understandings of addiction. And questions of mens rea are, of course, exactly what haunt the tragedy, from Cassio's drinking to Othello's murderous act.

Cassio's condition, being both exonerated from guilt because of his compromised ability to choose and condemned due to his culpable and predictable actions, anticipates in small measure the complex position of Othello. Othello, too, acts with compromised freedom. But his ability to consent—in defiance of his own training and profession—to being overtaken by another, and to experience the deep passion that results, remains admirable. Addictive propensities allow both Cassio and Othello to open themselves to others, to relate to the world around them. Being possessed is to be a participant in community. From possession of the handkerchief to possession of a spouse, the play highlights the vulnerability of such attachments to loss, manipulation, and deceit. Yet even as the play stages a tragic result emerging from such possession, it equally upholds addiction over an excessive exercise of the will. The oppositional relation of Iago and Othello—one driven by the will and the other releasing himself into addiction—reveals how the exercise of the will, so lauded in legal rulings, comes at the expense of connection, commitment, and devotion. Even then, as Othello draws on contemporary concerns about drinking addiction in its portrait of Cassio, the play uses the drinking scene to think through, with sympathy, the play's broader meditation on the ability to be possessed, to open oneself up to love and community even at the risk of oneself.

Drunken Incapacity in English Law

If a drunken man staggers blindly across a tavern, gets in a fight, and kills someone, what role does his drunkenness play in his guilt? He was, by virtue of alcohol, incapacitated. But the legal definition of incapacity, by which a defendant is deemed incapable of mens rea, or willful action, most often references mental or physical illness, often due to aging or disability. While it can also stem, as this example suggests, from drunkenness, such drunken incapacity poses difficulties for legislators. Unlike the incapacity of illness and aging, which are brought on involuntarily, defendants might actively choose to get drunk. And because the capacity for willful choice is fundamental to the legal understanding of a natural person (namely a human being who exercises rights and obligations), the implications of pardoning criminal defendants on the grounds of drunkenness, a chosen incapacity, are troubling. As the legal historian Jeremy Horder writes, "The possibility that defendants may plead that, through no fault of their own, they lacked the capacity for free agency at the time of their alleged offence, raises the most fundamental issues of principle in the criminal law." Horder underscores how legislation on drunkenness reveals the dilemma of legal personhood more generally: incapacity challenges legal understandings of the individual as a "natural person" who acts under the law. The law's assumed link of personhood with self-possession, autonomy, liberty, and rights runs up against modes of human life that deviate, whether by choice or compulsion, from such sovereignty.

Today the legal solution to this conundrum of intoxication and mens rea lies in the manslaughter charge, which admits the compromised will of the drunken defendant while still prosecuting him as a natural person who has killed someone. The early modern solution is quite different, primarily because early modern legislators did not consider drunkenness as a form of incapacity. On the contrary, it was deemed in the landmark case of Renier v. Feogosa (1551)—the first ruling on intoxication in English law—to be a voluntary condition, a sign of an active and errant will: "If a person that is drunk kills another, this shall be felony, and he shall be hanged for it, and yet he did it through ignorance, for when he was drunk he had no understanding nor memory; but inasmuch as that ignorance was occasioned by his own act and folly, and he might have avoided it, he shall not be privileged thereby." Since an individual elects to drink he is granted no special consideration.

Indeed, as a subsequent case goes on to establish, the defendant might
even be further penalized for drunkenness. According to Beverley's Case (1603), "Although he who is drunk is for the time non compos mentis, yet his drunkenness does not extenuate his act or offence... but it is a great offence in itself, and therefore aggravates his offence, and doth not derogate from the act which he did during that time." Prominent jurists and legal theorists of the early modern period recapitulate this point. "A drunkard," Sir Edward Coke states, "is voluntarius daemon... what hurt or ill soever he doth, his drunkenness doth aggravate it." William Blackstone writes, in a section on deficiencies of the will caused by madness, chance, and drunkenness, that "as to artificial, voluntarily contracted madness, by drunkenness or intoxication, which, depriving men of their reason, puts them in a temporary phrenzy: our law looks upon this as an aggravation of the offence, rather than an excuse for any criminal misbehaviour." Punishment for drunkenness has classical precedent: Blackstone cites the Greek enactment "that he who committed a crime when drunk should receive double punishment," and Aristotle writes in Nicomachean Ethics that "we punish a man for his very ignorance, if he is thought responsible for the ignorance, as when penalties are doubled in the case of drunkenness; for the moving principle is in the man himself, since he had the power of not getting drunk and his getting drunk was the cause of his ignorance."

Not all early modern lawyers pressed for higher sentencing, but the understanding of drunkenness as the defendant's choice and therefore personal responsibility was nearly universal. A person who committed a criminal offence should not be excused when, as Aristotle says, "the moving principle is in the man himself." Thus Francis Bacon and Richard Hooker both agree that even if the law should not punish involuntary action, it should nevertheless punish actions committed while drunk. As Bacon puts it, "If a mad man commit a felony, he shall not lose his life for it, because his infirmity came by the act of God; but if a drunken man commit a felony, he shall not be excused because his imperfection came by his owne default." Similarly, Hooker—in his discussion of how humans might transgress their own natures—asserts how drunkenness might cause a man to commit a crime against nature. Yet such a crime is a matter of choice, not compulsion, and thus he is responsible for it: "It is no excuse... unto him, who being drunk commiteth incest, and allegeth that his wits were not his own, inasmuch as himself might have chosen whether his wits should by that mean have been taken from him." Of course, this is not to say that the courts always meted out higher sentences to drunken offenders. Drunkenness does appear, at times, as a mitigating circumstance in criminal cases. For example, the case of Thomas Baynard vs. Georg Haythorne and his wife Anne featured the "purchase of unspecified property at unfair price after making plaintiff drunk." Nevertheless, the key legal theorists of the period, and the landmark cases, upheld a strict view of drunkenness as a choice and as a sign of voluntary madness.

In tandem with these rulings on incapacity, legislators pressed to criminalize drunkenness itself. One of the period's most significant and understudied legal struggles concerns this long and ultimately successful parliamentary battle to deem drunkenness itself a crime. Prior to the sixteenth century, legislation targeted not the drinker but the ale sellers, as Peter Clark, Judith Hunter, and others demonstrate in their surveys of the history of tavern legislation. Yet this control of alehouses was as much an economic as a social or criminal issue: "The magistrates were far more concerned with the economic aspects of running alehouses than with the number of those who got drunk," F. G. Emmison writes. Over the course of the sixteenth century, however, this economic interest was met by a social and moral one: controlling the heavy drinker. No longer content to regulate alehouses, legislators now sought to create yet another, more stringent measure to control drinking. Thus a series of bills on drunkenness, presented in Parliament between 1566 and 1606, began to posit excess drinking itself as a crime. These bills do not concern—as modern law does—drunken action. Rather than targeting those who are drunk and disorderly, these bills instead criminalize drunkenness itself, deeming it an overthrow of the subject, a form of tyranny, sin, and waste that endangers both the drinker and the community.

The 1606 "Act for the Repressing of the odious and loathsome Sin of Drunkenness" (4. Jacobus 5) begins the official history of criminalizing drunkenness in England. The culmination of forty years of legislative efforts, the act targeted drunkenness alone, claiming that drink overthrows, disables, impoverishes, and abuses otherwise loyal subjects: "The loathsome and odious Sin of Drunkennesse," the act argues, "is of late grown into common use within this Realm" and leads to "the overthrow of many good Arts and Manuall Trades," as well as "the disabling of divers Work-men; and the generall Impoverishing of many good Subjects." The act had significant staying power, with all subsequent attempts at legislation, including in 1614, 1620-21, and 1623, repeating this act's sense of drunkenness as an acute problem.

Since the history of this legislation on drunkenness is largely unfamiliar—in contrast to the extensive studies on the history of tavern regulation—it is worth piecing together the forty-year battle to pass this 1606 act. Doing so
reveals precisely the concerns, and at times the sympathy, shown by parliamentarians and monarchs toward the power of drunkenness. This history also reveals a set of shifting conceptions of and accommodations toward drinking. Notably, the 1606 legislative effort shifts from earlier attempts to regulate the "drunkard" to instead attacking "drunkenness." This may account for the success of the act's passage after four decades of effort: condemning a so-called drunkard proved a losing battle. By locating the agency in drinking rather than in the individual who drinks, legislators shifted blame away from a person and onto an activity—one that, as the legislation indicates, should be controlled and prevented. If the earlier drafts insisted on the damage a drinker causes the nation, the final act blames drinking itself for abusing individuals.

The legislative attempts to pass a bill on drinking began in 1566, with the bill "on swearing and drunkenness" to appear in Parliament. Linking drunken excess to swearing, gaming, and other allegedly sinful pursuits, the bill failed. Two decades later, the more substantial 1584 bill, labeled "An Act against excessive and common drunkenness," more aggressively justifies the need for such legislation. Even as it echoes the 1566 version in condemning drinking a spiritual problem, a "sin" that brings on the "displeasure of Almighty God," the 1584 bill's language more immediately insists on the antisocial effects of drunkenness, its "poornesse of life." Habitual ("common") or "excessive" drunkenness represents a misuse of resources: "A few in excesse" consume that which "moderately used would nourish and satisfie many." Further, drinkers commit crimes, including "swearing and blasphemye ... quarrelless fyghtinge bloodshedde, manslaughter," as drunkards are driven to "unlawfull shifte, and become more like brute beasts than reasonable creatures." As a result, the drinker should be punished "as a comon Barretor," namely a quarrelsome person given to brawling or riot, a "rowdy" or hired bully.

The 1584 bill exposes the conceptual tension at stake in regulating drunkenness. The heavy drinker actively abuses the nation and wastes its resources. Indeed, he is a bully and a "barretor." Yet drinkers, in becoming "brute beasts," by "falling into the saide vice," appear enslaved and transformed by drinking, suggesting ways in which they lack legal agency. In this regard the term "barretor" is especially telling, because it describes a particular kind of bully, one hired out as a "rowdy." Rather than acting on his own behalf, the barretor quarrels for others. This conundrum concerns a criminal who is at once free and bound: the drinker both exercises free will in his drunkenness and seems bound in it, behaving as alcohol dictates. If this condition is a familiar one, it is still worth noting how even the era's strictest legislation hesitates about the drinker's agency. Indeed, subsequent drafts of legislation move between views of the drinker as an agent and as a slave.

When the 1584 bill failed, Parliament raised the issue again in 1601, this timetargeting the drinker even more directly. Heavily amending the 1584 draft into a "bill against drunkards and common haunters of alehouses or taverns," the 1601 bill targets neither singular drunkenness nor alehouse activities, but instead excessive, habitual drinking: "drunkards" and "common haunters." Indeed, the revised title of the bill reinforces the shift: the 1584 bill regulated "excessive and common drunkenness," namely an activity; now the bill regulates "drunkards" and "haunters," that is to say, individuals defined by their relationship to alcohol. 1601 was a year that also saw the introduction of a "bill for reformation of abuses in alehouses," and a "bill against victualling houses and taverns." This was revised to "a bill for supressing alehouses and tippling houses" read on December 2 in the House of Lords, and on December 4 in the House of Commons. The "drunkards" bill thus appears in tandem with regulation of alehouses, rather than in place of such regulation.

