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Original Article

Private Spirits, Public Lives: Sober Citizenship, Shame and Secret Drinking in Victorian Britain

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ABSTRACT

This article considers Victorian concerns about the rise of secret drinking amongst respectable women. These new, apparently dangerous, practices were blamed on licensed grocers and even railway station refreshment rooms. Understandings of different male and female natures went hand in glove with anxieties about the potential effects of drinking. That alcohol might be consumed in secret, at home, triggered concerns about the shameful state of womanhood and the risks for the domestic space and state of the family. This secrecy, and an apparent absence of reliable evidence as to the scale of the problem, is central to the methodological challenge and argument in this article. Using their knowledge of and putative responsibilities for the private sphere, women in the temperance movement organized against the grocer. The article analyses published accounts of women's work in the Church of England Temperance Society, the British Women's Temperance Association, and Women's Total Abstinence Union. It argues that their efforts, rooted in private and domestic imperatives, tested the social and spatial reach of women's reform work. Acting against the grocer helped women to articulate a distinctively public model of sober citizenship.

KEYWORDS: Citizenship, gender, off-licences, secret drinking, temperance, women

1. INTRODUCTION: TEMPERANCE, SECRECY AND SHAME

> In women it [drinking] is not often a social vice: men frequently become drunkards from the allurements of association rather than a love of the drink itself. Indeed, intemperate men have been known to become comparatively sober if kept from drinking companions. Women, on the contrary, in the solicitude of the home, under the influence of weak health or depressed spirits, and often, how often! under medical advice, commence using intoxicating drinks; these drinks become habitual to them, they become fond of them, and when in the sequel they degenerate into drunkards, it is not from the love of company but from the love of drink.[1]

The place of alcohol in the nineteenth-century city was determined by gendered assumptions about its effects on the spaces of public and private life.[2] This article examines concerns that licensed retailers facilitated secret drinking by women, and profiles the distinctive actions of women in the temperance movement who responded to a perceived threat to domestic and

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1 'Should Ladies Take the Pledge? By a Lady', *Church of England Temperance Magazine*, 1 March 1869, 63–66 (65); 'Mrs Balfour's Paper', *Woman's Work in the Temperance Reformation: Being Papers Prepared for a Ladies' Conference Held in London, May 26, 1868* (London: National Temperance League), pp. 15–23 (p. 18).

2 James Kneale, 'The Place of Drink: Temperance and the Public, 1856–1914', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 2 (2001), 43–59 (45).

feminine ideals. The term 'temperance movement' is a catch-all for groups with often diverse religious and moral, philosophical and even economic backgrounds and concerns. Members were often bound by collective cultural practices such as processions and different, though also divisive, versions of a pledge to abstain from spirits, say, or all alcohol. These were public expressions of a personal commitment to sober self-discipline, which was threatened by secret flows of alcohol. That the temperance vision of a reformed and reasoning public sphere could only be realised by a domestic life freed from drink opened a distinctive opportunity for women to define the trajectory of temperance action.[3]

From its earliest days, temperance had served as both 'a claim to citizenship and a training for it'.[4] Attempts to drive down personal *demand* for alcohol were, from the 1850s and 1860s, accompanied by demands for state action to restrict its public *supply*.[5] Drinking was understood as 'a problem of milieu', of social and spatial relations, notes James Kneale.[6] The proliferation and visibility of pubs in cities therefore made them, and the system that licensed them, a temperance target.[7] And if women were guilty of secretive and solitary drinking, as the epigraph from Clara Lucas Balfour warned, then the flow of alcohol from licensed spaces into the home needed to be stopped.[8] This article shows how female reformers applied their knowledge and domestic responsibility to claim and train others in that work. Despite franchise reforms excluding women from formal political citizenship, through their campaigns against secret drinking women promoted a sober and no-less citizenly vision of reformed social and spatial relations.[9]

Here is Clara Lucas Balfour again, warning of the dangers of new types of licence that had been introduced in the 1860s:

> At grocers and at pastrycooks, and at refreshment counters, intoxicating beverages are obtained without the degradation or exposure of going into taverns and gin-palaces to get them. The barrier of shame, slight as it was, was yet, in former times, a restriction to respectable women. Now that barrier is completely removed, and the young as well as the mature, the refined as readily as the coarse, are allured by opportunities of obtaining stimulants on all occasions; and they apparently weakly yield to the temptation . . . unmarked until they have descended to a level of vice which leads to every kind of crime, misery, disease, and ruin.[10]

3 Annemarie McAllister, 'Nineteenth-century Public Displays of Temperance', *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, 28 (2014), 161–79 (164); James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 113–16.

4 Michael Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 152.

5 See Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815–1872* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994), p. 189.

6 James Kneale, 'Surveying Pubs, Cities and Unfit Lives', *Journal for the Study of British Culture*, 19 (2012), 45–60 (54).

7 See David Beckingham, *The Licensed City: Regulating Drink in Liverpool, 1830–1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), p. 125.

8 On Balfour, see Kristin G. Doern, 'Balfour, Clara Lucas (1808–1878)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1183> [accessed 24 October 2017].

9 See Kneale, 'The Place of Drink', p. 51. Jose Harris's *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 14. My title therefore inverts Harris's, the threat of spirits to the private sphere being the subject of women's public temperance campaigns.

10 'Mrs. Balfour's Paper', *The Ladies National Temperance Convention of 1876* (London: W. Tweedie & Co. Limited), pp. 41–47 (p. 43).

The grocer and refreshment room threatened the shield of social scrutiny that circumscribed women's pub use. Campaigns against them therefore reflected a politics of differentiation.[11] Concerned with their own social status, campaigners 'defined themselves by their appeal to respectability and self-improvement'.[12] This began at home, for the gender orthodoxies of 'complementary natures' ideology imbued women with a domestic set of responsibilities. But, as Megan Smitley's study of Scottish temperance and citizenship has shown, women could consistently respond to proselytizing evangelical and moral missions as 'invitations to public life'.[13] Because secret drinking aligned so clearly with the domestic sphere of their influence *and* understanding, I argue, temperance women claimed a mandate to expose its dangers and publicly oppose those who would profit from it.

