

INTOXICATION AND EMPIRE: DISTILLED SPIRITS AND THE
CREATION OF ADDICTION IN THE EARLY
MODERN BRITISH ATLANTIC

by

KRISTEN D. BURTON

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

December 2015

Copyright © by Kristen D. Burton 2015

All Rights Reserved



Acknowledgements

Many describe writing a dissertation as an isolating task, and yet, so many people make the creation of this work possible. Guidance from my committee helped me as I shifted through an array of ideas and resources. My mentor, Christopher Morris, provided essential assistance as I wrangled what was once a bewildered narrative. Elisabeth Cawthon, John Garrigus, and Sarah F. Rose also helped me pull together, first, cohesive chapters, then an organized manuscript. Insightful conversations with Frederick H. Smith were remarkably helpful. I also owe him my thanks for offering his time as an outside reader. Fellowships from the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington supported a large portion of my research. My deepest thanks to Conrad E. Wright, Daniel Hinchey, Sarah Georgini, Sarah K. Myers, Mark Santangelo, Neal Millikan, Michele Lee, and Mary V. Thompson for all your help in guiding my research. I owe thanks also to Douglas Bradburn for his mentorship during my stay at Mount Vernon. Finally, to my colleagues, family, and friends, your enduring support helped me to see this to the end. My parents, and my dear husband, Daniel, never wavered in their support. I give all my love and thanks to you for standing by my side during this crazy adventure.

November 19, 2015

Abstract

INTOXICATION AND EMPIRE: DISTILLED SPIRITS AND THE
CREATION OF ADDICTION IN THE EARLY
MODERN BRITISH ATLANTIC

Kristen D. Burton, PhD

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2015

Supervising Professor: Christopher Morris

This dissertation exams how the spread of imperialism in the British Atlantic led to the mass production and consumption of distilled spirits during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Through transatlantic colonization, distilled liquors, once produced as medicinal remedies, developed into a thriving industry by the beginning of the eighteenth century. This change in the purpose and use of distilled spirits prompted political, religious, and medical leaders to ask new questions about the effects and possible threats of consuming such spirits. This dissertation is a study of perceptions; it examines how spirits became the means through which people evaluated the place and proper behavior of women, the

working poor, indigenous peoples, enslaved laborers, and backcountry farmers, among others.

While alcohol was thought by many to be spiritually and physically nourishing, mass production and distribution of rum in the mid-seventeenth century created new questions and concerns among elites about intoxication, bodily health, and the perceived threat of lost control over the laboring poor in England, and over indigenous communities and enslaved peoples throughout the empire. Social elites constructed narratives around new notions of inebriation based upon the loss of physical, as well as moral, control. Through these narratives, physicians came to create new theories of habitual drinking as a compulsive act. Altered perceptions, constructed from unprecedented eighteenth-century drinking practices, redefined alcohol as an intoxicant. This established the framework of what became early addiction theory, which emerged during the initial decades of the modern era. Eighteenth-century imperial, medical, and religious debates over distilled spirits, in turn, established the foundation for early ideas of alcoholism and transatlantic movements advocating temperance.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract.....	iv
List of Illustrations	vii
Introduction: Slow, Yet Sure Poison	1
Chapter 1: Aqua Vitae	31
Chapter 2: Of Beast and Man	71
Chapter 3: Gin-Crazed and Rum-Flodded.....	116
Chapter 4: Spirits of Resistance	176
Chapter 5: Savagery and Civilization	249
Conclusion: A Disease of the Mind.....	325
References	343
Biographical Information.....	366

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: "Mary's Bath," detail (1528)	37
Figure 2: The expert doctors dispensatory (1657).....	54
Figure 3: Daniel Defoe standing in the pillory	80
Figure 4: Heywood, <i>Philocothomista</i> , frontispiece (1635)	86
Figure 5: A seventeenth-century French sugar plantation.....	98
Figure 6: Greenwood, Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam.....	149
Figure 7: Hogarth, "A Midnight Modern Conversation" (1730)	154
Figure 8: Hogarth, <i>Beer Street and Gin Lane</i> (1751)	158
Figure 9: "Interior of a Distillery on Delaps Estate Antigua"	186
Figure 10: "Penn's treaty with the Indians at Shackamaxon"	260

Introduction: Slow, Yet Sure Poison

On November 30, 1800, Charles Adams, son of revolutionary founder and second President of the United States, John Adams, died after a long-endured illness caused by habitual drinking. Charles' brother, Thomas Boylston Adams, notified fellow sibling, John Quincy Adams, in a somber note sent December 6, stating, "We have lost our Brother at New York. He expired after a lingering illness... We have long been looking for the catastrophe, which it was not in human power to avert. Let silence reign forever over his tomb."¹ Charles' decline and death remained a source of great pain for his family. For years, his mother, Abigail, worried about the effect his behavior had on his life and health. As Charles commenced his studies at Harvard College in 1785, Abigail expressed her concerns in a letter to her sister, stating, "How difficult to recover the right path when the feet have once wandered from it. How much resolution is necessary to overcome evil propensities? More particularly a habit of intemperence."² Such behavior was familiar to Abigail, as her brother, William Smith, also suffered an early death due to habitual drinking. As Abigail watched her son succumb to his illness, she recorded her pain

¹ Thomas Boylston Adams to John Quincy Adams, 6 December 1800. Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

² Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 11 September 1785. Adams Family Correspondence, Volume 6. Adams Papers, Digital Edition. Made available through the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

through indirect references in an effort to keep the details private.

Following Charles' death, Abigail wrote to her sister, Mary Smith Cranch, "He was beloved, in spite of his errors, and all spoke with grief and sorrow for his habits."³

In the midst of the Adams family members' sorrow for Charles' tragic end, their descriptions of the destructive nature of alcohol reveals the vast changes that occurred by the turn of the nineteenth century in the way people understood how habitual drinking affected one's body. Abigail wrote of Charles' affliction as a disease, stating, "His constitution was so shaken, that his disease was rapid, and through the last period of his Life dreadfully painful and distressing."⁴ John Adams, too, framed Charles' suffering in similar terms, as he stated in a letter to his son, Thomas, sent in the weeks after Charles died, "The melancholly decease of your brother is an affliction of a more serious nature to this family than any other. Oh! that I had died for him if that would have relieved him from his faults as well as his disease."⁵ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the understanding of habitual, excessive drinking as a disease began to take

³ Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 8 December 1800. *New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788-1801*, edited by Stewart Mitchell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947), 261-262.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, 17 December 1800. Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

hold in response to radical changes in the nature of alcohol production and consumption that occurred throughout the preceding century. The notion that habitual drinking – what physicians beginning in 1852 would call ‘alcoholism’ – was hereditary also appears in John’s letter to his son.⁶ Having lost a brother and a son to excessive drinking, the destructive nature of alcohol consumption stuck out to members of the Adams family. William Smith and Charles Adams would not be the last family members to develop an attachment to the bottle; Thomas Boylston Adams, and George Washington Adams, too, had personal struggles with excessive drinking. Notions of drinking as a hereditary issue, that habitual drinking might be compulsive, or that excessive consumption might be a physical disease emerged in the early years of the nineteenth century. Prompted by the commodification of distilled spirits across Britain’s Atlantic Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the heavy, recreational consumption of liquor made possible an understanding of alcoholism, and a perceived need for the social movements advocating temperance, that marked the modern era.

This dissertation traces how the seventeenth-century rise in mass produced distilled spirits permanently altered the nature of consumption

⁶ Roy Porter, “The Drinking Man’s Disease: The ‘Pre-history’ of Alcoholism in Georgian Britain” *British Journal of Addiction* 80 (1985), 390.

patterns and societal perceptions of alcohol. The manufacture and spread of potent liquors across Britain's Atlantic Empire cultivated new notions of alcohol consumption, bodily health, and control over labor systems. The establishment of rum distilleries in the Caribbean around the mid-point of the seventeenth century led to the mass production of potent liquors on an unprecedented scale. For the first time, spirits became available to all members of society, in both Britain's colonies and in Britain itself. Before this moment, distilled spirits, such as brandy, remained a drink of the elite. Spirits acted as both a means of conspicuous consumption, as well as a means of maintaining one's bodily health. In a world that saw health as interconnected with religious piety and elemental balance, the perceived purity of distilled liquors made such beverages seem wholesome and beneficial. By 1650, however, Caribbean rum distilleries produced thousands of gallons of potent spirits every year. Spirits, once used as a source of medicine, or a supplementary drink of the elite, developed into a product of imperialism and became an integral part of the thriving transatlantic economy. This change in the availability and purpose of spirits by the turn of the eighteenth century prompted new questions, asked by political, religious, and medical leaders, about the effects and possible threats caused by consuming such drinks.

At its heart, this dissertation is a study of perceptions; it examines how spirits became the means through which people evaluated the place and proper behavior of women, the working poor, enslaved laborers, indigenous peoples, and backcountry farmers throughout Britain's empire. In examining the changing nature of conceptualizing the place of alcohol in daily life during the early modern era, this dissertation will examine the following themes: the growth of the early modern distilling industry through the spread of imperialism, changing perceptions of intoxication and the way consuming spirits affected the body, and the question of maintaining and resisting control. By analyzing the shifting nature of alcohol consumption from 1650-1800, this dissertation will show the establishment of British imperial control across the Atlantic led to the mass production of distilled spirits and permanently changed perceptions toward alcohol and alcoholic consumption.

The commodification of spirits in the early modern era created new understandings of inebriation and alcohol as an intoxicant, which resulted in medical theories that bodily addiction was, in itself, a physical disease. Over the course of 150 years, views of distilled spirits documented by physicians and societal leaders reveal stark changes. Liquor, once thought of as pure, wholesome, and ethereal in nature became the "demon drink" and a perceived menace to settlements and cities on both

sides of the Atlantic. Changing drinking practices, combined with the rise of Enlightenment philosophy, the secularization of medical practice, and increasing concerns of maintaining control over racialized 'others' led to the understanding of intoxication as a societal threat. In response, advocates for reform initiated calls for temperance. Through the events of the eighteenth century, early nineteenth-century physicians in both Great Britain and the United States came to reevaluate their understanding of the ways habitual drinking led to mental and physical decay. While religious leaders attacked excessive drinking as a moral failing, physicians reclassified alcohol as an intoxicant and compulsive drinking as "a disease of the mind" and body.

Such understandings of alcohol and drinking, however, remain relatively recent developments. For centuries, alcoholic beverages were central to daily lives, particularly in England and across Western Europe. Even distilled spirits did not appear as a threat to one's personal health or the well-being of the greater society. Early production of distilled spirits in the British Isles remained highly localized, and in England, it largely remained a drink of the periphery. In Ireland and Scotland, distillers produced liquors by distilling malted barley: the base for brewing ale and

beer. The exact methods of individual producers remain obscure.⁷ The earliest accounts of distilled whiskeys in Ireland appeared in 1170; English soldiers returning from a campaign in Ireland commented on a peculiar *aqua vitae* consumed by the Irish.⁸ In Scotland, historians of Scotch whisky often point to the popular story of a Scottish friar named John Cor, who received eight bolls of malt in 1494 to make spirits, possibly an early form of Scotch.⁹ Another early reference to Scotch whisky appears in a funeral account dated 1618, which noted the drinking of *uisge beatha*, Gaelic for 'blessed water.'¹⁰ This term later evolved into *usquebaugh*, which became the basis for the English word 'whiskey.' Despite these scattered references, whiskey production in Ireland remained relatively isolated, and the practice of distilling malted barley in Scotland did not commercially develop until the eighteenth century.¹¹

⁷ Though the spelling of 'whiskey' varies between Irish whiskey and Scotch whisky, any references to both liquors will adhere to the whiskey (with 'e') spelling. References to Scotch whisky alone will maintain the appropriate (no 'e') spelling.

⁸ Kevin R. Kosar, *Whiskey: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2010), 67.

⁹ Michael Brander, *Brander's Guide to Scotch Whiskey*, fifth edition (New York: Lyons Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁰ Brander, *Brander's Guide*, 3; Magulonne Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 178.

¹¹ Brander, *Brander's Guide*, 3-4; L.M. Cullen, *The Brandy Trade under the Ancien Régime; Regional Specialisation in the Charente* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-2. The malt tax passed by the

In addition to the occasional production of whiskey in Ireland and Scotland during the sixteenth century, the Dutch helped promote another spirituous liquor across Europe: *brandewijn*, Dutch for ‘burnt wine.’ The production of *brandewijn* spread to other European countries, and eventually took on the name ‘brandy.’ The exact moment when brandy gained popularity in Europe remains unknown, however shipping documents confirm the presence of brandy production in Bordeaux by 1513.¹² Historian Henriette De Bruyn Kops explained that the lack of scholarly knowledge on the French-Dutch trade is due to the inconsistent source material. Many of the port records that held the details of this trade were lost in bombing attacks during World War II.¹³ Some historians argue that European *aqua vitae* production grew out of the medieval brandy trade. Historians speculate that early Scotch distillers may have mimicked the process used to make brandy when they distilled malted barley, and some scholars claim that distillers even used wine lees in early efforts.¹⁴

English Parliament aimed to prevent the Scottish and Irish distilling industries from competing with England’s own distillers.

¹² Cullen, *The Brandy Trade*, 4.

¹³ Henriette De Bruyn Kops, *A Spirited Exchange: The Wine and Brandy Trade between France and the Dutch Republic in its Atlantic Framework, 1600-1650* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 8.

¹⁴ Brander, *Brander’s Guide*, 2-3. Lees are the dead and residual yeast left behind after wine or beer finished fermenting.

While popularized by the Dutch, brandy did not originate in Holland. Distilling wine occurred as early as the eighth century, with credit for the process given to the Arab scholar Jabir ibn Hayyan. He found that the boiling point of wine was lower than the boiling point of water. Once wine reached the required temperature, the distiller could collect and separate the alcoholic vapor from the water.¹⁵ A 1576 guide on distillation, translated into English by the surgeon George Baker, acknowledges this point of origin, as it states, “The Arabians... were first authors & inventors of the Arte of Sublyming, which some doe name Drawing or Distilling.”¹⁶ The design of medieval and early modern alembics – small stills used by apothecaries and alchemists – reflect this process of evaporation and collection. Distillers placed the wine, as well as other possible ingredients, in the body of the still, which sat over a fire. After the alcohol evaporated, it rose into the head of the still, separating from the bulk of the water present in the wine. The vapor then passed through the cooling stem, and, once cooled, returned to a liquid state in a collection vessel. This produced a concentrated form of the alcohol present in the wine. After the first run, distillers then redistilled the concentrated liquor to separate the alcohol

¹⁵ Standage, *A History of the World*, 94-95.

¹⁶ George Baker, *The Newe Iewell of Health, wherein is contayned the most excellent Secreates of Phisicke and Philosophie, deuided into fower Bookes* (London: 1576), 1.

further from any remaining water, thereby creating increasingly potent drinks. Distillers repeated this process until the alcohol reached the point of “proof spirits.”¹⁷ Distillation did purify the elements that once made up the wine, but the production of spirituous liquors also created a much more powerful, and potentially dangerous, beverage.¹⁸

The movement of wine distillation out of the Middle East and into Europe remains murky, and it possibly resulted from Mediterranean trading patterns, or Arab control in the Iberian Peninsula. The French term for brandy, *eau argente*, derived from the Spanish, *aguardiente*, suggesting a possible connection.¹⁹ While the transfer of distillation knowledge and practice remains obscure, French wine makers came to favor the practice of distilling poor quality wine to salvage and profit off an otherwise inferior product. Distilling wine also allowed French wine makers to reduce shipping costs by condensing the overall amount of goods shipped.

¹⁷ This term refers tests used to gauge the strength of spirits before the invention of Baumé scale hydrometers in 1768. One common test was to place a small amount of spirit on gunpowder; when it was set on fire the “proof spirits” would burn before the powder. If too much water was present in the spirits, the gunpowder would be too damp to burn. Harrison Hall, *Hall's Distiller* (Philadelphia: 1813), 183.

¹⁸ Tom Standage, *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* (New York: Walker & Co., 2005), 94-95. Alcohol boils and evaporates when heated to 173° F, while water does not boil until heated to 212° F.

¹⁹ Cullen, *The Brandy Trade*, 5.

During the Middle Ages, brandy was almost exclusively medicinal rather than a recreational drink. By the sixteenth century, however, consumption patterns began to change, and brandy became a favored cordial drink amongst the European elite.²⁰ How the elite adopted the practice of drinking spirits remained unclear. L.M. Cullen, whose research focuses on the growth of commercial brandy production during the *Ancien Régime*, argues against the idea that the Dutch popularized brandy, stating, “the Dutch contribution was largely linguistic.”²¹ It is also unclear if the term *brandewijn* applied to multiple distilled spirits, or just wine-based liquors. This illustrates the lack of structure in the spirits trade before the seventeenth century. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the commercial production of brandy became more consistent, and France became the primary source of this liquor. By the 1680s, French brandy replaced brandy from Holland as the preferred drink of the English elite. Brandy became a common beverage served at banquets, and the elite drank it as a *digestif*, as well as to bring pleasure through intoxication.²²

Before spirits became a mass-produced commodity after the mid-seventeenth century, unhopped ale and hopped beer reigned supreme as

²⁰ Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 237.

²¹ Cullen, *The Brandy Trade*, 5.

²² Cullen, *The Brandy Trade*, 4-5; John Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 160.

the primary drinks of England and Scotland.²³ Readily available in alehouses, taverns, and the household, ale was, in the words of the sixteenth-century physician, Andrew Boorde, “for an Englishman... a natural drink.”²⁴ Ale and hopped beer provided a source of sustenance rather than intoxication. English law, by-and-large, regulated ale in the same manner as bread. Beginning in 1267, the Assize of Bread and Ale implemented strict laws that regulated the price of ale based upon the cost of grain to ensure that it always remained accessible to the general populace who depended upon it for hydration and nourishment.²⁵ Ale and beer also provided safe alternatives to water, which was often contaminated and unsafe to drink, particularly in crowded towns and cities where people used running water sources as moving dumping grounds for

²³ Brander, *Brander’s Guide*, 5. During the medieval and early modern era, references to ‘ale’ meant a specific, unhopped beverage brewed from malted barley, water, and wild yeast. The technique of adding hops to the brewing process first appeared in Germany in the ninth century. The method arrived in England in the late fourteenth century or early fifteenth century. With the addition of hops, it became necessary to distinguish between ale and beer. Although ‘beer’ was a common term to refer to unhopped ale before the introduction of hops, from the fifteenth century on, ‘beer’ referred to a brewed beverage made with hops.

²⁴ Andrew Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (1542; reprint, New York: C. Scribner & Co., 1893), 256.

²⁵ H.A. Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer* (Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1966), 48. The Assize of Bread and Ale remained in effect, in revised form, until the end of the sixteenth century. Kristen D. Burton, “The Citie Calls for Beere: the Introduction of Hops and the Foundation of Industrial Brewing in Early Modern London,” *Brewery History*, 150 (2013), 7.

trash, sewage, animal carcasses, and other unwanted waste. Drinking water fell out of practice to the point that it took on cultural signifiers; in fifteenth-century England, drinking water became associated with poverty. To drink water suggested a person was too poor to afford a more appropriate, usually alcoholic, beverage.²⁶ By the following century, Boorde cautioned his readers against drinking water without first boiling it, straining it, and adding it to wine.

Compared to water, ale and beer appeared wholesome and nutritious to the English. Brewing ale involved boiling the water used, killing most bacteria. The presence of alcohol in the finished product likewise acted as a purifier, burning off any remaining germs. Additionally, the use of malted barley in the brewing process meant that ale and beer provided grain, water, and sugar, making these beverages an important source of nutrition. Over time, English laborers came to perceive ale and beer as a necessity. In the fifteenth century, ale comprised forty-one percent of a worker's nutritional diet during times of harvest, but the peasantry was not alone in viewing alcoholic beverages as essential.²⁷

²⁶ Sarah Hand Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 7.

²⁷ Christopher Dyer, "Changes in Diet in the Late Middle Ages: The Case of the Harvest Workers," *Agricultural History Review* 36, 1 (1988), 25. Ale and beer consumed in the medieval and early modern eras were likely

Elite households stocked up on their own supply of beer, and high-quality brews, such as March Beer, became staples at banquets and feasts.²⁸ English housewives were largely responsible for brewing and providing regular access to ale and beer, due to the connections that existed between brewing, baking, and other household activities. When the distilling of spirituous liquors grew in practice over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this activity, like the brewing of beer, likewise fell within the housewife's realm.²⁹ Particularly among the elite, distilled alcoholic beverages appeared wholesome, and when consumed in small doses, spirits became an important means for people to maintain bodily health during the late medieval and early modern eras.

Although, historians have examined the social, economic, and political significance of alcohol, the history of distilled spirits in the early modern era remains a topic in need of greater attention. The bulk of the

comparable to modern beers in strength, ranging from 3-8% in alcoholic content.

²⁸ Frank A. King, *Beer Has a History* (New York: Hutchinson's Scientific and Technical Publications, 1957), 65. March Beer referred to the time of year the brewing occurred. Brewers made these beers stronger in order to last throughout the summer months, when warmer temperatures could affect the wort – the mixture of water, grains, and fermenting sugars – and result in poor-tasting brews.

²⁹ For more on the responsibilities of English women and the brewing of ale and beer see Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters: Women's Word in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery*, 28-31.

literature in Alcohol Studies focuses on either the establishments in which people drank, including taverns and public houses, or the nineteenth and twentieth century temperance movements.³⁰ Historical discussion of the production, consumption, and perception of spirits in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries pales in comparison to the scholarship on drinking in the modern era. Still, the field of Alcohol Studies is relatively young, and historians continue to produce compelling research on understanding the place of alcoholic beverages in the past.

Alcohol Studies, in essence, came into existence following the release of W.J Rorabaugh's *The Alcoholic Republic* in 1979.³¹ In this text, Rorabaugh captured and quantified the prominent place of alcohol in the North American colonies. His research on drinking in the eighteenth

³⁰ For further reading on the history of temperance movements in the United States and Great Britain, see: Jack S. Blocker, Jr., *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989); Leonard U. Blumberg, *Beware the First Drink! The Washington Temperance Movement and Alcoholics Anonymous* (Seattle: Glenn Abbey, 1991); J.C. Furnas, *The Life and Times of the Late Demon Rum* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965); J.R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963); Robert L. Hampel, *Temperance and Prohibition in Massachusetts, 1813-1852* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982); Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998); Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979).

³¹ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

century largely served as historical context for the bulk of his work, which focused on the peak decades of alcohol consumption in the United States – the 1820s and 1830s – and the effect temperance organizations had on nineteenth-century drinking patterns. Since the release of *The Alcoholic Republic*, historians have explored more questions about the history of alcohol, expanding the geographic boundaries in the process. Historians Jessica Warner and James Nicholls examined the social and political history surrounding alcohol consumption in early modern and modern England.³² Anthropologist Frederick Smith brought attention to the economic and cultural significance of rum production in the Caribbean.³³ Historians have also produced quality research on colonial taverns and the use of alcohol in the early American fur trade, adding additional layers of complexity to the topic first introduced in *The Alcoholic Republic*.³⁴

³² Jessica Warner, *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2003); James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

³³ Frederick H. Smith, *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008).

³⁴ David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink & the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Williamsburg, VA: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch & Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

Studies on alcohol history have often focused on the ways societies address intoxicants and inebriation; still, this remains a confounding subject for scholars.³⁵ At what point does consuming alcohol become a problem? When does finding pleasure in a transformative state of mind create problems for the drinker? The way scholars have focused on intoxication as a topic of study reflects the approach utilized by critics of alcohol in the past. Scholars' concentration upon instances of excessive, habitual drinking and reactions to one succumbing to a state of intoxication have obscured the more common practices and perceptions that surrounded drinking. This study also contends that this focus on intoxication has led scholars to undervalue or overlook medical uses of spirits, particularly in the seventeenth century.

In addition to focusing on drunkenness, scholars have described how views of alcohol and drinking changed over time, with the bulk of the analysis centered on the modern era, and only portion dedicated to early

³⁵ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (New York: Longman, 1983); Iain Gately, *Drink: a Cultural History of Alcohol* (New York: Gotham, 2008); Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty, eds. *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002); Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, *Drinking in America: A History* (Simon and Schuster, 1987); A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Violence, and Disorder in Traditional Europe* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2009); Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*; Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*; Smith, *Caribbean Rum*.

modern drinking. One of the most in-depth studies on the history of drunkenness and the way differing societies reacted to it is Jean-Charles Sournia's *A History of Alcoholism*, which presents a nuanced survey of the shifting reactions to alcohol-induced inebriation from antiquity to the modern era.³⁶ Sournia explains how excessive drinking eventually came to be a medical condition – alcoholism – and how that evolution led to both legal restrictions and moral condemnations. For this reason, the bulk of Sournia's study centers on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The same is true for most scholarly works on the history of alcohol, drunkenness, and calls for temperance, which concentrate on the centuries following the early modern era. The ready availability of primary literature on drunkenness during the modern era, however, offers scholars ample room to work compared to the limitation of sources from the eighteenth century and earlier.

Contributions to the field of Alcohol Studies have changed modern understandings of the historical significance of alcohol, but historians have offered less on the medical importance of alcohol during the early modern era. The literature on early modern medical history examines the methods of physicians during the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, as

³⁶ Jean-Charles Sournia, Nick Hindley, and Gareth Stanton *A History of Alcoholism* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 1990).

well as the lack of trust the individuals often placed in physicians. The works of Roy Porter dominates the field of early modern English medicine. His works *Disease, Medicine, and Society in England, 1550-1860* and *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity* are but a few examples of Porter's massive contribution to medical history and the history of the body.³⁷ Still, Porter's work does not contain in-depth discussion of the manufacture, use, and perceptions of distilled spirits in early modern medicine. Alongside Porter's contributions, medical historians have examined the ancient philosophical roots that informed medieval and early modern medical practice; the different ailments that afflicted those in the past, including physical damage as well as viral or bacterial; and the close connection that existed between illness and religious practice.³⁸ Studies on the outbreak of plague during the medieval

³⁷ Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine, and Society in England, 1550-1860*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Roy Porter, *Quacks: Fakers & Charlatans in English Medicine* (Charleston, SC: Tempus, 1989); Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998).

³⁸ Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Andrew Cunningham and Roger French, eds. *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Stephen Pender and Nancy S. Struever, eds. *Rhetoric and Medicine in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012); Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in*

and early modern eras are so extensive as to make up a subfield unto itself. Yet, throughout this literature, alcohol, in particular the central place of distilled spirits to early modern medical practices, remains absent.

This dissertation will complicate and expand upon the current understanding of distilled spirits in early modern culture and medicine by placing the topic in a transatlantic context. The sharp increase in production and the commodification of distilled spirits in the seventeenth century occurred because of European imperialism. A transatlantic perspective is necessary in order to understand how changes in drinking practices during the early modern era established a perceived need for temperance movements by the nineteenth century. As argued by Sidney Mintz, “A view that excludes the linkage between metropolis and colony by choosing one perspective and ignoring the other is necessarily incomplete.”³⁹ Utilizing a transatlantic approach aides in completing – or at the very least, expanding – current historical knowledge about shifting perspectives of alcohol in the past. The United States and Great Britain played host to two of the most organized temperance movements, but to

English Medicine, 1550-1680 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³⁹ Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), xvi.

understand how these movements came into existence, it is necessary to examine the events from the preceding era.

By utilizing a transatlantic framework to study distilled spirits in the early era of British imperialism, it is possible to see how these potent liquors served as a means of connection between the Caribbean, North America, Africa, and Europe. More than a simple network of exchanging goods, the production and consumption of spirits created an intercultural network between colonizer and the colonized – between settlers, slaves, and Native peoples. Broader perspectives are necessary to see how liquors produced in Caribbean distilleries provided slaves laboring on North American tobacco plantations a means of wresting control away from their masters. Transatlantic discourses over the meaning of intoxication prompted reevaluation of the proper behavior of the working poor in London, while also constructing destructive stereotypes of Native savagery within the North American backcountry. This framework also shows how African slaves appropriated a tool of empire, distilled spirits, to protect cultural practices and create communal bonds. By expanding the point of focus to consider the British Atlantic, it is possible to see how distilled spirits served as a fundamental commodity of transatlantic trade, as well as a weapon used to enforce and oppose imperial control.

This study features the use of multiple terms that reference the mental and physical effects of excessive drinking, primarily 'drunkenness' and 'intoxication.' While the terms appear as synonymous in modern usage, these terms present differing meanings and reveal the development of new perceptions of alcohol-based beverages. Throughout the medieval and early modern era, drunkenness was the common term to describe those who drank in excess. Often, the authors of sermons, laws, or pamphlets that criticized drunkenness defined the term through a description of the behavior that followed drinking sessions. Although these descriptions often exaggerate the loss of mental or physical capabilities, the use of 'drunkenness,' in essence, refers to a state of inebriation, in which the drinker succumbs to the effects of alcohol consumption. This study draws distinctions between drunkenness, or inebriation, and intoxication. The word itself, 'intoxication,' conveys that the act of drinking consists of introducing toxins to the body. This term does not reflect the prominent perception people held of alcohol in the medieval and into the early modern era. Before the end of the seventeenth century, Europeans, by-and-large, perceived alcohol as wholesome and nutritious – not as a toxin. Sixteenth century usage of the term 'intoxication' referred to ingesting poison. Use of the term in specific reference to the consumption of alcohol first appeared in 1646, when the physician Thomas Brown

described it as the result of consuming distilled spirits. Common usage of the term to describe the effects of alcohol consumption did not emerge until the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

The concept of alcohol addiction is a product of the modern era. The connection between the term 'addiction' and the notion of physical dependence upon a chemical substance or the compulsive ingestion of drugs is a relatively recent development.⁴¹ The word 'addiction' itself has ancient roots; its use often referred to a strong attachment or sense of devotion to a particular person, thing, or idea.⁴² The meaning of the word changed during the nineteenth century, as social movements against alcohol gained greater organization and influence. The term "alcoholism" itself did not emerge until 1852, and will, therefore, not appear within the historical analysis of this study.⁴³ According to psychologist Bruce K. Alexander, it was during the nineteenth century that "the meaning of the word 'addiction' was simultaneously narrowed, moralised, and medicalised

⁴⁰ "Intoxication, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2015.

⁴¹ Even in recent history, debates continue among clinicians as to the appropriate definition and use of 'addiction,' whether it refers to physical dependence or compulsive drug taking. Some arguments present physical dependence as altogether separate from the loss of control caused by the urge to consume drugs. Charles P. O'Brien, Nora Volkow, and Li T-K, "What's in a Word? Addictions Versus Dependence in DSM-V" *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 163, 5 (May 2006), 764.

⁴² James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A history of the drink question in England* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2009). 64.

⁴³ Porter, "The Drinking Man's Disease," 390.

for many people.”⁴⁴ In order for physicians to medicalize this term, they constructed a theory that compulsive drinking was itself an illness. This development, however, did not occur in a single moment of brilliance. As Roy Porter argued, the nineteenth century did not bring with it a “sharp break” in the way physicians perceived instances of heavy, habitual drinking.⁴⁵ This instead occurred because of new medical philosophies and developing discourses that emerged during the latter-half of the eighteenth century. Some historians instead argue that early nineteenth-century developments in the medical profession, and the formation of disease theory around heavy drinking, did represent a fundamental break with past medical practice.⁴⁶ Historical scholarship that remains fixed upon nineteenth century social movements against alcohol, tend to emphasize modern developments within the medical profession as altogether different from the preceding era. While medical understandings of physical addiction did not appear before the turn of the nineteenth century, the secularization of the medical practice that occurred during the eighteenth century made such conceptions of compulsive drinking and physical dependency possible.

⁴⁴ Bruce K. Alexander, *The Globalisation of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 30.

⁴⁵ Porter, “The Drinking Man’s Disease,” 393.

⁴⁶ Matthew Warner Osborn, *Rum Maniacs: Alcoholic Insanity in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 46.

In order to piece together the significant place of distilled spirits in the early modern Atlantic World, this research depended upon a vast collection of diverse resources. From manuscript cookery books, written by English housewives in the seventeenth century, to the ledger for George Washington's whiskey distillery, the story of distilled spirits touches on the lives of *les grand hommes* and the faceless, and often nameless, individuals whose actions served to shape the continually shifting perceptions of alcohol and intoxication. To gain insight into the production and use of spirits in the seventeenth century, this dissertation features medical texts, including manuscript physick books, distillation manuals, guides for housewives, and accounts written by early visitors to the Caribbean colonies. The evolving perceptions of intoxication often appear in sermons, making the voices of both English and colonial religious leaders especially important. Printed sermons by Anglican ministers in England, such as Edward Bury, and North American Puritans, like Cotton Mather, capture an insightful look into the sometimes extreme understandings of excessive drinking as a moral failing. Religious leaders often participated in debates over intoxication, including the so-called "gin craze" that spread throughout London in the first half of the eighteenth century. Joining political leaders and physicians, these ministers published and circulated their views of distilled spirits in an effort to sway legislative

action, as well as discourage the working poor from partaking of such potent liquors. Newspapers, planter's diaries, missionary reports, family letters, physicians' dissertations, merchant account books, plantation farm records, and travel writing all factor into the weaving narrative that tells the story of how imperialism led to the foundation of addiction theory and temperance.

In order to find a sense of cohesive understanding in this disparate collection of published and unpublished materials, this dissertation features a combination of literary analysis and thick description. In many of these sources, the authors are elite members of society who harbor hardened critiques of supposed 'subordinate' groups that consumed distilled spirits. Their presentation of intoxicated behavior, be it of women, poor laborers, slaves, or indigenous peoples, is far from trustworthy. Still, elite voices are key to understanding the subsequent shifts in perceptions of alcohol that occurred throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Therefore, it is necessary to approach these sources in a similar way one analyzes literary works. When a planter like Landon Carter complained of an intoxicated slave, it is impossible to know the motives that drove the slave to drink, or if the planter's account exaggerated the slave's behavior in any way. Similarly, when Benjamin Franklin described a group of drunken Natives dancing around a fire as resembling a scene

from hell, the record remains colored by Franklin's perceptions of Natives and the destructive stereotypes constructed by the colonists. By utilizing literary analysis, along with thick description, it is possible to piece together the context surrounding these often one-sided accounts. This approach also allows one to follow the way shifting perceptions of distilled spirits prompted changes in the legal code, as well as medical theories of drinking and personal health.

This narrative begins with an examination of how distilled spirits functioned in early modern English life before the establishment of large-scale distilleries in the Caribbean. The first chapter, "Aqua Vitae," looks at the uses of spirits as both a small-scale recreational drink of the elite and as a medicine produced in the household or by apothecaries. Before spirits became a transatlantic commodity, common perceptions emphasized the wholesome and pure qualities of distilled liquors. While spirits were not available on a large scale for the first half of the seventeenth century, other alcoholic drinks were. Chapter two, "Of Beast and Man," establishes understandings of intoxication before and immediately following the rise of large-scale production of spirits. Before commercial distillation arose in the Caribbean, religious leaders criticized drunkards for their moral failings and often described such behavior as animalistic. These presentations emphasized the savage nature of

intoxication and of the drunkards themselves. In “Gin-Crazed and Rum-Flooded,” this chapter charts the reactions of the elite in both Britain and across the British Atlantic as large quantities of spirits – primarily rum and gin – became available to all levels of society. For the first time, those living in complete poverty were able to afford pints of liquor, creating what elites saw as a social crisis. These initial reactions prompted a hardening of class lines, as well as stronger dictations of how certain members of society should behave.

While the elite profited off the production of spirits, and they attempted to use control over those spirits to reinforce class-based expectations, other groups used intoxication as a way to resist that kind of control. In chapter four, “Spirited Resistance,” the first examination of challenges to imperial control appears in an analysis of alcohol and slavery. Often overlooked in the historiography, this chapter shows that slaves’ consumption of alcohol provided a means of resistance against individual planters, as well as coordinated attempts to destroy the institution of slavery. This examination of challenges to imperial control carries into chapter five, “Savagery and Civilization,” which looks at the production and use of spirits along the North American frontier. By analyzing colonial perceptions of intoxication among indigenous peoples, it is possible to see that Natives critiqued the settlers by mirroring their

own behavior while drunk. While colonial settlers created destructive stereotypes of drunken Natives, the Natives, in turn, used alcohol and intoxication to remind the Europeans of their own moral failings. This chapter concludes by looking at the ways these critiques expanded to include backcountry, Scotch-Irish settlers, who fit neither in the indigenous world nor within the supposedly “civilized” coastal settlements. For these backcountry settlers, spirits provided a means of transferring and maintaining cultural practices, as well as resisting control, first against British imperialism, and then against the imperial control of the United States government.

This dissertation concludes by pulling each of these narratives together to show how British imperialism and the commodification of distilled spirits in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries established the foundation for nineteenth-century temperance movements. In addition, the events of the early modern era were significant to the emergence of early disease theory regarding alcohol consumption. Questions of beastly savagery, notions of slavery to the bottle, and the increasing significance of enlightened rationality all factored into the earliest descriptions of habitual drinking as a disease. The diverse and extended debates over who could drink spirits, and in what quantities, gave way to medical theories on excessive, frequent drinking as a “disease of the mind” – an

affliction that affected all, from the plantation slave to the son of a President.

Chapter 1

Aqua Vitae

“[Distilling] is necessarily founde and [ordained] for many maner of necessytees/ and specyally for the [love] of man... to kepe in helthe & strength and to brynge the [sick] and weke body agayne to helthe...”⁴⁷

In 1576, George Baker, noted English surgeon and writer, penned the opening lines to his translation of Conrad Gessner’s *Evonymus*, which Baker renamed *The Newe [Jewell] of Health*. In his letter to Anne Cecil, the Countess of Oxford, Baker argued that the spreading knowledge of distillation made the age in which they lived the best since the birth of Alexander the Great. “Herein I doe [rejoice],” Baker wrote, “that this worke of Dystillation is nowe finished to the profite of my countrie, wherein great studie and long labour hath bene earnestly bestowed.”⁴⁸ According to Baker, distilled medicines held near miraculous abilities: they would make the blind see and the lame walk freely once more. Baker claimed, “This new [Jewell] will make the weake to become strong, and the olde crooked age appeare young and lustye... yea, it will heale all infirmities, and cure

⁴⁷ Hieronymus Brunschwig, *The Vertuose Boke of Distyllacyon of the Waters of all Maner of Herbes*, translated by Laurence Andrew (London: 1527), no pagination.

⁴⁸ George Baker, *The Newe Jewell of Health, wherein is contayned the most excellent Secretes of Phisicke and Philosophie, deuided into fower Bookes* (London: 1576), A2.

all paynes in the whole bodie of man.”⁴⁹ The benefits of distilled medicines were so great that Baker stressed the need of disseminating the knowledge further, lest it remain too specialized and the art of distillation die alongside the few experts who remained. For this reason, Baker claimed that translating this guide to distillation was a service to both his country and his savior.

Before England embarked on its efforts to colonize the Americas, most medical and popular authorities perceived distilled spirits as wholesome and nourishing. For this reason, spirits often featured the generic label of *aqua vitae*, or the water of life. Commonly referred to as “cordial waters,” or spirits distilled with herbs or other ingredients, these potent drinks were available on a small scale throughout Western Europe. As England claimed its first colonies across the Atlantic in the early seventeenth century, distilled spirits were not yet a commodity of economic importance. Although, the mid-seventeenth century establishment of large-scale distilleries, driven by the desire for imperial control and mercantile profits, permanently altered the way people consumed and perceived distilled spirits, before that point, production remained small and the overall quantity limited. In England, spirits often fell within the realm of medicine, with small doses of these potent cordials

⁴⁹ Ibid., A3.

prescribed and prepared by physicians and apothecaries. Medical practices based upon ancient theories of internal humors posited that the elemental qualities of spirits offered a means of maintaining bodily health. Physicians and apothecaries perceived the distilling process as purifying the ingredients used, and they saw the resulting liquors as wholesome and good for the body.

The understood connections between spirits and the maintenance of health prompted physicians and distillers to describe such drinks as mystical in nature. Both producers and consumers saw spirits as traversing the boundaries between the physical and the ethereal worlds. Distillers described the chemical transformation initiated by distillation as a mystifying process. In the translated *New [Jewell] of Health*, Baker wrote, “When therefore after in the Distillation, the grosser and excrementuous partes abyde in the bottome of the Lymbecke, then doe the Aereall vanysh into spirits.”⁵⁰ The guide noted that such spirits “greatly comfort and strengthen” the body, and by the early seventeenth century, distilled herbal mixtures became an established form of medicine in England. Apothecaries kept the necessary equipment on hand to make limited supplies of distilled remedies, and they used those cordials to cure a wide array of ailments. Physick books – medical texts that listed folk remedies

⁵⁰ Ibid., 5.

intended to cure any possible ailment – and distillation manuals, like Baker’s 1576 translation, capture the common use of cordial waters in the early modern era. These texts, some produced by physicians and apothecaries for publication, but most often written and kept in manuscript form by housewives, underline the significant role that distilled spirits played in early modern medicine. In recipe after recipe, physick books demonstrate how both medical experts and laypersons employed distilled spirits to target internal discomfort, external injuries, and as a preventative against diseases.

Medicine, and the spirits that comprised medical remedies, was not solely restricted to the world of physicians and apothecaries. Frequently, medical treatment occurred within the private household. Laypeople held little respect for physicians, and these trained doctors proved too costly for most individuals in the early modern era. Producing cures often fell to housewives, who documented the recipes for personal cures alongside recipes for meals. Manuscript cookery books, therefore, also serve as important sources for understanding the fundamental place of alcohol in early modern, European households.⁵¹ Women produced remedies for ailments in the same kitchens that they used to prepare family meals.

⁵¹ Household cookery books often remained unpublished manuscripts, many of which are held today at the Wellcome Library in London. While

Although physick and cookery books reveal the common uses of distilled spirits, the production of liquor during the seventeenth century remained costly and impractical for most households. The high cost of production, therefore, typically kept concentrated alcoholic beverages out of the hands of most individuals. For those who could not afford cordial waters to aid against illness, beer, ale, and wine remained the more common and accessible alcoholic drinks of choice. The expense of distilled spirits, however, did prove attractive to elite households for alternative reasons. Outside of the realm of medicinal remedies, small batches of “strong waters” provided a moderate form of recreational enjoyment, as well as a conspicuous display of wealth. Although the elite consumed spirits for pleasure, servings remained small, as they usually drank spirits by the dram.⁵² The small portions limited instances of intoxication, and the casual consumption of liquor instead served as a

some books contain organized recipe collections, many cookery books feature an assortment of recipes women likely added to the books throughout their lives. An example cookery book includes Mary Bent’s family book, kept from 1664-1729. MS. 1127. Wellcome Library, London. More on Mary Bent’s cookery book, as well as others, will appear later in the chapter.

⁵² A dram measured around one-eighth of a fluid ounce, or the equivalent of a teaspoon of liquid. Primarily used as an indicator of measure for apothecaries, recreational consumption of small quantities of spirits became known as “dram-drinking” in early modern England. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. “dram,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/170967/dram>.

means for the social elite to display personal wealth and prestige. Beyond the practice of elite dram-drinking, spirits primarily served as a means of medical nourishment aimed at preserving bodily health.

The early modern uses of distilled spirits remains a neglected area of historical research. In fact, the appearance of spirits in cookery and physick books is a topic largely untouched by scholars. The absence of detailed research on the medicinal uses of distilled spirits during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has obscured a modern understanding of how people in Western Europe utilized liquors to care for themselves during times of illness. This lack of scholarship on medicinal uses of alcohol has also overlooked the ways early modern Europeans perceived distilled spirits before the rise of commercial production in the mid-seventeenth century. Texts on the history of early modern medicine tend to focus more on how the medical profession operated and how people perceived physicians or made use of apothecaries. To address the question regarding the medicinal uses of spirits in the early seventeenth century, this chapter will make use of manuscript cookery and physick books, along with published housewifery guides and distillation manuals. Such sources reveal the uses and perceptions of *aqua vitae* before spirits became a formidable commercial commodity by the end of the seventeenth century.

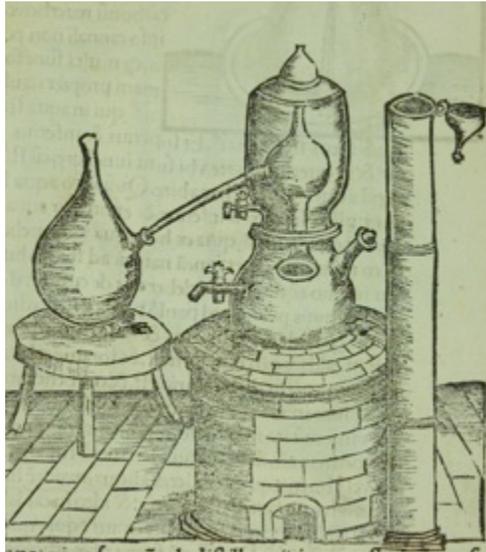


Figure 1: "Mary's Bath," detail from Philippus Ulstadius, *Coelum philosophorum* (1528). This image shows the arrangement of an alembic, or an early modern distiller.

Aqua Vitae – the name itself invokes the strong connection that once existed between spirits, often called ‘spirituous liquors,’ and the general health of the human body. During the early modern era, distillers, alchemists, and apothecaries perceived the distilling process to be an act of purification. Distilling removed corrupted elements, leaving a condensed, presumably wholesome beverage as the result. Given the alcoholic potency of spirits, medieval accounts presented “strong waters” as potentially magical substances that held restorative powers. Through the illnesses of daily life, and during continual outbreaks of plague,

distilled cordial spirits provided medical treatment for people living in England.⁵³

Some historians have argued that before the seventeenth century, distilled spirits were an uncommon element in daily life and that where they did exist, such beverages appeared as curiosities to outside observers. Historian L.M. Cullen, for example, claims that, “Spirits were an almost unknown product in 1600.”⁵⁴ While commercial distilling was certainly minimal before the seventeenth century, with limited production in isolated areas of Ireland and Scotland, household distilling occurred on a regular basis in elite English households. The equipment used to make such “waters” was primitive when compared to the stills used in the eighteenth century, but the regular appearance of household recipes that featured distillation in seventeenth-century family cookery books suggests that domestic distilling was not exceptional.

Even though imperial-driven, large-scale production of spirituous liquors did not emerge until the mid-seventeenth century, elite household distillation primarily operated within the realm of cookery and medicine. Evidence for small-scale, household production, like all evidence of pre-

⁵³ John Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 160.

⁵⁴ L.M. Cullen, *The Brandy Trade under the Ancien Régime; Regional Specialisation in the Charente* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

seventeenth century distilling, can be difficult to find. One of the most elaborate early distillations guides, published in 1500, was by Hieronymus Brunschwig, a German physician and chemist. Laurence Andrew translated Brunschwig's guide into English in 1527.⁵⁵ In his opening remarks, Andrew refers to Brunschwig as a master of distilling whose thirty years of experience informed this particular guide. It is clear in the beginning of the book that the author believed that anyone was capable of learning how to distill spirits, stating, "It is an olde saynge / though power often doth Fayle / a wylling harte is to be accepted."⁵⁶

This guide also makes strong connections between the virtue of distilled spirits and bodily health, reinforcing the significance of this early perception of spirituous liquors and the use of spirits as a medicine. The author explains that distilling is "an elementall thyng," and that the consumption of liquors had a purifying effect on the body. Brunschwig states, "[E]veryone muste be naturally [governed] by the bodyes... and through [sic] the waters that there be [divided] from the grossnes of the herbes... that to be [conveyed] to the place [most] nedefull for helth and

⁵⁵ Hieronymus Brunschwig, *The Vertuose Boke of Distyllacyon of the Waters of all Maner of Herbes*, translated by Laurence Andrew (London: 1527).

⁵⁶ Brunschwig, *The Vertuose Boke*, ii.

[comfort].⁵⁷ As the body dictated the overall well-being of the person, here Brunschwig directly connects the purity of the distilled spirits with the health of the body. He then explains that his motivation for producing this guide was to help people learn the method through which they could produce medicines that might preserve their health.

This perception of distillation as an act of purification carried throughout the early sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. In a guide published in 1705 the Dutchman, William Y-Worth, states that “Distillation imports no more than *a dropping down by little and little*; but the use and end thereof, is in the first place to Extract the Spirituality from bodies... so that we may truly say this Art is for changing of gross and thick bodies into a thin and Spiritual Nature.”⁵⁸ Through the application of heat, and the chemical process of fermentation, early distillers understood that a fundamental transformation took place within the liquor, although they did not always understand what those changes were.⁵⁹ Y-Worth stated that

⁵⁷ Brunschwig, *The Vertuose Boke*, no pagination.

⁵⁸ William Y-Worth, *The compleat distiller. or, The whole art of distillation* (London: 1705), 1.

⁵⁹ William Y-Worth (Yarworth) was a pharmacist and alchemist in addition to a distiller. He published several works on alcoholic production, including *A new treatise of artificial wines...* (1690), *Cervsiarii comesior*, *The new and True art of brewing* (1692), and *The whole art of distillation practically stated* (1692). For more information on Y-Worth’s work as an alchemist see Karin Figala and Ulrich Petzold, “Alchemy in the Newtonian Circle: personal acquaintances and the problem of the late phase of Isaac

distillation involved a “converting of Bodies,” in which the concocted mixture purified and condensed, “to draw forth that virtue out of bodies.”⁶⁰

Health and medicine in the seventeenth century largely remained a household practice, including the production of distilled remedies. Often, women produced cordials in their own kitchens to aid family members or neighbors who fell ill. Similar to brewing ale or beer, distilling “restorative waters,” or flavored liqueurs for entertaining guests, became part of a woman’s designated household tasks. The connection between English housewives and the distilling of liquors appears in surviving cookery books as well as published guides written and disseminated to help housewives fulfill gender-specific responsibilities. Gervase Markham’s 1637 guide, *The English Housewife*, made this clear when it stated that brewing was “properly the worke and care of the woman, for it is a house-work.”⁶¹ Markham’s claim was not new, as women had long served as household producers of ale and beer throughout the Middle Ages.⁶² Martha Bradley’s

Newton’s alchemy,” in *Renaissance and Revolution: Humanists, scholars, craftsmen and natural philosophers in early modern Europe*, edited by J.V. Field and Frank A.J.L. James (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 173-192.

⁶⁰ Y-Worth, *The compleat distiller*, 2.

⁶¹ Markham quoted in Amanda E. Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 87.

⁶² See Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters: Women’s Word in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

guide, *The British Housewife*, printed in 1760, demonstrates the longevity of the connection between women and household alcohol production. At almost 800 pages in length, this behemoth of a guide includes an extended discussion on the making of wine, beer, cider, and spirituous liquors. Bradley claims that distilling spirits was an easy task, something anyone could pick up as long as she had access to the appropriate ingredients and equipment. The cost of the equipment, compounded by the frequent use of wine or previously-distilled liquors in Bradley's recipes, show the household production of spirits remained restricted to elite members of society. Long before the release of Bradley's guide in the mid-eighteenth century, the ease of making spirits was the most significant factor in their popularity and prevalence among prosperous households.⁶³ Published household guides argued that anyone willing to invest time and money into learning the necessary skills and acquiring the necessary equipment had the means to produce "strong waters."

Most often, housewives created or flavored distilled liqueurs by adding wine or other spirits, such as brandy, to a mixture of fruits or herbs. The amount of liquor added to these concoctions was substantial. In her guide, Bradley explained that, to make five quarts of "strong Cinnamon

⁶³ Sarah Hand Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 60-61.

Water,” one needed four or five quarts of spirits, in addition to “as much Water as will keep it from burning.”⁶⁴ Mixing and flavoring spirits was an established activity by the time Bradley published her guide. A 1650 cookery book by Jeane Bell included an earlier recipe “To make Sinamon-water.” This recipe called for a quart of Rennish wine, or a pint of Spanish wine, rosewater, and cinnamon, infused together for twenty-four hours. After that point, the instructions call for distilling the spiced mixture over “a soft fire.”⁶⁵ By the mid-eighteenth century, when Bradley’s guide became available, the overall cost of spirituous liquors had decreased as commercial production increased, making liquors like brandy easier to access. Before the eighteenth century, the supply of such spirits was limited, making the cost of homemade cordials or liqueurs rather expensive. The number of cookery books that include recipes for distilling spirits, or “waters,” such as Bell’s, however, suggests that the practice was common.⁶⁶

The women who kept and recorded manuscript cookery books during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included luxurious

⁶⁴ Martha Bradley, *The British Housewife, or, The cook, housekeeper’s, and gardiner’s companion* (London: c.1750), 87.

⁶⁵ Jeane Bell, *A book of cookery* (London: 1650), 71.

⁶⁶ The overall number of cookery books kept by early modern women is difficult to quantify, but the Wellcome Library alone holds over seven hundred such manuscripts.

recipes reflective of the authors' livelihood. Many families kept cookery books for personal purposes. Literate men at times wrote these cookery books, but women who had the means to purchase a book in which to record recipes were the most common authors. While the expensive nature of the recorded recipes convey the wealth of the author or their household, these books also featured a patchwork of recipes collected from friends, neighbors, and even lower-ranking individuals or servants, although these contributors did not often receive direct credit. The collaborative effort that went into the construction of these recipe books reveals the flexibility of class boundaries. Amanda Herbert, a historian of early modern female networks, states, "These sources [cookery books] were ostensibly composed by elite women of the period but... they were edited, augmented, and impacted by women of many diverse ranks, ages, and educational backgrounds."⁶⁷ Gentlewomen often worked side-by-side with female servants while fulfilling their domestic duties, and these servants influenced cooking preparation and methods. It is possible the exchange of ideas that shaped the recorded entries of surviving cookery books included alcoholic beverages as well, expanding the knowledge of

⁶⁷ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 103.

how to prepare or flavor distilled spirits beyond the realm of the social elite.⁶⁸

Many of these cookery books, however, do feature extremely costly recipes – often an indicator of the personal wealth of the author. One example of this affluence appears in a book kept by Mary Bent and her relatives throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth century.⁶⁹ The recipe to make “Orange Watter,” which is the first recipe for a distilled spirit in the book, appears nestled inconspicuously between recipes to make a cake and “Thin Chees.” This recipe, although, is far from ordinary. Initially, it calls for an infusion of “30 Civil Oranges” and two quarts of brandy, both imported goods to England at the time. However, the true expense of the recipe appears in the final lines, as it calls for the addition of saffron for color, as well as “a small quantity of leafe Gold, Musk and Amber greace [ambergris].”⁷⁰ The inclusion of saffron, gold leaf, musk, and ambergris is telling. Saffron was an expensive and highly desired spice. The additional inclusion of flakes of gold, and two ingredients only accessible from animal sources – musk and ambergris – place this recipe well beyond the means of the

⁶⁸ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 8, 79-82.

