

WADE, HEATHER LYNN, M.A. “her convenience was always to give way”:
(re)Examining Anne Elliot’s Agency in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*. (2017)
Directed by Dr. Anne Wallace. 36 pp.

In Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, the narrator and the characters who encounter Anne seemingly portray her character as easily persuadable. Despite what appears to be a lack of agency and a mixed critical response towards potential agency, this essay argues that Anne does exhibit agency throughout the novel. Though initially portrayed in moments of crisis under conditions of high emotions and loss of reason among other characters, her agency is evident throughout the text. The analysis of her more obvious agency in these moments of crisis allows the reader to reexamine and then perceive her agency in other, more subtle manners and moments. Furthermore, this essay argues that the agency Anne portrays serves to criticize gendered social norms that promote the persuasion and obedience of young, unmarried females in regard to marriage and social hierarchy.

WADE, HEATHER LYNN, M.A. "something is wrong with mother": Alcohol, Women, and Respectability in Jack Common's *Kiddar's Luck*. (2017). Directed by Dr. Ben Clarke. 38 pp.

For individuals living in Britain during the 1900s, respectability was a major aspect of life. From the upper classes to the working classes, neighbors and other individuals judged respectability based on actions; particularly amongst the working classes, respectability had less to do with money than it did with conduct and behavior. These behaviors included, but were not limited to, sexual conduct and a family's, specifically the wife's, ability to manage the finances of the home. But respectability for women also depended upon one's ability to keep the home clean and properly care for the children. As a result of these ideals and the ideals of femininity, women were typically discouraged from drinking, because it often hindered their ability to complete these daily responsibilities. In Jack Common's semi-autobiographical novel, *Kiddar's Luck*, the reader can perceive this message throughout the story as the main character, Willie Kiddar, describes multiple occurrences of his mother's drinking. Based on these examples and the historical background of the text, this paper argues that through his writing, Common denounces female drinking, especially maternal drinking. Yet, Kiddar still is able to maintain sympathy for his mother, despite his aversion to her alcoholic tendencies and behaviors.

“HER CONVENIENCE WAS ALWAYS TO GIVE WAY”:

(RE)EXAMINING ANNE ELLIOT’S AGENCY IN

JANE AUSTEN’S *PERSUASION*

AND

“SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH MOTHER”: ALCOHOL, WOMEN,

AND RESPECTABILITY IN JACK COMMON’S

KIDDAR’S LUCK

by

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To my parents, John and Deborah Tinsley, for always supporting me and always encouraging me to never give up on my goals and dreams.

APPROVAL PAGE

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“HER CONVENIENCE WAS ALWAYS TO GIVE WAY”:

(RE)EXAMINING ANNE ELLIOT’S AGENCY IN JANE AUSTEN’S *PERSUASION*

But what is it to persuade? The Grecian Rhetoricians say, that to persuade is the Orator’s making himself master of the souls of his auditors, and to lead them, as it were, in triumph wherever he pleases.—As Persuasion is a kind of bringing into subjection the soul of man, so it is a victory, a conquest over his thoughts and sentiments; a leading his will captive, a mastery obtained over his passions, and a despoiling him of what he holds most dear, his Liberty...Persuasion is more powerful than even violence itself. If so, then, like poisoned weapons, should it not be prohibited as most pernicious, destructive, and dangerous?

-*The Weekly Miscellany*, Jan. 18, 1779. p. 374

In Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, the narrator and the characters who encounter Anne seemingly portray her character as easily persuadable. This portrayal does not present a complete picture of Anne Elliot, for multiple reasons. One reason lies in a characteristic trait of Austen’s writing: irony. Much of the narrator’s tone in the novel is ironic, which then complicates our reading of Anne. A further reason that this is not a complete picture is that there are multiple scenes, such as Anne’s role in deciding how to fix the Elliot financial situation and her role in assisting at both Uppercross and Lyme, which reveal an agency that appears in conflict with the views of her family members and even Captain Wentworth. These views, importantly, are often expressed through the narrator, making it difficult at times to distinguish between what the narrator is actually and explicitly informing the reader and how the family perceives her. These complications create an

opportunity for re-evaluation of Anne's characterization and how the situations occurring around her affect or alter the accepted perspective.

Despite what appears to be a lack of agency and a mixed critical response towards potential agency, this essay argues that Anne does exhibit agency throughout the novel. Though initially portrayed in moments of crisis under conditions of high emotions and loss of reason among other characters, her agency is evident throughout the text. The analysis of her more obvious agency in these moments of crisis allows the reader to reexamine and then perceive her agency in other, more subtle manners and moments. Anne's agency then also provides a social critique on women's roles, as they were expected to obediently submit, not only to certain people, but also to cultural and societal standards. The fact that Anne is able to perform agency throughout the novel shows that her character is constructed in contrast to the standards expected at the time, particularly those of persuasion. This becomes clearer as one examines those moments of agency, and allows them to reshape the characterization of Anne as passive.

Just as the text, on the surface, portrays Anne as easily persuadable, different scholars have made this same claim¹, and some have expanded upon her "persuadable temper" to claim that she lacks responsibility². This comment has been made in reference to her engagement to Captain Wentworth and her submission to the persuasions of Lady Russell. Persuasion, as we are to understand it from Austen's writing, is a term that signifies the actions of one person towards another with the intent to alter their mindset

¹ See John Hardy.

² See Linda Raphael.

regarding particular decisions. Anne is considered a persuadable character because she listens to and accepts the advice of others – advice that is given with the objective of changing Anne’s mind and convincing her to do what they want her to do – even if it is not something she wants. Throughout the story, the different characters of the novel continuously attempt to persuade Anne to do multiple things: break off her engagement, take one side over another (Mary), return to Uppercross after Louisa’s injury at Lyme, and many others. Indeed, they are almost always, if not always, successful in their acts of persuasion. But, nowhere does Austen or her narrator imply that persuasion involves force; in fact, in many cases, the situations in which persuasion occurs allow us to infer that persuasion does not force submission. The characters may try to convince her and get her to see things their way, but she is not forced to act against her own will. If the goal of persuasion is to reason with someone in order to induce that person to act a certain way, there is still capacity, even a need, for agency.

The term ‘agency’ is not one we would very likely find in Austen’s own writing. Agency, in the literary aspect we view it today, is a more recent usage of the word. The OED defines agency as the “ability or capacity to act or exert power; active working or operation; action, activity.” While one of the first usages did appear in 1606, it was not common. In 1754 Jonathan Edwards used it in terms of “moral agency,” and finally, in 2005 we see a usage that exemplifies how we use it today: R. Toor writes in *Pig & I*, “This...fantasy of giving up agency, of being stripped of having to make hard choices” (qtd. in OED). Based on these understandings, agency is, for the purposes of this paper, simply the ability of an individual to act – whether these actions are physical activities

that can be observed by others or internal decisions determined by the individual. Thus, even when someone is attempting to persuade someone else, an individual still has the capacity to act, to decide whether to listen and submit: to be or not to be – persuaded, that is.

This essay's epigraph from *The Weekly Miscellany* argues that effective persuasion acts as a destructive force, that it takes over one's own decision making power and even one's own identity. This, however, is not how persuasion is portrayed within Austen's text; as stated above, persuasion within the text is a method of convincing another person to change their mind or course of action. *The Weekly Miscellany* leaves no room for agency in the midst of persuasion; Austen's text does. But, the question still remains as to whether Austen's character truly enacts this agency in the text. Some critics argue that she does not, as in one instance, she would have been too young to decide on her own to marry Wentworth anyway, and so the decision was essentially made for her – she was not of age to exert the power to marry against the wishes or approval of guardians (Hardy 127)³. Others argue that she has a lack of responsibility, while still others seem to give the credit for her rationality – one of the key conditions for her agency in moments of crisis – to her sense of responsibility. I argue, rather, that she does indeed have agency throughout the novel. While there are scholars, such as Jocelyn Harris, who imply or state that Anne has agency, whether that degree of agency is small or not, I plan to expand upon their analysis with my own.

³ “Until 1823, a man or woman under the age of twenty-one could not marry without parental permission” (Pool 180).

John Hardy (1984), Linda S. Raphael (2001), and Jocelyn Harris (2007) all discuss, in depth, components of Anne Elliot's character, such as her relationships, presence, or behaviors. In *Jane Austen's Heroines*, Hardy dedicates a chapter to Anne Elliot, in which he discusses the relationship between Anne and Captain Wentworth. In doing so, however, he also comments on Anne's character, beginning by commenting on her absence from the first chapters: "she seems almost dismissed from notice..." and "Anne is virtually ignored, except when she can be a convenience to them [her family]" (109). Further, he alludes to the text's notion that Anne is persuadable without debating this claim, even though he also asserts that her "true worth" is in the fact that "she is the only one who does not lose her presence of mind" during the incident at the Cobb (115). Given that his chapter focuses most heavily on the relationship between Anne and Wentworth, he does not analyze too closely the agency of Anne; rather, he discusses her emotions and her rationality, thus still leaving one in limbo as to whether he himself views Anne as possessing sole agency or not. In some instances, his comments seem to imply agency, such as when he claims that "she remains truly possessed in herself of what is dearest to her, that she has both a heart and mind to reject the plausibly meretricious, the merely fair-seeming" and that she has "an inner strength of judgment independent of Lady Russell's opinions" (119). But, at the same time, he writes this off as simply the "true moral worth of her [Austen's] heroine" (119). And yet, while Hardy does not deliver a statement upon Anne's agency, his critique is still important, as it allows further insight into Anne's character and bolsters the relationship between

emotion, or passion, and reason, which is pivotal to the conditions through which we first witness Anne's agency.

In *Narrative Skepticism*, her study on moral agency in fiction, Linda S. Raphael devotes a chapter to *Persuasion* in which she explores passion and reason. This analysis, while it again does not argue for Anne's complete agency, does indeed seem to support a reading of Anne as a character of reason. In her introduction to the book, Raphael states that "Anne's breach of her engagement had been based on not only persuasion, but reason" (19). Yet, it was not her own reason, for it was upon the advice, the reason, of Lady Russell that Anne terminated her engagement (29). Raphael also discusses the importance of Anne's mother upon her own character, as this is from whom she acquires her sense of responsibility and rationality (41). And though Raphael claims that Anne refuses to take responsibility for the decision to end the engagement by claiming that it was in Wentworth's best interests, she does provide Anne with moral agency in that she is able to subdue her passions (38-39). Perhaps the clearest indicator of Anne's agency can be found in Raphael's statement that "in spite of her marginal status, she finds a way to have some power" (41) – and, as discussed earlier, agency involves the ability to exert power. Raphael may not discuss whether or not Anne does exert this power that she has, but that Anne does have power inherently moves her closer to agency, as she can, presumably, with that power, choose to act or not to act.

While Hardy and Raphael each focus on Anne Elliot for one chapter, Jocelyn Harris devotes an entire book, *A Revolution Almost beyond Expression: Jane Austen's Persuasion*, to the novel. Most of Harris's book mentions and discusses Anne throughout,

even if she is not the focus of every chapter. Like Raphael, Harris also mentions emotion and reason, but notes them as “gendered hierarchies that are being broken down” (18). One example of this is found in her discussion of Hazlitt’s views on women as less capable of rationality (26). According to Harris, Austen’s text begins to break this down through Anne’s conversation with Harville in which “Anne argues that brute strength does not affect intensity of feeling” (26). Though she does not directly speak of agency, Harris’s analysis of reason and rationality does at least imply agency, particularly when she discusses the ending of the novel in which Anne “takes the initiative in ‘proposing’ to him” and that “the consent of their elders is pretty much irrelevant to them” (34). While the rest of her study includes further comments on rationality, duty, and ancestry, I plan to expand upon her claims of reason as the paper continues its argument for Anne’s agency.

In arguing for Anne’s agency, I will begin by examining her agency when it is most obvious. As readers, we perceive that in certain moments and under certain conditions, Anne is able to act with authority. These brief glimpses of agency appear to only occur in moments of crisis, such as the incident at Lyme – moments that involve a dissonance between emotion and reason. In a surface reading, the only times in which Anne appears to be capable of agency is when there is a conflict between emotion and reason; other characters become incapacitated by their emotions and lose their ability to reason. Anne, however, maintains her rationality and reason, and thus is able to perform agency in these moments – she is, in essence, the only one able to do so. Following a discussion of these moments, I will commence a reexamination of the “passive”

moments. To do this, I will, briefly, discuss how the text seemingly portrays her as lacking agency. Then, I will provide an analysis of moments in which she has indirect agency, followed by moments of direct agency. Indirect agency simply refers to agency that an individual (in this case, Anne) exhibits through another character; for example, Anne at one point is able to exhibit agency through Mrs. Russell. This type of agency also refers to decisions that may appear submissive or lacking agency – such as choosing to be persuaded. Direct agency is the observable action that is easily identified as authoritative or agentive. It is the undoubted ability to exert power and the act of exerting that power. Not only will I discuss these moments of indirect and direct agency, but also how these moments speak against three social expectations of women: (1) young women should marry within their own class (or above it), (2) young women should seek and accept (obey) the advice of older, typically female, mentors, and (3) young women should act in obedience to the direction of those of higher social standing. Ultimately, these social expectations combine to state that a young woman should be persuadable by those in authority; I argue that this novel criticizes and combats that expectation.

