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# FROM DE QUINCEY TO A. A.: PERSONAL ADDICTION NARRATIVE AND ITS ROLE IN CONSTRUCTING ADDICTS' IDENTITIES

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The introduction of the genre of personal addiction narrative and the fellowship groups that grew out of it added new voices to public discourse about addiction: those of the addicts themselves. From Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, published in England in 1821, to personal narratives written by members of the Washington Temperance Society in 1840s America, to the international phenomenon that is Alcoholics Anonymous and its derivatives, addicts in modern Western society have used personal narrative as a means both for recovery and for challenging social constructions of addict identity. Personal addiction narratives have helped create new paradigms of what it means to be an addict in Western society—at turns both liberating and constricting. In this thesis, I analyze these personal narratives to examine how addicts relate their personal experiences to their addictions, and how the notion of addiction as the result of moral deficiency plays into their personal accounts. As a result of the history of addiction and its treatment, addicts' identities remain intricately tied up with notions of morality, guilt, and willpower, and addiction cannot be reduced down to a medical condition. By examining the history and evolution of the genre of personal addiction narrative, this thesis aims to provide insight on the role of personal addiction narrative for addicts today and what the scope of its inclusions and exclusions mean for social perspectives about addicts and those addicts' perspectives about themselves.