⁶⁹ Mary Bent, *Untitled Cookery Book*, 1664-1729. MS.1127. The Wellcome Library, London, United Kingdom.

⁷⁰ Bent, *Untitled Cookery Book*, MS.1127, ff. 46-47.

overwhelming majority of people living in England. Musk, obtained from the glands of the musk deer, and ambergris, obtained from the digestive tract of sperm whales, were clear signs of extravagance.⁷¹

The inclusion of such ingredients also raises questions as to the use of this particular beverage, since no explanation appears in the recipe itself. It is possible this spirit was medicinal, as people believed saffron and musk had restorative properties.⁷² This spirit could have had other uses that focused less on personal health and more on personal pleasure, as both musk and ambergris were considered aphrodisiacs at that time.⁷³ The inclusion of gold leaf suggests a more informal purpose; perhaps the beverage was to satisfy the palates of guests attending an elegant banquet. Another recipe for “Orring Water” recorded in a different cookery book, roughly contemporary to the recipe in Bent’s book, does not list saffron, gold leaf, or musk. Instead, it calls for infusing three quarts of brandy with the rind and juice from fifty oranges, then distilling the infused liquid “in an Ordinary still.”⁷⁴ The suggestion at the end of the recipe to “perfume it [with] a little Ambergrease,” suggests a common link between

⁷¹ Ken Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 46, 48.

⁷² Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe*, 46.

⁷³ Jennifer Evans, *Aphrodisiacs, Fertility and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2014), 154.

⁷⁴ Anon., *A booke of usefull receipts for cookery*, c. 1675-1700. MS.1325. The Wellcome Library, United Kingdom, ff. 115.

the luxurious item and this particular liquor. Even with the absence of saffron and musk, the use of thirty to fifty oranges and two to three quarts of brandy alone would have placed this particular recipe beyond the means of most households. Such high cost restricted the practice of making such spirits to the households of the elite, while more common men and women instead brewed and drank ale and beer.

Distilled spirits certainly offered the elite a source of recreational pleasure, but these liquors primarily served as a form of medicine in the early modern era. The perceived effectiveness of the cordial rested in the strength of the spirit used and the overall amount consumed. As stated by Martha Bradley in her mid-eighteenth century guide for the British housewife, there were different kinds of “waters” – the common term used to indicate spirits – some more suitable for medicine than others. ‘Simple waters’ consisted of mixed herbs, spices, and water, distilled without the addition of prior-made liquor. ‘Compound waters,’ or ‘cordial waters,’ all had spirits added to them to increase the overall potency. Bradley explains, “[C]ompound Waters mean the same as cordial or spirituous Waters, that is, such as are made with Spirit of some Kind; and in this Case they are called compound, though there be only one Ingredient: The Apothecares call Cinnamon Water a compound Water, though it is made

of nothing but Cinnamon and Spirit.”⁷⁵ Physick books and distilling guides emphasized the small serving sizes of medicinal liquors. The recipe for “Usquebaugh Royal” included in the 1705 guide *The Compleat distiller* states that one dose, given to aid with melancholy and stomach problems, was anywhere between two to six spoonsfulls.⁷⁶ By the end of the seventeenth century, changes in the scale of consumption prompted shifts in perceptions of spirits as an intoxicant rather than a medicine. As long as the portions consumed remained small and the predominate use remained medicinal, critiques of the dangers posed by distilled spirits were limited.

The appearance of distilled recipes in both cookery and medical physick books during the seventeenth century reveal the blurry boundaries that existed between food and medicine during the medieval and early modern eras. Common belief in England maintained that the elemental qualities of food, drink, and medicine all affected one’s overall bodily health. Bradley illustrated this connection in her guide when she stated, “Although the pleasing of the Palate be the main End in Books of Cookery, we carry the Consideration in this a little farther. We shall throughout have Regard to the Health as well as the Appetite: For it is of greater Concern;

⁷⁵ Bradley, *The British Housewife*, 86-87.

⁷⁶ Y-Worth, *The Compleat distiller* (London: 1705), 98-99.

neither can the other exist without it."⁷⁷ Spirituous liquors served as a form of medicine due to the elemental qualities of such beverages. Centuries-old medical theories and practices remained based upon the ancient theories of Hippocrates and Galen that claimed good health required maintaining a balance between the bodily humors. The appropriate balance varied from person to person, making the maintenance of health an issue of personal responsibility.⁷⁸ Alcohol, especially spirituous liquors, had hot and dry qualities and worked to counteract an imbalance of cold and wet humors. As Bradley described in her guide, bodily constitutions depended upon personal temperament, and she advised the readers to keep in mind the balance of humors when considering which foods and drinks to use to maintain or reestablish internal balance.⁷⁹

In the medieval and early modern era, treatment of illness often remained in the hands of the individual sufferer. This was not due to a lack of trained professionals; there were distinct groups of professional,

⁷⁷ Bradley, *The British Housewife*, 13-14.

⁷⁸ Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine, and Society in England, 1550-1860*, second edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 19-20, 22. Each of the four humors – phlegm, black bile, yellow bile, and blood – had temporal and elemental qualities. To maintain balance between the humors, and one's bodily health, medicinal remedies including alcoholic beverages consisting of opposing humors helped return the body to a state of balance.

⁷⁹ Bradley, *The British Housewife*, 14-15.

as well as amateur, practitioners who engaged in medical treatment in England: physicians, apothecaries, surgeons, and quack doctors. Access to physicians, however, was largely restricted to the social elite. Those outside of the upper class tended to distrust physicians. In the aftermath of outbreaks of plague, during which physicians often fled crowded cities, physicians, in general, held low professional reputations. High cost also meant ordinary folk did not have access to university-trained physicians and their services during the latter-half of the seventeenth century, and into the early decades of the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ More accessible was the apothecary, who bought, prepared, and sold his or her own forms of medicine. Not formally trained at universities, apothecaries gained their knowledge and skills as apprentices; although operating separately from physicians, apothecaries did fill doctors' prescriptions.⁸¹ Still, preparation of medication often remained in the hands of laypeople who also engaged in self-treatment. This placed particular importance upon the remedies commonly made by women within the household. Through the availability of homemade medicines and cordial waters, people outside

⁸⁰ Porter, *Disease, Medicine, and Society*, 5-6.

⁸¹ John A. Hunt, "The Evolution of Pharmacy in Britain (1428-1913)," *Pharmacy in History* 48, 1 (2006), 35. Due to the apothecary's role in filling prescriptions, they sometimes were known as "the physician's cook."

the upper echelon of society rarely called upon physicians, and they sometimes were skeptical of the apothecaries' concoctions.⁸²

Due to the frequency of illness, and cyclical outbreaks of plague, during the early modern era, people saw individual health as a constant point of concern. For many people, religion and medicine often remained intertwined. As summed up by Roy Porter, "Sickness and sin, health and holiness were intimately linked," and the proximity of sickness, as well as death, to those living in the eighteenth century and before, served to sustain the significance of religion in daily life.⁸³ The close connection between religion and medical care underscored perceptions of the elemental qualities of distilled spirits. The drinks created through the distillation process were not simply potent alcoholic beverages one drank to achieve a state of intoxication. Distilled spirits, these waters of life, represented the blurred boundaries that existed between the physical and spiritual worlds. The use of the term 'spirit' itself recalled the ethereal nature of the drink. The wholesome qualities of distilled spirits encouraged beliefs that such drinks could purify the body *and* soul. In his 1527 guide, Brunschwig stated that once a person understood and appreciated the natural healing properties of herbs distilled into liquors, they would

⁸² Roy Porter, "The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below," *Theory and Society* 14, 2 (March: 1985), 188-189.

⁸³ Porter, "The Patient's View," 193.

express through prayers their gratitude for the Almighty.⁸⁴ The inherent connection between physical and spiritual health likewise appears in a seventeenth-century recipe book that opens with “A prayer to be sayd at all tymes to defend thee from thy Enemyes.” The prayer, non-specific to any particular ailment or sin, directly precedes the first recipe listed in the book: one for homemade spirits. Although the title of the recipe remains obscured, it gives credit to a man named George Febells, and the cordial is described as “for a surfett,” to remedy any (non-specific) excessive pain or discomfort.⁸⁵ Religion and health, prayer and medicine – the mystical qualities of distilled spirits established these strong liquors as pure, wholesome, and good for the human body.

Many cordial remedies provided treatment for a wide array of ailments. One such treatment includes a recipe credited to a physician: “Doctor Steeuens water.” This recipe called for a gallon of Gasconian wine mixed and distilled with ginger, chamomile, cinnamon, cloves, and other spices. According to the recipe, this water “comforteth the spirites... and helpeth inwardes diseases comming of colds,” it also aided against “the shaking of the Palsey,” toothaches, gout, dropsy, bladder stones, and

⁸⁴ Brunschwig, *The Vertuose Boke*, ii.

⁸⁵ Lady Frances Catchmay, *Physick Book*, c. 1625. MS.184A, f. 2. The Wellcome Library, United Kingdom.

several other maladies.⁸⁶ Another recipe, “a Water for the Stone,” called for infusing a combination of herbs, including sage, sorrel, lavender, fennel, and parsley, among others, which for twenty-four hours in three gallons of small ale.⁸⁷ After the daylong soak, an assortment of additional ingredients, including walnuts and honey, were distilled together with the infused ale. Those suffering from stones would then take four or five spoonfuls of this cordial spirit mixed in with white wine, or any other preferred liquor. According to the instructions, “If your Urine is too sharp, take it three Mornings before the Full Moon, and three before the Change. If it be taken at the Beginning of a Fit, it often carries it off.”⁸⁸ Such medicines served as the customary cures for ailments, but these recipes feature a fusion between the growing understanding of medical knowledge and the perpetuation of folklore myths.

The scattered documentation on the origins and success of alcohol-based medicines makes it difficult for scholars to piece together how such remedies came into existence. The minimal descriptors that line pages of family cookery or physick books often perpetuate rather than

⁸⁶ Thomas Dawson, *The Good Huswifes Jewell in two parts* (London: 1596/7), 39-40.

⁸⁷ Small ale consisted of ale mixed with water to lower its alcoholic strength. For this reason, small ale was the 'appropriate' drink for women, children, and the elderly.

⁸⁸ Sarah Harrison, *The house-Keeper's pocket-book; and compleat family cook* (London: 1751), 233-234.

answer questions about the recorded remedies. While it is possible to decipher if the cure was considered successful or not, via personal letters and surviving diary entries, what remains unclear is how homemade medical remedies were assembled and employed.⁸⁹ If the author of a recipe neglected to offer any explanation as to the purpose and use of the documented remedy, then the malady it was to cure, or its effectiveness, is likely to remain a mystery. Indeed, researchers have uncovered few details about many of the complex and oddly specific recipes used in early modern households, and their effectiveness as medicine.



Figure 2: Frontispiece, Nicholas Culpeper, Pierre Morel, and Johann Jakob von Brunn, *The expert doctors dispensary. The whole art of physick restored to practice* (London: 1657), The Wellcome Library, London. This engraving depicts an internal view of a seventeenth-century apothecary shop. In the bottom right corner sits a small still, used by the apothecary to make distilled remedies.

⁸⁹ Porter, "The Patient's View," 191-192.

The concern held by laypeople over the maintenance of health in seventeenth-century England became a particularly perilous issue for the early settlers in England's New World colonies. English efforts to join the race to claim colonies across the Atlantic Ocean introduced and spread English customs in regions across North America and the Caribbean. The settlers who ventured across the Atlantic in the early decades of the seventeenth century faced the challenge of adapting to a new and, at times, harsh environment in order to survive. Gone were the conveniences of towns and cities, where specialized tradesmen and women ensured the steady operation of daily life. The early colonists attempted to construct from scratch the familiar life they knew in England. Part of that survival meant figuring out how to produce alcohol. Early settlers in Virginia found the swampy waters around Jamestown unsuitable for drinking. Although the colonists noted that fresh water was available in the woods, old English habits of dumping waste into water sources soon corrupted what clean water the colonists had on hand.⁹⁰ Few other choices existed in the Chesapeake region; milk cost roughly the same as imported ale or cider – far too much for colonists to buy and drink on a regular basis. The alternative, and most familiar, option was to find or create sources of

⁹⁰ Andrew F. Smith, *Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 7.

alcohol.⁹¹ With imports from England arriving at a slow and irregular pace, the colonists had to exercise ingenuity in the production of alcoholic beverages, using resources that were at hand.

The strong influence of English culture on early American life appeared in the colonists' efforts to brew beer and cider, as well as through the prominence of women in colonial alcohol production. As had been the practice in England throughout the medieval era, in North America brewing beer and cider remained the responsibility of women. The commercial production of alcohol did not develop in England's colonies for several decades, making brewing and small-scale distillation an important part of colonial household economy. Initially, there were not many women compared to men among the settlers, but as women increasingly migrated to the colonies, they took on the important task of making beer. Colonial recipe books reflect the ingenuity demanded of thirsty colonists, and the continued appearance of these recipes in books throughout the eighteenth century suggest either an ongoing preference, or perceived need, for these brews. In the Chesapeake region, women produced cider, persimmon beer, corn toddies, as well as other 'beers' made from artichokes, walnuts, and pumpkins. The ingredients to make beer, particularly the hops that had become fundamental to the brewing

⁹¹ Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery*, 12-13.

process in England by the 1600s, did not grow well in the Chesapeake. The cost of importing such ingredients made the large-scale and steady production of hopped beer impractical in the area. Therefore, colonial women had to improvise in creating alcoholic drinks.⁹²

In the early seventeenth century, attempts to grow English grains in regions of the colonies failed, and the cost of importing both grains and hops was too high for the individual brewer.⁹³ As a result, some New England colonists resorted to making spruce beer. Recipes for spruce beer appear regularly in cookery books throughout the eighteenth century. Instructions reveal the relative ease involved in the production of this beer; one recipe states: “Take half a pint of spruce – boil two hours in five gallons of soft water – a quart of molasses – when cold work in a large tea cup full of good thick yest – lit is work 24 hours & then bottle it off.”⁹⁴ The anonymous author of this particular recipe continued to say, “it will be pleasant Beer without the spruce.” It is curious that the spruce from which the beer gains its name appears to be an optional ingredient. Such recipes

⁹² Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery*, 34, 36-39; James McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 250.

⁹³ McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating*, 250.

⁹⁴ Anon., “Recipe Book,” (c. 1800), f. 1. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

show how the settlers adjusted methods in response to the new environment to continue the production of sought after alcoholic drinks.

Although beer and cider were in high demand, more so at first in the case of beer, colonial improvisation and ingenuity led to the creation of new, stronger drinks. Colonists took advantage of the abundance of apples to make cider, which became regularly present and popular throughout the colonies. The colonists living in colder regions of North America also distilled apples into a kind of spirit known as 'applejack.' The harsh winter months of the northeast complicated beer and cider production as drinks with high water content froze. In order to keep alcohol available and in liquid form, the settlers found ways to increase the amount of alcohol in the drink. To accomplish this, colonists in the northern region of British North America made use of a process known as freeze distillation, or fractional crystallization.⁹⁵ While this process, referred to as *jacking*, did not embody a true form of distillation, it served as a means for colonists to manipulate the amount of alcohol in a drink and ensure a continued supply throughout the winter months. After producing a batch of cider, they exposed the cider to the freezing winter

⁹⁵ Sanborn C. Brown, "Beers and Wines of Old New England: Under harsh conditions in a country very different from the fatherland, the early settlers gradually evolved beverages which they came to appreciate for their own qualities," *American Scientist* 66, 4 (July-August 1978), 465.

temperatures, which caused the water in the cider to freeze. After the ice was broken and removed, a stronger concentration of alcohol remained unfrozen below the extracted water. Through this method of freezing and withdrawing the water, what was once traditional cider became a concentrated liquor.⁹⁶ This likely resulted in a drink of inconsistent strength, but as cider itself fell within the range of eight percent to ten percent alcohol, applejack possibly compared to alcoholic content of fortified wines, which contain around eighteenth percent alcohol.⁹⁷ By increasing the potency of cider, the colonists were able to preserve their supply of alcohol during times of scarce resources.

In the southern colonies, leaving cider out to freeze was not an option, prompting settlers to turn instead to home distillation. Fruit brandies became popular beverages in the region as colonial settlers created their own versions of the old *brandewijn* in homemade stills.⁹⁸ Southern colonists distilled apples into an apple brandy, which became a popular beverage throughout the region in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In addition to apples, colonists extracted resources

⁹⁶ Ken Albala, "Applejack," *Alcohol in Popular Culture: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Rachel Black (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 10; Ben Watson, *Cider, Hard and Sweet: History, Traditions, and Making Your Own*, third edition (Woodstock, VT: The Country Man Press, 2013), 27-28.

⁹⁷ On the strength of popular colonial drinks see Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 9.

⁹⁸ McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating*, 253-254.

from the environment to distill fermented mashes of plums, grapes, blackberries, pears, cherries, and peaches.⁹⁹ Similar to distilling practices in England, early spirits produced in the North American colonies were made in the household, and often by women.

The high mortality rates during the early decades of English settlement in North America prompted increased concern over the maintenance of physical health. The initial years of England's first permanent settlement, Jamestown, was especially devastating to the small population. Historians have discussed at length the early "seasoning" period of English settlement, which brought with it waves of death and the near collapse of England's second attempt at a North American outpost. The high mortality among the Jamestown colonists was notable, even in a society accustomed to privation and epidemic disease. Following the first year of settlement, in 1608, thirty-eight out of the 108 founding settlers survived; between 1607 and 1624, only 1,200 of the 6,000 people sent to Virginia remained alive.¹⁰⁰ Referred to with the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 255.

¹⁰⁰ Statistics in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown" *Journal of American History*, 66, 1 (June 1979), 24. Other historians who have looked at death in early America include: Gerald L. Cates, "'THE SEASONING': Disease and Death Among the First Colonists in Georgia" *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 64, 2 (Summer, 1980): 146-158; Margaret Coffin, *Death in Early America: The History and Folklore of Customs and Superstitions of Early Medicine, Funerals, Burials, and*

simple, yet sinister, title, “The Starving Time,” the winter of 1609 brought the Jamestown settlers to their knees. Historians have examined the instances of drought, disinterest in labor amongst the settlers, and possible cases of cannibalism during this harrowing episode in early American history.¹⁰¹ Historical inquiries, however, have not included much consideration of colonial perceptions regarding alcohol and the maintenance of bodily health during the seasoning period. In 1609, the Virginia governor issued a call for two brewers. Beer appeared to be a lacking necessity, as hundreds of the settlers suffered from illness, but had nothing to drink but water, “which,” the governor wrote, “is contrary to the nature of the English.”¹⁰² The strong, perceived connections between beer and health prompted New England settlers to import English beer to treat cases of scurvy. In areas where the settlers were in strong health, observers credited it to the good quality of beer they consumed. Compared to distilled spirits, producing beer involved lower expense and lack of specialized equipment. These factors, along with the established

Mourning (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1976); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975).

¹⁰¹ Dennis B. Blanton, “Drought as a Factor in the Jamestown Colony, 1607-1612” *Historical Archaeology*, 34, 4 (2000): 74-81; Rachel B. Herrmann, “The ‘tragicall historie’: Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 68, 1 (January 2011): 47-74.

¹⁰² McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating*, 244-245.

cultural significance of beer in English settlements, meant colonists in the early era of settlement preferred beer over distilled spirits.¹⁰³

Medical practice in the colonies maintained many old-fashioned traditions that hearkened back to life in medieval, rather than early modern, England. In 1619, to help ensure the health of the early colonial settlements, the Virginia Company instructed the colonists to distill “hott waters out of your Lees of Beere,” and to seek out medicinal natural resources.¹⁰⁴ Medical treatment fell to neighbors who had knowledge of homemade remedies, as – unlike the strict hierarchy within the English medical profession – there was no legal requirement within the colonies for a person to possess a license to practice medicine. The practice of medicine, therefore, remained in the hands of women, laymen, and the few apothecaries who answered the call of joint-stock companies, such as the Virginia Company, to migrate to the colonies.¹⁰⁵ In the New England colonies, for the first century after settlement, only thirty-two individuals were either educated or classified as apothecaries. Of the thirty-two

¹⁰³ Ibid., 247.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Harold B. Gill Jr., *The Apothecary in Colonial Virginia*, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1972), 17.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 18, 23.

apothecaries, thirty-one were men, meaning the women who did produce medicinal remedies overwhelmingly did so in the household.¹⁰⁶

Well-established physicians had little reason to migrate to North America, meaning that those who did migrate were less skilled and, in general, less successful than apothecaries in the British Isles. All medical practitioners in the colonies, in spite of training or qualification, assumed the title of “doctor,” and often one individual carried out the work of physician, surgeon, and apothecary.¹⁰⁷ Like many residents in England before the eighteenth century, most American colonists could not afford the services of a physician, and they often looked to their own, usually alcoholic, remedies to treat bouts of illness. The apothecaries that transferred from England to North America likely operated in a manner very much like the apothecaries of the English countryside. The distance

¹⁰⁶ Norman Gevitz, “‘Pray Let the Medicines Be Good’: The New England Apothecary in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries,” *Pharmacy in History* 41, 3 (1999), 88. This number only applies to those officially recognized as apothecaries and does not factor in any informal treatment laymen or housewives may have provided to neighbors. The first female apothecary in New England was Elizabeth Gookin Greenleaf, who assisted her husband, a physician. She opened her own shop in Boston in 1727, before the establishment of legal requirements regarding pharmacy in the colony in 1730.

¹⁰⁷ Helen Brock, “North America, a western outpost of European medicine,” in Andrew Cunningham and Roger French, eds. *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 196; Gevitz, “Pray Let the Medicines Be Good,” 88.

between the colonies and metropole also disrupted the practice and understanding of medicine; this distance kept colonial medicine in what historians have described as a “primitive” state.¹⁰⁸ In both New England and the Chesapeake, the principles of Galen continued to inform philosophies and practices in medical treatment.

Colonial apothecaries had no choice but to work with limited resources. In spite of those limitations, cordial remedies remained a mainstay of apothecary shops. The apothecaries in the Chesapeake regularly advertised the medicines they sold, which included spirits and cordial waters. Although many individual settlers lacked the equipment to make these strong waters, each apothecary shop included its own still. Consisting of a tub, a copper head, and a “swan neck,” or worm, the apothecary could create his or her own alcohol-based remedies in a manner similar to their English counterparts.¹⁰⁹ The advertisements featured little change throughout the eighteenth century; one can assume similar kinds of cordials and spirits were available in colonial apothecary shops.¹¹⁰ Some apothecaries, however, found themselves in trouble for doing more than simply making these cordial remedies. In mid-seventeenth century Salem, apothecary William Woodcock obtained a

¹⁰⁸ Gill, *The Apothecary in Colonial Virginia*, 15-16.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-31, 33.

license to distill alcohol and sell it to the public, although he received criticism for “partaking too liberally of his own creation.”¹¹¹

The brutal seasoning period not only affected those English settlers struggling to adapt to the North American climate, but it also affected the English émigrés in the Caribbean colonies. The heat of the tropical environment proved to be a point of concern for English settlers. They believed their bodies were best suited for a temperate climate, one similar to that of England.¹¹² The royalist Richard Ligon, who sought out better opportunities in Barbados the midst of the English Civil War, commented on the heat of the island. Finding the “*Air* so torridly hot,” Ligon saw the heat as a threat to the well-being of the Englishmen on the island.¹¹³ In line with the accepted medical theories of the day, these settlers believed that overheating would throw their internal humors off-balance. As an excess of one humor often resulted in the expelling of certain bodily fluids, English settlers saw instances of excessive sweating as detrimental, and possibly even dangerous, for their health. Humoral theory associated the

¹¹¹ Gevitz, “Pray Let the Medicines Be Good,” 92. Following Woodcock’s death in 1669, Rev. John Higginson reportedly complained of problems with excessive drinking in town, believing Woodcock’s influence as responsible for this activity.

¹¹² Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 41, 2 (April 1984), 213.

¹¹³ Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (London: 1673), 9, 27.

heat of the sun with Cholera, the humor corresponding with fire. In the eyes of the English, moving to the hotter climate of the Caribbean increased the likelihood of bodily illness and disease.¹¹⁴

Similar to settlers in North America, the English in the Caribbean turned to spirits to maintain their health. Since they believed that sweating left the stomach “cold and debilitated,” the colonists thought the heat of spirits would restore balance and strength to their bodies.¹¹⁵ In addition to the heat of the tropics, the dampness and humidity brought with the tropical weather also encouraged the colonists to turn to spirits for medicinal purposes. The “hot” properties of the spirits served as a form of protection against chills in the cool night air, but the colonists also believed spirits helped protect them from diseases like Yellow Fever, which often broke out within the Caribbean settlements.¹¹⁶ In addition to maintaining humoral balance and warding off disease, the settlers believed that distilled spirits helped aid in the digestion of food. As mentioned, this practice was common amongst the social elite in Europe, who partook of

¹¹⁴ Kupperman, “Fear of Hot Climates,” 214-215.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 220-221. Although a common belief in the seventeenth century, and even in cases today, associated the burning caused by the high alcohol content with heat, alcohol has a cooling, rather than a warming, effect on the body. As Kupperman notes, spirits increase blood flow to the skin, which promotes sweating (as well as redness in the face and cheeks often associated with drunkenness).

¹¹⁶ Frederick H. Smith, *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 25-26.

lavish *digestifs*, such as Mary Bent's saffron-colored Orange Watter.

English settlers carried this practice to the Caribbean. When the heat of the day seemed to sap strength from their bodies, drams of spirits became increasingly popular among the emerging planter class.¹¹⁷

While the medicinal properties of spirits became particularly important during the era of early English settlement, some observers expressed concern at the volume of spirits that colonists began to imbibe. Explorers and settlers, including Sir Henry Colt and Richard Ligon both documented their criticisms of the settlers' excessive use of spirits. While the English in both Europe and the colonies largely accepted the use of alcohol as a form of medicine, concerns regarding the amount people drank appeared alongside such practices. Ligon, in particular, saw distilled spirits as contributing to the internal heat of the body, rather than countering it. In spite of Ligon's concern over the quantity of spirits consumed by the settlers, however, he was quick to acknowledge the medical importance, and even necessity of distilled spirits, stating:

[C]ertainly strong drinks are very requisite, where so much heat is; for the spirits being exhausted with much sweating, the inner parts are left cold and faint, and shall need comforting, and reviving. Besides, our bodies having been used to colder Climates, find a debility, and a great failing in the vigour and sprightliness we have in colder Climates...¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Kupperman, "Fear of Hot Climates," 222; Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 26.

¹¹⁸ Ligon, *A True and Exact History*, 27.

Although spirits presented a threat in the eyes of some in the Caribbean, the settlers continued to see the hot qualities of the spirits as an important factor in the maintenance of bodily health. For the colonists in both the Caribbean and North America, distilled spirits served as a means of protection against the unfamiliar and threatening aspects of the new environment.

Before spirits evolved into a favored imperial commodity during the latter-half of the seventeenth century, distilled cordial remedies provided a significant source of medicine in both England and in England's Atlantic colonies. Limited production and consumption of these potent beverages established these strong waters as a source of wholesome nourishment. Developed through alchemists' experiments, late medieval and early modern distillation manuals helped spread knowledge of the producing spirituous liquors across Western Europe. The purity of spirits reinforced notions of the mystical nature of *aqua vitae*, and the significance of spirits in maintaining bodily health established liquor as a necessity in both English and colonial households.

Tradition prompted English settlers to carry familiar practices across the Atlantic. Along with structures of government and the construction of towns and farmsteads, settlers also brought with them

certain perceptions of alcoholic beverages. Early settlement in North America and the Caribbean created new challenges for maintaining personal health. New environments initiated harsh seasoning periods that left many settlers struggling to survive. Turning to familiar remedies, colonial apothecaries constructed stills and produced a number of “strong waters” to help the settlers cope with illness while adjusting to life across the Atlantic.

Although spirits were too expensive for most people to produce or to purchase before the eighteenth century, distilled liquors played a prominent role in early modern English society and colonization. Featured in numerous physick and cookery books, such spirits were an important source of medicine for internal and external ailments. High potency coupled with small servings reinforced the idea that these ‘strong waters’ were wholesome in nature and safe to consume. The same distilling practices used by English housewives and apothecaries for centuries transferred into commercial distilleries interested in producing spirits not for the maintenance of health but for the pursuit of profit. As stills grew larger, distillers sold increasing amounts of potent spirits to a large consumer market who *could* afford these strong waters. By the end of the seventeenth century, increased output and imperial commercial interests made distilled spirits abundant, cheap, and readily available to the casual

drinker. Spurred by economic profit, the overproduction of the 'waters of life' led to new questions, social concerns, and perceptions of the dangers of the once medicinal spirits. From household production to large-scale, commercial production, created through the emerging plantation system in the Caribbean, spirituous liquors increasingly became a recreational beverage that appealed to those seeking inebriation rather than bodily health.

Chapter 2

Of Beast and Man: Drunkenness in the Seventeenth Century

“That as Drunkards have lost the prorgative of their *Creation*, and are changed... from *men* into *beasts*, so they turn the *sanctuary of life* into the *shambles of death*.”¹¹⁹

To those living in England, and in England’s American colonies during the seventeenth century, the drunkard was a peculiar figure, one who put himself at great risk, of both public scorn and eternal damnation. Popular perceptions of the shabby drunkard – who was always male – maintained that he risked demonic possession along with a plethora of potential accidents that awaited the careless, inattentive drunk.¹²⁰ This included, but was certainly not limited to, falling and drowning in a ditch, falling under a horse-driven cart, or falling into a scalding cauldron. The greatest threat for drunkards, however, was gambling with their immortal

¹¹⁹ Richard Younger, *A Sovereign Antidote, or, A Precious Mithridate: For Recovery of Souls twice dead in Sin, and buried in the Grave of Long Custome, to the Life of Grace* (London: 1663), 8.

¹²⁰ In popular perceptions, drunkards almost always appeared as male. Sermons and published tracts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries used male-centric language to describe drunkards, such as in the Calvinist writer, Richard Younger’s 1663 anti-drunkenness tirade. Younger implied that drunkards were male, whereas women were instead the victims of such male drunkenness. Instances when women did succumb to drunkenness, particularly during the early eighteenth-century “gin craze” in London, proved to be a shocking challenge to this budding paradigm. Richard Younger, *A Sovereign Antidote* (London: 1663).

souls.¹²¹ Inebriation caused by excessive drinking, and resulting in the loss of mental and physical capabilities, became a popular point of criticism among moral and spiritual reformers during the early modern era. Religious authority figures stressed that, while drinking itself was not a sin, drinking in excess constituted a moral failing. Even before highly potent spirits became available on a wide scale, critics frequently described drunkards as morally degenerated and likened them to beasts more than men, a person who offered nothing to the society in which they lived. Although these arguments emerged while the common alcoholic drinks remained ale, beer, cider, and wine, the growth of commercial distillation during the midpoint of the seventeenth century permanently shifted the nature of alcoholic consumption and the perception of distilled spirits. By the end of the seventeenth century, imperial interests had turned spirits into a formidable commodity that spread across the Atlantic World. The increasing commercial production of spirits in both England and its American colonies led new concerns to emerge over drinking practices. As more spirits became available, and as instances of inebriation increased, the image of the beastly drunkard persisted and intensified. Seventeenth-century arguments that drunkenness made the drinker less

¹²¹ Each of the risks appears, among many others, in Samuel Clark, *A Warning-piece to all Drunkards and Health-Drinkers* (London: 1682).

than human ultimately established the rhetorical foundation favored by early temperance advocates in the eighteenth century.

This study will examine how the rhetoric employed to discourage excessive drinking during the seventeenth century did not fade away, but rather evolved in the eighteenth century, becoming the main language of nineteenth-century temperance movements. It will also show how, during the seventeenth century, religious leaders were the primary critics of intoxicated behavior, and they portrayed inebriation as a moral and spiritual failing rather than a physical problem. One of the most influential arguments among seventeenth-century critics of drunkenness was that drunkards – or, those who habitually drank to the point of inebriation – were animalistic, beastly, and ultimately less than human. The emphasis on the rational mind during the Enlightenment, however, conflicted with the notion that a person would intentionally lose his sense of reason through inebriation. This willful loss of reason – what became known as “voluntary madness” – presented a direct affront to the ideals of enlightened philosophers. As Enlightenment thought helped separate the connections between the spiritual and physical worlds, the human body, and in particular the mind, increased in importance for philosophers. Reason became the defining element that separated and denoted the superiority of mankind over all other living creatures. Excessive drinking

not only appeared to be a voluntary act but also one that destroyed the singular trait of mental superiority. As the early modern era progressed, the discourse surrounding drunkenness increasingly focused on the way inebriation destroyed reason. This loss of reason reinforced notions that drunkards were more akin to beasts than man. Although the morality of excessive drinking remained an enduring point of contention in both the early modern and modern eras, the significance placed upon the rational, sober mind during the Enlightenment raised new questions about the perceived need to control those seemingly unable to control themselves.

The sources that most commonly contain this language are religious in nature, featuring ministers who regularly condemned excessive drinking in sermons. On both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, ministers and missionaries recorded their perceptions of alcohol and drunkenness. Many of these sources do not deny the importance of alcohol, but as more people consumed greater amounts of distilled liquors during the latter-half of the seventeenth century, social elites permanently changed the way they perceived and discussed alcohol consumption. The sermons of the influential Puritan ministers Increase and Cotton Mather, and letters from Anglican missionaries working for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel indicate that excessive drinking was perceived as a constant problem across the North American and Caribbean

colonies. Although Puritan and Anglican ministers disagreed on doctrine, both churches condemned excessive drinking throughout the early modern era. During the latter-half of the seventeenth century, drunkenness became a favorite topic of discussion at the pulpit. English ministers, such as Samuel Clark and Edward Bury, expounded at length about the dangers that intoxication posed to the human body and to the well being of society. The arguments made by these religious leaders were similar to the underpinning laws aimed at controlling drunkenness in England at the same time. Records from the Old Bailey reveal that accused persons often pinned excuses for their behavior on drunkenness. By the end of the seventeenth century, many critics of excessive drinking began to connect drunkenness to criminal acts.

Clergymen explained in detail to their flocks that those who drank to the point of inebriation allowed Satan an opportunity to shape and transform their bodies. Samuel Clark, a Puritan Nonconformist and outspoken opponent of drunkenness in the seventeenth century stated that, "The Devil having moistened and steeped [the drunkard] in his Liquor, shakes him like soft Clay, into what mould he pleaseth."¹²² This view of drunkenness combined fears of spiritual corruption with the loss of physical well-being. Drunkards not only proved to be physically feeble and

¹²² Clark, *A Warning-piece*, 4.

altogether reckless, but they also took on the qualities and appearances of beasts. Although drunkenness presented a source of concern for religious and political leaders, there was not yet widespread anxiety over this behavior. Ale, beer, and cider remained the most prominent drinks of daily life until the final decades of the seventeenth century, and fears of potent spirits did not yet factor into many of these early proclamations against drunkenness. The cultural and social significance of alcohol established drinking as a common act, as well as a perceived need. Drunkenness, while an occasional problem due to the lower alcoholic content of drinks like beer and cider, did not make critics of excessive drinking try to dissuade their listeners from mere consumption. By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, the development of new spirits caused a shift in the perceptions of alcohol and drunkenness. Still, the belief that alcohol was perceived as wholesome and good for the body outweighed fears of physical corruption and moral damnation.

Even before distilled spirits became widely available, drunkenness was an ongoing, albeit mild, point of concern in medieval and early modern life. It was a potential problem that lingered on the edge of every alcoholic beverage consumed. Political leaders in England continuously pushed for measures to limit this behavioral nuisance by restricting access to alcohol. As early as 1189, the government in London established a

licensing system for public houses.¹²³ Nightly curfews, initiated in 1327, established that public houses and taverns could not remain open after a determined hour. Those who operated an establishment in violation of the law received punishment either in the form of public humiliation or in payment of a fine, one that increased with each offence.¹²⁴ These laws seemed to fall short of their objective, as Parliament continued to pass legislation aimed at curbing excessive drinking. In 1552, a new Licensing Act required all alehouse operators to obtain a license. Acts passed during the mid-sixteenth century sought to restrict the “intolerable hurts and troubles” drunkenness caused by regulating the increasingly ubiquitous public drinking establishment: the alehouse.¹²⁵

By the end of the sixteenth century, drinking establishments in England mirrored social class divisions, establishing certain drinking venues as easy legal targets for those who saw drunkenness as a public problem. Of the three most prominent public drinking establishments, –

¹²³ Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 50; James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 5.

¹²⁴ A.H. Thomas, ed., *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London: Volume I, 1323-1364* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), roll A 1b, membr. 6 (8)b.; John Carpenter, *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, trans. and ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London, 1861), 240-241.

¹²⁵ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 5, 11.

inns, taverns, and alehouses – inns held the highest level of social prestige. Inns were larger, served full meals, and provided lodgings for wealthier travelers. Taverns also operated for more elite members of society, as many taverns exclusively served wine and catered to travelers, although these establishments did not feature the same level of refinement as inns. Alehouses, the most ‘crude’ of the three but also the most widespread, served the laboring class. By the end of the sixteenth century, there were fifty alehouses for every tavern in England.¹²⁶ As indicated by the name, these establishments sold ale, and later hopped beer, rather than wine. Historians have noted these separate venues divided the social classes through the creation of designated drinking spaces.¹²⁷ This, in turn, made drunkenness among the laboring class more visible. These laws, therefore, targeted the alehouse as a means of controlling the behavior of the poorer classes.

The rise of large-scale commercial brewing in London by the turn of the seventeenth century changed perceptions of excessive drinking. The budding beer brewing industry curtailed domestic production. During the medieval era, housewives brewed at home, in private, as part of their

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²⁷ Peter Clark, *English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (London: Longman, 1983), 11; Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 15.

household chores. Public houses that served unhopped ale often brewed it on site, and in many cases, women were responsible for that production as well.¹²⁸ Over the course of the sixteenth century, commercial brewing became possible through the addition of hops to the brewing process. Hops, which contain protective resins, made beer more resilient than unhopped ale and allowed brewers to produce beer in larger batches, knowing that it would not spoil in a week or two.¹²⁹ As the amount of beer produced rose, the opportunities for intoxication likewise increased. Higher beer consumption in public venues, like alehouses, brought instances of inebriation out of the home. In the wake of the English Reformation, Protestant religious leaders, who focused intently on the reformation of behavior, saw public drinking as particularly problematic. Ministers railed against excessive drinking and time spent in idleness in public houses.¹³⁰ Laborers who wiled away their time in a public house drinking did not actively contribute to the well-being of society. This made patrons of public houses easy targets for anti-drunkenness rhetoric.

¹²⁸ For more on medieval and early modern women's responsibilities in brewing ale or beer, see Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹²⁹ Kristen D. Burton, "The Citie Calls for Beere: the Introduction of Hops and the Foundation of Industrial Brewing in Early Modern London," *Brewery History*, 150 (2013), 6.

¹³⁰ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 9-10.

Although Parliament already had passed licensing laws and alehouse curfews to limit drunkenness, in 1606, Parliament passed an Act for “repressing the odious and loathsome synne of Drunckennes.”¹³¹ The law stated that inebriation resulted in a number of shocking crimes including bloodshed, murder, adultery, and swearing. This law set a fine of five shillings, roughly the amount of a day’s wages for laborers, for those found guilty of drunkenness. Anyone unable to pay within one week of conviction received his punishment in the form of public humiliation by spending six hours in the stocks.



Figure 3: “Daniel Defoe is standing in the pillory while soldiers have to restrain crowds from throwing flowers at him,” wood engraving (no date). The Wellcome Library, London. Although Defoe was put in the pillory for libel in 1702, this shows the punishment used on drunkards.

¹³¹ “An Act for repressing the odious and loathsome synne of Drunckennes,” 1606. HL/PO/PU 1. *The Statutes of the Realm, 1586 to 1624*, 1142. The Parliamentary Archives, London, United Kingdom.

Like previous laws, this act targeted the suppliers of alcohol, and it placed the burden of enforcement on city and town officials. Magistrates and justices of the peace kept track of those who frequented alehouses. If any official observed a person drinking habitually at the same alehouse beyond the “acceptable limit of alcohol” (which the act does not define), that official was to charge the offender. In this way, enforcing control over drunkenness remained a local matter. The law sought to the regular haunting of alehouses by those believed to be prone to drunkenness. Like previous attempts, however, this law struggled to fulfill its goal as the commercial production of beer increased and more kinds of strong beverages became available throughout the seventeenth century.¹³²

Such laws appeared to be necessary, as those testifying before the Old Bailey, the Central Criminal Court of London, often used drunkenness as an excuse for criminal activity. From 1674, when records of the Old Bailey proceedings begin, to 1699, claims of drunkenness appear seventy-two times. After extending that scope to the December 1799, the number of cases including drunkenness blossoms to 1,733. Within that same frame of time, 790 cases featured references to both drunkenness

¹³² Ibid., 1142-1143.

and liquor.¹³³ Those charged fighting, larceny, uttering seditious words, or even murder, often blamed their crimes on alcohol. One unnamed “young fellow,” tried on May 25, 1677 for stealing a silver plate valued at thirty-five shillings, claimed his actions were the result of drunkenness. The attempt failed, as the court found this and his other “several slight ridiculous Excuses” unsatisfactory and declared the defendant guilty.¹³⁴ Intoxication factored into another case in which Charles Sancey, a Frenchman, was put on trial December 8, 1680 for burglary at the house of an unidentified French Marquess. In this case, witnesses claimed that at one or two in the morning the cries of “[Murder] and Thieves” were heard from the Marquesses’ house. Those who heard the cries ran to the house and found the doors open. After ascending the stairs, they “found the Marquesses Steward weltring in his Blood, and a great Knife lying by him,” but no one else was present. After searching the house for the culprit, Sancey was found in the cellar, “besmeared with the Stewards Blood.” Sancey admitted that he and four others had planned to rob the Marquess, but he blamed his actions on drunkenness, which caused him to enter the house “by chance.” Even though Sancey stole nothing from

¹³³ Numbers calculated through The Old Bailey Proceedings: London’s Central Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913 Online database. www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.

¹³⁴ Old Bailey Proceedings Online, June 1677, trial of young fellow (t16770601-1): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.

the house, he was found guilty of breaking in with the intent to steal and was sentenced to death.¹³⁵

Men were not the only ones to blame their crime on drunkenness. Even though popular depictions of drunkards at the time were usually male, women, too, pointed to intemperance to explain criminal behavior. One case involved “Two Legerdemain Ladies” charged with shoplifting two pieces of calico in their aprons on December 13, 1676. One of the ladies claimed that she was drunk on brandy at the time, “and knew not what she did.” The reference to brandy shows how recreational consumption of the wine-based spirit grew during the seventeenth century, even among women. The charged woman’s attempt to blame her actions on spirits, however, did little to sway the court, and both women were found guilty.¹³⁶ Elizabeth Scot was also put on trial for theft on January 16, 1682, after she attempted to steal two silver perfume pots, two silver cups, six spoons, along with other pieces of silver in her apron. Scot likewise blamed her actions on drunkenness and, like the Legerdemain Ladies, claimed she “knew not what she did.” Similar to the previous cases, the

¹³⁵ Old Bailey Proceedings Online, December 1680, trial of Charles Sancey (t16801208-3): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.

¹³⁶ Old Bailey Proceedings Online, December 1676, trial of Legerdemain Ladies (t16761213-5): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.

court showed little sympathy or understanding and found Scot guilty. She was sentenced to death for the crime.¹³⁷

The regular connection between drunkenness and crime made in the Old Bailey courts caused certain elite observers to perceive excess drinking among poor laborers as a societal threat. Samuel Clark warned drunkards, “You promise your selves Mirth, Pleasure, and Jollity in your Cups; but for one drop of your mad Mirth, be sure of Gallons and Tons of Woe, Gall Wormwood, and bitterness here and hereafter.”¹³⁸ Through cases such as these, drunkenness appeared to invite evil affliction into the bodies and souls of both male and female drunkards, resulting in crimes that led to punishment via execution.

While legal impositions against drunkenness focused on the regulation of alehouses, moral authorities instead utilized harrowing depictions of the afterlife s to warn against insobriety. In sermons, ministers described the damnation in store for habitual drunkards. In 1677, Edward Bury, a minister at the Great Bolas church in Shropshire, stated, “...’tis to be feared, that nothing but Fire and Brimstone will awake many of

¹³⁷ Old Bailey Proceedings Online, January 1682, trial of Elizabeth Scot (t16820116a-1): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.

¹³⁸ Clark, *A Warning-piece to All Drunkards*, 3.

our drowsy *Drunkards*.¹³⁹ Concern over the spiritual corruption wrought by drunkenness is understandable coming from ministers, but this also emphasized the physical transformation caused by excessive drinking. Clark's *A Warning-piece to all drunkards*, printed in 1682, described drunkenness as "the general Rendezvouze [sic] of all sin," and excessive drinking resulted in a metamorphosis that made the drink unrecognizable to all who saw him.¹⁴⁰ When the drunkard soaked their bodies in pernicious liquors, according to Clark, "The Devil... shakes him like soft Clay, into what mould he pleaseth."¹⁴¹ Clark believed, that by drinking excessive amount of alcohol, the drunkard allowed the Devil to corrupt his body. Spiritual failings gave way to physical destruction. Ministers like Clark described the drunkard's soul as a "dunghill," and warned that such behavior set the habitual drinker on the path toward a spiritual, as well as a temporal, death.¹⁴²

Other sources presented drunkards as animals. A woodcut appearing opposite to the frontispiece of *Philocothomista*, by the early Jacobean playwright and author Thomas Heywood, depicts drunkards as a gathering of beasts. One man, shown as a swine, vomits onto the floor,

¹³⁹ Edward Bury, *England's Bane or the Deadly Danger of Drunkenness* (London: 1677), B3.

¹⁴⁰ Clark, *A Warning-piece to all drunkards*, preface, no pagination.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

while another man, depicted as a goat, throws back a large glass of alcohol. Other animals, including a donkey, a mule, and a bird carouse around a table, which is tended to by a woman who appears to the left, carrying in two more tankards of drink for the drunken beasts.¹⁴³



Figure 4: Thomas Heywood, *Philothonista, or the Drunkard, Opened, Dissected and Anatomized* (London: 1635).

¹⁴³ Frontispiece discussed in Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 43.

Accompanying the frontispiece, Heywood included the following lines:

[Calves], Goates, Swine, Asses, at a Banquet set,
To graspe Health's in their Hooff's, thou seest here met;
Why wonder'st thou oh Drunkard, to behold
Thy brothers? In whose ranke thou art inrowl'd,
When thou (so oft, as tox't at any Feast)
Can'st bee no better held, then such a beast,
Since, like *Cyrcean* Cups, Wine doth surprise
Thy senses, and thy reason stupifies,
Which Foe, would Warre-like *Brittaine* quite expell,
No Nation like it, could bee said to excell.¹⁴⁴

In this passage, Heywood brought together many of the prominent arguments employed by early seventeenth-century critics of drunkenness. Lacking reason, a drunkard was no more than a beast. Any man who over-indulged at a banquet would be no better than the absurd menagerie depicted in the frontispiece. If an enemy posed such a threat, Heywood states, the state would take military action. Instead of expelling this particular foe, Heywood wryly claims that no other nation excelled at the art of drunkenness quite like the English.¹⁴⁵

While Heywood is best known for his work as a playwright, prominent in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras of English theater, late in his life, he abandoned his work with the theater and began writing pieces focused on England's history and social commentary, like

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Heywood, *Philocothomista, or the Drunkard, Opened, Dissected and Atomized* (London: 1635), cover.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

Philocothomista.¹⁴⁶ In just under 100 pages, Heywood carries out the promise of his title; he dissects the drunkard through an examination of the history of drunkenness from antiquity to Heywood's present. He turns the drunkard into an isolated subject for one to scrutinize and pick apart. Heywood ridicules drunkards through a series of stories, such as one in which a drunkard "could not find his owne doore," although he knew the area well. Heywood tells of another drunkard who decided to relieve himself into a chimney, fell in, and believed he had fallen into a well.¹⁴⁷ Comical though these stories appear, the central message of Heywood's *Philocothomista* is clear: drunkards who discard the "Noblenesse of their owne Nature, and give themselues over to inordinate and carnall appetities" are no different from asses, swine, and other beasts.¹⁴⁸ By drinking to the point of inebriation, the drunkard made himself into something less than human.

The rhetoric of drunkards as beasts carried into the eighteenth century. Often, critics of drunken behavior drew correlations between the actions of the inebriated and farm animals. Edward Bury, a Presbyterian minister based in Shropshire, made such a comparison in a pamphlet published posthumously in 1677, stating, "Consider *Drunkenness* is such

¹⁴⁶ Barbara J. Baines, *Thomas Heywood* (Boston: Twayne, 1984), 4-5.

¹⁴⁷ Heywood, *Philocothomista*, 75-77.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

a Sin, as takes away the use of Reason and turns a Man into a Beast, yea makes him worse than a Beast, he that in the Creation was made little lower than the Angels, is now become lower than the Beast.”¹⁴⁹ Once more, Bury made use of religious imagery combined with descriptions of physical corruption to emphasize the dehumanization wrought by excessive drinking. He argues that such a person, who willingly befell the effects of drunkenness, was not only lower than man, but also lower than the beast. As those who succumbed to the vapors of alcohol often lost control of their mental and physical capabilities, the drunkard physically became something less than human. Other ministers, like Clark, agreed with the notion that drunkards sunk lower than common beasts. He stated, “The bewitching, besotting nature of Drunkenness: It doth not turn men into Beasts, as some think, for a Beast scorns it... But it turns them into Fools and Sots, dehominates them, turns them out of their own Essences for the time, and so disfigures them, that God saith, *Non est hæe Imago mea*, This is not my Image...”¹⁵⁰ In this way, ministers argued that drunkards corrupted their souls when they lost control of their physical bodies. Drinking to excess did such damage that the drunkard was no longer representative of God’s own creation.

¹⁴⁹ Bury, *England’s Bane*, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Clark, *A Warning-piece*, preface (no pagination).

Much of the religious rhetoric against drunkenness focused on the deterioration of the drinker's physical body. This line of thought appeared continuously throughout the early modern era, as religion and medicine remained largely bound together at the time. To many, diseases and other afflictions occurred as the result of one's environment or as a form of natural justice. Those who fell into the practice of sinful behavior could expect to receive punishment in the form of bodily illness. This perception made health, both bodily and spiritual, a matter of personal responsibility.¹⁵¹ Therefore, ministers directed many of their messages toward the individual; each person was ultimately responsible for controlling his behavior. If a person engaged in behavior that opened his body to sin and corruption, then he was at fault.

Drunkenness remained a widespread example of this corruption to early modern ministers. Chaplain Edward Buckler argued that the human body was naturally opposed to the state of drunkenness, as evidenced by the physical reaction that occurred in response to inebriation. Buckler describes this reaction, stating, "'Tis to drink to such a Degree of giddiness that we are not able to stand... it is made a sign of a drunk man, to fall and to rise no more... 'Tis to drink unto Vomiting... *Drink and be drunken, and*

¹⁵¹ Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine, and Society in England, 1550-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 20-22.

spue.¹⁵² Buckler agreed that drunkenness deformed the drinker until he resembled beast more than man. Yet, the deprivation of one's "noble faculties" – this perceived 'voluntary madness' – is what turned man into a beast.¹⁵³ Buckler explained, "[Drunkenness] 'Tis a Sin against the very Law of Nature as well as against the written Law of God, being amongst those evils in which there is so much evil and deformity, that if there were no external Law at all against it, a rational nature must needs look upon it with abhorrency."¹⁵⁴ Drunkenness removed the restraint of self-control, which was an aspect that spiritual leaders simply could not abide. All personal and bodily control was lost with inebriation, with no apparent shame that accompanied such behavior.

To bring an excessive amount of strong liquors into the body – the vessel reflecting God's own image and the residence of the soul – represented the moment in which the drinker descended below the realm of humanity. Buckler summed up this line of thought, stating, "He that being Sober is not ashamed to be drunk, how should he being drunk, be ashamed of any thing? That is, he that being a Man is not ashamed to turn

¹⁵² Edward Buckler, *The sin and folly of drunkenness considered* (London: 1682), 6-7.

¹⁵³ As explained by James Nicholls, 'voluntary madness' was "something [religious writers on drink] saw as both a species of gluttony and the willful destruction of the rationality which God had uniquely bestowed upon Man." Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 21.