Evidence of the level of secret drinking was disputed. At least in quantitative terms, it may never have been a major issue.[14] But that would be to overlook the ideals that it seemed to threaten, and the responses it provoked. For Nathan Booth, 'discursive' alcohol histories can 'privilege the polemical over the experiential': narratives that place the pub in opposition to the home can lead to a focus on *extremes* of excess and abstinence, obscuring the mundane realities of everyday drinking practices.[15] This is a salutary methodological warning, for my argument is drawn from parliamentary, periodical and pamphlet sources. Jennifer Wallis and colleagues are a sensitive guide to the worlds of secret drinking beyond the pub, however. Its apparent hiddenness supported medical authority over women's bodies, for doctors could access private spaces of the home. By reporting it, meanwhile, journalists could feed a contemporary fascination with 'sensation'. The secret drinker became a moral index of failing femininity, whose insidious effects would be widely felt. That middle-class women might have chosen to drink, without the approval of their husbands, and therefore in defiance of them, raised doubts about female trustworthiness and concerns about their economic and social independence.[16]

The threat of secret drinking confirmed that in temperance work female respectability was something to be practiced and not merely a status to be assumed. Campaigns therefore invoked tropes of shame both to target and protect other women. It is well established that temperance activists engaged in urban surveillance work, utilizing the 'shaming machine' of newspapers to report breaches of licensing legislation for example.[17] Temperance women promoted ideals of respectability by targeting other women, in public space and in print. Discussions of this work, at dedicated women's temperance meetings and through reports in publications, importantly shaped what Megan Smitley identifies as a public sphere of

[11] Rachel McErlain, 'Alcohol and Moral Regulation in Historical Context', in *Women and Alcohol: Social Perspectives*, ed. by Patsy Staddon (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), pp. 31–44 (p. 40); Johan Edman, 'Temperance and Modernity: Alcohol Consumption as a Collective Problem, 1885–1893', *Journal of Social History*, 49 (2015), 20–52 (20).

[12] Amelia Bonea, Melissa Dickson, Sally Shuttleworth and Jennifer Wallis, *Anxious Times: Medicine & Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), p. 124.

[13] Megan Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere: Middle-Class Women in Civic Life in Scotland, c.1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 41.

[14] Bonea, Dickson, Shuttleworth and Wallis, *Anxious Times*, p. 146.

[15] Nathan Booth, 'Drinking and Domesticity: The Materiality of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Provincial Pub', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 23 (2018), 289–309 (291).

[16] Bonea, Dickson, Shuttleworth and Wallis, *Anxious Times*, p. 147; Thora Hands, *Drinking in Victorian and Edwardian Britain: Beyond the Spectre of the Drunkard* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 46.

[17] Andy Croll, 'Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame: Regulating Behaviour in the Public Spaces of the Late Victorian British Town', *Social History*, 24 (1999), 250–268 (261).

women's associational culture.[18] Women's contributions to the temperance press represent an especially important 'underexplored resource', to quote Gemma Outen. Such publications, I argue, reveal how women organized and practiced their sober citizenship through campaigns against issues such as secret drinking, settling their putative domestic responsibilities alongside an urgent sense of public duty.[19]

The article proceeds in two sections. Section two explains the government reforms of the 1870s that enabled off-sales and outlines the temperance and even medical opposition that developed. Section three then turns to the response of women's temperance groups, recovering their work from newspapers and periodicals. Broadly speaking, it examines the work of the Women's Union within the broad yet hierarchical coalition of the Church of England Temperance Society (CETS), as well as the British Women's Temperance Association (BWTA) and its breakaway Women's Total Abstinence Union (WTAU). CETS grew after adopting a 'dual' structure of total abstainers and more moderate members, enabling it to attract wealthy and influential patrons. With access to bishops in the House of Lords, it also had a potential parliamentary platform.[20] It was not uncommon for temperance societies to have ladies' committees whose work was deemed to reflect women's roles. This included organizing tea parties and fundraising bazaars, or teaching children. Policy-making roles were more limited before the late 1860s and 1870s, notes Lilian Shiman. The BWTA, founded in 1876, is important as 'the first female temperance organisation of national significance' in the UK.[21] Like CETS, it had to determine the kinds of political battles it would fight and the methods it would adopt. This shaped a split in 1893, with WTAU members leaving to focus on more strictly defined drink-related issues. I trace the connections between these groups and contemporary political debates around the landmark Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws in the 1890s. Battling the secret drinker importantly shaped a geography of temperance action beyond the private sphere, which allowed women to test the definition as well as the public reach of their citizenly responsibilities and reform identities.

2. THE PROBLEM OF THE GROCER

The grocer's emergence in public debate in England and Wales dates to trade reforms of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone. Under a treaty with France signed in 1860, Britain lowered duties on *vins ordinaires*.[22] In a move 'favourable to sobriety', Gladstone sought to allow refreshment houses to sell this wine on their premises with just an Excise licence, free from the oversight of traditional licensing magistrates. Shopkeepers would also be allowed to apply for licences to retail wine in pint or quart bottles for consumption off the premises. This stimulated the growth of retail chains, positioned between pubs and traditional wine merchants.[23] A resolution with Gladstone's 1861 budget also opened the spirits

[18] Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere*, p. 41.

[19] Gemma Outen, 'Girl, Junior, Woman: Negotiating Childhood and Adolescence in the Female Temperance Press', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 52 (2019), 749–764 (749–50).

[20] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 171.

[21] Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 182–83.

[22] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 229.

[23] *Hansard*, HC Deb 10 February 1860 vol 156 c. 857, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/index.html>; 23 & 24 Vict. c. 27, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1860/27/pdfs/ukpga_18600027_en.pdf> p. 259; Asa Briggs, *Wine For Sale: Victoria Wine and the Liquor Trade, 1860–1984* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1985), p. 37; James Nicholls, 'Wine, Supermarkets and Alcohol Policy', *History and Policy*, 2011 <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/wine-supermarkets-and-alcohol-policy> [accessed 8 May 2019].

trade, allowing licensed dealers to pay an additional fee to retail individual quart bottles of spirits.[24] Canny grocers reportedly spotted an opportunity, applying for dealer licences to sell single bottles of spirits. To its opponents, this hardly looked like a temperance measure.[25]

In Scotland, grocers' licences had a longer history.[26] Awarded by traditional justices, their role in the drink landscape had been confirmed by the Licensing (Scotland) Act of 1853 (16 & 17 Vict. c. 67), though their business was restricted to off-sales. A dedicated commission in the 1870s examined the longer history and broader place of the grocer in Scotland. Despite collecting evidence of concerns that the sale of small measures of spirits facilitated everyday drinking amongst the less well off, it decided against recommending introducing larger quart or pint bottle minimum sales lest this push people to pubs.[27] South of the border, it was the apparent connection to respectable middle-class women's secret drinking that made Gladstone's off-sales a focus for temperance action.