The 1601 bill, like the two before it, did not pass. It took another five years before legislation on drunkenness received approval. The resulting 1606 act condenses much of the language of the prior bills while also shifting the focus—as noted above—to the drinker victimized by alcohol (Figure 1). It reads:

A Statute against Drunkenness [An Act for the Repressing of the odious and loathsome Sin of Drunkenness] (4. Jac 1, c.5).

Whereas the loathsome and odious Sin of Drunkenness is of late grown into common use within this Realm, being the Root and Foundation of many other enormous Sins, as Bloodshed, Stabbing, Murder, Swearing, Fornication, Adultery, and such like; to the great dishonour of God, and of our Nation; the overthrow of many good Arts and Manuall Trades; the disabling of divers Work-men; and the generall Impoverishing of many good Subjects, abusively wasting the good Creatures of God:

Be it therefore enacted by the Kings most Excellent Majestie, the Lords and Commons in this present Parliament Assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That all and every person or persons, which shall be Drunk, and of the same offence of Drunkenness shall be lawfully convicted, shall for every such offence, forfeit, and
loose five shillings of lawfully Money of England, to be paid within one week next after his, her, or their conviction thereof, to the hands of the Church-Wardens of that Parish, where the offence shall be committed, who shall be accountable therefore to the use of the poor of the same Parish: And if the said person or persons so convicted, shall refuse, or neglect to pay the said forfeiture, as aforesaid, then the same shall be from time to time, levied of the Goods of every such person or persons so refusing or neglecting to pay the same, by Warrant or Precept from the same Court, Judge or Justices, before whom the same conviction shall be: And if the offender or offenders be not able to pay the said sum of five shillings, then the offender or offenders shall be committed to the Stocks for every offence, there to remain by the space of six hours.

And it is further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That if any person or persons, being once lawfully convicted of the said offence of Drunkenness, shall after that be again lawfully convicted of the like offence of Drunkenness; That then every person and persons so secondly convicted of the said offence of Drunkenness, shall be bounden with two sureties to our Soveraign Lord the Kings Majestie, His Heirs, and Successors, in one Recognisance or Obligation of ten pounds, with condition to be from henceforth of good behaviour.

Whereas earlier versions had a much more elaborate definition of drunkenness based in an identity (namely the 1601 "drunkard or comon haunter of alehouses for needless excessive drinking"), here the legislation condemns the act of "drunkenness." Whereas earlier versions specified two justices of the peace as the arresting officers or witnesses, here the legislation omits reference to the precise mechanisms of arrest. Perhaps this act resolved some of the (now lost) debate that occurred around the earlier drafts of the legislation: a parliamentary exchange on swearing in 1601 reveals that certain members of Parliament were concerned about the opportunities for corruption offered to justices of the peace who might make arrests as a means of lining their own pockets. A later parliamentary debate in 1620 saw the committee revising the 1606 legislation to "define a drunkard." This discussion suggests how members might not share consensus on what precisely constituted a "common drunkard" or "common haunter," despite the appearance of these phrases in local records and in the titles of legislation. Finally, the 1606 bill underwent heavy revision. Its introduction on December 5 provoked dissent: "Sir Rob. Johnson offereth a reformed Bill, for represing the odious and loathsome Sin of Drunkenness—the first Reading, and hissed." Then the bill, engrossed in committee, re-appeared on March 3: "Upon a third Reading, much disputed; Two Provisoes read thrice, and, upon several Questions, added; and the Bill, with the Provisoes, upon another Question, passed." This law received lavish praise, at least among those puritan ministers who vigorously supported criminalizing drunkenness and who, in increasing numbers, held parliamentary seats. Richard Rawldige, for example, praises the legislation in a pamphlet advertising all parliamentary acts against drunkenness (Figure 2). John Downname, the puritan minister and brother to King James I's chaplain George Downname—and familiar from this project's earlier chapters—also praises Parliament for the 1606 act. He does so in terms that highlight the stakes of the debate, calling habitual drunkenness an addiction.

Figure 1. The 1606 Statute against Drunkenness (4. Jac 1, c.5). © The British Library Board. (669.f.7.(70)).
undermining the nation: “Our wise Statesmen thought it necessary in Parliament, to inact a law for the suppressing of this sin; for Ex malis moribus bonae nascuntur leges; evil manners occasion good laws. And indeed not without good cause is the sword of the Magistrate joyned with the sword of the spirit . . . For who seeth not that many of our people of late, are so unmeasurable addicted to this vice.”

Downame’s treatise echoes the arguments of the legislation. First, like the legislation, which distinguishes between the single and repeat offender, Downame targets the “addicted” drinker over those who “drink to live.” Second, if drafts of the legislation complain of the few who “waste in excess” what might “nourish and satisfy many,” Downame also criticizes the drinker for consuming precious resources: he is a “devourer of the fat of the land, in which respect he is more pernicious to a State, & more fit to bring a common death, than either canker-worm, or caterpillar.” Like the “caterpillars of the commonwealth” (Shakespeare’s term for bad counselors), these habitual drinkers corrupt the state from within.

Finally, just as the legislation notes the “overthrow” of trades and the “disabling” of workmen, so too does Downame show how drunkenness robs the commonwealth: the drinker “disableth himself that he cannot performe any good service to his countrey.” Although Downame invokes the language of festivity—the drinker “carouses”—he goes on to define the problem in more political terms. Unruly subjects are tyrannized by the power of drink: “A drunkard can neither bee good Magistrate, nor good subject, seeing bee cannot rule others that cannot rule himself.” This legislative attack on drunkenness, and its attendant condemnation in godly polemic, reinforces the legal theory cited above: drinkers are doubly responsible, both for their drinking and for the criminal actions committed while drunk. This 1606 act thus works in tandem with theories of drunken responsibility to condemn the drinker for his errant but active will. At the same time, this act embeds the fissures evident in broader theories of addiction: the drinker is at once entirely responsible, and abused and overthrown.

Given the difficulty in establishing responsibility—even the strictest legislation hesitates about the drinker versus the drink as culprit—perhaps unsurprisingly this legal insistence that drunkenness is a sign of the defendant’s active will in choosing errancy over health is short-lived. With the growing view of excessive, habitual drunkenness as a kind of permanent madness, indeed as an addiction in modern terms, jurists swing the pendulum of legal reform toward the opposite extreme, no longer blaming but entirely exonerating drunken defendants. What happens, the law begins to ask, when the
defendant is an addict? Sir Matthew Hale considered this question as early as the 1670s, but it was in the 1820s that jurists came to rule on what Hale calls the “habitual or fixed phrenzy” of drunkenness. After the “discovery” of the more familiar notion of addiction as compulsion and disease in 1800 by the physicians Benjamin Rush and Thomas Trotter, legislators began to consider habitual drunkenness as a mitigating circumstance. In cases including *Rex v. Grindley* (1819) and *Regina v. Cruse* (1822), the court ruled that drunkenness diminishes criminal intent. *Burrow's Case* and *Rennie's Case* further established that “fixed, habitual, and permanent” madness as a result of intoxication reduced a man to a state of “being without reason or mind,” and therefore “not accountable or responsible for his actions.” As Horder writes of incapacity in general, “Our system of law is not based ... on principles of brute deterrence, and presupposes that to become criminals people must be responsible for harm, and not just cause it.” This Enlightenment view of incapacity yielded, by the twentieth century, to a more flexible understanding of how a drunk defendant might be held criminally liable for his or her actions, while also retaining possible protection from the charge of specific intent to harm, a charge required for the prosecution of crimes such as first-degree murder. Hence, after the early modern views of responsibility and the Enlightenment notion of guiltlessness, modern jurists introduce a *via media* by using the manslaughter charge for drunken defendants.

This survey of views on drunkenness exposes the contrast between early modern and modern conceptions of the drunken will. To look at rulings such as *Feorgosa* and *Beverley*, one might imagine that sixteenth-century legislators and citizens deemed drunkenness as a matter resting entirely in an individual’s control. Furthermore, one might imagine that it is only with the “invention” or “discovery” of addiction that the concept of the incapacitated will of the habitual drinker enters legal and lay understandings. The legislative record even supports this assumption. As suggested above, Rush and Trotter, the two physicians credited with the discovery of alcoholism, published their findings in 1800; twenty years later the first rulings on the incapacitated will of the habitual drinker would appear.

Even as early modern legislators engage with will so strictly in cases of drunkenness, however, contemporary nonlegal writings acknowledge the tangle of incapacity and responsibility at stake in drunkenness and addiction more broadly. Precisely at the moment of *Beverley* in 1603, Shakespeare explores the ways in which the addict is often the victim of either his own uncontrolled impulses or the criminality of others. In *Othello*’s broad investigation of incapacity, both Cassio and Othello commit crimes engendered through their “own act and folly,” to use *Feorgosa*’s language. They are both “voluntarily contracted” and compelled in their incapacity, being, in legal terms, “voluntarius daemon” and displaying “imperfection” of their “owne default.” The play invokes the legal link of human personhood with agentive choice, showing Cassio punished for criminal action and Othello arrested. But the play more dramatically stages the incapacity of these victims and links agentive choice to Iago’s villainous hyperexercise of the will.

The incapacity of Cassio and Othello might invoke a counterfactual response: What if each had been strong enough to stay fixed in their duties, against Iago’s goading? What if they had maintained strong boundaries against attack? But such a thought experiment denies the ways in which incapacity does not, in itself, make these characters culpable. Instead their incapacitated incapacity emerges from the desire to join fellow soldiers, in the case of Cassio, or one’s beloved, with Othello. Such desire for union might, in itself, be called admirable. These characters represent a potentially troubling but also expansive notion of self, a notion that extends beyond the legal insistence on self-possession. The legal preoccupation with such self-possession or sovereignty ironically secures only isolation as the fundamental human right. The legal theorist Jennifer Nedelsky critiques the law on precisely these grounds, as a “(misguided) attempt to protect individual autonomy.” She explains: “The perverse quality of this conception [of the law] is clearest when taken to its extreme: the most perfectly autonomous man is the most perfectly isolated.”

Othello’s heroics reveal in contrast, even at tragic cost, a mode of living based in addiction’s transformative and connecting power.

**Cassio’s Infirmity**

Shortly after the Herald invites “each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him,” Iago encourages Cassio to join the soldiers and drink: “Come, lieutenant, I have a stoup of wine, and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants that would fain have a measure to the health of black Othello” (2.3.26–29). But Cassio avers, prompting the following exchange:

*Cassio:* Not tonight, good Iago, I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking. I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.
Iago: O, they are our friends. But one cup, I'll drink for you.
Cassio: I have drunk but one cup tonight, and that was craftily qualified too, and behold what innovation it makes here! I am unfortunate in the infirmity, and dare not task my weakness with any more.
Iago: What, man, 'tis a night of revels, the gallants desire it.
Cassio: Where are they?
Iago: Here, at the door, I pray you, call them in.
Cassio: I'll do't, but it dislikes me. (2.3.26–44)

This exchange hinges on the encounter of opposites: the frank Cassio versus the crafty Iago, the honorable lieutenant versus the villainous ensign. The audience watches Cassio snared by his enemy, since Iago has announced in the scene before that he is plotting the lieutenant's ruin, and he reiterates this intention as Cassio goes in (2.1.270–75).