¹⁵⁴ Buckler, *The Sin and Folly*, 13-14.

himself into a Swine, how should he being a Swine be ashamed to wallow in the mire?" In the eyes of religious leaders, drunkenness corrupted the body, threatened eternal damnation, and destroyed perceivable elements of humanity. The Calvinist tract writer, Richard Younge, wrote in 1663 that it was far better for one to be either a toad or a serpent than a drunkard, illustrating the sheer level of disgrace certain people associated with excessive drinking.¹⁵⁵ These religious leaders also noted that such outcomes seemed to be of little concern to drunkards. Younge blamed this apparent lack of care on the Devil, stating, "Much less do *Drunkards...* know, that it is *not they, but the Devil in them*, when they *scoff at Religion and holiness.*"¹⁵⁶ For ministers like Buckler, they believed that, through the loss of rationality, the only worry held by these beastly individuals was when and where they would find their next drink. In the words of Buckler, these drunkards, these *men* "whose Souls are in their Bellies," offered little use to society and deserved little respect. It was through their own actions that these drunkards became a creature lacking any perceptible personhood.¹⁵⁷

Such concerns over drunkenness grew alongside the consumption of distilled spirits in the midst of the seventeenth century. As mentioned,

¹⁵⁵ Younge, *A Sovereign Antidote*, 7.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Buckler, *The Sin and Folly*, 36-37.

although distilled spirits existed before the seventeenth century, production remained small, limited, and expensive. English distilled spirits became a commercial commodity after the 1640s when sugarcane replaced tobacco as the chief crop in England's Caribbean colonies. Imperial ambitions established a distilled byproduct of sugar making – a spirit called Kill-Devil, rumbullion, but, eventually, rum – as the common drink throughout England's growing Atlantic empire. Rum fundamentally changed drinking practices across the Atlantic. Increased production meant lower cost for a potent source of alcohol. Frederick Smith estimates that, from 1664 to 1667, the price of Barbadian rum fell to two shillings one pence per gallon.¹⁵⁸ As liquor, that was previously unaffordable for most individuals, became increasingly available, elite members of society, not only ministers, changed their views of spirituous liquors. Over time, the waters of life began to appear quite dangerous.

Before the emergence of rum, however, early settlers in the Caribbean already held established drinking practices that shocked new arrivals. During a brief stay in Barbados in 1631, only four years after the English began to colonize the island, English explorer Sir Henry Colt noted the practice of excessive drinking among the settlers. Although it is likely the drinks consumed at this point were not yet rum, Colt observed an

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 21.

apparent reliance on strong alcoholic drinks at the outset of colonization.¹⁵⁹ Colt, on his way to St. Christopher, stopped in Barbados for three weeks, offering one of the earliest accounts of Barbadian life.¹⁶⁰ Colt noted with surprise the level of idleness among the settlers, as well as their servants and slaves. Concerning this behavior, Colt stated, “You are all yong men, & of good desert, if you would but bridle ye excesse of drinkinge, together wth ye quarelsome conditions of your fyery spiritts.”¹⁶¹

Fiery spirits and excessive drinking marked a way of life for colonists in Barbados from the outset. Colt saw these drinking practices as a “bad example,” and he condemned the English settlers for their lack of temperance or initiative toward labor.¹⁶² The three week-period that Colt spent in Barbados was not an enjoyable time in his life; he complained about the insects, such as gnats and ants, which proved a constant bother

¹⁵⁹ Frederick Smith discusses in detail the different alcoholic beverages produced by indigenous communities in the Caribbean. A wide array of fermented drinks were available to the settlers in the early years of colonization, in addition to imported beer, wine, and liquor. At the point of Colt’s stay in Barbados, Smith argues that the spirits consumed were not rum, but were prototypes of rum. Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 6-12.

¹⁶⁰ Sir Henry Colt, “The Voyage of Sr Henrye Colt Knight to ye Ilands of ye Antilleas in ye shipp called ye *Alexande*” in Vincent T. Harlow, ed. *Colonising expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1925), 64-65; Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar & Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1972), 15-17.

¹⁶¹ Colt, “The Voyage of Sr Henrye Colt,” 65.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 65-66.

to the English colonists on the island. In addition to the unfamiliar and uncomfortable conditions he encountered, Colt admitted that he succumbed to the excesses of the Barbadian settlers. Within a few days of arriving, Colt stated that the practice of habitual drinking “corrupted” him. Such behavior led to little good, in Colt’s eyes, as he found the English settlers constantly inebriated, in conflict with one another, and failing to tend to their servants or the land. Colt blamed the constant fighting on the excessive drinking, stating, “But ye worst of all was your manifold quarrels. Your younge & hott bloods, should not haue oyle [alcohol] added to encrease ye flame, but rather cold water to quench it.”¹⁶³ Although settlers also used the “hot” qualities of alcohol to balance the effects of the hot environment, Colt saw this manner of drinking and the violence it created as driving the island into a deplorable state. Colt contended that the settlers’ lack of care or initiative, in addition to their constant drinking, left the “ground & plantations... like ye ruines of some village lately burned.”¹⁶⁴ The only activity the early settlers of Barbados seemed to succeed at, as summed up by Colt, was imbibing alcohol.

After three weeks, Colt and his men left Barbados for St. Christopher, arriving at what was England’s first Caribbean colony on

¹⁶³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 65.

June 26, 1631. The lifestyle of the colonists on St. Christopher offered a point of comparison to that of the Barbadians. Colt evaluated the two colonies and the inhabitants, stating that, “St Christophers haue as good drinkers as [Barbados], butt nott so manye, neyther soe quarrelsome.”¹⁶⁵ He also claimed that the colonists of St. Christopher were not as idle as the Barbadians, however many did tend to “wander about.”¹⁶⁶ Before the production of sugar, English settlers in the Caribbean attempted and failed to produce tobacco, but high cost and low investment likely contributed to the idle behavior criticized by Colt.¹⁶⁷ Even though Colt complained at length about the amount of alcohol – and possibly hard liquor at that, as indicated by his use of the terms “hott water” and “oyle” – consumed by the English settlers in Barbados, the drinking habits of colonists in the Caribbean were but a mild precursor to the behavior that developed around the production of rum.

Less than two decades after Colt made his brief appearance in Barbados, Richard Ligon’s three-year stay on the island occurred in the midst of the proto-industrial sugar production that spread throughout the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 91.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 91.

¹⁶⁷ Dunn, *Sugar & Slaves*, 49-50.

Caribbean.¹⁶⁸ Ligon's descriptions show that the drinking habits Colt criticized had not improved. Settlers continued to drink regularly, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, they relied upon spirits to maintain bodily health. Ligon, however, had reservations about such practices. Recalling the theory of bodily humors, and how ill suited Englishmen believed they were for a tropical climate, Ligon expressed his own fears of laboring in high temperatures and the risk of overheating the body. Going against the common belief that spirits strengthened weakened stomachs and brought increased health, Ligon held his own views:

We are seldom dry or thirsty, unless we overheat our bodies with extraordinary labour, or drinking strong drinks; as of our *English* spirits, we carry over, of *French* Brandy, of the drink of the Island, which is made of the skimmings of the Coppers, that boyl the Sugar, which they call kill-Devil. And though some of these be needful if they be used with temper; yet the immoderate use of them, over-heats the body, which causes Costiveness [constipation], and Tortions in the bowels; which is a disease very frequent there; and hardly cur'd, and of which many have dyed...¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Historians have written extensively on the economic nature of the plantation system established in European colonies during the early modern era. Sidney Mintz's seminal text, *Sweetness and Power*, acknowledges the complexities that surround the plantation system in the Caribbean. Mintz states, "Both in its labor forms and its organization, then, the plantation is an oddity. Yet its existence was predicated on European intent, and in its own way it became vital to European development over time. If it was not 'capitalistic,' it was still an important step toward capitalism." Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 55.

¹⁶⁹ Ligon, *A True and Exact History*, 27. The "Tortions in the bowels" described by Ligon is an early reference to a disease later known as the West Indian dry gripes. While many Caribbean settlers blamed the illness

Here, Ligon points to the tendency of the settlers to raise their core temperatures through excessive consumption of hot spirits, which he saw as increasing the possibility of disease. It is in this passage that Ligon makes one of the earliest, explicit references to rum, which became a favorite beverage of Caribbean planters, their servants, and their slaves.

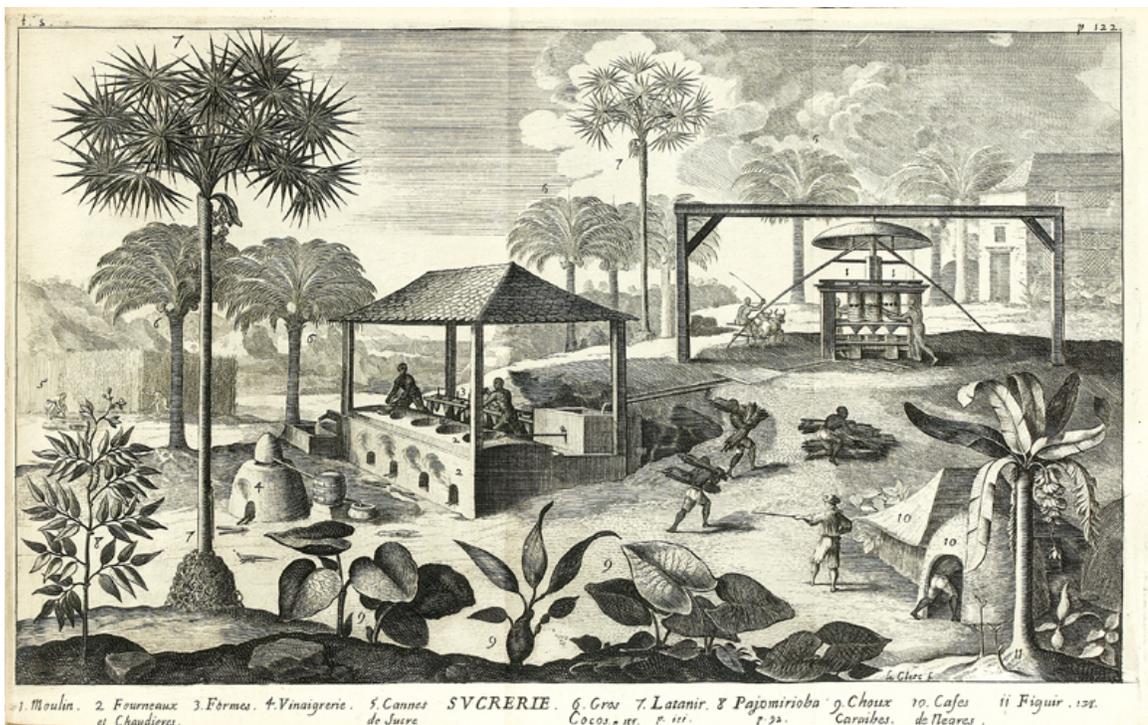


Figure 5: Image of a seventeenth-century French sugar plantation that shows a small alembic to the right. This image appears in Jean Baptiste Du Tertre, *Histoire generale des Antilles* (Paris: 1667-1671).

on excessive heat and overconsumption of spirits, the likely cause was lead poisoning, as the colonists distilled the rum in lead-contaminated stills. Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 144-145.

Rum probably came into existence through a cultural exchange between the Native population and the enslaved population, both of whom maintained traditions of producing alcohol. After the production of sugar took off in the region during the mid-seventeenth century, slaves gained increased access to the waste produced through the sugar-refining process – waste matter in which planters had little interest, at least at first. Slaves used this byproduct to make their own fermented beverages, calling on their knowledge and history of making alcohol in Africa. Similarly, indigenous groups living across the Caribbean produced their own alcoholic beverages, including the potato-based *mobbie* or the cassava-based *perino*. It is possible that the alcohol-making traditions present amongst these groups then combined with the knowledge of distillation that was introduced by Dutch settlers and traders in the region. As the sugar industry grew, so did production of the fiery sugar-spirit known as *rum*.¹⁷⁰

Ligon described the rum-making process in his account of the history of Barbados. By the time of Ligon's arrival, the production of sugar and rum was established to the point that still-houses were already commonplace on sugar plantations. Ligon explains planters collected the

¹⁷⁰ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 7-8, 12-13.

skimmings and scum created as the sugarcane juice boiled and sent this matter to the still-house. He continues:

After [the skimmings] remained in the Cisterns... till it be a little soure (for till then, the Spirits will not rise in the Still) the first spirit that comes off, is a small Liquor, which we call low-wines, which Liquor we put into the Still, and draw it off again; and of that comes so strong a Spirit, as a candle being brought to a near distance... the Spirits will flie to it...¹⁷¹

Although Ligon emphasizes the importance of the scum that rose to the top of the sugarcane juice in the midst of boiling, it was the thick, syrupy molasses left at the bottom of the cistern that became the most prominent ingredient in the rum-making process. Once mixed with water and exposed to air-borne yeast, molasses begins fermenting, similar to sugarcane juice, which ferments shortly after the cane is cut. After planters and slaves learned of this process, molasses beer became a popular drink amongst slaves and servants across the plantations. When fermented molasses is distilled, moreover, rum results. Modern estimations suggest that the rum produced in the Caribbean sugar plantations was quite potent, possibly as high as sixty-seven percent in alcohol content.¹⁷² This falls in line with Ligon's description of the spirits 'flying' toward any flame brought too close to it.

¹⁷¹ Ligon, *A True and Exact History*, 92-93.

¹⁷² Smith, *Drinking History*, 25.

The commercial production spread of rum across the Atlantic. While the bulk of the molasses and rum produced remained within the Caribbean colonies, over 600,000 gallons of Barbadian rum went to the North American colonies. While exports to England and Wales in the seventeenth century remained small – around 2,000 gallons in 1700 – English imports of Caribbean rum increased throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁷³ The movement of rum across the Atlantic World introduced unprecedented amounts of highly potent spirits to a consumer base that held established drinking practices. Throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, rum-based drinks, including punch, toddy, and grog, came to replace the rounds of beer and cider frequently consumed within taverns and public houses across England and its American colonies.

Rum was not the only spirit to gain popularity in the seventeenth century, however. Brandy remained a well-known and circulated spirit throughout the era, although the cost of brandy usually confined it to the social elite. In the mid-seventeenth century, Franciscus Sylvius, a professor of medicine at the University of Leyden, developed a new spirit, one made through the distillation of grain and flavored with juniper berries. This Dutch spirit, known as *junever*, Dutch for “juniper,” was a source of medicine made specifically for Dutch seaman. As this spirit began to

¹⁷³ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 28.

spread across Europe, *jenever* took on the name 'geneva,' and initially provided a source of rations for Dutch sailors during long sea voyages. Like brandy, geneva became a recreational beverage favored by the social elite, especially in the Low Countries. Supposedly, it became the favorite beverage of the nobleman William of Orange, later William III of England.¹⁷⁴ Historians have made much of the origins of gin, tracking the movement of geneva to England through William's capture of the English throne in 1688, but this remains a point of debate.¹⁷⁵ Richard Barnett, in *The Book of Gin*, states, "We have no concrete evidence that William drank gin, though he certainly enjoyed other spirits, and on many occasions his courtiers noted, with a touch of weariness, that their master and his boon companions had once more drunk themselves into unconsciousness."¹⁷⁶ While a king might escape harsh condemnations for engaging in beastly behavior, the increase of spirits for recreational consumption certainly fed into growing concerns members of the English

¹⁷⁴ David J. Hanson, *Preventing Alcohol Abuse: Alcohol, Culture, and Control* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 10; Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 27.

¹⁷⁵ For more information on this history see: Patrick Dillon, *Gin: The Much-Lamented Death of Madam Geneva* (Boston: Justin Charles & Co, 2003); Jessica Warner, *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2003).

¹⁷⁶ Richard Barnett, *The Book of Gin: A Spirited History from Alchemists' Still and Colonial Outposts to Gin Palaces, Bathtub Gin, and Artisanal Cocktails* (New York: Grove Press, 2011), 43.

clergy held about drunkenness. Whether William was responsible or not, the introduction of geneva, or 'gin,' to England signaled a turning point in the drinking practices of the English. Initially, gin was an inconspicuous addition to the choice of beverages available to those within the middling and upper classes, but over time, it became the focal point of debates about alcohol consumption in English society.

The final decades of the seventeenth century resulted in significant change in the way distillers produced spirits, and these variations of *aqua vitae* became instruments used to strengthen both England's imperial and domestic interests. By the time gin became a feature in England, rum production was a profitable enterprise in the Caribbean. Exports of rum and molasses spread to the eastern seaboard of North America, particularly the Chesapeake and New England regions, with smaller amounts crossing the Atlantic to reach England. While colonial interest in the rum trade continued to grow, English entrepreneurs and merchants also began to focus on the domestic production of spirits during the latter decades of the seventeenth century.

Although moral reformers warned against the danger excessive drinking posed to both body and soul, politicians instead focused on *increasing* the production of strong liquors. Political leaders in England had long sought to diminish or put an end to the reliance on trade with

France, particularly the importation of French wine and brandy. In the midst of conflicts with France, England looked to the products of its on-again off-again allies, the Spanish and the Portuguese, to feed elite demands for fine wines. During wars with France, England imported Spanish Madeira that was produced in Spain's colony off the coast of North Africa, as well as Portuguese wine from Oporto. Still, the continued outbreak of war, such as the War of Spanish Succession in 1701, jeopardized these trade agreements. Alcohol remained a regular point of concern throughout the increasing instances of conflict between competing European empires. The imperial wars of the late seventeenth century fed interests to develop a domestic industry for the production of spirits, one that could satisfy the thirst of the wealthy while weaning England off of its reliance on foreign trade.¹⁷⁷

This attempt to end dependency upon French goods came in 1689 with the outbreak of King William's War – a conflict that immediately followed William III's capture of the English throne in 1688. During the war, Parliament implemented a ban on imports from France in order to cut French profits used to fuel the war against England. This also allowed the landed interest in Parliament an opportunity to increase their personal profits. By encouraging the domestic production of spirits, the landowners

¹⁷⁷ Hanson, *Preventing Alcohol Abuse*, 10; Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 72-73.

who sat in Parliament created new ways to profit off surplus grain.¹⁷⁸ Passed as 'An Act for the Encouraging of the Distillation of Brandy and Spirits from Corn' in 1690, this legislation allowed English farmers to use damaged grain that failed to meet the quality requirements for use in brewing or baking.¹⁷⁹ What was once wasted grain became the materials for the production of gin. Despite the public censure that ministers like Bury, Buckler, and Clark levied at excessive drinking, Parliament lifted restrictions on distilling across England. With the additional source of revenue, the landed nobility became vocal supporters of the rising practice of distilling spirits.¹⁸⁰ The widespread commercial production of gin transformed it from a medicine to an intoxicant. This shift, similar to the move toward the commercial production of rum in the Caribbean, had long-lasting consequences for perceptions regarding the uses and medicinal value of spirituous liquors across the Atlantic.

The initial economic impact of Parliament's decision seemed to be quite positive. William III required funds to support the war effort, and the newly increased production of distilled spirits presented a perfect

¹⁷⁸ Warner, *Craze*, 32.

¹⁷⁹ English law monitored the quality of grain used to make bread and beer as early as 1267 with the passage of the Assize of Bread and Ale. This law aimed to protect the supply of essential foodstuffs for the English peasantry.

¹⁸⁰ Hanson, *Preventing Alcohol Abuse*, 10; Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 73-74.

opportunity. Parliament lifted the ban on imports of distilled spirits and increased taxes on imported goods in 1692. Tax revenues on French imports, and on domestic English spirits, passed in the early years of the eighteenth century, became a significant source of funding for the English throne.¹⁸¹ Political interest in protecting domestic manufactures from foreign competition helped the English distilling industry gain great profit and independence from the French brandy trade. English distillers thrived under the mutually beneficial relationship with Parliament; the distilling industry, through protection against foreign competition, was able to gain a foothold in the marketplace while simultaneously funding the government.¹⁸²

Initially English distillers looked to their own ingenuity, as their counterparts in the colonies did, to create substitute drinks in the wake of the ban. Similar to the guidebooks produced for housewives, new guides emerged at the end of the seventeenth century to provide instructions for making wines, brandy, and other strong waters that were “equal to that of *France and Spain, &c.* with their Physical Virtues.”¹⁸³ The author of one anonymous guidebook published in 1697 noted the change in distillation

¹⁸¹ Warner, *Craze*, 32-33.

¹⁸² Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 36; Warner, *Craze*, 33-34.

¹⁸³ Anon., *England's Happiness Improved: Or, an Infallible Wary to get Riches, Encrease Plenty, and promote Pleasure* (London: 1697), title page.

practices in England, stating, “Of late years particularly, the greatest produce of Common Distillation of Spirits have been from Malt, and since the War has prohibited French Brandies, a Spirit very near it in Tast [sic], Colour and Strength has been Extracted from Grain, with Little other help...”¹⁸⁴ Beyond this note, the recipes differ little from those included in other seventeenth-century cookery or physick books, indicating that the changing nature of drinking practices surrounding distilled spirits had not yet been realized.

The increased commercial production of spirits resulted in instances of drunkenness that shocked moral and authority figures, who saw the beastly behavior of drunkards as a direct affront to the maintenance of social order. One aspect of drinking that ministers targeted in their sermons was the practice of drinking to another’s health, commonly referred to as drinking healths. To spiritual leaders, drinking healths, or toasting, was one of the rituals that upheld practices of excessive consumption.¹⁸⁵ Drinking healths, however, was a long-practiced tradition in English culture. Viewed as an act of respect or remembrance by many, drinking to another’s health or memory also appeared to some as simply a means of achieving intoxication – employed

¹⁸⁴ Anon., *England’s Happiness Improved*, 46.

¹⁸⁵ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 21.

almost in the form of a game. The Puritan Nonconformist, Samuel Clark, spoke of this practice, describing it as “an Engine invented by the Devil, to carry on the Sin of Drunkenness with the great ease and Infallibility, by which men must either be suspected of their Loyalty to their Sovereign, or Respect to their Friends.”¹⁸⁶ Clark points to the core issue of drinking healths. If a toast was made in honor of the monarch, a companion, or in memory of someone deceased, drinking became obligatory. To refuse would appear, at best as impolite, and at worst bordering on treason. For this reason, Clark refers to this as “a great snare” to force intemperance upon groups of drinkers. Clark elaborates on this custom, stating, “Every man at all times hath not consideration enough to give him a convincing Evidence, that Loyalty and Respect to others, is not proper to be shewn in so absurd a Method; and so this poysoned Health goeth down (right or wrong) the Throats of those that do n’t [sic] think what they do.” Critiques of this practice extended beyond England, and continued well after the seventeenth century. Candid observers, including Voltaire, agreed with Clark’s assessment of this “absurd” act. The persistence of the practice is clear as Voltaire commented on health drinking in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, describing it as unique to the English. Designating the practice as barbaric in origin, he emphasized the irrationality of the act and

¹⁸⁶ Clark, *A Warning-piece*, Preface, no pagination.

claimed drinking to one's health did not provide any benefit to the individual in question.¹⁸⁷

Drinking healths carried cultural significance to the English, and settlers in the American colonies made this occasionally disruptive tradition part of their reconstructed English life in the 'New World.' Drinking healths became as important in the colonies as it was in England, and the practice likewise fell under the scrutiny and criticism of religious and political leaders. Samuel Sewall, the renowned Boston judge, famous for his role in the Salem witchcraft trials, documented his own frustrations when confronted with this behavior. For the colonists, drinking healths provided a means of deliberate subordination.¹⁸⁸ Often, those raising a toast did so with rum in their cups. In Sewall's case, on February 6, 1714, he attempted to disperse a large and unruly crowd at a tavern kept by John Wallis. The day being Queen Anne's birthday provided the crowd with reason enough to drink. Around nine o'clock in the evening, Sewall's neighbor, named Colson, asked the crowd at the tavern to quell their

¹⁸⁷ Voltaire, *The Works of Voltaire: A philosophical dictionary*, edited by Tobias George Smollett, John Morley, William F. Fleming, Oliver Herbrand, George Leigh (E.R. Du Mont, 1901), 168-169.

¹⁸⁸ For more on the use of toasts as a means of voicing political support or opposition in England and North America, see James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 21-33; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: the Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press), 184, 314.

celebration. Failing to succeed, Colson asked Judge Sewall to accompany him and Henry Howell, the Constable, to the tavern. Sewall described the scene:

It was 35. Minutes past Nine at Night... then we went... Found much Company. They refus'd to go away. Said were there to drink the Queen's Health, and they had many other Healths to drink. Call'd for more Drink: drank to *me*, I took notice of the Affront to them. Said [they] must and would stay upon that Solemn occasion. Mr. John Netmaker drank the Queen's Health to me... Mr. Brinkley put on his Hat to affront me. I made him take it off. I threaten'd to send some of them to prison; that did not move them. They said they could but pay their Fine, and doing that they might stay.¹⁸⁹

Sewall finally convinced the crowd to relocate to the private home belonging to one of the attendees; however, Sewall notes that it took the crowd “a pretty while” before they fully departed the tavern. By the following Monday, two days after the incident, Judge Sewall received the names of those who acted in offence at John Wallis's Tavern. Sending the names to the Constable, Sewall charged the men with a fine of five shillings. While most paid the fine, one man faced a different charge. John Netmaker, noted for mockingly drinking the Queen's health to slight Sewall, was fined five shillings for profane cursing. Netmaker reportedly said to Sewall's neighbor, Colson, “God dame ye,” because Colson had refused the revelers' demands to drink to the Queen's health. Sewall in

¹⁸⁹ Samuel Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall: 1674-1729*, Volume 6 (Massachusetts Historical Society, 1879), 421. Emphasis added.

turn placed a fine of twenty pounds on Netmaker for his contempt and for vilifying the provincial government during the fracas.¹⁹⁰

In the colonies, as in England, drinking healths allowed people the means to drink in excess in an 'acceptable' way, as well as express sentiments of discontent. Historian James Nicholls explains the ways in which drinking healths became entangled with the politics of the English Civil War, as Royalists drank to the King's health as a means of voicing their political support. Following the Restoration, drinking healths became decidedly political; Charles II issued a proclamation in 1660 that condemned the act of drinking healths due to concerns of excessive drinking and public drunkenness. Nicholls argues that this proclamation brought forth the connections between concerns over drunkenness and ritual patterns of drinking. He states, "While *what* and *where* people drank was commonly seen as a marker of social class, those rituals which tended towards excessive drinking in groups were more often perceived, for better or worse, as a feature of national culture."¹⁹¹ If the actions of the crowd encountered by Judge Sewall are an indication, the colonists embraced this aspect of English culture and employed it with apparent enthusiasm, even in the face of direct confrontation. Through the drinking

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 421-422.

¹⁹¹ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 28.

to another's health, both the English and English colonists celebrated the practices that appeared to be so dangerous in the eyes of religious figures. For in both England and in England's colonies, the foundation for a culture of heavy, recreational drinking emerged.

In spite of the harrowing claims made about drunkenness in the seventeenth century, alcohol, including distilled spirits, remained a prominent and growing aspect of daily life. How did religious leaders fit their arguments of beastliness and moral corruption within a belief system that saw alcohol as wholesome and nutritious? It is important to remember that drinking was not in itself an act of sin – drinking to excess, however, was. The famed Puritan minister, and contemporary of Buckler and Bury, Increase Mather, stated, “Drink is in it self [sic] a good Creature of God, & to be received with thankfulness.”¹⁹² This was due to the strong connections that existed between medicine, bodily health, and alcohol. Increase's son, Cotton Mather, another famed minister of Massachusetts, acknowledged this point as well. He stated that an argument of total abstinence from alcohol was too extreme, or “*Overdoing*” it. He explained, “I should *Overdo*, if I should say, Let [no alcohol] be brought into the Country; or, Let no body taste a drop of it, if it be here. Tho' I am

¹⁹² Increase Mather, *Wo to Drunkards: Two Sermons Testifying against the Sin of Drunkenness*, second edition (Boston: 1712), 7.

sufficiently a stranger to the use of it, my self; yet I can readily allow, its being of a manifold use, both as a *Medicine*, and a *Cordial*.”¹⁹³ While ministers regularly denounced the excessive consumption of alcohol, their primary concern remained focused on the behavior caused by drunkenness. These men acknowledged the important place of alcohol in daily life. Cotton Mather spoke about the medical importance of alcohol in the midst of a sermon that condemned rum and the drunkenness it caused. His father, likewise, referred to alcohol as “a good Creature” while preaching against the effects of inebriation. Throughout the seventeenth century, the strong connections between alcohol and medicine helped preserve the perceptions of alcohol as wholesome and good for the body. This was a point that stalwart ministers, like the Mathers, Buckler, and Bury, could not ignore.

During the latter half of the seventeenth century, however, these perceptions came into direct conflict with practice. The enthusiastic reception from a large consumer base made the steady increase in the commercial production of spirits possible. While spirits retained perceived aspects of the ethereal elements that helped purify the body, the fact that drunkenness could result in rebellious or uncontrollable behavior made

¹⁹³ Cotton Mather, *Sober Considerations, on a growing Flood of Iniquity* (Boston: 1708), 5.

liquor as source of contention. As traditional practices, like drinking healths, evolved into public displays of subversion, the concerns regarding the behavior of the drunkard grew into an increasingly worrisome question by the end of the seventeenth century.

As distilled spirits shifted from relatively small-scale production – one that fell within the realm of housewives, apothecaries, and French wine makers – to an emerging, large-scale, commercialized industry, consumption patterns and overall perceptions of spirits began to change. As imperial interests motivated the increase in Caribbean sugar production throughout the latter-half of the seventeenth century, the supply of molasses distilled into rum likewise grew. By 1660, Boston merchants promoted the sale of rum across the New England colonies, and by the end of the seventeenth century, Barbados exported around 600,000 gallons of rum to the North American colonies every year, with most going to the New England and Chesapeake regions.¹⁹⁴

Meanwhile, political interest in encouraging domestic manufactures in England caused gin consumption to grow at an unprecedented rate. Due to the protection offered to the English distilling industry, the production of gin blossomed, causing the price to fall within the means of common laborers. In spite of the taxes levied on distilled spirits between

¹⁹⁴ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 28.

1690 and 1710, high production kept the cost at three halfpence per half cup. Common laborers not only had the means to purchase these strong waters, but they also developed an apparent preference for the alluring intoxication offered by the liquor. Though gin was known in London before the 1690 Act, consumption remained limited, averaging around .3 gallons per capita per year. Within a few decades, the consumption level rose to 1.3 gallons, and concerns over the effects of drunkenness extended beyond the realm of religious sermons and warnings of beastly transformations.¹⁹⁵ Political leaders joined the ministers in what became an increasing chorus of fears and condemnations of the shocking new liquor-based drinking habits that were spreading rapidly throughout England and its Atlantic empire.

¹⁹⁵ Warner, *Craze*, 3.

Chapter 3

Gin-Crazed and Rum-Flooded

“[T]his Infection daily spreads... encourag’d by the general Depravity of the lower Class of People, who run into a Taste for these pernicious Liquors, and find it always at Hand...”¹⁹⁶

In Ipswich the morning of April 10, 1744, Grace Pett’s daughter awoke to find her mother lying over the household hearth. Pett, described as around sixty years old and the wife of a fisherman, appeared that morning “like a block of wood burning with a glowing fire without a flame.” The daughter’s cries caught the attention of their neighbors, who gathered around the dead woman’s smoldering body. Upon pouring two bowls of water over Grace to put out the heat, “the smother and stench almost stifled the neighbours... the trunk of the body was in a manner burnt to ashes, and appeared like a heap of charcoal covered with white ashes.”¹⁹⁷ The burning of Grace Pett’s body proved to be an inexplicable mystery. The report stated that there was no external fire burning anywhere near her remains. There had not been a fire in the grate, nor had a candle been burning nearby. Flammable objects found near the remains, including a

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Wilson, *Distilled Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation* (London: 1736), vi.

¹⁹⁷ Charles Hutton, George Shaw, and Richard Pearson, eds. *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, from their Commencement, in 1665, to the Year 1800, Vol. 9* (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1809), 145.

paper screen and a child's clothes, were unmarked by the fire. Even the floor showed no sign of damage. Instead, the only explanation eyewitnesses could find was that the fire had an internal point of origin. Grace Pett was a victim of spontaneous combustion.¹⁹⁸

Morality tales that emphasized the threat distilled spirits posed to the human body, including the story of Grace Pett's fiery end, circulated in newspapers and scientific journals during the first half of the eighteenth century. By that time, distilled spirits were no longer the recreational drink of the elite. Although apothecaries continued to mix together cordial remedies, increasingly spirits became the common man and woman's drink of choice, enjoyed as a source of intoxication, pleasure, and escape. The widespread availability of such liquors appeared to many in the upper classes of society as a new and pernicious threat. What was once a marker of luxury and elite status became a means of degenerate behavior among the working class. The steady, commercialized production of spirits like rum and gin seemed to accentuate and harden already strict class lines. Many elites, including Puritan and Anglican ministers in both Britain

¹⁹⁸ Analysis of Grace Pett, as well as other older women who died via what was at the time termed spontaneous combustion, also appears in Jessica Warner, *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2003), 74-77. Warner examines these cases as fantastical tales about the disposal of older, unwanted women. Frequently, the women featured in these stories consumed distilled spirits before combustion.

and across Britain's Atlantic empire, denounced the recreational consumption of distilled spirits in more direct ways than before. By the early decades of the eighteenth century, the earliest cries against the mass consumption of spirits began to emerge. Seventeenth-century arguments against drunkenness paled in comparison to the horrific scenes anti-liquor advocates painted as they organized to restrict public access to spirits. Through the collision of the readily available cheap liquor, the rise of the eighteenth-century consumer culture, and the spread of Enlightenment philosophy, the roots of temperance first began to grow.

The outbreak of what historians now refer to as the "Gin Craze" – a roughly fifty-year period of widespread gin-drinking in London that began around the turn of the eighteenth century – has received considerable attention from scholars, but often with a focus upon England. What historians have not explored in depth is how events in London shifted the transatlantic discourse on distilled spirits.¹⁹⁹ The large-scale production of

¹⁹⁹ For studies on drunkenness in early American and the eighteenth-century "Gin Craze" in London, see: Peter Clark, "The 'Mother Gin' Controversy in the Early Eighteenth Century" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series. 38 (1998): 63-84; Patrick Dillon, *Gin: The Much-Lamented Death of Madam Geneva* (Boston: Justin Charles & Co, 2003); Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, *Drinking in America: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Jessica Kross, "'If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me': The Sociology of Drinking in the Middle Colonies" *Pennsylvania History*. 64, 1 Regional Perspectives on Early American History. (Winter, 1997): 28-55; Alice Hall Petry, "Gin

gin in England followed the rise of the budding rum industry in the Caribbean; within a matter of a few decades, distilled spirits were available on an unprecedented scale. Across the Atlantic, those who witnessed and commented upon the sharp increase in distilled spirits took note of events that occurred either in the metropole or the colonies. These witnesses were aware of the widespread nature of this phenomenon. Both rum and gin influenced the way people thought about distilled spirits throughout the Atlantic World.

While studies on the “Gin Craze” do tend to focus exclusively on reactions that emerged in England, it is due to these previous works that a broader perspective is now possible. When considering the rise of gin drinking in early-eighteenth-century London, Historian Jessica Warner’s research is especially important.²⁰⁰ In her research, Warner identified

Lane in the Bowery: Crane’s Maggie and William Hogarth” *American Literature*. 56, 3 (October, 1984): 417-426; Dana Rabin, “Drunkenness and Responsibility for Crime in the Eighteenth Century” *Journal of British Studies*. 44, 3 (July, 2005): 457-477; Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Frederick H. Smith, *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008); Warner, *Craze*; Jonathan White, “The ‘Slow but Sure Poyson’: The Representation of Gin and Its Drinkers, 1736-1751” *Journal of British Studies*. 42, 1 (January, 2003): 35-64.

²⁰⁰ Warner’s studies on the “Gin Craze” includes: Jessica Warner and Frank Ivis. “‘Damn You, You Informing Bitch.’ Vox Populi and the Unmaking of the Gin Act of 1736” *Journal of Social History* 33, 2 (Winter,

multiple factors that went into the Gin Craze – such as questions of gender, class, and culture. Warner’s research, along with James Nicholls’s examination of the “Craze” in *The Politics of Alcohol*, showed how drinkers embraced and opponents criticized gin as an intoxicating drug.²⁰¹ While both academic and popular writers acknowledge that the opponents of gin also condemned rum, and that the colonists followed the debates about gin, this research examines the rhetoric surrounding the “Gin Craze” to analyze how the mass production of spirits in the early eighteenth century changed perceptions of alcohol across the Atlantic. This change of perception, in turn, led to eighteenth-century debates over alcohol, which established the foundation of modern temperance movements.

For many of the eighteenth-century ‘reformers,’ who were alarmed by the sharp rise in the consumption of alcohol, drunkenness caused by distilled spirits became a matter of maintaining elite control over the laboring masses.²⁰² The emergence of a consumer society in the

1999): 299-330; Jessica Warner, *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2003).

²⁰¹ James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

²⁰² This author agrees with Jessica Warner’s caution in using the word ‘reformer’ when discussing critics of distilled spirits. Though these anti-liquor advocates sought to protect the stark divisions between social classes, they upheld strong perceptions of morality and how they believed society should run. Warner, therefore, argues in favor of the term “moral reformer,” as their objective was primarily focused on reforming the

eighteenth century threatened to undo much of the status quo that persisted throughout the preceding centuries – a status quo that established who drank what and for what purpose. Suddenly, beverages of the elite were mass produced and available to all, in spite of station, trade, or contribution to society. What would result if the laboring class ceased to labor due to drunkenness? With inefficient labor and intoxicated mothers producing malnourished and sickly children, how would the British Empire survive? Such fears propelled many of the debates that arose around the mass consumption of spirits in the early eighteenth century. While colonization and imperial contests spurred the rise of mass-produced spirits, these debates over the effect of drinking on the strength of the Empire effectively framed the “waters of life” as a threat to both the individual and the public.

Historians have made regular use of published debates that appeared in newspapers, sermons, popular literature, and Parliamentary reports over the large-scale consumption of distilled spirits in the eighteenth century. The strong, public reaction against the production of gin in London led to an array of published speeches, sermons, mercantilist debates, medical investigations, as well as other documented sources.

laboring classes. This study uses another descriptor: “anti-liquor advocates,” to emphasize the somewhat intense focus and criticism these reformers placed specifically upon distilled spirits. Warner, *Craze*, 11.

This chapter will examine these sources in a transatlantic context. Certainly, the rise of mass-produced liquors was not a phenomenon restricted to the British Isles. From the mid-seventeenth century on, rum flowed freely across the Atlantic and remained a popular beverage in the American colonies and in England, even in the midst of the “Craze.” While gin remained a perceived threat more so in England than in the colonies, the colonists were aware of the events occurring in the metropole, with some observers making direct comparisons between the excessive consumption of rum in North America with that of gin in London. To gain an understanding of how the perspective toward spirits shifted in response to increasing production in the early eighteenth century, this chapter makes use of the aforementioned published debates over the production of gin in England. In addition, the manuscript letters and reports of Anglican missionaries working for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) capture candid remarks and perceptions of what many of the Society members considered to be a growing problem. The SPG sources, Puritan sermons, and the well-known, published denunciations of spirits by Anglican Bishops Isaac Maddox and Thomas Wilson, feature two interconnected messages: recreational consumption of spirits was on the rise, and it could result in permanent destruction to the laboring masses.

Along with the published debates and speeches, and manuscript reports, physicians and politicians in both Britain and in Britain's Atlantic colonies launched inquiries into the ways distilled spirits affected the human body – specifically, the bodies of laborers. Such debates reveal elite concerns regarding the working classes' easy access to spirits. By examining these sources, it is possible to chart how the large-scale production of rum and gin in the Caribbean, North America, and in England permanently changed both the use and perception of spirits from that of a medicine to an intoxicant.

The most common method employed by anti-liquor advocates who spoke publically against spirits was to relate shocking stories that emphasized the danger such beverages posed. The story of Grace Pett circulated in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, as one such example warning against spirituous liquors. The night before her supposed spontaneous combustion, Grace Pett “drank very plentifully of gin,” as a way of celebrating her daughter's return from Gibraltar.²⁰³ While the description of Grace's death did not explicitly state that the internal burning of her body occurred due to her drinking gin, the inclusion of such a statement given immediately before the explanation of what caused the fire drew an unmistakable connection between her drinking gin and her

²⁰³ Hutton, Shaw, Pearson, *Transactions*, 145.

death by spontaneous combustion. This recalled beliefs regarding the 'hot' elemental qualities of spirits and suggested that excessive consumption of liquor would prove detrimental to the body. Because Grace Pett drank "plentifully" of gin, the internal heat of her body grew in excess, not only killing her in the process, but also leaving her a smoldering and charred carcass. Such a story circulated amongst London society, even though Grace Pett's unusual passing was but one case of many instances in which women perished via what was claimed to be internal combustion. Eighteenth-century tales of spontaneous combustion frequently featured distilled spirits, and they almost always focused upon the destruction of women. In the majority of such cases, the women were older and drank large amounts of liquor shortly before their death. The exaggerated, impossible fates of Grace Pett and other women like her represented cautionary tales, specifically, for other women. The message was clear: women who consumed distilled spirits risked death by fiery combustion. These appalling stories, printed in popular newspapers and magazines of the day, helped fuel the campaign against the widespread distribution of distilled spirits.²⁰⁴

Roughly a dozen or more stories of spontaneous combustion appeared in London in the early decades of the eighteenth century, but

²⁰⁴ Warner, *Craze*, 74-75.

they did not remain restricted to the British Isles.²⁰⁵ Ominous accounts that combined women drinking spirits and sudden death also appeared in colonial newspapers, spreading the anti-liquor message across the Atlantic. On March 7, 1736, *The New-York Weekly Journal* printed a story originally published in London the preceding November. In an “*Extract of a Letter from Verona*,” the article told the story of an unnamed woman, aged sixty-two years, who perished via “a Fire that kindled within her own Body.”²⁰⁶ As with Grace Pett, this woman was past her childbearing years in age, and she made use of spirits not long before her death. Unlike Grace, who drank as an act of celebration, this anonymous woman made use of spirits as a *topical* medicine; the report makes no note of her drinking. As described in the article, “This Woman... had been used to wash and rub herself every Day with Spirits of Camphire, as a proper Means to prevent Colds and Coughs, with which she was much troubled.”²⁰⁷ This detail is an important diversion from the story of Grace Pett, or other women who drank spirits before dying by spontaneous combustion. This particular woman made use of spirits in the traditional

²⁰⁵ Estimate made by Warner, *Craze*, 74.

²⁰⁶ “*Extract of a Letter from Verona*,” originally published November 16, 1735, London. *The New-York Weekly Journal*, March 7, 1736. Issue CLXXIII.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

manner – as a medicine and not as an intoxicant. Even more significant, this article claims that the Spirits of Camphire caused her death, stating:

A humane Body hath likewise in it oleous [oily] and saline Particles, capable of producing a Fire : We even find, that the Sweat of some People, smells like Brimstone. *Phosphoruses* are made of Urine, which partly kindle of themselves : Therefore, if to these Particles of the Body, Brandy and Camphire be added, which are the two Ingredients which compose the Spirits of Camphire, their Particles, especially by the Means of chasing, cannot but cause a violent Motion in the mentioned Particles of the Blood, and other Juices, which will produce a vehement Attrition or rubbing against each other : Such Attrition is capable of producing Fire even in cold Bodies, as appears by the striking of a Piece of a Steel upon a Flint, and the rubbing two Sticks against each other.²⁰⁸

According to this passage, bringing the volatile substances of distilled spirits in contact with the oily and, apparently combustible, materials of the human body presented a fatal combination. Such a story also provided an unmistakable warning to women to avoid all use of distilled spirits, medicinal or not. If the traditional use of distilled spirits posed such a threat, what acceptable uses of liquors remained?

The timing of this article, however, is a significant indicator of the shifting discourse on distilled spirits that emerged during the first half of the eighteenth century. The account of the unnamed woman's incendiary death appeared in the midst of tense political debates over the restriction of gin. In 1735, Parliamentary politicians debated with each other and

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

religious leaders over the passage of an act to inhibit the highly profitable domestic distilling industry. To make the case in favor of the act, many anti-liquor advocates promoted harrowing stories that combined drinking spirits with a violent death. No longer did the medicinal use of spirits appear harmless. This story is also reflective of the change that simultaneously occurred in the knowledge and practice of European medicine. Enlightenment thought influenced the way physicians and influential elites understood the functions of the human body, how to treat illness, and the importance of health to social and economic growth. A few decades into the eighteenth century, folk remedies began to fall out of favor as enlightened philosophers and physicians connected the health of the masses to the prosperity of the state and empire.²⁰⁹ The story of the combusted anonymous woman, in particular, made it clear that the continued use of old-fashioned treatments posed a threat to both the body and the progressive advances toward new, sophisticated medicinal remedies.

While many vocal opponents of distilled spirits emphasized the dangers recreational consumption posed to one's bodily health, they placed even more weight on the potential damage widespread drunkenness could cause among the lower social orders. Although alcohol

²⁰⁹ Porter, *Disease, Medicine, and Society in England*, 30-33.

was an important source of medicine, drinking was also a frequent cause of concern over class divisions. Early seventeenth-century condemnations of drunkenness often focused on the lower classes, with most laws targeting alehouses and sermons deploring the spiritual debasement of beastly drunkards. Underlying many of these laws and messages against drunkenness was a concern over the loss of labor. Samuel Clark, in his 1682 *A Warning-piece to All Drunkards*, acknowledged this point. He stated, “[T]his Infatuation is more eminently seen in the Poorer sort, that earn their Money hardest, and pay most for their Drink.”²¹⁰ Through drinking, those who made up the lower social orders lost time – time better spent on labor – in addition to their money. Complaints against the laboring classes for spending their time and money on drink persisted into the eighteenth century, when concerns grew more pointed. Across the Atlantic, colonial leaders in North America and the social elite in England expressed bitter criticism against the poor, who they perceived to be acting above their station and threatening the well-being of society through their continued consumption of spirituous liquors.

With the development of rum distillation in the Caribbean by the mid-seventeenth century, it did not take long for a market to develop in

²¹⁰ Samuel Clark, *A Warning-piece to All Drunkards and Health-Drinkers* (London: 1682), preface.

mainland Britain North America, as thirsty colonists embraced this new sugar-based spirit. The established cultural significance of and a ready market for alcohol in the colonies drove interest in procuring rum, and planters in the Caribbean enthusiastically met that demand. Established trade connections and easy access to Barbadian and Jamaican rum and molasses magnified the amount of alcohol already present in colonial North America. In addition to fruit brandies, cider, and beer, the colonists gained a new, popular, and far more potent source of alcohol. Through imports of rum, the colonists did not have to rely as much on their own ingenuity and local resources to fulfill their demand for alcoholic drinks. While Barbados sent a small portion of its rum exports to England, far more went to the North American colonies. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Chesapeake and New England colonies each annually imported around 250,000 to 300,000 gallons of rum and molasses. Especially in Boston, New England distillers made their own local rum from the imported Caribbean molasses and sold it to neighboring colonies. The constant supply of rum drove down the cost, and by the 1740s, New England rum sold in Philadelphia for around two shillings and two pence per gallon.²¹¹ In addition to providing a new, potent drink, rum also

²¹¹ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 64.

became a form of currency in areas where specie was lacking.²¹² With such high levels of rum and molasses – molasses that the colonists also turned into rum – flowing throughout the Caribbean and North American colonies, certain societal leaders, including many Puritan and Anglican ministers, expressed their fears over the effects of drunkenness quickly followed.

With the Caribbean at the epicenter of the emerging rum industry, drinking in that region became a frequent point of discussion and criticism. As rum was available to all levels of society from the outset, many who visited the West Indies remarked with varying levels of disdain upon the drinking practices prevalent across the social spectrum. Sir Henry Colt and Richard Ligon were typical of English elites who recorded their own thoughts. Colt expressed his disapproval of the planters' preference for drinking rather than tending to issues of labor. Ligon was not as openly critical; he presented the planter class as upstanding and genteel, uncorrupted by the habitual consumption of alcohol. Ligon's bias was typical of most commentary on the drinking practices of the planters.²¹³ Not all who visited Barbados turned a blind eye to the prominent place of rum in Caribbean society, especially concerning the "lower sort" – the

²¹² Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 28-29.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 131.

laboring whites who often arrived in the Caribbean as indentured servants. In a letter to Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, from Thomas Pitt, the 1st Earl of Londonderry and Governor of the Leeward Islands from 1728-1729, Lord Londonderry included critical remarks about the “meaner sort.” Writing from St. Christopher on June 8, 1729, Lord Londonderry stated, “In the first place, I am of an opinion that is a very healthy part of the world to moderate discreet persons, that will be guilty of no great exces’s, but often proves fatal to the meaner sort of people... from their immoderate drinking of rum.”²¹⁴ Anthropologist and historian Frederick Smith states that the indentured servants and poor class of laboring whites had the worst reputation for excessive drinking across the Caribbean. Due to the strong association with drinking and violence, the Barbados House of Assembly passed legislation passed in 1668 that restricted the time, days, and location where people could drink. These laws targeted public drinking establishments in particular, as they catered to the lower classes. In Jamaica, which the English conquered and took control of in 1655, the Assembly passed similar restrictive laws against public drinking houses in 1683.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Lord Londonderry to Bishop Gibson, St. Christophers, June 8, 1729, *Fulham Papers, Vol. XIX, Leward Islands (1681-1749)*, folios 188-189. Lambeth Palace Library, London, United Kingdom.

²¹⁵ Smith *Caribbean Rum*, 132-133.

Laws targeting taverns and public drinking spaces most often visited by members of the laboring class also appeared throughout the North American colonies in the latter-half of the seventeenth century. These early attempts to curb excessive drinking established one-hour time limits and regulated how much drink a customer could receive.²¹⁶ A number of common drinking establishments had appeared at the outset of settlement. According to Jessica Kross, in Plymouth Colony, by the end of the seventeenth century, there was one tavern for every 110 adult men; one for every sixty-six in Essex County, Massachusetts; and roughly one for every five to fourteen men in Philadelphia.²¹⁷ These numbers show that in areas with higher population, such as Philadelphia, more public drinking space was available to the male residents in the area. Many taverns on the Philadelphia waterfront also catered to merchants and sailors, tending to the needs of those who kept colonial commerce running.²¹⁸ Such locations served as the gathering place for many of the “lower sort,” and colonial leaders feared the consequences of an intoxicated rabble that was prone to fighting and other coarse behavior. In spite of these fears, the colonists continued to perceive the availability of public drinking establishments as a necessity. Such businesses not only offered laborers

²¹⁶ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 86-87.

²¹⁷ Kross, “If you will not drink with me,” 30.

²¹⁸ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 61-63.

a place to drink, but also served as a place for travelers to eat, drink, and sleep. Still, the potential problems that excessive drinking could cause did lead to restrictions on what and whom tavern keepers could legally serve.²¹⁹

Those who sought to open a tippling house in North America had to acquire a license that stipulated what beverages the owner could sell, as well as what behavior was and was not acceptable amongst the clientele. Licensing laws had a long history in England. Before the seventeenth century, Parliament passed legislation intended to monitor alehouses and their clientele. The North American colonists transferred the practice of issuing licenses, as it was a familiar way to regulate public drinking establishments.²²⁰ A license granted to George Borston on July 13, 1708 approved the opening of an alehouse in Rehoboth, Massachusetts. This license established clear boundaries on how Borston could run his business. Borston gained approval to sell wine, ale, beer, and cider for one year, but he could not sell “any wine Liquor, or other strong drink unto any Apprentices servants Indians or Negros.” Also, customers could not legally play any games, including dice, cards, and shuffleboard. The

²¹⁹ Ibid., 90-91.

²²⁰ James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 14-15.

license stated that Borston's alehouse must maintain good order and observe the laws of the colony in order for legal operation to continue.²²¹

Such laws grew common across the colonies, but one of the distinguishing factors that emerged was the growing commentary on drunkenness among the social elite. While Ligon's critique spared the planter class in Barbados, the elite living elsewhere did not escape criticism for their rambunctious behavior. In her study on colonial taverns, Sharon Salinger states, "Virginia was the only colony to address explicitly the danger to the public trust when ministers, judges, and members of the assembly drank too much." While concerns over drunkenness in late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries increasingly focused on disorder among laborers and the poor, early admissions by Virginia leaders, including members of the House of Burgesses, show that the colonists saw drunkenness among the elite as establishing a poor example for the rest of the colony to follow.²²² Other southern colonies, however, did not regularly censure elite members for excessive drinking. Overall, colonists faced minimal prosecution for drunkenness during the colonial era. As practice came to shape southern culture, colonists expected alcohol consumption at community events. Even during court

²²¹ "Inn and alehouse license, 13 July 1708," Misc. 1708 July 13. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

²²² Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 91.

days, local tavern keepers supplied the liquor as the colonists continued to drink.²²³

While many colonial legislators expressed minimal concern over prosecuting drunkards, leaders in the New England colonies admonished excessive drinking in a notably different way. Primarily coming from colonial ministers, anti-drunkenness sermons emphasized the threat of intemperance to social morality. One of the first to publish sermons condemning the practice was the prominent and influential Increase Mather. His collection of two sermons, entitled *Wo to Drunkards*, originally published in 1673, and again reprinted in 1712, singled out rum as a threat to the community. He claimed rum shortened lives, and he lamented the “Tragical Effects” the drink had on the neighboring Native population.²²⁴ In particular, Mather pointed out that drunkenness was a growing problem, stating, “There was a time... when a man might Live Seven Years in New-England, and not see a Drunken man. But how is it now? Several sorts of Strong Liquors have been an occasion of the abounding of this Iniquity... they abound with other intoxicating Drinks.”²²⁵ Mather states that his continued witnessing of drunkards motivated him to reissue the sermons

²²³ *Ibid.*, 126.

²²⁴ Increase Mather, *Wo to Drunkards: Two Sermons Testifying against the Sin of Drunkenness*, second edition (Boston: 1712), A3.

²²⁵ Mather, *Wo to Drunkards*, A2.

for further circulation. This might also suggest his words had little success in convincing the people living in New England to curb their consumption of the increasingly available sugar-spirit.