Complaints were laid before a House of Lords Select Committee, established at a time of rising apprehensions for drunkenness and comparatively high real wages.[28] Attempts to stimulate legislative action hinged on reformers presenting compelling of the problem. Evidence showed rising per capita consumption of beers, wines and spirits.[29] Gladstone's opponents linked this to new *private* drinking practices – hidden from the police and therefore the statistics that were so foundational to public debates.[30] The Church of England Temperance Society's president Canon Henry Ellison submitted a survey of police, medical and clerical concerns. For its part, the medical journal *The Lancet* collected 920 signatures from physicians, surgeons and GPs for a petition complaining that the grocer put drink within easy reach of the women, servants and children of 'respectable households'.[31] Supportive correspondents, including Manchester medic Robert Martin, used a distinctive medicalization of women's nature to encourage action: women were 'soft, yielding, emotional', temptation easily giving way to constant craving.[32] Doctors' privileged access to the private lives of patients was projected into a contested policy arena but for reasons of patient confidentiality they could not make public individual 'names, places, and dates, as the Select Committee desired'. Their status had to stand in for proof.[33]

[24] Gladstone defined the quart as 'a bottle six of which went to the gallon'. *Hansard*, HC Deb, 6 May 1861, vol. 162 c. 1613, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/index.html>.

[25] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 230; 1878–9 (113) X.469, *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Intemperance*, p. xlvi, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*; 'The Grocers' Licences', Letters to the Editor, *The Times*, 20 October 1887, 13, in *Times Digital Archive*.

[26] See James Nicholls, 'Alcohol Licensing in Scotland: A Historical Overview', *Addiction*, 107 (2012), 1397–403.

[27] 1878 [C.1941] XXVI.1, *Report by the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Laws Regulating the Sale and Consumption of Excisable Liquors Sold Not for Consumption on the Premises in Scotland*, p. x, p. 9 and p. 17, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*; Hands, *Drinking*, p. 45.

[28] T. R. Gourvish and R. G. Wilson, *The British Brewing Industry, 1830–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 601; 1877 (271) XI.357, *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Intemperance*, Appendix C, pp. 300–301, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*.

[29] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 231.

[30] [Anon.], *The Grocer's Licence* (London: Church of England Temperance Society, *c.* 1894), p. 6. See: V. A. C. Gatrell and T. B. Hadden, 'Criminal Statistics and their Interpretation', in *Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative History*, ed. by E. A. Wrigley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 336–96.

[31] 'The "Grocers" Licence', *The Lancet*, 2.2810, 7 July 1877, 27–28; 'The Grocers' Licence'.

[32] 'Medical Protest Against the Grocers' Spirit Licence'. Letter to the Editor, *The Lancet*, 1.2802, 12 May 1877, 700.

[33] 'The Grocer's Licence', *The Lancet*, 2.2881, 16 November 1878, 710.

The Select Committee delivered its judgment on the alleged connection between the grocer and increasing intemperance:

> After the examination of many witnesses on the point, and after the best inquiries they could make, the Committee have obtained very little direct evidence in support of this view; and the conclusion they have come to is, that upon the whole there have been no sufficient grounds shown for specially connecting intemperance with the retail of spirits at shops as contrasted with their retail at other licensed houses.[34]

This seemed unambiguous, a verdict that should have silenced temperance opposition. But the clause had apparently been recommended by just one committee member, Lord Kimberley. Years later, CETS was still protesting his influence. It even complained that witnesses had been prevented from giving names and details of cases, leading to their evidence being discounted.[35] Canon Ellison accused Kimberley – who had served in Gladstone's government – of carrying party politics through every witness cross-examination and into a paragraph blind to the facts.[36] Although the trade presented this paragraph as the findings of the committee, to Ellison it was the opinion of someone who had pre-judged the question. Reformers would continue their agitation, impelled by the evidence of their own investigations.

3. REFORM

Figure 1 shows an image from 'Susan Brooks' Basket', a story by London clergyman Charles Courtenay in which Walter Brooks detects a decline in the standards of dress and domestic habits of his model wife. A doctor reveals to Walter that Susan has been drinking in secret, probably since the birth of their child. A search reveals two liquor bottles hidden at the bottom of the shopping basket beneath tea and sugar, with labels that Walter links to a local grocer. Susan is a rather forlorn character: submissive before the grocer; her deceitful drinking exposed by the strong figure of the doctor; reliant for redemption on Walter's forgiveness. The reconciliation of husband and wife, now made possible by the discovery of the drink, is followed by Walter's attack on its supply. On his intervention – marked in a footnote as 'fact' – the grocer who had hastened Susan's 'fall' gives up his licence.[37] But this was not just work for the Walters of the world. With responsibility for the private sphere, women could use those same gendered assumptions about female nature that might previously have silenced them to organize against the grocer. This section turns to that work.

A combination of anger and action filled the space between the Lords report and the Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing some 20 years later. *The Lancet* was worried that the Married Women's Property Act, active from 1883, would bring more mischief, with women having 'their own way with what they are pleased to call "their own" money'.[38] The attack on women's independence is indicative of the broader social anxieties that gathered around

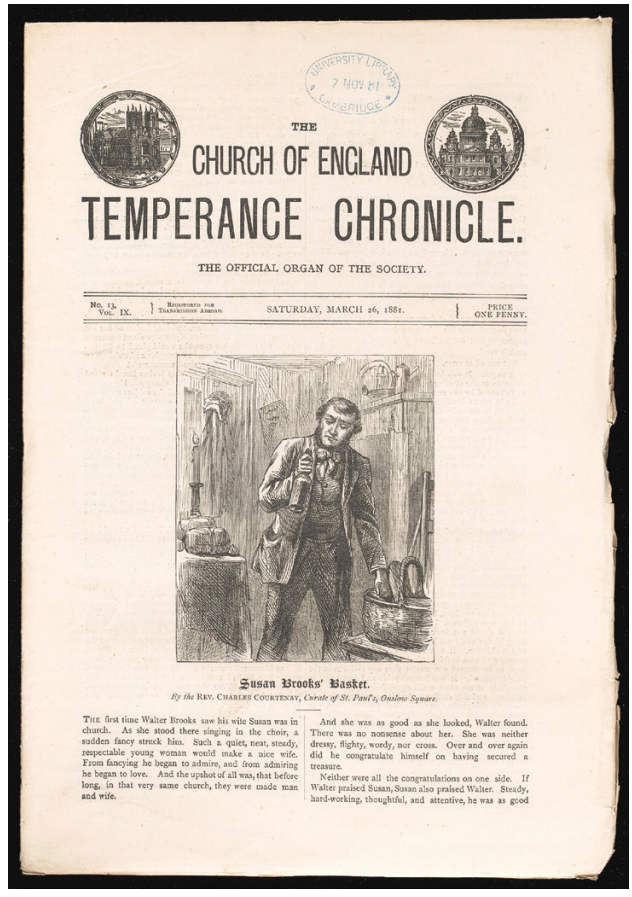
[34] 1878–9 (113) X.469, *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Intemperance*, p. xlvii, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*.