But the scene is about more than the opposition of these two characters. It is also about the opposition of two incompatible views of drinking. Iago represents merriment and sociability: he tells Cassio that “gallants” are drinking to “the health” of Othello. It is a “night of revels,” and these drinkers are “our friends.” This custom of health drinking—the focus of Chapter 5—was a prevalent one, associated with male communities bound in political-military unity. Drinkers would pledge the health of their superior or absent friends, either passing the glass around the table or draining it entirely. Thus Iago’s invitation might be in Cassio’s best interest, since drinking rituals were ways of cementing alliances and demonstrating fortitude. For Cassio to refuse to drink with the other soldiers might betray his unfitness for his job (which Iago alleges from the start). The lieutenant could appear, in abstaining, as unsociable, haughty, or puritanical, as well as disloyal and unmanly, a particularly potent charge for a lieutenant accused of ineffectiveness in the field.46

Against Iago’s view of festive drinking lies Cassio’s own. He knows that health drinking is a “courtesy” and “custom”; he knows that he should participate, and he fully accepts Iago’s depiction of drinking. Indeed, he capitulates in the end, attesting to the strength of the social pressure to drink and to his own desire to join friends. But at the same time, Cassio offers an entirely different picture of alcohol’s effects. For him, it is not about good fellowship but about disease. He is open about his own troubles with drinking: he has “poor and unhappy brains for drinking”; it is “an infirmity,” “a weakness.” He speaks of the physical effects that drinking alcohol has on him. Looking at his drunken body, he claims, “What innovation it makes here!” While on the one hand, Cassio’s language might merely suggest he has no tolerance—he gets quickly drunk because he is a lightweight—on the other hand, his description invokes the notion of infirmity familiar from religious and legal discourses. He draws attention to the addicted brain, or the “unhappy brain,” which is not unaffected by alcohol but indeed is too much affected by it. In this sense, Cassio stands in contrast to other characters affected by toxins in the play; most notably Othello, who little knows how the poison of Iago’s jealousy will work on his system and who proves unable to protect himself. Cassio knows about the dangers of alcohol and tries to prevent its effects. So he has been pretending to drink more than he actually has to keep up appearances, knowing that he should drink no more.

The scene thus stages a confrontation between two alternative views of drinking. The men speak in opposite languages (social vs. physical). These languages are considered equally legitimate, and both press upon the loaded term “addiction” deployed by the Herald. Iago’s call on behalf of the merry gallants is a familiar one; Cassio knows it well. Part of Iago’s mastery is that he takes stock arguments and twists them to his own ends, as in his use of the timeworn cuckoldry story to bait Othello. But even as the play rehearses this customary drinking practice, it also stages the opposite, but equally true, notion of drinking: it is a “custom” that overcomes participants, as the previous chapter revealed. Custom, as the Galenic formula puts it, alters nature, a maxim that addiction theorists deploy in later centuries as an explanatory device in accounting for habitual, excessive drunkenness: *habitus, alteram naturam.*47 Cassio performs this maxim as he moves from externalized custom—the call to drink—to an alteration of his nature, the innovation his body experiences.48 Cassio’s “unhappy brains” recall these contemporary accounts of daily bouts affecting the drinker’s brains: wine gives “the braine a blow, that like a subtil wrestler, it may supplant the feet afterwards,” or “wine takes away the heart, and spoyleth the braine.”49 Cassio’s defense of abstinence, then, has to be taken seriously. Indeed, the audience recognizes that Cassio should take his own argument more seriously than he does, for in capitulating, he facilitates Iago’s vengeful rise.

The rest of the scene continues to juxtapose Cassio’s disease theory of drinking with Iago’s conviviality thesis. But in doing so it tips the scales toward disease, not merriment, as the truer position, for it is precisely the soldiers’ weakness for drink that allows sober Iago to become stage manager of events. Plying Roderigo and three Cyprian soldiers “with flowing cups”
(2.3.55) to ensure their drunkenness, Iago repeatedly calls for more drink throughout the scene: “Some wine ho!” (2.3.64), “Some wine, boys!” (2.3.70) “Some wine ho!” (2.3.93). Iago punctuates his calls for wine with drinking songs. Of his first song he claims, “I learned it in England, where indeed they are most potent in potting. Your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander—drink, ho!—are nothing to your English” (2.3.72–75). The drunken Cassio asks, “Is your Englishman so exquisite in his drinking?” (2.3.76), to which Iago responds, “Why, he drinks you with facility your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next pottle can be filled . . . O sweet England!” (2.3.77–84). This laudatory inset on the strength of the English drinker resonates with any number of ballads circulated in the decades surrounding the play’s performance, ballads portraying national pride in both English ale and English drinkers—particularly against the Dutch and Danes, their rivals in beer production and consumption.30

To have such a ballad sung by Iago, in Cyprus, is peculiar. How might the audience receive this bit of pro-England rhetoric? Does this scene of comic relief help promote nationalist drinking in the face of the famed abstinence of Muslim opponents? To enjoy this drinking scene as a drinking scene—indeed, to enjoy the scene as comic relief at all—requires viewers to suspend awareness of the unfolding plot and the role of Iago in generating it. And, were the drinking episode to achieve this affect, it would highlight even more powerfully the dangers of drink. If all it takes is a drinking song and the call of “sweet England” to get the audience to forget what Iago announces before the scene—he is not drunk, but merely acting so to entangle others—then they are just as likely as Cassio, Roderigo, Montano, and others to be the dupes of a villain. So even as an audience of early modern Londoners might take a bit of national pride in Iago’s claims—the English can outdrink even the most notoriously drunken foreigners—the play also reminds viewers to suspect such rousing words: they feed into precisely the type of national competition that Iago hopes to take advantage of on this “warlike isle.”

What is the origin of Cassio’s infirmity? Why is he so “rash and very sudden in choler” (2.1.270) when drunk? To Cassio himself, such an infirmity comes from his “unhappy brains,” his baffling weakness as a drinker. But this infirmity might equally come, as Cassio’s arresting, drunken non sequitur might indicate, from reprobation, from failed election: in the midst of his drunken ranting he claims, “There be souls must be saved, and there be souls must not be saved” (2.3.99–100). The scene, if not the play itself, bears out this stark judgment. While all the soldiers drink, only Cassio is dismissed as a drunkard, ending the scene bloody, incapacitated, and mute. He imbibes like the other characters, but he alone receives severe punishment, a sanctioning that seems both extreme and inevitable. In this sense, as Cassio himself claims, he is among those unsaved. He becomes, in terms of his office under Othello, the uncelebrated soul he is excised from employment, marriage, and friendship.

Yet this fall from grace is complicated, of course, by Iago’s role in engineering it, and thus Cassio’s infirmity is and is not his own. Iago convinces Montano that Cassio is habitually drunk: “‘Tis evenmore the prologue to his sleep: / He’ll watch the horologe a double set / If Drink rock not his cradle” (2.3.125–27). While drink, like tobacco and opium, was often prescribed to help cure insomnia, Iago’s lines are more damning.31 Cassio, in his view, is compelled by alcohol, habitually imbibing it to the point of necessity. And this possession by alcohol poses political risks, as Iago elaborates: “‘Tis pity of him: / I fear the trust Othello puts him in, / On some odd time of his infirmity / Will shake this island” (2.3.121–24). As Cassio himself had claimed, drinking is an infirmity. And Montano quickly adopts this language in response: “And ‘tis a great pity that the noble Moor / Should hazard such a place as his own second / With one of an ingrained infirmity” (2.3.134–36). The term “infirmity” has migrated in resonance: when deployed initially by Cassio, it meant weakness or inability for drinking, but now it means the weakness of habitual drinking. Furthermore, Montano’s description indicates that what might have been an external, or foreign, practice has become incorporated into Cassio’s character: the infirmity is now “ingraft[ed]” and permanent.

The scene ends with Cassio dismissed from his post as a drunkard. What begins as a single instance of drinking now stands for Cassio’s identity writ large. Cassio is convinced he cannot sue for his place because, as he puts it, “I will ask him for my place again, he shall tell me I am a drunkard; had I as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange! Every inordinate cup is unblest, and the ingredient is a devil” (2.3.298–304). There is a strong dramatic irony accompanying Cassio’s lament—the audience knows, as he does not, that the “devil” that torments him is not wine but Iago.32 Yet there is also logic to Cassio’s speech—it was truly wine that made him easy prey for Iago and Roderigo. Wine has indeed “stolen” from him; it has “transformed” him.33 Where does responsibility for Cassio’s fall lie? He is slandered, with his drinking bout exaggerated as habitual and excessive. He is also vulnerable to the social custom of health drinking, a common and nearly compulsory practice
among groups of soldiers. Cassio nevertheless deems himself a drunkard and understands himself to be responsible for his choice to drink. As with the 1606 act analyzed above, Cassio is at once entirely responsible—and abused and overthrown.

Othello’s Addiction

Iago preys upon Cassio’s vulnerability, deploying customary arguments and social pressure against him while meting out precisely enough poison to ensure the lieutenant’s incapacity. Cassio consents to drinking and thus subsequently holds himself responsible for the events, not realizing he has been manipulated by another. This dynamic repeats itself in Iago’s dealings with Othello. The move from Cassio to Othello is a move from the custom of health drinking to that of cuckoldry, from the passion of wrath to jealousy, from the poison of liquor to fantastical speech. But the practice is the same, and the resulting questions—about capacity and responsibility—remain. In both cases Iago preys upon the predispositions and vulnerabilities of his victims. Cassio begins the play predisposed to drunken brawling. Othello begins the play possessed by intimate relation to another, and it is precisely this predisposition—this addiction to love—that Iago exploits.

Recalling the addiction to love as a devotional, not humoral, state helps illuminate the condition of Othello in the play’s opening. Love addiction, as explored in Chapter 2’s analysis of Twelfth Night, is a release of control that requires commitment beyond a singular act; it is a sustained process of giving up oneself again and again. To addict, to recall Thomas Thomas’s formulation, is to “bequeath or give himself to something: to say: to avow: to alienate from himself to another, and permit, grant, & appoint the same to another person: to condemn: to approve or allow a thing to be done, to deliver, depute or destinate to; to judge, to constrain, to pronounce and declare.” Thomas’s definition resonates with that of other lexicographers in its gloss of addiction as bequeathing, giving, or devoting. But he puts this process in starker terms, calling it a form of alienation from oneself in favor of another; indeed, to addict is to “deliver, depute or destinate” oneself to another. And it is this process of delivering oneself to another that is at stake in Othello.

Othello’s addicted state—his willingness to be overcome by devotion to love at the risk of his own identity—unfolds over the course of the play’s first act, in spite of his vigorous attempts to reassure the Venetian state otherwise.