Religious leaders in New England often took advantage of any opportunity to criticize the overconsumption of alcohol, especially rum. Benjamin Wadsworth, who like Increase Mather was a Puritan minister and a president of Harvard, joined his compatriot in condemning rum's effects on society. He stated:

I verily believe, that various sorts of Strong Drink are greatly abus'd in this Land, and *Rum* especially... I verily believe, that multitudes of Persons in this Land, are very criminal and blame-worthy; for the *needless haunting of Drinking-houses*, and spending their Time and Money there.²²⁶

In addition to his sermons against drunkenness, Increase Mather used the execution of a prisoner in 1687 to condemn rum once more. Tying the crimes and sins of the condemned criminal to drunkenness, Mather argued that rum led to the eternal ruin of the drinker's body, as well as the damnation of his soul. Recalling the earlier warnings of English ministers like Edward Bury and Samuel Clark, Mather claimed that a more appropriate name for rum, or 'Kill-Devil,' would be "Kill-men for the Devil," as he believed the drinker invited evil influence into their body through

²²⁶ Benjamin Wadsworth, *An Essay to do Good* (Boston: 1710), 2-3.

excessive drinking.²²⁷ Mather made this remark in 1687 in *A sermon occasioned by the execution of a man*; the condemned man in question was named James Morgan, and he was found guilty of committing murder. Before his execution, Mather reports that Morgan lamented succumbing to two sins in particular, one being drunkenness. Mather candidly states that, “*Drunkenness has bin a bloody sin; it has bin the cause of many a Murder.*”²²⁸ Concluding his account with the words of the condemned man, Mather reinforced the connection between drunkenness and violent crimes, as well as the inevitable moral corruption caused by such intoxication.²²⁹

For the young New England colonies, whose moral authority maintained a constant vigilance against any dangers posed by otherworldly forces, the sin of drunkenness appeared to be a serious, and entirely real, threat. While English ministers in the early seventeenth century pointed to the risk the drunkard took in exposing his body to Satan’s influence, Puritan ministers instead saw drunkenness as opening the entire settlement to possession and spiritual destruction. Morality made up a significant part of life for the Puritans in North America, and

²²⁷ Increase Mather, *A sermon occasioned by the execution of a man, second edition* (Boston: 1687), 25-26.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

²²⁹ Mather, *Sober Considerations* (Boston: 1708), 18.

Puritan ministers saw themselves as responsible for the maintenance of this moral behavior. To reinforce its importance, notions of appropriate, deferential behavior appeared tightly woven within colonial laws. Laws established to prevent intemperance and overindulgence among the dependent classes served as a means of societal control in colonial New England.²³⁰ As Sharon Salinger pointed out, the rising cry against drunkenness among Puritan ministers coincided with a larger crisis surrounding an apparent breakdown of the original colonial mission. From 1686 to 1689, James I revoked colonial charters and imposed the much maligned Dominion of New England, headed by the Anglican Governor, Sir Edmund Andros. Salinger states that, “[W]hile New Englanders celebrated when Andros was ousted from power, the colony remained without a charter, leaving its future uncertain. The ministers’ dire warnings were not, as it turned out, idle threats.”²³¹ Succeeding generations in Massachusetts brought about a rise in debates over the breakdown of spiritual observation and deference, all while drinking practices shifted toward distilled spirits, like rum, over brewed beverages, like cider or beer. The issue of drunkenness became ever more important for ministers who sought to maintain their place of authority in society.

²³⁰ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 119.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

These concerns carried into the 1708 sermon, *Sober Considerations*, delivered by Increase Mather's son, Cotton. In this sermon, Cotton Mather reiterated many of his father's arguments against drunkenness. This sermon also offers a look into the ministerial response to drunkenness aimed at a younger generation. Rum stands at the center of Mather's denunciations. Whereas his father only made brief, direct references to rum in the introduction of his sermons against drunkenness, Cotton Mather devoted his entire attention to this particular distilled spirit. He dramatically outlined the threat posed by rum, which involved nothing less than the complete destruction of society. He states, "There is a hazard lest a Flood of RUM, do Overwhelm all good Order among us... Would it not be a surprize [sic] to hear of a Country destroy'd by a *Bottel* of RUM?"²³² While ministers long associated the sin of drunkenness with gluttony, Mather presented a more harrowing message. The figurative flood of rum, in Mather's eyes, would result in chaos and devastation. Rum threatened the very existence of the colony, as well as the success of the great Puritan mission.

While many ministers spoke out against drunkenness in England before and during colonization, and many religious leaders carried the same message across the Atlantic, *Sober Considerations* stands out as a

²³² Mather, *Sober Considerations*, 3.

significant source in the study of alcohol history. The weight of Mather's name in and of itself is a point of importance; this distinguished line of Puritan ministers had maintained social significance in Massachusetts since the early years of the colony's existence. The importance of this legacy was not lost on Cotton, either. According to William J. Scheick, Cotton Mather perceived his family name as in decline by the early eighteenth century, and the fault for this waning influence rested with Cotton himself. Scheick states this made Cotton all the more defensive of his family legacy and his place within it.²³³ Cotton, therefore, perceived himself as the heir to a long family line of moral authority figures. Cotton's belief in his legacy, combined with the political upheaval brought by the loss of Massachusetts's charter and the overall decline of influence once held by Puritan ministers, made drunkenness appear to be more of a

²³³ William J. Scheick, ed. *Two Mather Biographies: Life and Death and Parentator* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1989), 24. While *Sober Considerations* gains much scholarly attention from those interested in the history of alcohol, the importance of the Mather family to the literature on colonial New England is immense. For further reading on the history of the Mather family see: John Canup, *Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of an American Identity in Colonial New England* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1990); Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *Increase Mather* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974); Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956); George Selement, *Keepers of the Vineyard: The Puritan Ministry and Collective Culture in Colonial New England* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

threat to Cotton Mather than it ever did to his father. In *Sober Considerations*, Mather made his views of drunkenness clear: he claimed that the drunkard not only threatened his own soul and salvation but also posed a threat to society as a whole. Mather claimed, “There is danger lest this *Bottel do break this People and this Country*, and bring irremediable Plagues upon us.”²³⁴ In Mather’s eyes, the drunkard cultivated and introduced a debased level of morality in society and placed the colony at risk of receiving God’s destructive wrath.

With rum producers like Barbados exporting thousands of gallons of rum per year to the mainland colonies and to the metropole by the turn of the eighteenth century, many societal leaders began to reconsider the place of such “strong waters” in daily life. For British islands like Barbados, exports of rum to North America helped pay for imports of food, as planters remained devoted to sugar production. While 12.34 percent exports of Jamaican rum went to North America, Barbados made fifty percent more rum than other islands for export to the mainland colonies.²³⁵ In 1748 alone, Barbados exported 1,391,472 gallons of rum to

²³⁴ Mather, *Sober Considerations*, 11.

²³⁵ Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 74.

Britain and across Britain's Atlantic empire.²³⁶ No longer a potent beverage made in small batches largely enjoyed by the elite or doled out by apothecaries, distilled spirits were widely and cheaply available to members of all social classes by the turn of the eighteenth century. A few shillings became enough to purchase a gallon of rum, meaning a laborer's daily wages could cover the cost of a week's supply of liquor.²³⁷ Many community leaders, including ministers and politicians, debated whether it was appropriate for laborers to partake liberally, of a beverage that previously had been out of their reach due to cost. For the leaders of colonial societies who struggled with a supposed flood of rum, or those in England who battled gin as well as the French, the question of consumption brought forth new issues regarding alcohol, drunkenness, and new calls for temperance. For the good of the British nation, these leaders would proclaim, laborers were not suited to consume such unwholesome and damaging spirits. The success of the British Empire rested upon the laboring poor, and many politicians feared the repercussions of an inebriated working force. As much as these anti-liquor advocates emphasized practical concerns about increasing crime or a loss

²³⁶ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 86.

²³⁷ Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 64.

of labor, underneath their arguments lay the more ambiguous issue of maintaining social morality and control.

While ministers like Cotton Mather feared the potential spiritual repercussions of intemperance, they also recognized the more practical threats drunkenness posed to economic prosperity. Mather claimed that the drunkard harmed local industry by spending all his money on liquor and on nothing else.²³⁸ Even though Mather condemned the wasting of resources on a commodity such as rum, he also understood the danger drunkenness posed to economic interests, as inebriation resulted in a lack of productivity. Mather presented the dismal picture of an impoverished country, lacking the necessary labor to plow fields and the ability to provide food for its residents because of widespread drunkenness. If the people of a town could not produce enough food by their own labor, the community would have to rely on outside sources of food, spending unnecessary funds on grain the town could otherwise provide for itself.²³⁹

While not always explicitly directed at the poor, these ministerial denouncements of drunkenness were primarily aimed at the lower classes. Combined with fears over the loss of labor, the message against spirits focused on controlling the actions of those at the lower levels of

²³⁸ Mather, *Sober Considerations*, 14.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

society. Still, Cotton Mather alluded to whom he was speaking through the employment of rather creative descriptions. He stated:

There have been prodigious Examples, of Wretches among us, that have devoured horrid Quantities of Liquor. One would hardly think it credible, that there should be such *Salamanders* in the world; or, that they should Survive in their *Debauches*; that they were not *Burnt Alive*. Perhaps they have been *Strong to pour down Strong Drink*. Their *Heads* have been so *Strong*, as to keep their *Feet* out of the Stocks.²⁴⁰

Although he never uses the terms “laborers” or “the poor,” Mather’s message remains pointed. His references to “Wretches” and the debauched nature of drunkards’ livelihood carries an underlying message that drunkenness amongst the poor was a prominent problem – a problem that Mather believed required eradication. To his apparent disappointment, not all drunkards suffered the appropriate punishment.

In both the northern and southern colonies of British North America, Anglican ministers expressed a level of agreement with their Puritan counterparts regarding the issue of drunkenness. Anglican missionaries who worked for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in the both the North American and Caribbean colonies sent regular reports to London on the spiritual condition of the colonists. These letters and reports today make up the Fulham Papers, a collection that captures an intriguing perspective on colonial life – one that also features many of the

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 11.

same concerns expressed in Puritan sermons. One such report sent to London on May 6, 1724 from George Pigot, an Anglican minister who presided over Warwick, Rhode Island, stated about the resident English colonists that they were “deplorable rank in Infidelity.” Regarding the religious instruction of the enslaved and indigenous population, Pigot complained that, “there can be no Hopes of their Conversion, until the White Men show them a better example.”²⁴¹

Anglican as well as Puritan ministers wrestled to maintain religious influence over the colonies, and they called on the social elite for support. Often, these religious leaders attempted to push back against the multitude of religious sects that existed in the colonies, as evidenced by Pigot who bitterly complained about the unfortunate influence of Quakers and Anabaptists over the residents of his parish. In addition to battling competition from the diverse numbers of sectarian groups, these missionaries also attempted to secure the souls of the growing enslaved population and the members of neighboring indigenous tribes. This particular challenge proved to be too difficult for some ministers, who believed that they would never achieve success until the colonists offered

²⁴¹ Queries of George Pigot, Providence, Warwick, Greenwich, etc. in the colony of Rhode Island, May 6, 1724, *Fulham Papers, Vol. VIII – Pennsylvania (1762 – undated), Rhode Island*, folio 190. Lambeth Palace Library, London, United Kingdom.

some assistance. Pigot blamed the “White Men” for failing to lead by an appropriate example. One of the causes for such poor leadership from the white community, in the eyes of Anglican ministers, was the abundance of alcohol and the tendency of the colonists to overindulge and lose control of their senses. Singling out the colonial whites, Pigot aligned with the message presented by Cotton Mather, that it was the responsibility of the whites, and in Mather’s eyes, the elite whites, to set a better example for the lower classes. Mather called on the “Good men” to press for improved behavior, and even form an association through which members could check in on and observe known drunkards. “God,” Mather stated, “put into their Hearts to make the Experiment!” Therefore, the elite were responsible for the maintenance of society, for the continued control of labor, and for ensuring the lower sorts engaged in appropriate behavior, even though the elites did not always do so themselves.²⁴²

In many cases, the letters sent by members of the Society not only expressed concern and outrage at the negative effects of drunkenness in the colonies, but they also often criticized other Anglican ministers who seemed to succumb to the temptation of alcohol. One such letter of complaint, sent from Charleston on September 6, 1737 by Society member Alexander Garden, presented a damning account regarding the

²⁴² Mather, *Sober Considerations*, 19.

conduct of a fellow SPG missionary. Garden notified the Bishop of London after he learned about the shocking behavior of an Anglican missionary named John Boyd in a letter from the governor of North Carolina. Describing Boyd as “one of the Vilest & most scandalous Person,” Garden states that Boyd was guilty of drunkenness and idleness, but that was not the worst of his actions. According to Garden, Boyd fell into such a despicable state of drunkenness, that “on a Sunday, this Spring, at noon day, he was seen by many Persons Lying dead Drunk & fast asleep, on the Great Road to Virginia, *with his Horses Bridle tyed to his Leg.*”²⁴³ Garden states that such accounts of Boyd’s horrifying behavior came from several other witnesses, and that he believed it best for the Society to dismiss Boyd from his service and avoid the risk of further damage the wayward missionary might bring to the reputation of the Society and the Anglican Church.

Similar to the Puritans, the letters and petitions to the Bishop of London suggest that the Anglican ministers felt responsible for the maintenance of social order in the colonies. If a minister failed to lead by example, then the missionaries feared an inevitable decline in social morals and behavior would follow. A petition sent to the Bishop by six

²⁴³ Alexander Garden to Bishop Gibson, Charlestown, Sept. 6, 1737, *Fulham Papers Vol. X – South Carolina (1735 – undated)*, folios 46-47. Lambeth Palace Library, London, United Kingdom. Emphasis added.

members of the Vestry of St. Paul's Parish in Baltimore against Reverend William Tibbs, the church minister, reflects such fears. The petition claimed that the poor leadership and bad example offered by Tibbs caused many of the residents to "[profane] the Lord's Day with Drunkenness and many other sorts of Vice."²⁴⁴ The petitioners accused Tibbs of weakness, as his inability to admonish bad behavior allowed parish residents to continue in their sinful ways. In addition to his weakness, the petitioners singled out Tibbs's own tendency for drunkenness as a primary cause for his failure as a religious leader. Among the accusations made against Tibbs, the signers stated that Tibbs was "a common drunkard"; altogether, three out of the five accusations against him featured alcohol as the primary cause. These letters, reports, and petitions sent to the Bishop of London indicate that drunkenness among ministers, as well as the general population, was a common problem in the early eighteenth century. Even though ministers saw themselves as moral authority figures – those responsible with suppressing "a growing Evil" within their congregations – ministers, too,

²⁴⁴ Maryland, Petition against Mr. Wm. Tibbs, Feb. 15, 1715, *Fulham Papers, Vol. II – Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland (1694-1719)*, folio 215. Lambeth Palace Library, London, United Kingdom.

fell under the influence of strong drink in a similar manner to the residents of the colonies that they attempted to lead.²⁴⁵



Figure 6: John Greenwood, *Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam* (c. 1752-58). This painting depicts the rambunctious behavior that seemed to accompany punch drinking amongst the elite in the colonies. The chaotic scene also shares similarities to the behavior of the beastly drunkards featured in Heywood's *Philocothomista*.

Condemnations of drinking did not remain limited to the sermons and letters of religious leaders. White colonial men engaged in extensive practice at imbibing spirits. Satirical literature, newspapers, and travel accounts document the excessive lifestyle of the colonial elites. One particularly scathing portrayal of the planters' lifestyles appeared in John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart's *A Tour in the United States of America*, an excerpt of which appeared in *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald and The*

²⁴⁵ Mather, *Sober Considerations*, 18.

American Monitor in 1786. Stuart, a loyalist during the Revolutionary War, described the life of an American gentleman as one of gluttony and of excessive drinking. After rising at nine o'clock and eating breakfast, Stuart stated the "gentleman of fortune... lies down on a pallet, on the floor, in the coolest room in the house, in his shirt and trowsers only, with a negro at his head, and another at his feet, to fan him, and keep off the flies."²⁴⁶ Following this respite, the gentleman "takes a draught of bombo or toddy" – a weak mixture of water, sugar, rum, and nutmeg – but with dinner, the gentleman throws back rounds of "cider, toddy, punch, port, claret, and madeira," followed by more glasses of wine after dinner. Not quite finished for the evening, Stuart states the gentleman concluded his day with more portions of toddy and sangaree.

While Stuart's portrayal of the American gentleman's lifestyle carries a mocking tone, such criticism was not unfounded, as the elite ranks of colonial and post-independence American society embraced habitual, heavy drinking. The raucous scene captured in John Greenwood's mid-eighteenth century painting, *Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam*, conveys the level of debauchery that comprised elite drinking parties. With punch bowls and broken glasses scattered throughout the

²⁴⁶ John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart, *A Tour in the United States* excerpt, printed in *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald and The American Monitor*. February 8, 1786. Vol. III, Issue 5.

scene, in the midst of vomiting and gambling men, the excessive consumption of alcohol remained a favored pastime for many elites across the Atlantic World. For centuries, drinking wine and spirits, such as brandy, was restricted to the realm of the upper classes, but following the rise of mass-produced rum in the Caribbean and gin in England, substantial amounts of liquor flowed throughout these high-consumption societies. Often, elite white men justified their drinking habits through the form of club meetings. These meetings simply offered elite whites both the opportunity and excuse to imbibe excessive amounts of liquor. The Scottish physician, Dr. Alexander Hamilton, wrote about his experiences with gentlemen's clubs as he traveled throughout the colonies in 1744. Dr. Hamilton did not hold a high opinion of these clubs, which he shared in a written account of his travels. While in Maryland, Dr. Hamilton penned his observations of club members leaving a tavern:

Just as I dismounted at Tradaway's [Inn], I found a drunken Club dismissing. Most of them had got upon their horses, and were seated in an oblique situation, deviating much from a perpendicular to the horizontal plane... hence we deduce the true physical reason why our heads overloaded with liquor become too ponderous for our heels. Their discourse was as oblique as their position: the only thing intelligible in it was oaths and Goddames; the rest was an inarticulate sound like Rabelais' frozen words a-thawing, interlaced with hickupings and belchings.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 6-7.

Gentlemen's clubs were intended as meetings in which elite white men could gather and discuss a variety of matters, from professional interests to politics. Regardless of the topic, alcohol remained on hand, and frequently such gatherings devolved into rambunctious parties. The ability to drink to excess became a point of pride for elite white men. Dr. Hamilton noted that, while attending a meeting of the Hungarian Club in New York, Governor George Clinton was "a jolly toaper... and for that one quality is esteemed among these dons."²⁴⁸ While club members based the existence of their meetings on the need to gather for the purpose of discourse, Dr. Hamilton instead believed the club members were more interested in gathering to drink.²⁴⁹

As much as colonial ministers and missionaries complained about the behavior caused by distilled spirits, the sharp increase in the consumption of gin amongst, and the feared loss of control over, London's working poor received even more public scrutiny via political attacks. Unlike the colonies, where laborers remained high in demand, England instead had an abundance of workers. With more laborers than tasks to

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 165.

²⁴⁹ For more on colonial gentlemen's clubs in North America, see: W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 32-33; Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 76-82.

complete, many “masterless men” (and women) eventually found their way to the capital city.²⁵⁰ By the early eighteenth century, London became the largest city in Europe, and much of its population lived in a state of poverty. For these individuals, gin – available on most streets and from an estimated 2,377 retailers across the city – was a means of escape from the squalor of their living conditions.²⁵¹ For many in the lower levels of society, gin provided “the poorer sort” an opportunity to mimic the behavior of the social elite. Wealthy residents in London often enjoyed spirit-based punches, in which they mixed liquor with fruit juices and spices. The poorer residents likewise flavored their ‘waters’ with fruit juice, often to mask the harsh flavor of the gin.²⁵² By acting as the elite did – carousing over a large supply of spirituous liquors – these poor laborers were, in the eyes of many critics, drinking above their station. Anti-gin advocates deplored this behavior. Thomas Wilson, the bishop of Sodor and Man, and outspoken critic of distilled spirits, bemoaned the favor bestowed upon spirits by the poor. By drinking liquors, he argued, the poor mimicked their social betters in a manner he found most unsuitable. He stated:

²⁵⁰ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 69.

²⁵¹ Warner, *Craze*, 54.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 26-27, 37.

Is it not notorious, that *Luxury* and *Extravagance* were never at a greater Height than at present, amongst the *laborious*, and even the *Meanest* part of *Mankind*? Instead of being contented with *Beer* and *Ale* brewed at home of their own Malt, they must now have *Tea* and *Spirits* at six times the Expence.²⁵³

No longer were laborers content to drink simply beer or ale, but now the lower classes had access to potent spirits. The beverage of the elite now poured down the throats of those living at all levels of society.



Figure 7: William Hogarth, "A Midnight Modern Conversation" (London: 1730). Hogarth presented a critical portrayal of elite men succumbing to drunkenness over an elaborate punch bowl. The dress of the drinkers and the furnishings of the room indicate the social status of the drunkards. While Hogarth emphasized the debauchery that drunkenness caused, this behavior was considered a luxury of the elite.

²⁵³ Wilson, *Distilled Spirituous Liquors*, 7.

In East London, during the first decades of the eighteenth century, gin took hold. Popular among the laboring poor, who concentrated in that region of the city, gin flowed freely in spite of protests from moral reformers and anti-liquor advocates. Gin was everywhere; it was sold in lanes, back rooms of retail shops, and even in an early prototype of the vending machine – known as a “puss and mew.”²⁵⁴ The display of squalor on London’s streets while the city appeared to be stuck in the grips of the “Craze” was certainly deplorable, as captured in the words of the numerous proclamations and political attacks leveled against the consumption of gin. Thomas Wilson described the scene as one where streets were full of gin-sellers, lined with gin shops, and scattered with “a Croud of poor ragged People, cursing and quarrelling with one another, over repeated Glasses of these destructive Liquors.”²⁵⁵ Wilson claimed that such sights were common at all hours. Men, women, and children succumbed to the intoxicating effects of the liquor; they would overindulge in gin, recover their senses, and then continue to drink again.

²⁵⁴ “Puss and mew” machines provided a way for gin-sellers to conduct business, even if their wares were sold without a proper license. Operating in a manner comparable to speakeasies in twentieth-century United States, a customer approached the machine, said “puss,” and the gin-seller responded with “mew.” A movable drawer provided a place for the customer to place their coins and the seller to place the gin. Through this method, gin remained available in spite of attempts at legal crackdowns throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Warner, *Craze*, 43.

²⁵⁵ Wilson, *Distilled Spirituous Liquors*, v-vi.

While the social elite expressed their frustration over the new access laborers had to distilled spirits, many stressed a connection between the increase in potent spirits consumed by the lower classes and an increase in crime. Early eighteenth-century cases recorded in the Old Bailey feature the constant association of gin with a wide array of criminal acts, from petty theft to murder. On December 4, 1724, Eleanor Lock of Clerkenwell was charged with stealing a silver watch from Thomas Miller. Gin was said to play a prominent role in the crime. Miller claimed he encountered Lock while traveling to Islington. Miller explained that Lock implored him to stop for a moment, saying, "Tis a long way... and you had better drink before you go any further, for fear you should faint upon the Road. - Come, my Dear, treat me with a Pint."²⁵⁶ Miller acquiesced to her request, but claimed she was set on drinking gin. Miller continued, "With all my Heart (says he), but what House shall we go to? – Why, I'll tell you Child, I don't much Care for drinking Beer; but if you'll go to my Landlady's in Butcher's Alley, we'll have a Quartern of Gin." Miller agreed, and at some point in the midst of drinking, he realized he no longer had his watch. Calling the Constable, Lock eventually confessed and revealed where she hid the watch. Lock pled her case in court by emphasizing her

²⁵⁶ Old Bailey Proceedings Online, "December 1724, trial of Eleanor Lock" (t17241204-68): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.

advanced age and life of poverty, but the jury found her guilty of theft, and she was charged with transportation. Her destination does not appear in the record.²⁵⁷

While theft and crime occurred before the working poor gained access to distilled spirits, the emphasis on criminal activity developed into a regular refrain amongst the opponents of gin. The press circulated shocking tales, such as the story of a woman who stole the clothes off a child's body to sell them so she would have money for gin. Other stories of crime, violence, as well as the story of Grace Pett's smoldering body, sought to shock and horrify polite society into action. Although London stood as the largest city in Europe, and the capital of a growing empire, the perceived decay of city's grandeur focused the elite's critical eye on the lower classes. Many critics came to frame their opposition to the mass production of gin in class terms, and they argued that the drunkenness of laborers undermined societal progress. In 1751, Henry Fielding, a justice of the peace, invoked the imagery present in William Hogarth's famous, and sharply political, *Gin Lane*, when discussing his views on gin and its effect on the lower classes in London.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

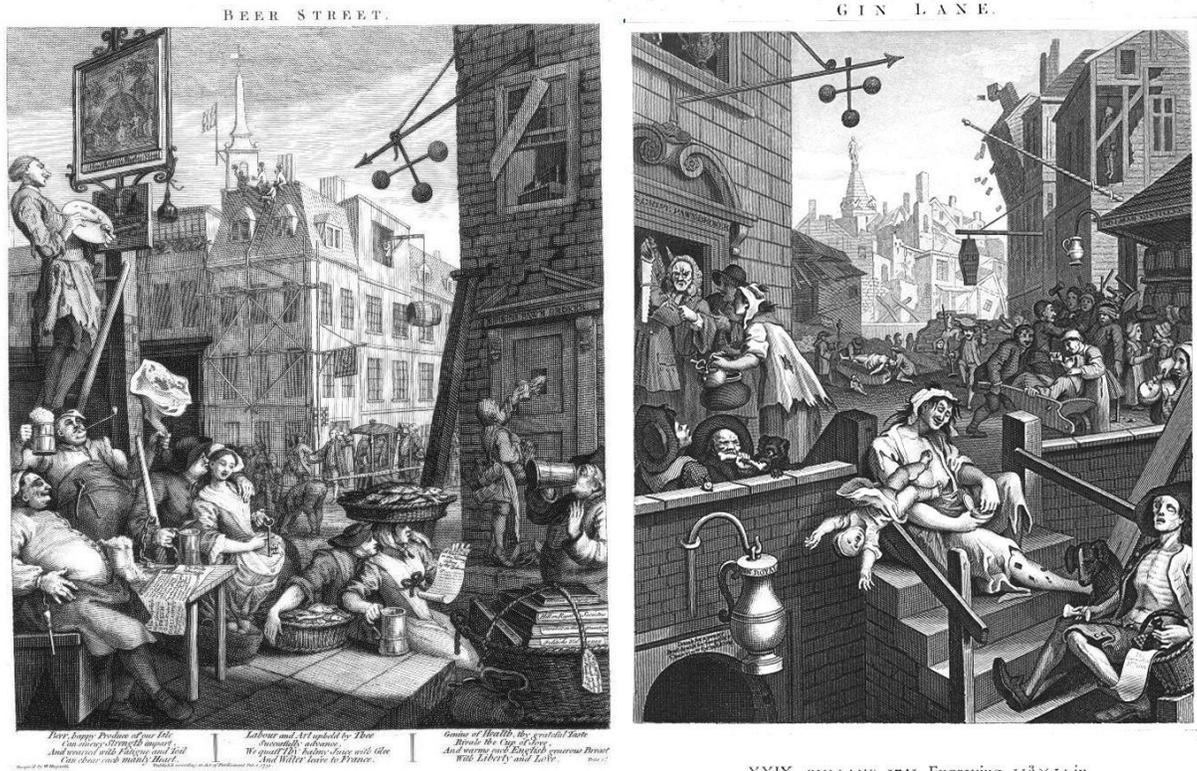


Figure 8: William Hogarth, *Beer Street and Gin Lane* (London: 1751). Hogarth created these contrasting images to encourage passage of the 1751 Gin Act.

Fielding claimed that the poor and middling sort, of all ages and genders, gathered at all hours of the day to drink “a Glass of Juniper,” and that they never found satisfaction but for the moment “the Glass is at their Noses.”²⁵⁸ Isaac Maddox, the Bishop of Worcester, also lamented the ill-effects gin brought to the city. In a sermon to the Mayor and Aldermen of

²⁵⁸ Henry Fielding, *A Dissertation on Mr. Hogarth's Six Prints Lately publish'd, viz. Gin-Lane, Beer-Street, and the Four Stages of Cruelty* (London: 1751), 9. Juniper berries were the popular additives for gin, giving the liquor its distinctive flavor.

London, Maddox emphasized the deteriorating state of social morals. He pragmatically pointed to the lawlessness resulting from the overconsumption of gin, stating, “Emboldened Wretches, prompted by Want, and inspired by Gin, will enter upon the most daring and audacious Acts of Wickedness; despising Law and Punishment.”²⁵⁹ Anti-liquor advocates emphasized the degraded state caused by gin, and specifically gin consumption among the working poor, to show how distilled spirits were a threat to the overall safety of London’s residents.²⁶⁰

The words of Fielding and Maddox reflect the contrasting images constructed by the famed English painter and print maker, William Hogarth. Created to encourage the passage of the Gin Act in 1751, Hogarth’s *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* present the stark differences he saw in beer and a distilled spirit like gin. In *Beer Street*, the laborers shown consuming alcohol appear industrious and healthy. People quaff tankards of beer as Hogarth evoked the traditional connections between beer and the English working class. Construction on a building in the background represents progress, while only the office of the creditor appears to be in a state of decay. The women featured in this scene are under the direct supervision and physical control of men. Where beer brought industry, gin

²⁵⁹ Isaac Maddox, *Sermon* (London: 1750), xii-xiv.

²⁶⁰ Wilson, *Distilled Spirituous Liquors*, vi.

brought destruction. In the companion piece to *Beer Street*, the same setting appears, although the viewer is met with a harrowing scene. Intoxicated laborers appear scattered across the road. A drunk, unattended woman unknowingly drops her baby, while a starving, skeletal man sits nearby. To the left of the woman, a man and a dog appear fighting over the same bone, while scenes of death and destruction compose the chaotic background. While Hogarth similarly criticized the wealthy drunkards depicted in *A Midnight Modern Conversation*, printed fifteen years prior, the inebriated destruction of the elite had its limits. Similar to Greenwood's drunken sea captains, Hogarth depicted this elite party indoors. In this way, wealthy drunkards could hide their excessive consumption from public eyes. The wealthy drunkards in the print appear falling on the floor, staggering, and spilling their drinks, but the image conveys more of a mocking humorous tone than a sense of shock. Hogarth did not spare the intoxicated elite his scorn, but by comparing the two images, *A Midnight Modern Conversation* and *Gin Lane*, the negatives of gin drinking among the poor are clear. The widespread drunkenness amongst the laboring classes did not just result in a rambunctious party held indoors; it resulted in the crumbling of society.

The poor and their lack of industrious labor remained a frequent target in political speeches throughout the "Craze." The loss of control

over the lower classes, due to drunkenness, threatened to disrupt the traditional system of stratified labor. The elite felt comfortable that an occasional drinking bout resulted in little social harm, but laboring workers across Great Britain kept cities like London afloat. Class control and stratified labor was necessary to maintain the long-enduring system of deference and consumerism restricted by hierarchical social structures. In his sermon, Maddox explained the repercussions of lost industry due to widespread gin consumption, stating:

In a Case of such immense Importance to the Preservation of numberless Lives of *British* Subjects, and to the Welfare and Safety of the Nation itself... where an Evil already so very extensive is daily enlarging its baneful Progress; and with a poison peculiarly venomous, gnawing the very *Vitals* of a trading Nation, by spreading largely its sad Infection in Towns and Villages engaged in *Manufactures*, where *Industry* and *Temperance* are so peculiarly *essential*, if any Product of *British* Labour is to appear at foreign Markets...²⁶¹

Here, Maddox makes a direct connection between industry and the maintenance of temperance amongst laborers. Temperance led to progress and trade, while liquor remained a poison to workers that threatened the success of the young British Empire.

Similar to the remarks made by Cotton Mather, elites in England expressed their concern over the loss of revenue a diminished workload would bring. Thomas Wilson spoke at length about this possible outcome,

²⁶¹ Maddox, *Sermon*, xxiv.

stating, “Tis a certain and known Maxim, that the *Strength* and *Riches* of any Nation arise principally from the *Number*, *bodily Strength*, and *Labour* of its Inhabitants; and consequently, in proportion as *these* are diminished, so must the *Riches* and *Power* of a Nation decrease.”²⁶² As historians have noted, the emphasis on the loss of revenue was a significant component of anti-gin arguments. The landed interest, who served as members of Parliament, directly benefited from the distillation of surplus grain, which presented a challenge to those who opposed the British distilling industry. To convince those who profited off the production of gin that distilled spirits were the cause of many social ills, anti-liquor advocates instead stressed the ways spirits would lead to a loss of revenue elsewhere – one which occurred on a much larger scale – in order to sway the interest of Parliament.²⁶³

In order for laborers to work, they required bodily health. Wilson quipped, “[T]hese Liquors *dispirit* and *enervate* them, so that they are not able to go thro’ the *Hardships*, that were, by their former wholesome Diet...”²⁶⁴ What did the former wholesome diet of laborers depend upon? Why, malt liquors, of course. Wilson states that such brewed beverages

²⁶² Wilson, *Distilled Spirituous Liquors*, 7.

²⁶³ Warner, *Craze*, 91.

²⁶⁴ Wilson, *Distilled Spirituous Liquors*, 7.

were “the *natural* and *wholesome* Drink of this Kingdom.”²⁶⁵ Workers maintained health and strength when they drank only ale and hopped beer, but gin, critics like Wilson pointed out, did not offer this same level of nourishment. Gin not only sapped workers of their required strength, but it also decimated their bodies, reducing them to mere skin and bones. The image of the body wasting away due to habitual drinking appears early in Wilson’s tirade against gin. In a chilling description, Wilson states, “distill’d [Spirituous] *Liquors*, in *all* Cases, *impoverish* the whole Mass, and by an habitual Use of them, the plumpest and healthiest Bodies are soon emaciated, the radical Moisture dried up, and the strongest Men reduced to *Skeletons*.”²⁶⁶ Like the stories that circulated of women, such as Grace Pett, an unmistakable connection appeared between the habitual consumption of gin – particularly among the lower classes – and death.

While the campaign against gin in London sometimes ebbed in response to instances of war and peace during the first half of the eighteenth century, laborers and members of the poor remained a constant target for anti-liquor advocates and other social reformers. Almost two decades after Thomas Wilson published his condemnations against gin, John Clayton, a minister and deacon of Chester, perpetuated

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, xi.

such criticisms in his *Friendly Advice to the Poor*, published in 1755.²⁶⁷ In this, he states that, without industrious artisans and laborers, “the State of the World [cannot be] maintained.”²⁶⁸ What did Clayton claim to be the primary source of distraction to the poor? Drinking and gaming – sordid activities that claimed all the money of wayward poor men, who left their “wretched wife and children... to work and starve.”²⁶⁹ In particular, Clayton saw distilled spirits as one of the root causes of idleness among the poor. If distillers allowed men to spend all their income on this “slow yet sure Poison,” Clayton argued that even the greatest industry in the nation could not endure.²⁷⁰ While Clayton is clear to distinguish laborers from the poor, who he believed offered no clear contribution to society, much of his message applied to both groups. To Clayton, laborers appeared as “Examples of Industry,” while the poor were not much more than a nuisance. Clayton complained that, “We cannot walk the Streets without being annoyed with such Filth...” The poor, according to Clayton, only had themselves to blame for their life of misery.²⁷¹ Drinking, however, was a threat presented to both laborers and the poor, and Clayton claimed that many laborers spent what little money they earned in irresponsible ways –

²⁶⁷ John Clayton, *Friendly Advice to the Poor* (Manchester: 1755).

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

on liquor and games. Ineffective laborers, incapable of work due to drunkenness, resulted in ineffective production. This, in the end, led to a deteriorating society.

The arguments that arose against distilled spirits presented a contrary perspective of what was once considered the wholesome waters of life. Medical understanding of the effect regular consumption of spirits had on the body evolved alongside the widespread practice of drinking such liquors. Theories based upon belief in the internal humors continued to be the basis for medical knowledge and practice in the early eighteenth century. Physicians who examined the possible damage habitual drinking could cause framed their discussions in these elemental terms. In 1706, Daniel Duncan, a Scottish-French physician, commented on the impact distilled spirits' hot qualities had on the body. While common belief and practice upheld spirits as a way to strengthen one's body, particularly in the hot climate of the Caribbean colonies, Duncan disagreed. Instead, he said the hot properties of spirits made "the Blood too sharp, too hot, too subtil and too thin," and drinking liquors resulted in an overall dissipation of "the Spirit of Life."²⁷² Duncan, in a move away from the cultural distrust and overall dislike of water, argued in favor of drinking water instead of

²⁷² Daniel Duncan, *Wholesome advice against the abuse of hot liquors, particularly of coffee, chocolate, tea, Brandy, And Strong-Waters* (London: 1706), 36.

alcohol. Duncan describes life before the Deluge, the great flood, in which “Mankind drank nothing but Water, and they lived to a far greater Age than those which came after... The Temperance of the First World prolonged their Days. The Intemperance of the Last shortens it by kindling a great Fire in our bodies...”²⁷³ Perhaps the hot qualities of spirits were, in fact, too hot for human bodies to ingest on a regular basis. Physicians also began to wonder if these spirits were less medicinal and wholesome, as they once perceived.

Physicians played an active role in the debates over the widespread consumption of spirits. They acted as both direct participants who authored their own pamphlets for the public, as well as cited authorities whose views anti-liquor advocates rolled out in order to supplement their own stance against widespread, recreational drinking. Cotton Mather, who begrudgingly acknowledged the medical use of alcohol early in his sermon against rum, used physicians as an example to support his larger argument against intemperance. Excessive consumption, he explained, would ruin the drinker’s health by causing indigestion, as well as inviting a number of diseases into the body. “The *Blood* is vitiated,” Mather dramatically argued, “The man breathes like a Smith’s *Forge*. He is quickly Burnt to Death. The *Bottle* kills more than the

²⁷³ Ibid., 47.

Cannon.²⁷⁴ While Mather intermingled religious imagery with the supposed medical knowledge of physicians, anti-liquor advocates began to present a more “scientific” argument about bodily health and drinking. Wilson regularly quoted an unnamed physician in his tract against gin to provide a voice of authority regarding the physical impact habitual drinking had on the body. Such critics of alcohol consumption, however, always returned to the central concern over the health of laborers, and the strength of future sailors and soldiers who would be responsible for protecting the Empire. Ultimately, the health of the emerging British nation, and its strength as a global, imperial power, rested upon the labor of the working classes. Both physicians and anti-liquor advocates argued that, without healthy and strong laborers, the power of Britain would inevitably decline. The Royal College of Physicians attempted to present this message to Parliament in 1726, but England’s conflict with Spain tabled concerns over gin in favor of more pressing issues.²⁷⁵

The timing of these debates was also significant, as the ideals of the Enlightenment began to spread across Great Britain and Western Europe, influencing the way physicians understood the operation of the body and the effect of medicine. Interest in ‘enlightened’ medical thought

²⁷⁴ Mather, *Sober Considerations*, 13.

²⁷⁵ Warner, *Craze*, 94; Wilson, *Distilled Spirituous Liquors*, xiii-xiv; Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 40.

placed emphasis on the health of one's physical body, rather than the threat drunkenness posed to one's soul. One of the greatest factors of Enlightenment thought on medicine was the gradual separation of religion from understanding illness and disease. Medical knowledge that once depended upon the elemental connections between the spiritual and physical worlds began to move away from the influence of religious thought. This process developed slowly, and many of the debates over distilled spirits continued to feature an intermingling of both science and religion.

Philosophers and physicians alike grappled to understand a drunkard's willingness to destroy their ability to reason. A significant contributor to the early, enlightened debates on the physical effects of drinking was the Scottish physician, George Cheyne. Cheyne's writings often emphasized the importance of diet, and he advocated that balancing food intake was equally as important as balancing drink. As early as 1740, Cheyne proposed a diet that later became the hallmark of nineteenth-century temperance advocates. In *An Essay on Regimin*, Cheyne stated, "And he who would timeously give up... *fermented* Liquors, and drink nothing but *pure tepid Water*, need never seek nor want any other *Cure* or

Medicin [sic].²⁷⁶ James Nicholls explained the significant nature of Cheyne's work, stating, "Cheyne was perhaps the first secular doctor... who saw total abstinence as both possible and advisable."²⁷⁷ The reason Cheyne proposed abstinence from drinking was due to his concern over the mental decline caused by habitual alcohol consumption. Even in an era when many placed little trust in drinking water, Cheyne challenged any reader to provide an example of a "Water-drinking only" man who descended into madness or lunacy. Cheyne argued:

[For] it is *fermented* Liquors only that inflame the *Membrans* and *membranous Tubuli* (the *Nerves*), which are the bodily Organs of *intellectual* Operations. It is the *Fire... of fermented* Liquors, that inflame... these *Membranes*, and their linear Threads, into violent Succussions, that break and tear them...²⁷⁸

Cheyne saw the consumption of alcohol as a vehicle that destroyed the drinker's reason in a most violent manner. His emphasis on the degenerative, destructive effects excessive drinking had on the mind reflected the secularized rhetoric of the Enlightenment, as well as the shift in medical perceptions of alcohol consumption. Physicians like Cheyne came to view the drinking of spirits as the ingestion of toxins that poisoned the drinker's body and, more importantly, the mind.

²⁷⁶ George Cheyne, *An Essay on Regimen* (London: 1740), lvii.

²⁷⁷ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 61.

²⁷⁸ Cheyne, *An Essay on Regimen*, xxv.

The ideals of the Enlightenment required more time to cross the Atlantic and influence medical knowledge in the colonies. After the Act of Union passed in 1707, which opened up trade between North America, the Caribbean, and Scotland, a connection between the colonies and Edinburgh began to develop. The medical school at the University of Edinburgh opened its doors in 1726 and soon developed into a hotbed of Enlightenment thought. With the lifted restriction on trade and migration, considerable numbers of Scottish emigrants traversed the Atlantic to settle in the colonies over the eighteenth century, including many Scottish doctors who carried Enlightenment ideals with them. By the mid-eighteenth century, increasing numbers of North American colonists traveled to the University of Edinburgh for medical training, thereby perpetuating the influence of the Enlightenment on the development of colonial medicine.²⁷⁹ As the eighteenth century progressed, these new ways of understanding and perceiving the effect of alcohol on the body came to the fore, and physicians began to question whether spirits held the medical benefits they once believed. Practice, however, did not always follow the changes in discourse, and distilled spirits remained a favorite

²⁷⁹ Helen Brock, "North America, a western outpost of European medicine" in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 198-200.

choice of both recreational escape and medical care to members across the socioeconomic spectrum.

The episode of mass consumption known as the “Gin Craze” that spawned lengthy debates over the medicinal value of distilled spirits, as well as the threat intoxication posed to the strength of the British Empire, eventually came to an end. For the first time in British history, doctors, ministers, and politicians worked together to enforce large-scale restrictions against the consumption of alcohol. In 1751, Parliament passed the final Gin Act that, unlike earlier attempts, helped rein in the seemingly unrestricted consumption of gin among the masses. While the decline in consumption seemed to bring about a perceived end to the “Craze,” historians argue that gin was already on the decline, making the Gin Act of 1751 more of a symbolic marker to the end of this outburst of intense anti-alcohol rhetoric.²⁸⁰ While the recreational consumption of gin did not end outright, neither did the philosophies that emerged within the debates throughout the gin-soaked episode.²⁸¹ Medical and economic discussions of consuming spirits not only contributed to a new understanding of the health of a populace and the wealth of a nation, but

²⁸⁰ Warner, *Craze*, 207-208.

²⁸¹ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 47-48.

they also brought about a significant reevaluation of medical perceptions regarding the impact of alcohol on the human body.²⁸²

Concern over the social effect spirits had on the lower, laboring classes drove the debates about gin. Critics feared the emerging consumerism among individuals who usually did not enjoy access to traditionally luxurious items.²⁸³ The elegant, lavish cordials of the elite – such as a Mary Bent’s Orange Watter made with saffron and gold leaf – were once exclusive to the upper echelon of society. The rise of mass-produced rum in the Caribbean and North America, and the spread of gin distilling in England made cheap spirits a favored and accessible drink of the working poor. Although the gin and rum consumed by laborers in both the colonies and in England did not feature the same level of luxury as the cordials distilled in elite households, the very act of consuming spirits and fruit-based punches proved too much for elite observers like Thomas Wilson. The clear interest in consumerism amongst the ‘meaner sort,’ revealed troubling trends that threatened to upset a long-established status quo, and the resulting deliberations about spirits, reinforced the necessity of class boundaries and the need to control the working poor.

²⁸² Ibid., 33-35.

²⁸³ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 45.

Vocal critics of spirits continued to frame their arguments in spiritual terms, as their counterparts did in the early seventeenth century, but the widespread availability of rum and gin in the early eighteenth century shifted the focus of concern to the loss of labor. Even religious leaders like Cotton Mather and Isaac Maddox could not help but emphasize the damaging effect that labor lost to drunkenness would have on the well-being of society. In Britain's colonies, where labor was always in high demand, the threat of labor lost to inebriation appeared particularly pernicious. In addition, their arguments centered on an apparent fear of lost control over class groups who were supposed to remain content with their station and obligation toward production. Even though, by the mid-eighteenth century, gin consumption was on the decline, anti-liquor advocates launched a revived campaign. Scholars agree that this campaign had less to do with gin drinking and more to do with renewed fears that the lower classes continued to imitate their betters through the recreational consumption of spirits.²⁸⁴

While the elite in London maintained their fears of an uncontrollable labor force, similar fears developed in the colonies, although the focus remained fixed on two groups that did not factor into the debates of the elite English: enslaved Africans and Native Americans. The presence of

²⁸⁴ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 46; Warner, *Craze*, 193-195.

these particular groups, defined by unique racial markers of perceived subordination, complicated views concerning the availability of spirits in the colonies. Unlike control over the labor force in England, colonial legal structures sought to maintain elite, white control over the growing enslaved population in North America and the Caribbean through restrictions on behavior. As mentioned, tavern licenses outlined prohibitions on serving slaves and Natives, due to fears over lost control and potential violence against the colonists. The relationship that developed between the colonists, slaves, Natives, and distilled spirits grew fraught with tension. As much as the European settlers and planters across the colonies consumed spirits for personal pleasure, they tried to make use of spirits as a means of maintaining control over groups that they considered to be inferior. Planters believed that potent beverages would appease and bewilder slaves into continued subservience. Spirits also helped colonial traders profit from indigenous peoples. In these ways, colonists used spirits to enforce imperial control, and yet the threat of intoxication among social “inferiors” was also frightening. More so than the elite English fearing the loss of class boundaries and a diminished labor supply, the colonists feared the possibility drunk slaves or Natives might rise against them. While imperial interests brought about the mass production of distilled spirits across the Atlantic World in the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, those same spirits, in turn, became the very element through which slaves, Natives, and even white colonists fueled their resistance against the British Empire.

Chapter 4

Spirits of Resistance

“He knows he never gets a stroke but for his drinkings, and then he is very sharply whipped; but as soon as the cuts heal he gets drunk directly.”²⁸⁵

On May 9, 1767, Gizebert Lane placed an ad for a slave, named London, who had run away on April 23. Lane described London as being thirty-three years old, roughly five feet and nine or ten inches in height, and of “yellow Complexion.” The ad included extensive detail to help those who read the description locate Lane’s rebellious slave. London had previously had small pox, and likely still had the scarred features survivors of the disease often carried. One of his fore fingers was stiff. He reportedly wore a coat and jacket “of new homespun brown Broadcloth,” good leather breeches, and a good hat. In addition to his clothing and physical features, the ad describes London’s character, stating he was “a cunning artful Fellow” who might try to pass himself off as a free man. Embedded within the listed details, Lane included a telling line about his runaway slave: “he is addicted to strong Liquor, and when drunk troublesome.”²⁸⁶

With a few words, Lane provided a remarkable insight into London the

²⁸⁵ Jack P. Greene, ed. *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*, Volume II (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965), 778.

²⁸⁶ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. May 21, 1767. No. 2004.

individual, rather than London the slave. London, through drunkenness, acted out with such frequency that it became a defining element of his character. Such a descriptor, however, regularly appeared in runaway slave advertisements circulated in colonial newspapers. In January of 1767, an ad placed by Wilson Hunt for an unnamed male slave states that, “He is much addicted to strong Liquor, and when drunk very noisy and troublesome.”²⁸⁷ Another ad placed by Pollard Edmondson in February of 1769 for a runaway slave named Will states, “[he] is much addicted to liquor, and when drunk is very impudent.”²⁸⁸ Again, in May of 1785, an ad for a runaway slave, named Dick, states he was “fond of spirituous liquor, and when he drinks a little too much appears stupid, drowsy and very much inclined to sleep.”²⁸⁹ More than simply featuring a continuity of descriptors, these ads for runaway slaves show that drunkenness among slaves was not only common, but it was also a way for slaves to act “impudent,” “troublesome,” or to avoid work through sleep. In other words, drunkenness provided slaves a habitual means to disobey their masters. Through quietly subversive and at times violent acts of rebellion, slaves made use of distilled spirits, a product of

²⁸⁷ *The New-York Gazette or, The Weekly Post-Boy*. January 1, 1767. Issue 1252.

²⁸⁸ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. February 16, 1769. No. 2095.

²⁸⁹ *The Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser*. May 26, 1785. Vol. II, No. 69.

European imperialism, as a means to challenge planters as well as the institution of slavery.

As was true for white settlers across North America and the Caribbean islands, slaves, free people of color, and indigenous peoples who, together, completed the population profile of Britain's colonies, all had access to distilled spirits. With Barbados exporting millions of gallons of rum – 1.4 million gallons in 1748 alone – to the continental colonies, spirits and heavy drinking practices became common by the eighteenth century.²⁹⁰ While colonial laws sought to restrict access of spirits to select racial groups, liquor freely flowed among all who inhabited the British Atlantic in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century. Common criticisms of excessive drinking that appeared in the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth century often came from religious figures or policy makers, who were concerned about either moral decay or economic stagnation. These criticisms, however, focused on the effects of drunkenness among white colonists or English laborers. When concerns regarding excessive drinking considered slaves and free people of color, the discourse changed noticeably. Instances of inebriation and the resulting loss of control over these racialized groups began to appear

²⁹⁰ Frederick H. Smith, *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 84.

quite dangerous to elite whites. This perceived threat of drunkenness fed into the continuous fear of violent retaliation, and white settlers in Britain's colonies began to establish laws that specifically targeted the availability of liquor and the drinking practices of such groups. In spite of these attempts, spirits not only remained accessible to slaves and free people of color, but in some instances, intoxication provided those suffering under racial oppression with a means of subtle or outright resistance.

The available literature on the lives of slaves and free people of color in the North American and Caribbean colonies is extensive and rapidly growing. Historians of American slavery have explored the daily lives of slaves in differing parts of the colonies, how the system of slavery led to the rise of capitalism, as well as the psychological impact of enslavement.²⁹¹ Only a handful of works, however, have considered the

²⁹¹ For further reading on the history of slavery in the British Atlantic, see: Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar & Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, 1976); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Sidney W. Mintz, *The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: a*

way alcohol functioned in slaves' daily lives. In the bulk of the literature on slavery, any appearance of either the production or consumption of alcohol by slaves appears in passing. In Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution*, intoxication among slaves appears, although it is limited to a few paragraphs focused on slave holiday celebrations.²⁹² Eugene D. Genovese's seminal monograph, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, makes only brief references to the presence of alcohol in the lives of slaves. Genovese's research, however, largely focused on the lives of slaves post-1800, a time when planters increasingly restricted, or outright banned, slaves' use of alcohol.²⁹³ Regarding works that focus on an earlier era, Philip D. Morgan's influential study, *Slave Counterpoint*, provides an in-depth analysis of slaves' daily lives and the construction of racial identities in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Low Country. Similar to *Roll, Jordan,*

Comparative Study (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, second edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁹² Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 370-371.

²⁹³ Genovese does discuss alcohol consumption to a limited degree; he relates the importance of alcohol in slave holidays, and the existence of an established trade between slaves and poor whites that included the transfer of liquor. Genovese argues that the social implications created by economic cooperation between slaves and poor whites caused planters to fight against this trade. Therefore, the concern rested with interracial interaction rather than drunkenness among slaves. Ultimately, Genovese states that slaves preferred tobacco to alcohol, and that slaves did not engage in excessive drinking in the same manner as southern whites. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 641-642; 645.

Roll, Morgan's research only makes brief references to alcohol consumption among slaves. Often, instances of intoxication appear framed in the context of how drinking affected slaves' relationship with either white planters or the white community.

While few studies examine the nature of alcohol consumption by slaves and free blacks, the existing works offer an essential foundation upon which this dissertation builds. Sharon V. Salinger's research on taverns in the North American colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries includes remarkable insight into the legal restrictions on alcohol consumption by slaves and free people of color.²⁹⁴ Salinger illuminates how colonial taverns led colonial whites to construct fears of slave rebellions. This research will expand on Salinger's work by comparing the use of alcohol in documented slave conspiracies and rebellions that occurred in North America and the Caribbean. Frederick H. Smith's study, *Caribbean Rum*, also describes the production and use of alcohol by slaves in the British and French Caribbean.²⁹⁵ Smith's analysis of the transfer of drinking customs from West Africa unveils the spiritual importance of alcohol to slave communities. His research also shows how

²⁹⁴ Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

²⁹⁵ Frederick H. Smith, *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008).

slaves used intoxication as a means of spiritual and psychological escape from the brutality of Caribbean slavery.

Where historians and archaeologists have previously analyzed the way alcohol production and consumption operated among slave communities, this chapter will examine the ways drinking, as well as intoxication, served as a means of resistance among these racialized, subjugated groups. For slaves and free people of color, intoxication provided an opportunity to wrest control away from the white community. In turn, whites sought to dominate and control those they perceived as inferior, a perception that habitual drinking fed. Often, the accounts of planters and traders lamented that drunkenness robbed them of control over their slaves. Whether white members of society sought to exploit the labor or impose certain social norms upon such groups, their underlying objective was to maintain control. Slaves who engaged in daily acts of rebellion did so in deliberate, albeit often subtle, ways that were difficult for whites to detect. As Michael Craton argued, the attitudes of slaves resulted from calculation and personal choice. Craton elaborates, stating, "Different decisions could make the same slaves under different conditions appear cringingly docile, simply content, annoyingly troublesome, or

implacably rebellious.”²⁹⁶ Historical analysis of these acts often center on bringing forth the agency of slaves. Walter Johnson’s 2003 essay, “On Agency,” instead proposes alternative methods through which historians may assess the condition of life within the institution of slavery. Johnson suggests historians instead pose questions that examine the daily existence of slaves to understand the ways slaves both suffered and resisted enslavement.²⁹⁷ By analyzing the place of alcohol consumption within slaves’ lives, this chapter aims to bring forth a new perspective of slave resistance – one that does not simply seek to reaffirm the agency of slaves by acknowledging their humanity.²⁹⁸ Through distilled spirits, slaves and free blacks could consciously manipulate their demeanor, challenge laws that sought to restrict their behavior, lash out against those who sought to control their bodies, and form a sense of community based upon plans for open rebellion. Walter Johnson observed that historians often leave unanswered questions about the ways isolated acts of sabotage developed into explicit threats against the institution of slavery.²⁹⁹ While distilled spirits provided those suffering from racialized oppression

²⁹⁶ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 14.

