

The Politics of Drunkenness: John Henry Walker, John A. Macdonald, and Graphic Satire

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Résumé

John A. Macdonald, le premier premier ministre du Canada, fut le sujet de plusieurs portraits officiels peints ou photographiés. Dans cet article, nous examinons les représentations satiriques de Macdonald qui le représentent buvant ou ivre. Notre objet principal d'analyse est la gravure sur bois peu connue de l'artiste montréalais John Henry Walker intitulée *The Pipe versus the Bottle*, qui est apparue dans le journal comique *Grinchuckle* en 1869. Cette estampe montre Macdonald en train de boire en compagnie du rédacteur et défenseur du mouvement de tempérance John Dougall, ce dernier tenant ce qui semble être une boisson non alcoolique. Nous plaçons Walker dans une longue lignée d'auteurs de satires graphiques, dont James Gillray, qui ont raillé politiciens et monarques au travers d'un discours portant sur l'ivrognerie et, plus généralement, sur l'excès de consommation. À partir d'une étude d'archives au Musée McCord de Montréal, notre analyse montre que Walker fut inspiré par l'artiste satirique anglais George Cruikshank, qui a produit de nombreuses gravures représentant l'ivrognerie. Nous développons le concept du « grim chuckle » (petit rire sombre) afin d'explorer les relations complexes entre satire, rire et consommation d'alcool.

Alcoholism has rarely been imaged or imagined as humorous. Drunkenness, on the other hand, has frequently been represented as a source of laughter, particularly in graphic satire, both historically and in the more recent past (fig. 1).¹ This article examines works of political graphic satire produced in the nineteenth century that portray the first prime minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald (1815–91), as intoxicated.² The primary object of analysis is a wood engraving by Montreal graphic artist John Henry Walker (1831–99) that represents Macdonald and newspaper editor John Dougall (1805–86) (fig. 2). The prime minister is shown drinking, and Dougall, who was a vehement temperance advocate, is also depicted with a glass in his hand. Entitled *The Pipe versus the Bottle*, it was published in the illustrated comic journal *Grinchuckle* on Thursday 28 October 1869, accompanied by a poem.³ The poem, ostensibly “By a Witness” (alluding to Dougall’s newspaper *The Montreal Witness*), is written in a thick Scottish brogue, suggesting that Dougall, a Scot, is speaking to Macdonald. It begins:

Sir John, this winna do, man, this fudlin’ winna do,
You’re gi’en yer freens a scunner, an’ a’ the world would think
Ye must hae been in liquor when ye chose auld
Francis Hincks.

In this first stanza, “the Witness” warns Macdonald that he is giving his friends a “scunner,” a Scottish slang term for a source of disgust, in choosing Francis Hincks as minister of finance.⁴ Dougall suggests that the outlandishness of this decision would lead people to think that Macdonald was “in liquor”—drunk—when he made his choice. The implication is that Macdonald’s drinking, which was common knowledge, was resulting in poor political decisions. In the poem’s second stanza Dougall encourages Macdonald to “objure the bottle.” The third and final stanza reads in its entirety:

Ye ken my freen. Sir Johnny, sic habits to evince,
Is na a good example to set afore a Prince;

Then brak’ that ugly bottle; — I canna bear its smell;
An’ though I hate tebacco [*sic*], I’ll tak’ a pipe myself.

For Dougall, then, of these competing vices—the pipe and the bottle—the pipe is the lesser of two evils. Although Dougall is shown drinking, the liquid in his glass is lighter than in Macdonald’s, signifying that he is consuming a non-alcoholic beverage. *The Pipe versus the Bottle* is a satirical image that portrays Macdonald’s drinking as convivial, despite the accompanying poem’s suggestion that the prime minister’s alcohol consumption may have negatively impacted his politics.

While Walker and his wood engraving are the primary foci of this article, I also examine representations of Macdonald by Toronto graphic satirist John Wilson Bengough (1851–1923), who has long been known for his political satires that portray Macdonald in a negative light, in order to demonstrate how the two artists alluded to the prime minister’s alcohol consumption in order to elicit laughter from their audiences, but with different intentions. Bengough employed the bottle as a symbol of Macdonald’s political (and moral) corruption, while Walker’s intent was to “make fun” of Dougall and Macdonald, undermining the ostensible seriousness of both temperance and politics by doing so. In *The Pipe versus the Bottle*, Walker depicts a well-known temperance advocate standing in close proximity to a well-known drinker. With his raised left hand and extended finger pointing skyward, Dougall appears to be admonishing Macdonald for his drinking, a reading that is supported by the poem that accompanies the engraving. By bringing these two figures together in one satirical pictorial space, Walker deflates Dougall’s (ostensible) moral superiority, but his primary objective is to poke holes in the political image of Canada’s first prime minister that other forms of visual culture, such as official portraiture, were intended to concretize. In a photographic portrait from 1862, for example, Macdonald stands in an interior space, a dark curtain hanging on his left (fig. 3). His right arm is held close to his body—unlike the broad gesture in Walker’s engraving



Figure 1. William Hogarth, *Gin Lane*, 1751. Etching and engraving, 38 x 32 cm
© Trustees of the British Museum.

—and he looks thoughtfully into the distance. The mood of the photograph is quiet and contemplative, a fitting atmosphere for the “Father of Canada.” His soft contrapposto and feet firmly rooted on the carpet signify gravitas. His hand is placed on his hip in a pose that recalls Renaissance paintings of powerful male subjects. As Kristina Huneault observes regarding the hand-on-hip pose in historical art, “the gesture is one of cocky, masculine self-assurance.”²⁵ In Walker’s engraving, Macdonald’s legs are similarly positioned—the right leg bent instead of the left—but his feet are planted more widely apart and he leans forward, throwing him somewhat off balance. His body takes up more space in contrast with the photograph’s contained stance, which is only interrupted by his left elbow jutting out.