Indeed, what is most obvious about Othello’s love in the first act is his attempt to downplay it. He, has, he admits, put himself into “circumscription” for love; “But that I love the gentle Desdemona / I would not my unhoused free condition / Put into circumscription and confine / For the sea’s worth” (1.2.25–28). His formula implies that deep relation to another requires loss of freedom and indeed a kind of entrapping possession, even as such love also represents a form of awakening. It is a familiar and problematically misogynist formulation to see marriage simultaneously as entrapment and the possession of another. But Othello’s statement tellingly exposes how he feels not ownership of Desdemona but confinement of himself: he is the one possessed—by Desdemona, by the institution of marriage, by the domestication it implies, or perhaps most obviously, by love itself. And he chooses this relation. He loves, he has “put” himself into this circumscribed condition, consenting to what might otherwise seem uncomfortable or undesirable because his heart has transformed.

A military hero who marries privately, Othello—in his union—challenges the singular nature of his commitment to the state. The play’s first act brings Othello before the senate on a military matter, where he endures instead a trial of sorts, asked to defend his course of private wooing. Condemned by the very man, Brabantio, who previously sought his companionship, Othello finds that Venice, his home, has become the site of interrogation and persecution as a result of his marriage. He maintains composure in the face of Venetian slander and refuses to be reactive even when attacked: “Let him do his spite,” “my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly” (1.2.17, 31–32). Through the interrogation Othello asserts himself more vigorously as a trained soldier, comfortable in the theater of war, than as a newlywed. Indeed he seems unclear on his relation to what he calls Cupid’s realm, hesitating on the agency behind his union: he has “ta’en away” Desdemona, he has “married her” (1.3.79–80), but he has also “won” her (1.3.94), as if granted her by merit. He did “draw from her a prayer” (1.3.153) but he also “did consent” (1.3.155) to her. This dispersed agency, moving between Othello and Desdemona as the agentic force behind the marriage, speaks affirmatively of their equal participation in wooing. But it also illuminates Othello’s hesitancy to claim his will as his own, a hesitancy perhaps born of the “trial” scene that confronts him: in fielding racialized accusations of witchcraft and sorcery, he might well highlight Desdemona’s agency as a means of placating his interrogators and protecting himself and their marriage.

In contrast to Othello’s muted account of his own love, Desdemona’s
account of marriage in the opening scenes insists on its addictive, transformative power. “Desdemona,” Ayanna Thompson writes, “makes it clear that she has been made wholly new through her marriage to Othello.”55 Roderigo claims she has made “a gross revolt” (1.1.132), and even in challenging such a view, Desdemona concurs that her marriage occasions “downright violence and scorn of fortunes” (1.3.250). Indeed, she must admit, as Othello does not, the shattering and revolutionary potential of their union from the start: she leaves her home, she redeems her heart as “subdued / Even to the very quality of my lord” (1.3.251–52), she takes to the transforming seas. Desdemona loves so deeply that she challenges Othello’s attempts to maintain his separateness, a point Paul Cefalu makes in his analysis of the play: “Othello becomes discontented when he is compelled to leave the comforts of his relative mind-blindness. This is a process of losing the self in the other.”56 If deep connection in Twelfth Night, the Henriad and even in Doctor Faustus provides a model of expansion beyond egoistic boundaries, for Othello such expansive bonds are challenging, drawing him into conflict and potentially confining him.57 Addiction in love is achieved, but the opening scenes stage its cost to Othello’s sense of independence and his self-possession as a military commander.

As a sign of his chaffing against the addiction he experiences in love, Othello claims that he can separate his professional and emotional duties, and he furthermore reassures the senate of the primacy of his military commitments over his new marriage. When granted the commission to Cyprus, he says, “I do agnize / A natural and prompt alacrity / I find in hardness” (1.3.232–34). He is a warrior first and foremost, he tells them; he submits to their request, he is still “hanging to [their] state” (1.3.233). He is, he claims, their servant, despite the fact he is also now a spouse. Even in asking for Desdemona’s presence on Cyprus, he insists on the primacy of his military commitment over his interest in her, for the Cyprus mission is “serious and great business” (1.3.268), against the “light-winged toys / Of feathered Cupid” (1.3.269–70). He goes to Cyprus, he tells the duke, “with all my heart” (1.3.279), as if none of it belongs to Desdemona.

Yet Othello, too, experiences the “divided duty” (1.3.181) that Desdemona admits. At the end of the council table scene the strain between Othello’s devoted love and his louder claims of committed service to Venice appears clearly. This is where, in planning the journey to Cyprus, Othello attempts to make, publically, private accommodations for his wife. Having assured the state it has its full heart, he nevertheless exhibits concern and preoccupation with Desdemona’s condition, arguably to the frustration of the duke. Witnessing the intramarital planning of Othello and Desdemona over her journey to Cyprus, the duke responds with a reply at once supportive and dismissive: “Be it as you shall privately determine, / Either for her stay or going: th’affair cries haste / And speed must answer it” (1.3.276–78). The duke tries to reestablish the private and secondary nature of the marriage in the face of the geopolitical threat of the Turks; the couple’s time-consuming desire to determine Desdemona’s new home is, his comments indicate, beside the point.

Othello nonetheless lobbies for his love, acknowledging his strong affection even as he downplays it. He wishes Desdemona’s company, he admits, not for physical reasons but “to be free and bounteous to her mind” (1.3.266). This sentence pops out from its speech precisely because it is framed through negatives: he does not wish to comply with his appetite, because he claims he does not have one; he does not value the toys of Cupid, because they are anathema to him. He just wants, he claims, to commune with her mind. If some critics find his protestations naïve for dismissing bodily desires, others point to the prurient, prejudicial environment surrounding him. Yet in approaching his love as transformative and devotional, his statement about feeling “free” with her “mind” offers a powerful testament to their connection: he begs for her presence on the island and offers a reluctant admission of his own deep attachment in the process. Freedom now comes in relation to Desdemona, he reasons. At once confined and circumscribed, he nonetheless experiences freedom with, or for, her.

As the play proceeds, Othello’s addictive love for Desdemona comes into greater focus. Reunited after the tempest, Othello tells her, “it gives me wonder as great as my content / To see you here before me!” (2.1.281–82). Othello’s repetition of the word “content” three times in this one scene demands critical attention, with the valences of the word shifting, in E. A. J. Honigmann’s analysis, from pleasure and contentment to self-indulgent satisfaction. But the appearance of “content” in Othello’s formulations is also about its destabilization through “wonder” and the “absolute.” The homely feeling of contentment—what might be familiar and moderate—is here yoked to uncommon states, of wonderousness, surprise, and newness: “I fear / My soul hath her content so absolute / That not another comfort like this / Succeeds in unknown fate” (2.1.288–91).58 The feeling of contentment becomes extraordinary, exceeding anything in the known world. Othello’s equations suggest precisely how transformative his love for Desdemona proves: it renders him mute, as when he tells her, “I cannot speak enough of this content, / It stops me here, it is too much of joy” (2.1.294–95). The excess of love, its unexpected
power, overcomes him. He dwells in exclusive relation to Desdemona, despite his attempts to uphold his professional role above or against his marriage.

Othello's love provokes a transformation parallel to Cassio's "innovation" from drinking. He watches himself reunite with Desdemona after the tempest with some disbelief: "I prattle out of fashion, and I dote / In mine own comforts" (2.1.205–6). Mocking himself in love, his statement betrays—in a man who claims more comfort with weapons than words—the changes he experiences, even a kind of emasculation, with the words "prattle" and "dote" being overdetermined as female. But his lines betray curiosity about this state, not concern. For even as loving Desdemona might destabilize him, it also transforms him through attachment. He experiences, like Desdemona, the simultaneity of rulership and service in love; he may command, but so does she. Indeed, she is powerful enough to command an emperor, Othello claims, in an image notable for its tangle of equity and hierarchy: "O, the world hath not a sweeter creature," he claims of Desdemona; "she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks" (4.1.180–82). Lying side by side in bed, lover and beloved both experience sovereignty and vulnerability at once.

In loving, Othello feels the interconnection at the base of ethical, if not legal, definitions of personhood. Indeed, his state challenges legal notions of the autonomous self. He is, in legal terms, "voluntarily contracted" in his love, a phrase invoked above in the rulings on drunkenness, but one equally appropriate for the condition of married love in which Othello now engages. He is also, as Coke claims of the drinker, "voluntarius daemon," intoxicated in his condition of loving, surprised at himself. To early modern jurists, such compromised will is criminal; it is a condition to be policed and condemned, as suggested above. In sharp contrast, the play does not uphold strict models of individual action and isolated will. Othello's willingness to embrace incapacity distinguishes him as a sympathetic hero transformed by love.\(^9\) While Iago's claim to uphold his interests at the expense of others makes him culpable, and ultimately criminal—his attack on "obsequious bondage" (1.1.45), and his desire "to serve [his] turn upon" (1.1.41) Othello, is sinister—in opening himself to love of another, Othello experiences an acute form of such connectedness. In possessing each other, Desdemona and Othello love with the shattering power of true union, the kind of addictive relation analyzed in earlier chapters of this project. They challenge and overturn the relations that formerly held them—to family, to nation, to identity. No longer self-possessed, they are connected to, devoted to, each other. Iago, by contrast, celebrates those isolated actors who "keep yet their hearts attending on themselves" (1.1.50), a formula that ultimately demonstrates the dangers of strict responsibility, a legal defense of the hyper will.

Other characters comment on Othello's devotion and his diminished self-possession. Cassio calls Desdemona "our great captain's captain" (2.1.74), and cynical Iago proclaims a version of this as well: "Our general's wife is now the general . . . for he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark and denotement of her parts and graces" (2.3.309–13). Iago's description of a devotion so overpowering as to undo someone, to unseat them from government of others and themselves, offers a precise account of the transformative, ravishing addiction this project has traced so far. He expands, in soliloquy, saying, "His soul is so enfeated to her love / That she may make, unmake, do what she list" (2.3.340–41). Iago's characterizations are not laudatory; he does not admire Othello's ability to transform himself. Yet part of the reason for Iago's sinister success, as Paul Cefalu's analysis illuminates, lies in his uncanny ability to read other people's minds, in this case Othello's experience of a transporting addiction that he will soon transform to a liability.