²⁹⁷ Walter Johnson, “On Agency” *Journal of Social History* 37, 1 Special Issue (Autumn 2003), 115-116.

²⁹⁸ Johnson describes this approach as “the master trope of the New Social History.” Johnson, “On Agency,” 113.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

moments of psychological escape, such liquors also allowed these groups opportunities to retain and establish cultural identities and communal bonds of resistance. Intoxication, for some slaves, allowed them to regain control of their bodies in a way that exceeded the boundary of their masters' power.

The history of slaves and free blacks in the early modern Atlantic World presents an array of challenges to the construction of a cohesive narrative of their cultural life. Historians instead must rely upon texts generated by whites, which sometimes directly reference the lives of individual slaves. More often, historians work with restricted glimpses into the lives of people turned into property. In many ways, this history parallels the history of alcohol, which was omnipresent in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic, but often only briefly acknowledged. Combining the two fields to analyze the way slaves and free blacks made use of distilled spirits offers a new perspective into lives long left silent in the historical record.

To understand how slaves and free people of color used distilled spirits, this chapter looks at an array of sources. Planter diaries often feature the most detailed information regarding the characteristics of particular slaves. Planters also documented their specific approaches to running a plantation, including the manner of doling out rum rations. Such

sources include the writings of Landon Carter, George Washington, Samuel Cary, and Thomas Thistlewood, among others. Colonial newspapers also provide detailed accounts of slave rebellions in both North America and the Caribbean, and, as demonstrated, runaway slave ads provide insight into the lives of slaves. Finally, records of notable events, such as the 1741 Slave Conspiracy that occurred in New York, reveal the significance of taverns and alcohol in the formation of organized rebellions against the institution of slavery. All of these sources, however, come from the perspective of white men, often the very individuals who owned or found themselves at odds with the people they discussed. Therefore, a close reading is required to investigate how distilled spirits fueled resistance within the daily lives of those considered to be racially inferior.

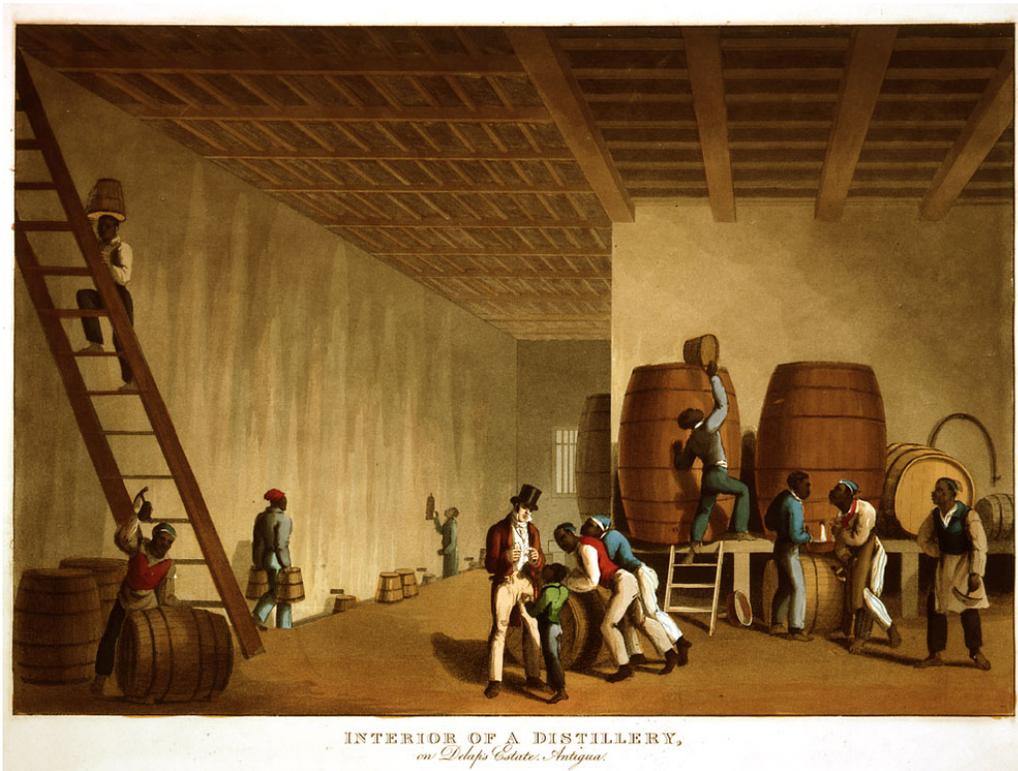


Figure 9: "Interior of a Distillery on Delaps Estate Antigua," from William Clark, *Ten Views from the Island of Antigua* (London: 1823).

Before the establishment of the Atlantic slave trade, the diverse cultures that inhabited the western coast of the African continent held long established drinking traditions that predated contact with European traders. For the Akan and Igbo peoples, upon whom the British slave trade centered, alcohol held both social and spiritual significance. The appearance of alcohol along the Gold Coast was enduring; Frederick Smith found references to "intoxicating drinks" in Ghana as early as the

eleventh century.³⁰⁰ Grain-based beers and a wine made from the palm tree were particularly popular. Palm wine appears throughout the western coast, but it was especially common on the Gold Coast, while the Arada of the Slave Coast favored beers made from fermented grains. As was the case in Europe, Arada women were responsible for the production of beer.³⁰¹ Alcohol was an important aspect of the economic and social life for West and West Central Africans. In Nigeria, alcohol was a fundamental part of major events in a person's life cycle, including naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals, as well as day-to-day activities such as entertaining guests. Even though alcohol maintained a strong social presence, African drinks had low alcohol content.³⁰² Because palm wine tended to spoil in a short amount of time, once it arrived to the market, men gathered to drink it that day, making drinking a highly social activity. The French slave trader, Jean Barbot, described palm wine as thus, "This sort is of a pleasant sweet taste, being used two or three hours after it has fermented a while in the pots; but soon loses its sweetness, and grows sourer every

³⁰⁰ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 98.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁰² Simon Heap, "'A Bottle of Gin is Dangled before the Nose of the Natives': The Economic Uses of Imported Liquor in Southern Nigeria, 1860-1920" *African Economic History*, 33 (2005), 69.

day: the older it is, the more it affects the head.”³⁰³ Barbot attributed the health of the people in North-Guinea to their regular consumption of palm wine. Although the wine could easily “fly into the head,” Barbot stated the effects of inebriation quickly pass. As in Europe, drinking in public appears to have been a male privilege, although men who gathered to drink palm wine would send small portions home to their wife.³⁰⁴

Alcohol was also an important aspect of rituals, as many tribes along the West Coast of Africa, including the Akan and Igbo, used alcohol to facilitate connections to the spiritual world. According to Frederick Smith, the Akan and Igbo saw the physical and spiritual worlds as closely aligned, and inebriation helped established connections between the two worlds. The best representation of alcohol’s spiritual importance was the use of libations, alcoholic offerings made to ensure the favor of ancestral spirits.³⁰⁵ Alcohol was a sacred fluid for many West African cultures, including the Akan, Igbo, Kongo, and Arada. Libations, in particular, reflect the spiritual significance of alcoholic drinks. In personal and group

³⁰³ Jean Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea; and of Ethiopia Inferior, vulgarly Angola: Being A New and Accurate Account of the Western Maritime Countries of Africa* (London: 1732), 51.

³⁰⁴ Jessica Kross, “‘If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me’: The Sociology of Drinking in the Middle Colonies” *Pennsylvania History* 64, 1, Regional Perspectives on Early American History (Winter 1997), 33-34.

³⁰⁵ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 99-100.

ceremonies, people poured small portions of alcohol on the ground as an offering to ancestral spirits.³⁰⁶ Barbot noted this use of custom during burials of the deceased in South Guinae toward the end of the seventeenth century. Barbot stated, “As soon as the [corpse] is let down into the grave, the persons who attended the funeral drink palm-wine, or rum plentifully... and what they cannot drink off at a draught, they spill on the grave of their deceased friend, that he may have his share of the liquor.”³⁰⁷ Following the European introduction of distilled spirits, these potent drinks became part of traditional West African rituals extending the spiritual significance to liquor-based drinks. Similar to palm wine and beer, rum and brandy became embedded within the social and religious practices of West African cultures.

Europeans who documented their interactions with African leaders remarked on the high levels of suspicion both sides had of one another, and alcohol contributed to this distrust. When William Snelgrave wrote about his voyage to parts of Guinea in 1734, he included a story about a tense encounter with the King of Acqua. Snelgrave objected to the presence of a child, tied up and intended for ritual sacrifice. Although the situation did not devolve into violence, and the child’s life spared, both the

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 100.

³⁰⁷ Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts* 283.

King of Acqua and Snelgrave remained wary of each other. Snelgrave made a point to mention his fear of palm wine, as, he claimed, the Africans “artfully poison.”³⁰⁸ John Thornton states this level of caution and suspicion was common in European-African trade encounters.³⁰⁹

Liquor was a European import, possibly introduced by the Dutch during the early formation of the Atlantic slave trade. European traders brought spirits to offer as a gift to the kings and chiefs with whom they interacted. Demand for spirits increased, and traders were quick to realize the popularity of this new form of alcohol. By the eighteenth century, liquor became a necessary component of exchange between European slave traders and West Africans.³¹⁰ Dutch merchant, Willem Bosman, wrote at the beginning of the eighteenth century that brandy drinking became an apparent vice among West Africans. Bosman stated, “If one chance to get but a Mouthful more than another, and they are half Drunk, they immediately fall on Fighting, without any respect to the King, Prince or

³⁰⁸ William Snelgrave, *A New Account of some Parts of Guinea, And the Slave-Trade* (London: 1734), xxiv. Snelgrave states the rest of the men in his group did not hold the same level of distrust, and they drank “plentifully of it with his [the King’s] Guards.”

³⁰⁹ Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 70.

³¹⁰ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 96.

Priest.”³¹¹ Critical as Bosman was, he claimed the love West Africans had for brandy was their best quality – an indicator of his low opinion of Africans in general. Bosman stated other Dutch merchants cut the supplied brandy with water and added a small amount of Spanish soap to give the liquor a false sheen of full proof. Drinking along the Gold Coast, according to Bosman, was “too much in vogue,” and as with other European powers, liquor became a fundamental part of European-African trade.³¹² By the beginning of the eighteenth century, British traders brought an estimated 48,000 gallons of rum to the Gold Coast every year, an overwhelming amount of liquor for a region with an estimated population of 20,000-30,000 at that time.³¹³ The presence of and high local demand for distilled spirits did little to ease tensions, however. This was especially true as European demand for slaves increased throughout the seventeenth century.

The introduction of distilled spirits to both the Akan and Igbo cultures led to local appropriation of liquor both in West Africa and across the Atlantic. The spread of rum distillation across Britain’s Caribbean and North American colonies, and the use of rum as a staple commodity of the

³¹¹ Willem Bosman, *A new and accurate description of the coast of Guinea, divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts* (London: 1705), 403.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 107, 403.

³¹³ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 99.

slave trade, established spirits as a product of empire. Slaves labored in the Caribbean to produce rum, and European traders, in turn, used that rum to perpetuate the slave trade. Frederick Smith argues that, because slaves produced the rum traded in West Africa, Africans assigned special meaning to the liquor. Smith states, “The social and sacred value of alcohol increased the African demand. However, the heavy emphasis on rum in the African slave trade also reflects a possible appreciation for African slave-made products and respect for brethren stranded overseas.”³¹⁴ Through the cultural tradition of viewing alcohol as a way to connect to ancestors and the spiritual world, West Africans similarly saw rum as a way to maintain connections with their enslaved kin. Among the oral histories documented by anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits in the 1930s was a Dahomean chant that captured this sense of connection. Within the chant the Dahomeans stated, “The Americans must bring the cloths and the rum made by our kinsmen who are there, for these will permit us to smell their presence.”³¹⁵ Although rum, and distilled liquor in general helped fuel the slave trade, free and enslaved West Africans scattered across the British Atlantic embraced these spirits. Drawing on their drinking traditions and upholding the spiritual significance of alcohol,

³¹⁴ Ibid., 102.

³¹⁵ Quoted in Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 102.

slaves and free blacks in the colonies were able to use this imperial liquor to maintain a sense of cultural continuity.

Rum was a profitable export commodity for Caribbean sugar plantations, and it also served as a source of nutrition for the slaves whose labor made the production of sugar and rum possible. The extensive amount of rum and molasses that remained within the islands – roughly eighty-five percent of the molasses and rum produced – provided planters with an excess, part of which they supplied to their slaves.³¹⁶ In Martinique, the French clergyman and sugar planter, Jean-Baptiste Labat, wrote that around ten percent of the rum made on his plantation went to his slaves as a supplement to their diet.³¹⁷ For planters in the British Caribbean colonies, the practice was no different. Ligon's mid-seventeenth century account shows that supplying rum to servants and slaves was common even in the early era of Caribbean distillation. Ligon stated that rum was "of great use, to cure and refresh the poor Negroes, whom we ought to have a special care of by the labour of whose hands, our profit is brought in... for when their spirits are exhausted, by their hard labour... a dram or two of this Spirit, is a great comfort and refreshing to

³¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 22.

them.”³¹⁸ For planters in the Caribbean, rum seemed to offer their slaves a source of energy, which compensated for the lack of nutrition in their daily rations. They made use of alcohol, despite the potential danger of plying slaves with rum as they labored in the sugarcane fields, sugar mills, and boiling houses.

Samuel Cary Jr., a merchant and Caribbean planter who obtained possession of a sugar plantation in Grenada on October 16, 1766, explained his own approach to supplying slaves with rum in an undated collection of instructions intended for use by other sugar planters. Cary stated that, while many estates supplied weekly rations of rum to servants and slaves, he saw this practice as “one of the worst plans that can be followed, for if [the slaves] dont drink it they look on it that they have a Right to dispose of it.”³¹⁹ Cary states that slaves, whom he described as “very artfull & cunning among young folks,” profited from rum rations, by selling any portion they did not drink. Instead of doling out separation rations, Cary preferred to open a forty-gallon cask of rum and “let them make use of it whenever they have Occasion.” This approach, Cary believed, prevented slaves from taking and selling any rum on their own.

³¹⁸ Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (London: 1673), 93.

³¹⁹ Samuel Cary, “Samuel Cary Plantation Instructions, Vol. 2” Samuel Cary papers, 1766-1870, Ms. N-1997, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

Planters in North America held contrasting views on this practice. While planters like George Washington supplied servants and slaves with regular rum rations, as well as additional rations as a means to reward or compensate particularly difficult tasks, other planters shied away from supplying distilled spirits to their slaves.³²⁰ At Mount Vernon, Washington's enslaved artisans received weekly rations of rum. His shoemaker and tailor, for example, received three and one-half pints of rum per week. Enslaved overseers at Washington's outlying farms, including Muddy Hole and Dogue Run Farms, received two pints of rum per week. The rations of hired white workers at Mount Vernon were roughly the same.³²¹ According to Philip Morgan, in the eighteenth century, the liquid diet of slaves in the Chesapeake and Low Country consisted primarily of water. While planters supplied rum rations on occasion, the amount consumed by slaves in North America paled in comparison to the amount imbibed by Caribbean slaves. In 1766, South Carolinian planter, Henry Laurens, supplied more than thirty gallons of rum to his slaves in three months.

³²⁰ Dennis J. Pogue, *Founding Spirits: George Washington and the Beginnings of the American Whiskey Industry* (Buena Vista, VA: Harbour Books, 2011), 32-33.

³²¹ Rum Account, "Weekly Allowances deld. out of the Store," Mount Vernon Store Book, Jan. 1, 1787 to Dec. 31, 1787 (typescript, LGWMV), Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon; Mary V. Thompson, "Better fed than Negroes are," unpublished manuscript, 298-299.

With twenty-four slaves, that meant roughly a gallon and a quarter of rum went to each slave for those three months. Even with this amount, Laurens documented his surprise that the slaves asked for an additional ten gallons of Jamaican rum.³²² By comparison, slaves at Halse Hall in Jamaica received one pint to one quart of rum per week, meaning the heaviest drinkers among the slaves consumed around three gallons of rum in three months.³²³ The overall amount of spirits consumed by slaves did raise concerns among planters in both North America and the Caribbean, but the importance of rum to slaves' diets made the supply of rations appear as a necessity.

This belief resulted from the use of rum as source of calories – albeit, empty calories – for slaves. Samuel Cary's instructions for running a sugar plantation reflect this practice, especially when slaves dug holes

³²² Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 142; S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 204.

³²³ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 103. For slaves receiving one pint per week, Smith calculates their annual consumption as around 6.5 gallons. For those who received a quart of rum per week, their annual consumption amounted to around thirteen gallons. While Halse Hall represents the higher end of rum rations, other Caribbean plantations did not supply nearly as much rum to slaves. Smith also includes the data on rum rations for Worthy Park, another Jamaican plantation, at around 2.5-3.0 gallons per slave per year from 1784 to 1813. In general, however, slaves in the Caribbean received much higher amounts of rum than their counterparts in North America.

to plant sugar canes, or “cane holes.” This arduous labor resulted in increased rations of rum. Cary states:

[W]henever [the slaves] are at hard labor... give them Tody [toddy] twice every day, [visit] at about ten oclock in the morning, & four in the afternoon, and if at any other Time they get wet [sweat] in the field, order each negroe a glass of Rum immediatly, this method prevents colds & fevers... & gives them a Belly full, with ease in their labour.³²⁴

Cary saw this as “good and humane” treatment for his slaves, and he believed that readily providing rum to slaves hard at labor provided them with a sense of pleasure and garnered much better results than violent punishment. This approach also underlines the importance of rum as a source of medicine for slaves. Cary saw rum as a preventative against colds and fevers, and he later stated that good nourishment and care of one’s slaves served as the best method of maintaining the slaves’ health. These instructions reveal the continuity of belief in the medicinal powers of distilled spirits.

This belief persisted on North American plantations as well. At Mount Vernon, rum often served as a form of medicine for slaves. Between August 23 and September 9 of 1787, three bottles of rum went to slave women in the midst of childbirth; it is possible the women drank the rum as a form of anesthetic. Other ailing slaves received pints of rum to

³²⁴ Cary, “Plantation Instructions,” 3.

restore their health.³²⁵ One slave's use of spirits as medicine resulted in long-term damaging effects. George Washington's valet, William "Billy" Lee, used spirits to ease enduring pain after he fell and broke his kneecaps in 1785.³²⁶ Over time, Billy grew dependent upon spirits and reportedly became a drunkard. His suffering from delirium tremens, a deteriorating condition that can cause hallucinations, physical trembling, or seizures, indicates the severity of Billy's drinking problem.³²⁷ While such problems could result, the practice of supplying rum to slaves suffering illness or pain lasted throughout the eighteenth century.

³²⁵ Rum Account, entry for January 18, 1787, Mount Vernon Store Book, Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1787; Rum Account, entry for September 9, 1787; Thompson, "Better fed," 300.

³²⁶ This injury occurred while Billy assisted Washington in surveying land on the north side of Four Mile Run, which Washington purchased in 1774. Washington recorded the event in his diary: "My Servant William (one of the Chain Carriers) fell, and broke the pan of his knee wch. put a stop to my Surveying; & with much difficulty I was able to get him to Abingdon, being obliged to get a sled to carry him on, as he could neither Walk, stand, or ride." Billy suffered a similar injury in 1788, crippling his knees for the remainder of his life. "April—1785," *The Diaries of George Washington*, vol. 4, *1 September 1784–30 June 1786*, edited by Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 111–131. Founders Online, National Archives.

³²⁷ GWPC, *Recollections and Private Memoirs*, 157n; Thompson, "Better fed," 303. Washington also referred to Billy Lee as "Mulatto Will." "From George Washington to William Pearce, 18 May 1794," *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 16, *1 May–30 September 1794*, edited by David R. Hoth and Carol S. Ebel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 87–92, fn. 6. Founders Online, National Archives.

At times, planters observed that their slaves became intoxicated when supplied with rum. Jamaican planter, Thomas Thistlewood, regularly noted in his diary of the times he supplied slaves with bottles of rum, either in reaction to observing good work, or to allow his slaves time to “make merry.”³²⁸ Planters used this tactic to encourage slaves to vent their frustrations through celebration rather than subversive rebellion. On one occasion in 1751, Thistlewood noted he supplied a slave named Marina with four bottles of rum, some sugar, along with food – primarily corn – “to treat the Negroes” in what Thistlewood described as a “housewarming” for newly arrived slaves. Thistlewood noted that the slaves responded enthusiastically to the party, saying “they was very Merry att Night.” The slaves sang, danced, and played the drums, but Thistlewood noted that some of the slaves drank to the point of intoxication, and in particular, Marina “got very very drunk.”³²⁹ Thistlewood does not express any note of concern regarding the drunkenness of his slaves, likely because the time and place of this intoxication was appropriate. With the rum supplied by the planter, and the drunkenness occurring at a designated time

³²⁸ For more on the life of Thomas Thistlewood and his life as a Jamaican planter, see: Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

³²⁹ Diary of Thomas Thistlewood, 6 July 1751, Monson 31/2, Lincolnshire County Archives, Lincoln. Records made available through the permission of Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus.

separated from the slaves' labor, this manner of slave inebriation remained under the firm control of the master. The possibility of instances of slave drunkenness outside of this control, however, remained a constant point of concern for planters.

While colonial whites perceived excessive drinking among slaves as a menace, the erratic and violent behavior of drunk white planters and overseers presented a greater threat for slaves. Thistlewood's diary makes note of a harrowing event that occurred in 1753. Even though the details are few, Thistlewood wrote that one evening, two men, "Mr: Paul Stevens & Thos: [Thomas] Adams" went to a slave's hut "to Tear old Sarah to Pieces." As she was one of his slaves, Thistlewood put a stop to what Trevor Burnard described as an attempted rape.³³⁰ Even after Thistlewood "had a Quarrell" with the two men, he wrote "They Burnt her and would ffire the hutt."³³¹ Thistlewood added that the two men involved were drunk. In their drunkenness, Stevens and Adams attempted to rape, and ultimately burned a slave woman. Such brutality conveys the level of violence slaves endured when the white men they lived amongst fell into a state of inebriation.

³³⁰ Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire*, 161.

³³¹ Thistlewood, Tuesday 20 March 1753, Monson 31/4.

The tragic story of the attack on Sarah reveals another threat that slaves, particularly slave women, faced on a day-to-day basis. On August 21, 1756, Thistlewood wrote in his diary, “The White Driver Beastly drunk & wanted to Force Rose.”³³² The implication of the single statement is clear. What occurred following this event remains undocumented, as Thistlewood was seemingly unconcerned with the outcome. Trevor Burnard explained that such episodes occurred often, because the expectation for white men living in slave societies was they were free to have sex with enslaved women at their leisure.³³³ Any objection on the part of the woman was not a factor, and most slave women faced violent punishment if they attempted to refuse. White men exploited this aspect of their constructed racial and gendered superiority, and intoxication fueled many sexual encounters, often to the peril of slave women. Philip Morgan poignantly summarized the brutal nature of sexual abuse that remained embedded in colonial slave societies. He states, “Some sexual encounters were marked by tenderness, esteem, and a sense of responsibility, but most were exploitative and unspeakably cruel – nothing more than rapes by white men of black women – a testament to the ugliness of human

³³² Thistlewood, 21 August 1756, Monson 31/7.

³³³ Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire*, 5.

relations when people are treated as objects.”³³⁴ The case of the drunk white driver’s attempt to rape Rose was not the only appearance of such behavior in Thistlewood’s diaries. The previous year, in 1755, Thistlewood wrote that six men, including Thistlewood’s employer, John Cope, became drunk and all forced themselves on a house slave named Eve.³³⁵ For many white men and planters in the colonies, drinking to excess represented an additional freedom denied to people perceived as racially inferior. For white men, the issue of morality and drunkenness had clear limitations, especially within the realm of sexual and racial control. Imbibing from the constant supply of liquor became a point of power, one that white elites could enjoy to excess, as well as restrict others’ access to, as they pleased.

Even though distilled spirits were readily available and often supplied to slaves and free blacks, colonial laws attempted to restrict the access these groups had to drinking. Laws focused on taverns to establish who could and could not patronize these public drinking spaces. Such regulations appeared regularly from the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century. As mentioned in Sharon Salinger’s research on colonial taverns, early laws in Massachusetts tended to group

³³⁴ Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 411.

³³⁵ Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire*, 82.

servants, slaves, and apprentices together. These laws usually forbade anyone from selling liquor to those individuals without the permission of their master.³³⁶ Over time, the laws grew more explicit. In a 1708 license granted to George Borston of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, clear restrictions appeared on serving “Apprentices servants Indians or Negros.”³³⁷ The use of “negros” rather than specifying free or enslaved suggests no black customers were allowed service under the license granted to Borston.

Legal restrictions on access to spirits tended to fluctuate in response to the level of diversity present in each colony. In colonies like New York, regulation of slaves’ access to liquor tended to fall to their masters before 1664, as the overall number of slaves in the area remained low.³³⁸ According to Salinger, lawmakers in New York City initially allowed Native Americans and slaves to patronize taverns, but as the number of slaves and free blacks in the colony increased, and racialized stereotypes emerged, colonial legislators began to prohibit these groups’ access. Salinger states that, around 1680, common assumptions emerged that such customers paid for their drinks with stolen goods, which contributed to the construction of emerging racial

³³⁶ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*, 22.

³³⁷ Inn and alehouse license, 13 July 1708. Misc. 1708 July 13. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

³³⁸ Edwin Olson, “The Slave Code in Colonial New York” *The Journal of Negro History* 29, 2 (April 1944), 147.

stereotypes.³³⁹ In spite of the laws, however, tavern keepers continued to serve slaves and free people of color in the colony. This resulted in increasing legal attention on tavern keepers. Salinger found that, between 1683 and 1772, almost all tavern keepers appeared before the General Quarter Sessions Court because they entertained and offered liquor to slaves.³⁴⁰

Of particular legal concern was preserving the sanctity of the Lord's Day, as the Sabbath was the only day slaves gained extended time off from work. A series of laws established restrictions on slaves and free blacks during the Sabbath. These laws intended to ensure the maintenance of control over individuals' behavior. A 1684 ordinance passed in New York City prohibited four or more slaves from gathering. This sought to prevent "rude and unlawful sports and pastimes to the dishonour of God."³⁴¹ A 1692 law added to the earlier restriction by barring slaves from "playing of making any hooting or disorderly noise... or [to be] found in a publick house."³⁴² In 1698, legislators in South Carolina passed regulations to prohibit slaves residing outside of Charles Town from drinking, quarrelling, cursing, swearing, and engaging in other behavior

³³⁹ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 23.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

³⁴¹ Quoted in Olson, "The Slave Code," 155.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 155.

viewed as prophaning the Sabbath.³⁴³ A law enacted by the House of Delegates of Maryland on January 24, 1786 focused several provisions on the actions of slaves and servants on the Sabbath. The law stated that any slave found “in liquor” on the Sabbath was to receive no more than twenty lashes as a punishment. For servants or apprentices found profaning the Lord’s Day with drunkenness, they were to receive no more than ten lashes. Free people of color found drunk on the Lord’s Day, the punishment included a fine of twenty shillings for each offence; for any other day, the fine dropped to ten shillings.³⁴⁴ These laws reveal the expectation that white elites held of slaves. When away from direct supervision of white men, gathered together in large groups, or patronizing a tavern, white elites believed slaves were incapable of maintaining moral control on what was the most sacred day of the week.

On February 20, 1737, *The New-York Weekly Journal* published the law for regulating taverns in the colony, which included explicit restrictions on the behavior and actions of subjugated racial groups. The law stated, “That no Negro, Mullatto, or Indian Slaves, about the Number of three, do assemble or meet together on the Lord’s Day... and sport, play or make Noise or Disturbance, or at any other time at any Place from

³⁴³ Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 20.

³⁴⁴ *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*. February 7, 1786. Vol. XIII, Issue No. 11.

their Masters Service, within this City.”³⁴⁵ This law shows further development through the inclusion of increasingly specific racialized groups. In addition to blacks and Indians, mulattos, too, could not gather in groups of three or more. Tavern keepers regularly faced charges for serving slaves, mulattoes, or free blacks on the Sabbath. The planter elite sought to prevent slaves from gathering in taverns and spending the day in idleness during their only day off from labor. Of more concern was tavern keepers serving spirits to slaves without express permission from the slaves’ masters. In 1706, John Gardner, a tavern keeper, faced the New York court for serving rum to slaves without written consent from their masters, and as a result, Gardner lost his license

Dictating what constituted appropriate behavior for slaves served as the focus of two sermons delivered by Thomas Bacon, Anglican clergyman and slave owner, in 1749. While Bacon directed a small portion of his sermons to Maryland planters, outlining obligations of slave owners to allow slaves time for Christian worship, Bacon placed the onus of appropriate behavior and self-management on the slaves themselves. In spite of referring to slaves multiple times as “poor ignorant Creatures,” Bacon stated, “If these poor Creatures would but mind, and do as the

³⁴⁵ *The New-York Weekly Journal*. February 20, 1737. No. 224.

Minister has told them to Day, they would make *excellent* slaves.”³⁴⁶

Through this argument, Bacon connected the religious morality of the slave to the quality of their service. He even claimed that the “direct Tendency” of the gospel was to make “Negroes the better Servants, in Proportion as they become better Christians.”³⁴⁷ According to Bacon, appropriate behavior – established by white planters – was the key for slaves to achieve and maintain this sense of morality. A point that Bacon directly condemned was spending the Sabbath day in drunken idleness.

For a white person to profane the Sabbath through inappropriate behavior was bad enough, but for a slave, such sins might cost their souls the opportunity to go to Heaven and, therefore, lose their only hope for freedom. Bacon made this point painfully clear, as he repeated it continuously throughout the two sermons. One manner in which slaves flouted their chance for salvation was through intoxication, and Bacon claimed that slaves were particularly guilty of this vice. Directing part of his sermon to the slaves, he stated:

But from what I have seen myself, and what I have been told by others... I must observe to you, that you meet, and make Merry together, much oftener than most white People do; - that many idle, scandalous, and wicked Things are done among you at such

³⁴⁶ Thomas Bacon, *Two Sermons, Preached to a Congregation of Black Slaves at the Parish Church of St. Peter in the Province of Maryland* (London: 1749), A2.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, A3.

Times, without Same or Concern; - and that your *Saturday Nights* are very often spent in Rioting and Drunkenness.³⁴⁸

Such behavior resulted in ineffective labor, and it carried into the holiest of days, which slave owners like Bacon found reprehensible. Even worse was the behavior drunkenness created; inebriation led to swearing, and eventually to “*Lust and Lewdness*,” among both enslaved men and women. Bacon warned that drunkenness not only led to bodily punishment and “correction” for offending slaves, but it also debauched the mind and made “a meer Beast of him.”³⁴⁹ Like clergy members who came before him, Bacon utilized the imagery of an animalistic, beastly drunkard who incurred destruction on their body and soul. The notion of beastliness took on new meaning, however, when applied to slaves. White elites, like Bacon, saw slaves and free blacks as less civilized and closer to nature than white men. They, therefore, believed the emergence of beastly qualities was more likely when slaves drank to excess. Ultimately, Bacon felt that, in addition to enforced white control, slaves were responsible for their own sense of morality, as well as keeping other slaves in line. If they did so, Bacon saw no reason why slaves could not live out their lives in happiness as they awaited freedom in the afterlife.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 50.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 51-52, 57.

The continued presence and regular passage of these laws suggests a lack of ability to enforce restrictions on access to distilled spirits among slaves, mulattos, free blacks, and Indians. These groups, however, lacked the resources to produce their own source of alcohol, meaning that white tavern owners and shopkeepers, like John Gardner of New York, continued to sell alcohol to them in spite of the laws. Why then did white tavern owners continue to sell to prohibited ground and risk losing their business? According to Timothy J. Lockley, this trade proved too lucrative to ignore.³⁵⁰ While white elites and slave owners focused on the problems distilled spirits might cause, tavern keepers refused to overlook a growing group of potential clients.

This ongoing practice had the potential to cultivate significant acts of subversion. The differing colonies passed laws and statutes to regulate and prevent such economic encounters between the races, particularly if alcohol was part of the exchange. In 1765, Georgia passed laws that established regulatory patrols to ensure colonists, and their slaves, maintained appropriate behavior. The patrols, deemed “absolutely necessary, for the security of his Majesty’s subjects,” had the power to enter “disorderly” tippling houses to look for slaves or free black

³⁵⁰ Timothy J. Lockley, “Trading Encounters between Non-Elite Whites and African Americans in Savannah, 1790-1860” *The Journal of Southern History* 66, 1 (February 2000), 27.

patrons.³⁵¹ Any disorderly slaves found in such establishments received “correction” via a whipping. What became of patrol members who imbibed in too much drink? The law stated that any member of the patrol who drank too much liquor while on duty faced a fine of no more than ten shillings.³⁵²

This same law directly addressed the issue of slaves buying and selling goods with whites without permission from the slave’s master. As in the taverns, interactions between slaves and poor whites remained a point of concern for the planter elite. Commercial exchange between the races involved interactions between two groups elite planters sought to keep separate. The system of slavery depended upon the suppression of constructed racial identities, and mutual exchange, as well as potential commradery, between slaves and poor whites threatened to upend the system of slavery. Regardless, the economic market between these groups persisted throughout the eighteenth century. Georgia’s 1765 law imposed a fine of no more than ten pounds on any person engaging in commercial exchange with a slave who did not hold written permission to do so. Half of the paid fine went to the poor of the parish where the

³⁵¹ Georgia (Colony) Laws, Statutes, etc. “An Act for the Establishing and Regulating Patrols” Evans Early American Imprints 41616, (Savannah: 1765), 1, 5.

³⁵² Ibid., 5.

offence occurred and the other half went to the informer. In this way, Georgia's law encouraged residents, particularly poor whites, to expose any occurrence of interracial trade. Any offender who refused to pay the fine faced three months in jail.³⁵³ Lockley, however, argues that the ability of slave owners to grant permission to their slaves to purchase illicit goods created loopholes that both slaves and non-elite whites exploited.³⁵⁴ Before the American Revolution, slave markets in Savannah operated on Sundays, the only day that allowed slaves enough time to engage in such business. Even though shops in Savannah were supposed to remain closed on Sundays to prevent this manner of trade, many shopkeepers intentionally flouted the law in favor of greater profits. The most common offense charged against those who broke the laws was "entertaining Negroes," by selling slaves and free blacks distilled spirits, and conducting this illicit business on a Sunday.³⁵⁵ These behaviors reveal the growing concern among elite colonial whites that intoxicated slaves, gathered into groups and interacting with poor whites, was a distinct threat that demanded restriction and control.

Yet, like planters wary of providing slaves with rum rations, white elites had to contend with a level of slave inebriation during the celebration

³⁵³ Ibid., 6.

³⁵⁴ Lockley, "Trading Encounters," 27-28.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 28, 30.

of holidays. Philip Morgan argues that holidays brought more attention to slave behavior, quoting one unnamed visitor to Maryland who observed slaves “made much” of the holidays.³⁵⁶ Another anonymous commentator, named only as “The Spy,” wrote a letter published in *The New-York Weekly Journal* March 7, 1736 that expanded on white perceptions of how slaves celebrated holidays. The author of the letter, dated April 10, describes the experience as thus:

This morning I heard my Landlord’s black Fellow very busy at tuning of his Banger [banjo], as he call’d it, and playing some of his Tunes; I, who am always delighted with Music, be it never so rustic, under a Pretence of Washing came into the Kitchen, and at last asked, what the Meaning was of his being so merry? He started up and with a blithsom Countenance answered, *Massa, to day Holiday; Backerak no work; Ningar no work; me no savy play Banger; go yander, you see Ningar play Banger for true, dance too; you see Sport to day for true.*³⁵⁷

This description imparts several racial stereotypes that had developed by the first half of the eighteenth century, including the nature of the slave’s dialect and the remark of the slave’s “blithsom,” carefree countenance.

This segment of the letter also relates the importance of holidays to the slaves, as such days allowed slaves the opportunity to play culturally traditional instruments, like the banjo, as well as sing, dance and engage in behavior planters usually restricted. Slaves were also able to drink

³⁵⁶ Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 413.

³⁵⁷ *The New-York Weekly Journal*. March 7, 1736. Issue CLXXIII.

freely on holidays. The same letter published to *The New-York Weekly Journal* acknowledges the loss of control and morality caused by slave drunkenness, stating, “some who had been unlucky enough to get a Dram too much, as I suppose, were got to Loggerheads; all cursing and swearing, and that in a Christian Dialect, enough to raise one’s Hair an end.”³⁵⁸

Irritation surrounding the lack of control and loss of perceived civility underlines many descriptions of holiday celebrations written by white observers. The unnamed traveler to Maryland cited by Morgan described one instance when, “100s and 100s of blacks” gathered for a celebration as, “one of the most tumultuous scenes I ever beheld.”³⁵⁹ The anonymous author of the 1736 letter published in *The New-York Weekly* concluded the account by stating, “In short, we have been used to Holidays in our Country, but such an Observation of them in my Opinion, would hardly go down with our civilized Heathens.”³⁶⁰ A common point of complaint, in addition to the rambunctious, drunken behavior among participating slaves and free blacks, was the presence of whites. The anonymous “Spy” complained, “You can’t imagine how irksome it is to me who have been used to a regular Life, to hear the Impieties, and see the Outrages daily

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Quoted in Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 413.

³⁶⁰ *The New-York Weekly Journal*. March 7, 1736. Issue CLXXIII.

committed in the common Streets, not only by the Blacks, or the poorer Whites, but even by the genteeler Sort; and all this too often with Impunity.”³⁶¹ The uncivilized, heathenish behavior of both blacks and whites drinking and celebrating together concerned such observers. The unnamed traveler to Maryland quipped that it was unclear which, of either the black or white population, were “the best creatures,” but they concluded that regardless of the answer, “in either case the example is bad.”³⁶²

In Caribbean colonies, slave holidays took on a different role from those practiced in North America. For white planters in the Caribbean, drunkenness and the practice of rituals provided slaves with a way to release tension and anger. Frederick Smith argues that planters did not simply tolerate slaves’ celebration of holidays, but they actively encouraged it. Planters also saw sanctioned days and times for slaves to indulge in alcohol as a way to prevent drunkenness from interfering with slave labor.³⁶³ Planters saw these celebrations as a way to diffuse tensions, while the slaves used these moments as an opportunity to

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Quoted in Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 413.

³⁶³ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 160-162. Smith points out that the celebration of rebellion rituals have West African roots, and slaves forcibly transported to the Caribbean modified the practice to fit into holiday celebrations familiar to the white population.

engage in otherwise prohibited behavior. As long as slaves' drunken behavior occurred through direct approval and supervision of whites, planters saw the excessive consumption of alcohol during holidays as acceptable.

One of the most prominent sources of fear was the possibility of an open slave rebellion. This was an underlying fear felt by the white population as a whole and was not limited only to the planter class. Instances of individual resistance occurred on a daily basis; historian Michael Craton argues that, in the British West Indies – and I would include North America – a continuum of active slave resistance remained in operation.³⁶⁴ John Thornton defines three different types of slave resistance: “day-to-day” resistance, which entailed slow or poor work production, as well as other actions that proved contrary to the master’s interests; *petit marronnage*, or temporary leaves of absence; and *grand marronnage*, which spanned from permanently running away to open rebellion.³⁶⁵ Within these forms of resistance, including both “day-to-day” and *grand marronnage*, distilled spirits and drinking played a significant, albeit subtle, role. For example, the idea that the uncontrolled, intoxicated behavior carried out during celebrations could continue after the end of the

³⁶⁴ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 17.

³⁶⁵ Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 273.

holiday cultivated a sense of unease among the white population. Throughout the eighteenth century, slave consumption of distilled spirits became an increasing point of contention. When instances of rebellion did occur, white planters learned that slaves used alcohol as a way to ally themselves together while planning an uprising. White elites also learned that taverns served as gathering points for slaves, free blacks, and poor whites in spite of laws that prohibited such behavior. Within those spaces, and lubricated by intoxicating drinks, colonial whites came to dread the subversive plots these groups might conjure. Spirits also provided individual slaves the nerve to lash out at their masters, avoid work, and find a sense of release from the constant burden created by racial suppression. The loss of white control, and the possible gain of enslaved self-control, remained a central concern in each case of rebellious slaves imbibing spirits. For, without a master's control over the slave, the entire institution of slavery would fall into jeopardy. In addition to the fear of lost control, instances in which alcohol directly factored into the formation of slave revolts served as proof to colonial whites that slaves and the consumption of distilled spirits was a dangerous combination.

In the Caribbean, fears of violent retaliation by the slaves differed from those felt by North American planters, as conditions in the Caribbean remained fundamentally different throughout the colonial era. Across the

British West Indies, slaves outnumbered the white population on each island. In colonies like Antigua, the disparity in black and white numbers was a staggering eight to one by the 1730s. Altogether, the black population made up more than eighty-eight percent of colonial Antigua.³⁶⁶ Such stark differences in the racial makeup of the island appear in contemporary explanations for the formation of a planned slave uprising set to occur in 1736.

Even before 1736, Antigua experienced instances of violent slave rebellion. In the first case of rebellion in the island, the use of rum played a stunning role. Two days after Christmas, in 1701, fifteen Coromantee slaves attacked and killed their master, Major Samuel Martin, the Speaker of the Antiguan Assembly at that time. Documents offer no clear indication of why this attack occurred, but Martin had reportedly punished his slaves by denying them their holiday celebration. Martin also had a reputation as a harsh master.³⁶⁷ The slaves attacked and killed Martin by stabbing him “betweene the threat and breast.” The slaves then decapitated Martin,

³⁶⁶ David Barry Gaspar, “The Antigua Slave Conspiracy of 1736: A Case Study of the Origins of Collective Resistance” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, 2 (April 1978), 313.

³⁶⁷ David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua with Implications for Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 186.

“washed [the head] with rum, and Triumphed Over it.”³⁶⁸ Historian Michael Craton wrote about the importance of decapitation to African war customs and the appropriation of the practice by white planters. Craton argues that the use of decapitation in the Caribbean reflected the heavy influence of African retaliation methods within slave societies. Akan warriors, in particular – to whom the term ‘Coromantee’ applied – often displayed the decapitated heads of enemies. British planters took up the practice as a means of warning other slaves against potential rebellion, but they also tapped into the Akan belief that dismembered bodies prohibited the spirit from returning to the homeland.³⁶⁹ The decapitation of Major Martin shocked the white elite in Antigua, but it also reveals the continuation of Akan practices among Coromantee slaves. The use of rum, however, presents an intriguing shift in the practice. The meaning of washing the head in rum is not entirely clear, but the slaves’ act of ‘triumphing over’ it certainly denotes an act of domination on the part of the slaves and humiliated defeat on the part of Major Martin. Perhaps the act of washing the head with rum – a liquor whose existence depended upon slave labor – served as an additional way to degrade Martin’s head. The inclusion of

³⁶⁸ Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, 186; Quoted in Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 118.

³⁶⁹ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 100.

rum in the act indicates a level of appropriation of an imperial product by rebellious slaves.

The Antigua Slave Conspiracy of 1736, like other instances of planned rebellions that never came to fruition, remains a point of debate among historians. Was there in fact a conspiracy? The historical records are limited to the Judges' General Report – the presiding judges' accounts of the interrogation and subsequent executions – and newspaper articles comprising the bulk of available material. Historians like David Barry Gaspar argue that plans for a rebellion did occur, and the charismatic leaders of the would-be rebellion made its reality possible.³⁷⁰ Whether real or imagined, the appearance and discussion of rum in slave interrogations warrant analysis. Both the Judges' General Report and newspaper accounts highlight the presence and use of spirits, primarily rum, by the slaves organizing the rebellion.

Historians cite many factors leading to the Antigua Slave Conspiracy of 1736, including an economic downturn in the sugar market, which led to a decline of imported food in Antigua, as well as a slave uprising in the nearby Danish island of St. John that occurred three years earlier. The drop in the economy in the 1730s captured the attention of Antigua's white planters, who seemed to register little notice of growing

³⁷⁰ Gaspar, "The Antigua Slave Conspiracy," 322.

discontent among the island's slaves. A drop in the British sugar market hit the Caribbean islands hard. While this led Parliament to pass the Molasses Act in 1733, in an effort to boost West Indies trade, Antigua's economy continued to decline. In addition to a struggling economy, a drought in the early 1730s resulted in poor harvests, and an aphid disease hit the island's crops in 1734, destroying many of the food grown for sustenance. Outbreaks of scurvy among both whites and blacks caused much alarm, and a hurricane in 1733, as well as an earthquake in 1735, all combined to create a state of deplorable misery throughout Antigua.³⁷¹ Antigua largely depended upon imported supplies of food, and the natural disasters with the economic decline severely restricted Antigua's ability to import enough food for all residents on the island. Many planters who fell into debt had to choose whether to pay off their debts or instead by food rations for their slaves. The disruptive years led to the spread of embittered anger and fed slave discontent.³⁷²

By November of 1735, a group of Coromantee slaves in Antigua formulated a plot to kill the whites on the islands and establish a kingdom under a slave named Court, also known as Tackey, the Akan word for 'chief.' With the help of a creole slave named Tomboy, the Coromantees

³⁷¹ Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, 224-225.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 225-226.

were able to form an alliance between the differing cultural groups that existed among the island's slave population. The plan was intended to occur on October 11, 1736 during a ball celebrating the second anniversary of King George II's coronation. The whites, instead, postponed the ball until the king's birthday on October 30, and they learned of the plans on October 20 to October 27. Colonial authorities arrested and executed the rebel leaders, Court and Tomboy, along with ten others. The discovery of the plot led to widespread paranoia and vicious retaliation among the Antigua's whites. By May of 1737, eighty-eight slaves had been executed, five were broken on the wheel, six were hung in gibbets, and seventy-seven were burned to death. An additional forty-seven slaves were banished.³⁷³

Island whites extracted information about the planned rebellion emerged through interrogation, relying on pain and torture – “not extending to Loss of life or limb” – to obtain the confessions.³⁷⁴ The bulk of incriminating testimonies, however, came from convicted slaves during closed trials. Tomboy and Court confessed as well, though after conviction and spending half an hour tortured on a breaking wheel.³⁷⁵ While these

³⁷³ Gaspar, “The Antigua Slave Conspiracy,” 308-309; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 120-122.

³⁷⁴ Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, 21.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

conditions raise questions about the validity of the testimonies, Gaspar reasons that the slaves were already convicted and knew death was certain, making such testimonies a final opportunity of defiance.³⁷⁶ Still, validity remains uncertain. Questions of accuracy aside, the testimonies from the Antigua conspiracy place great weight on the importance of distilled spirits. participants claimed the leaders secured their support by plying them with food and distilled spirits. An account of the uprising that appeared in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* in March of 1737 included details on the ways conspirators swore their oaths over distilled spirits. The article states:

The chief Measures used by the two Heads, to corrupt our Slaves, were Entertainments of Dancing, Gaming and Festing, and some of them very chargeable ones; always coloured with some innocent Pretence, as commemorating some deceased Friend, by throwing Water on his Grave... or the like, according to the Negro-Customs: Where they were debauched with Liquor, their Minds imbittered against their Masters, and against their Condition of Slavery, by strong Invectives thrown out against both; and Freedom with the Possession of their Master's Estates were to be the Rewards of their Perfidy and Treachery; and they never failed to bind their new Proselytes to Fidelity and Secrecy... by Oaths taken after their Country Customs...³⁷⁷

This record not only indicates that food and drink were fundamental to securing co-conspirators in this plot, but it also reveals the West African influence of the oaths.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

³⁷⁷ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. March 10-17, 1736,7. Issue 431.

The use of rum in the binding of these oaths, again, reflects an appropriation of distilled liquor – a product of Britain’s imperial control and vehicle of the transatlantic slave trade – as a means of resistance, but one that maintained significant cultural markers of the slaves’ African heritage. Willem Bosman, a merchant who wrote about his experience in the Dutch Gold Coast during the first years of the eighteenth century, commented on the cultural importance of oath drinks in West Africa. Bosman wrote:

But [of] late Years some *Negroes* are so refined, that before they their contractory Oaths, they oblige the Priest to swear first, and drink the *Oath-draught*, with an Imprecation, that the *Fetiche* [*obeah*] could punish him with Death, if he ever absolved any Person from their Oath without unanimous consent of all interested in that Contract.³⁷⁸

Other oath drinks, including one for thievery, similarly included the possibility of death if the person who took the oath was either dishonest or did not follow through on their obligations. Slaves sent to Britain’s Caribbean colonies introduced this practice to the region and established it as a vital means of securing communal support. Gaspar argues that the taking of a “Damnation Oath” was the most crucial aspect in securing support for revolts. Part of a ritual feast, assembled recruits swore an oath to aide in and to never betray the plans to rebel. Gaspar states that, for both Coromantees and Creoles, the slaves did not become true

³⁷⁸ Bosman, *A new and accurate description of the coast of Guinea*, 149.

accomplices, bound by sacred obligation, until they took this oath.³⁷⁹

Frederick Smith states that such ceremonies evoked African cultural traditions by using the powerful spirituality assigned to alcohol to bind the. Saves made use of similar oath drinks in the Jamaican slave conspiracy of 1760 and an uprising in Curaçao in 1795. Smith argues that these oath drinks helped evoke shared beliefs among the diverse African groups forced co-habitat within the Caribbean islands.³⁸⁰

For the conspirators sworn to support the Antigua rebellion, the oath was powerful, and many feared the spiritual consequences of breaking their pledge. Such oaths were prominent in the tradition of Akan religion. Taking the oath involved drinking a mixture of rum, dirt from the graves of deceased slaves, and sometimes cock's blood, placing a hand on a live cock, and stating the following pledge:

*To stand by and be true to each other, and to kill the Whites, Man, Woman, and Child; to assist in the Execution of this, when called upon by the Chief; and to suffer Death rather than discover; with Damnation and Confusion to those who should refuse, or having drank and sworn, should afterwards discover.*³⁸¹

Mixing rum, a drink that brought one closer to the spiritual world, with the dirt from a deceased slaves' grave represented the close connections

³⁷⁹ Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, 242.

³⁸⁰ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 163-164.

³⁸¹ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. March 10-17, 1736, 7. Issue 431. Interestingly, the English accounts of these oaths frame the ritual in European terms by describing the oath as “drinking a Health.”

between the living and the dead. This mixture helped the oath takers unify with their ancestors. The oath also represented the rebels' appeal to their ancestors for support in their quest to destroy slavery.³⁸²

As slaves in Caribbean colonies took oaths, the traditional Akan religious practice came to include unique cultural elements of both the enslaved and the slave owners. Rum, an imperial commodity that came into existence through slave labor, became the vehicle through which enslaved rebels swore oaths of allegiance. The image of rum, however, mixed with the dirt from a deceased slaves' grave, is a particularly poignant symbol of the powerful forces unleashed through imperial control. Yet, for the slaves of Antigua such a mixture provided a means to destroy those imperial forces while keeping alive the practice of significant religious rituals. Slaves also appropriated customs from the English colonizers and used those practices to secure recruited support for rebellion. During feasts when the rebel leader, Tomboy, administered the oath, the pledge first began with the assembled slaves drinking healths. In an intriguing collision of cultures, enslaved leaders who sought to instigate rebellion bound conspirators together through an act that combined African heritage and an English drinking tradition.³⁸³ To white observers,

³⁸² Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, 245.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 244.

slaves' use of distilled spirits to swear oaths of allegiance appeared as a distinct threat to both white society and slavery itself. The judges that presided over the trial in Antigua remarked on this, stating, "[They] were debauched with Liquor; their Minds imbittered against their Masters, and against their Condition of Slavery, by strong Invectives thrown out against both."³⁸⁴

Witnesses referred to those who administered the oath as the "Obey Man," likely an obeahman, or "a Physition," and they spoke of the power this figure embodied. Gaspar explained *Obeah* as meaning either a supernatural, protecting force assigned to a man, or as charms that derive power from this similar force.³⁸⁵ Judges in the Antigua trials described such men as wizards, acknowledging the supernatural forces slaves associated with these individuals. One witness, Quamina, stated to the judges that, "if you had not Caught me I would not have told you now. I am afraid of this Obey Man now, he is a Bloody fellow, I knew him in Cormantee Country."³⁸⁶ This belief was unique to Akan slaves in the Americas; those considered *Obeah* men were people of influence and control over other slaves. The oath was a powerful source through which the rebel leaders gained support. While oath drinks were sufficient in

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, 246.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

³⁸⁶ Quoted in Gaspar, "The Antigua Slave Conspiracy," 322.

binding support among rebellious slaves, the participation of *obeah* men and the powers they embodied added additional weight to the ritual.³⁸⁷ During the trials that followed discovery of the plot, multiple slaves stated that, after taking the oath, they would choose to die first than “betray the Secret.”³⁸⁸ Similar to the beliefs of seventeenth-century Europeans, African slaves maintained that distilled liquor, like other alcoholic drinks, held powerful spiritual qualities. By mixing rum with blood, which many African cultures associated with warfare, Antiguan slaves were able to draw on traditional customs, appropriate a product of British imperialism, and forge spiritual bonds directed toward the destruction of slavery and white oppression.³⁸⁹

Like the slaves of Antigua who carefully planned their takeover of the island, those accused of organizing a plot to destroy New York City reportedly used West African ritual oath drinks to recruit co-conspirators. It is not accidental that a tavern provided the setting for these plots. The frequent passing of laws barring slaves, as well as free blacks, from taverns and spirituous liquors indicates the potential danger white elites attached to these gathering spaces. As explained by Salinger, “It was not just that taverns provided free blacks and slaves with places to eat, drink,

³⁸⁷ Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels*, 247.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 244.