As previously mentioned, the elements that appear as essential for Anne's agency are an overabundance of emotion and lack of rationality in the characters around her. The first scene that provides Anne with almost complete agency in these conditions occurs at Uppercross. When little Charles is brought home because he injured his collarbone, there is panic and Anne is the one to take charge:

It was an afternoon of distress, and Anne had everything to do at once – the apothecary to send for – the father to have pursued and informed – the mother to

support and keep from hysterics – the servants to control – the youngest child to banish, and the poor suffering one to attend and soothe; - besides sending, as soon as she recollected it, proper notice to the other house, which brought her an accession rather of frightened, enquiring companions, than of very useful assistants. (Austen 57-58)

If it was not Anne's child and the mother was present, why was Anne left to do all of those things, like sending for the apothecary and soothing the child? The text states that she had to keep the mother calm, and as the mother was not calm, she was not in a rational mind frame to attend to the other tasks. Thus, Anne at that moment had to be the one to act. The conditions are now set for Anne's agency—the characters around her are distraught and inhibited by their emotions, while Anne suppresses her emotions. This scene shows Anne as controlled and in charge; even if she was not completely calm herself, even if her mind and nerves were strained, she is the one that is able to suppress those emotions of panic in order to accomplish the necessary tasks. Through this, she performs an agency that, seemingly, has previously not been granted to her, illustrating the idea that her agency derives from crisis and the inability of those around her to make rational decisions.

This seemingly conflicting aspect of Anne's character is revealed again while the group of friends are in Lyme. In different places in the text, Anne has been depicted as a character easily influenced, as well as one who struggles to control and handle her inward emotions, as evidenced when she attempts to isolate herself to deal with her emotions. At Lyme, however, her characterization appears to shift, and this incident becomes, as scholar John Wiltshire puts it, “the turning point both in the relationship of Anne and

Wentworth, and in Anne's narrative position" (Wiltshire 80). Wiltshire's analysis, then, exemplifies the importance of this scene textually and regarding Anne's characterization. When Louisa jumps from a higher part of the Cobb to the lower, missing Captain Wentworth's arms, she falls, slams her head against the rocks, and knocks herself unconscious. At this point, every member of the party reacts in various manners, from fainting to panicking – except Anne. Though she is undoubtedly shocked by the fall – “The horror of that moment to all who stood around” – she is the only one capable of issuing orders calmly (Austen 118).

Captain Wentworth, who had caught her up, knelt with her in his arms, looking on her with a face as pallid as her own, in an agony of silence. “She is dead! She is dead!” screamed Mary, catching hold of her husband, and contributing with his own horror to make him immovable; and in another moment, Henrietta, sinking under the conviction, lost her senses too, and would have fallen on the steps, but for Captain Benwick and Anne, who caught and supported her between them.

“Is there no one to help me?” were the first words which burst from Captain Wentworth, in a tone of despair and as if all his own strength were gone.

“Go to him, go to him,” cried Anne, “for heaven's sake go to him. I can support her myself. Leave me, and go to him. Rub her hands, rub her temples; here are salts, - take them, take them.”

Captain Benwick obeyed, and Charles at the same moment, disengaging himself from his wife, they were both with him; and Louisa was raised up and supported more firmly between them, and every thing was done that Anne had prompted, but in vain; while Captain Wentworth, staggering against the wall for his support, exclaimed in the bitterest agony,

“Oh God! Her father and mother!”

“A surgeon!” said Anne.

He caught the word; it seemed to rouse him at once, and saying only, “True, true, a surgeon this instant,” was darting away, when Anne eagerly suggested,

“Captain Benwick, would it not be better for Captain Benwick? He knows where a surgeon is to be found.”

Every one capable of thinking felt the advantage of the idea, and in a moment (it was all done in rapid moments) Captain Benwick had resigned the poor corpse-like figure entirely to the brother’s care, and was off for town with the utmost rapidity. (118-119)

This scene illustrates that Anne has the ability to make decisions and to instruct others. In this instance, Anne defies social norms by flipping them; rather than remaining the passive character of inferior social standing—at least in regards to some of the crowd gathered—she assumes authority by instructing others in what to do. Following Benwick’s departure for a surgeon, the narrator describes the scene and Anne’s part in it:

Anne, attending with all the strength and zeal, and thought, which instinct supplied, to Henrietta, still tried, at intervals, to suggest comfort to the others, tried to quiet Mary, to animate Charles, to assuage the feelings of Captain Wentworth. Both seemed to look to her for directions. (Austen 119)

Just as in previous situations of agency for Anne, there is a disparity between emotion and reason.

The descriptions and imagery that Austen provides in this scene allow the reader to vividly imagine the events as they occur. This picture also includes the various emotions of the cast of characters. Louisa is unconscious, an effect of the fall. Captain Wentworth is overcome with despair, and is unable to do much apart from sob and utter asides about Louisa’s mother and father. Henrietta faints and collapses, and thus must be held up. Mary clutches at her husband and goes into hysterics. Captain Benwick looks on

in shock, while Charles is frozen in shock. At this moment, emotions have run much too high within any of these characters for them to act rationally.

Anne is the first to regain the capacity of mind to act, sending Benwick to assist Wentworth. Her agency, her authority, is further attested to in this situation when Charles pleads for further instruction: “Anne, Anne...what is to be done next? What, in heaven’s name, is to be done next?” (120). Though the narrator, perhaps sarcastically, has stated a few sentences earlier that these three characters (Wentworth, Charles, and Anne) were completely rational, that does not appear to be wholly accurate for the two males. Captain Wentworth and Charles are more rational than they were, but still unable to logically decide on the next best action. Anne, however, is completely rational, and seems never to have lost that rationality. Thus, because she is the only one capable of rationality, she acquires an opportunity to exhibit her agency, and unhesitatingly takes it. In other words, the construction of Anne as a rational character within crisis provides particular moments in which the readers can perceive Anne’s agency.

Anne’s agency is evidenced in another scene at the end of the novel. In this scene, she is having a friendly, but intense, debate with Captain Harville regarding constancy. This scene is interesting for many reasons, one of which is that this is the most in depth conversation that the readers witness from Anne. She speaks more in this scene, clearly articulating her thoughts to Captain Harville. Although John Wiltshire claims that the assertiveness displayed in this scene is both a narrative and psychological development, I would argue that it is more narrative (80). Just as Anne possesses agency throughout the text, she also possesses the capacity for assertiveness, but does not exert that ability until

this scene. As she exhibits more of her own agency, she then also appears to be more assertive. In the conversation between Anne and Captain Harville, Wiltshire notes, “The dialogue begins quietly but rises in seriousness and commitment, as Anne’s responses become longer, more assertive, more eloquent” (81). Anne is speaking her thoughts without qualm, and is doing so to a male, with “intense personal feeling” (82). This not only reveals her agency, but also speaks to what Jane Austen has accomplished at this moment. In the words of John Wiltshire, “Jane Austen has found a way that gives her heroine the initiative, and gives her, finally, the heroine’s place” (82). By this scene, readers can perceive her much more clearly as an active character, a heroine with agency.

These situations all seem to have one thing in common – crisis, and the inability of her friends, or family members, to make wise and rational decisions. These are crucial elements to Anne’s agency. But we can also see that there does not have to be a crisis for Anne to have agency. In her conversation with Captain Harville, there is no real crisis at hand. They are simply having an intense discussion. But, throughout the conversation and even when it becomes heated, she retains her rationality. These scenes, then, not only illustrate Anne’s capacity for agency, but they also imply that Anne’s agency is authorized by her rationality. It is because she remains rational that she can exhibit agency in these moments of crisis and intensity. In his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, John Wiltshire argues for character development that stems from emotional struggles. He discusses the emotional struggles of Anne, and how these struggles and painful experiences have caused her to obtain “a mature, if tenuous, accommodation” (77). Wiltshire explains that throughout her struggle, the main battle

for her is between her emotions and being sensible or rational – she wants to maintain her rationality, which then shows in later circumstances. As a character that has had to hide and control her emotions throughout the novel, it is logical that she is then able to control her emotions in the presence of others and in these critical moments. This control, then, allows her to remain rational and act with authoritative agency – but she does not have to be surrounded by people who have lost their rationality in order for her to possess agency, as witnessed in her conversation with Captain Harville and as I will further show in the following sections of this paper.

Reexamining moments in which Anne appears passive⁴, such as her broken engagement to Captain Wentworth, allow us to interpret them with a new lens based on the knowledge that she does have agency. Even if readers only witness that agency in moments of crisis, once it is observed, readers, if they so choose, could flip back through other scenes of the story, even ones where initially readers would not have perceived her to have agency, and discover that Anne did indeed possess and exhibit agency in those moments. To show her agency in these moments, I will start by illustrating and analyzing how the novel portrays her as passive on the surface, and then discuss how, once below the surface, we can see that she does exhibit agency throughout the entirety of the text.

Anne Elliot may be the protagonist of the story, but she appears in many respects as an underrated and passive protagonist. This portrayal is developed by her family, as well as by the narrator. From the start, her father describes her as “of very inferior value”

⁴ By passive, I simply mean, for this paper, not active – lacking agency.

(Austen 5). This statement both presents a surface description of Anne and also clearly depicts her father's biased opinion of her. He does not think highly, perhaps not much at all, of his middle child. But what does the narrator tell the reader? On the surface, the narrative voice seems to agree with this view of the father, but deeper analysis of the tone reveals a different message.

Narrative tone and voice is central to Jane Austen's novels, and this is an aspect about which even early 19th Century readers, or critics, were aware. Rowland Grey, the pseudonym for English writer Lilian Kate Rowland Brown, speaks to Austen's narrative voice when she notes the significance of Archbishop Whately for pointing "out that her [Jane Austen's] humor was her strongest, her impregnable point" (Grey 39). Archbishop Whately makes this claim by comparing her to Shakespeare in that "Like him, she shows as admirable a discrimination in the characters of fools as of people of sense ; a merit which is far from common" ("*Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*" 362). Austen uses this humor throughout all of her novels. And although Grey notes that "the spirit of humor is less manifestly apparent in it [*Persuasion*]," she concedes that it is also "never wholly wanting" (48). There may be less humor, or perhaps the humor is simply less apparent, but it is still there, and as a result the narrative tone is more complicated than what appears on the surface. The narrative tone of the novel serves multiple functions, from revealing the views of Anne's family and friends to offering a separate view through irony.

In addition, Anne is not even mentioned by name until the fourth page of the novel, and it is not until the second chapter that Anne appears as the possible protagonist;

one might not realize with certainty that she is indeed the protagonist until chapter four or five. John Wiltshire notes this in his analysis of the text, saying much the same thing, that “Anne Elliot is mentioned very early in *Persuasion*, but several chapters pass before this possible or potential heroine comes into her own in its pages” (76). This structure itself seems to portray her as passive, or perhaps unimportant, as do the narrator’s descriptions of her: “...Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character...was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way; - she was only Anne” (Austen 6). This description aligns with, and contains, the family view, but it also contains an ironic tone.

In a similar manner, the narrator also explains that “Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early; and as even in its height, her father had found little to admire in her...there could be nothing in them now...to excite his esteem” (6). The narrator first states positive traits about Anne, revealing a disjuncture from the family views. Yet, though containing irony, the passages still reveal her father’s opinion of her. The first quote also illustrates her passivity in allowing others to obtain what they desire regardless of her own wishes and alludes to her susceptibility to persuasion. The concept that “her convenience was always to give way,” though spoken with irony, still suggests that Anne submitted to the will of others often. This predisposition in her character is evident throughout the text, though in lessening degrees, and is particularly evident in the relationships she has with other characters. Yet, what I will argue in full later, this predisposition to submit does not inherently strip her of agency; rather, I argue that she displays agency in her decision to submit.