[35] 1878–9 (113) X.469, *Report*, p. ix, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*; 'Current Notes', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 1 May 1880.

[36] Henry J. Ellison, 'The Grocers' Licences'. Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 13 October 1887, 3, in *The Times Digital Archive*.

[37] 'Susan Brooks' Basket', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 26 March 1881, 193–95.

[38] 'Grocers' Licences and the Women's Property Act', *The Lancet*, 1.3097, 6 January 1883, 27.



THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
TEMPERANCE CHRONICLE.

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SOCIETY.

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Susan Brooks' Basket.

By the Rev. Charles Courtenay, *Curate of St. Paul's, Onslow Square.*

The first time Walter Brooks saw his wife Susan was in church. As she stood there singing in the choir, a sudden fancy struck him. Such a quiet, neat, steady, respectable young woman would make a nice wife. From fancying he began to admire, and from admiring he began to love. And the upshot of all was, that before long, in that very same church, they were made man and wife.

And she was as good as she looked, Walter found. There was no nonsense about her. She was neither dressy, flighty, wordy, nor cross. Over and over again did he congratulate himself on having secured a treasure.

Neither were all the congratulations on one side. If Walter praised Susan, Susan also praised Walter. Steady, hard-working, thoughtful, and attentive, he was as good

Figure 1. 'Susan Brooks' Basket', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 26 March 1881, 193 (Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library).

secret drinking. Women fighting for influence in the temperance movement could use these as a focus for their efforts – increasingly reported in dedicated publications. In 1883 the British Women's Temperance Association launched a *Journal*, to share around its branches reports about legislative work and organizational recommendations for the likes of drawing room meetings. Its content, Gemma Outen notes, showed women that being 'domestic, feminine creatures' and public temperance reformers were not inconsistent identities.[39] Connecting private knowledge and responsibility to public action in this way represented a distinctive spatial as well as social claim on citizenship.

CETS sponsored a private member's bill in 1884 to revoke shopkeepers' ability to sell spirits, introduced by MP Coleridge Kennard. The bill would fail – for its part, *The Lancet* opposed its exclusive focus on spirits[40] – but on the day fixed for its reading, the Women's Union presented a petition of 47,810 signatures.[41] This action brought CETS's women greater visibility, which was celebrated later that year when the Union met in Exeter Hall in London

39 Outen, 'Girl, Junior, Woman', 752.

40 'The "Lancet" and Ourselves', Leader, *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 9 February 1884, 90.

41 'What is it?', Leader, *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 17 May 1884, 30–31.

for its first public annual meeting. From the chair Charles Tritton, conscious and supportive of a time when a woman would take his place, commended the Union's emergence from the more private spaces of 'drawing-room meetings and conferences into the fuller blaze of its first annual meeting'. He praised the distinctive effects of women's 'personal influence', which 'tells far more than platform speeches'. This might have represented a contained, rather private, preventive work. But Tritton set temperance effort alongside public 'rescue work': the examples of Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale, and those friends of soldiers and sailors Agnes Weston and Sarah Robinson, might show women that 'they have not perhaps done so much as they might have done'.[42]

For Lilian Shiman, alongside their missionary efforts, 'individual women did their most effective temperance work on paper'.[43] In the same issue that reported the first annual meeting, the *Chronicle*'s editor lauded a Women's Union pamphlet called *The Evils of Grocer's and Shopkeeper's Licences*. It allows us to track the influence of women's work well beyond the domestic sphere. Following a CETS Meeting in Liverpool, at which the Bishop of Liverpool J. C. Ryle had spoken out against the grocer, the president of the city's Licensed Grocers' Association Mr W. Boote was drawn into detailed public correspondence in the Liverpool *Daily Courier*, a trade-supporting paper. Boote used the conclusions of the Lords Committee to attack CETS. Forwarding a copy of the cover of the women's pamphlet in reply, Bishop Ryle said he felt it lay with the trade to disprove the charges. Boote knew the pamphlet, and claimed its evidence was reminiscent of the lists of cures advertised by quack doctors. Having reprinted their correspondence, and the *Courier*'s criticism of Boote's intemperate attack, the *Chronicle* concluded that the barbs of trade journals were proof of popular public reaction to the pamphlet.[44] Here is evidence of the 'interchange of information' between different types of publications and their audiences; it brought women's work to a wider audience, while the tangible support from church leaders such as Ryle points to a legitimacy in the broader sphere of temperance action.[45]

Speaking at a meeting to celebrate the Women's Union, the total abstainer and Bishop of London Frederick Temple stressed that women were often 'the best ambassadors' to reach other women. For, aware of the 'temptations and influences' facing women, they could use 'arguments that went more closely home'.[46] At the risk of extending the evidence, the choice of the word *home* is noteworthy. For Canon Wilberforce, the first bishop of the Diocese of Newcastle, women were the 'home-makers' and indeed 'happiness-makers of us poor men'. They were 'vote-makers', their homes cradles of citizenship.[47] But it should now be clear that temperance action was no 'sequestered femininity', and citizenship not merely something that

[42] 'Public Meeting in Exeter Hall', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 17 May 1884, 32. For biographies of Weston and Robinson, see Ros Black, *Scandal, Salvation and Suffrage: The Amazing Women of the Temperance Movement* (Kibworth Beauchamp: Matador, 2015). The Women's Union's independence from CETS' central organization was later apparently traded for seats on the national executive and a clearer structure of representation on local boards. Beatrice Temple, 'C.E.T.S. Work. Women's Union Quarterly Letter', *The Illustrated Temperance Monthly*, January 1895, 45.

[43] Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, p. 187.

[44] See 'Bishop Ryle and the Grocers', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 15 March 1884, 169–70; and 'What is It?', Leader, *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 17 May 1884, 30–31.

[45] Bonea, Dickson, Shuttleworth and Wallis, *Anxious Times*, p. 147; Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere*, p. 4.

[46] 'Women's Union. The Bishop of London at Grosvenor House', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 6 June 1885, 273–74.

[47] Rev. Canon Wilberforce, *Our Young Women. An Address on Temperance* (London: National Temperance Publication Depot, 1890), p. 26.

women's male children might one day exercise through the ballot box. Rather, the very notion of different spheres was used to promote a vision of what Smitley terms 'social mothering', a more active and public conception of citizenship.[48] To make such arguments meant leaving the home, a point recognized by the writer George Foster in a pamphlet called *Women and Temperance*. As drink threatened to destroy the home, so women had 'a right to help in the temperance cause'; for 'precisely as the man goes from the scene of his work in the world to his home, so does the woman go from the scene of her work, as occasion requires, into the world'.[49] The mandate was clear, and from their publications we can recover the methods by which women constructed roles that were far from passive or private.