³⁸⁹ Smith, *Caribbean Rum*, 164.

and socialize, although this subverted an orderly society. Gatherings of slaves were dangerous.”³⁹⁰ Even more dangerous was common interaction between the races within New York City's waterfront taverns during the early eighteenth century. Such a setting proved to be a breeding ground of subversion, and eventually, organized rebellion.

The “Negro Plot” that shocked New York City in the early spring of 1741 developed after a series of fires broke out across the town. The timing of the fires occurred in the midst of war between England and Spain – the infamous “War of Jenkins Ear.” The war, combined with a hard winter, depleted the city’s resources. That same winter, a group of “Spanish negroes” was brought to New York on a captured Spanish ship. In spite of their claims of freedom, a New York City court was not impressed with their lack of documentation, and sold the men into slavery. The presence of Spanish slaves and class tensions cultivated by exhausted resources came to a head once the fires began.³⁹¹

On April 5, 1741, Mrs. Abigail Earle, looking out her window, took notice of a group of three slaves walking, and she overheard one slave proudly claim, “*Fire, Fire, Scorch, Scorch, A LITTLE, --- Damn it, BY-AND-*

³⁹⁰ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 134.

³⁹¹ Leopold S. Launitz-Schurer, Jr. “Slave Resistance in Colonial New York: An Interpretation of Daniel Horsmanden’s New York Conspiracy” *Phylon* 41, 2 (2nd Qtr., 1980), 137-138.

BY,” after which the slave threw his hand into the air and laughed.³⁹² It did not take long after Mrs. Earle reported the remark to an Alderman before the white residents of New York City attached blame for the fires to an intentional plot among the slaves, likely instigated by the Spanish slaves, to destroy the city and kill all the white men. The Conspiracy itself was a peculiar event, as the evidence was thin at the time, and appears even more so when examined by modern historians. The testimony of one witness, an indentured servant named Mary Burton, led to the arrest and conviction of suspected conspirators who planned to destroy the city. Mary had been arrested for theft in February of 1741, but in her confession, she indicated inside knowledge behind the outbreak of fires in the city. What initially appeared to the residents of New York to be an act of retaliation from free black Spaniards sold into slavery developed into a complex investigation into the underbelly of New York City’s criminal world. Following the testimony of Mary Burton, the entire investigation centered on a notorious tavern owned and operated by Mary’s master, John Hughson.³⁹³

³⁹² Daniel Horsmanden, *A Journal of the Proceedings in the Detection of the Conspiracy Formed By Some White People, in Conjunction with Negro and other Slaves, for Burning the City of New-York in America, And Murdering the Inhabitants* (New York: 1744), 7; Launitz-Scherer, Jr., “Slave Resistance in Colonial New York,” 137-138.

³⁹³ Launitz-Scherer, Jr., “Slave Resistance in Colonial New York,” 138.

The only document to detail the peculiar unraveling of the so-called “Negro Plot” is Daniel Horsmanden’s *A Journal of the Proceedings in the Detection of the Conspiracy... for Burning the City of New-York*, first published in 1744. Any insight historians wish to gain into this event must come from this source, which features heavy bias in favor of the ruling of the court. While historians continue to debate whether plans to burn New York City and overthrow slavery in 1741 ever existed, Horsmanden held no doubt as to the validity of the plot or the confessions supplied by those seeking to avoid execution.³⁹⁴ Regardless of its reliability, Horsmanden’s account does draw attention to a number of telling points about slaves, drinking, and beliefs about organized resistance.

Twenty-nine years before the Slave Conspiracy of 1741 that New Yorkers experienced a slave rebellion. In April of 1712, a group of armed slaves set fire to a building and attacked all the whites that ran toward the building to put out the flames.³⁹⁵ As no corresponding source like Horsmanden’s *Journal* exists for the 1712 uprising, the 1741 conspiracy remains a topic of greater discussion among historians. Still, Sharon Salinger argues that taverns proved fundamental to the organizing of the

³⁹⁴ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 177-178.

³⁹⁵ Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-century Manhattan* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 52-53.

1712 attack, as slaves used such a space to formulate their plans.³⁹⁶ In spite of what happened in 1712, within a few years, slaves and free blacks in New York once more gained easy access to taverns and strong drink. Less than thirty years after slaves illegally gathered at a tavern to lay plans for an organized attack, once again, slaves and free blacks cooperated with poor whites in an illicit space. The confessions recorded by Horsmanden steadily repeat that Hughson's tavern served as the focal point of organized criminal activity as Hughson and his wife fenced stolen goods brought in by slaves, free blacks, and poor whites.³⁹⁷ Horsmanden's record of the events surrounding the conspiracy make it clear that, regardless of the laws in place, slaves and free blacks illegally continued to patronize New York's drinking establishments.

The use of tavern space and slaves' access to strong drinks was not the only point of discussion surrounding spirits in Horsmanden's *Journal* as shown by the confession of a slave named Jack, commonly called Capt. Jack. Jack was enslaved to Gerardus Comfort, a cooper, who reportedly was often away from his house. Horsmanden relates that Jack willingly agreed to confess; likely, Jack provided the investigators with the information they sought to protect his own life. As stated in Horsmanden's

³⁹⁶ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 228-229.

³⁹⁷ For more discussion about the interracial nature of New York's taverns, see Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 128-136.

account, Jack promised, “that if his Life might be spared, he would discover all that he knew of the Conspiracy.” Jack’s dialect, however, required the use of interpreters, meaning that his confession, from the start, appeared in court via a filter. In his confession, Jack stated he lived near Hughson’s tavern, and Horsmanden describes Jack as “a most trusty and diligent Agent for *Hughson*.”³⁹⁸ Jack explained how the Hughsons supplied slaves with feast-like meals and liberal amounts of rum punch. One such meal consisted of a goose, a quarter of mutton, fowl, two loaves of bread, a flask of rum, and two bowls of rum punch. The quality and amount of food far exceeded typical slave rations, and the presence of rum punch indicates that the slaves, like the London poor criticized for drinking gin, were consuming drinks intended for those above their social standing. Jack explained that it was at this meal that plans for setting fires across the city took place.³⁹⁹

Echoes of Caribbean revolts appeared in Jack’s confession, as he stated distilled spirits served as a means for the conspiring slaves to swear their alliance to the plot. Two weeks after the feast Jack described, the conspirators gathered at Comfort’s home when Jack’s master was

³⁹⁸ Horsmanden, *A Journal*, 63.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

absent from the house. While there, the slaves made use of spirits as oath drinks. Jack described the scene, stating:

This Conversation began, and was most talked of before *Sandy* [a slave] came in; *Sandy* came into the Kitchen first, being called in by him (*Jack*) *but was loth* [loathe] *to come*; *Jack* asked him to drink a Dram, *Sandy* said, No; *Sarah* (*f*) who was then present, said, he must drink, and made him drink; and having drunk the Dram, *Jack* asked him, *if he would stand to, and help them burn Houses, and kill the white People?* *Sandy* seemed afraid: They all drank a Dram round, and then he (*Jack*) brought in nine clasp Knives...⁴⁰⁰

The knives served as a means of intimidation, to pressure Sandy to join their cause. If Sandy refused, Jack threatened to cut off his head.

Following the drinking of drams to form bonds of allegiance and the threat of bodily harm, Sandy did agree to aid in the conspiracy. The slaves were not the only conspirators to make use of oath rituals. Horsmanden claims that Hughson, the white tavern keeper and supposed ringleader of the plot, made the conspirators swear on “a great Book.” The oath stated that those who revealed the plot or failed to carry out their tasks would be damned to eternity.⁴⁰¹ In another oath described in a confession offered by a slave named Kane, Hughson called the conspirators to stand in a circle, while his wife held a bowl of rum punch over each slave’s head as they swore their oath of allegiance and drank from the bowl.⁴⁰² The use of

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 71-72.

⁴⁰² Lepore, *New York Burning*, 179.

oaths and ritualized drinking recalls ties to the slaves' African heritage. Horsmanden describes many of the accused conspirators as Coromantees, indicating shared Akan traditions. If the confessions of the slaves are to be believed, which Horsmanden clearly did but many historians continue to question, the Hughsons actively tapped into these cultural ties to incorporate spiritual elements to formulate open rebellion.

In addition to the Hughsons, who were executed for their part in the conspiracy, enslaved leaders of the supposed plot were also participants in another subversive organization, one that actively mocked the drinking clubs popular among elite white men. Horsmanden describes two slaves, named Caesar and Prince, as the "Heads and Ringleaders" of a group responsible for stealing a supply of gin in the mid-1730s. Caesar, Prince, and others found guilty of the crime were punished via public whipping, but the two slaves responded by forming a club comprised of both enslaved and free blacks called the Geneva Club, so named in honor of the gin stolen in the heist. This club actively mocked the rituals of elite white organizations, particularly the Free Masons, much to the displeasure of Horsmanden and other ruling New York whites. Horsmanden stated the activities of the Geneva Club "looked upon to be a gross Affront to the Provincial Grand Master and Gentlemen of the Fraternity at that Time, and

was very ill ACCEPTED.”⁴⁰³ Salinger argues that the Geneva Club operated to ridicule the manner of elite club meetings, which amounted to little more than heavy drinking parties, and criticized the privilege white men gained from the system of racial hierarchy.⁴⁰⁴ The Geneva Club is a short-lived, but remarkable example of the public nature of racial subversion in the early eighteenth century. Not limited to acts of open rebellion, slaves and free blacks used spirits to mock white supremacy, as well as the drinking customs common among the ruling class. The Geneva Club ceased to exist following the 1741 Slave Conspiracy, as many of the club’s members were either executed or transported for their participation in the plot; both Caesar and Prince were executed.⁴⁰⁵

Unlike instances of organized rebellion, smaller-scale, individual cases of resistance occurred on a daily basis across North American and Caribbean plantations. The methods of resistance embraced by slaves to interrupt work or frustrate their masters have long been the focus of historical interpretation. Before the influential contributions of Kenneth Stamp’s *The Peculiar Institution* and Eugene Genovese’s *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, white historians, like Ulrich B. Phillips, tended to frame subtle acts of

⁴⁰³ Horsmanden, *A Journal*, 26, fn. p. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁰⁴ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 82.

⁴⁰⁵ Horsmanden, *A Journal*, 26, fn. p.

subversion by slaves as mere laziness.⁴⁰⁶ In 1951, William Dosite Postell, who admitted holding a “sympathetic appreciation” for the Antebellum South, wrote, “Since the slave lacked the economic motive to work, he had to be made to work by fear of the lash.”⁴⁰⁷ Stamp and Genovese’s work, published in 1956 and 1974, respectfully, changed the nature of historical analysis regarding the lives of slaves. What once appeared to authors like Phillips and Postell as an unmotivated work ethic became clear acts of resistance by slaves. John Thornton described this resistance as thus: “Work discipline, tool management, and absenteeism were the weapons available to slaves to require their masters to abolish bad customs, punish sadistic overseers (or reconsider the masters’ own sadism), or increase slaves’ free time, time available for their own work, rights to visit or live with family members, and the like.”⁴⁰⁸ Overlooked in these discussions of slave resistance, however, is the use of alcohol to disrupt work or lash out at masters while in a state of intoxication. Drinking to excess allowed slaves the ability to release frustrations and later blame any challenges to the master’s control on their temporary drunkenness.

⁴⁰⁶ Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966).

⁴⁰⁷ William Dosite Postell, *The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 29.

⁴⁰⁸ Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 274.

Documentation of slave behavior remains sparse, but the remaining insights into slaves' lives show that drinking remained a point of contention between individual slaves and their masters. As shown, runaway slave ads offer one of these rare glimpses into the relationship that existed between some slaves and distilled spirits. A 1769 ad placed for Sandy, a mulatto slave who belonged to Thomas Jefferson, described Sandy as thirty-five years old and a shoemaker by trade. Similar to the other runaway ads discussed, this posting describes Sandy as "greatly addicted to drink, and when drunk is insolent and disorderly, in his conversation he swears much, and his behavior is artful and knavish."⁴⁰⁹ The reoccurrence of similar phrases such as "addicted to drink," and descriptors of impudent behavior offer only hints at a slave's life, but these are still telling hints. The full context of Sandy's drinking remains untold, but the suggestion that Sandy was "addicted" to drinking is a significant descriptor. The term "addicted" appeared in reference to drinking throughout the early modern era, but it did not always carry the same meaning as modern understandings of physical dependency. Use of the word "addicted" could simply indicate a strong attachment, and it applied to ideas, including

⁴⁰⁹ "Advertisement for a Runaway Slave, 7 September 1769," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, 1760–1776, edited by Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 33. Founders Online, National Archives.

religious philosophy, as well as physical materials, such as drinks.⁴¹⁰ This ad appeared in the midst of evolving ideas of what physical addiction meant, and while underlying similarities between the use of “addicted to drink” in 1769 and an “addict” may appear, modern interpretations of addiction should not cloud interpretation of Sandy’s drinking. Instead, this ad shows that Sandy was, at the very least, a habitual drinker, but what is telling is the way Sandy behaved when drunk. This ad indicates that, when intoxicated, Sandy became “insolent” and “disorderly,” behaviors that few slave owners would tolerate. Perhaps, drunkenness offered Sandy an opportunity to lash out, to swear, and to engage in intentionally disruptive behavior. Similar to broken tools and absenteeism, drunkenness was a weapon with which slaves like Sandy could verbally attack their masters and, when sober, blame their “insolent” behavior on the spirits. For slaves across the empire, excessive drinking and inebriation was more than a means of escape; it became a way to fight against those who demanded complete control.

One of the most documented cases of habitual drunkenness and disobedient behavior by a slave was that of Nassau, a tortured slave owned by the Virginian planter, Landon Carter. Nassau was Carter’s

⁴¹⁰ James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 64-65.

surgeon assistant, and he was roughly the same age as Carter's son, Robert Wormeley Carter, who was born in 1734. Carter depended upon Nassau to care for his wellbeing, as well as his family, any guests, and the rest of the slaves on Carter's plantation. Carter was one of the wealthiest planters in Virginia, as he owned 401 slaves at the time of his death.⁴¹¹ While Carter's diaries remain a favorite source for analyzing events surrounding the build up to the Revolutionary War, Carter also recorded extensive details about the operation of his plantation and his relationship with his slaves. Carter's descriptors are often contentious. He began his diary in 1752 to keep a record of proceedings in the House of Burgesses, but by 1766 Carter devoted much of his diary to documenting cases of disobedience within his household.⁴¹² He frequently refers to others as "villains," and he grew increasingly concerned with his maintenance of control over others throughout his life. One of the greatest sources of frustration to Carter's attempted dominance was Nassau's incessant drinking. In many of Carter's entries about his enslaved surgeon, Nassau appears drunk and failing in his duties. At one point, Nassau attacked Carter. In response to each occurrence, Carter inflicted harsh physical and

⁴¹¹ Rhys Isaac, *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xvii.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, xv.

mental punishment on Nassau for his behavior. In spite of the suffering, however, Nassau continued to drink. Nassau's life became a continuous cycle of drunkenness, violent punishment from his master, and resumed drinking as both a form of direct defiance against Carter, as well as a way to escape the mental hardship caused by slavery. Carter documented his exasperation with Nassau's constant insobriety in his dairies, leaving a permanent record of the brutal relationship that existed between master, slave, and the bottle.

The extensive record kept in Carter's dairies does much to reveal his perceptions, motivations, and fundamental belief in upholding morality, but it offers less insight into the thoughts of those Carter wrote about. Carter was motivated by the continuous drive for self-improvement, and his dissatisfaction with the surrounding world's lack of interest in pursuing a virtuous life proved infuriating. Carter's temper ran hot, and his diary includes a litany of quarrels, violent confrontations, and terse arguments.⁴¹³ Demanding though he was, the importance Carter applied to self-improvement and the pursuit of virtue reflected ideological beliefs common among the colonial gentry during the latter-half of the eighteenth century. Central to one's improvement was the use of reason. Through

⁴¹³ For more discussion about Carter's character, see: Jack P. Greene, ed. *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*, Volume I (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965), 11-27.

reason, one could evaluate personal behavior and qualities that either led to or detracted from the path of improvement. Jack Greene states that, “Carter insisted that every man was obliged to use his reason, however unreliable it might be, to check his passions and to guard against habits and tendencies, arguments and practices, that were ‘Vastly against all or any spark of reason.’”⁴¹⁴ This belief underscored Carter’s perceptions of his consistently drunk body slave, Nassau, as he viewed drunkenness as an intentional act of self-destruction and a turn toward “voluntary madness.” Over time, Carter decided it was his paternalistic responsibility to reform Nassau’s behavior for the sake of both Nassau, as well as Carter’s, eternal soul.

Most references to Nassau within Carter’s diary feature the slave’s tendency toward drunkenness, which often disrupted his ability to work. January 18, 1770, Carter grouped a complaint about Nassau’s drunkenness with the illness of another slave named Bridget, and Carter described both occurrences as intentional disruptions of labor. Carter writes, “Mrs. Bridget I find has had a pain in her guts six days without the least fever and looks well that is she has her Mother’s Cabin to lounge in and Nassau so constantly drunk that I cannot with every day’s inquiry hear who pretends to be sick but there will come a warm day for the

⁴¹⁴ Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. I, 16.

punishment of these things.”⁴¹⁵ Carter makes it clear that he believed his slaves feigned illness to avoid work, and his inclusion of Nassau’s continued inebriation reinforces the importance of analyzing slave drunkenness as a means of resistance.

As Carter’s diary progressed, his frustration with Nassau’s drinking began to build into moments of open confrontation. By May of 1770, Carter claimed he reached a breaking point with Nassau’s behavior. On May 16, Carter wrote:

Nassau is become intolerable. I saw he had been drinking on Saturday when he could not bleed his Master. I told him of it every day and now he has got to stinking so much with it that he is not to be endured. Last night I could not be waited upon. His pretence was his wife was taken dangerous bad. But now I have found out that it is his state of drinkinness.⁴¹⁶

In this entry, Carter complains of the way Nassau’s drinking interfered with his duties, in this case, tending to his master’s health. It is impossible for to know whether Nassau drank to avoid work, but Carter certainly believed Nassau drank as a form of intentional rebuke. By September, 1770, Nassau engaged in open rebellion against Carter by getting “devilish drunk” and running away for a week. After Nassau returned, he again drank to the point he could not wait upon Carter, and he once more ran

⁴¹⁵ Carter, “January 18, 1770,” Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. I, 347.

⁴¹⁶ Carter, “May 16, 1770,” Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. I, 411.

away from the plantation. After Carter apprehended Nassau, he locked up his wayward slave “for a serious day of Correction.” In spite of his frustration with Nassau’s behavior, Carter wrote that he struggled to get by without the assistance of his slave.⁴¹⁷

When Nassau’s drinking began to affect his ability to administer medical treatments to other slaves and overseers on the plantation, Carter resorted to increasing levels of violence in an attempt to correct Nassau’s behavior. On September 25, 1770, Carter recorded that Nassau “got yesterday most inhumanly drunk,” and in that condition, Nassau bled a two year-old child and the child’s father. When he returned to Carter, he reported that he gave the child a purgative instead, which Carter described as “a most audacious lie.” Nassau later denied telling Carter the false information, and Carter punished Nassau by locking him in irons “to lye all night and feel his drunkenness.”⁴¹⁸ Such punishment did little to dissuade Nassau from drinking. The entry on September 23, 1773 of Carter’s diary reveals a sharp deterioration in the manner Carter dealt with Nassau’s drunkenness. Carter wrote:

I have been obliged to give Nassau a severe whipping this day. He has been very drunk ever since Mulatto Betty was taken ill, and had

⁴¹⁷ Carter, “September 15-18, 1770,” Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. I, 490-492.

⁴¹⁸ Carter, “September 25, 1770,” Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. I, 527.

like to have died with inflaming his bile... I gave him a Vomit of Ipecacuana which eased him instantly. The next day his blood was so inflamed, he was obliged to be blooded. And yet he will drink; he can't say he can't help it, because he could help sending for liquor. I have threatened him, begged him, Prayed him, and told him the consequences if he neglected the care to one of the sick people... and yet all will not do; he seems resolved to drink in spite of me, and I believe in order to spight me.⁴¹⁹

The catastrophe that represented Carter and Nassau's master-slave relationship runs throughout the lines of this entry. Nassau's refusal to abstain from drinking infuriated Carter who punished his slave through physical violence time and time again. Still, Carter laments that "as soon as the cuts heal he gets drunk directly."⁴²⁰ To Carter, Nassau's drunkenness was a direct affront to his authority, both as a slave owner and as the ruling moral authority on the plantation. The anger and frustration Carter felt toward his slave remains embedded in the words of this entry; his clear lack of understanding regarding Nassau's motivations to drink, and his enduring drive to beat, literally, the desire to drink out of his slave. Even though Carter saw Nassau's drunkenness as an open act of rebellion, Carter concluded his thoughts on the matter by stating that he still hoped to save Nassau's soul.

⁴¹⁹ Carter, "September 23, 1770," Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. II, 778.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

Alcohol and violence rested at the heart of Carter and Nassau's lives together. As one drove the other, Carter's demands for self-improvement fed Nassau's destruction. On Monday, September 11, 1775, the downward spiral progressed when Carter instructed Nassau to tend to an ailing overseer. Instead of following the given orders, Nassau gave money to another slave to buy rum, and they met together on Carter's plantation to drink. Following this, Nassau reportedly did visit the overseer, although in an inebriated state. Nassau then went missing, but he was later found "at sunset aSleep on the ground dead drunk." Once Nassau returned to Sabine Hall, Carter reports, "I offered to give him a box on the ear and he fairly forced himself against me." The violence that defined interactions between master and slave erupted, and Nassau responded to Carter's admonitions with violence of his own. Here, Carter lost full control, and Nassau retaliated through physical assault. As one can expect, this encounter did not end well for Nassau. The brutal details of Nassau's punishment appears in Carter's diary as thus:

However I tumbled him into the Sellar and there had him tied Neck and heels all night and this morning had him stripped and tied up to a limb and, with a Number of switches Presented to his eyes and a fellow with an uplifted arm, He encreased his crying Petitions to be forgiven but this once, and desired the man to bear witness that he

called on God to record his solemn Vow that he never more would touch liquor.⁴²¹

Tied, stripped, and beaten, Nassau cried out his promise to abstain from drinking. Carter, the self-perceived paternal planter, found comfort in this vow. Even though Carter resorted to violence and torture, time and again, to correct Nassau's behavior, Carter continued to view such "correction" as just. The master accepted the promise from the punished slave, and Carter wrote about his continued hope to save Nassau's soul before he died. Three weeks later, Carter found Nassau drunk once more.

Reading Carter's entries that relate to Nassau's dependence upon drinking and Carter's dependence upon violence exemplify the severity embedded within the institution of slavery. For slaves in North America and the Caribbean, distilled liquor held spiritual qualities, and many who suffered under the yoke of chattel slavery found comfort in the intoxicating qualities of the drink, as well as the communal bonds the spirits created. For many slaves, drunkenness offered a means of psychological escape, but the act of drinking, in many ways, represented a form of resistance against the control white planters enforced upon them. Nassau's drinking likely embodied both of these qualities, as drinking was both a way for him to run away, either physically or simply within his mind, as well as a way to

⁴²¹ Carter, "September 11, 1775," Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. II, 940-941.

disobey direct orders from his master. The severity of Carter and Nassau's relationship pushed Nassau to the brink of suicide. Carter's ruthless responses to Nassau's actions were, by and large, typical for the North American paternalistic planter; and yet, the flatness of his words when discussing Nassau's destructive decline reveals the level of humanity planters assigned to their enslaved laborers. When Nassau, imprisoned once more for drinking to intoxication, began to refuse meals, Carter wrote, "He will not eat. I don't care. He desires to die... If he goes, I shall be rid of a Villain, though a most capable servant."⁴²² Ultimately, Nassau would live long enough to see his tormentor pass when Carter died on December 22, 1778. Nassau, along with Carter's other slaves and property, passed on to his son, Robert Wormeley Carter. With Landon Carter's death, the historical record of Nassau's life and his troubles with alcohol fall silent.⁴²³

Slave resistance across Britain's Atlantic empire occurred in many ways, including undermining laws, mocking the activities of elite whites, disobeying a master's orders, or even plotting open rebellion. Present in each of these forms of subversion was alcohol, another tool with which individuals sold as chattel could find ways to challenge and attempt to

⁴²² Carter, "September 30, 1775," Greene, ed. *The Diary of Landon Carter*, Vol. II, 953.

⁴²³ Isaac, *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom*, 322.

destroy the institution of slavery. As anti-liquor advocates in England and North America emphasized the tragic destruction of drunkenness, for slaves, whose labor sustained the empire, drunkenness provided a means to resist the system of labor forced upon them. By losing control of their own bodies through inebriation, slaves denied their masters the control they sought. Although historians have considered the varied and creative ways slaves engaged in rebellion, alcohol and drunkenness has remained absent from the discussion. The historical record captured in colonial newspapers, travel accounts, court records, and planters' diaries makes it clear that distilled spirits remained an important part of resistance among slaves and free people of color. By taking a product of imperialism, and using it to pledge oaths of rebellion, to disrupt labor, and to maintain cultural connections to their homeland, slaves and free blacks continually found ways to subvert the very system that forced the migration of millions of slaves across the Atlantic. Through rum, slaves regained a sense of control through disobedience, even if it resulted in the loss of physical control through drunkenness. In spite of the continued violence and oppression endured by slaves, distilled spirits continually provided a means of mental, physical, and spiritual resistance that persisted throughout the colonial era.

Chapter 5

Savagery and Civilization: Spirits on the Frontier

“The Traitor, or rather the Tyrant, I arraign before you, O *Creeks!* is no Native of our Soil; but rather a *lurking Miscreant*, and *Emissary* of the evil *Principle* of Darkness. ‘Tis that pernicious Liquid, which our pretended *white Friends* artfully introduced, and so plentifully pour in among us.”⁴²⁴

On May 21, 1758, Captain Thomas Bullitt wrote to Colonel George Washington requesting immediate medical attention for John Waid, a soldier wounded by a Cherokee ally. Bullitt wrote that the unnamed Cherokee approached Waid while he sat in an Indian camp eating his rations. The Cherokee, “Askt him for some whiskey,” but when Waid did not respond, the Cherokee man “pickt up his gun and shot him through the back.”⁴²⁵ The shot did not prove fatal, as Bullitt believed medical aid could save the soldier’s life. The unnamed Cherokee who instigated the attack, however, was found dead in the camp, “with his throat cutt from Ear to Ear

⁴²⁴ *The Speech of a Creek-Indian, against the Immoderate Use of Spirituous Liquors* (London: 1754), 12. The author of this speech remains anonymous, but historian Peter Mancall speculates that the speech was the work of a non-Indian temperance advocate. Still, Mancall states the speech offers a summary, albeit from an outsider’s view, of the destructive impact liquor had on indigenous communities in North America. Peter Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 246.

⁴²⁵ W. W. Abbot, ed. “To George Washington from Thomas Bullitt, 21 May 1758,” *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, Vol. 5, 5 October 1757–3 September 1758 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 189–190. Founders Online, National Archives.

by one of their own men.” Such violence came to characterize interactions between the Anglo-American colonists and Native Americans, especially in the wake of Great Britain and France’s war for imperial control over North America. Long before the Seven Years’ War, however, the North American backcountry provided the setting of continuous intercultural encounters, commodity exchanges, as well as instances of violence. In the midst of these moments, distilled spirits proved to be both a perceived necessity and a persistent menace to indigenous peoples, the colonial settlers, and the relations between them. The introduction and use of distilled spirits along the North American frontier revealed the complicated power dynamics that existed between colonizer and Indian, violence and peace, and the continuous quest of imperial, and eventually federal, control over inhabitants perceived as living on the boundaries of civilization.

Historical analysis of the relationship between indigenous peoples and alcohol consumption continues to be a source of cultural distress and political tension within North American indigenous communities. The focus of this relationship often rests upon the destructive effect liquor had on indigenous communities. Within this analysis, historians have examined the harmful stereotypes Anglo-Americans constructed to both degrade and lament the plight of Native tribes. Such a historical perspective is

necessary, as the introduction of distilled spirits did result in permanent damage to indigenous communities. For Europeans settling and trading along the North American frontier, spirits served as a tool of empire. These Europeans, introduced distilled liquors to Native Americans in an attempt to establish power over the tribes. They did so in direct ways, by plying Natives with spirits in order to gain an advantage in trade agreements. They also did this in more subtle ways by constructing an image of savagery that clashed with the invading Europeans' self-perceived cultural superiority. They often deployed this imagery through the familiar language of beastly drunkards. Tales of drunken Natives that circulated in colonial newspapers and published sermons reinforced the connection between intoxication and beastliness. For indigenous communities, however, intoxication provided a way to antagonize and oppose the imperial forces that continued to spread across the continent. While merchants, traders, and colonial settlers used liquor as a tool of empire and viewed drunkenness as a way to deceive Native Americans, indigenous tribes used inebriation to reestablish control and undermine European subjection.

Examining the production and use of distilled spirits on the North American frontier reveals the plurality of alcohol in the eighteenth century. In this setting, spirits acted as both an agent of empire and a means of

resistance against such control. It was also on the frontier, a setting that appeared to colonists as a symbolic battle between savagery and civilization, that a new corn-based liquor emerged. The result of European technology and the appropriation of indigenous grains, American whiskey became an significant domestic product that came to represent economic opportunity and a sense of independent nationalism. As slaves and Native Americans used spirits to resist racial suppression and imperial conquest, white Americans similarly used liquor to aid in their separation from the British Empire. Whites who perceived Native consumption of liquor as a potential danger, in turn, saw drinking domestically manufactured spirits as a form of patriotic resistance. Following independence, however, distilled spirits once more became a means to establish and enforce federal control at the end of the eighteenth century. For the new United States, domestic whiskey production served as the testing ground of governmental regulation over a frontier inhabited by people viewed as rebellious and uncivilized. The success of this endeavor cemented whiskey as a representative of federal power and a fundamental component of the new national economy.

The literature on seventeenth and eighteenth-century exchanges between indigenous people in North America and colonial settlers describes the complexity of those encounters. While early scholarship

tended to ignore the significant place of Native people in the colonial period, over time, the literature has included greater cultural inclusion. Like the literature on slavery, the study of indigenous peoples presents a wide array of challenges, especially as most of the existing sources come from the perceptions of white men. To understand who these people were and how interactions with Europeans affected their lives, historians have had little choice but to embrace methodologies often used by anthropologists and archaeologists.

Scholars have worked diligently to capture the indigenous perspective of the tumultuous years that encompassed European colonization. Historians like Richard White and Daniel Ritcher sought “to look over [the native’s] shoulder” to untangle indigenous lives and perspectives. Other historians like James Axtell have deconstructed the cultural challenges that arose from Native-colonial encounters.⁴²⁶ Studies by these scholars, as well as many others, have brought a level of nuance and careful analysis to a field of study that continues to require further

⁴²⁶ James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Daniel K. Ritcher, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empire, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

digging and discussion.⁴²⁷ No longer can historians simply chronicle the “inevitable” conquest of the white Europeans over the “savage” Indians. Instead, as Axtell states, “[Scholars must] ensure that each culture is treated with equal empathy, rigor, and discernment. If we are to understand the total contact situation, we must fully understand the motives and actions of both groups.”⁴²⁸ Perspective is a driving force in the documentation of past events and current analysis of those sources. The upheaval that followed first contact – to culture, economy, religious beliefs, and all other aspects of life – constructed a remarkably complex setting for historical analysis.

Within the literature on indigenous life and cultural encounters there is little discussion of distilled spirits on the North American. Many studies acknowledge the significance of liquor in trade agreements, and few historians dispute European traders’ malicious use of spirits in such moments of exchange. Still, there remains a need for further analysis and

⁴²⁷ James Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford, 1981); Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); James H. Merrell, *The Indians’ New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1989); Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

⁴²⁸ Axtell, *The European and the Indian*, 15.

discussion of the ways that the consumption of distilled spirits by Native Americans influenced Anglo-American perceptions of Natives, as well as Natives' perceptions of Europeans. The most detailed study to examine the events surrounding colonial-Native interaction based on drinking is Peter C. Mancall's *Deadly Medicine*.⁴²⁹ In this book, Mancall frames Native alcohol consumption from the Indians' perspective and experiences. He focuses on the region where the Fur Trade dominated, including the hinterland of Pennsylvania and New York, the Ohio Valley, the Great Lakes region, and Mississippi Valley from the mid-seventeenth century to before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Similar to Frederick Smith's research on indigenous and enslaved communities in the Caribbean, Mancall argues that, for Natives, drinking offered a means of escape as the world that they once knew fell apart. His research also examines how exchanges with European traders, lubricated through the supply of alcohol, brought Native Americans into the transatlantic commercial economy, even as the issue of drunkenness resulted in European questions of Native civility and social uplift.⁴³⁰

Discussions of civility also appear in studies on European settlers living on the frontier, particularly those that focus on the Ulster Scots, also

⁴²⁹ Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23-29.

referred to as the Scotch-Irish. Studies of the large number of migrants who came to populate the North American backcountry often focus on the settlers' social and cultural heritage. Lowland Scots, used to help enforce England's colonizing efforts in Ireland, played a parallel role in British North America. Studies like, *The People with No Name* by Patrick Griffin, and James G. Leyburn's enduring research, *The Scotch-Irish*, break down the ways the culture and colonizing efforts of Scotch-Irish migrants influenced cultural development in the North American backcountry.⁴³¹ Other studies, like Eric Hinderacker and Peter Mancall's *At the Edge of Empire*, focus on interactions between frontier settlers and Native Americans, particularly the violent nature of many of the encounters.⁴³² Few of these studies, however, include much discussion about the migrants' role in transferring whiskey distillation to North America. It is only when events like the Whiskey Insurrection, or Whiskey Rebellion, occurs that whiskey receives any substantial scholarly attention. Even in those studies, the analytical focus remains more on the political and economic

⁴³¹ Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689-1764* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962).

⁴³² Eric Hinderacker and Peter Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

legislation, as well as the rights of the settlers versus the federal government, than on the whiskey itself.⁴³³ The significance of whiskey to the Scotch-Irish migrants, the way it affected colonial-Native relations, and the role of whiskey in shaping Anglo-American perceptions of the frontier deserves analysis in its own right.

This study does not seek to examine the cultural significance of distilled spirits to specific tribes. Instead, this chapter looks at the use of liquor as both a tool to aid in the spread of empire and as a means to resist imperial control. The varied uses of distilled spirits within the North American frontier reveal how perceptions of intoxication shifted when people perceived as lacking in civilized behavior fell into a state of drunkenness. For Anglo-Americans in North America, the inebriation of indigenous peoples enabled European colonists to emphasize their own cultural superiority over those they saw as “savage.” Colonists’ exaggerated descriptions of intoxicated Native Americans, instead, reflect the nature of European drinking habits. This forced some of the colonists to reevaluate their own uses of distilled spirits. The constant reminder –

⁴³³ Example of such studies include, Leland D. Baldwin, *Whiskey Rebels: The Story of a Frontier Uprising* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939); Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

one often brought to the colonists' attention by the Natives themselves – that the Europeans were to blame for any debauchery caused by liquor within Native communities undermined any claim of cultural superiority. This point remained a constant challenge to European efforts to “civilize” indigenous peoples, as the colonists could not deny their role in introducing such strong and destructive drinks to the tribes of North America.

Although colonists criticized Native Americans for excessive drinking, when the question of independence from imperial control arose, the domestic manufacture and sale of distilled spirits became economically significant. The need for economic capital during and immediately following the North American colonies' war for independence established liquor as a patriotic commodity. In such moments, the value of a flourishing industry came to outweigh the sin of inebriation. Liquor that once served to enforce imperial control over Natives, now became the currency of independence. The production of whiskey on the frontier established western household economy as the economic backbone of the new nation. Distilled spirits on the North American frontier acted as more than a trade good. In this setting, liquor became an instrument utilized by both sides in an ongoing war of imperial conquest and the protection of sovereignty.

First hand accounts offer telling insights into the perceptions and uses of distilled spirits along the North American frontier. Missionaries from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) documented encounters with Native Americans involved in the fur trade, and often remarked on the troubles created by distilled spirits. On occasion, they noted the views of the Natives as well, offering a limited glimpse into indigenous perceptions of liquor and intoxication. Other religious leaders denounced excessive drinking among Native peoples in execution sermons, delivered before a prisoner's death, that capture both Anglo and Native American perceptions of drunken behavior. Execution sermons that focused on condemned Natives expose the emergence of constructed racial stereotypes that included drunkenness. Other first hand accounts, including those by Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush reveal Anglo-American perceptions of the savagery of frontier life. These perceptions were not limited to indigenous tribes, as the civility of select European settlers fell under scrutiny as well. In addition to these sources, colonial newspapers captured individual views of Natives, frontier settlers, and the value of the backcountry spirit, whiskey. While the perspectives captured in these sources are often those of elite white men, they convey the significance of liquor on the North American frontier. Such sources show the complexities of indigenous-colonial interactions that involved alcohol,

how the distillation of spirits affected perceptions of frontier life, and the value of liquor as tool of imperial control.



Figure 10: "Penn's treaty with the Indians at Shackamaxon," 1890. Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Spirits had a long presence on the colonial frontier, as Europeans introduced indigenous communities to alcohol from the outset of contact between these groups. For tribes in northern region of the North American continent, the production and consumption of alcohol, and particularly distilled spirits, was a wholly new concept at the time of the Europeans' arrival.⁴³⁴ European traders regarded the inclusion of distilled spirits as necessary in trade negotiations, possibly due to the established practice of trading liquor within the slave markets along the West African coast. The

⁴³⁴ Hinderaker and Mancall, *A the Edge of Empire*, 91.

injection of this unfamiliar European commodity, however, held dire consequences for the indigenous tribes of North America. European traders, missionaries, and settlers were quick to comment on how little control the Natives seemed to have when inebriated. For many participants in the profitable fur trade and settlers moving further inland, this loss of control seemed to present an opportunity.⁴³⁵

Such opportunities arose with greater frequency in North America than in colonies established in the Caribbean, as indigenous tribes in Mesoamerica and Latin America had prior experience with alcohol. The striking differences in the experiences of indigenous peoples in the Caribbean and in North America largely resulted from the Caribbean tribes' established use and consumption of alcohol before first contact. Carib peoples were familiar with the sensation of intoxication, and they utilized alcohol as a means to facilitate communication with and invoke spirits. Both the Taíno and Carib peoples of the Caribbean produced and consumed alcohol before interactions with Europeans ever occurred. Fermented drinks made from cassava, known as *perino*, and from sweet potatoes, known as *mobbie*, were popular among the Carib people in Barbados. Many Europeans compared *perino* to beer, but not all who tried this beverage cared for its taste. English Royalist, Richard Ligon,

⁴³⁵ Mancall, *Deadly Medicine*, 42-43.

described *perino* as a wholesome drink, “though not altogether so pleasant.”⁴³⁶ Europeans also drank *mobbie*, and it became the common beverage of indentured servants in the region.⁴³⁷ Europeans introduced distilled spirits to the Caribbean, first through French brandy, which Frederick Smith argues did have a destabilizing effect on Carib society. In spite of this, drinking also fueled indigenous attacks on European settlements.⁴³⁸ Large-scale drinking festivals, called *ouïcou*, held their own spiritual significance. These gatherings, which featured several hundred participants and heavy alcoholic consumption, often preceded attacks on European settlements.⁴³⁹ In this way, the introduction of distilled spirits, while destabilizing to a degree, did not prove as devastating to the tribes of the Caribbean as it did to those of North America. Spirits became a part of an established system of drinking and intoxication in the Caribbean, whereas the tribes of North America had no such system.

Due to the tribes’ lack of experience with alcohol, traders in North America believed plying Native negotiators with spirits was a strategic way to obtain greater profit. In this way, liquor served as a tool of imperialism.

⁴³⁶ Richard Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (London: 1657), 32.

⁴³⁷ Frederick H. Smith, “European Impressions of the Island Carib’s Use of Alcohol in the Early Colonial Period” *Ethnohistory*, 53, 3 (Summer 2006), 546-548.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 543.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 550-552.

Europeans utilized alcohol to befuddle and take advantage of indigenous peoples without their full knowledge or consent. Peter Mancall explained, “Since Indians in the territory that became British America had no alcohol before Europeans brought it, it is not surprising that they were unskilled in the art of intoxication.”⁴⁴⁰ This was a point of constant criticism among other European colonists. Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, was one such critic. To Williams, the supply of liquor to the surrounding tribes only led to conflict and encouraged violence between the Natives and European settlers.⁴⁴¹

As was often common in colonial writing, Europeans blamed Natives for succumbing to drunkenness and the loss of self-control. In 1672, Williams engaged in an argument with John Throckmorton, accusing Throckmorton and other Quakers of illegally selling liquor to neighboring tribes. In an angry letter to Throckmorton, Williams conveyed his fury, stating:

I heartily wish that your hands were washed from the bloody trade of *Liquors* to the *Indians*... telling the *Indians* that the *Quakers* only know God, and therefore would sell them *Powder* and *Liquors* cheaper, and they would not mix water with *Rhum* as others did: so that by many sudden deaths, what by *Consumptions* and *Dropseis*,

⁴⁴⁰ Mancall, *Deadly Medicine*, 16.

⁴⁴¹ Roger Williams, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, Vol I 1629-1653*, edited by Glenn W. LaFantasie (Hanover: Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988), 266, fn. 20.

the *Barbarians* have been murdered, *hundreds*, if not *thousands* in the whole Countrey.⁴⁴²

Williams condemned the practice of supplying liquor to the tribes, but he also focused on the resulting behavior among drunk Natives. Already perceiving Native Americans as barbaric in nature, as European colonists tended to do, Williams wrote that, once the Natives acquired distilled spirits, they engaged in “the wildest and most licentious” behavior.⁴⁴³

While the English held long-standing traditions of habitual drinking that only grew with the increased availability of distilled spirits, the Natives of North America lacked that experience, and the colonists often remarked on the loss of bodily and behavioral control that resulted from intoxication among the Indians.

Puritan missionaries like John Eliot, the well-known “Apostle to the Indians,” abhorred the presence of alcohol among indigenous peoples, which he saw as a “withering curse” to Native peoples.⁴⁴⁴ For missionaries determined to convert Native Americans, whom they perceived as simply ignorant of Christianity’s message, or more controversially as the Lost

⁴⁴² Roger Williams, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, Vol II 1654-1682*, edited by Glenn W. LaFantasie (Hanover: Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988), 675.

⁴⁴³ LaFantasie, ed., *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, Vol II*, 450-451.

⁴⁴⁴ Convers Francis, *Life of John Eliot: the apostle to the Indians* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1844), 171.

Tribe of Israel, the effects of drinking on the tribes were a constant source of frustration.⁴⁴⁵ Eliot's efforts to convert and encourage the "praying Indians" of Massachusetts during the mid-seventeenth century encountered difficulties due to Native consumption of distilled spirits. One particular incident that occurred in the spring of 1654 "occasioned much scandal and discouragement," when three of the "praying Indians" obtained several quarts of spirits from English colonists. When the eleven year-old son of the Natick ruler, Totherswamp, found three of the "praying Indians" drunk, they forced the boy to drink their rum until he, too, became inebriated. The drunk men claimed, "Now we shall see whether your father will punish us for drunkenness, since you are drunk as well as we."⁴⁴⁶ Totherswamp did punish the three men, as each received twenty lashes and time in the stocks. The eleven year-old boy also spent time in the stocks and he was whipped in front of his peers for associating with the drunk men.⁴⁴⁷ This incident reportedly upset Eliot and caused him to fear the fate of his mission, as one of the drunk men previously served Eliot as

⁴⁴⁵ Michael P. Clark, ed. *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 27.

⁴⁴⁶ Quoted in Francis, *Life of John Eliot*, 194-195; Richard W. Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 116-117.

⁴⁴⁷ Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission*, 116-117.

an interpreter and helped translate Biblical scriptures into Algonquian.⁴⁴⁸ For missionaries like John Eliot, distilled spirits were constant barriers to efforts to “civilize” indigenous peoples.

The behavior caused by inebriation, however, was one learned from the Europeans. For the Dutch traveler, Jasper Danckaerts, who documented his travels in New Netherland toward the end of the seventeenth century, drunkenness among the Natives he encountered was a notable problem. In the journal he kept of his travels, he describes meeting an old Indian man, also named Jasper. Jasper’s community reportedly held him in high regard, as he daily went fishing and shared his spoils with his hungry friends and neighbors. When asked why he chose to share so much with his people, Jasper explained that it was his inclination since he was a young man “to do good, especially to good people known to me.”⁴⁴⁹ Although his community held Jasper in esteem, he did have a prominent weakness. Danckaerts states that an older woman explained to the Dutch travelers that Jasper had a tendency to make himself drunk, even though the community tried to warn Jasper against drinking in excess. When Danckaerts questioned Jasper about

⁴⁴⁸ Francis, *Life of John Eliot*, 195.

⁴⁴⁹ Jasper Danckaerts, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679-1680*, Bartlett Burleigh James, J. Franklin Jameson, eds. (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 76.

this point he stated, “Yes... I had rather not, but my heart is so inclined that it causes me to do it, although I know it is wrong. The Christians taught it to us, and give us or sell us the drink, and drink themselves drunk.”⁴⁵⁰ In this way, Jasper placed the blame for his inclination to drink on the Europeans. He made a point to say that the Europeans “taught” the Natives how to drink, and in drinking to the point of intoxication, Jasper was only following the example set by the colonists.

Claims of this nature did not sit well with the colonizers.

Danckaerts’s own response to the Indian’s argument was that if Danckaerts himself, and his companions, lived near Jasper’s tribe, he would never see them drunk and they would never sell rum to the Natives. In other words, if only “good” colonists interacted with the indigenous tribes, drunkenness would not be a problem. Danckaerts recorded Jasper’s response: “‘That,’ he replied, ‘would be good.’”⁴⁵¹ It is possible to imagine the skepticism that may have underlined Jasper’s statement. The extensive nature of trade in alcohol between colonists and Native Americans was well known by the eighteenth century. Even during Danckaerts’s travels, the flouting of laws prohibiting the supply of liquor to Natives was widespread. Danckaerts commented on this when he wrote,

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

“Although it is forbidden to sell the drink to the Indians, yet every one does it, and so much the more earnestly, and with so much greater and burning avarice, that it is done in secret.”⁴⁵² For both indigenous peoples and the European colonists who sought to ‘improve’ the lives of Native Americans, the steady supply of spirits had harmful repercussions.

Despite the trouble alcohol brought into the lives of Native peoples, they continued to supply liquor to North American tribes, frustrating missionaries who continued to complain about the practice. On May 29, 1702, Godfrey Delius, a Dutch minister, wrote to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). In this letter, Delius turned down an offer to represent the Society in the North American colonies. He had once served as a minister in Albany and had attempted to convert indigenous peoples in the region to Christianity, but Lord Bellmont, governor of New York eventually banned Delius from the colony. After Bellmont’s death, the Society approached Delius to resume his work. Delius, however, refused the offer in part because he felt the Natives were either incapable of or uninterested in conversion. Delius stated that, outside of forcing cohabitation between the indigenous peoples and European Christians, the civilizing and religious uplift process would achieve little progress.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 79.

The primary cause of troubles among the Native tribes, Delius argued, was the presence of “that unhappy Liquor” sold by European traders. Delius called for a ban against the sale and supply of rum and other liquors, as drunkenness debased and resulted in great harm among the indigenous communities. Delius conveyed his anger and passion about this topic as his letter progressed. He stated, “if they knew in England how much Christian Blood has been spilt & to what Dangers the Kings subjects that live in the Country are daily exposed because of this accuse’d Liquor I am fully perswaded that her [Majesty] would not suffer the sale of it to the Barbarians.”⁴⁵³ Delius’s complaint was far from unique, and his call for prohibition in the North American backcountry amounted to one of many demands to end the liquor trade between Europeans and Native Americans.

Colonial authorities did try to restrict, or even prohibit, indigenous peoples’ access to alcohol. Many colonies passed such laws out of fear that inebriated Natives would be violent, as stated in a 1683 Maryland law that claimed intoxication among Natives would cause “a chargeable and expensive Warr.”⁴⁵⁴ A set of laws passed in Massachusetts Bay Colony in

⁴⁵³ Godfrey Delius to Secretary Bergen-op-Zoom, May 29, 1702 (translation), SPG Papers, Vol. 9 – *Correspondence Europe, Asia, China, India, 1702 – 1803*, f. 4. Lambeth Palace Library, London, UK.

⁴⁵⁴ Quoted in Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 24.

1666 acknowledged an increase in occasions of drunkenness among Natives living near the settlement. The laws ordered to “any person or persons that shall see, know or finde, and Indian with any strong Liquors, Wine, or strong Drink... to seize the same, and to deliver the said strong drink to the Constables of the Town or Place where such Indians are found.”⁴⁵⁵ Any Natives captured this way, who refused to say how they came to possess the liquor, were imprisoned until they agreed to admit this information. Drunk Natives were also subjected to either a fine of ten shillings or a whipping of no more than ten stripes. If an apprehended drunk Indian accused a person of selling them liquor, the Court found the accused guilty, unless they cleared their name by swearing to the contrary.⁴⁵⁶

Fear of possible violence prompted colonists to construct notions of how Natives behaved when drunk, which, in turn, led to established assumptions regarding Natives’ capacity for civility. Ministers often used stories of drunk Natives to impart morality lessons to both colonial and indigenous audiences. Samuel Danforth, a Puritan minister and associate of John Eliot, told the story of two indigenous men, named Jonas and Joseph, in a sermon delivered in 1709 about the dangers of drunkenness.

⁴⁵⁵ Massachusetts Bay Colony, “Severall Laws” (Cambridge: 1666), Evans Early American Imprints 109, 2.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.

According to Danforth, Jonas and Joseph committed murder while inebriated. Although the two men were executed for the act of murder, Danforth focused almost exclusively on the fact the men were drunk when they committed the crime. For Danforth, drunkenness was merely the method through which Native Americans engaged in horrific and self-destructive behavior. In his sermon, Danforth described the self-destructive tendencies of drunken Natives, who he stated might suffer being “burnt to Death in their little Houses; other *Indians* by their being drowned first in Drink, have been exposed to a second drowning in the Water.”⁴⁵⁷ Danforth also explained that Jonas and Joseph were not the first Natives to commit murder “when overcome with Drink” and face execution for the crime. Through this execution sermon, Danforth made his argument clear: when Natives drank alcohol in excess, they were prone to violent, dangerous behavior.

When ministers like Samuel Danforth emphasized the sinful nature of drunkenness among Native Americans, they utilized well-worn language previously employed by ministers on both sides of the Atlantic. While lamenting Jonas and Joseph’s demise, Danforth stated, “Drunkenness is justly termed a brutish Sin, and a voluntary Madness;

⁴⁵⁷ Samuel Danforth, *The woful effects of drunkenness: A sermon preached at Bristol* (Boston: 1710), 10-11. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

Sense & Reason being laid asleep thereby, nothing remains in exercise, but that part of man wherein he resembles a Beast, which produces beastly actions and behaviour.”⁴⁵⁸ Arguments that emphasized the loss of reason, the “voluntary madness” that was inebriation, to decry excessive drinking persisted throughout the eighteenth century. Like earlier ministers who spoke against drunkenness, Danforth stressed that inebriation and the loss of reason turned man into a beast. Nevertheless, Danforth’s perspective differed from those other ministers because he was discussing Natives. In the eyes of English settlers, Native Americans inherently lacked civility. European colonists based this upon the dress and customs of the indigenous tribes they encountered. The English saw their own culture as the peak of civility and viewed other cultures, customs, and belief systems as insufficient.⁴⁵⁹ That mentality appears in Danforth’s sermon when he described Jonas and Joseph as “Children of Hell,” and due to their acts of drunkenness and murder, they were condemned “two-fold more.”⁴⁶⁰ The use of animalistic descriptors take on new meaning when applied to people English settlers viewed as

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁵⁹ Michael Zuckerman, “Identity in British America: Unease in Eden” in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 137-138.

⁴⁶⁰ Danforth, *The woful effects of drunkenness*, 35.

intrinsically barbaric, and lacking reason. Natives, therefore, appeared as susceptible to drinking excessively and engaging in beastly behavior.

As Danforth blamed Jonas and Joseph for their own actions, he argued that the Europeans made the condemned men's drunkenness possible in the first place. Like other missionaries, Danforth pointed to the underhanded practices of European traders who supplied the tribes with liquor "for the sake of a little gain." Danforth described how, while intoxicated, the Natives wounded and murdered each other, while the English executed many more "for Murder committed in their Drink."⁴⁶¹ Danforth held the Natives responsible for the "extraordinary craving" they seemed to have for strong liquor, but he blamed the Europeans for feeding that desire. Comparing the Europeans' actions to that of a parent giving liquor to their child, Danforth argued that the settlers should care for the Natives, "to prevent them from harming themselves with Strong Drink: when we know by our observation of them from time to time, that their Reason hath not the Command of their Appetites."⁴⁶² This statement reveals the paternalistic attitudes the settlers directed toward the indigenous peoples of North America. Although the English did not physically control the Natives in the same way they controlled enslaved

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 30-32.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 32.

Africans, some of the colonists saw it as their responsibility to uplift the Native population. This responsibility included restricting the supply of distilled spirits.