In loss Othello most fully articulates the addictive nature of his love. Lamenting Desdemona's alleged betrayal, Othello cries that he could have endured "captive," living in "poverty," and even shame and humiliation, standing as the "fixed figure for a time of scorn" (4.2.51, 52, 53), but it is torture and death to be tormented "there where I have garnered up my heart, / Where either I must live or bear no life" (4.2.58–59). Connection to his wife becomes life and death; he no longer exists as an independent being, he cannot serve the state with "all [his] heart" as he claims in the opening. It is being wrenched away from her, and experiencing the pain of being "discarded" (4.2.61), that undoes him. His devotion to her and commitment to their marriage has transformed him to a degree that he cannot exist without it. He defines himself in relation to her; his love for her is "the fountain from the which my current runs / Or else dries up" (4.2.60–61). Indeed, as he claims at the play's ending, Desdemona has become the world. He defines value entirely in relation to her, a point he expresses through a troubling image of trafficking: "Had she been true, / If heaven would make me another world / Of one entire and perfect chrysolite, / I'd not have sold her for it" (5.2.139–42). This image on her impassible value is also an image of possession—he imagines owning his wife and therefore being free to sell her. As striking as this image might be—not least because Othello has experienced, as other Venetians have not, the human trafficking of being "sold to slavery" and of "redemption hence" (1.3.139)—it deeply contrasts with his view of their relationship elsewhere in the play.
Othello might attempt, as he does here, to assert possessive control over Desdemona (“O curse of marriage / That we can call these delicate creatures ours”; 3.3.272–73). But he more frequently and convincingly speaks of their mutual dependency or his own possession by her: “perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee!” (3.3.90–91). He, like Olivia, is caught in love, giving voice to the strong feelings hinted at but not fully realized from the play’s opening scenes, when Othello was more reluctant to admit their presence. This vulnerability in love, this staging of the addict’s deep attachment, shapes Othello as a hero, but it also, as the next section explores, proves his undoing.

Othello’s Possession

Possessing another, and being possessed in turn, can prove a violent process. Othello stages this violence by demonstrating possession to be both ownership and entrapment. The very openness to attachment that fuels addictive love also leaves Othello vulnerable—in the horrifying course of act 3, scene 3—to control by Iago. As the play reveals through the circulation of the handkerchief, possessions—and possessive relations—are vulnerable to manipulation and loss. If this handkerchief had been woven by a “charmer” as a gift to “subdue” another (4.3.59, 61), it becomes, as Paul Yachnin argues, “a possession that possesses the possessor.” This formulation helps illuminate the peculiar condition of Othello: far from offering the hero magical power, possessions—a handkerchief, a love, a military unit—instead serve as a means for others to control him.

If the previous section tracked Othello’s transformation through love—the release of agentive selfhood in marriage—this section turns to his much more obvious transformation in the play, as he changes in relation to Iago. As with Falstaff, when faced with the alleged failure of his primary addicted relation, Othello develops another addiction in its place. He moves from his devoted attachment to Desdemona toward an irrational, shattering, destructive attachment to Iago, pledging himself and in so doing, opening himself to Iago’s emotional world. They become partners, exchanging oaths: “I am bound to thee forever” (3.3.217) he tells Iago, prompted by Iago’s pronunciation of love: “I humbly do beseech you of your pardon / For too much loving you” (3.3.215–16).

How is it Othello is so vulnerable to Iago? How does he become “perplexed in the extreme” (5.2.344), as he puts it? This question haunts us, as critics, viewers, and readers. One answer lies in the poisonous theater that Othello imbibes over the course of act 3, scene 3. As with Cassio’s “one cup,” so too with Othello: what had been drink for Cassio is strong emotion prompted by insinuations and allegations with Othello. After one short exchange, in which Iago insinuates Desdemona’s infidelity, Iago boasts, “The Moor already changes with my poison” (3.3.328); his “poisons” will “burn like the mines of sulphur” (3.3.329–32) and engender sleeplessness: “Nor poppy nor mandragora / Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world / Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep / Which thou owedst yesterday” (3.3.334–37). “Work on, / My medicine, work!” (4.1.44–45), Iago urges as Othello falls into a trance. This poison is, certainly, jealousy, and here Leo Africanus’s A geographical historie of Africa offers one context for understanding Othello’s potential responsiveness to such a toxin. In now-familiar passages cited for their relevance for Shakespeare’s play, Africanus chronicles the addiction of jealousy prominent in regions of the continent. Residents of Delgumua are, for example, exceedingly “addicted to jalousie.”

“No nation,” he writes in his general introduction, “in the world is so subject unto jealousy; for they will rather leese their lives, then put up any disgrace in the behalfe of their women.”

Yet if this poison is jealousy, it is not Othello but Iago who is dominated by the emotion, as Mary Floyd-Wilson has argued. Jealousy is, initially, anathema to Othello, as Desdemona herself says: “my noble Moor / Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness / As jealous creatures are” (3.4.26–28); “the sun where he was born,” she claims, “drew all such humours from him” (3.4.30–31). It is only with extraordinary baiting, with outright invention and lies, that Othello comes to feel jealousy at all. His entry into jealousy thus challenges Emilia’s theory, offered to the dumbfounded Desdemona as she reels from Othello’s insistent call for the handkerchief: “jealous souls,” she says, are “jealous for they’re jealous. It is a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself” (3.4.159–62). The circuit of Othello’s jealousy is not as precisely hermetic as Emilia suggests, since her own husband helped with the begetting of it. But the possession of jealousy, like Yachnin’s formulation of the handkerchief, is nonetheless circular: it possesses the possessor. This is, of course, not the case with Othello, as the audience knows. Jealousy was not born of itself but born of Iago, becoming Othello’s dominant, defining emotion only after he transfers his loyalty to this newfound partner.

If jealousy is the motivating emotion and outcome of Othello’s union with Iago, jealousy does not explain why Othello transfers his loyalty to Iago in the first place. Instead, I would argue, it is Iago’s attack on the nature of
Othello’s addiction that unravels him. Iago exposes Othello’s marriage to be a form of cruel optimism, whereby “the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you initially,” in Berlant’s formulation rehearsed earlier in this project.66 For it is precisely when Iago insinuates Desdemona’s deceitfulness and insincerity that Othello’s addiction transforms. Asserting one last strong defense against jealousy (“I’ll see before I doubt”; 3.3.193), Othello tells Iago twenty-five lines later, “I am bound to thee for ever” (3.3.217). In the intervening exchange Iago contrasts Othello’s “free and noble nature” filled with “self-bounty” (3.3.202–3) to Desdemona’s “pranks,” which she and other Venetian women “dare not show their husbands” (3.3.205–6). Such women keep, he claims, their actions “unknown” (3.3.207). Desdemona, he argues, has already proved insincere: “she did deceive her father, marrying you” (3.3.209).

Iago’s nationalistic argument, carefully analyzed by Emily Bartels and others, preys upon Othello as an outsider, unfamiliar with the “country disposition” (3.3.204) of Venetian women. Iago intimates, and goes on to elaborate, an incendiary critique of their marriage, describing as “unnatural” (3.3.237) Desdemona’s failure to marry men of “her own clime, complexion and degree” (3.3.234). If Othello successfully defended himself against such arguments in Venice, the difference now is that Iago attacks not Othello but Desdemona: it is her fidelity to Othello, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually, that Iago calls into question. “Iago compels Othello,” Andrew Sisson writes, “to become aware that his marriage depends upon his partnership with a virtue that cannot be known, displayed, judged, or valued in a way that would satisfy him of its reality.”67 In rephrasing her as deceitful, claiming that she hides her actions and even her feelings, Iago troubles and undoes the basis of Othello’s attachment, a devotional relationship that the hero embraced.

In deeming Desdemona a false idol, Iago shatters Othello’s faith. He insinuates that the match that Othello willingly entered, at the expense of his liberty, never existed. It is a sign of Othello’s addictive capacity that he transforms himself so violently and utterly in relation to Iago—it is a sign, precisely, of his relational, devotional abilities, in sharp contrast to Iago himself, the unbending force of will. Iago distains devotion and service; he never will, he claims, “wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at” (1.1.63–64). He shuns intimate relations, mocking those figures who experience love and savoring their vulnerability to his machinations. He is, as many critics have noted, an actor—he is a theatrical Vice figure, a Machiavel combining staging and imaginative fancy as a theater director might. If this project began by teasing out the intimate relation of the actor and the addict, as two figures who pledge and transform themselves in relation to another, Othello pushes on this connection to the point of undoing it, staging instead their opposition. For even as Iago pledges himself to Othello, taking an oath to serve him faithfully, we know his pledge is an act. A manipulation, it stands as the worrying form of theater as deception and counterfeiting asserted by writers like Prynne. Othello, by contrast, is the addict: he takes a sincere vow, pledging himself and speaking to his commitments: “Now by yond marble heaven / In the due reverence of a sacred vow / I here engage my words” (3.3.453–65). Othello promises Iago to maintain his “compulsive course of “bloody thoughts” (3.3.457, 460), securing their shared pledge through an inverted marriage ceremony.68 This newly established marital relation compels Othello: even as it appears consensual, the audience recognizes it as deception. This second devotional relation—to Iago, to the dominant emotion of jealousy within their relationship—overcomes Othello to the point of undoing all previous attachments. He claims he turns to stone, admitting and yet also seemingly unaware of the stakes of his own transformation: “My heart is turned to stone: I strike it, and it hurts my hand” (4.1.179–80), a phrase that, like Cassio’s deterministic “souls must not be saved,” evokes Calvin and Luther’s writings on the hardened heart untouched by grace.

The very capacities that elevated Othello at the start of the play—the capacity to love, to temper his military life with marital attachment—are now what open him to Iago’s machinations. As a result of this possession—by love, wrath, jealousy, Iago—Othello transforms utterly. He changes to the point that Desdemona claims, “My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him / Were he in favour as in humour altered” (3.4.125–26), while Lodovico exclaims of Othello’s behavior in hitting his wife, “My lord, this would not be believed in Venice / Though I should swear I saw’t” (4.1.124–42). He asks, “Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate / Call all in all sufficient? This the nature / Whom passion could not shake?” (4.1.264–66). This project’s earlier chapters traced the admirable process of addictive change, as a hero emerges out of him or herself. Theorizing the laudable ability to will away one’s own will, this project highlights devotional aspects of service to another. But this chapter instead exposes the environmental strains and threats of addiction: its release leaves one vulnerable to deception and villainy. With Othello, the “speaking to” of addiction, the pledging, occurs within an environment of white Christians who may or may not pledge back. As Ian Smith asks: “Among his white, Christian auditors, whom can he trust to tell his story or speak of
him in a balanced way.” Pulling away from the addictive relation that had offered him life outside of public definitions and expectations, Othello commits himself, pledges himself, to Iago—but his supposed exercise of will is compromised. Poisoned and possessed, Othello lacks the ability to offer meaningful consent. Indeed, he no longer demonstrates mens rea required to be fully responsible. In the end, even Othello does not recognize himself, ending the play in the past tense, speaking as “he that was Othello? Here I am” (5.2.281).

**Diminished Responsibility**

In *Othello*, who is responsible? Desdemona says “nobody. I myself” (5.2.122). But her answer claims excessive, inappropriate responsibility, even as she also protests “a guiltless death I die” (5.2.121). In her refusal to mete out blame, Desdemona brings the question of responsibility to the fore. For the most obvious answer to Emilia’s question—“Who hath done / This deed?” (5.2.121-22)—is also an inadequate one: if it is obviously not Desdemona, neither is it clearly Othello. Through diminished capacity, Othello’s act of murder, like Cassio’s drunken bawling, simultaneously is and is not his own. In the play’s early scene of drunkenness, Othello attempts to assert a model of strict responsibility, condemning Cassio entirely. But it is precisely this strict resolution—in upholding radical responsibility for Cassio, who is depicted, in part, as vulnerable to forces greater than himself—that helps produce the play’s tragedy. Dismissing his lieutenant, failing to recognize the mitigating circumstances and compromised will at issue in the episode, Othello leaves himself open to the same process of manipulation that felled Cassio. The play thus doubles the audience’s awareness of the law’s strict responsibility as an inadequate response: the audience, throughout, sees that the charge of drunken bawling unjustly falls on an incapacitated man; so too with Othello, who is possessed at the prompting and design of Iago.

