

***Drugs and the Addiction Aesthetic in Nineteenth-Century Literature (2019)* by Adam Colman**

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Though it uses addiction as its primary metaphor, Adam Colman's book, *Drugs and the Addiction Aesthetic*, is more interested in repetition. In creating his conceptual metaphor of the addiction aesthetic, Colman argues that the repetition of a behavior enables new thought processes and that this is an overriding theme throughout drug-associated literature. Colman notes early on the modern, figurative language of addiction, such as the addictive quality of streaming shows such as *Breaking Bad*. Using the popularity of addiction-based language, Colman finds purchase to pursue an atypical avenue of addiction-based thought. He conceptualizes a figurative idea of addiction; addiction can be a pattern of behavior that drives an individual's hunger for more knowledge, more content, more possibility. Exploiting the nineteenth century's compulsive consumption of addiction literature, Colman notes the way many literary texts capitalized on patterned language and behaviors during this period of shifting addiction discourse. Thus, he encourages a nuanced way of thinking about aesthetic representations of addiction.

Colman divides his book into seven chapters, covering authors across the nineteenth century. He begins with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose own routines of wandering and conversing at establishments such as coffeehouses resemble an addiction aesthetic in their own rite. By focusing on what he calls the "addiction-like", repetitive behavior that leads one to new knowledge, Colman avoids the obsessive reliance commonly associated with addiction discourse. Because he generally avoids the detrimental aspects of addiction, Colman portrays addiction in a new light, albeit one less focused on the tragic realities of addiction and more focused on the implications of Brunonian medicine, the idea equating the stimulatory effects of drugs, literature, and thought. Tracing this concept through the ideology and works of Percy Shelley, Colman notes the differentiation of literal addiction with the addiction-like in *The Cenci* (1819). By juxtaposing Count Cenci's alcohol dependency with that of the heroine Beatrice's repetitive, and thus addiction-like, language, Colman tangibly exemplifies the difference between literal addiction and his concept-metaphor. Though no book on drug literature is complete without a segmental

ode to De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), Colman's stands out for its fascination with the labyrinth, a common trope in drug literature and nineteenth-century novels in general. Considering the wide-ranging implications of the labyrinth for writers such as Aldous Huxley or Walter Benjamin, this chapter seems poised to expand the scope of the addiction aesthetic into multiple genres. Colman further expands the latitude of the addiction aesthetic as he examines the works of Alfred Tennyson and Christina Rossetti. Isobel Armstrong's notion of the "double poem", the Victorian fascination with contradictory and ambiguous meaning in poetry, plays a key role in this chapter. Colman suggests his concept-metaphor parallels the abstruseness inherent in double poems. The chapter expands the usefulness of Colman's concept-metaphor, which, up to this chapter, seemed limited to drug literature and detective fiction. But detective fiction returns to center stage as Colman examines Victorian attitudes toward addiction in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853). His chapter argues the simultaneous possibility of ruination and patterned behavior that breathes life into Dickens's characters and the physical and social worlds they inhabit. One of Colman's more laudable chapters, "Optative Movement and Drink in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*", examines the overlap of "dreamt-of wandering" (163) with the consumption of addictive substances in Robert Louis Stevenson's well-tread novella. Colman reimagines *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) as a proto-cinematic experience in which the viewer vicariously wanders the street along with Gabriel Utterson, whose alcohol consumption ostensibly inspires his flâneur-like interest, as they track the illusive Mr Hyde. "Optative Movement" argues that Stevenson's novella satisfies its readers' desire for vicarious narratives that explore possibility through mediation. Focusing on the *absintheur* in Marie Corelli's *Wormwood* (1890), Colman's final chapter argues that the novel's contradictory, addiction-like thought maintains tension between reality and possibility. In doing so, Corelli challenges Emile Zola's naturalistic movement, emphasizing the space between "material experience and nightmarish yearning" (188). This final chapter provides an appropriate summation of *Drugs and the Addiction Aesthetic*, a book that fixates on ambiguity and possibility in addictive behavior.

Just as the addiction aesthetic itself works, Colman's book continues to gain traction as its chapters consistently target the patterns inherent in nineteenth-century authors' lives as well as their texts. Surprisingly, Colman does not extensively discuss Wilkie Collins, but scholars of Collins's work will immediately recognize the relevance of his discussion of addiction and its narrative tropes, which implicitly connect Colman's work to other recent studies such as Susan Zieger's "Opium, Alcohol, and Tobacco: The Substance of Memory in *The Moonstone*" or Janice Trecker's "Wilkie Collins's Sleuths and the Consolations of Detection". Despite this exclusion, Colman's fixation on literature littered with drug references and associations leaves space for the reader to realize his concept's implications outside such texts. Some scholars might be put off by his use of addiction as a metaphor and his ambivalence toward the adverse realities of addiction. Though this is a valid reason for concern that might instinctively turn some scholars away, his book does bear insight into addiction literature of the nineteenth century and beyond. And though the groundwork is laid, given the breadth of repetitive behavior and language in literature, the value of the addiction aesthetic is perhaps overwhelming to the point of ineffability. Readers would be hard pressed to find a literary piece without any connection to habitual behavior, be it substance or routine-based. But because he avoids addressing dependency, Colman's book is less about addiction and more about patterned behavior.

By compulsively fixating on the addiction-like, Colman creates meaning from the seemingly monotonous language readers habitually ignore. And, considering the prominence of repetitive rhetoric, *Drugs and the Addiction Aesthetic* has the promise of being utilized in a variety of fields beyond the detective genre, drug literature, and the nineteenth century. And it is when Colman expands the scope of his concept-metaphor past these genres that his book reveals its potential. But it remains to be seen how far Colman's conceptual metaphor can be stretched.