In other instances, the execution of Native Americans offered publishers an opportunity to present and capitalize upon a moralizing story directed toward a white audience. One ambiguous case, documented only in a few surviving broadsides, presents the story and execution of a man named Julian. References to Julian's identity as a Native are subtle, but telling. In *Advice from the Dead to the Living: Or, A Solemn Warning to the World Occasioned by the untimely Death of poor Julian*, printed in 1733, the opening stanza reads:

This Day take warning young and old,
By a sad Sight we here behold,
Of one whom Vengeance in his Chase
Hath taken in his sinful Race.⁴⁶³

The same broadside again references Julian's "wicked Race," indicating a clear separation from the Anglo-American audience targeted by the publisher. The documents refer to Julian as a servant, but historians like Robert E. Desrochers, Jr. describe him as an Indian slave, arguing that

⁴⁶³ Anon., *Advice from the Dead to the Living: Or, A Solemn Warning to the World Occasioned by the untimely Death of poor Julian* (Boston: 1733). Broadside. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

the language of the broadside identify Julian as part of a race separate from the white audience.⁴⁶⁴

The broadside, *Advice from the Dead to the Living*, as well as another broadside, *The Last Speech and Dying Advice of Poor Julian*, emphasized the importance of temperate behavior, especially for “young People, and Servants of all Sorts.”⁴⁶⁵ These two sources portray Julian’s story as that of, likely, a Native man, who was sold to an English master at the age of three. From his master, he learned the lessons of Christianity, as well as how to read and write. Around the age of twenty, Julian took “To Drinking and ill Company,” which led him down a road to ruin that ended when he murdered John Rogers of Pembroke on September 12, 1732.⁴⁶⁶ In his final confession, Julian blamed drunkenness and the breaking of the Sabbath for his self-destructive tendencies that led to his execution. Repeatedly in *The Last Speech and Dying Advice*, Julian warns servants to avoid excessive drinking.⁴⁶⁷ His enthusiastic encouragement for servants to remain obedient to their masters, not to run away, and,

⁴⁶⁴ Robert E. Desrocher, Jr. “Periphery as Center: Slavery, Identity, and the Commercial Press in the British Atlantic, 1704-1765,” in *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Stephen Foster (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 181.

⁴⁶⁵ Anon., *Advice from the Dead to the Living*. Broadside.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Julian, *The Last Speech and Dying Advice of Poor Julian, who was Executed the 22d of March, 1733* (Boston: 1733). Broadside. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

especially, not to get drunk, indicates that Julian's story likely presented English masters with a perfect morality lesson for their servants. It also reinforced connections between drunkenness, sin, and the 'wickedness' of Julian's particular race.

Attempts to civilize the indigenous peoples of North America had their limitations in the eyes of European colonists. Try as they might, Native Americans continued to drink excessively and behave in a sinful, debauched manner. Some attempts to 'uplift' the Native population seemed a perplexing and impossible mission to the colonists. One such case, that of a Wampanoag man named Moses Paul, ended in a familiar and tragic manner that featured many parallels to the story of Julian's execution. In 1747, when Paul was five years old, he became an apprentice to John Manning, an English settler in Windham, Connecticut, and Paul lived with Manning and his family for fourteen or fifteen years.⁴⁶⁸ The Mannings raised Paul to practice Protestant Christianity; during that time, he learned to read and write. Following his apprenticeship, Paul

⁴⁶⁸ The biographical sketch of Moses Paul, "collected chiefly from his own Mouth," appears at the end of Samson Occom, *A Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, An Indian, Who was executed at New-Haven, on the 2d of September, 1772, for the Murder of Mr. Moses Cook* (Boston: 1773), no pagination.

served in the colonial army, when he “contracted many sinful Habits.”⁴⁶⁹ Paul’s penchant for those “evil Habits” and vices, including his favor for strong drink, continued after his time in the army while he worked in the seafaring business. In spite of his upbringing, which Paul himself claimed separated him from the “Northern Savages,” also known as the “French” or “Canadian” Indians – tribes that often attacked English settlements – Paul still ended up on trial for the premeditated murder of Moses Cook, a fifty-five year-old resident of Waterbury, Connecticut.⁴⁷⁰

Distilled spirits served as fuel for the attack, which occurred at a tavern kept by David Clark in New Haven on December 7, 1771. The differing accounts claimed, on one side, that Paul drank to the point of belligerence, causing Clark’s wife to refuse him further service and Cook to remove Paul from the tavern by force. Paul then reportedly waited outside the tavern for Cook to leave, and when Cook stepped outside, Paul assaulted him by hitting him on the head with a flat iron. Cook suffered from the wound until December 12 when he died. In Paul’s version of the event, he claimed Cook singled him out and antagonized Paul because he was a Wampanoag man. Paul, who did not deny drinking

⁴⁶⁹ Occom, *A Sermon*, no pagination; Ava Chamberlain, “The Execution of Moses Paul: A Story of Crime and Contact in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut” *The New England Quarterly* 77, 3 (Sep., 2004), 418-419.

⁴⁷⁰ Chamberlain, “The Execution of Moses Paul,” 417, 439.

at Clark's tavern, claimed Cook called him "a Drunken Dogg" and threatened to kill him. When Cook attempted to attack Paul, Paul reacted in self defense and mistakenly landed a fatal blow to Cook's head.⁴⁷¹ In spite of his claim, the jury found Paul guilty and, after a series of reprieves, he was executed on September 2, 1772.

The story of Moses Paul's trial and execution reveals the strong connections English colonists made between indigenous peoples, intoxication, and violent behavior by the latter half of the eighteenth century. What causes Paul's story to stand out is the deliverance of his execution sermon by Samson Occom. Occom, a Mohegan Indian born near New London, Connecticut in 1723, converted to Christianity in 1740 and served as a missionary and minister throughout New England.⁴⁷² Occom was a well-known figure and representative of the possibilities that could result from missionary efforts to indigenous tribes, although Occom, too, had his own poor experiences with excessive drinking.⁴⁷³ Paul requested Occom deliver his execution sermon, which drew additional

⁴⁷¹ Chamberlain, "The Execution of Moses Paul," 421-423, 440-441.

⁴⁷² Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 192.

⁴⁷³ Chamberlain, "The Execution of Moses Paul," 445. Occom reportedly received punishment from the Long Island Presbytery in 1769 for "intemperate drinking." Chamberlain states this incident became known as "Occom's fall."

attention and continued historical inquiry into this particular event.⁴⁷⁴ Like Danforth's execution sermon for Jonas and Joseph, Occom's sermon lays the blame for Paul's violent behavior on his inebriated state at the time of the attack.

While Occom's sermon reflects much of the same language used by English and colonial ministers about sin, drunkenness, and damnation, embedded within his message was a poignant reminder to the white audience of the blame they shared in Paul's impending execution. In many ways, Occom represented the kind of cultural and religious appropriation participants the English 'civilizing' mission sought. Occom's sermon delivered at the execution of Moses Paul was widely circulated, with nineteen different imprints of the sermon itself, in addition to printed broadsides that summarized the central message of the sermon in verse form. The bulk of Occom's message focused on the dangers of sin and the death of the soul. While his message varied little from sermons delivered by other ministers, such as Danforth, Occom's ability to connect to Paul as a fellow Native made this sermon unique. He lamented the loss of Paul's potential and his promising future. Within this sermon, however, Occom criticized the men "who put the bottle to their neighbours mouth to

⁴⁷⁴ Chamberlain, "The Execution of Moses Paul," 444-445.

make them drunk.”⁴⁷⁵ These “devilish men,” that Occom described were at fault for dispersing alcohol amongst the Natives, making them drunk, and leading to the tragic events that brought Moses Paul’s like to an end. Jace Weaver argues that Occom intentionally made use of the platform and audience offered by Paul’s execution to both affirm Native personhood and to lay the blame of Native drunkenness at the feet of the white population.⁴⁷⁶ Within this sermon, Occom established points of connection with Paul. Occom found a point of connection with Paul when describing him as “a despised creature” for being an Indian. In Occom’s autobiography, printed in 1768, he also questioned and reflected upon the poor treatment he received from whites. Occom wrote, “What can be the Reason that they used my in this manner? ... I *must* Say, ‘I believe it is because I am a poor Indian.’ I Can’t help that God made me So; I did not make myself so.”⁴⁷⁷ Even though Occom found this point of familiarity in her sermon, his focus while speaking to Paul remained on Paul’s sin, his damnation, and the need for repentance.⁴⁷⁸ Occom did not address drunkenness in depth until he neared the end of his sermon. For that

⁴⁷⁵ Quoted in Weaver, *Red Atlantic*, 197.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Occom, *A Sermon*, 15-19.

portion, Occom directed his attention toward the Natives attending Paul's execution.

When speaking to both the Natives attending the execution and to those who might read the printed sermon, Occom spoke broadly to the indigenous peoples of North America about the dangers of drunkenness. Laura M. Stevens argues that Occom reinforced the colonial agenda by utilizing the established caricature of the drunk and out of control Indian. Stevens states that, in the execution sermon and in the broadside that followed, "He [Occom] seemed to use Christianity to articulate an internalized racism, blaming Indians for their own victimhood."⁴⁷⁹ In this section of the sermon, the language utilized by Samuel Clark, Edward Bury, and Increase Mather in the seventeenth century returned once more. In a plea to other Native peoples, Occom stated:

There is a dreadful wo denounced from the Almighty against drunkards; and it is this sin, this abominable, the beastly and accursed sin of drunkenness, that has stript us of every desiriable comfort in this life; by this we are poor, miserable and wretched; by this sin we have no name nor credit in the world among polite nations; for this sin we are despised in the world, and it is all right and just, for we despise ourselves more; and if we don't regard ourselves, who will regard us?⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Laura M. Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 174.

⁴⁸⁰ Occom, *A Sermon*, 19-20.

The colonists' tool of imperialism, used to befuddle and cheat indigenous peoples from goods and the land upon which they lived, became the means through which Natives like Occom felt a sense of shame. Occom recognized the prevalent use of spirits among Natives as a reason for European colonists to denounce their claims of civility. For Occom, no one else was more to blame for that behavior and the resulting condemnation than the Natives themselves.

For Moses Paul, his drunkenness became the defining element of his character. His violent murder of Moses Cook was only the result of his drunken state. The broadside ballads that circulated following Occom's sermon and Paul's execution made drunkenness the central topic. A broadside printed in 1772, the year Paul was executed, opened with direct references to Paul's drunkenness and the dangers inebriated Natives posed to the colonists. While Occom used theological reasoning to analyze Paul's acts, the reason for his execution, and why other Native peoples should heed the warning offered by his tragic end, the broadside skewed the central focus of the sermon to focus much more on Paul's inebriation. As stated by Stevens, "the broadside transforms [the sermon] into a sentimental meditation on Indian depravity."⁴⁸¹ The broadside,

⁴⁸¹ Stevens, *The Poor Indians*, 176.

presented as though Occom stated the words himself, include the following verses:

My kindred Indians, pray attend and hear,
With great attention and with godly fear;
This day I warn you of that cursed sin,
That poor, despised Indians wallow in.

'Tis drunkenness, this is the sin you know,
Has been and is poor Indians overthrow;
'Twas drunkenness that was the leading cause,
That had poor Moses break God's righteous Laws.⁴⁸²

The inherent connection between intoxication and sin is explicit. Paul's drunkenness was "the leading cause" that led to his execution and moral damnation. The broadside emphasized this connection by using "drunk" and "drunken" multiple times within the same verse. It also pulled on the imagery of the beastly drunkard featured in Occom's sermon. This language deepened the constructed connections between intoxicated Natives and the display of animalistic qualities. One such verse states:

On level with the beasts and far below
Are we when with strong drink we reeling go;
Below the devils when in this sin we run,
A drunken devil I never heard of one.⁴⁸³

Again, the notion that drunkards were on par with or even less than beasts appears, but this verse also dehumanizes Natives further. Devils, this

⁴⁸² Samson Occom, *Mr. Occom's Address to his Indian Brethren, on the Day that Moses Paul... was Executed... the 2d of September, 1772*. Broadside. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

verse claims, were even superior to a drunk Indian, as a devil did not engage in such habitual depravity.

The broadside also included a verse that focused on the drunkenness of Native women and children. Drinking practices among Native women were as complex as the habits of Native men. Still, the disconnect between indigenous gender roles, which varied among the differing tribes, and European notions of gender roles caused some colonial observers to misinterpret the behavior of Native women. According to Juliana Barr, Europeans often commented upon gender roles and constructions of what constituted masculinity and femininity as it was a recognizable point of comparison.⁴⁸⁴ While Europeans and Natives struggled to convey an understanding of most cultural differences, European perceptions of appropriate gender roles offered familiar ground for commentary and contrast. As argued by Barr, “Europeans found parallels and similarities between the peoples and places they encountered in the ‘New’ World and those of the ‘Old’ World already known and familiar to them. They did this by reading and reformulating American peoples and places to fit their expectations.”⁴⁸⁵ By adding the

⁴⁸⁴ Juliana Barr, “A Diplomacy of Gender: Rituals of First Contact in the ‘Land of the Tejas’ *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 61, 3 (July 2004), 398.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 399.

consumption of alcohol to notions of gender, European settlers found two familiar points upon which they built cultural criticisms.

While European gender roles and drinking practices established restrictions on the amount and strength of alcohol women could drink, for some Choctaw women, alcohol offered a sense of power. Toward the end of the colonial era, European observers noted how women in Choctaw communities used alcohol to control the men. While the men drank, the women gathered and hid their weapons, and each time a man offered a woman a drink, she would slowly empty the alcohol into a calabash. In this way, the women gathered the alcohol and mixed it with a little water to increase the volume. When the men ran out of rum, the women informed them of their supply, and in this way they could command the behavior of the men. Peter Mancall states that the savviness of Native women allowed them to carve out increased power and control in communities where such power did not always exist for women. Mancall states, “[Drunkenness] was not random but often integrated into a web of social relations associated with other aspects of public life.”⁴⁸⁶ Sobriety and cleverness allowed Native women opportunities to capitalize on instances of drunkenness among men in their communities. Such ingenuity, however, does not appear in the portrayal of Native women in the broadside ballad about

⁴⁸⁶ Mancall, *Deadly Medicine*, 71.

Moses Paul. Europeans, too, implicated Native women in the stereotype that indigenous peoples were incapable of avoiding drunkenness.

Depictions of drunk Native women also appears in the broadside, echoing the language the London elite used to condemn poor women for consuming gin. The broadside states:

A shocking, dreadful sight we often see,
Our children young and tender, drunkards be;
More shocking yet and awful to behold,
Our women will get drunk both young and old.⁴⁸⁷

These lines reinforce the idea that few things were more abhorrent than an intoxicated woman. The idea of women drinking to the point of inebriation appears as worse and “more shocking” than drunken children. While most colonial criticisms of intoxicated Natives focused on men, this verse suggests that Native women also faced condemnation for excessive drinking.

Occom’s execution sermon and the broadside made a particular message clear: Moses Paul and any other Native who willfully drank in excess were at fault for their own moral destruction. Drunk Natives fell below the rank of beasts and devils, and Native women, like men, faced public censure for the “shocking” act of excessive drinking. Although colonists introduced spirituous liquors to indigenous peoples, this

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

constructed image allowed Europeans to shed any responsibility. Occom acknowledged the racial subjugation of both himself and Moses when he described Paul as “a despised creature,” but he also accepted the sense of shame European colonists projected onto indigenous communities for their manner of alcohol consumption. Occom’s use and acceptance of the intoxicated and wild Indian stereotype only served to deepen Anglo-American confirmation of the damaging trope.

Questions of civility were a source of steady contemplation for Anglo-American settlers in North America from the outset of settlement to the end of the colonial era. Michael Zuckerman argues that the colonists strove to remain Britons, and much of the culture and manner of life cultivated by the settlers of British North America were attempts to recreate the life they previously knew in England.⁴⁸⁸ The untamed nature of the wilderness appeared as an adversary the colonists sought to conquer and control. The process of clearing the wilderness, however, presented its own dangers. Historian Carville V. Earle stated that, “only a thin veil of culture kept Englishmen from descending the great chain of being to the barbarian and animal.”⁴⁸⁹ To the colonists, living like a Native meant descent into barbarity. Anglo-Americans, therefore, placed great

⁴⁸⁸ Zuckerman, “Identity in British America,” 115-116.

⁴⁸⁹ Earle quoted in Zuckerman, “Identity in British America,” 138.

effort into the construction of urban centers and orderly towns – clear signs of civilization. The importance of developing the land in order to erase its perceived primitive qualities became a defining element of the colonial agenda.⁴⁹⁰ The lives of the indigenous peoples who lived on the frontier was a perfect foil against which the colonists could measure their own civility. In their minds, the frontier came to represent the front lines in the battle against the perceived savage wildness and the establishment of Anglicized civilization. As settlers pushed the colonial boundaries further inland, efforts to control the land occurred in a steady cycle.

The diversity of settlers attracted to the colonial backcountry, however, only served to complicate these notions of civility. This became particularly apparent in the backcountry of colonial Pennsylvania. William Penn's efforts to encourage settlers across Europe to migrate to his colony proved wildly successful. In addition to welcoming persecuted Quakers, Pennsylvania provided a destination for German-speaking refugees who fled the Palatinate region from the end of the seventeenth century through the bulk of the eighteenth century. They eventually made up roughly one-third of the 125,000 emigrants in Pennsylvania by the end of the colonial era.⁴⁹¹ Scottish migrants, who were seasoned participants

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 120-123.

⁴⁹¹ Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 79.

of England's colonizing mission in Ireland, also favored the colony.⁴⁹²

When James I, in 1610, settled lowland, Protestant Scots there to enforce English control over the native Irish. In the eighteenth century, colonial promoters saw these Presbyterian Ulstermen as suitable for settling amongst the indigenous tribes living on the North American frontier.⁴⁹³

Mercantilist policies had once prevented Scottish traders and migrants from engaging with England's American colonies, but following the Acts of Union in 1707, which brought Scotland, Wales, and England together to create Great Britain, the Scots became active participants in the bustling transatlantic community. By this point, the Ulster experiment soured for many of the Scottish migrants. Unfavorable conditions created by restrictive landlords, crop rot that ruined harvests, and a clear second-class status prompted thousands of the Scottish settlers to leave Ulster and pursue more promising endeavors across the Atlantic. The first migration wave of Ulster Scots to North America began around 1717. By the 1720s, the number of migrants grew to alarming levels, and

⁴⁹² For more on the use of Scottish Protestants to assist in English control over plantations in Ireland, see: Nicholas Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Griffin, *The People with No Name*; Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish*.

⁴⁹³ Joseph Earl Dabney, *Mountain Spirits: a Chronicle of Corn Whiskey from King James' Ulster Plantation to America's Appalachians and the Moonshine Life* (Asheville, NC: Bright Mountain Books, 1974), 35-36, 40.

government administrators in both Ireland and England began to see the migration as a potential imperial crisis.⁴⁹⁴ From 1717 to 1776, roughly 250,000 Ulster Scots migrated to British North America.⁴⁹⁵ These Ulster Scots, or Scotch-Irish migrants, found the location of their desired homeland in the Pennsylvania backcountry. The region featured a familiar environment and climate to Ulster, but it lacked controlling landlords and high rents. In western Pennsylvania, the Scotch-Irish were free to work the land they settled and adhere to the Presbyterian doctrine.⁴⁹⁶ These migrants eventually spread down the Appalachian region, and as they had done in Ireland, the Scotch-Irish became the boundary between the 'civilized' Anglo-Americans and the 'savage' wilderness of the unsettled backcountry.

The movement of Scottish and Irish migrants into the western borderlands of colonial North America introduced prevalent cultural traits into the region, which included the distillation of grain into whiskey. The Scotch-Irish migrants that settled in the North American interior carried with them more than two hundred years of distilling knowledge, and the Atlantic crossing did not diminish the importance of whiskey production to

⁴⁹⁴ Griffin, *The People With No Name*, 65-66.

⁴⁹⁵ Dabney, *Mountain Spirits*, 40.

⁴⁹⁶ Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 80; Griffin, *The People With No Name*, 66.

these migrants. The cultural significance of *usequebaugh* soon emerged along the North American frontier. Distilling whiskey represented more than the maintenance of cultural practices across the Atlantic, however; it also became an important freedom relished by Scotch-Irish migrants.

In the British Isles, whiskey distillation was the target of strict regulation and high taxation. This regulation began in 1642 when Parliament passed a series of excises on distillation to help fund the civil war occurring at the time. This included an eight-pence tax on every eight gallons of spirits imported or produced. In 1644, Scotland passed similar excise laws, which forced the majority of Scotland's whiskey distillers to turn to illicit production. Illegal smugglers kept the trade functioning and profitable, while local residents often protected those engaged in illicit production. The manufacture of illicit whiskey was so widespread that some historians estimate that roughly half of the whiskey consumed in the British Isles up to 1800 was illegal.⁴⁹⁷ The excise hit especially hard in Ireland. There, the longstanding traditions of whiskey making among the Scottish migrants merged with the cultural importance of Irish whisky drinking. Taxes on distillation, coupled with increasing restriction on Irish exports to prevent competition with English goods, including English gin,

⁴⁹⁷ Dabney, *Mountain Spirits*, 37.

was also a prominent factor that prompted thousands of Scottish and Irish migrants to heed the call of colonial promoters like William Penn.⁴⁹⁸

The Atlantic crossing and settlement on the frontier brought new-found freedoms, including the ability to produce and freely trade tax-free whiskey. Utilizing what grains were available, these migrants used wheat, rye, and the indigenous grain, maize, to produce their beloved spirit. Through the insertion of European drinking traditions and the appropriation of a native grain, the Scotch-Irish cultivated a new spirituous liquor that came to define life on the North American frontier. As Grace Toney Edwards argues, “They [the migrants] assumed the right to convert their excess foodstuffs into liquor form and they vehemently opposed any attempt to regulate or tax the fruits of their home distilleries.”⁴⁹⁹ In a region where little specie circulated and to which rum imported from the eastern seaboard did not often reach, the domestic manufacture of whiskey took on early economic importance. While rum and molasses remained prominent commodities for colonists living near the eastern shore, the settlers living in the interior increasingly relied on whiskey.

⁴⁹⁸ Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 79-80.

⁴⁹⁹ Grace Toney Edwards, “Appalachia: The Effects of Cultural Values on the Production and Consumption of Alcohol,” in *The American Experience with Alcohol: Contrasting Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Linda A. Bennett and Genevieve M. Ames (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), 134.

By the mid-eighteenth century, whiskey production, in conjunction with rum and brandy, wreaked havoc upon indigenous communities, perpetuating both Native and colonial concerns regarding the effects of spirits on Native peoples. This increase in the availability of whiskey on the frontier occurred in the midst of rising tensions and eventual war between the British and the French empires in North America. As the British sought to secure alliances with neighboring tribes, the use of distilled spirits against Native communities became a point of contention. A treaty between Pennsylvanian commissioners – Richard Peters, Isaac Norris, and Benjamin Franklin – and leaders of the Six Nations signed on October 2, 1753, expressed the Natives' frustration with the constant presence of whiskey. In a speech, Scarrooyady, an Iroquois leader, stated:

Your Traders now bring scarce any Thing but Rum and Flour: They bring little Powder and Lead, or other valuable Goods. The Rum ruins us. We beg you would prevent its coming in such Quantities, by regulating the Traders. We never understood the Trade was to be for Whiskey and Flour. We desire it may be forbidden, and none sold in Indian Country... When these Whiskey Traders come, they bring thirty or forty Cags, and put them down before us, and make us drink; and get all the Skins that should go to pay the Debts we have contracted for Goods bought of the Fair Traders; and by this Means, we not only ruin ourselves, but them too. These wicked Whiskey Sellers, when they have once got the Indians in the Liquor, make them sell their very Clothes from their Backs. In short,

if this Practice be continued, we much be inevitably ruined: We most earnestly therefore beseech you to remedy it.⁵⁰⁰

In this statement, Scarrooyady makes no distinction between rum and whiskey. What he conveys, however, is the addition of whiskey to a trade network already awash with liquors served to compound existing problems. The frontier exchanges that utilized distilled spirits as a weapon against the Natives of North America prompted indigenous leaders to confront their relations with the British colonists in the midst of an imperial war. Anglo-American colonists continued to see inebriated among indigenous peoples, and the fearful qualities of their behavior, as the primary point of concern.

Franklin shared his own thoughts on the Natives' relationship with distilled spirits during the 1753 Treaty of Carlisle. In his *Autobiography*, Franklin opened his experience of negotiating the treaty by stating, "As those People [the Indians] are extreamly apt to get drunk, and when so are very quarrelsome and disorderly, we strictly forbad the selling any Liquor to them."⁵⁰¹ In response to this restriction, Franklin stated the

⁵⁰⁰ Leonard W. Labaree, ed. "Treaty of Carlisle, 1 November 1753," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 5, *July 1, 1753, through March 31, 1755* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 84–107. Founders Online, National Archives.

⁵⁰¹ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, second edition, edited by Leonard W. Labaree, Ralph L. Ketcham, Helen C.

Natives objected until the colonial commissioners agreed to provide spirits, as long as the Native leaders remained sober during the negotiations. The impassioned speech made by Scarrooyady seems to be in direct conflict with Franklin's own account of the negotiation. Franklin does not specify if certain Natives insisted on receiving liquor, but he instead presents the scenario in sweeping terms, implying all the Natives present made such demands. Franklin even claimed that the Natives' desire for spirits, and their inability to drink until the conclusion of negotiations, was the only reason the treaty was conducted in an orderly manner. Following the end of the talks, Franklin describes a chaotic scene, in which the Natives, after receiving the promised liquor, fell into a state of wild inebriation. Franklin wrote:

We found they had made a great Bonfire in the Middle of the Square. They were all drunk Men and Women, quarrelling and fighting. Their dark-colour'd Bodies, half naked, seen only by the gloomy Light of the Bonfire, running after and beating one another with Firebrands, accompanied by their horrid Yellings, form'd a Scene the most resembling our Ideas of Hell that could well be imagin'd.⁵⁰²

Franklin's impression of the events at Carlisle emphasized many of the qualities Anglo-Americans came to expect from intoxicated Native Americans. Peter Mancall states that this passage in Franklin's

Boatfield, and Helene H. Fineman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 198.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

Autobiography “best captured” the ‘drunk Indian’ stereotype that colonists constructed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁰³ In spite of the emphasis colonists placed on Native drunkenness, from Roger Williams to Benjamin Franklin, the Europeans always maintained control over the supply. Peter Mancall argued that Natives drank relatively little alcohol in comparison to white colonial consumption.⁵⁰⁴ John McCusker quantified this amount, stating the colonists sent roughly three percent of the overall amount of rum in the colonies to Natives on the frontier.⁵⁰⁵ This restricted supply makes colonial descriptions of drunken Natives even more striking. Franklin’s emphasis on the racialized color of the indigenous bodies, coupled with the harrowing imagery reflecting Christian conceptions of hell, reinforced the notion that drunk Natives were demonic, uncontrollable, and violent.⁵⁰⁶ Such perceptions underlined the savagery of indigenous life, as well as the threat it posed to colonial

⁵⁰³ Mancall, *Deadly Medicine*, 13.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-16.

⁵⁰⁵ John. J. McCusker, “The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteenth Continental Colonies, 1650-1775” *The Journal of Economic History* 30, 1, The Tasks of Economic History (March 1970), 245.

⁵⁰⁶ Richard H. Immerman discusses Franklin’s views of race and racial attitudes toward Natives, stating that, while Franklin found Natives interesting, he was “partiral to the Complexion of [his] Country.” Immerman further argues that Franklin believed it was necessary for the colonists to push aside the Natives for British, and later American, expansion. Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 30.

civilization. It also underscores colonial arguments that Natives regularly consumed excessive amounts of liquor. As shown in Franklin's own account, the colonists controlled when the Natives could drink, and they also condemned the Natives for consuming that same liquor.

Like Franklin, Dr. Benjamin Rush believed the indigenous inhabitants of the land represented the anti-thesis of civilization, and settlers living on the Pennsylvania frontier embodied nothing less than a conquering force. In the opening of his essay on the vices of the Native peoples, Rush voiced his disapproval of a late-eighteenth century trend "to celebrate the virtues of the savages in America."⁵⁰⁷ In response to this trend, Rush denigrated what he perceived as the qualities of the Native peoples, including uncleanliness, gluttony, and drunkenness. On the Natives' relationship to distilled spirits, Rush wrote, "Drunkenness is a more general vice among savages than among civilized nations. – Whole Indian tribes have been destroyed by it. Indeed they glory in their fondness for strong liquors, and consider it as a part of their character."⁵⁰⁸ So strong was the connection between the constructed image of the "drunk Indian" and Native peoples as a whole by the end of the eighteenth century, that Rush found the vice to be altogether inseparable from the

⁵⁰⁷ Benjamin Rush, *Essays: Literary, Moral & Philosophical by Benjamin Rush, M.D.* (Philadelphia: 1798), 257.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 258.

very character of each individual Native. Overall, Rush found the manner and culture of indigenous peoples to be deplorable. This placed ever more importance on the ways settlers could develop and, in his eyes, improve the frontier.

Another essay by Rush on the nature of people, society, and government of Pennsylvania describes the various stages of frontier settlers, with each group representing steps away from savagery and toward civilization. The language he employs to describe this process is one of invasion and conquest. The wealthiest and most civilized settlers in Pennsylvania resembled “not only pioneers and light-infantry, but the main body of an army” set on taming the savage wilderness.⁵⁰⁹ Rush is explicit in his view of this most advanced settler; he states a typical settler, “may be viewed as a conqueror. The weapons with which he achieves his conquests, are the implements of husbandry: and the virtues which direct them, are industry and economy.”⁵¹⁰ Such perceptions show that, as was the case during the early decades of European settlement and colonization, colonists viewed the continued movement of westward settlement as a form of imperial conquest. For the frontier settlers of the

⁵⁰⁹ Rush, “An Account of the Progress of Population, Agriculture, Manners, and Government in Pennsylvania, in a Letter to a Friend in England,” *Essays*, 222.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid*, 225.

late eighteenth century, developed European-style agriculture and industry were the conquerors' weapons. Within that agriculture and industry rested the cultivation of maize, wheat, and rye, and the distillation of the new American spirit, whiskey.⁵¹¹

While the production and consumption of whiskey remained largely relegated to the North American backcountry until the latter decades of the eighteenth century, its potential benefit as a domestic manufacture did not go unnoticed. An anonymous editorial originally printed in *The Pennsylvania Journal* on June 28, 1764 made the case against Britain's mercantilist policies and instead called for the establishment of internal manufacturing to build domestic wealth.⁵¹² The article derided the taxes Parliament levied on the colonies in the wake of the Seven Years War, and the author called on the people of Pennsylvania to rely instead on the production of domestic goods. The economic strength of the trade in rum

⁵¹¹ For more on the papers of Benjamin Rush, as well as Rush's trip to Carlisle, see: David Freeman Hawke, *Benjamin Rush, Revolutionary Gadfly* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971), 299-302, 401-402. To read more on Benjamin Rush's work as a founder and physician, see: Alyn Brodsky, *Benjamin Rush: Patriot and Physician* (New York: Tuman Talley Books, 2004). The opening chapter of Matthew Warner Osborn's *Rum Maniacs* also discusses Rush's views on alcohol in detail. See: Matthew Warner Osborn, *Rum Maniacs: Alcoholic Insanity in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 13-44.

⁵¹² The anonymous author, named as "A Lover of *Pennsylvania*," might be Benjamin Franklin, as much of the argumentation and writing style reflects other works published under Franklin's name. The article was reprinted in *The Newport Mercury*, July 16, 1764, Issue 306.

and molasses became a sticking point for the author, who cared little for the spirits themselves or the way the trade benefitted Britain's Caribbean colonies. The author argued, "The trade we carry on with the West-India planters may be instanced as one that is clearly against us... for by the steps they have taken, not only the profits of our industry are subjected to their arbitrary will and pleasure, but in fact they have brought us into a state of vassalage."⁵¹³ Why support the rum trade when, according to the author, plenty of domestic alcoholic beverages were readily available in the colonies? The author criticized the way rum debauched the constitution, morals, and tastes of those living in North America. The article provided a clear answer – the colonists must disengage from the West Indies trade and turn to, "the salutary manufactures of our own country, such as beer, spirits of properly fermented honey and Indian corn, a liquor distilled from rye, peaches, &c."⁵¹⁴ Here, the article makes a brief, but unmistakable, reference to what became American whiskey. The author argued that the liquor made with maize and rye, and occasionally flavored with fruits or honey, could be a suitable alternative to rum. The manufacture of domestic spirits remained limited, and, as stated by the

⁵¹³ Anon., "Industry '*exalteth a nation; and the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*'" *The Newport Mercury*. July 16, 1764. Issue 306.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

author, “lamentably neglected,” in spite of the profits such a product might bring.

Not all observers of the whiskey-distilling frontier settlers held such a spirit and the people who made it in high regard. By and large, coastal colonists held low opinions of the Scotch-Irish settlers scattered along the North American frontier. In 1766, the Anglican minister, and eventual loyalist, Charles Woodmason left his home in Charleston to travel to the South Carolina interior. For six years, Woodmason resided in the Carolinian backcountry, providing ministerial services and documenting his experiences amongst the settlers he described as “wild peoples.”⁵¹⁵ One trait Woodmason associated with the Scotch-Irish settlers, and a contributor to their wild qualities, was drunkenness. In August of 1768, Woodmason wrote that, “Now will come on their Season of Festivity and Drunkenness – The Stills will be soon at Work for to make Whisky and Peach Brandy – In this Article, both Presbyterians and Episcopalians very charitably agree (Viz.) That of getting Drunk.”⁵¹⁶ Woodmason found this behavior detestable, especially when it followed the completion of religious ceremonies. On August 16, he documented his disdain when, after a

⁵¹⁵ Richard J. Hooker, ed. *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), xi, 61.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

service ended, the gathered group – which, he noted included multiple races – “went to Revelling Drinking Singing Dancing and Whoring.”⁵¹⁷ Woodmason stated that all became drunk before the left, and they behaved “as the Common Savages.”⁵¹⁸ Woodmason’s writings show that whiskey distillation followed the settlement of Scotch-Irish migrants and became a cultural feature of the southern frontier. In the eyes of coastal colonists, these settlers, and their propensity for whiskey consumption, made them appear to be wild and savage in a similar nature colonists attributed to the Natives.

Woodmason’s critical portrayal of the frontier Scotch-Irish appears to undercut the idealized ‘conquering force’ imagined by Benjamin Rush, but Rush, too, traveled to the Pennsylvania backcountry and documented his disappointment with what he found. The Scotch-Irish failed to epitomize an invading force bringing civilization to the savage wilderness. Rush blamed this lacking civility, in part, on their habitual drinking of corn spirits. In a scale of settlers he outlined in his essay, “Account of the Progress of Population,” Rush explained the hierarchy of those living on the frontier. Rush’s essay, based on his encounters with Scotch-Irish residents during a trip to Carlisle in 1784, described these settlers living in

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

rough conditions and subsisting on little. What produce they could use as food, they instead distilled into whiskey, much to Rush's dismay. In the journal of his travels, Rush wrote, "[Near] many of the houses in the Irish Settlements we saw *Still houses*. The Quantity of Rye destroyed & of Whisky drank in these places is immense, & its effects upon their industry – health & morals are terrible."⁵¹⁹ While Rush, an early temperance advocate, maintained long-held opinions against the consumption of liquor, his criticisms of the Scotch-Irish, similar to those recorded by Woodmason, featured parallels to common condemnations of drunk Natives. By focusing on the rye and maize 'destroyed' to produce a distilled spirit, Rush implied that these settlers did not properly use the bounty of the land. His emphasis on the degradation of the settlers' morals, health, and industry due to the liquor also echoed long standing censures of indigenous tribes. Comparisons between the Scotch-Irish settlers and Native Americans were not always ambiguous, either. Rush explicitly stated that, among the causes that lowered these settlers in his hierarchy, was the appropriation of indigenous practices. Rush stated, "As he lives in the neighbourhood of Indians, he soon acquires a strong

⁵¹⁹ L.H. Butterfield and Benjamin Rush, "Dr. Benjamin Rush's Journal of a Trip to Carlisle in 1784" *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 74, 4 (Oct., 1950), 456.

tincture of their manners.”⁵²⁰ In agreement with Woodmason’s description of the Scotch-Irish as “Common Savages,” Rush attributed higher levels of savagery to these settlers due to their adoption of indigenous cultural traits and practices, as well as their act of destroying grain to produce spirits.

In addition to adopting aspects of life from the Native Americans, Rush criticized these settlers for revolting against civic laws and refusing to pay taxes to support local governments. This complaint was a common charge against Scotch-Irish Presbyterians living in Pennsylvania. In 1764, Isaac Hunt, an Anglican from Philadelphia, lambasted Presbyterians for their lack of loyalty to the royal government. In *A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians*, Hunt wrote, “For if a firm Attachment to the King, and the Laws of our Country, be necessary Ingredients in a representative of the People, a *Presbyterian* can lay no claim to them.”⁵²¹ In Rush’s estimation, German emigrants embodied the ideal backcountry settler. Unlike their Scotch-Irish counterparts, these settlers did not produce and drink spirituous liquors in excess, they cultivated a wide array of necessary victuals, and they dutifully paid their taxes. To Rush, the Scotch-Irish

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 214.

⁵²¹ Isaac Hunt, *A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians* (Philadelphia: 1764), 4. Emphasis in original.

featured similarities to Natives, while German settlers represented civilized farmers.⁵²²

Moreover, the Presbyterian Scotch-Irish did not always maintain a positive relationship with the English settlers and civic leaders of Pennsylvania, which further tarnished overall perceptions of the frontier migrants. One incident that occurred in the wake of the French and Indian War shocked the Anglo-American population of Pennsylvania, and established the Scotch-Irish frontier settlers as villains in the eyes of prominent residents, like Benjamin Franklin. The brutality of the war hit the backcountry settlements especially hard and embedded deep-seated resentment among the Scotch-Irish toward their indigenous neighbors. In the aftermath of the war, the colonial and royal governments were intent on establishing peaceful relations between the colonists and Natives, but when instances of violence broke out and the frontier settlers received no governmental support, some frontier settlers pursued their own acts of vengeance. On December 14, 1763, fifty Scotch-Irish settlers from the town of Paxton, located on the Susquehanna River, attacked a village of Christian Susquehannock Natives.⁵²³ The attack occurred when many of the Natives were away, leaving only three men, two women, and a young

⁵²² Rush, *Essays*, 221.

⁵²³ Hinderacker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 134-135.

boy, but the settlers still killed and scalped those present. To protect the fourteen Susquehannocks who were away, the colonial government brought them under protective custody in the town of Lancaster. In spite of a proclamation of protection issued by John Penn, colonial governor of Pennsylvania, on December 27, 1763, the frontier force, colloquially referred to as the “Paxton Boys,” launched an attack at the protected Natives. Overpowering the guards of the workhouse where the protected survivors stayed, the Paxton Boys killed and scalped the Christian Indians.⁵²⁴

While Scotch-Irish settlers on the frontier celebrated the assault, the events shocked many of the Anglo colonists, and it brought notions of European civility into direct conflict with perceived indigenous savagery. Benjamin Franklin published a blistering response to the Paxton Boys’ actions in which he condemned the colony’s inability to fulfill its promise of protection to their indigenous allies. Franklin described the poignant scene in which the surviving Natives, whilst under the sacred protection of the colonial government, faced their destruction. He wrote:

Fifty of them [the Paxton Boys], armed as before, dismounting, went directly to the Work-house, and by Violence broke open the

⁵²⁴ Benjamin Franklin, *A Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County, of a Number of Indians, Friends of this Province, By Persons Unknown* (Philadelphia: 1764), 5-9; Hinderacker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 135.

Door, and entered with the utmost Fury in their Countenances. When the poor Wretches saw they had *no Protection* nigh, nor could possibly escape, and being without the least Weapon for Defence, they divided into their little Families, the Children clinging to the Parents; they fell on their Knees, protested their Innocence, declared their Love to the *English*, and that, in their whole Lives, they had never done them Injury; and in this Posture, they all received the Hatchet!⁵²⁵

As critical as Franklin was toward the Natives at Carlisle in 1753, he felt that the Paxton Boys' attack scarred the honor and reputation of the entire colony and all of its residents. Franklin reminded the readers that the Natives murdered by the Paxton Boys were descended from the same tribe who welcomed and aided the initial settlers of the colony. They had converted to Christianity and often proclaimed their assured sense of safety due to their alliance with the English colonists. In spite of their long history of friendship with the English, the violence of the French and Indian War established all indigenous peoples as enemies in the eyes of the frontier settlers. To this Franklin stated, "The only Crime of these poor Wretches seems to have been, that they had a reddish brown Skin, and black Hair."⁵²⁶ In the same manner that Franklin accused the Scotch-Irish settlers of conflating all indigenous peoples into the same category, Franklin also mocked the frontier settlers for their "freckled Face and red Hair." Franklin wrote, "If it be right to kill Men for such a Reason, then,

⁵²⁵ Franklin, *A Narrative*, 8-9.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13

should any Man, with a freckled Faced and red Hair, kill a Wife or Child of mine, it would be right for me to revenge it, by killing all the freckled red-haired Men, Women and Children, I could afterwards any where meet with.”⁵²⁷ Franklin was not the only Pennsylvanian to deride the Paxton Boys, as Isaac Hunt similarly mocked the ‘nobility’ of their deeds, by stating that it befitted the honor capable of Presbyterians.⁵²⁸

To settlers on the frontier, the Paxton Boys were heroes, as hundreds of western farmers joined the group in demanding concessions from Philadelphia’s governor, but to members of the colonial elite they confirmed the savagery of the Scotch-Irish.⁵²⁹ Hunt stated that killing a disarmed, captured enemy, as the Paxton Boys had done, indicated the depravity of that person’s nature. Franklin argued the attack was below the behavior of barbarians, and the protected Natives would have been safer if harbored by the Spanish, the Turks, or even the indigenous tribes of Africa. “But,” Franklin wrote, “shall *Whitemen* and *Christians* act like a *Pagan Negroe*? – In short it appears, they would have been safe in any Part of the known World, except in the Neighbourhood of the CHRISTIAN WHITE SAVAGES of *Peckstang* and *Donegall!*”⁵³⁰ The manner in which

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Hunt, *A Looking-Glass*, 14.

⁵²⁹ Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 135-136.

⁵³⁰ Franklin, *A Narrative*, 27. Emphasis in original.

Anglo colonial elites responded to the Paxton Boys reveals the underlying perceptions of the barbarity and inferiority of the Scotch-Irish. In response, however, the settlers on the frontier pointed out their precarious position as the boundary between wilderness and civilization. As much as colonial elites condemned the attacks, those on the frontier saw the Paxton Boys as their avengers, as the settlers continued to encounter attacks from the neighboring tribes. In the end, the colonial government relented to the Scotch-Irish settlers, and by mid-1764, Governor John Penn reinstated scalp bounties to reward frontier settlers who provided a protective barrier between the 'savage' wilderness and the 'civilized' colonial towns.⁵³¹

Colonies like Pennsylvania struggled with ongoing violence between Scotch-Irish migrants and neighboring tribes throughout the latter-half of the eighteenth century. To observers like Benjamin Rush the rough nature of Scotch-Irish living was due, in part, to their devotion to producing and drinking whiskey. In the eyes of an anti-liquor advocate like Rush, whiskey was a natural factor in explaining the barbarity of Scotch-

⁵³¹ Hinderacker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 136-137. Early nineteenth-century literature on the Paxton Boys also questioned the civility of the Scotch-Irish force, including Thomas F. Gordon's *History of Pennsylvania*, published in 1829, and Rhoda Barber's *Recollections Written in 1830 of Life in Lancaster County 1726-1782 and a History of Settlement at Wright's Ferry, on Susquehanna River*. For more on this literature, as well as the history and legacy of the Paxton Boys, see John H. Brubaker, *Massacre of the Conestogas: On the Trail of the Paxton Boys in Lancaster County* (Charleston: The History Press, 2010), 83-84.

Irish settlers. To other colonists, whiskey remained a backcountry spirit that represented the rough nature of living at the edge of the wilderness.

That aspect of whiskey ultimately changed as tensions between thirteen of Britain's North American colonies and the metropolis erupted into a war for independence from imperial control. The rum-producing colonies in the Caribbean, even though they contemplated the opportunity to join the North American colonies in fighting for independence, ended up staying within the Empire.⁵³² As a result, British naval blockades cut off the North American colonies from their much loved imports of rum and molasses.⁵³³ For islands like Jamaica, which sent over eighty-five percent of rum exports to Britain between 1744 and 1769 and supplied the British army during the war, the loss of the North American market was not as disruptive.⁵³⁴ For the overall British West Indies, the blockade hit the island economies hard. Britain implemented import duties on sugar and rum to raise funds for the war, and from 1776 to 1781, the total sale of rum exports from the British West Indies dropped from roughly 2.3 million

⁵³² Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 139-140.

⁵³³ Frederick H. Smith, *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 88-89.

⁵³⁴ Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 72.

gallons to 1.2 million gallons.⁵³⁵ The loss of rum and molasses imports in the North American colonies resulted in drastic changes to daily life. The once ubiquitous drink became scarce and the cost spiked. In 1777, William Pynchon, a diarist based in Salem, wrote of a friend who purchased a house for four shillings more than the cost of a hogshead of rum.⁵³⁶ The disruption of the rum trade to North America caused civic and military leaders to turn to a domestically-manufactured spirit to fill the void. Whiskey, the frontier spirit produced by ‘uncivilized’ Scotch-Irish, became a tool with which colonial Americans rebelled against and sought complete separation from the British Empire.

To military leaders like General George Washington the supply of distilled spirits to soldiers was a point of critical importance throughout the war. The Continental Army relied upon rum, and the British naval blockade of the Caribbean sufficiently disrupted the North American trade and made rum become difficult to acquire a few years into the war. Civic leaders found it necessary to strike a fine balance between rationing the grain supply and ensuring enough spirits were available for the Continental Army. General Washington wrote to Brigadier General John Armstrong on March 5, 1777, and stated that the southern states passed

⁵³⁵ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 165.

⁵³⁶ Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 65.

legislation to prohibit the distillation of excessive amounts of grain into whiskey. Washington expressed his hope to Armstrong that Pennsylvania would follow suit. Nine months later, however, Washington included instructions in a letter to Major General Stirling, written on December 28, 1777, to supply his men with whiskey, “if it is to be had.”⁵³⁷ By January of the follow year, the situation grew more pressing for the American military leaders. In a letter to Washington sent by Brigadier General John Lacey, Jr. on January 21, 1778, Lacey informed the General of the fatigue affecting his troops and the exhaustion of their whiskey supply. In Washington’s response, sent January 23, he helplessly stated, “Your want of Whiskey I cannot remedy – we are in the same situation here & nothing effectual can be done.”⁵³⁸ Rum remained the primary spirit for the Continental Army in spite of the blockade. Throughout the war effort, Washington made continual efforts to procure rum supplies. To

⁵³⁷ Frank E. Grizzard, Jr., ed. “From George Washington to Brigadier General John Armstrong, 5 March 1777,” *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, Vol. 8, *6 January 1777–27 March 1777* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 514–515. Founders Online, National Archives; Edward G. Lengel, ed. “From George Washington to Major General Stirling, 28 December 1777,” *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, Vol. 13, *26 December 1777–28 February 1778* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 34. Founders Online, National Archives.

⁵³⁸ Lengel, ed. “From George Washington to Brigadier General John Lacey, Jr., 23 January 1778,” *The Papers of George Washington*, Vol. 13, 323-324. Founders Online, National Archives.

Washington, the lack of rum forced soldiers to rely instead upon drinking water. In a letter to the Continental Congress in July 1777, Washington wrote, "Beer or Cyder seldom comes within the verge of the Camp, and Rum in much too small quantities. Thus, to devouring large quantities of animal-food... or by any kind of Drink but water... are to be ascribed the many putrid diseases incident to the Army."⁵³⁹ In a letter sent July 8, 1781, Washington described rum as "an Article of great Necessity," as the supply had run dry, and in September of that year, Washington emphasized the importance of supplying soldiers with spirits in order to maintain their health. Washington stated that he saw it as his duty to ensure soldiers had sufficient rations of spirits.⁵⁴⁰

The blockade between Britain's Caribbean colonies and North America persisted after the Americans secured their independence from imperial control. This reinforced the necessity of increasing and regulating the domestic manufacture of spirits, particularly whiskey. Distilled spirits, once the tool of European imperialism that wreaked havoc among the

⁵³⁹ "From George Washington to the Continental Congress Committee to Inquire into the State of the Army, 19 July 1777," *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 10, *11 June 1777–18 August 1777*, ed. Frank E. Grizzard, Jr. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 332–337. Founders Online, National Archives.

⁵⁴⁰ "From George Washington to Robert Morris, 27 September 1781," *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*, Volume 2: August-September 1781, edited by E. James Ferguson. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 362-363.

indigenous tribes and allowed for colonial subjugation of Native morality, became the means for the United States to secure economic independence. As the anonymous author wrote in 1764, the domestic production of spirits would help wean the Americans from relying solely on the West Indian trade. Following the victorious end of the war, when political leaders sought to construct an enduring federal government, the domestic manufacture of spirits presented an opportunity to boost the wealth of the new government through a means most despised by the western farmers: an excise tax. The first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, believed a tax on distilled spirits would be the most equal and advantageous tax, as it would raise money and possibly encourage people to avoid drinking in excess.⁵⁴¹ Historians have published multiple interpretations on the political strategy behind such a tax, and the way the event that became known as the Whiskey Rebellion revealed the military might of the federal government under the Constitution.⁵⁴² What the Whiskey Rebellion, and its rapid end, shows,

⁵⁴¹ Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 51.

⁵⁴² Steven R. Boyd, ed. *The Whiskey Rebellion: Past and Present Perspectives* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985); Jerry A. Clouse, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Southwestern Pennsylvania's Frontier People Test the American Constitution* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1994); Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*.

however, is the manner in which distilled spirits continued to function as a means of control.

The use of liquor by frontier traders to take advantage of agreements with Native Americans, and the insertion of European whiskey distillation into the North American backcountry, all reflected uses of distilled spirits as a means of control. Traders sought to control the Natives via inebriation, while frontier settlers, they sought to control the 'wilderness' and establish familiar, European practices such as distilling. These were ways in which spirits, including rum, brandy, and whiskey, all served as tools of empire. In the outbreak of war between the North American colonies and Great Britain, distilled spirits were considered a significant factor in securing the rupture of that empire. In the aftermath of the war, the new federal government of the United States assumed the role once held by the British metropole. Again, the state, and budding imperial power, turned to distilled spirits as a means of profit and control. By implementing an excise on a good deemed to be of economic and cultural significance to the oft ignored farmers in the West, the federal government extended its power over all settlers residing within the nation's borders. What was once a tool of empire on the frontier became a tool of federal control, and distilled spirits remained essential to the economic framework of the newly independent nation.

Alexander Hamilton's so-called "whiskey tax" became the first test of strength for the United States over an unruly backcountry. Hamilton supported a tax on distilled spirits, as the abundance of such drinks in the new nation ensured a level equality in enforcement.⁵⁴³ The proposed tax would impose twenty to forty cents per gallon of imported spirits, the cost varying by proof strength; on domestic spirits produced from imported materials, such as molasses, the cost was eleven to thirty cents per gallon; and on spirits made from raw domestic materials, the price of the tax was nine to twenty-five cents per gallon.⁵⁴⁴ In his 1790 economic report, Hamilton estimated the shortfall in federal revenues to be \$826,624, but the duty on imported and domestic liquors would bring in around \$975,000. \$270,000 of that revenue, alone, would come from domestic manufacture.⁵⁴⁵ Congress did pass the tax in 1791, in spite of an outcry from states like Pennsylvania, where many of the state legislators described the tax as an abomination. For backcountry farmers, the tax appeared as a direct attack on their way of life. Western protests immediately followed passage of the tax. According to Thomas P. Slaughter, unrest and resistance to the tax occurred in every state south

⁵⁴³ Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 51.

⁵⁴⁴ Thomas P. Abernethy, *The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1961), 218.

⁵⁴⁵ Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 96.

of New York. No official enforced the tax in Kentucky, making the law a dead letter from the start.⁵⁴⁶ In Georgia, farmers called for an exemption of peach brandy, citing it as “necessary [to] life.”⁵⁴⁷ Although the Pennsylvanian backcountry is often the focal point of dissention regarding the whiskey tax, Slaughter states the events that occurred in western Pennsylvania are not unique.⁵⁴⁸

Hamilton recorded his response to the protests in a report sent to Congress March 5, 1792. He seems baffled by the farmers’ claims that the tax infringed upon their liberties. Hamilton wrote, “It is not easy to conceive was maxim of liberty is violated, by requiring persons, who carry on particular trades, which are made contributory to the revenue... There can certainly be nothing more harmless, or less inconvenient, than such a regulation.”⁵⁴⁹ The greatest complaint among western distillers, however, centered on the methods of payment. Western farmers often lacked hard currency, but Hamilton dismissed this complaint. In his report, he stated:

As to the circumstances of scarcity of money, as far as it can be supposed to have foundation... The weight of the tax is not certainly

⁵⁴⁶ Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 117.

⁵⁴⁷ Quoted in Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 53.

⁵⁴⁸ Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 117.

⁵⁴⁹ Alexander Hamilton, “Report on the Difficulties in the Execution of the Act Laying Duties on Distilled Spirits, [5 March 1792],” *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 11, *February 1792–June 1792*, edited by Harold C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 77–106. Founders Online, National Archives.

such as to involve any peculiar difficulty. It is impossible to conceive that nine cents per gallon on distilled spirits, which is stating it at the highest... distress any part of the Country.⁵⁵⁰

Hamilton, however, did not ignore all distiller complaints. Petitions from eastern distillers gained greater exceptions of paying the tax than smaller, western distillers. Hamilton held little regard for small, home-operated stills. These operation would not establish the industrial society Hamilton envisioned. For this reason, Hamilton ignored the protestations of the uncivilized backcountry farmers, and he instead favored the large, coastal, and increasingly industrialized distillers.⁵⁵¹

No distillery exemplified Hamilton's goal more than the whiskey distillery constructed at George Washington's plantation, Mount Vernon. The late-eighteenth century spread of domestic manufacturing prompted the expansion of whiskey distillation out of the western backcountry. In August of 1796, James Anderson, a Scottish emigrant and farm manager at Salvington plantation near Fredericksburg, Virginia, received a letter from George Washington regarding an opening for a farm manager position at Mount Vernon. Washington held high expectations for the incoming farm manager; the previous manager at Mount Vernon, William Pearce, in Washington's words, "superintends *all* my concerns" pertaining

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 147.

to the operation of Mount Vernon.⁵⁵² As illness prompted the manager to retire from the position, the Scotsman, Anderson, ambitiously sought to take on the job. When listing his qualifications to the inquiring Washington, Anderson stated that he had worked on farms and operated grain mills to service distilleries in Scotland until 1791. After migrating to the United States and taking the farm manager position at Salvington plantation in 1795, he continued his experience in whiskey production by opening a distillery. In his letter to Washington, Anderson made an early pitch in favor of whiskey. Anderson stated, “I take some share in this Distillery – And beg leave to Observe that I do think one properly conducted is one of the best means for the improving of a Farm.”⁵⁵³ Anderson’s effort to take on the position of farm manager at Mount Vernon proved successful, and on October 5, 1796, Washington and Anderson signed an agreement making his employment official. This agreement included a significant line: “[Even] in cases where they may happen to be explicit, if repugnant to the ideas of the said James Anderson the said George Washington will

⁵⁵² “George Washington to James Anderson, August 18, 1796,” George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 4. General Correspondence. 1697-1799. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁵³ James Anderson, “Salvington, to George Washington, Philadelphia, 1796 September 11,” Washington Collection. Mount Vernon Ladies Association, Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, VA.

always and with pleasure listen to any suggested alterations which may be offered by him with a view to the advancement of the... Estate.”⁵⁵⁴

Anderson soon made use of this part of the agreement as he became a vocal advocate for the installation of a whiskey distillery at Mount Vernon.