While there are passive moments throughout the text, Anne's agency becomes more visible as the novel continues. This progression aligns with the frame of the novel, as John Wiltshire clearly articulates in his description of Anne: "Anne is without power in her family circle as she is at first without dramatic prominence in the text, but the narrative becomes gradually suffused with her presence, idioms, and approach" (Wiltshire 76). Due to her lack of power within the family, it is not surprising that she is not consulted by her father and Elizabeth when they are discussing financial issues. Yet, this episode in the novel allots Anne with indirect agency, gained through the character of Lady Russell. After Mr. Elliot asks her for advice, Lady Russell

drew up plans of economy, she made exact calculations, and she did, what nobody else thought of doing, she consulted Anne, who never seemed considered by the others as having any interest in the question. She consulted, and in a degree was influenced by her, in marking out the scheme of retrenchment, which was at last submitted to Sir Walter. (Austen 13)

This scene does two things. It further confirms the family's opinion of her as not worth consulting and not worth listening to, while also providing her with agency, albeit indirectly. The fact that Lady Russell decided to consult her also shows that Lady Russell thought much more highly of her than her own family and trusted Anne's advice enough to include it in Lady Russell's recommendations to Sir Elliot and Elizabeth.

This scene also portrays a form of indirect agency, for though it shows a different aspect of Anne's character, it is not full agency since the reader can infer that Anne's advice would not have been given if not for a mediator. Even though Anne does not have direct agency in this situation, the circumstances still reveal the recurring conditions

under which Anne's agency is typically observable. These conditions revolve around the conflicts between emotion and reason. In this scenario, Sir Elliot and Elizabeth are absorbed in their emotion of pride, and thus "neither of them [were] able to devise any means of lessening their expenses without compromising their dignity, or relinquishing their comforts in a way not to be borne" (10). Because of their pride and distress, they are unable to make rational decisions. Anne, on the other hand, is separated from this high pride and distress and thus able to think rationally and logically, providing suggestions and reform that her father and sister would not themselves have considered. This scene, then, illustrates the circumstances within which Anne noticeably possesses agency. It is still not full agency, though, for when Anne is brought into the conversation later in discussing where the family should repair to, Anne's own wishes to remain in the country go unheard and largely ignored. Though Anne's agency here is only indirect, it is still only in a moment of crisis, or even potential crisis, that Anne appears to have any agency at all.

Anne also exhibits indirect agency during her stay with Mary at Uppercross Cottage. When the Elliot family departs Kellynch Hall, Anne joins her younger sister, Mary, at her and her husband's home. Anne's mere act of going to Uppercross is a sign of agency, as the text implies that she could have declined to go:

To be claimed as a good, though in an improper style, is at least better than being rejected as no good at all; and Anne, glad to be thought of some use, glad to have any thing marked out as a duty, and certainly not sorry to have the scene of it in the country, and her own dear country, *readily agreed to stay*. (Austen 36, emphasis mine)

The fact that Anne “agreed to stay” means that she chose, she made the decision, to stay with Mary rather than going on to Bath with her father and sister. So, even if Mary’s request seemed more of a requirement or demand, Anne still had the ability to choose whether or not to obey. And in this instance, she chose to submit and visit with her sister.

During her stay, the Musgroves welcome her into their daily lives, from helping with the kids to being part and parcel to their own arguments. In fact, the narrator explains:

One of the least agreeable circumstances of her residence there, was her being treated with too much confidence by all parties, and being too much in the secret of the complaints of each house. Known to have some influence with her sister, she was continually requested, or at least receiving hints to exert it, beyond what was practicable. “I wish you could persuade Mary not to be always fancying herself ill,” was Charles’s language; and, in an unhappy mood, thus spoke Mary; – “I do believe if Charles were to see me dying, he would not think there was any thing the matter with me. I am sure, Anne, if you would, you might persuade him that I really am very ill – a great deal worse than I ever own. (Austen 47-48)

It is not just the discussions between husband and wife that envelope Anne, but also those between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. In discussing servants one day, Mrs. Musgrove tells Anne,

“I make a rule of never interfering in any of my daughter-in-law’s concerns, for I know it would not do; but I shall tell *you*, Miss Anne, because you may be able to set things to rights, that I have no very good opinion of Mrs. Charles’s nursery-maid...Mrs. Charles quite swears by her, I know; but I just give you this hint, that you may be upon the watch; because, if you see any thing amiss, you need not be afraid of mentioning it.” (49)

These instances, while they are complaints, are also requests for Anne to do something about these issues. In a contribution to the January 1821 edition of *The Quarterly Review*, Archbishop Whately reasons that Anne is “the only one of the family possessed of good sense” and as a result,

when on a visit to her sister, is, by that sort of instinct which generally points out to all parties the person on whose judgement and temper they may rely, appealed to in all the little family differences which arise, and which are described with infinite spirit and detail. (“*Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*” 368)

These “little family differences” include the disputes between Mary and her husband, into which they often attempt to draw Anne, as discussed above. Whether it is because she is the only one “possessed of good sense” or not, the family, whether that be Mary, Charles, or the other Musgroves, believes that she has the power, the agency, to move on their behalf. They expect her to be able to hold influence over these individuals and to be able to persuade the said person to a particular way of thinking. These examples reveal that, even though her father and other sister do not seem to think she has any use or any agency, the people at Uppercross are of a different opinion. For, if they did not believe Anne capable of agency, they would not speak their complaints to her – at least, not in the hope that she might be able to act in regards to those situations. They believe that she has influence – and if she has influence, she must have agency.

One scene that illustrates well Anne’s agency occurs while she is still staying with Mary. Following little Charles’s injury, discussed earlier in the paper, Mr. Musgrove, Mary’s husband, decides he will go to his father’s house for dinner to meet Captain

Wentworth. Since little Charles is doing better and the doctor sees no danger for the child, Mr. Musgrove sees no reason as to why he should not go, leaving his wife and sister-in-law to care for the child. Mary, however, is opposed to this idea because she would also like to go to dinner.

“So! You and I are to be left to shift by ourselves, with this poor sick child – and not a creature coming near us all the evening! I knew how it would be. This is always my luck! If there is any thing disagreeable going on, men are always sure to get out of it, and Charles is as bad as any of them...So, here he is to go away and enjoy himself, and because I am the poor mother, I am not to be allowed to stir; – and yet, I am sure, I am more unfit than any body else to be about the child.” (Austen 60)

Once Anne realizes that Mary would like to go, she suggests that Mary tell Charles that she is going with him, and Anne offers to stay at the house – Charles’s reaction and attempt to have Anne join them later further reveals Anne’s own agency:

“This is very kind of Anne,” was her husband’s answer, “and I should be very glad to have you go; but it seems rather hard that she should be left at home by herself, to nurse our sick child.”

Anne was now at hand to take up her own cause, and the sincerity of her manner being soon sufficient to convince him, where conviction was at least very agreeable, he had no further scruples as to her being left to dine alone, though he still wanted her to join them in the evening, when the child might be at rest for the night, and kindly urged her to let him come and fetch her; but she was quite unpersuadable; and this being the case, she had ere long the pleasure of seeing them set off together in high spirits. (62)

This particular passage is significant, but easily missed. Not only does Anne hold her own in this discussion, but she also exhibits agency through her arguments and decision making. She is the one that suggests Mary go with her husband. She makes the decision

to stay behind and watch the child. And she is successful in convincing Charles not to come back and pick her up later in the evening – in fact, the text tells us that “she was quite unpersuadable” (62). Despite his attempts to persuade her, she chose not to be persuaded, but rather persuaded them. It would be difficult here to ignore her agency, even if it is not as direct as in the previously discussed moments of crisis. Nevertheless, it exists, and illustrates that, even when it is not as observable, her agency is still present throughout the different scenes of the text.

The scenes that depict Anne as passive do not solely happen toward the beginning of the novel. Rather, one scene in which she apparently behaves in a passive manner occurs after the scene at Lyme. Following the incident on the Cobb, Captain Wentworth wants Anne to remain in Lyme; Anne readily gives assent, perhaps also because this is what she desires to do. Yet, when Mary is informed and complains, Anne is sent back to Uppercross and Mary stays. Even though Anne would rather stay, Mary assumes authority over Anne because of her perceived social standing above Anne, and so Anne leaves in order to appease the anger of her sister. Again, this scene complicates Anne’s agency, as the narrator explains that “Anne had never submitted more reluctantly to the jealous and ill-judging claims of Mary” (124). If Anne’s submission was reluctant, does that signify a level of agency? One might argue that Anne, rather than behaving passively, enacted agency in an attempt to stay. Still, this agency is again seemingly taken from her as she is either instructed to leave, or chooses to do so only to appease her sister. It is seemingly taken from her because, as mentioned in the introduction, persuasion, and even instruction, comes with a choice to submit or not. So, even in this

scene when she is essentially being told to leave, she enacts agency in choosing to listen, because, had she wanted to do so, she could have chosen to stay. In either situation, this scene and conflicted interpretation of Anne's behavior assist in the development of an alternate perspective of Anne as more than a passive recipient of the world around her.

These moments involving Mary do not just illustrate Anne's agency, but also provide examples of one of the societal norms portrayed, and critiqued, in the text. Mary, the youngest sister, is very conscious of societal standards and what they say about social hierarchy. She states to Anne "that Mrs. Musgrove was very apt not to give her the precedence that was her due, when they dined at the Great House with other families; and she did not see any reason why she was to be considered so much at home as to lose her place" (49). She believes, or knows, that as the daughter of a baronet, she should be seated in a higher position than Mrs. Musgrove, her husband's mother, at dinners. Mary also knows that Anne is socially inferior to her because Mary is married, while Anne is not.⁵ As a result, Mary believes that her desires should and do take precedence over Anne's desires, and that Anne should be willing to accept the instruction of the younger, but socially elevated, sister. This is seen on numerous occasions, such as when Mary wants to go for a walk, does not want to go to a dinner, or, for a specific example, desires to stay in Lyme despite the obvious benefits of her leaving and Anne remaining, as discussed in the preceding paragraph.

⁵ See Notes (Austen 391). Mary took precedence over Anne because she was married. But as Anne is older, she regains her precedence at dinner gatherings after she gets married.

Anne's characterization as docile, accommodating, and yielding is most vividly portrayed in the recounting of her short engagement to Wentworth prior to the current action of the novel. Though her father opposed the engagement, the text implies that he made no actions to stop it from happening (28). In fact, the narrator informs the reader that Anne might have been able "to withstand her father's ill-will," and thus overcome his opposition (29). This implication seems to portray a degree of agency that is in misalignment with both Anne's characterization as passive and contemporary cultural standards for women, but is quickly stifled by the advice and persuasion of another.

The task of convincing Anne to call off her engagement to Wentworth fell to Lady Russell, thus exhibiting the significance of female friendship, or mentorship. Lady Russell firmly believed that the marriage "must not be, if by any fair interference of friendship, any representations from one who had almost a mother's love, and mother's rights, it would be prevented" (29). In this situation, as a girl of nineteen years of age, Anne had a decision to make, and that decision aligned with the descriptions given of her at this point in the novel, as well as with societal views. Thus, Anne "was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing – indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it" (30). This situation and its descriptions in the text further reveal not only Anne's characterization as passive and yielding, but also illustrate the significance of the constructed intimacy of this friendship on Anne's character as it negates Anne's own perceived agency in favor of Lady Russell's authoritative advice.

Once again, a cursory reading of the text supports the above example as a negation of Anne's agency. A closer examination, however, allows for an argument that

Anne still possessed agency. For, though she was highly influenced by the opinions of Lady Russell, the decision was ultimately Anne's to make. The narrator explains that Anne only chose to follow the advice because she believed that, in doing so, she was acting "for *his* advantage" and that the decision was in his best interest (30). Does this then provide her with agency, since she made the final decision? It would seem so. Yet, the narrator is also clear on the level of influence Lady Russell maintained over Anne: "Such opposition, as these feelings produced, was more than Anne could combat" (29). Here, persuasion becomes coercion, seeming to strip Anne of the slight agency she otherwise would have maintained in this situation. And still, the ending scene between Anne and Captain Wentworth provides additional room to think that Anne still had agency:

"I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and the wrong, I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me, she was in the place of a parent. Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides; and for myself, I certainly never should, in any circumstance of tolerable similarity, give such advice. But I mean, that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience. I have now, as far as such a sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion." (267-268).

Even the mere fact that Anne was debating whether or not she was wrong implies that there had to have been some degree of choice, some degree of agency – otherwise, she could not be held accountable. As it stands, she has been thinking whether she was right

or wrong in her decision to submit to the advice of Lady Russell. And though she decides that, for her, it was the right decision, she notes that, placed in a similar predicament, she would not give the same advice to another woman. Thus, she acknowledges her own agency, while also providing a conflicted view of the act of persuasion.