Campaigners in many arenas of social reform imagined a scalar link between the self, the home and the nation.[50] This shaped medicalized concerns 'that the motherhood of England – the home life of our people – should be in danger of being poisoned at its source', to quote Canon Ellison.[51] The disciplined maternal body was a site for the very reproduction of the nation, and by extension women's social work a test of citizenship.[52] As Dr Kate Mitchell put it, addressing the Women's Union, as 'mothers of the human race they cannot avoid the grave responsibilities which attach to them in this capacity of motherhood'. This meant taking an 'active position' regarding women's drinking.[53] For Mitchell, temperance work would help women whose days were 'full of *ennui*, idleness, and emptiness'.[54] Women were noted to drink to salve the effects of illness or the menopause, for example, or to deal with the realization of frustrated hopes once their children had left home.[55] Mitchell attacked those who excused their own private drinking as medicinal or moderate but who complained about public drinking and drunkenness – their wealth guaranteed the purity of their drink and their status hid its effects. Total abstinence became a litmus test of women's trustworthiness and influence. 'If women would only recognise the fact their influence in the home and society is illimitable', Mitchell urged, 'then we should witness the spread of a much higher moral tone, and also a diminution in the crimes and vices which beset our modern civilisation'.[56]

Various speakers and writers confronted the limits and indeed efficacy of women's temperance work. Here is Rebekah Hind Smith, who converted the estimated national annual drink bill into bread – specifically 1100,000,000 quarter loaves – to emphasize the potential power of domestic decision-making:

> Is YOUR influence, dear sister, going on the *right* side about all this?
>
> You sometimes say you don't understand *politics*. But this is a kind of politics you ought to understand! "Politics" means the welfare of the people. And "the people"

[48] Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere*, p. 8 and p. 7.

[49] G. J. Foster, *Women and Temperance* (London: National Temperance Publication Depot, 1888), p. 5 and p. 7.

[50] See Stephen Legg and Michael Brown, 'Moral Regulation: Historical Geography and Scale', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 42 (2013), 134–39.

[51] 'Women's Union. The Bishop of London at Grosvenor House', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 6 June 1885, 273–74.

[52] See Francesca Moore, '"A Band of Public-Spirited Women": Middle-class Female Philanthropy and Citizenship in Bolton, Lancashire before 1918', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41 (2016), 149–62.

[53] 'Science. Temperance, the Stronghold of Life. By Dr. Kate Mitchell', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 16 May 1885, 229–31 (230).

[54] Dr Kate Mitchell, *Effects of Alcohol on Women* (London: National Temperance Publication Depot, 1884), pp. 3–5.

[55] Lady Henry Somerset, *Beauty for Ashes* (London: Lupcott Gill and Son, Ltd, 1913), p. 12.

[56] Mitchell, *Effects of Alcohol*, p. 4 and pp. 6–7.

> means husbands, wives, sons, and daughters! It means *you*, and *your* husbands and *your* sons and *your* daughters.[57]

This is one of many addresses urging women's involvement in temperance work.[58] The secretary of CETS Women's Union, E. M. Ayerst, emphasized that every member was a shareholder, their responsibilities to church and country 'limited only by the opportunities given to each'.[59] Public speaking might be the gift of a relative few, Mrs P. R. P. Braithwaite reassured an audience at Andover, but 'personal' work was 'surely within the scope of all'. Women cautious about breaking conventions, simply needed to realize that 'it is God's work, not social and philanthropic'.[60] Truly, there was urgent and distinctive work to be done.

Reform work could trouble social and spatial boundaries. Addressing the May Day Women's Union meeting in 1884, Laura Ormiston Chant described her work exposing secretive drinking in railway refreshment rooms.[61] They were public yet dangerously anonymous spaces. The physical exertions of travel offered a ready excuse for stimulation, while the regular throughput of customers waiting for trains helped prevent detection.[62] At Brixton station's refreshment room Chant observed a woman drinking neat whisky and brandy. 'I followed her', she recounted, 'and you must do the same'. When questioned, the woman explained that she would drink at the end of a long day's shop work, her parents knowing nothing about it. Chant warned her: 'This is an awful danger you are running and you know you are ashamed of it'. So should Chant's listeners be, were they unwilling to confront women's drinking. Her presentation chimes with Philippa Levine's observation that 'The sentiment of moral superiority became the leading edge of many women's rights campaigns'. It was a 'positive proclamation of their identity as women'.[63] Rooting a new geography of action in essentialized notions of femininity, Chant stressed that women could slip into places – 'tinier chinks', she called them – where men could not.

The idea that a woman might be drinking in public, however slyly, had the potential to reflect back on women battling for respectability in the expanding public space of Victorian society. Reports of unaccompanied women suffering from mistaken identity on the street revealed the moral scrutiny at work in that fight.[64] The keeper of a Leicestershire inebriate home, Mr Riley, would tell the Peel Commission in 1897 of the case of a married woman of 'very high position', arrested in the Lancashire seaside resort of Southport. She had reportedly been the worse for alcohol; and being 'taken for a woman of immoral character', she was charged with solicitation and sentenced to a month in prison. Riley said that to avoid

57 Mrs [Rebekah S.] Hind Smith, *Waste, Want, & Treachery. Being the Substance of a Letter to a Women's Meeting* (London: National Temperance Publication Depot, *c.* 1890), p. 9, original emphases.

58 'Women's Union', *The Church of England Temperance Society Chronicle*, 12 March 1887, 152–53.

59 E. M. Ayerst, 'C.E.T.S. Work. The Women's Union. Quarterly Letter', *The Illustrated Temperance Monthly*, January 1893, 51–52.

60 Mrs P. R. P. Braithwaite, *Women's Work in Relation to Intemperance. Being a Paper Reading at a Meeting of the Hants & Isle of Wight United Temperance Council at Andover* (London: Church of England Temperance Society, 1896), p. 6.

61 'Mrs. Ormiston Chant's Speech', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 17 May 1884, 33.

62 David Beckingham, 'Banning the Barmaid: Time, Space and Alcohol Licensing in 1900s Glasgow', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 18 (2017), 117–36 (126).

63 Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850–1900* (Gainsville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), p. 13.