Othello wrestles with this insight on mitigated responsibility. He understands himself as both externally and internally compelled, but he initially claims his action as purely his own: “‘Twas I that killed her” (5.2.128), “I did proceed upon just grounds” (5.2.136). He takes full responsibility and even deems himself a fool—“O fool, fool, fool!” (5.2.321)—thus echoing Cassio, who claims of himself, “to be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange!” (2.3.300-302). In their admitted guilt, both men reinforce the link of folly with criminality in the legal ruling of *Reniger v. Feguson* (1551): because the drinker’s “ignorance was occasioned by his own act and folly, and he might have avoided it, he shall not be privileged thereby.” In such folly, Cassio and Othello were for “a time non compos mentis” yet as with the drunken man in *Beverley’s Case* (1603), such a condition “does not extenuate his act or offence.” Othello, like Cassio, should have been able to choose differently, for as Aristotle reasons, “the moving principle is in the man himself, since he had the power of not getting drunk,” or impassioned, or jealous.

Yet the play’s final recognition scene insists not on guilt but on diminished responsibility for both Cassio and Othello. Insight into their mitigating circumstances comes in tandem. First Othello learns of his manipulation at the hands of Iago, turning to the heavens for retribution against the perpetrator of events: “are there no stones in heaven / But what serves for thunder?” (5.2.232-33). He finds himself immediately undone, unrecognizable, losing all of the qualities formerly precious to his sense of self: “Let it go all,” he proclaims, in lines that signal the belatedness of his own death. “Who can control his fate?” (5.2.244, 263), he asks, turning to the heavens again, now not for intervention but explanation. He understands himself as ultimately possessed, owned by another—be it Iago, fate, Desdemona, or the passionate part of himself: “O cursed, cursed slave!” (5.2.274). Then Cassio learns of his own manipulation: he was led into drinking, and goaded into fighting, by Iago and Roderigo. Cassio’s drunken criminality now emerges as Iago’s. Far from enduring the law’s strict sentence, Cassio ends ruling Cyprus, absolved of any charges and promoted in the process.

Othello and Cassio thus stand in internalized relation to their own deeds, the agency behind their criminal action dispersed. When Cassio recounts Roderigo’s letter, stating how Iago “made him [Roderigo] / Brave me upon the watch, whereon it came / That I was cast” (5.2.323-35), he draws attention to precisely such dispersed agency, as the action moves from Iago to Roderigo to Othello as the party responsible for Cassio’s fall. So, too, with Othello, who has “fallen into the practice of a cursed slave” (5.2.289), as Ludovico puts it; Othello can only ask the “demi-devil” why he “hath thus ensnared [his] soul and body” (5.2.298-99). Finally, meditating on the events, Othello deems them “unlucky deeds” (5.2.339); he imagines he has been “wrought” upon by another, and thereby “perplexed in the extreme” (5.2.343-44). Cast out, wrought upon, both Cassio and Othello find their consent compromised, even as Othello seeks punishment and retribution: “Whip
me,” “blow me,” “wash me” he cries to the “devils” he attempts but fails to conjure (5.2.275–78).

How, then, to understand addicted action? If the Herald’s invitation initially frames addiction as a choice, taken up as a temporary inclination, ultimately the play reveals addiction as a form of possession. One is overcome and ravished. Othello’s solution to the question of responsibility, a powerful one, lies in imagining himself as a partial agent, a hand independent of a body or soul: he is “one whose hand, / Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away” (5.2.344–45). “These hands have newly stopped” the life of Desdemona, he claims (5.2.199). He ultimately understands his own actions as self-divided. A portion of his body—his hands—are responsible, and yet even they were led by another. In famous lines, he deems himself both Turk and Venetian, both responsible and vulnerable: “in Aleppo once, / Where a malignant and a turbanned Turk / Beat a Venetian and traduced the state, / I took by th’ throat the circumcised dog / And smote him—thus!” (5.2.350–54). Here Othello condenses the play’s dilemmas around criminal responsibility by externalizing a part of himself in calling it foreign—a Turk—but also malignant, resonant with Iago.63 Othello deems himself culpable for a crime he committed while incapacitated, but he insists that addictive possessions—to the predisposition of jealousy, and to poisonous magic of Iago—overcame him. Thus even in assuming responsibility he also insists, tragically, on his vulnerability, if not innocence.

It is worth recognizing, in ending, how Desdemona displays the same transformative capability as Othello, redefining herself in love, shattering prior attachments, and remaining devoted even to the point of audience frustration at her supposedly meek response to Othello’s violence. She displays what Lauren Berlant calls “nonsovereign relationality,” putting connection above individuality.64 Part of the play’s tragedy lies in the demise of two characters with such equal capacity as addicts. For considered from the vantage point of addictive attachment, Desdemona’s response is anything but passive. Othello’s addiction to Desdemona collapses upon attack; hers never does. If Othello transfers his addiction to another in the face of assaults, she does not. Of course, her devotion might seem pathological, in that it supports the abuse that might accompany such a deep structural commitment. But the lens of early modern addiction invites us to parse, cautiously, the distinction between devotion and pathology. For it is not, I would argue, Desdemona’s loyalty or devotion that’s diseased. The disease comes from Iago and from Othello’s violent, inverse addiction to him. Both heroes, Othello and Desdemona, are compelled as addicts, both are possessed in devotional relation, and this possessive devotional relation might have been to each other. But Othello, as insecure in his attachment as Faustus had been in his, chooses the wrong relationship, and he does so at the expense of the beloved who perfectly mirrors—and in fact sustains, in the face of his failure—his own heroic abilities as an addict.

This argument on Desdemona’s propensity as an addict, in the face of Othello’s failure, might serve as the limit case of addiction. When devotion and attachment lead to violent death, can addiction continue to be called—as I have argued through this project—laudable, heroic, and extraordinary? Applauding the strength of Desdemona’s attachment could resonate with dangerous and familiar arguments counseling loyalty in the face of abuse, self-sacrifice in the name of marital ideologies. Desdemona anticipates, one might argue, the more familiar modern view of addiction as diseased and destructive. But before denouncing such attachment, it is worth pausing to distinguish admirable devotion from its gruesome outcome. In the case of Desdemona, does her death diminish her right to love? In the case of Othello, does his ultimate fall to Iago cheapen his earlier devotion to his new wife? Their devotional attachments offer the play’s strongest challenge to Iago’s hyper-exercise of the will. Demonstrating “nonsovereign relationality as the foundational quality of being in common,” they expose a mode of loving worthy of admiration, even in its demise.65 Yoking incapacity and sympathy, devotion and humanity, the play challenges early modern legal emphasis on strict responsibility. More than this, the play upholds—even in its deadly outcome—a model of addiction. Othello and Desdemona meet heartbreaking, tragic ends, but their capacities to release themselves into love, and their willingness to relinquish the will, hold the potential to end otherwise. It is Iago who—in his counterfeit attachments, and his failure to connect—speaks to the inhumanity of those who strive never to addict themselves at all. Iago and Othello, in their oppositional stances to attachment, expose how the exercise of the will—the autonomy and self-possession so lauded in legal rulings—can come at the expense of another, more related model of living, one based in devotion and addiction.
Notes


2. Ibid.

3. William Pryme, Histrio-mastix. The players scouer, or, actori tragedy, divided into two parts (London, 1632), 617, 325.


6. Ibid., s.v. "devote, v." See especially definition 2, "To give up, addict, apply zealously or exclusively."

7. Ibid., s.v. "devotion, n.," definition II, 5.

8. Ibid., s.v. "devoted, adj.," definition 2a.


14. There are direct references to addictive states, such as Olivia to melancholy and Falstaff to sack, but as Pollard reveals in Drugs and Theatre, theater stages drugging in a variety of forms, from the use of actual drugs such as poppy and mandragora to more symbolic engagements.

15. I use the masculine pronoun here, where I would otherwise use various inclusive pronouns, because the early modern actor on the public stage was presumed to be male.


24. Thus, as compelling as a study of addictive gaming, swearing, tobacco use, and/or hunting might be, the connection of the term “addict” with these activities is less frequent than for faith, love, and drinking.


INTRODUCTION


15. Ibid., 224.

16. Levine, "Discovery of Addiction," 144.

17. Ibid., 148.


20. Of course, it is important to acknowledge that physicians are far from unified in naming the cause of addiction. While the dominant medical narrative on addiction stresses the shift in understanding from vice to disease, as traced above, there has also been resistance to medicalization. Caught between biological determinism and individual free will as two ways of thinking about the issue, physicians often refer to both poles in treating addiction.


25. See the study of Nasir H. Naqui, David Rudrauf, Hanna Damasio, and Antoine Bechara, "Damage to the Insula Disrupts Addiction to Cigarette Smoking," *Science*, new series, 315. no. 5811 (Jan. 26, 2007), 331–34, which investigates the effect of brain lesions on drug addiction. The researchers found that smokers with brain damage involving the insula—a region in the brain linked to emotion and feelings, as well as to conscious urges—quit smoking easily, immediately, and without relapse. Viewing these neurobiological studies from a historical vantage point, we might say that modern research into addiction over the course of the last two centuries has become increasingly internalized, as perception of the phenomenon has shifted from medical psychology to brain chemistry. It is no longer a social disease of a culture, or even an individual, but instead a pathologized condition of a portion of an organ. For a response to such medicalization, see Timothy A. Hickman, who brings a historian’s skill to analyzing and contextualizing the new “brain science” of addiction in "Target America: Visual Culture, Neuroimaging, and the ‘Pilfered Brain’ Theory of Addiction," *Past and Present* 222 no. 69 (2014): 207–26.