Early on, when Anne is persuaded by Lady Russell to end the engagement with Wentworth, her friend (or mentor) is the one more fully in control; Anne is full of emotions, both of love and hurt as she experiences the disapproval of father and mentor. As a result, she yields to what she believes to be the mind of rationality; this is confirmed when she states even at the end of the novel to Wentworth that she “was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now” (Austen 267). This reinforces the conditions seemingly necessary for agency in this text; because Anne is, in this moment, overcome by her emotions, she is not capable of that agency that she displays in other moments. Lady Russell, while she is upset, provides what is seen as logical advice. Given Anne’s emotional state and her intimate relationship with and trust of Lady Russell, Anne follows this advice, believing it to be accurate and friendly advice – she willingly adhered to societal expectations.

In listening to Lady Russell’s advice, Anne accepted two societal standards portrayed in the novel – marrying within one’s own class and accepting the advice of a mentor. Much like Anne’s own analysis in her discussion with Captain Wentworth at the end of the novel, Archbishop Whately discusses the importance of listening to wise advice:

To disregard the advice of sober-minded friends on an important point of conduct, is an imprudence we would by no means recommend; indeed, it is a species of selfishness, if, in listening only to the dictates of passion, a man sacrifices to its gratification the happiness of those most dear to him as well as his own.
(*Northanger Abbey and Persuasion* 374-75)

Anne follows this societal norm by seeking advice from one much older than herself and then following the advice – this again shows her agency. She chose to speak to Lady Russell concerning the issue, and was then willing to accept Lady Russell’s verdict. The friendship, mentorship, that exists between Anne and Lady Russell supports this norm; Austen’s text, however, seems to fight this norm based on the multitudinous events that occur throughout the novel that bring Anne and Captain Wentworth together again. And just as it critiques that norm, the fact that Anne and Wentworth eventually marry acts as a critique against Sir Walter’s principle norm that individuals marry within their same class. Lady Russell too agrees with this sentiment, as “she had prejudices on the side of ancestry; she had a value for rank and consequence” (Austen 12). It is this acceptance of societal norms of marriage and mentorship that causes her to advise Anne against marriage to Captain Wentworth, and it is Anne’s acceptance, at the time, of the expectation that she would obey Lady Russell that causes her to consent to that advice and break off the engagement. Willingly and consciously, she performs agency in this decision to be persuaded and to end her relationship with Wentworth.

While many of the instances of Anne’s agency may be indirect, there are moments of direct agency that deserve discussion. The first of these is Anne’s relationship with Mrs. Smith and her willingness to spend time with her old schoolfellow,

despite the disapproval of her father. The narrator informs us that Anne had been visiting Mrs. Smith for some time “before the existence of such a person was known in Camden-place” (Austen 170). This aspect alone reveals agency on Anne’s part, for not only did she take it upon herself to make the visits, showing that she has the capacity to decide for herself how to spend her days, but she also chose to willingly conceal her actions from her family. When the family finally does discover the existence of Mrs. Smith, Sir Elliot is appalled at his daughter:

They were not much interested in any thing relative to Anne, but still there were questions enough asked, to make it understood what this old schoolfellow was; and Elizabeth was disdainful, and Sir Walter severe.

“Westgate-buildings!” said he; “and who is Miss Anne Elliot to be visiting in Westgate-buildings? – A Mrs. Smith. A widow Mrs. Smith, – and who was her husband? One of the five thousand Mr. Smiths whose names are to be met with every where. And what is her attraction? That she is old and sickly. – Upon my word, Miss Anne Elliot, you have the most extraordinary taste! Every thing that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations are inviting to you. But surely, you may put off this old lady till to-morrow. She is not so near her end, I presume, but that she may hope to see another day...A poor widow, barely able to live, between thirty and forty – a mere Mrs. Smith, an every day Mrs. Smith, of all people and all names in the world, to be the chosen friend of Miss Anne Elliot, and to be preferred by her, to her own family connections among the nobility of England and Ireland! Mrs. Smith, such a name!” (170-171)

Despite the scolding of her father and his entreaties for her to join them and break her engagement with Mrs. Smith, Anne boldly stands up to her father, telling him that “I do not think I can put off my engagement, because it is the only evening for some time which will at once suit her and myself” (171). And her boldness is not in vain – she keeps her engagement with Mrs. Smith while the family goes to visit Lady Dalrymple. Thus, in

this scenario, readers can witness direct agency from Anne as she stands up to her father and maintains her own will – while also respecting her father enough to choose to withhold words “in defence of *her* friend’s not very dissimilar claims to theirs,” referring to her father’s and sister’s friendship with Mrs. Clay (171). This scene illustrates her own agency, and her capacity for self-control within that agency.

This scenario also very clearly reveals Sir Elliot’s prejudice for rank and title. Though he is not very directly speaking about marriage in this scene, it is clear that he believes his family, even his daughter whom he does not seem to think much of at other times, are above spending time with those of a lower social rank. And yet, Austen’s text fights this standard, this prejudice. The text fights it in Anne’s own willingness, her own preference, to spend time with Mrs. Smith over her own family. It further fights it through the eyes of Lady Russell and Mr. Elliot (a relative of Anne). Anne discovers that “Her kind, compassionate visits to this old schoolfellow, sick and reduced, seemed to have quite delighted Mr. Elliot,” who “thought her a most extraordinary young woman” (172). If Lady Russell and Mr. Elliot held the same views as her father or did not approve of her actions, then they would not have spoken so highly of her, thus rejecting Sir Elliot’s views of rank and title. Additionally, Anne’s agency in the following scene will combat the societal standards of marriage to which both her father and sister adhere.

Following her visit with Mrs. Smith and the praise she receives from Lady Russell and Mr. Elliot, she discovers the intentions of Lady Russell to attempt to pair her with Mr. Elliot. While this seems favorable, Anne was not in agreement, telling Lady Russell that “Mr. Elliot is an exceedingly agreeable man, and in many respects I think highly of

him, ... but we should not suit" (173). There is not much of an explanation given at this point, but Anne does still hold agency in her decision to tell Lady Russell that she does not believe it will work, and that she is not particularly interested. Anne herself knows that "She could never accept him" (174). Her agency is viewed more firmly as the text progresses along this storyline; once she discovers portions of his past from Mrs. Smith and deduces more of the reasons why he is now interested in the Elliots, when he had neglected them for so long, her mind is set even more against Mr. Elliot than it was prior. She assures Mrs. Smith that she has no intentions whatsoever to marry Mr. Elliot, repeating multiple times that "he is nothing to me" and "I shall not accept him. I assure you I shall not" (213). Now, she has stated this both to Lady Russell and to Mrs. Smith, and both times very firmly.

She further explains to Captain Wentworth, in response to his fear that she would be persuaded by Lady Russell to marry Mr. Elliot, that he "should have distinguished" and realized the implausibility of that persuasion –

"You should not have suspected me now; the case so different, and my age so different. If I was wrong in yielding to persuasion once, remember that it was to persuasion exerted on the side of safety, not of risk. When I yielded, I thought it was to duty; but no duty could be called in aid here. In marrying a man indifferent to me, all risk would have been incurred, and all duty violated." (265-266)

This statement shows her boldness and agency in refusing the hand of Mr. Elliot. Meanwhile, it also reveals her thoughts regarding persuasion, and again infers the existence of agency within persuasion. She asserts that she was, in at least one regard, not wrong, since she believed it to be the right course of action. Thus, she chose her course of

action and chose to be persuaded. But, she claims that, in this new situation, she would not yield to Lady Russell's persuasion, because nothing but risk would occur. She may have been persuaded, and her mind may have been changed, but she accepted the advice and acted on it of her own will, her own agency, further emphasized by her decision to marry Captain Wentworth regardless of approval or disapproval from her family.

Despite the fact that Anne chose to marry Wentworth even if her father disapproved, the narrator informs us that, in actuality, Sir Elliot had no objections because

Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody. He was now esteemed quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him.... (270)

While this appears to fall in line with the societal standards of the time, it does not do so completely; Captain Wentworth, while he is accepted by Sir Elliot, is not of the same rank and title – and yet, Anne still marries him, combating the societal notions of accepted marriage held by her father.

Though Sir Elliot had hoped for his daughters to marry well, he did not much expect them to do so, except for Elizabeth. He hoped and expected that Elizabeth would marry Mr. Elliot, the inheritor of his estate. The narrator tells the readers early on that Elizabeth had “meant to marry him; and her father had always meant that she should” (8). Their anger at his initial withdrawal from the family is not only evident, but exemplifies their belief in the societal norm of marrying within one's own class:

This very awkward history of Mr. Elliot, was still, after an interval of several years, felt with anger by Elizabeth, who had liked the man for himself, and still more for being her father's heir, and whose strong family pride could see only in *him*, a proper match for Sir Walter Elliot's eldest daughter. There was not a baronet from A to Z, whom her feelings could have so willingly acknowledged as an equal. (9)

Elizabeth and her father are frustrated once again at the end of the novel, when Mr. Elliot leaves their presence with Mrs. Clay, not only crushing Elizabeth's hopes, but also ensuring that the property would still be his in time. In this way, the text not only fights this social norm through Anne's agency and marriage, but also through the failure of Elizabeth and her father to secure for her the marriage that they so desired.

The existence of these norms is evident throughout the text, as many characters, including Anne at certain points, adhere to them. Yet, Anne's moments of agency contradict these norms, just as they complicate the reading of her character as solely passive. The fact that Anne is able to perform agency throughout the novel shows that her character is constructed in contrast to the standards of persuasion and obedience expected at the time. It is also not surprising that Jane Austen would write a text that, intentionally or not, critiques the societal standards of her time, and particularly those of persuasion. As the epigraph of this essay reveals, there were real dangers to persuasion, especially when persuasion became coercion, or when someone's advice changed the course of someone else's life. This is portrayed in the novel in regards to the broken engagement of Anne and Wentworth; luckily for them, however, everything worked out in the end. Life does not always happen that way, and Jane Austen would have known this well, having been asked for advice by her niece, Fanny Knight. This request centered on the decision

to marry or not marry a particular suitor; Austen, though she offered potential benefits and consequences of the arrangement, stating that “Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection,” refused to give Fanny a definite answer (*Jane Austen’s Letters* 280). Instead, she told her niece that “you must not let anything depend on my opinion. Your own feelings & none but your own, should determine such an important point” (285). This situation reveals that Austen herself was not an advocate of persuasion. While I do not venture to assert claims related to authorial intent, the novel itself depicts an aversion to persuasion and a critique on the existing social expectations discussed throughout the text and this paper, and as depicted most strongly in relation to Anne’s agency.

Anne’s character, when examined more closely, is complicated; the existence of a complicated character may not be too surprising for an author who’s “forte lay not so much in describing events, as in drawing characters” (“Women as they Are” 449). Austen was adept at writing characters and bringing them to life for the readers. Anne is a prime example, for she reads as an almost life-like heroine; she is not solely passive, nor is she as strong or active as many readers might desire her. Yet, she does perform agency in multiple occasions throughout the text. Typically, and in almost all situations where it is obvious, this agency occurs when there is an increase in the emotional states of those around her. This emotion, whether pride, distress, shock, or something else, overtakes the individuals and renders them incapable of rational thought. To be sure, Anne too has emotions in these moments; she is not heartless or emotionless. However, unlike the others, she is able to suppress her emotions, refusing to allow them to gain control over

her mental faculties. As a result, she is able to maintain rationality, which then creates her opportunity for agency which is, at other times, seemingly denied her by the obstinate views and dominating actions of others. This, then, not only reveals the conditions necessary for readers to witness Anne's emotion, but also reveals the key to understanding her agency as a whole.

In her moments of control and guidance, she is surrounded by intimate friends who are, for the most part, no longer fully rational. In these situations, both at the Cobb and when Mary's son injures himself, she portrays an aura of calmness, despite any panic she may be feeling, and becomes the voice of reason, instructing the others and comforting them. Thus, it is not just development of a dynamic character, but the conditions, situations, and relationships that allow for a reading of Anne Elliot as both yielding and capable of authority and guidance in strained moments. Further, this examination allows for a reading of Anne Elliot not as a passive character, but as an active agent throughout the novel, even in moments of calm and stability. This rereading of Anne Elliot as a heroine who possesses agency allows the novel to offer a social critique of persuasion, its effects, and the issue of female agency. Ultimately, Anne, contrary to the normal view of her as passive, is a character with agency throughout the text. Her agency, as portrayed in the text, appears developmental; however, if we use these moments that show us she has agency and re-examine those moments of passivity, we can perceive that she has agency in those moments as well, and thus maintains agency throughout the novel.

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“SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH MOTHER”:
ALCOHOL, WOMEN, AND RESPECTABILITY
IN JACK COMMON’S *KIDDAR’S LUCK*

This is neither a novel, nor in any sense a work of imagination. Whatever value or interest the following chapters possess must come from the fact that their hero has a real existence. I have tried to set forth, as far as possible in his own words, certain scenes from the life of a young criminal with whom I chanced to make acquaintance, a boy who has grown up in the midst of those who gain their living on the crooked, who takes life and its belongings as he finds them, and is not in the least ashamed of himself.