While inspired by a Scottish émigré, the construction of a whiskey distillery at Mount Vernon ultimately bore little resemblance to the Scotch-Irish whiskey stills constructed throughout the North American backcountry. Initially, Washington voiced his reservations regarding the construction of a distillery at Mount Vernon. He worried that such an operation would attract “idlers... and bad people” to the area.⁵⁵⁵ After continued discussion with Anderson, Washington relented and approved Anderson’s production of whiskey. Anderson initially ran two pot stills – a test run requested by a wary Washington. Throughout the first half of 1797, Anderson’s small operation produced over 600 gallons of whiskey that brought in a profit of £83. The success of the small operation, coupled with Anderson’s claim that he was not able to meet the local demand, convinced Washington to fund an expansion of the distillery in October of

⁵⁵⁴ “Agreement, 1796 October 5,” Custis Family Papers. Mss1 c9698a 413. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

⁵⁵⁵ Quoted in Dennis J. Pogue, *Founding Spirits: George Washington and the Beginnings of the American Whiskey Industry* (Buena Vista, VA: Harbour Books, 2011), 114.

1797.⁵⁵⁶ By 1798, the distillery at Mount Vernon had five pot stills operated by six slaves and produced 4,400 gallons of spirits. Although it produced some fruit-based brandies each year, the bulk of the production remained focused on rye whiskey. In 1799, production increased significantly, as the distillery manufactured 10,500 gallons of liquor, worth \$7,674.⁵⁵⁷ Within two years of operation, the distillery at Mount Vernon became the largest single producer of whiskey in the new United States. Like backcountry distillers, Anderson used rye and maize, or Indian corn, to make Mount Vernon's whiskey. Unlike backcountry distillers, Mount Vernon's distillery sold whiskey to the upper echelon of Alexandria society. Customers included prominent merchant John G. Ladd, statesman William Fitzhugh, as well as Washington's nephew and future Supreme Court Justice, Bushrod.⁵⁵⁸ Although business quickly boomed, Washington held initial reservations about how successful the distillery might be, as he wrote to Anderson in September of 1798, "As to the profits of the Distillery, it is very probably I shall say nothing more about it until the close of the year; when – according to the proverb – the proof of the pudding will be in the

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 114-115.

⁵⁵⁷ Pogue, *Founding Spirits*, 116-119.

⁵⁵⁸ James Anderson, Distillery Ledger, ff. 14, 23. Mount Vernon Ladies Association, Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, VA.

eating.”⁵⁵⁹ By 1799, however, Washington himself could not deny the value of this distilled commodity. In a letter to William Augustine Washington sent October 29, 1799, Washington encouraged the Brigadier General, and former officer of the Continental Army, to pick up two hundred gallons of Mount Vernon whiskey. “[The] sooner it is taken the better,” wrote George Washington, “as the demand for this article (in these parts) is brisk.”⁵⁶⁰ By the time of Washington’s death at the end of 1799, his whiskey distillery was the largest in the nation, and it was the most profitable enterprise on his entire plantation. The appropriation of indigenous grains into a European process continued at the nation’s largest whiskey distillery. By the end of the eighteenth century, large-scale production of corn-based whiskey confirmed both the practice of using indigenous materials, like maize, as well as the place of this uniquely American spirit in the national economy.

⁵⁵⁹ W. W. Abbot and Edward G. Lengel, ed. “From George Washington to James Anderson, 16 September 1798,” *The Papers of George Washington*, Retirement Series, Vol. 3, *16 September 1798–19 April 1799* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 1–4. Founders Online, National Archives.

⁵⁶⁰ W. W. Abbot, ed. “From George Washington to William Augustine Washington, 29 October 1799,” *The Papers of George Washington*, Retirement Series, Vol. 4, *20 April 1799–13 December 1799* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 379. Founders Online, National Archives.

The frontier provided the setting for colonists to reevaluate their beliefs regarding civility and moral responsibility; it also became the birthplace of a new spirituous liquor. Native Americans, whose long and contentious relationship with distilled spirits, served as physical representations of the savagery of the wilderness. Anglo-American constructions of the damage drunkenness caused in indigenous communities became a trope utilized by colonists to simultaneously demoralize Natives and shed their own responsibility in introducing spirits to those communities. As the Scotch-Irish moved into the region throughout the eighteenth century, they constituted a colonizing force intent on taming the wilderness while also maintaining their own sense of cultural freedom. Their adoption of indigenous grains led to the production of a maize-based spirit known as whiskey. Colonial newspapers promoted its economic value as a domestic manufacture that was later confirmed by the loss of West Indies rum during the Revolutionary War. Initially a spirit produced and consumed in the backcountry, whiskey quickly became a valuable domestic commodity throughout the North American colonies and political leaders viewed as a necessity. National independence established whiskey as a national, patriotic drink. Where distilled spirits once served as a tool of imperialism along the frontier, one particular spirit became a tool with which Americans attacked the Empire. The

commercial interests that had formed around rum in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries re-organized around whiskey. A distilled spirit, representative of the frontier subjugation of indigenous agency, became the economic backbone of backcountry farmers, and eventually a means of economic growth for the new, independent nation.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: A Disease of the Mind

“What a contrast he is to the douce sober man,
Wha lives in accordance wi’ nature’s first plan!
Wi’ health on his cheek, and true love in his e’e –
O, a Slave to the Bottle will never wed me.”⁵⁶¹

Johann Christian Ehler, an accomplished gardener who once worked for Frederick II of Prussia, and George III of England, arrived at Mount Vernon in 1789. Ehler’s impressive resume caught George Washington’s attention, but Ehler’s behavior prompted Washington to grow dissatisfied with his gardener over time. Ehler’s fondness of drinking became a particular point of frustration. In a letter sent to farm manager, William Pearce, in December 1793, Washington outlined restrictions on Ehler’s provisions for meals. Washington wrote that Ehler was not to receive more than one bottle of beer per day as, “The Gardener has too great a propensity to drink and behaves improperly when in liquor... he behaves well when sober, understands his business, and I believe is not naturally idle; but only so when occasioned by intoxications.”⁵⁶² That same month, Washington wrote to Ehler directly, pleading with him to abstain

⁵⁶¹ William Smith, *The Teetotaler’s Hand-Book, in Four Parts* (Toronto: 1860), 224.

⁵⁶² George Washington to William Pearce, 12/22/1793, *The Writings of George Washington*, 33:200-201.

from drinking distilled spirits. Washington explained, “Consider how little a drunken Man differs from a beast; the latter is not endowed with reason, the former deprives himself of it; and when that is the case acts like a brute; annoying, and disturbing everyone around him.”⁵⁶³ At the end of the eighteenth century, Washington echoed the words many critics of drunkenness uttered decades and centuries prior. Washington, however, did not end with this oft-used, dehumanizing descriptor. He continued, “Shew yourself more of a man; and a Christian, than to yield to so intolerable a vice; which cannot, I am certain (to the greatest lover of liquor) give more pleasure to sip in the poison (for it is no better)... and the more serious evils produced by it afterward, must give pain.”⁵⁶⁴ In this letter, Washington describes liquor as no better than a poison and the act of habitual drinking as an intolerable vice. For Ehler, drinking became a destructive condition, and when “occasioned by intoxications,” as Washington stated, Ehler grew idle, beastly, and incapable of moderating the amount he drank.

Such language is telling, as it captures the changes in perspectives toward alcohol and drinking that occurred throughout the early modern era. The source of these letters, too, is important, as Washington was not

⁵⁶³ George Washington to John Christian Ehler, 12/23/1793, *The Writings of George Washington*, 33:214-216.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

a social reformer seeking to convince the masses to avoid drinking spirits. As shown, within four years of writing this letter, he funded the construction and operation of a large-scale whiskey distillery at Mount Vernon. Still, his perspective reflects the shifting attitudes held by individuals at the end of the eighteenth century. The unexpected and unprecedented production of distilled spirits in the Caribbean, in England, and across North America permanently altered drinking practices. The apparent flood of rum that flowed throughout the Atlantic World, the so-called gin craze that enveloped the poor of London, and the spread of Scotch-Irish whiskey across North America resulted in increasing consumption levels that appeared to have no end. Between 1800 and 1830, annual per capita consumption of distilled spirits alone peaked in the United States at close to six gallons.⁵⁶⁵ The changes in practice surrounding the consumption of liquor throughout the eighteenth century, in turn, fed wide scale changes in perceptions of alcohol as a harmful intoxicant.

⁵⁶⁵ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 8-9. In England, the consumption of spirits stagnated following the end of the “craze,” and beer again became the favored drink of the English. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, Parliament again turned its attention to regulating and restricting the production of beer over spirits. For more on the 1830 Beer Act in England, see James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 80-95.

The early modern mass production and consumption of distilled spirits throughout the Atlantic World prompted new questions of control over other individuals, such as the working poor, slaves, and indigenous peoples, as well as control over one's own body. In the midst of this wide scale consumption of spirits, the spread of Enlightenment thought began to alter medical, and eventually social, perceptions of alcohol. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the beastly qualities of drunkenness, once perceived as a moral failing, developed into a medical condition. Spirits, once the waters of life, appeared as an intoxicant. Habitual consumption – an act lamented by seventeenth-century English ministers, North American planters, and even presidents of the United States – appeared to be compulsive. In 1800, John and Abigail Adams wrote of their son's decline as a disease. Such language came to frame understandings of excessive drinking, and in the early decades of the nineteenth century, drunkenness gave way to intoxication, and the act of habitual, excessive drinking came to appear as a disease of the mind.

The understanding of alcohol as an intoxicant and the emergence of addiction theory became possible through the secularizing influence of Enlightenment philosophy on the medical profession. Enlightened thinkers sought to improve social welfare, albeit in a secular manner separate from religious charity. They believed that improving the health of the populace

in a society would result in more prosperous political states.⁵⁶⁶ This ideology took a central role in the debates that grew out of the sharp rise in excessive drinking, particularly among the laboring poor. Building from the debates that surrounded the 'gin craze,' enlightened physicians attempted to understand why people drank themselves into a stupor, destroying their ability to reason, and actively contributing to their own physical decline.⁵⁶⁷ Debated philosophies not only contributed to a new understanding of the health of a populace and the wealth of a nation, but they also brought about a significant reevaluation of medical practices and perceptions regarding the impact of alcohol on the human body.

Philosophers and physicians analyzed the effects of excessive drinking, and they became particularly preoccupied with the effect of inebriation on one's consciousness. Enlightenment philosophy emphasized reason, and the seemingly willful destruction of rational thinking through inebriation perplexed physicians and philosophers alike. Edward Harwood, the English scholar and writer, claimed in 1774 that the vice of drunkenness "throws the mind into universal confusion and uproar

⁵⁶⁶ Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine, and Society in England, 1550-1860*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 30.

⁵⁶⁷ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 60-61.

– lays the understanding and reason in sad and deplorable ruins.”⁵⁶⁸ The destruction of reason flew in the face of Enlightenment philosophy, and, as a result, drunkards appeared as self-destructive and perverse. Some came to associate the act with madness. Benjamin Faulkner, an owner of a London madhouse, wrote in 1789 that frequent drunkenness, and the loss of the rational mind, resulted in insanity.⁵⁶⁹ As the eighteenth century progressed, the habitual drunkard’s behavior increasingly stood out, as it did not fit within the framework of enlightened health. By the century’s end, physicians struggled to comprehend individuals who repeatedly destroyed their minds through the excessive consumption of strong liquors.

Within the midst of increasingly secularized medical practice, and continued examinations on the effects of distilled spirits, Benjamin Rush made his famous contribution to the medical assessment of habitual drinking. Within his notable pamphlet, *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body*, first published in 1784, Rush denounced the consumption of any distilled spirit. This pamphlet continues to be the symbolic point of origin for the temperance movement in the United States, and Rush continues to carry the title of ‘father of American

⁵⁶⁸ Edward Harwood, *Of Temperance and Intemperance; Their Effects on the Body and Mind* (London: 1774), 42.

⁵⁶⁹ Faulkner quoted in Roy Porter, “The Drinking Man’s Disease: The ‘Pre-history’ of Alcoholism in Georgian Britain” *British Journal of Addiction* 80 (1985), 389.

temperance.⁵⁷⁰ Rush received renown for advocating the complete abstention of drinking distilled spirits. Rush argued against the common perception that spirits contained wholesome properties, stating, “There is neither strength nor nourishment in spirituous liquors.” He also claimed the consumption of liquors should only occur in life-threatening situations.⁵⁷¹ Rush even went so far to argue, “The different preparations of opium are a thousand times more safe and innocent than spirituous liquors.”⁵⁷²

Rush is a prominent example of a colonial medical leader who experienced the effects of the Enlightenment firsthand. He was among those who traveled to Edinburgh to study at the prestigious University of Edinburgh medical school, which opened in 1726. This institution was not only at the epicenter of the Scottish Enlightenment, but it also had a significant influence on the development of medicine in North America. From 1740 to 1800 on, aspiring American physicians crossed the Atlantic to receive their training in Edinburgh - thirty-eight went from Philadelphia alone.⁵⁷³ During the 1760s, Rush studied in Edinburgh, where he

⁵⁷⁰ Jack S. Blocker, David M. Gahley, Ian R. Tyrrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia, Volume 1* (Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 32.

⁵⁷¹ Benjamin Rush, *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body* (Philadelphia: 1790), 6.

⁵⁷² Rush, *An Inquiry*, 9.

⁵⁷³ Helen Brock, “North America, a western outpost of European medicine” in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, edited

encountered the ongoing debates amongst British intellectuals, prompted by the 'gin craze,' over the issue of alcohol and drunkenness. These enlightened discussions had a profound impact on Rush's own perceptions of the physical damage distilled spirits might cause, and he carried these theories back to North America.⁵⁷⁴

The early editions of Rush's *Inquiry* hinted at the notions of drinking as a degenerative act. In relating the story of an unnamed man who progressively preferred stronger drinks, Rush claims the man developed this desire, as weaker alcoholic drinks no longer satisfied him. Moving steadily from toddy drinks, to grog, the man "found even Jamaica spirits were not strong enough to warm his stomach."⁵⁷⁵ This brief tale of the unnamed man's apparent cravings for stronger drinks appears more as a cautionary tale than a physician's assessment of compulsive drinking. Rush concluded the story by writing off the man's fate, stating simply, "that he soon afterwards died a martyr to his intemperance." While Rush was successful in circulating his work, his notion of drinking as a degenerative act offered nothing new, as English physicians, like George Cheyne, had been discussing the physical effects of habitual drinking since the early

by Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 198-200.

⁵⁷⁴ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 64-65.

⁵⁷⁵ Rush, *An Inquiry*, 10.

decades of the eighteenth century. Also, Rush was never able fully to separate his theories from the idea that excessive drinking remained a moral failing. Although, toward the end of his life, Rush began to warm to the idea that compulsive alcohol consumption might itself be a disease, he continued to argue that religious guidance remained the best treatment available to chronic drunkards.⁵⁷⁶

The moral arguments present in Rush's writings appealed to temperance advocates who helped circulate his pamphlets throughout the nineteenth century, but the discourse on alcohol and intoxication within the medical community did not linger long on Rush's contribution. By the turn of the nineteenth century, physicians continued to build upon eighteenth-century arguments and theories in an attempt to understand compulsive drinking as a medical condition. Along with Rush, Thomas Trotter, a Scottish physician, often receives credit for promoting the idea that habitual drinking was itself a disease in his 1804 study, *An Essay Medical, Philosophical and Chemical on Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body*. In this study, Trotter reframed earlier medical debates to argue that the consumption of liquor was potentially habit-forming and physically addictive. Trotter states that he considered drunkenness to be a disease

⁵⁷⁶ Quoted in Matthew Warner Osborn, *Rum Maniacs: Alcoholic Insanity in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 34.

of the mind, “giving birth to actions and movements in the loving body, that disorder the functions of health.”⁵⁷⁷ Trotter defined drunkenness as “the delirium occasioned by fermented liquors,” that cultivated a sense of momentary “stupefaction.”⁵⁷⁸ In particular, Trotter warned against the use of alcohol as a form of medication in children to avoid the early introduction of physical desire and dependence upon such a dangerous drink.⁵⁷⁹

Similar to Rush, Trotter’s work reflected the influence of enlightened physicians like George Cheyne, and he reinforced the significance of reason to Enlightenment thought. Trotter stated, “Drunkenness itself, is a temporary madness,” and the consumption of alcohol altered the mind to the point that the drunkard’s brain began to resemble that of “maniacs and ideots.”⁵⁸⁰ Echoing Cheyne’s arguments from the mid-eighteenth century, Trotter emphasized the connection between habitual drinking and the destruction of the mind. Still, Trotter’s reliance upon clinical observation and documentation, as well as his use of medical terminology, made his contribution to the debate over

⁵⁷⁷ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 69; Thomas Trotter, *An Essay Medical, Philosophical and Chemical on Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body* (Philadelphia: 1813), 17.

⁵⁷⁸ Trotter, *An Essay Medical*, 18-19.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 128-130.

compulsive drinking appear unique. Trotter framed habitual drunkenness as a medical condition, one that physicians could isolate and treat accordingly. Where Rush directed drunkards to the pulpit, Trotter proposed medical diagnosis and treatment.⁵⁸¹

While Trotter offered new theories and medicalized language for understanding habitual drinking, he also perpetuated many long-standing perceptions of drunkards acting less than human. Trotter wrote that when a man drank in excess, “he has lost the faculty of reason, [and] is not only levelled with the brutes, but seems to lose the respect of inferior animals.”⁵⁸² Animals, Trotter wrote, could sense when man succumbed to strong drink. In this way, the drunken man degraded himself to a point lower than beasts. The central argument appears nearly unchanged from Samuel Clark’s own words published in 1682: “[Drunkenness] doth not turn men into Beasts, as some think, for a Beast scorns it.”⁵⁸³ The rhetoric of beastliness remains an intriguing constant throughout the early modern era. While new drinking practices prompted reevaluation from political, religious, and medical leaders, the behavior of drunkenness consistently appeared as a dehumanizing quality. What did change, however, was an

⁵⁸¹ Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 69.

⁵⁸² Trotter, *An Essay Medical*, 147.

⁵⁸³ Samuel Clark, *A Warning-piece to all Drunkards and Health-Drinkers* (London: 1682), preface, no pagination.

understanding of why such behavior occurred. As Trotter stated, excessive drinking was a “habit of intoxication”; a consistent act of poisoning one’s own body with toxic liquors.⁵⁸⁴ While the perception of drunkenness, as well as intoxication, as animalistic persisted, nineteenth-century physicians increasingly came to see this behavior an involuntary act.

The dehumanizing qualities the seemed inherent in excessive alcohol consumption, combined with the emerging notion that drinking itself might be a compulsive act, constructed a new imagery of slavery, one in which the drinker became enslaved to the bottle. This idea cultivated a popular phrase employed by physicians and advocates for temperance alike. Those who simply could not abstain from drinking became “slaves to the bottle”; a phrase that captured the sense of lost hope that surrounded discussions of drinking within the nineteenth-century temperance movement.⁵⁸⁵ This phrase came into common usage toward the end of the eighteenth century and increased in popularity during the

⁵⁸⁴ Trotter, *An Essay Medical*, 148.

⁵⁸⁵ Use of the phrase became increasingly common after 1860. A few examples of temperance literature that include this phrase are: Harry Seymour, *Aunt Dinah’s Pledge: a Temperance Drama in Two Acts* (New York: 1850); James Ewell, *The medical companion, or family physician; treating of the diseases of the United States, with their symptoms, causes, cure and means of prevention* (Washington: 1827); William Scott, *The Teetotaler’s Hand-Book* (Toronto: 1860).

nineteenth century, as it allowed supporters of both temperance and abolition to attack two movements in one convenient phrase.

Physicians latched on to this phrase as much as social reformers, as it conveyed the strong medical danger connected to habitual drinking. In 1772, the Scottish physician, William Buchan warned against alcohol consumption of almost any amount. He stated, “Many people injure their health by drinking, who seldom get drunk.”⁵⁸⁶ No longer did drinking to a state of inebriation warrant criticism; drinking, even without becoming drunk, threatened the drinker’s health. Buchan also defined all intoxicating liquors as poisons, revealing the drastic evolution in perceptions of distilled spirits that occurred throughout the eighteenth century. *Aqua vitae* – the pure, distilled waters of life – no longer nourished the ill, but these liquors poisoned them instead. Buchan attributed habitual drinking to living in a state of misery, and he described this behavior as a common trait of the working poor in England. Buchan wrote:

The habit of drinking proceeds frequently from misfortunes in life. The miserable fly to it for relief. It affords them temporary ease... Hence a repetition of the dose becomes necessary, and every fresh dose makes way for another, till the unhappy wretch becomes a slave to the bottle, and at length falls a sacrifice to what nature intended only as a medicine.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁶ William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine: or, The family physician, being an attempt to render the medical art more generally useful* (Philadelphia: 1772), 58.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

Within a few lines, Buchan captured *aqua vitae*'s evolution. A potent remedy became the means of escape from misery among London's poor. These common people abused spirits and grew dependent upon the liquors. By becoming enslaved to the bottle, these strong waters became a poison, an intoxicant, that only destroyed the bodily health of all who consumed it.

As the nineteenth century progressed, medical and social notions of the loss of reason coupled with enslavement to the bottle fed into the emerging theory that habitual drunkenness was itself a disease. This understanding ultimately contributed to early conceptions of alcohol addiction. In 1813, British physicians gave a name to a confounding ailment that affected heavy drinkers with uncontrollable trembling, vomiting, and haunting hallucinations.⁵⁸⁸ Physicians named this affliction delirium tremens.⁵⁸⁹ The primary point of concern was the state of the drinker's mind, as medical understanding of delirium tremens increasingly associated it with the onset of madness. A Philadelphia physician named Jesse Carter wrote in 1830 that, "A patient labouring under this form of mania, is in a state of perpetual excitement, laughing and talking by turns

⁵⁸⁸ Osborn, *Rum Maniacs*, 45.

⁵⁸⁹ For an in-depth study on the history of delirium tremens in nineteenth-century North America, see Osborn, *Rum Maniacs*.

incessantly.”⁵⁹⁰ Carter followed this statement by describing one patient who claimed rattlesnakes were under his bed, while another pressed his body against the wall “to prevent it crushing him.” These symptoms, Carter stated, resulted from “a morbid excitement of the brain,” through the habitual intake, and eventual withdrawal from, alcoholic drinks.⁵⁹¹ Compulsive drinking, mental deterioration, and the loss of self-control drove medical knowledge and social perceptions of alcohol throughout the nineteenth century. Intoxication, constructed from the altered drinking practices of the eighteenth century, came to represent a danger to personal health and the well-being of society.

In the mid-seventeenth century, African slaves fired stills in the Caribbean and gave birth to a new spirit, a new *aqua vitae*. The imperial ambitions that drove English settlement and colonization of Caribbean islands and the eastern coast of the North American continent also fueled the rise of a domestic distilling industry. Together, the creation and mass production of rum and gin forever changed the way people made, consumed, and perceived distilled spirits. English clergy, who had long criticized the beastly qualities of drunkenness, grew appalled at the

⁵⁹⁰ Jesse Carter, “Observations on Mania a Potu” *The American Journal of Medical Sciences* (Aug. 1, 1830), 323.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 324.

squalor that followed the extensive supply of cheap liquors. Political and medical authorities joined religious leaders in reassessing and condemning liquors. The greatest concern rested with maintaining control. The social elite feared the loss of control over poor laborers, who, when drunk, were incapable of work. Such labor was necessary for the maintenance of the empire. Women, too, were responsible for producing the next generation of imperial soldiers and sailors. If women destroyed their bodies, as well as their unborn children, through drinking, then the future of the empire began to appear tenuous. In Britain's colonies, the question of control extended to enslaved laborers, as well as indigenous peoples, whose racial identities seemed to heighten the potential dangers of lost control due to excessive drinking. Yet, distilled spirits also provided such groups with a means to challenge systems of authority. For the poor laborers of London, discontent with the miserable quality of their lives, gin provided a means to mimic their social betters and temporarily escape day-to-day hardships. For slaves endlessly laboring on colonial plantations, drunkenness became a way to avoid work, or openly challenge their masters. Spirits became the valve through which slaves expressed their frustrations, as well as formed communal bonds of planned rebellion. For indigenous Natives and backcountry settlers living along the

North American frontier, distilled spirits provided a way to challenge imperial authority.

The great upheaval in drinking practices that occurred throughout the eighteenth century gave way to new perceptions of alcohol as an intoxicant and early notions of alcohol addiction theory. These changes would not have occurred without the imperial-driven mass production of distilled spirits throughout the early modern era. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, as temperance organizations began to emerge in both the United States and Great Britain, medical notions of habitual drinking as a compulsive, degenerative disease was an established aspect of public debates on alcohol consumption. The general acceptance of medical theories on compulsive drinking made the term 'alcoholism' possible by 1852. The long-standing debates between enlightened physicians promoted new concepts that alcohol consumption was not merely a moral failing but a physical ailment. The emphasis on rationality and the destruction of reason through intoxication altered medical conceptions of habitual drinking. The loss of one's ability to reason came to represent a loss of personal identity, and, eventually, sanity.⁵⁹² These enlightened notions of drunkenness as a physical disease, fears of

⁵⁹² Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 62-63; Porter, *Quacks: Fakers & Charlatans in English Medicine* (Charleston, SC: Tempus, 1989), 51-52.

drinkers becoming slaves to the bottle, and the medicalization of alcoholic insanity solidified the connections between medical theories of drinking as a degenerative disease and the need for a temperate lifestyle.

References

Primary Sources

- Anon. *A booke of usefull receipts for cookery*. 1675-1700. MS.1325. The Wellcome Library, United Kingdom.
- Anon. *Advice from the Dead to the Living: Or, A Solemn Warning to the World Occasioned by the untimely Death of poor Julian*. Boston: 1733. Broadside. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.
- Anon. An Act for repressing the odious and loathsome synne of Drunckennes. 1606. HL/PO/PU 1. *The Statues of the Realm, 1586 to 1624*, 1142. The Parliamentary Archives, London, United Kingdom.
- Anon. *England's Happiness Improved: Or, an Infallible Wary to get Riches, Encrease Plenty, and promote Pleasure*. London: 1697.
- Anon. Extract of a Letter from Verona. November 16, 1735, London. *The New-York Weekly Journal*, March 7, 1736. Issue CLXXIII.
- Anon. Georgia (Colony) Laws, Statutes, etc. An Act for the Establishing and Regulating Patrols. Evans Early American Imprints 41616. Savannah: 1765.
- Anon., "Industry 'exalteth a nation; and the hand of the diligent maketh rich.'" *The Newport Mercury*. July 16, 1764. Issue 306.
- Anon. Inn and alehouse license, 13 July 1708. Misc. 1708 July 13. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
- Anon. Massachusetts Bay Colony. "Severall Laws." Cambridge: 1666. Evans Early American Imprints 109.
- Anon. Petition against Mr. Wm. Tibbs. Feb. 15, 1715. Maryland. *Fulham Papers, Vol. II – Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland (1694-1719)*. Lambeth Palace Library, London, United Kingdom
- Anon. Recipe Book. 1800. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

- Anon. Rum Account. "Weekly Allowances deld. out of the Store." Mount Vernon Store Book, Jan. 1, 1787 to Dec. 31, 1787. Typescript, LGWMV. Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon.
- Anon. Runaway slave ad. *The Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser*. May 26, 1785. Vol. II, No. 69.
- Anon. *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*. February 7, 1786. Vol. XIII, Issue No. 11.
- Anon. *The New-York Weekly Journal*. February 20, 1737. No. 224.
- Anon. *The New-York Weekly Journal*. March 7, 1736. Issue CLXXIII.
- Anon. *The Newport Mercury*, July 16, 1764, Issue 306.
- Anon. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. March 10-17, 1736,7. Issue 431.
- Anon. *The Speech of a Creek-Indian, against the Immoderate Use of Spirituous Liquors*. London: 1754.
- Anon. trial of Eleanor Lock. December 1724. Old Bailey Proceedings Online. (t17241204-68): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.
- Anon. trial of Elizabeth Scot. January 1682. Old Bailey Proceedings Online. (t16820116a-1): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.
- Anon. trial of Charles Sancey. December 1680. Old Bailey Proceedings Online. (t16801208-3): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.
- Anon. trial of Legerdemain Ladies. December 1676. Old Bailey Proceedings Online. (t16761213-5): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.
- Anon. trial of young fellow. June 1677. Old Bailey Proceedings Online. (t16770601-1): www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0.
- Abbot, W. W., ed. *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series, Vol. 5. 5 October 1757–3 September 1758*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988.

_____. *The Papers of George Washington*, Retirement Series, Vol. 4, 20 April 1799–13 December 1799. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999.

Abbot, W. W. and Edward G. Lengel, eds. *The Papers of George Washington*, Retirement Series, Vol. 3, 16 September 1798–19 April 1799. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999.

Adams, Abigail to Mary Smith Cranch. 11 September 1785. Adams Family Correspondence, Volume 6. Adams Papers, Digital Edition. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

Adams, John to Thomas Boylston Adams. 17 December 1800. Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

Adams, Thomas Boylston to John Quincy Adams. 6 December 1800. Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

Anderson, James. "Salvington, to George Washington, Philadelphia, 1796 September 11." Washington Collection. Mount Vernon Ladies Association. Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, VA.

_____. Distillery Ledger. Mount Vernon Ladies Association. Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, VA.

Anderson, James and George Washington. "Agreement, 1796 October 5." Custis Family Papers. Mss1 c9698a 413. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

Bacon, Thomas. *Two Sermons, Preached to a Congregation of Black Slaves at the Parish Church of St. Peter in the Province of Maryland*. London: 1749.

Baker, George. *The Newe Iewell of Health, wherein is containd the most excellent Secretes of Phisicke and Philosophie, deuided into fower Bookes*. London: 1576.

- Barbot, Jean. *A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea; and of Ethiopia Inferior, vulgarly Angola: Being A New and Accurate Account of the Western Maritime Countries of Africa*. London: 1732.
- Bell, Jeane. *A book of cookery*. London: 1650.
- Bent, Mary. *Untitled Cookery Book, 1664-1729*. MS.1127. The Wellcome Library, London, United Kingdom.
- Boorde, Andrew. *A Dyetary of Helth*. F.J. Furnivall, ed. 542; reprint, New York: C. Scribner & Co., 1893.
- Bosman, Willem. *A new and accurate description of the coast of Guinea, divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts*. London: 1705.
- Boyd, Julian P., ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol. 1, 1760–1776*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.
- Bradley, Martha. *The British Housewife, or, The cook, housekeeper's, and gardiner's companion*. London: c.1750.
- Bridenbaugh, Carl, ed. *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948.
- Brunschwig, Hieronymus. *The Vertuose Boke of Distyllacyon of the Waters of all Maner of Herbes*. Laurence Andrew, trans. London: 1527.
- Buchan, William. *Domestic Medicine: or, The family physician, being an attempt to render the medical art more generally useful*. Philadelphia: 1772.
- Buckler, Edward. *The sin and folly of drunkenness considered*. London: 1682.
- Bury, Edward. *England's Bane or the Deadly Danger of Drunkenness*. London: 1677.

- Carpenter, John. *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*. Henry Thomas Riley, trans. and ed. London, 1861.
- Carter, Jesse. "Observations on Mania a Potu." *The American Journal of Medical Sciences*. Aug. 1, 1830.
- Cary, Samuel. Samuel Cary Plantation Instructions, Vol. 2. Samuel Cary papers, 1766-1870. Ms. N-1997. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.
- Catchmay, Lady Frances. Physick Book, c. 1625. MS.184A. The Wellcome Library, United Kingdom.
- Cheyne, George. *An Essay on Regimen*. London: 1740.
- Clark, Michael P., ed. *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003.
- Clark, Samuel. *A Warning-piece to all Drunkards and Health-Drinkers*. London: 1682.
- Clayton, John. *Friendly Advice to the Poor*. Manchester: 1755.
- Colt, Sir Henry. "The Voyage of Sr Henrye Colt Knight to ye Ilands of ye Antilleas in ye shipp called ye *Alexande*." Vincent T. Harlow, ed. *Colonising expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667*. London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1925.
- Danforth, Samuel. *The woful effects of drunkenness: A sermon preached at Bristol*. Boston: 1710. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.
- Dawson, Thomas. *The Good Huswifes Jewell in two parts*. London: 1596/7.
- Delius, Godfrey. May 29, 1702 (translation). SPG Papers, Vol. 9 – *Correspondence Europe, Asia, China, India, 1702 – 1803*. Lambeth Palace Library, London, UK.

- Duncan, Daniel. *Wholesome advice against the abuse of hot liquors, particularly of coffee, chocolate, tea, Brandy, And Strong-Waters*. London: 1706.
- Edmondson, Pollard. Runaway slave ad. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. February 16, 1769. No. 2095.
- Ewell, James. *The medical companion, or family physician; treating of the diseases of the United States, with their symptoms, causes, cure and means of prevention*. Washington: 1827.
- Ferguson, E. James, ed. *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784, Volume 2: August-September 1781*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975.
- Fielding, Henry. *A Dissertation on Mr. Hogarth's Six Prints Lately publish'd, viz. Gin-Lane, Beer-Street, and the Four Stages of Cruelty*. London: 1751.
- Foster, Stephen ed. *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Franklin, Benjamin. *A Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County, of a Number of Indians, Friends of this Province, By Persons Unknown*. Philadelphia: 1764.
- _____. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, second edition. Leonard W. Labaree, Ralph L. Ketcham, Helen C. Boatfield, and Helene H. Fineman, eds. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.
- Garden, Alexander to Bishop Gibson. Charlestown. Sept. 6, 1737. *Fulham Papers Vol. X – South Carolina (1735 – undated)*. Lambeth Palace Library, London, United Kingdom.
- Greene, Jack P., ed. *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778, Volume I*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965.
- _____. *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778, Volume II*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965.

Grizzard, Jr., Frank E., ed. *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 8, 6 January 1777–27 March 1777. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998.

_____. *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 10, 11 June 1777–18 August 1777. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000.

Hall, Harrison. *Hall's Distiller*. Philadelphia: 1813.

Hamilton, Alexander. *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, Vol. 11, February 1792–June 1792. Harold C. Syrett, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Harrison, Sarah. *The house-Keeper's pocket-book; and compleat family cook*. London: 1751.

Hooker, Richard J., ed. *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953.

Horsmanden, Daniel. *A Journal of the Proceedings in the Detection of the Conspiracy Formed By Some White People, in Conjunction with Negro and other Slaves, for Burning the City of New-York in America, And Murdering the Inhabitants*. New York: 1744.

Harwood, Edward. *Of Temperance and Intemperance; Their Effects on the Body and Mind*. London: 1774.

Hoth, David R. and Carol S. Ebel, eds. *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 16, 1 May–30 September 1794. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011.

Hunt, Isaac. *A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians*. Philadelphia: 1764.

Hunt, Wilson. Runaway slave ad. *The New-York Gazette or, The Weekly Post-Boy*. January 1, 1767. Issue 1252.

Hutton, Charles and George Shaw, Richard Pearson, eds. *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, from*

their Commencement, in 1665, to the Year 1800, Vol. 9. London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1809.

Jackson, Donald and Dorothy Twohig, eds. *The Diaries of George Washington*, vol. 4, *1 September 1784–30 June 1786*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978.

James, Bartlett Burleigh and J. Franklin Jameson, eds. *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679-1680*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Julian. *The Last Speech and Dying Advice of Poor Julian, who was Executed the 22d of March, 1733*. Boston: 1733. Broadside. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

Labaree, Leonard W., ed. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 5, *July 1, 1753, through March 31, 1755*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.

LaFantasie, Glenn W., ed. *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, Vol I 1629-1653*. Hanover: Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988.

_____. *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, Vol II 1654-1682*. Hanover: Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988.

Lane, Gizebert. Runaway slave ad. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. May 21, 1767. No. 2004.

Lengel, Edward G., ed. *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, Vol. 13, 26 December 1777–28 February 1778*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.

Ligon, Richard. *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes*. London: 1673.

Linebaugh, Peter and Marcus Rediker. *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.

- Lord Londonderry to Bishop Gibson. St. Christophers. June 8, 1729.
Fulham Papers, Vol. XIX, Leward Islands (1681-1749). Lambeth
Palace Library, London, United Kingdom.
- Maddox, Isaac. *Sermon*. London: 1750.
- Mather, Cotton. *Sober Considerations, on a growing Flood of Iniquity*.
Boston: 1708.
- Mather, Increase. *A sermon occasioned by the execution of a man,
second edition*. Boston: 1687.
- _____. *Wo to Drunkards: Two Sermons Testifying against the Sin of
Drunkenness*, second edition. Boston: 1712.
- Mitchell, Stewart, ed. *New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788-1801*. Boston:
Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947.
- Occom, Samson. *A Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, An
Indian, Who was executed at New-Haven, on the 2d of September,
1772, for the Murder of Mr. Moses Cook*. Boston: 1773.
- _____. *Mr. Occom's Address to his Indian Brethren, on the Day that
Moses Paul... was Executed... the 2d of September, 1772*.
Broadside. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.
- Pigot, George. Providence, Warwick, Greenwich, etc. in the colony of
Rhode Island. May 6, 1724. *Fulham Papers, Vol. VIII –
Pennsylvania (1762 – undated), Rhode Island*. Lambeth Palace
Library, London, United Kingdom.
- Rush, Benjamin. *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the
Human Body*. Philadelphia: 1790.
- _____. *Essays: Literary, Moral & Philosophical by Benjamin Rush,
M.D.* Philadelphia: 1798.
- Scott, William. *The Teetotaler's Hand-Book*. Toronto: 1860.
- Sewall, Samuel. *Diary of Samuel Sewall: 1674-1729, Volume 6*.
Massachusetts Historical Society, 1879.

- Seymour, Harry. *Aunt Dinah's Pledge: a Temperance Drama in Two Acts*. New York: 1850.
- Smith, William. *The Teetotaler's Hand-Book, in Four Parts*. Toronto: 1860.
- Snelgrave, William. *A New Account of some Parts of Guinea, And the Slave-Trade*. London: 1734.
- Stuart, John Ferdinand Smyth. *A Tour in the United States. The Pennsylvania Evening Herald and The American Monitor*. February 8, 1786. Vol. III, Issue 5.
- Thomas, A.H., ed. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London: Volume I, 1323-1364*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926.
- Trotter, Thomas. *An Essay Medical, Philosophical and Chemical on Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body*. Philadelphia: 1813.
- Voltaire. *The Works of Voltaire: A philosophical dictionary*. Tobias George Smollett, John Morley, William F. Fleming, Oliver Herbrand, George Leigh, eds. E.R. Du Mont, 1901.
- Younge, Richard. *A Sovereign Antidote, or, A Precious Mithridate: For Recovery of Souls twice dead in Sin, and buried in the Grave of Long Custome, to the Life of Grace*. London: 1663.
- Wadsworth, Benjamin. *An Essay to do Good*. Boston: 1710.
- Washington, George to William Pearce, 12/22/1793, *The Writings of George Washington*, 33:200-201.
- Washington, George to John Christian Ehler, 12/23/1793, *The Writings of George Washington*, 33:214-216.
- Washington, George. *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 4. General Correspondence. 1697-1799*. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Wilson, Thomas. *Distilled Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation*. London: 1736.

Y-Worth, William *The Compleat distiller: of, The whole art of distillation practically stated*. London: 1705.

Secondary Sources

Books

Abernethy, Thomas P. *The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1961.

Albala, Ken. *Food in Early Modern Europe*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003.

Alexander, Bruce K. *The Globalisation of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Axtell, James. *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*. New York: Oxford, 1981.

_____. *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Baines, Barbara J. *Thomas Heywood*. Boston: Twayne, 1984.

Baldwin, Leland D. *Whiskey Rebels: The Story of a Frontier Uprising*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1939.

Barnett, Richard. *The Book of Gin: A Spirited History from Alchemists' Still and Colonial Outposts to Gin Palaces, Bathtub Gin, and Artisanal Cocktails*. New York: Grove Press, 2011.

Bennett, Judith. *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters: Women's Word in a Changing World, 1300-1600*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

- Bennett, Linda A. and Genevieve M. Ames, eds. *The American Experience with Alcohol: Contrasting Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.
- Black, Rachel. *Alcohol in Popular Culture: An Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012.
- Blocker, Jack S. Jr. *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989.
- Blocker, Jack S. and David M. Gahley, Ian R. Tyrrell. *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia, Volume 1*. Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2003.
- Blumberg, Leonard U. *Beware the First Drink! The Washington Temperance Movement and Alcoholics Anonymous*. Seattle: Glenn Abbey, 1991.
- Boyd, Steven R., ed. *The Whiskey Rebellion: Past and Present Perspectives*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Brander, Michael. *Brander's Guide to Scotch Whiskey*, fifth edition. New York: Lyons Press, 1996.
- Brockliss, Laurence and Colin Jones. *The Medical World of Early Modern France*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Brodsky, Alyn. *Benjamin Rush: Patriot and Physician*. New York: Tuman Talley Books, 2004.
- Brubaker, John H. *Massacre of the Conestogas: On the Trail of the Paxton Boys in Lancaster County*. Charleston: The History Press, 2010.
- Burnard, Trevor. *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Burnett, John. *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

- Canny, Nicholas. *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- Canny, Nicholas and Anthony Pagden, eds. *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Canup, John. *Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of an American Identity in Colonial New England*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1990.
- Clark, Peter. *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830*. New York: Longman, 1983.
- Clouse, Jerry A. *The Whiskey Rebellion: Southwestern Pennsylvania's Frontier People Test the American Constitution*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1994.
- Cockayne, Emily. *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Coffin, Margaret. *Death in Early America: The History and Folklore of Customs and Superstitions of Early Medicine, Funerals, Burials, and Mourning*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1976.
- Cogley, Richard W. *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Conroy, David W. *In Public Houses: Drink & the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts*. Williamsburg, VA: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Craton, Michael. *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Cunningham, Andrew and Roger French, eds. *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

- Cullen, L.M. *The Brandy Trade under the Ancien Régime; Regional Specialisation in the Charente*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Dabney, Joseph Earl. *Mountain Spirits: a Chronicle of Corn Whiskey from King James' Ulster Plantation to America's Appalachians and the Moonshine Life*. Asheville, NC: Bright Mountain Books, 1974.
- De Bruyn Kops, Henriette. *A Spirited Exchange: The Wine and Brandy Trade between France and the Dutch Republic in its Atlantic Framework, 1600-1650*. Boston: Brill, 2007.
- Dillon, Patrick. *Gin: The Much-Lamented Death of Madam Geneva*. Boston: Justin Charles & Co, 2003.
- Dunn, Richard S. *Sugar & Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1972.
- Edelson, Max. *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Evans, Jennifer. *Aphrodisiacs, Fertility and Medicine in Early Modern England*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2014.
- Field, J.V. and Frank A.J.L. James, eds. *Renaissance and Revolution: Humanists, scholars, craftsmen and natural philosophers in early modern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Francis, Convers. *Life of John Eliot: the apostle to the Indians*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1844.
- Furnas, J.C. *The Life and Times of the Late Demon Rum*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965.
- Gallay, Alan. *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Gaspar, David Barry. *Bondmen & Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua with Implications for Colonial British America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

- Gately, Iain. *Drink: a Cultural History of Alcohol*. New York: Gotham, 2008.
- Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Random House, 1976.
- Gill Jr., Harold B. *The Apothecary in Colonial Virginia*. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1972.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Greene, Jack P. *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986.
- Griffin, Patrick. *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689-1764*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Gusfield, J.R. *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963.
- Hampel, Robert L. *Temperance and Prohibition in Massachusetts, 1813-1852*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982.
- Hanson, David J. *Preventing Alcohol Abuse: Alcohol, Culture, and Control*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995.
- Hawke, David Freeman. *Benjamin Rush, Revolutionary Gadfly*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971.
- Herbert, Amanda E. *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Heywood, Thomas. *Philocothomista, or the Drunkard, Opened, Dissected and Atomized*. London: 1635.

- Hinderacker, Eric and Peter Mancall. *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Immerman, Richard H. *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Isaac, Rhys. *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- King, Frank A. *Beer Has a History*. New York: Hutchinson's Scientific and Technical Publications, 1957
- Kosar, Kevin R. *Whiskey: A Global History*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2010.
- Kümin, Beat and B. Ann Tlusty, eds. *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.
- Lender, Mark Edward and James Kirby Martin. *Drinking in America: A History*. Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Lepore, Jill. *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-century Manhattan*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005.
- Leyburn, James G. *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962.
- Lindemann, Mary. *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Lowance Jr., Mason I. *Increase Mather*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974.
- Mancall, Peter C. *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Martin, A. Lynn. *Alcohol, Violence, and Disorder in Traditional Europe*. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2009.

- Mattingly, Carol. *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998.
- Meacham, Sarah Hand. *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Merrell, James H. *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1989.
- Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956.
- Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985.
- Monckton, H.A. *A History of English Ale and Beer*. Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1966.
- Morgan, Edmund S. *American Slavery, American Freedom*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975.
- Morgan, Philip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Nicholls, James. *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011.
- Osborn, Matthew Warner. *Rum Maniacs: Alcoholic Insanity in the Early American Republic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: a Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Pender, Stephen and Nancy S. Struever, eds. *Rhetoric and Medicine in Early Modern Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012.

- Phillips, Ulrich B. *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966.
- Pogue, Dennis J. *Founding Spirits: George Washington and the Beginnings of the American Whiskey Industry*. Buena Vista, VA: Harbour Books, 2011.
- Porter, Roy. *Disease, Medicine, and Society in England, 1550-1860*, second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- _____. *Quacks: Fakers & Charlatans in English Medicine*. Charleston, SC: Tempus, 1989.
- _____. *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.
- Postell, William Dosite. *The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951.
- Ritcher, Daniel K. *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Rorabaugh, W.J. *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Salinger, Sharon V. *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Scheick, William J., ed. *Two Mather Biographies: Life and Death and Parentator*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1989.
- Selement, George. *Keepers of the Vineyard: The Puritan Ministry and Collective Culture in Colonial New England*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.
- O'Shaughnessy, Andrew Jackson. *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

- Silverman, Kenneth. *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.
- Slaughter, Thomas P. *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Smith, Andrew F. *Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Smith, Frederick H. *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008.
- Sournia, Jean-Charles, Nick Hindley, and Gareth Stanton. *A History of Alcoholism*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 1990.
- Stampp, Kenneth. *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- Standage, Tom. *A History of the World in 6 Glasses*. New York: Walker & Co., 2005.
- Stevens, Laura M. *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Thistlewood, Thomas. Diary. 6 July 1751. Monson 31/2. Lincolnshire County Archives, Lincoln.
- _____. Diary. 20 March 1753, Monson 31/4. Lincolnshire County Archives, Lincoln.
- _____. Diary. 21 August 1756, Monson 31/7. Lincolnshire County Archives, Lincoln.
- Thompson, Peter. *Rum Punch & Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Thornton, John. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, second edition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

- Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne. *A History of Food*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.
- Tyrrell, Ian R. *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.
- Unger, Richard W. *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Usner, Daniel H. *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Waldstreicher, David. *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: the Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Warner, Jessica. *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason*. New York: Random House, 2003.
- Watson, Ben. *Cider, Hard and Sweet: History, Traditions, and Making Your Own*, third edition. Woodstock, VT: The Country Man Press, 2013.
- Wear, Andrew. *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Weaver, Jace. *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empire, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Articles

- Barr, Juliana. "A Diplomacy of Gender: Rituals of First Contact in the 'Land of the Tejas.'" *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series. 61, 3 (July 2004): 393-434.
- Blanton, Dennis B. "Drought as a Factor in the Jamestown Colony, 1607-1612." *Historical Archaeology*. 34, 4 (2000): 74-81.
- Brown, Sanborn C. "Beers and Wines of Old New England: Under harsh conditions in a country very different from the fatherland, the early settlers gradually evolved beverages which they came to appreciate for their own qualities." *American Scientist* 66, 4 (July-August 1978): 460-467.
- Burton, Kristen D. "The Citie Calls for Beere: the Introduction of Hops and the Foundation of Industrial Brewing in Early Modern London." *Brewery History*. 150 (2013): 6-15.
- Butterfield, L.H. and Benjamin Rush. "Dr. Benjamin Rush's Journal of a Trip to Carlisle in 1784." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. 74, 4 (Oct., 1950): 443-456.
- Cates, Gerald L. "'THE SEASONING': Disease and Death Among the First Colonists in Georgia." *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. 64, 2 (Summer, 1980): 146-158.
- Chamberlain, Ava. "The Execution of Moses Paul: A Story of Crime and Contact in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut." *The New England Quarterly*. 77, 3 (Sep., 2004): 414-450.
- Clark, Peter. "The 'Mother Gin' Controversy in the Early Eighteenth Century." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series. 38 (1998): 63-84.
- Dyer, Christopher. "Changes in Diet in the Late Middle Ages: The Case of the Harvest Workers." *Agricultural History Review*. 36, 1 (1988): 21-37.

- Gaspar, David Barry. "The Antigua Slave Conspiracy of 1736: A Case Study of the Origins of Collective Resistance." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 35, 2 (April 1978): 308-324.
- Gevtiz, Norman. "'Pray Let the Medicines Be Good': The New England Apothecary in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries." *Pharmacy in History*. 41, 3 (1999): 87-101.
- Heap, Simon. "'A Bottle of Gin is Dangled before the Nose of the Natives': The Economic Uses of Imported Liquor in Southern Nigeria, 1860-1920." *African Economic History*. 33 (2005): 30-37.
- Herrmann, Rachel B. "The 'tragicall historie': Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown." *William and Mary Quarterly*. 68, 1 (January 2011): 47-74.
- Hunt, John A. "The Evolution of Pharmacy in Britain (1428-1913)." *Pharmacy in History*. 48, 1 (2006): 35-40.
- Johnson, Walter. "On Agency." *Journal of Social History*. 37, 1 Special Issue. (Autumn 2003): 113-124.
- Kross, Jessica. "'If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me': The Sociology of Drinking in the Middle Colonies" *Pennsylvania History*. 64, 1 Regional Perspectives on Early American History. (Winter, 1997): 28-55.
- Kupperman, Karen Ordahl. "Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown." *Journal of American History*. 66, 1 (June 1979): 24-40.
- _____. "Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience." *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series. 41, 2 (April 1984): 213-240.
- Launitz-Schurer Jr., Leopold S. "Slave Resistance in Colonial New York: An Interpretation of Daniel Horsmanden's New York Conspiracy." *Phylon*. 41, 2 (2nd Qtr., 1980): 137-152.
- Lockley, Timothy J. "Trading Encounters between Non-Elite Whites and African Americans in Savannah, 1790-1860." *The Journal of Southern History*. 66, 1 (February 2000): 25-48.

McCusker, John. J. "The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteenth Continental Colonies, 1650-1775." *The Journal of Economic History*. 30, 1, The Tasks of Economic History. (March 1970): 244-247.

O'Brien, Charles P. Nora Volkow, and Li T-K. "What's in a Word? Addictions Versus Dependence in DSM-V." *The American Journal of Psychiatry*. 163, 5 (May 2006): 764-765.

Olson, Edwin. "The Slave Code in Colonial New York." *The Journal of Negro History*. 29, 2 (April 1944): 147-165.

Petry, Alice Hall. "Gin Lane in the Bowery: Crane's Maggie and William Hogarth." *American Literature*. 56, 3 (October, 1984): 417-426.

Porter, Roy. "The Drinking Man's Disease: The 'Pre-history' of Alcoholism in Georgian Britain." *British Journal of Addiction*. 80 (1985): 385-396.

_____. "The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below." *Theory and Society*. 14, 2 (March: 1985): 175-198.

Rabin, Dana. "Drunkenness and Responsibility for Crime in the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of British Studies*. 44, 3 (July, 2005): 457-477.

Warner, Jessica and Frank Ivis. "'Damn You, You Informing Bitch.' Vox Populi and the Unmaking of the Gin Act of 1736." *Journal of Social History* 33, 2 (Winter, 1999): 299-330.

White, Jonathan. "The 'Slow but Sure Poyson': The Representation of Gin and Its Drinkers, 1736-1751." *Journal of British Studies*. 42, 1 (January, 2003): 35-64.

Unpublished Manuscripts

Thompson, Mary V. "Better fed than Negroes are." Unpublished manuscript.

Biographical Information

Kristen D. Burton is a doctor of philosophy in transatlantic history from the University of Texas at Arlington, funded by the Enhanced Doctoral Graduate Teaching Assistantship. Kristen also holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in History from Oklahoma State University. In her Master's thesis, Kristen studied the industrialization of beer brewing in London, which resulted in the article, "The Citie Calls for Beere: the Introduction of Hops and the Foundation of Industrial Brewing in Early Modern London," published in the *Journal of the Brewery History Society* (February 2013). In addition to research, Kristen is the recipient of research fellowships at the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon. She is also the co-founder and Senior Editor of *Traversea*, an online, peer-reviewed, and open access journal of transatlantic history.