64 Bonea, Dickson, Shuttleworth and Wallis, *Anxious Times*, p. 141. Also see Judith Walkowitz, 'Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London', *Representations*, 62 (1998), 1–30; Julia Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885–1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

publicity the family chose not to take the case to the Home Secretary, even though she had simply been drunk and incapable. She was left to serve her term. The case ultimately ended in divorce, Riley speculating that the accusation of solicitation may have played some part in the husband 'getting rid' of his problem wife. And where had she procured the drink that became her downfall? Riley suspected it was the railway refreshment room.[65]

If Riley's report was accurate, this woman had mistaken the comparative liberty that accompanied her social class for a kind of licence.[66] She paid a heavy price, for that licence was measured out by gender. If an essential ambition for citizens was to be able to navigate the city undisturbed, Chant showed women how fragile their privacy in public could be.[67] Back in the Brixton refreshment room, she spotted a 'beautiful, bright looking, young lady, of twenty-five' drinking brandy and water. The lady claimed this was for her rheumatism. Chant explained, as a doctor's wife, that what was 'morally wrong must be scientifically wrong'. And she encouraged this woman to devote herself to God and not be separated from her husband, himself active in temperance work. When the young lady uttered 'God bless you', Chant knew she had 'ample reward for any barrier of etiquette I had overstepped in trying to rescue her'. That idea of rescue was bound to invite comparison with efforts to combat prostitution, a reminder not only that reformers subscribed to many causes but that temperance work might challenge the conventions of public space.[68] Chant was as likely to scrutinize other women as suffer the surveillance of men.[69] Her access to the inner lives of such women – gleaned from even chance public encounters – provided a platform to reveal home truths about the risks of secretive drinking.

Campaigning against secret drinking was leading women into the electoral and legislative issues-based temperance characteristic of the 1880s and 1890s. Miss Holland advised a conference audience in Great Yarmouth in 1886, for example, that they should put their objections to grocers and their wives, and petition MPs and licensing authorities. Holland noted with satisfaction that William Gladstone's daughter Helen had added her signature to a petition against a grocer's licence application in Cambridge.[70] Women could withdraw their custom from licensed grocers, making their homes into the sites of *rational* economic consumption expected of good citizens.[71] The grocer was engaged in 'savage competition', Chant would later argue, because the public wanted 'luxuries at the expense of necessaries'.[72] Buying from grocers without licences would therefore be akin to a 'temperance subscription' – an exercise in self-control and in-kind support for weaker-spirited women who might otherwise be seduced by the shopkeeper's wares.[73] To Henry Clifford Gosnell, solicitor of the Off

65 1898 [C.8693] XXXVI.1, *Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws*. Third report. Evidence of Mr H. M. Riley, p. 537, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*; 'Grocers' Licences', *Wings*, 1 September 1897, 118, in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*. The accounts differ as to whether the woman was from Liverpool or Sydenham.

66 'Liberty is not Licence', *The British Women's Temperance Journal*, 1 October 1887, 113, in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

67 Helen Rogers, 'Any Questions? The Gendered Dimensions of the Political', *Leeds Centre Working Papers in Victorian Studies Volume 3: Platform, Pulpit, Rhetoric* (2000), pp. 9–22 (p. 13).

68 'Mrs. Ormiston Chant's Speech', *The Church of England Temperance Chronicle*, 17 May 1884, 33.

69 Croll, 'Street Disorder', 257.

70 Miss Holland, 'Shopkeepers' Licences', *The British Women's Temperance Journal*, 1 January 1887, 8–10 (9), in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

71 Pamela K. Gilbert, *The Citizen's Body: Desire, Health, and the Social in Victorian England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2007), p. 22.

72 L. Ormiston Chant, 'Grocers' Licences', *The United Temperance Gazette*, May 1897, 32–33.

73 Miss Holland, 'Shopkeepers' Licences'.

Licences Association, this amounted to a 'boycott', language that evoked political struggles in Ireland. 'It is a common thing', he wrote, 'to hear members of the Temperance party expressing their abhorrence of and indignation at the tyrannical system of boycotting practised in Ireland'. Using the same methods was 'political hypocrisy', Gosnell concluded. Yet in so doing, of course, he explicitly acknowledged the political potential of everyday domestic decisions.[74]

In October 1890, the British Women's Temperance Association quarterly conference heard a demand for the removal of Post Office branches from licensed grocers. How could the adverts for beers and spirits in such shops be compatible with the thrifty conduct promoted by the 'Post Office and Savings Bank', asked Tottenham member Mary Phillips? They must oppose the location of Post Office services in licensed grocers through 'guerilla warfare'.[75] They were to memorialize the Postmaster General, and temperance branches nationwide were asked to research and report to Phillips the numbers and impacts of such licences in their areas. Such circulating stories helped reinforce a sense of a problem, even if its scale remained more elusive. The Post Office's network itself serves as a useful metaphor: the drink mobile but hidden – like the contents of a parcel – beneath a veil of packing paper.[76] It was the distribution network for temperance information, for papers, pamphlets and petitions, and ultimately public debate.[77]

The 1890s was a particularly febrile period in temperance politics. As Frances Knight has noted, of all moral issues 'none became so deeply embedded in the fabric of political life as the temperance question'.[78] The Liberal Party had pledged to support local option reforms, but in government its legislative efforts to give ratepayers a say in licensing decisions stalled. CETS did not take an official position on the proposals, a reminder that it was a coalition of temperance and teetotal views. Instead, through the Bishop of London Frederick Temple, it proposed a different bill to reduce the numbers of licences, to be granted by elected boards not magistrates, and restrict off-licence sales to beers and wines.[79] Opposition was led by that familiar figure the Earl of Kimberley, who called out the 'violent onslaught on grocers' licences' and reminded their Lordships that statistical claims of an increase in women's drinking would not stand scrutiny. Temple withdrew his bill without a division; a later effort was also easily defeated.[80]

Just as debates about legislation threatened to expose differences in CETS, the BWTA's 45,000 members divided on the question of how expansive and political its activism should be. President Lady Henry Somerset favoured a 'Do Everything' policy, including campaigning for women's suffrage.[81] Somerset's critics on the National Executive Committee, led by Mary Docwra, preferred to concentrate on drink. They had taken control of the BWTA's

74 H. Clifford Gosnell, 'Boycotting of Grocers by Good Templars', Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 4 January 1888, 7, in *The Times Digital Archive*.

75 'Post Offices at Licensed Grocers. Points of Attack', *The British Women's Temperance Journal*, 1 December 1890, 140, in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

76 On the Post Office network, see Kate Thomas, *Postal Pleasures: Sex, Scandal, and Victorian Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 17.