—Clarence Rook, *The Hooligan Nights:
Being the Life and Opinions of a Young and Impenitent Criminal*

In his *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, J. A. Cuddon notes that a working-class novel “may be defined as a novel that is written by a working-class author and which focuses on the experiences of working people” (775). Typically, these experiences center on the male experiences, both at home and at work – or in the pubs. As Steven Earnshaw points out,

At its most basic, literature has represented features of the drinking place which would be familiar to its audience: the duplicitous alewife, tavern sodality, the attractive barmaid, the sharking landlord, the sottish idler. From there it has been manipulated for religious ends as a den of iniquity, or political ends, as the seed-bed of revolution, and from there on to more general moral purposes: to illustrate its wasteful nature, a repository for sins of idleness, blasphemy, drunkenness, swearing, gluttony and fornication. (13)

The use of literature to depict public houses and their role in working-class life is often, as Earnshaw notes, instrumental in political or religious campaigns; this moral aspect can also be found in Jack Common's writing. For many working-class men, the pubs were a place of leisure and socialization. It would be difficult to write a working-class novel without mentioning pubs. That is not to say that entire works must be about pubs; many are in actuality domestic accounts, discussing scenes from the home life, or they focus on the man's labor – his job and what occurs in the workplace. Despite the centrality of pubs to working-class culture, the focus on the home life is also significant in working-class novels, and mothers are important figures in the text. For instance, even when the storyline does not intricately involve the mother, Richard Hoggart notes that often “many authors from the working-classes, when they write about their childhood, give the women in it so tender and central a place” (228). This is true of Jack Common's writing, as he both shows sympathy for his mother and simultaneously uses his writing to condemn, or at the very least speak out against, women's drinking habits.

In many instances in working-class literature, men go out to the pub and drink, while the women stay home and take care of the family; this pattern is common in many working-class communities, and exists because of the dichotomy between men's work and women's work. Women's work, her duties and responsibilities around the house, were continuous. They did not end just because the day was over, and there was not a set work schedule as there was for men. Yet, despite the never-ending hours and the often hard work of keeping a house clean, their work was not considered as labor. This attitude is depicted clearly by Paul Willis in *Learning to Labor*:

And if the nature of masculinity in work becomes a style of teleology, completion, femininity is associated with a fixed state. It's labor power is considered as an ontological state of being, not a teleological process of becoming. Housework is not completion, it is maintenance of status. Cooking, washing and cleaning reproduce what was there before. Certainly in a sense housework is never completed - but neither is it as difficult or productive as masculine work is held to be. Female domestic work is simply subsumed under being 'mum' or 'housewife.' 'Mum' will always do it, and should always be expected to do it. It is part of the definition of what she is, as the wage packet and the productive world of work is what "dad" is. (151)

In this excerpt, Willis acknowledges and explains the difference between men and women in reference to labor. Based off this explanation, then, woman's work is seen not as labor, but rather simply as part of their tasks as women, as a portion of what defines them as women.

Despite the contradictions between men's work and women's work and its effect on their respective leisure times, there were some instances where the women went with their husbands to the pub. Scenes such as these are evident in works like Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* when Mrs. Crass and Ruth join their husbands. This adventure does not end well for Ruth, though. Despite her desire to spend time with her husband, she proves unable to hold her drink, and eventually stumbles home without her husband in an effort to get back to her child. She is joined along the way by her and her husband's tenant, who proceeds to kiss her and make unwanted sexual advances to her once they arrive home; Ruth was too inebriated to resist any of his advances (Tressell 250-254). This example, then, shows that even when women accompanied their husbands, drinking could have dire consequences for them. Further, it reveals a major argument against women's drinking, that being their inability to hold

their alcohol. Contrary to women joining their husbands in the pubs, in *Kiddar's Luck*, Jack Common portrays a situation in which the mother is seen to enter pubs alone and drink heavily, while her husband is at work on the railroads. This influence of alcohol eventually leads to the dismantling of the mother's ability to effectively raise her children and take care of the home. Through this portrayal, Common reveals that women, like men, drank; yet, the outcomes of such behavior prove to be much worse for women.

This essay argues that through the multiple incidents in the novel, Common condemns the idea of women drinking, especially when that drinking is in excess. In order to establish this argument, I will first start by examining the novel's opening scenes, through which Willie Kiddar, the narrator of the story, disseminates his Grandma Johnson's views on his father, prior to the marriage of Kiddar's parents. These views further help to present a negative view of alcohol before discussing why the act of drinking was discouraged more for women than for men – because it opposed the standard 20th Century British views of respectability and femininity.

In addressing why drinking was discouraged for women, the essay will discuss women's inability to hold their alcohol or moderate their drinking, the standard ideals of respectability and femininity, particularly as related to cleanliness and child-rearing, and the issue of women's work, which was not considered labor, and how this affected the concept of leisure time for women. The discussion of these reasons will form a significant portion of the essay, as they not only explain the negative aspects of women's alcohol consumption, but help to show textually how Common uses the incidents of childhood experiences and the voice of a sympathetic son to criticize drinking.

Additionally, I will discuss, as relevant, the role which mothers played in society and the laws established throughout England's history at that time that had direct impact upon women's drinking, and their methods of acquiring drink. The examination and analyses of these various components will then allow readers to make the supposition that, intentionally or unintentionally, Jack Common's text condemns, or heavily discourages, female drinking.

The opening epigraph makes a claim that could also be applied to Jack Common's work, *Kiddar's Luck*, minus the criminal focus. Rook is making a disclaimer that the work is not fiction – it is not something he made up, but rather a recounting of observations. In Common's case, his work, while seemingly written as a novel, is a loose recounting of his own childhood. As the Dictionary of National Biography explains, "In 1951 Turnstile Press published Common's best-known book, the autobiographical *Kiddar's Luck*, in which he vividly described his childhood on the streets of Edwardian Tyneside, as seen through the lens of his adult socialism" (Myers). It is an interesting, yet little known, piece of working-class literature. Despite this categorization as working-class, Common is unique in the manner that he discusses women, and particularly women's drinking. Hoggart writes in *The Uses of Literacy* that to "write of a working-class mother is to run peculiar risks," mainly because of the "honoured place" that she holds in the child's life (24). While women were often mentioned throughout working-class texts, Hoggart emphasizes that it could be difficult to write of the mother because even though her "own menfolk may appear careless of her for much of the time," they "like to buy ornaments inscribed 'What is home without a

mother', and for years after she has 'gone' will speak lovingly of 'me mam'" (24).

Additionally, it could be tough because of the mother's significant role in the lives of her children and the impact she had upon them, and also because of the potential risk of harming her respectability. Nevertheless, Jack Common writes rather prolifically of the mother figure in this text, both positively and negatively. This focus in the text allows the reader to conclude that, despite the honor and respect accorded to mothers, it was still worth mentioning the negative incidents in order to adequately speak out against females, particularly mothers, drinking alcohol.

Jack Common's *Kiddar's Luck* is a semi-autobiographical novel concerning the experiences of a young male protagonist (from childhood into early adulthood⁶) within a working-class neighborhood in England between 1903 and 1917. Though this story, like many working-class novels, is told from the perspective of a man, it does something that many others do not do in such detail. In this novel, Common depicts women drinking, focusing on Kiddar's mother. The portrayal that Common provides is not in the least positive, but yet his writing does not explicitly state a condemnation of women's drinking. Rather, he leaves it to Kiddar's descriptions and expressed thoughts to reveal implicitly that Kiddar, and by proxy Common himself, does not agree with his mother's actions, even while he is sympathetic to her ailments. Throughout the text, Common shows many of the negative influences that alcohol exerts upon women, often causing

⁶ Not to confuse early adulthood with modern understanding, the term is used here to mean around the age of fourteen, the age when many children left school to find employment.

them to stumble and fall and rendering them incapable of controlling their own bodies, such as when Kiddar's mother spills milk down the front of her dress.

Kiddar's Luck vividly portrays these issues of women's drinking. Without knowing the historical reality, though, it appears just as a story of adolescence that condemns the mother for drinking while at the same time reproaching the father for not being home or for often being argumentative when at home. While this reading of the text is accurate, it fails to account for the novel's engagement with its social context.

Understanding the historical setting, then, allows readers to make and further understand the connections between Common's writing and the world outside his text. Common was not just writing about a fictional place; rather, the issues within his stories were vivid reflections and parallels for the issues that plagued his own childhood and society. Like Kiddar, he was born in 1903 and grew up in Newcastle upon Tyne with a father who worked on the railroads. Both writer and character had an older sister who died young (Myers). Additionally, laws that impacted Kiddar's mother, such as the Children's Act of 1908, impacted women across Britain during that time, because as Peter Haydon explains, "Intended to stop children from running errands, it actually had the effect of preventing women from entering public houses..." (246). These are just a few connections that reveal that Common's writing reflected his own childhood.

The novel begins with Willie Kiddar, the narrator, introducing his mother as a fool and describing how she met his father. In this opening, he quotes his grandmother, who despises her daughter's marriage to "a common workman, one who drinks and is not a good Christian" (Common 1). One can infer from the statement that his grandmother

condemns drinking, both for men and women. Thus, she believes that her daughter is ruining herself by marrying a man who drinks, as exemplified by her statement that her daughter “will never know happiness now” (1). Yet, there is irony in the fact that it is not Kiddar’s father’s drinking that causes problems, financially or otherwise, but his mother’s drinking. There are relatively few times within the novel when the reader sees Kiddar’s father drinking, both in comparison to Kiddar’s mother and to other working class novels. That is not to say, however, that his father abstains from drinking altogether; it is mentioned in one scene that his father does not care who knows that he drinks, but in the same scene, Kiddar implies that his father does not always like to drink in excess: “Because I was outside, my father had an excuse for the curtailment of good cheer which his economics as a raiser of young on a working-man’s wage was asking for” (47). This statement expresses the father’s consciousness of his responsibilities as a husband and father, and his capability to control his alcohol consumption in order to meet those responsibilities. However, the lack of attention to his father’s drinking does serve a different purpose; it places focus and emphasis on the mother, further showing Common’s interest in female drinking and its negative effects.

It is clear that Grandma Johnson disapproves of alcohol in general, no matter whether it is a man or a woman drinking it. Kiddar, however, does not seem to mind that his father will drink on occasion. Yet, his discussions of his mother’s drinking provides a negative response, a discouragement of that drinking. Indeed, as the paper will discuss more fully, he even attempts to persuade his mother to leave the pub. But why is Kiddar’s perspective different? What causes him to criticize his mother’s drinking but not his

father's drinking? As the text demonstrates, the intake of alcohol by women is discouraged largely because it contradicts the twentieth-century British ideals of femininity and respectability. In addition, women's drinking supposedly prevents them from completing their daily domestic tasks. While these anxieties are linked together in the sense that respectability can be correlated with responsibilities, this last issue introduces and correlates to another controversy regarding women's work and its lack of classification as labor. Thus, the contradictions around women's drinking – whether it was acceptable or not acceptable – reflects the contradictions around viewing women's work as labor. During this time period, though women took care of the children and the home, their work, women's work, was not considered as labor. This refusal to label women's work as labor creates complications in the discussion of legitimate leisure and alcohol intake. These issues, portrayed within the text, also serve to reflect and parallel the same issues within the society at the time of Common's childhood.

One of the first indications the readers receive about Kiddar's disapproval of his mother's drinking stems from her inability to hold her alcohol. The ability to control one's drinking and maintain functionality was an important aspect of drinking and respectability.⁷ For instance, in one of the few scenes of Kiddar's father drinking, the narrator states that

⁷ The concept of respectability is paramount to this essay and to the arguments against female drinking. If people, men and women alike, were not concerned with respectability, then there would likely not have been as much force against female drinking, for even the care of children and the fear of neglect was, ultimately, tied up in respectability and ideals of femininity.

father's drinking was different. He didn't flush, stumble over words, or fall down helpless. All that happened as the whiskies twinkled away towards their natural Valhalla, was that the raw edges of his awkward temper wore down. He became almost genial, and, in flashes, even considerate. He was very much all right, and in his charge we came home happily in the shaky old trams which sparked their way over the wind-clutched Byker Bridge. (25)

This quote reveals that Kiddar's father did drink but was capable of controlling the amount he drank and also holding his drink without falling prey to its intoxicating and detrimental effects. His mother, on the other hand, was largely unable to hold her alcohol; as he states, "She had no head for drink" (Common 20). Just a few pages before the description of drinking's effects on his father, he describes a scenario in which he comes home from the pub with his mother.