28. Ibid., 4.


33. Ibid.


36. Joyce, The Unite and Scyme of the Olde Chirche (Antwerp, 1543), 6v.
37. John Bale, The seconde part of the Image of both churches after the most wonderfull and heauenly Reuolution of Sainct Iohan the Evangelist (Antwerp, c.1545), 7v, 6v.
39. Philip Nicolls, The copie of a letter sente to one maister Chrispyne chanon of Exceter for that he denied ye scripture to be the tychie stone or triall of al other doctrines (London, [1548?]), 3r.
40. John Jewel, "An Homilie of good worke. And first of Fasting," in The seconde tome of homilies of such matters as were promisde, and instituted in the former part of homilies. Set out by the authourite of the Queenes Maiestie: and to be red in every parochie church agreeably (London, 1571), 174.
42. Barnabe Googe, "Capricornus, the tenth Book," in The zodiacke of life written by the godly and seauld poet Marcellus Pallingensius stellatus, wherein are contenied twelue bookees whollye the hauynous cromes [and] wicked vices of our corrupt natur: and plainely declaring the pleasant and perfite pathway unto eternall lyfe (London, 1569), NNiii. As Chapter 1 discusses in more detail, translations of Latin and continental texts include the terms "addict" and "addiction" either as a direct translation of the Latin original or as a perceived cognate for the French words for dedication and attachment. Thus, in the 1561 translation of Philip Melanchthon's A famous and godly history from Latin into English, Henry Bennet Callesian employs the term "addict" as a direct translation of the original Latin, writing how the believers "addict them selves to the true." Philipp Melanchthon, A famous and godly history containing the lyves and (in the acts of three renowned reformers of the Christi[n] Church, Martine Luther, Iohn Calvyn and Huldriche Zwingius, . . . Newly Englished by Henry Benet Callesian (London, 1561), n.p.
43. Thomas Rogers, Of the imitation of Christ, three, both for wisdome, and godlines, most excellent booke; made 170 yeares since by one Thomas of Kemps, and for the worshines thereof oft since translated out of Latine into sondrie language (London, 1580), 70, 191.
44. Donald Lupton, "The glory of their times. Or, The lives of ye proueintie fathers (London, 1640), 169.
46. Ibid., 230.
47. Guglielmo Gratarolo, A direction for the health of Magistrates and Students... Written in Latin by Guglielmo Gratarolinus, and Englished, by T. N. (1574), n.p.
48. John Huarte, The examination of mens with (1594), 8r. See also Levinus Lemnius, The sanctuarie of salvation, helmes of health, and mirror of modestie and good maners (London, 1592), and The haven of pleasure containing a freemans felicite, and a true direction how to live well, by I. T. (London, 1597).
49. Lancetl Andrewes, A Sermon Preached Before His Maiestie at Whithall the fifth of November last 1617, (London, 1618), 21; see also CXCVI sermons by the Right Honorable and Reverend Father in God, Lancetl Andrewes, late Lord Bishop of Winchester (London, 1619), 984.
50. Roger Edgeworth, "The 8th treatise or sermon," in Sermons very fruitful, godly, and learned, preached and sette forth by Mraster Roger Edgeworth (London, 1557), Bbbb.
51. William Baldwin, "The Spouse to the Younglyges, xvi," in The cancturies or balades of Solomon, phrasebyke declared in English metres (London: William Baldwin, 1549), n.p. Baldwin's poem draws on the Song of Solomon and references the Church as the Spouse, speaking to its members.

54. Desiderius Erasmus, "The paraphrase of Erasmus upon the Epistle of S. Paulus to Titus," in The secondo tome or volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus upon the New Testament containing the epistles of S. Paul, and other the Apostles (London, 1549), EEEIII.
55. Thomas Bilson, The true difference betweene Christian subjection and unchristian rebellion wherein the princes lawfull power to command for truth, and indepersible right to heare the sword are defended against the Popes censures and the Lestissose sophismes (London, 1588), 459; William Charke, A treatise against the Defense of the censure, given upon the bookes of W. Charke and Meredyth Hamner, by an unknowne popish traytor in maintenance of the seditious challenge of Edmond Campion (London, 1586), 320.
56. John Foxe, Acts and monuments of masters most speciall and memorabe, happening in the Church with an universall history of the same. . . . Newly revised and recorde, partly also augmente, and now the fourth time agayne published, vol. 1 (London, 1583), 20, 101.
57. Ibid., 566.
58. John Jewel, "An Homilie against glutonye and drunkenness," in The second tome of homilies of such matters as were promisde, and instituted in the former part of homilies. Set out by the authourite of the Queenes Maiestie: and to be red in every parochie church agreeably (London, 1573), 203.
59. Henry VIII, A glasse of the trute (London, 1532), 8r.
61. Ingram, "Reformation of Manners," 68. The work of Margaret Spufford provides a corrective to overemphasis on innovation: "To think or to imply that such social control was new shows a certain shortness of historical perspective on the part of the historians concerned." "Puritanism and Social Control," in Order and Disorder in Early Modern England, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 17.
62. Wrightson, Puritan Reformation of Manners, 18.
64. "Early medieval writers and their patristic predecessors," Hugh Magennis notes in his

72. John Downman, Fourte treatises tending to dissuade all Christians from foregoing no less hainly than common idlers: namely the abuses of swearing, drunkenness, whoredom, and briebrerie (London, 1609), 83. Samuel Ward, In Wee to Drunkards: A sermon by Samuel Ward, preacher of Ipswich (London: A. Math for John Marriott, 1622), offers another such attack on drunkenness: “A drinker goes, as a fool to the stocks and an ox to the slaughterhouse, having no power to withstand the temptation, but in hee goes with him to the tilting house, not considering that the Chambers are the Chambers of death; and the guests, the guests of death; and there hee continues as one bewitcht or conjured in a spell out of which he returns not til he hath emptied his purse of money, his head of reason, and his heart of all his former seeming grace” (19). The tavern holds a necromantic power over customers, luring them with a rival spirit away from pious living. The anonymous author(s) of A looking glasse for drunkards, Or, the hunting of drunkenness: Wherein drunkards are vumasked to the view of the world. Very convenient and useful for all people to ruminative on in this drunken age (London, M. Flesher for F. C(joleus), 1627) similarly advises readers to “take heed of haunting taverns, inns, and alehouses which are the occasions of drunkenness, for whosoever will avoid the sinne must avoid the occasions which lead thereunto in: it may be truly said, the way to the alehouse is the drunkards path” (ch. 3), while Robert Harris, Drunkard’s Cup (1639), writes, “Come to a mans house, and where is hee? His wife knowes not; ask the servants, they know nor; when will he be home? They cannot show you: yet they can, but they blush to speak; forsooth the matter is this: there’s his house, but his dwelling is at the Alehouse, and when all his money is spent” (18).

73. William Perkins, A godly and learned exhortation or exposition or sermon delivered to the first chapter of the Revelation (1593), 227; Prynce, Historia-mastica, act 7, scene 3.

74. In the period between 1608 and 1641, eighteen tracts appeared on the topic of drunkenness. These tracts were reprinted multiple times, with writings by Henry Smith, Robert Harris, Samuel Ward, and Richard Younge appearing every few years. These pamphlets either preach against drunkenness along with other vices, or they single it out for particular consideration, dedicating an entire sermon or pamphlet to the topic.


82. Cook, Alcohol, Addiction, and Christian Ethics, xii.
85. Thomas D’Urfey, *Wits and Mirth: Pills to Purge Malaria,* vol. 6 (London, 1720), 184. On the term “merry” as a synonym for “drunk,” see, for example, the following court case: Nehemiah Brett, as described by William Blindell of Little Crosby, went “merry to bed” one night and was found dead the next morning, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire,* ed. E. J. Hance and T. N. Norton, vol. 36 (Liverpool: Adam Holden, 1889), from Lancashire Mortuary Letters 1666–1672, no. 37.
87. William Pryne, *Healthes Sicknesse. Or a compendious and briefe discourse proving the drinking and pledging of Healths, to be Sinfull, and utterly Unlawfull unto Christians* (London: Augustine Mathewes 1628), 45. The concept of “companion,” invoked by Pryne, proves multiple and various, as Phil Withington reveals in “Company and Sociability in Early Modern England”: one’s association with company—through dedication to a particular community—might offer both an exercise in self-definition and a mode of implication.

98. Smyth, introduction to Smyth, Pleasing Sinne, xv. Smyth frames his collection around a set of questions that remain crucial for understanding early modern alcohol culture: “Was alcohol a source of health, or illness? A force for social bonding, or a catalyst for disorder and rebellion? A marker of social grace, or a sign of debasement?” Introduction to Smyth, Pleasing Sinne, viii–x, xiv.


103. In its study of excess with achievement, this project participates, as Richards puts it in her study of discretion, in the recent reassessment of what has long been viewed as the opposition between regulation and excess. As she argues, "The preoccupation with restraint and excess has left the conviviality of moderate intoxication, light-headedness, and its rhetorical practice—the witty adaptation of sayings—overlooked and undervalued" ("Health, Intoxication, and Civil Conversation," 172).

104. Henry Crosse, Vertues common-wealth: or The high-way to honour Wherein is discovered (London, 1609), Tsr.


106. George Benson, Sermon at Paulus Cross (London, 1609), 73; Thomas Cooper, The Churches Deliverance (London, 1609), 73. See also John Boys, The autumne part from the twelfth Sundy (London, 1613), who claims "drunkeanness a point of good fellowship," 163.

107. I do not seek to locate "addicts" in the archives. Instead, I concur with Withington, in "Introduction: Cultures of Intoxication," Past and Present 222 no. 50 (2004), 9–33, when he writes of the challenge of tracking drunkenness as a phenomenon: "The 'ecstasies' of most people remain far beyond the historical record and, by their very nature, are notoriously difficult to recollect and convey" (11).


CHAPTER I


1. Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, ed. Michael Keefer (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2007), prologue, lines 15–16. Hereafter cited above, with the standard act, scene, and line divisions. All citations are to this edition unless otherwise noted. Keefer prints the A text (although he occasionally prefers and prints the B text reading of a speech) on the grounds that it is more authentic, whereas the B text shows signs of censorship and corruption. This chapter follows
Shakespearean Comedy," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 no. 2 (Summer 2000): 127–53. Alternatively see Traub, who, in *Desire and Anxiety*, explores Falstaff as the rejected mother that Hal discards.

46. Montaigne, as discussed above, describes what Falstaff experiences: a seized will, a sense of losing himself in relation. It is worth noting, however, that Montaigne’s account of reciprocal friendship concludes with a mirror image: the speaker, having admitted to his own incapacity, then describes how friendship affects his partner, “which likewise having seized all his will, brought it to loose and plunge it selfe in mine, with a mutuall greedinesse, and with a semblable concurrence.” Montaigne, *Essays*, 91.

47. Hal, like his father, represents a “lonely, other-directed, and singularly burdened monarchical being” (Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 180).

48. As he says to Poins after his jest with Francis the drawer, “I am now of all humours that have showed themselves humours since the old days of Goodman Adam to the pupal age of this present twelve o’clock at midnight” (*Henry IV*, 2.4, 90–94). He boasts of his own range, but as Kastan’s gloss also suggests, he mists himself to his audiences: “I will fit myself to all humours: I will game with a gamester, drink with a drunkard, be civil with a citizen, fight with a swaggerer, and drab with a whore-master” (1.3.125–38), as John Cooke’s character Spendall puts it in *Green’s To Quoque*, in *A Select Collection of Old Plays*, ed. Robert Dodalay, Isaac Reed, and Octavious Gilchrist, vol. 7 (London, 1825), 2–98.

49. On King Henry IV’s use of such economic and transactional language see Lemon, *Treason by Words*, 52–78.

50. David Schalkwyk writes, a “loyal servant,” in “service,” is defined as “a commingling of affection and structure, devotion and self-interest, abandon and control” (*Shakespeare, Love and Service*, 168, 172).