77 'Quarterly Conference', *The British Women's Temperance Journal,* 1 November 1890, 131, in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

78 Frances Knight, 'Recreation or Renunciation? Episcopal Interventions in the Drink Question in the 1890s', in *Religion, Identity and Conflict in Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century. Essays in Honour of Keith Robbins*, ed. by S. J. Brown, F. Knight and J. Morgan-Guy (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 157–73 (p. 157).

79 Knight, 'Recreation or Renunciation', 164; Shiman, *Crusade against Drink*, p. 219.

80 *Hansard*, HL Deb 12 May 1893 vol 12 cc. 733–53, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/index.html>; Knight, 'Recreation or Renunciation', 166.

81 Shiman, *Crusade against Drink*, p. 185; Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere*, p. 7.

journal in 1891 and would take it with them to their breakaway Women's Total Abstinence Union (WTAU). In 1894, the journal, now called *Wings* and edited by a woman, reported on the WTAU's own bill to abolish the sale of beers, wines, and spirits by shopkeepers.[82] Promoted through the Welsh MP David Thomas, the bill failed to clear its first reading, yet it is instructive how the different sides positioned themselves. The Honorary Secretary of the Manchester and District Off Licence Holders' Protection Association attacked the 'irresponsible busybodies' of the temperance movement, pointing out that the existence of a bill didn't imply guilt on the part of grocers.[83] The WTAU wouldn't be brushed off like this. At its annual conference in May 1894, Mary Docwra explained: 'our especial duty is so to focus this opinion that the rays of light will be directed upon Parliament with such force that it can no longer delay legislation'. Docwra called for special meetings, and resolutions to the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Home Secretary. Information about 'well-authenticated' cases of secret drinking needed to be shared, illustrated stories published, and letters written to MPs, coordinated so that perhaps 5000 might arrive on the same day. She even envisaged a 'Monster Women's Petition'.[84] Docwra's demands may have reflected the WTAU's narrower message, but her methods betrayed no such caution.

The Liberty Review, its name quickly betraying its position, seized on Docwra's request for information as proof that campaigners' actions were 'founded upon nothing more substantial than their own diseased imagination'. In a remarkable attempt to marginalize Docwra it simply and cruelly referred to her as 'Miss Somebody'. It attacked the 'shrieking sisterhood and their coadjutors' for repeating 'stale lies and calumnies'.[85] But it was clear that campaigners were forcing a trade response. Henry Clifford Gosnell had heard Docwra speak. Writing in the *Grocer*, later reprinted in *Wings*, he concluded that if more grocers listened to Docwra they would realise the need to be better organized. Their 'lamentable apathy' was in contrast to the 'energy, activity, and perfect condition of the total abstinence and temperance organisations'.[86] The grocer was also under attack from competitors in the pub trade who, with talk of protective shields of shame, remarkably allied themselves to the cause.[87] Gosnell returned fire, boasting that the off-licence aided temperance because it encouraged the consumption of drink with food, at home, allowing ordinary people to get alcohol without going to the pub.[88] Grocers, like their temperance opponents, were fighting to demonstrate that they promoted respectability in the communities they served.[89]

[82] Lilian Lewis Shiman, 'Docwra, Mary Elizabeth (1847–1914)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/55164> [accessed 11 June 2020]; Outen, 'Girl, Junior, Woman', 749; [Anon.], *The Grocer's Licence* (London: Church of England Temperance Society, 1894), p. 14.

[83] H. G. Crews, 'To The Editor of the Manchester Guardian', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 May 1894, 3.

[84] Miss M. E. Docwra, 'How to Secure the Abolition of Grocers' Licenses', *Wings*, 1 June 1894, 74–76 (76), in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*. Docwra had served on the BWTA National Executive Committee. Olwen Claire Niessen, *Aristocracy, Temperance and Social Reform: The Life of Lady Henry Somerset* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), p. 101.

[85] 'Lies and Twaddle about Grocers' Licences', *The Liberty Review*, 23 June 1894, 468–69 (469), in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

[86] 'The Abolition of Grocers' Licences. Testimony and News.' *Wings*, 1 July 1894, 94–95 (95), in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

[87] William Beatty-Kingston, *Intemperance: Its Causes and its Remedies* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1892), p. 43.

[88] H. Clifford Gosnell, 'Grocers' Licences', Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 2 January 1895, 9, in *The Times Digital Archive*.

[89] Christopher P. Hosgood, 'The "Pigmies of Commerce" and the Working-class Community: Small Shopkeepers in England, 1870–1914', *Journal of Social History*, 22 (1989), 439–60 (453).

Docwra continued to search for 'facts which prove the existence of the evil', collecting the names of medics for another petition.[90] Her efforts were to be frustrated, if the introduction of new legislation is the measure of success. Lord Salisbury's Conservative administration moved the debate on licensing reform into a Royal Commission. Its establishment had been encouraged by the Archbishop of Canterbury Edward Benson, apparently frustrated that bishops such as CETS chair Frederick Temple had become so active in legislative debates. Temple would sit on the commission as one of eight temperance voices, balanced by trade representatives and neutral figures.[91] Debates about the nature of the evidence were of a piece with the investigation 20 years earlier. When inebriate home manager Mr Riley was pushed to outline why he was appearing as a witness, he explained that he had read in a newspaper that the commission lacked evidence of a link between the grocer and increased drunkenness. He believed he had that evidence: the drinking habits of 90% of the women who had come under his care could be traced to licensed grocers, exploited by women who would not dare enter a pub or spirit vaults. But of the 'hundreds' of cases he had seen, only three had 'got into the police statistics': one was the woman in Southport, whose case showed how families would attempt to minimize the shame of publicity.[92]

Temperance campaigners continued to represent the grocer as a gateway to the pub. Alice Hawkes of the WTAU described how a Somerset lady, interested in temperance work, had been 'ruined' by her grocer. Getting drink in this way, seemed 'all right and very respectable until the alcohol got such a hold of her that, poor thing, I suppose she would almost go anywhere for it now' – including the pub.[93] So far so familiar. But Charles Sutcliffe, a temperance advocate and solicitor, had earlier reported to the commission that in the Lancashire mill town of Burnley women were meeting in homes 'in the absence of their husbands', their drink supplied from the grocer discretely under another name or delivered by children.[94] This forced a trade response, which was put to Alice Hawkes by Liberal commissioner Henry Grinling of the wine and spirits merchants W&A Gilbey.[95] Burnley's Off License Association had surveyed all 91 shopkeepers in the town: 89 pledged they had never sold drink under another name; one was away, leaving only one possible 'black sheep'.[96] We might read Sutcliffe's complaint as evidence that working women were carving out valuable social space, for well into the twentieth century gendered social conventions forced many to seek 'the sociability of the pub in alternative settings'.[97] But the claim that women might be drinking *together*, in relative privacy, connected the grocer to the kinds of 'allurements of association' that Clara

90 'Grocers' Licences', *Wings*, 1 February 1895, 17–18, in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

91 Benson died before the commission sat. Knight, 'Recreation or Renunciation', 169; David Fahey, 'Temperance and the Liberal Party – Lord Peel's Report, 1899', *Journal of British Studies*, 10 (1971), 132–59 (134).