It is late on a dark night, and mother stays in a glittering smoky shop with big brass doors by which I stand. People go in and out, passing me; one of them stoops to give me a new penny, but I am not happy. We are going home at last, and something is wrong with mother. She is flushed, her hat is falling off, she stumbles against her stick. She wants to turn into the back lane, which alarms me since its feeble gas-lamps have arcs of shadow trembling about them. She falls down and she cannot get up again. I stand crying for a long time. Then a man comes, the German pork-butcher from Heaton Road it is; he lifts her up; we lurch off into the gas-lit mottled dark. (21).

Again, on another night,

We are nearly home, in our own street, and again I know that all is wrong with mother; I talk to her incessantly, making sure I get answers; we get just inside our front door when she collapses; I pull at her and cannot move her a bit; she doesn't talk properly; I look along the dark passage and feel that the house has terrifying things in it; I conquer fear and move a little way towards the kitchen, hoping there may be a light in it; there isn't and the shapes of old coats hanging on the wall are dusty-shouldered in the stray light from the street—they might be alive; I tug at mother, and she tries to rise; what does she say? Get the barber? The door is not

quite closed; I squeeze through and run across to the barber opposite; he is just closing and questions me over and over again before he'll come across and help.
(21-22)

These two examples alone show her incapability to hold her drink, or to even moderate her drink. She continuously drinks too much, becoming drunk on multiple occasions; not only does this lower her respectability in the eyes of the neighbors or any that see her drunken walks, it also leads her to neglect her child:

I am hungry, but mother lies helpless in the armchair; I pester her and she answers with an incoherent snore of broken words; I climb on a chair and get a tin of condensed milk from the table, take it to her; her hand grips it clumsily, she looks at it, and seems to listen to me now; her eyes close and she tilts the tin, slowly the thick condensed milk runs down the blue velvet dress over her breast, a great cream snot on the lovely deep-blue softness I loved so much. I am heartbroken.
(22)

This lack of control and inability to hold drink is part of what Kiddar dislikes, and it is different from his father's drinking. In Kiddar's description of his father's drinking, the fact that he states that he did not stumble over words or fall down indicates an already present condemnation of drinking in women, particularly in his mother, because it affected her in these manners. These examples demonstrate the different effects of drinking on men and women, while also allowing for the condemnation of women's drinking in both circumstances.

As previously mentioned, an individual's ability to hold their drink was directly related to views of respectability. The issue of respectability during the 1900s was one that most everyone faced, but it was particularly important among women of all classes.

Despite working-class status or potential distaste from middle- or upper-class individuals, the women in the working-classes still had high standards for one another in regards to ideas of respectability and femininity. These ideals permeated most every aspect of daily life, from cleaning the house and taking care of the children to conducting oneself in public. This permeation is evidenced by Ellen Ross's article, "'Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep': Respectability in Pre-World War I London Neighborhoods." Ross acknowledges that respectability can be a mystified word, but notes that it often encompassed "dress, public conduct, language, housekeeping, childrearing methods, spending habits, and, of course, sexual behavior" (39). Additionally, Ross notes that

in general, a wife's reputation with her neighbors was a combination of housekeeping skill, ability to dress and control her children reasonably well, her record of returning borrowed items, and keeping up her end in the constant round of street-centered exchanges of goods, advice, and help. (46)

Her essay further explains that, particularly within the working class, cleanliness and tidiness were an important reflection of a woman's level of respectability, as were the dress and condition of one's children. Additionally, a woman's sexual behavior was also under the observation of others. These ideals are also heavily tied up within the tasks that women were expected to complete daily. While the men worked in factories, on railroads, or elsewhere, the women were expected to remain home, keep the house tidy and clean, prepare the meals, take care of household expenses, and properly care for the children. It is the rebellion against these standards through drinking that Common condemns throughout his text.

Public conduct, housekeeping, childrearing methods, and spending habits are the main components of respectability that Common portrays as negatively impacted, or largely ignored, throughout the text. As discussed previously, holding one's drink was important, as it impacted the way in which an individual conducted oneself in public. Additionally, and as stated previously, ideals of femininity and respectability were often correlated with tidiness and cleanliness. Common portrays this correlation clearly with the example of Kiddar's grandmother, Grandma Johnson. He describes her home and its cleanliness in detail:

Her house epitomized her life. She lived in Bath Lane Terrace, hard by the Brewery and opposite a very dead little shop which let out invalid chairs on hire. A highly-respectable street this, particularly on Sundays which was when I most often saw it; three steps up to each pair of downstairs and upstairs flats, every set freshly hearthstoned in white, or cream or blue; iron boot-scrapers carefully blackleaded; and brass bell-pulls fairly shining each a single eye looking on the Sabbath calm You went upstairs to a dim sitting-room in which Grandma held state. Two sets of curtains, one of lace starched to the thickness of perpendicular rice-pudding, the other a weighty velveteen...It was an apartment very suitable for receiving the Vicar in.... (Common 41)

Even though his grandmother lived in poverty, she knew what it meant to be respectable, and thus kept her home as clean and tidy as was possible, even to the extent of closing it off from what she viewed as the less respectable community that surrounded her home. It did not matter to her that she did not have as much money as some people; she still believed it proper and necessary to maintain cleanliness and tidiness at all times. As Kiddar states, "Not that she had any money ever, but she made poverty respectable" (1).

And she did so in every aspect of her home and life, attempting also to teach that to her children and grandchildren.

Likewise, early in the marriage of Kiddar's parents, Mrs. Kiddar upheld the societal expectation of an ideal wife. Kiddar tells the reader that she would often sit up and wait for her husband to arrive home from work. She kept the home clean. Later, after she begins drinking heavily, Kiddar states,

My mother, you see, was letting things drift. Her pride was declining into mere reminiscence most times; only now and again were her energies equal to a total onslaught on the accumulation of neglected duties. Usually, when you came into the living-room, you'd see that the table was spread with newspapers, even those stained with yesterday's spillings; no one had cleared away the half-loaf, the margarine in its paper, the pot of jam or the fly-infested tin of condensed milk. Discarded garments and dirty towels heaped up on the sofa; there were miscellaneous boots about the fender; the hearthrug, which had a hole in it, badly needed a shaking; whatever object had come to rest on the mantelshelf had a coating of dust or a streak of smut from some boisterous fire-puffing when last there was a cross-wind in the chimney. Even the once-gorgeous Front Room had subsided to junk-shop state. (75)

This description shows the extent to which Kiddar's mother stopped cleaning or keeping the house tidy. The idea that her pride was declining reveals that she no longer cared so much about respectability in the grand scheme of things. Ross explains that "When housewives cleaned...it was mainly for each others' inspection, and even offhand accusations of slatternly housekeeping could be devastating" (42). The fact that she allowed her home to become so untidy reveals her choice of alcohol over respectability. In comparison with his grandmother's tidiness and ideals of respectability, this untidiness on the part of Kiddar's mother was, to him, unacceptable. In fact, he disliked the home

being dirty to the extent that he himself began cleaning the house and doing women's work: "Well, I tried to introduce some of this shining order into our own ragtime establishment. It was harder work than ever I'd thought it. It didn't last either. Somebody was always untidying what I'd just tidied. I got vexed with my sisters on this score" (Common 78). This job of cleaning continued until his father called him a Jessie, at which point he gave up the cleaning, noting: "I shrank inside. A Jessie, a little girl doing mammy's housework. He was right, of course. I had the instinct to feel that. Not even for the purest of motives is it good to make a lassie of yourself if you aren't one by nature..." (80). Still, even though he ended up giving it up, his initiative to complete the housework shows both his mother's neglect of it and his disapproval of her carelessness and its cause – alcohol.

Kiddar's mother is not the only woman in the text that consumes alcohol. His mother has a group of friends with whom she drinks, known as the Ma Gang. The Ma Gang, in a sense, functions as an alternative community in which the members can meet and drink together without judgement while also trading amongst each other when finances are tight. Early on, the reader knows that Kiddar does not approve of any of these friends, even before many of them are mentioned. His disapproval of his mother's friends is evident in his description of how his mother began drinking under the influence of Mrs. Buchan, whom he describes as "the first of mother's new series of friends, all of them, without exception, menaces in one degree or another" (19). Here, his condemnation of Mrs. Buchan and the other members of the Ma Gang is clear. He does not like them, as they support each other in their drinking – he does not approve of his mother drinking, as

it distracts her from her various womanly duties, and these women provide her people with whom she is able to drink. Perhaps, if it had not been for Mrs. Buchan, Kiddar's mother would never have started to drink, and their family would never have had to endure a decrease in respectability, both from their mother's public actions and the untidiness of their home.

Before spending afternoons with Mrs. Buchan, Mrs. Kiddar was an ideal wife. However, due to her accident which left her lame, she was often in pain, and she was lonely due to her husband frequently being gone for work. As a result, she began drinking in company with Mrs. Buchan as a means to ease her pain. However, this started her on a path of destruction, as she quickly became addicted to alcohol, preferring to drink over completing her daily tasks. This progression on the part of Mrs. Kiddar aligns well with members of the Temperance Movement who believed that drinking for women, in any amount, was harmful, as even small amounts of consumption at social gatherings were "widely regarded as the precursor" to habitual drunkenness (Moss 157). In Ma Kiddar's case, even though it started off innocently enough, it quickly became a problem that continued throughout the remainder of the text.

The act of women drinking was scrutinized more than that of men because their roles in society were much different. The man was, typically speaking, the breadwinner, while the woman was the housekeeper and caretaker. These differences are clearly exemplified by Richard Hoggart, who notes that "It is a hard life, in which it is assumed that the mother will be 'at it' from getting up to going to bed : she will cook, mend, scrub,

wash, see to the children, shop and satisfy her husband's desires" (24). Additionally, he slightly explains why the woman is the one in charge of the children:

Partly because the husband is at work but also because women are simply expected to look after such things, it will be the mother who has the long waits in public places, at the doctor's for 'a bottle', at the clinic with a child who has eye-trouble, at the municipal offices to see about the instalment on the electricity bill. (25)

And in much the same way, the woman is the one in charge of tidying the house. It is the woman's work; even young girls will learn this work at an early age: "She [young, working-class female] has usually had some training before leaving school, helping a little with the cleaning at home, looking after younger brothers, pushing out their own or the neighbour's baby" (Hoggart 33). This is evidenced in the text as well, when Kiddar reflects on his time as a baby and all the young girls that flocked to take him out in the streets.

In our street no babe was allowed to stay entirely in its mother's care for long. Almost before the tiny creature had settled in, deputations of small girls would appear at the front door. "Please, can I take the baby out?" the eldest would begin politely, and then the chorus came in, "No, me, Mrs. Kiddar. Oh, let me, I'll be ever so careful, and they'd pluck at her apron and stick themselves as much in front of her as was humanly possible considering the disparity in size. Now missus might be anxious as she watched her precious sail off under the escort of a thin-armed girl moving very gingerly and slow, but unquestionably baby enjoyed it. (Common 15)

This scene shows the enthusiasm with which young girls fawned over newborns. Yet, their caretaking did not end once a baby became older and was out of the pram. Kiddar informs the readers that not only did the neighborhood girls gallivant with the babies in

the prams, but also became their guardians once the babies were old enough to crawl around on their own.

As soon as you got into that dangerous area, however, some little girl would come to lift you up and totter with you back to safety. They were your street-guardians, the little girls. You were a nuisance to them when you crawled over the bays they had chalked out, or pee'd on them, or came too near their skipping-ropes, but they still accepted responsibility for you. I have one strong pavement-memory which must be pretty early. Summer again, and I was lying with my face close to the grey slate paving-stones tracing the cracks; they were as warm as dinner-plates; and there was a powerful, sickly smell of privet in blossom. Then drops like pennies came splashing down, patterning the light summer pavement with dark discs, and faster, wetting my hands, my hair, my back – I chuckled over the lovely pennies. No doubt I was lugged to shelter soon enough, and by a little girl, yet it was one of those moments, brief and trivial in themselves, for which time's clock stops. (15-16)

These scene from the text displays gender expectations that existed in Common's society. Even though the girls may have found the babies to be a nuisance at times, they also knew, or realized, that as future women, it was their responsibility to help out the other women by watching the babies, or toddlers, and protecting them from danger. This, then, further emphasizes the idea of childrearing and taking care of the children as women's work, and not men's work.

The differences between these roles can be seen throughout the text. Kiddar notes that his father was often not at home due to his work; when he was there, he either went straight to bed or sat in his armchair, creating a tense atmosphere for everyone. The mother, on the other hand, was in charge of childrearing, bills, and housekeeping. Though Kiddar's father was significant in that he provided for the family, and while Kiddar does have some fond memories of him from childhood, Kiddar's mother is the central figure

of the household and of the text. She is the one with whom he spends the most time, even accompanying her, at times, to the pubs. Thus, he is able to witness when she collapses and faints multiple times, something that he already knows is not respectable. Yet, because of these differences in social and domestic roles, women in the act of drinking were not often viewed favorably, and Kiddar's views were no exception.