57. Ibid., 41–42; with thanks to Barbara Mello for drawing my attention to this point.

### CHAPTER 4


2. Louis C. Charland purrs it this way: “Addicts display agency. However, agency of this sort is not the same as capacity. For our purposes ‘capacity’ will be understood to mean decision-making capacity…” *Decision-Making Capacity and Responsibility in Addiction*, ed. Jeffrey Polan and George Graham (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 147. See also Steven J. Morse, *Addiction and Criminal Responsibility*, in Poland and Graham, *Addiction and Responsibility*, 139–200.

3. Vallerde, *Distract or the Will*.


5. Africanus, *A geographical historie of Africa*, book 2, n.p.: “Summary of Religions,” 77, 377. He also claims that people from Zanzibar are “addicted to sorcery and witchcraft.” people from Bissar and Media in Ethiopia are “addicted to enchantments, witchcrafts, and all kind of abominable sorceries,” and dwellers in the Arabian gulf are “addicted unto Magick and enchantments, and doe bring to passe matters incredible” (“Certain Answers,” 271, 41, 47).

6. On Othello’s jealousy, see Mary Floyd-Wilson, who writes that “ironically, and counter intuitively for modern readers, Othello is undone by his attachment to constancy rather than by barbarous mutability,” *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151; and Rebecca Olson, who writes, “In *Othello*, however, Shakespeare seems to go out of his way to establish that the Moor Othello is not predisposed to jealousy,” “‘Too Gentle’: Jealousy and Class in *Othello*,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 15 no. 1 (Winter 2015): 6.


21. Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Pleadings, series 1, Elizabeth I; C/2/Eliz/B/37/1. In the case of Thomas Hockney of Hungerford vs. Nicholas Muntayne of Bradford, the accusation concerned "making petitioner's servant drunk at Chippingham and obtaining from him keneys and money" (Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Early Proceedings, C/22/183 c.1493-1500). In a case between Julian Mermean vs. John Bayly, the charge is "making petitioner's servant drunk and seizing a pack of her goods at Welles" (C/25/85, c.1645-1651). One could also, as a 1538-44 case indicates, be prosecuted as a drunken curate (C/606/24).

22. Incidents of drunkenness occasionally appear in session records; drunkenness was prosecuted through ex officio and ecclesiastical courts before the passage of the 1668 act. In the Caernarvonshire Quarter Sessions records, the charge first appears in a 1711 letter, mentioning articles laid against Rhys Thomas ap Gwilym as "a common drunkard, dizer and carder, keeper of disorder and rnule in his house" (XQ/S/171/21; February, 7, 1709-10). In records from Chester between 1768 and 1770, the first charge of "common drunkard and hauntor of Ale houses" appears in 1619 (E3, D.24, S. Middlewich, 20 April, 11 Jan. 1619, in Quarter Sessions Records...for the County Palatine of Chester, 1559-1716, ed. J. H. E. Bennett and J. C. Dewhurst (Cheshire: Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1940). In Worcestershire, the first indictment is in 1607, of "George Harris of Ombersley" as a "common Drunkard" (XIV/137/9) two years later, "Edward Field of Kings Norton Gentleman" was indicted for "drunkenness" (LXXIII/37/130), in Worcestershire County Records. Division 1: Documents relating to Quarter Sessions. Calendar of the Quarter Sessions Papers, vol. 1, 1551-1648, ed. J. W. Willis Bund (Worcester: Eben. Baylis and Son, 1906).


27. Few traces exist of this 1566 bill, other than references to The House of Commons Journals, noting that it was read on November 30 and committed on December 6.

28. SPD 1/38/43:

Bill against excessive and common drunkenness

Flearnoor as the saide vice of drunkenness is not onle of yt selfe a vile and de-

testable thing in the abuse of godl's good benetfits whereby that is wasted by a few

in exence, which being moderately used would nourish and satiase many and the

saide drunken persone (the most part of them beeing of the worst and inferior sorte

of people) not only consume thence substance on occasion that often tymes dyres

tbem to unlawful shift, and become more like brutte beast then reasonable
creatures. But also out of the same vice do spring divers other new misteries within the comon weelthe, as loose and wanton belief or swearing and blasphemyne the name of almighty God, Quarrelless fightinge O bloodshed, manslaughter, yea and some tymes willfull and professd murder, and divers other grovose cnymes and enormyres, and for that the saide sine doth greate abonde in some places of this Realme, to the grete displeasure of almyshtie God. For as it is rather supposed because by no lawe alreadie established, the temporall magistrat haue autoritie to correct the saide offence for avoiding of the fowle and common sinne of drunkenness be it therefore ordeyned and Inacted by the Queenes moste excellent majestie the Lorde Spiritual and temporall and the commons in this present parlament assembled, and by the authoritie of the Same that evrie person and persons whiche shall be founde to be a comon drunkearde by offoorses fallinge into the saide vice, shall be required of presented indyed and fined in case of a common Barretor and receive suche punishment as a comon Barretor by the Lawes and statues of this Realme.

The first version was read on February 17, 1585, and then again on October 31, 1601.

29. The Journals of all the Parliaments of Queen Elizabeth, both of the House of Lords and House of Commons, compiled by Sir Simonds D’Ewes of Stow-Hall in the County of Suffolk, revised and published by Paul Bowes, of the Middle-Temple, London (London: John Stakkey, 1682), 629. The bill was heavily debated in both houses of parliament. The 1584–85 version was read in the House of Commons on October 31, then read again on November 3, when it went to committee. The bill was revised, and then a new version was read to the House of Commons by Dr. James the next day, November 4 or 5. This revised bill now circulated under its new title, “bill against drunkards and common haunters of Alehouses and Taverns.” This bill, read for a second time and committed on November 7, and then was shown by William Wray on November 28 and engrossed. The bill was then read in the House of Lords, for the first time on December 3 and for the second time on December 4. See T. E. Hartley, ed., Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth, vol. 1, 1553–1603 (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 328–29.

30. Journals of all the Parliaments of Queen Elizabeth, 603, 633, 616.

31. The Statutes at Large, from the First Year of King James the First to the Tenth Year of the Reign of King William the Third... Volume the Third (London, 1780), 68.

32. Journals of all the Parliaments of Queen Elizabeth, from the debate about the bill on swearing, with Gascoign’s-operative on justices of the peace recorded, 660–61.

33. Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons in 1620 and 1621, Collected by a Member of that House. In Two Volumes, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1766), 332: Thursday 3 March 1620. “Drunkenness. Mr. Cary. To have the committee define a Drunkard... Sir Edw. Warden: to have drunkenness defined. Sir George Moore: to have the words, ‘a common haunter of tri- pling houses,’ added, instead of the word ‘Drunkard.’”


36. Downman, Four treatises, 79.

37. Ibid., 88.


39. Downman, Four treatises, 88.

40. Ibid.

41. While concurring with legislators before him that a drunken person contracts his madness voluntarily, Hale amended this judgment with two conditions, one of which being “that although the simplex phrenzy occasioned immediately by drunkenness, not excepted in criminals, yet if by one or more such practices, an habitual or fixed phrenzy be caused, though this madness be contracted by the will and will of the party, yet this habitual and fixed phrenzy thereby caused puts the man into the same condition in relation to crimes, as if the same was contracted involuntarily at first.” Sir Matthew Hale, Historia placentororum coronae: The History of the Pleas of the Crown, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: R. H. Small, 1847), 32. Blackstone amplified this point when he wrote, more generally, “that a vicious will without a vicious act is no civil crime, and on the other hand, an unwarrantable act without a vicious will is no crime at all” (Commentaries on the Laws of England, 21). See also Parliament of Victoria Law Reform Committee, Criminal Liability for Self-Induced Intoxication (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1999), 31.


44. These phrases come from Reniger v. Feeogosa, Blackstone, Coke, and Bacon, which are cited above.


46. On Cassio’s military experience, see Andrew Sisson, "Othello and the Unweaponed City," Shakespeare Quarterly 66 no. 2 (Summer 2015): 157–66, in which he illuminates Cassio as the “citizen-soldier who, unlike the professional, moves seamlessly between peace-time and war-time occupations” (159).

47. Trotter, Essay in Medical, Philosophical, and Chemical, on Drunkenness.

48. This argument would be familiar to Shakespeare’s audience, since it was circulating freely in contemporary medical and godly pamphlets on drinking. As surveyed in Chapter 3, excessive drinking was linked to a range of diseases, including “distillations, coughs, runnings of the nose, Apoplexies, Palsies, etc.” Leonard Lessius, Hypostasis: or, the right course of preserving Life and Health unto extreme old age (Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1654), 351.


50. In "The Merry Hostess," for example, the speaker cries, "Here’s a health to all English men who like ale," in contrast to "the bonny Scots" who enjoy merely their "stale ale." See also 273: “Match me this Wedding. Or, a health that was drunkne in Sider and Perrie. And good strong beere to, which did make the lads merry. To a new couth tune," and 276: "The merry Hostess: On, / a pretty new ditty, composed by an hostess that lives in the City: / to wrong such an Hostess were a great pity, / by reason she caused this pretty new Drity, / to the tune of Buff Coat has no fellow." Roxburghs Ballads, vol. 1, British Library Rox L.1–279.

51. On these substances as sleep alices, see Angelus Sala, Opiologia: or, A treatise concerning the nature, properties, true preparation and safe use and administration of opium, trans. Thomas Brentor (London: Nicholas Okes, 1658); Thomas Elyot, Of the knowledge which maketh a wise man (London, 1533); Thomas Twyne, The shoemaster, or teacher of table philosophie (London: Richard Jones, 1576).

52. Indeed, Iago describes himself as a devil as soon as Cassio leaves (3.3.345).
remain completely detached from the usual engagements, commitments, and responses of human intercourse” (Shakespeare, Love and Service, 261).

65. Ibid., book 1, 41.
66. Berlant, Cruel Optimism, 1.
68. David Schalkwyk writes of Othello’s vow, “Othello invokes ‘heaven’, ‘reverence’, and the ‘sacred’ in the name of a resolve constancy (traditionally associated with married love) that is the very opposite of ‘sacred’ or ‘heavenly’: it is ‘tyrannous’” (Shakespeare, Love and Service, 253).
69. Smith, “We Are Othello,” 112.
70. Edmund Powell, The commentaries, 39.
72. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1758.
75. Ibid.

CHAPTER 5


1. Scedol, Excess and the Mean, 209.
4. Shepard, Meanings of Manhood, 101, 27, 100–102. See also Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility, 93.
5. “It was not uncommon for divines to use healthing as a religious metaphor, as in 1616, when Thomas Adams described Christ’s sacrifice as ‘drinking to us in his own blood, a saving Health to all Nations’” (McShane, “Material Culture and Political Drinking,” 257, citing Thomas Adams, A Divine Healthful [1616]).
6. This legislation did not curb the practice: the misdemeanor most frequently prosecuted in 1651 was the drinking of healths, as noted by Paul H. Hardacre, The Royalists During the Puritan Revolution (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), 74–75. To give a brief sense of the scope of healthing, the Calendar of State Papers lists 467 incidents related to health drinking in the Stuart period. I am grateful to David Cressy for bringing my attention to some of these records.
7. Shakespeare, Hamlet, 1.4.11–12.
8. Shakespeare, Othello, 2.3.27–34.