



# **Inventing the Addict: Drugs, Race, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature**

*Susan Zieger*

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The notion of addiction has always conjured first-person stories, often beginning with an insidious seduction, followed by compulsion and despair, culminating in recovery and tentative hope for the future. We are all familiar with this form of individual life narrative, Susan Zieger observes, but we know far less about its history. "Addict" was not an available identity until the end of the nineteenth century, when a modernizing medical establishment and burgeoning culture of consumption updated the figure of the sinful drunkard popularized by the temperance movement.

In *Inventing the Addict*, Zieger tells the story of how the addict, a person uniquely torn between disease and desire, emerged from a variety of earlier figures such as drunkards, opium-eating scholars, vicious slave masters, dissipated New Women, and queer doctors. Drawing on a broad range of literary and cultural material, including canonical novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula*, she traces the evolution of the concept of addiction through a series of recurrent metaphors: exile, self-enslavement, disease, and vampirism. She shows how addiction took on multiple meanings beyond its common association with intoxication or specific habit-forming substances?it was an abiding desire akin to both sexual attraction and commodity fetishism, a disease that strangely failed to meet the requirements of pathology, and the citizen's ironic refusal to fulfill the promise of freedom.

Nor was addiction an ideologically neutral idea. As Zieger demonstrates, it took form over time through specific, shifting intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality, reflecting the role of social power in the construction of meaning.

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