One of the largest fears of the time regarding women consuming alcohol seemed to be that mothers would neglect their children. This was such a fear, in fact, that the British Women's Temperance Association (BWTA) used the potential neglect of children in their campaign to prohibit alcohol. In her essay, "'Wartime Hysterics'?: Alcohol, Women and the Politics of Wartime Social Purity in England," Stella Moss explains that the BWTA "maintained that drink imperiled the 'home life and child life of our nation. It is the close ally of immorality, with its accompaniment of hideous disease'" (150). Furthermore, they "registered female drinking as particularly corrosive to the fabric of family and community structures" (150). In order to combat this fear and deter women from drinking, the government introduced the Children's Act of 1908 (Moss), which prohibited children from entering "licensed premises." Women had previously been able to enter pubs, since they could take their children inside with them, rather than having to leave them at home (150). With the institution of this new law, officials and Temperance members hoped that the number of women who entered pubs would decrease.

However, the act was not completely successful in the mission it set out to accomplish. In fact, it had the potential to increase the neglect of children, as mothers would leave them outside of the pub while they went inside for a drink; in her essay,

Stella Moss discusses these fears and their plausibility, explaining that while these instances of leaving the children outside did occur, some women still took their children inside the pubs, regardless of the law (153). In fact, she explains that “some mothers would take their offspring across the threshold and into the main drinking rooms, even, it was alleged, going so far as to purchase them drink” (154). Despite the ineffectiveness of the Bill, it undoubtedly caused further problems, including child neglect or endangerment – whether they were left at home or left outside, they were not being watched and when outside had a larger risk of catching illnesses.

Perhaps the easiest and most evident example of neglect in this novel is also a complicated example, for it is not an issue of drunkenness or out of control drinking; still, it is neglect caused by alcohol, or the desire for alcohol. Further, Kiddar is not actually present for the incident, but is informed of the details later, further complicating the example, as the reader is receiving a second-hand story from memory, rather than a memory of what Kiddar himself witnessed. According to his description of what happened, his mother went out with his two sisters while he was at school, and that is when the unthinkable occurred.

Yesterday afternoon, on her shopping rounds, she stopped at the Addison for a glass of beer, leaving the pram outside. She only had a couple, but when she came out and was pushing the pram containing younger sister and holding on to the hand of the elder, she had to pass a young policeman. She could feel him staring at her (many people did that, alas!). The awful thought came into her mind that he had seen her coming out of the pub and might think she was drunk (because she walked so badly and her hat and her hair were always being shaken loose by her uneven gait). At that moment, her lame foot caught on the sweeping hem of her skirt, the pram-handle went down under her weight, the baby yelled from fright. Over comes the copper to help. Yes, but he did think she was drunk. He wanted to

run her in; worse, he did run her in; kids, pram as well, all the way to Headlam Street Police Station. (Common 64)

After retelling the story, Kiddar seems to be sympathetic towards his mother and the humiliation that she experienced. This can be seen from his declarations following the telling of the story:

God, I could see it so vividly, that shame-making procession, the flushed, protesting, limping woman still hanging on to one whimpering child; the smart young copper holding her free arm and trying to steer a pram-full of yelling babe past curious and unsympathetic bystanders. (64)

Even so, he does not seem to condone her drinking, as implied in the statement, “I cared for her, without approving or admiring, and hell with all the moralities made by fortunate conformers by which they condemned and did not assist her” (65). This example shows that he is sympathetic and desires that people would help her due to her crippled leg, regardless of whether she has been drinking or not. He seems to think it is a shame that these moral conformists would profess different moral standards, but not have the compassion to assist a crippled woman. At the same time, though, it is evident that he does not approve of her drinking, and it is the fact that she had been drinking at all that prevented people from being sympathetic of her leg. So, while Kiddar does care for her, he shows that drinking is the root of the problem.

This scene from the novel influences his mother’s decline in respectability and is a clear example of neglect. Though she did not drink heavily enough to intoxicate herself completely, she still chose alcohol over her responsibilities, and over her children. Due to

her need for a drink, she left her daughters outside of the bar to fend for themselves. Regardless of the amount of time she left them outside, this is still a form of neglect, as she should have been watching them and she was not. But this was not an uncommon practice of the time; since the enactment of the 1908 Children's Act, "Many mothers would deposit their children on the pavements outside and in the doorways of licensed premises, often leaving an older child nominally in charge" (Moss 153). That mothers left their children outside while they went inside a pub to drink reveals the strength of the stronghold that alcohol maintained over some of these women; it reveals the extent to which women were influenced, or perhaps controlled, by alcohol. The Children's Act did not serve its purpose in keeping women from drinking; rather, they found ways around it. Further, this scenario had a major impact on Ma Kiddar's respectability. As she was seen by multiple people while the policeman walked her to the station, Kiddar had no doubt that "she was to be outcast" because it was assumed that she was drunk (Common 65). As a result, she would be looked down upon more and her respectability would have declined also due to the perceived abandonment of her duties. By leaving her children outside, she neglected her obligations as a mother and as a woman.

Kiddar is in no way happy or content with these changes. He would prefer the home to be "clean and comfortable as...it used to be" (76). This, then, is another example of Kiddar showing his distaste of his mother's drinking. His condemnation can further be seen in comments stating that he assumed his mother would be at a certain bar; his expectation that his mother would be there reveals that his mother spent a large amount of time in the pubs. Further, the scenes in which he attempts to convince her to leave the

pubs show his concern for her, but also his desire for her to leave drinking behind. In one instance, when his mother goes back inside the pub with Ma McGrewin, he comments, “My amiable fuddle-headed mother was good as lost now, I knew” (92). Based on the knowledge that his mother was with Ma McGrewin, and that she was under her care, he realized that she would not be leaving the pub after that drink, or likely anytime soon – she would be lost to the alcohol she was consuming. And by staying there, his mother would become even more inebriated, which would lead to her neglecting even more of her responsibilities, a clear violation of the existing societal standards.

His distaste of his mother’s drinking is further witnessed as he describes her various encounters with alcohol, after being introduced to it by Mrs. Buchan. She often decides to quit washing day, a typical feminine task, early in order to drink beer (46), she stumbles home, collapses and has to be carried back to her home (21), and passes out in the armchair at home, spilling milk down the front of her dress (22). These episodes reveal not only the effect that drink has on Mrs. Kiddar, but also the attitude that Kiddar holds towards these changes. He states twice that “something [all] is wrong with mother” (21), acknowledges that he “was aware of something strangely wrong in our household” (20), and tries to keep his mother’s drinking hidden from his father. Something was wrong because his mother could not handle her drink. The comparison between his father’s ability and mother’s inability to handle alcohol shows one of Kiddar’s perspectives on why it was okay for men to drink, but not for women. Simply put, these examples showed that women could not handle it, and therefore should not drink at all.

Yet, does that mean that if women were capable of drinking in moderation and effectively holding their drink while still completing the household and family activities that drinking would be approved for women, or at least not condemned so strongly? It is possible for that argument to be made, as the main arguments seem to revolve around their ability to complete their tasks and do their work. Therefore if they could maintain or moderate their drinking to where they could still do this, much of the argument would disappear. There is, of course, still the issue of respectability and the mindset that a woman drinking is not viewed as respectable regardless of the situation or amount, indicating that, even if women could handle their alcohol, others would still view them as unrespectable. The statements and actions in this scene also reveal that Kiddar knew that it was not normal for his mother to be drinking – he knew that it was not generally accepted and the fact that he did not want his father to find out emphasizes the need to protect his mother and her respectability. Yet, by his own reckoning, his mother’s respectability was already in decline.

Even though Kiddar mentions these other women that drink, the reader is not informed of their own household chores, and whether or not they complete their tasks. Readers are, however, shown multiple instances in which Ma Kiddar neglected cleaning her own home, leading to Kiddar doing the cleaning for a time. In addition, there is also, in contrast to popular belief about the neglect of children, a section from the text that acknowledges that these women had healthy looking children. He states that “all Ma Kiddar’s children were healthy, you could see they were well looked after” (117). Kiddar further explains

it is a curious fact, contrary to the principles of social hygiene, wise planning, family or private morality, that the children of the Mas were extremely healthy, take 'em all round. Ma McGrewin's brood for instance, drew forth pity from passers-by every winter as they appeared in thin dresses to splash barefoot in the slush. Well, they never ailed a thing. (117)

So, even though the children were sometimes scantily clad, they did not get sick – at least, not the McGrewin children. Additionally, even the group of women themselves noted that they may drink and have a bad reputation among some, but they never neglected their children (117). So, if the children were healthy, and malnutrition or ill health were arguments against maternal drinking, then that seems to dismantle one of the larger arguments of the Temperance Movement and other similar thinkers. Yet, while the health of the children seems to be a counter to one of the issues surrounding female drinking, it is not completely accurate. They state that they never neglect their children, but there are still instances in which Ma Kiddar leaves her children alone so that she could drink. Whether the Ma Gang saw it as neglect or not, the text still depicts this as a form of neglect, as anything could happen while the mother was inside drinking. Further, just because children are strong and look healthy does not necessarily mean that they are not neglected; it could merely mean that the kids themselves are resourceful and have learned how to take care of themselves, just as young Kelly does in Pat Barker's *Union Street*.

Much like *Kiddar's Luck*, Pat Barker provides another example of slovenly living due to female drinking. Though *Union Street* is set in the 1970s, Barker reveals that many of the ideals relating to respectability are still in place. This continuity despite the time

span is evidenced by Mrs. Brown, mother of eleven-year-old Kelly Brown. Mrs. Brown has a reputation for spending her evenings out on the town, specifically in the pubs with men. This is significant because she is looked down upon by her neighbors, for much the same reasons that Kiddar despises his own mother's drinking. Barker describes the home of the Browns as untidy, with Iris King "sparing no more than a single glance of disapproval for the messy room and the unwashed hearth" (Barker 42). The extent of the messiness is described as such that "There was six months' muck in the room if there was a day's" (42). The untidiness of the home itself would be enough to cause a decrease in Mrs. Brown's respectability, given that she chooses drinking over cleaning.

Her respectability is further decreased, however, because of her multiple relationships with men. As mentioned earlier, sexual conduct was a major component of respectability – a woman's respectability could be easily and quickly decreased by sexual misconduct. This is one of the larger reasons as to why more respectable women, or those who cared more about their perceived respectability, tended not to go into licensed premises alone; rather, if they went at all, they would enter with their husbands, lest they be taken for a prostitute. To be accused of sexual misconduct, prostitution, or promiscuity could be devastating for a woman's respectability. Sexual looseness could also signify or imply that the individual was loose in other areas of her life as well, such as tidiness of the home. Indeed, the OED lists the first definition of "slut" as "A woman of dirty, slovenly, or untidy habits or appearance; a foul slattern." To be considered sexually loose, then, was more than just lacking respectability in one area. Instead, it encompassed

an implication that the woman was overall unrespectable, in her home life just as in her sexual life.

Mrs. Brown herself knows that sexual misconduct is viewed negatively, as she knows that her sexual activities are what have caused the other women in the town to turn against her: “They’d all turned against her, because since Tom left there’d been other men in the house” (Barker 39). The fact that she continues to have these relationships, though, shows that she does not particularly care about respectability or what others think of her choices. And so, despite the perceived connection between sexual looseness and looseness in other areas, Mrs. Brown consistently goes into the pubs, whether alone or with a guy. This is often where she meets men with whom she will enter a short-term sexual relationship. She will even allow these men to spend nights at her home and be present in her children’s lives. Additionally, these relationships do not keep her home more often or better focused on her kids; even when she is in a relationship, she still spends most of her nights out of the home. Thus, the neighbors criticize her for spending her nights out drinking and having relations with men while her children are often neglected.

While Mrs. Brown spends most of her nights in the pubs or with a man, her youngest child, Kelly, often spends the evenings roaming the streets, since there is really no reason for her to be at home. The neighbors know this, as well as the fact that the child is not well taken care of – Kelly tells one shopkeeper that she gets hungry at school because the bacon, bread, and milk are not for her, but for “her [Mrs. Brown] and her

fancy man” (Barker 16). Other women that know this information are reproachful, as evidenced when Iris King states,

“I wish I could say I’m surprised, but if I did it’d be a lie. I saw her [Mrs. Brown] the other week sat round the Buffs with that Wilf Rogerson. I say nowt against him, it’s not his bairn – mind you, he’s rubbish – but her! They [Mrs. Brown and Wilf] were there till past midnight and that bairn left to God and Providence. I know one thing, Missus, when my bairns were little they were never let roam the streets. And as for leave them on their own while I was pubbing it with a fella – no!” (17)

These statements reveal that Mrs. Brown’s activities were well known around the town, and thus she was not seen as respectable.