92 1898 [C.8693] XXXVI.1, *Royal Commission*, Evidence of Mr H. M. Riley, p. 540, p. 539, and p. 537, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*; 'Grocers' Licenses', *Wings*, 1 April 1897, 47, in *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

93 1898 [C.8693] XXXVI.1, *Royal Commission*, Evidence of Mrs Alice Elizabeth Georgina Hawkes, p. 41, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*.

94 1898 [C.8693] XXXVI.1, *Royal Commission*, Evidence of Mr Charles Sutcliffe, p. 35, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*.

95 Fahey, 'Temperance', 135; Hands, *Drinking*, p. 86.

96 1898 [C.8693] XXXVI.1, *Royal Commission*, Evidence of Alice Hawkes, p. 58, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*.

97 Claire Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 72.

Balfour had thought characterized only men's drinking, and the commission was invited to consider the consequences.

In a blow to the temperance cause the Royal Commission famously divided, producing two reports.[98] The minority report devoted nearly three pages to the grocer, the majority report one paragraph. While both favoured moving control of off-licences to licensing justices, they differed on whether licensees should be required to devote their premises solely to that purpose and therefore lose their grocery trade. The minority report's recommendation to separate the sale of drink from groceries was rejected by the majority signatories as a threat to the viability of businesses, particularly in small towns. The convenience of the middle classes won out.[99] Whereas so much reform attention had focused on the *private* moral natures and failings of individuals, in legislative terms the grocer would practically now be dealt with as just another licence in the landscape of supply – and a legitimate one at that. Leading Liberals knew the risk of alienating the likes of the Gilbeys and their grocer clients, and 'spared the grocers' when they embarked on their watershed 1908 licensing efforts.[100] The grocer's opponents were never able to meet the threshold of adequate proof required to deliver a secure verdict in the court of political opinion. But specific and ultimately unsuccessful though their campaign against the grocer may have been, by their actions temperance women were able to articulate their legitimacy to participate in public debates about drink.

4. CONCLUSIONS

To its critics, the grocer threatened the 'ring fence of propriety' that shielded women and protected their respectability.[101] Its visibility, like that of the railway refreshment room, made it an obvious focus of attention when the drinking culture it allegedly sustained was otherwise hard to identify. Different groups contested the space created by an absence of official evidence. Doctors had projected their knowledge of private lives, even while they used patient confidentiality to excuse a lack of verifiable cases. For CETS such public confessions were not necessarily desirable, even if they were possible, for they would require 'unlocking many a skeleton cupboard and revealing family secrets, which are better locked up in the family records'.[102] The scrutiny that secret drinking demanded was as much that of the self. Laura Ormiston Chant hit out at the 'shoddy respectability' of hypocrites who would criticize publicans but excuse the grocer, maintaining the 'genteel appearance' of their suburban life by burying their secrets at the bottom of the grocery basket.[103] There could be no inconsistency between public practices and private habits, the legitimacy of one resting on the respectability of the other.

Reform work was built as much on a politics of differentiation as togetherness. I have shown how, by appealing to notions of shame, campaigners hitched individual sobriety and private responsibility to an emerging set of public citizenship practices 'beyond the vote'.[104]

98 James Kneale, '"A problem of supervision": Moral Geographies of the Nineteenth-century British Public House', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 25 (1999), 333–48 (336).

99 1899 [C.9076] XXXV.395, *Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws*. Final Report, p. 157, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*.

100 Fahey, 'Temperance', pp. 146–49.

101 Sir Thomas Barlow, *The Prevailing Intemperance Among Women: Its Cause and Its Remedy* (London: Church of England Temperance Society, *c.* 1903), p. 4.

102 [Anon.], *The Grocer's Licence* (London: Church of England Temperance Society, 1894), p. 16.

103 L. Ormiston Chant, 'Grocers' Licences', *The United Temperance Gazette*, May 1897, 32–33.

104 Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880–1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 19. For parallels with motherhood, see Moore, 'A Band of Public-Spirited Women'. Also see Pat Thane, 'Late Victorian Women', in *Later Victorian Britain, 1867–1900*, ed. by T. R. Gourvish and A. O'Day (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 175–208 (p. 186).

For some women this work represented a vigilant defence of the private sphere, to ensure the home was the kind of site of sober self-discipline in which Britain's future citizens might be trained.[105] It would 'responsibilize' citizens to use their liberal freedoms with appropriate respect and restraint.[106] And while the disagreement between the BWTA and the WTAU over the boundaries of social action is a reminder not to assume the same ultimate motives, the methods of organizing nevertheless supported a public culture of meeting and petitioning, writing and publishing. Secret drinking gave women a temperance platform, from which to address various clerical, political and trade interests.[107] Even as they traversed and tested the boundaries of reform work, however, the actions of campaigners could limit the everyday social and spatial freedoms and practices of other women. It is important to highlight the potential legacies of such work, and the gender ideals it promoted. For, to quote James Nicholls, 'drink is a subject on which the assertion of intractable gender differences remains an unimpeachable norm'.[108] If the ideas of shame that featured in speeches and tracts represent a strategy of differentiation, then temperance served as a way to bind, build and maintain the respectability only of those who could be persuaded to meet the responsibilities of its model of sober citizenship.

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[105] *Church of England Temperance Society, 30th Annual Report* (London: Church of England Temperance Society, 1891), p. 27.

[106] Alan Hunt, 'Fractious Rivals? Moral Panics and Moral Regulation', in *Moral Panic and the Politics of Anxiety*, ed. Sean Hier (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 53–70 (p. 64).

[107] Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere*, p. 41; Margaret Barrow, 'Teetotal Feminists: Temperance Leadership and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage', in *A Suffrage Reader: Charting Directions in British Suffrage History*, ed. by C. Eustance, J. Ryan and L. Ugolini (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 69–89 (p. 84); Patricia Grimshaw and Charles Sowerwine, 'Women's Suffrage', in *The Edinburgh Companion to the History of Democracy*, ed. by Benjamin Isakhan and Stephen Stockwell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 337–47 (p. 340).

[108] Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, p. 237.