Consequently, when Kelly is lured into a back alley and raped, the neighbors are more reproachful towards Mrs. Brown than sympathetic, though Iris does keep these thoughts in her head while she tries to comfort Mrs. Brown. Iris, in actuality, is shocked that Mrs. Brown has come to her, since “she was apt to play her mouth on the subject of women who neglected their children and she didn’t care who heard her” (40). Still, she listens, with the narrator occasionally providing us with Iris’s thoughts, such as “Her bairn indeed! Pity she hadn’t thought of that a bit sooner,” implying that had Mrs. Brown paid more attention to her children and kept them home with her, then this situation may very well have never happened. This is reiterated again when Iris goes into the kitchen; the narrator informs the reader that “Now she was no longer faced by the sight of Mrs Brown’s misery she was more inclined to withhold her sympathy and make judgements. Her bairn! Where had she been when it happened?” (41). These statements undoubtedly show the disgust that Mrs. Brown’s neighbors feel towards her, due to her actions and

what they perceive as the neglect of her children. So, while they are all sympathetic towards Kelly, they are reproofing of the mother, because they believe that she should have been at home. Ultimately, due to Mrs. Brown's constant drinking and nights out with men, she was not viewed as respectable among her neighbors, and clearly neglected her children, regardless of the reasons that may have initially led to her drinking.

The incidents discussed within Pat Barker's text and the focus on cleanliness in both *Kiddar's Luck* and *Union Street* demonstrate that the threat to women's respectability posed by alcohol was exponentially tied up in their ability to complete household tasks. But the very nature of those tasks also posed an obstacle towards women's drinking. These texts also highlight and further exemplify the different issues and components of working-class respectability, and how alcohol could impact that respectability. Most of the anxieties around women's drinking relate to the ability to maintain the household and care for the children. Unlike the men who could drink at night and still return to work the next morning or have the weekend off, women faced a larger problem. Throughout the text, not only did their drinking often get out of control, but almost any level of drinking hindered their ability to fulfill their responsibilities. In addition, they did not receive time off from their work as the men did, since their duties were often continuous. Thus, the act of women drinking is condemned. This condemnation, though, spurs further questions regarding gender differences within labor. Men, because of their labor, were entitled to the leisure of drinking in the evenings, so long as they were able to work the next day. Women, however, did not labor in the same

sense; in many ways, their work was not considered to be labor in the same manner in which a man's work was constituted as labor.

Men are the breadwinners of the family. Their work is labor, and constitutes such jobs as “what used to be called ‘navvying’ and other outdoor manual work, commercial and public transport workers,” factory work, plumbing, or heavy industrial work (Hoggart 6). Kiddar's father, for instance, works on the railroad system. For most working-class men, this work is difficult, requiring strength and endurance. Nevertheless, they have hours in which they are at work, and hours in which they are home, or at least, not on the job. This, then, allows them to have leisure time when they are not at work, especially since “A husband is...not really expected to help about the house” (Hoggart 35). Ellen Ross supplements Hoggart's statement, claiming that “Cleaning was, however, strictly women's responsibility. Husbands could not be trusted to honor the need for household tidiness that announced—primarily to other women—their wives' respectability...” (48). It was a well-gendered society in which the men worked outside the home while the women took care of the housework, often including paying the bills each week when the husband was paid. These bills included, or allotted for, spending money for the husband. It is typically agreed by both men and women that the husband “must still have his pocket-money...He must have money for cigarettes and beer, perhaps even for an occasional bet” (Hoggart 36). Because of the work he does outside of the home and the wages he brings home to the wife and kids, it is expected that the man deserves his leisure time, and the funds to relax the way he chooses. As Hoggart explains in regards to drinking,

On the one hand, drinking is accepted as part of the normal life, or at least of the normal man's life, like smoking. 'A man needs 'is pint'; it helps to make life worth while ; if one can't have a bit of pleasure like that, then what is there to live for? It is 'natural' for a man to like his beer. (66)

It is important to note, though, that this drinking and leisure time needed to remain within reason for a man, and by proxy his family, to maintain respectability. Yet, the measurement of 'within reason' could vary based on various situations, as Hoggart clarifies:

Just how much beer-drinking a man may be allowed without incurring disapproval depends on his circumstances; there is a finely-graded scale of allowances. A widower might be expected to drink more than most, since he has not got a wife and comfortable home to go back to...A husband with a family should drink 'within reason', that is, should know when he has had enough, and should always 'provide'. There are occasions—festivals, celebrations, cup-ties, trips—when anyone might be expected to drink quite a lot. (66)

These descriptions and statements further accentuate the fact that men were allowed drink in their leisure time because of their labor, which was kept separate from their home lives. For men, work life and domestic, home life, were distinct realms that did not typically need to overlap or interfere with one another; issues only arose when men allowed their home life, typically their leisure time, to interfere with their work, such as when drinking in excess.

For women, on the other hand, the case was much different. Women did not have the same distinction between work and home life that men did, as most women worked in the home. Theirs was a domestic work during which they took care of the children, cleaned the house, darned and mended clothing, and prepared food. In many cases, even

when females did hold a job, they still had these tasks and chores to attend to once they arrived home. As a result, women were continuously working – and as a result, they were not allotted leisure time as men were. As Ellen Ross explains, “The job of a wife and mother among London’s working poor indeed included the creation and maintenance of the commonly accepted symbols of respectability. High standards of cleanliness were a major element in this work” (48). And though this statement is made in reference to London wives, it also applies to those in the communities outside of London, as evidenced in both Common’s text and Barker’s text. So, with no allotted leisure time, woman had no real time in which to drink, which contributed to the disapproval they faced if they did choose to drink after they became mothers. Hoggart again puts this situation into context for us when he states that

Women seem to be drinking more easily now than they did a generation ago; even as late as my adolescence the ‘gin-and-It’ woman was regarded as a near-tart. But still, after the children have arrived, women’s drinking is not usually considerable; the weekends are their big ‘let-out.’ (66)

The issue of women’s work not being considered labor explains why it was considered disreputable for mothers to drink, and is relevant to Ma Kiddar’s experience with the police officer. Because her job as a mother was continuous, drinking at any point in time would have caused her to neglect her duties; even if she waited until the children were asleep, she risked this abandonment. If she went out, she left her children at home alone. If she stayed at home and drank there, she may not have retained a mental state to handle any possible situations that arose during the evening, and she would likely have also been

neglecting her duties to keep the house clean. Men, then, after a day's work, could go to the public houses and enjoy drinks with co-workers and friends; meanwhile, women frequently waited at home for their husbands in order to make sure his food was hot when he finally arrived home because the man "wants food and his own sort of relaxation when he comes home" (41). Consequently, a mother faced an impossible situation if she wanted to drink, because, unless she had someone to look after the children and prepare food for the husband, she would inevitably neglect or risk neglecting her children and husband if she drank alcohol.

The depictions of Kiddar's father further demonstrate that a man's drinking could be viewed as acceptable so long as he still provided for his family and did not spend all the household income on drink. In fact, Richard Hoggart states that

A man and wife with no children can be allowed regular drinking, since they are not taking the bread from their children's mouths, and home without kids is not very inviting. A husband with a family should drink 'within reason', that is, should know when he has had enough, and should always 'provide.' (66)

However, he further explains that "Drink, then, is 'alright', is 'natural', in moderation. Once the boundary, which varies with different kinds of family, is crossed, disaster may follow" (67). It was not viewed as a violation of respectability for a man to drink, or even for a married woman with no children to drink. Indeed, society often viewed a man who did not drink as abnormal; as Hoggart explains "the man who does not drink at all is a bit unusual—most working-class people would not ask for a majority of men like that, whatever the perils of drink" (67). The concept that a man who did not drink would be

considered strange, whereas a woman who did not drink would be considered respectable and normal, shows the gendered attitudes towards alcohol that existed in 20th Century Britain. Furthermore, for a woman with children, the status of respectability was even more tied up in the management of her home and children. These examples reveal that while it may have been acceptable at times for women to drink, this acceptability dwindled once they became mothers, while men could drink regardless of whether they had children or not.

Due to this distinction between a man's labor and a woman's work, drinking posed a problem. Men could drink without much scorn so long as they worked and did not spend all of the household money on drink. In a manner of speaking, and in popular belief of the time, men were entitled to leisure because of the work they did all day long. Women, however, were not entitled to such leisure because their domestic duties were not viewed as labor. Moreover, the constant nature of this work meant that they had no break during which they could partake in leisurely drinking. As a result, almost any time a woman chose to drink, she did so at the risk of abandoning her duties. This abandonment of duty is evident in many of Kiddar's own stories, which further evidence his criticism of his mother's drinking. These examples not only further his argument on the vices of drinking in females, but also reveal and emphasize the difference between men and women's labor.

When World War I broke out in July of 1914, its effects were felt among the working class people. Many of the men departed to support their country; others, like Kiddar's father, did not. However, he was still out of the house much more than he had

been previously, due to the increased work hours at his job because of the war. This departure of men allowed the women, in Ma Kiddar's case, to spend more time with other women. But it also caused some women to spend more time in the pubs. Stella Moss writes that "With large numbers of men away on active service, many of the traditional impediments to female presence in pubs without male companions were removed" (152). Women began meeting at the public houses to socialize and share news about the war. Yet, at the same time, consumption of alcohol by women was, in some circles, even more condemned than previously. Because their husbands were out serving their country, the women at home were expected to behave "exemplary" as well. According to Moss, the drinking of women whose husbands were away not only "impl[ied] a rejection of feminine virtue and maternal responsibility, but it was also perceived as an affront to the sacrifices being made by the troops for King and Country" (153). Many of these women seemed to simply be seeking "solace in drink" (153), likely from the stress of the war and its impact on their lives as well as the absence of their husbands, and perhaps in much the same way that Mrs. Kiddar began drinking with Mrs. Buchan to escape or lessen her physical pain.

Despite the condemning of his mother's drinking habits, it is important to note that Kiddar was not a teetotaler, abolitionist, or member of the Temperance Movement. Based on passages of the text in which he mentions the boys being able to drink when the fathers went off to war, he did not despise alcohol in and of itself. Rather, the text shows that he dislikes the effects that alcohol had upon his mother and the manner in which it caused women to neglect their responsibilities. In addition, he is critical of the moments

in which his mother collapses or faints, revealing that he distinctly believes that drunkenness in a woman, especially in a mother, is not respectable.

In his introduction to *Working-class Stories of the 1890s*, P. J. Keating discusses working-class authors, or slum novelists, stating:

They imbibed the theory of artistic objectivity which was widespread in late-Victorian criticism, and they took advantage of the freer atmosphere of the nineties – largely pioneered by Zola – to treat more frankly than their mid-Victorian predecessors of swearing, sex and violence... *Moral purpose, though veiled, never disappears entirely*; the finer qualities of human personality are not ruthlessly and inevitably destroyed by environment or heredity; and the personal feelings of the author, if not so obvious as in Dickens, are everywhere apparent. (x, emphasis mine)

Keating's statement here points out that, for many, if not all, working-class writers, there is typically an underlying moral purpose, which they are able to portray as a result of the "freer atmosphere" that allows them to more openly write about topics that were once potentially unmentionable in novels. Whether intentional or unintentional, Jack Common too has a moral purpose underlying his text. His portrayals of women in *Kiddar's Luck* demonstrate the various negative effects of alcohol on both women and their families. In addition, the text mirrors the anxieties and concerns of the society in which Common grew up. While Hogart may have acceded that drinking in moderation was acceptable, others disagreed. Moss describes the beliefs of many during this time at the conclusion of her essay:

All forms of drinking were condemned: indeed, the critique of women's drinking was characterised by the absence of any notable differentiation between moderate consumption in the context of occasional social gatherings and habitual (and often

more secretive) drunkenness on a daily or even hourly basis. Moreover, the former was widely regarded as the precursor of the latter. As the BWTA [British Women's Temperance Association] argued, 'it isn't a problem of drunkenness, it is a problem of drinking. Alcohol in any amount hurts you.' (157)

Common, through the character of Willie Kiddar, seems throughout the text to agree with this sentiment, as he does not care for the members of the Ma Gang to be in his home. Further, his comments regarding his mother being at the Chillingham also accentuate this point, since he knew that it would not be just the rest of that drink, but rather that there would be more following that drink. Though in a grander scale, the differentiation between men and women's labor may play a large role in the acceptability of drinking, for Kiddar drinking is unacceptable in women because it is not a respectable act and it takes them away from their obligations as wives, mothers, and even as women in general, particularly those involving cleanliness and caring for their children.

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