Both Walker’s and Bengough’s representations of Macdonald differ dramatically from the carefully constructed political image exemplified by the 1862 photograph. Although they had different objectives with their portrayals of Macdonald, their works illuminate the power of graphic satire to offer an alternative version to the “official” image of an individual, and it can function as a system of checks and balances in the political

sphere.⁶ As an analytical framework with which to read satirical images of Macdonald I develop the concept of the “grim chuckle” so as to explore the complex relationships among satire, laughter, and alcohol in both visual culture and lived experience. I suggest that the “grim chuckle” is a particular kind of laughter that is often, though certainly not always, the affective response to satirical representations of drunkenness, whatever the intentions of the artist might have been.

Drunkenness, Visual Culture, and the Grim Chuckle

During Macdonald’s lifetime, intemperance—that is, “excessive” alcohol consumption—was viewed as a form of deviance, as well as a sin, a vice, and sometimes a crime—a moral problem that could be solved with either willpower or the positive influence of a good woman.⁷ Alternatively, it was believed by some in the nineteenth century that the only solution for the problem of intemperance was enforced confinement in asylums.⁸ In 1888, British physician Norman Kerr, the first president of the Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety (“Cure” was quickly dropped from its name), wrote that contrary to these earlier views, “inebriety” was not a crime or a sin, but a disease, thus, in theory, emptying it of the taint of immorality.⁹ Kerr was not the first to promote the idea that intemperance was a disease, but despite his best efforts many individuals in England and other countries continued to perceive intemperance as intrinsically immoral and therefore shameful. The terms “intemperance” and “inebriety” were eventually discarded in favour of “addiction” and “alcoholism.”¹⁰ Many Victorian writers, both poets and novelists concerned with this subject, drew on medico-moral discourses related to addiction (or intemperance) that represented the drinker as enslaved to alcohol.¹¹ Visual artists and graphic satirists also represented drug and alcohol consumption, but there are few studies in this field.¹²

The ideology of alcoholism-as-stigma persists in recent scholarship on Macdonald.¹³ For instance, Ged Martin rejects the diagnosis of alcoholism in his discussion of Macdonald’s alcohol consumption. He acknowledges that Macdonald “had a serious but intermittent drink problem,” but claims that it “is unhelpful to relate this to the medical concept of ‘alcoholism.’”¹⁴ It is worth asking what is at stake when scholars are intent on distancing their subjects from alcoholism. “Problem drinker” appears to be an acceptable term, while “alcoholic” is largely avoided. As sympathetic as recent studies of Macdonald have been, they provide evidence that addiction is still perceived as a “weakness.”¹⁵ The principal question I address is not whether Macdonald was an alcoholic, but how works of graphic satire informed or contradicted nineteenth-century narratives about Macdonald’s drinking. Walker’s wood engravings function as important primary evidence of the role that visual culture has



Figure 2. John Henry Walker, *The Pipe versus the Bottle*, 1869. Ink on paper on supporting paper; wood engraving, 13.8 x 11.3 cm © McCord Museum, Montreal.

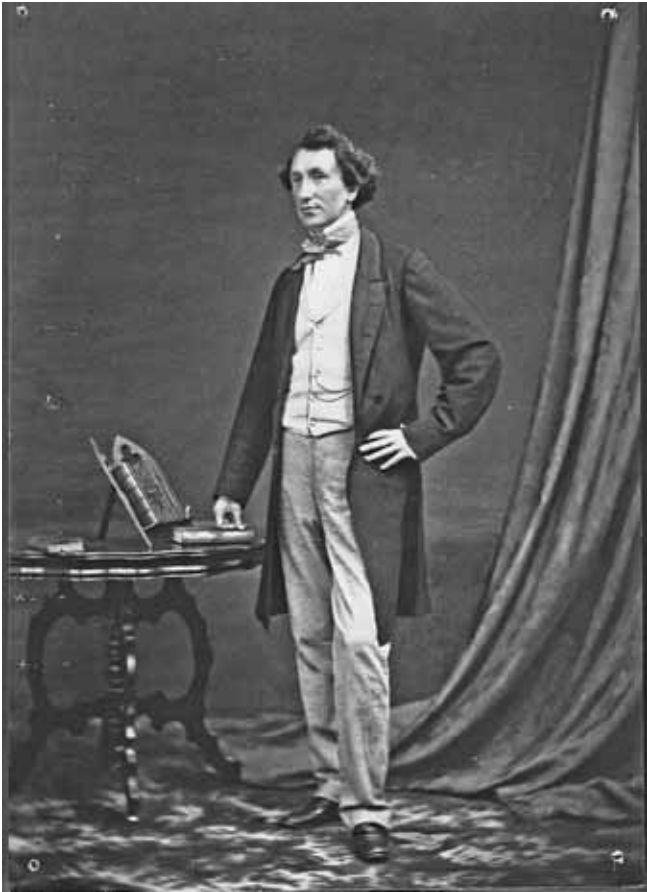


Figure 3. Anonymous, *John A. Macdonald, politician, Montreal, QC*, copied 1862. Silver salts on glass, wet collodion process, 12 x 10 cm © McCord Museum, Montreal.

played in discourses related to drunkenness and as a site for examining the fraught relationships among satire, laughter, and drunkenness.

One of the challenges of writing about drunkenness and satire is the need to address the question of what is *funny* about drunkenness. I propose that there is a particular kind of laugh—the “grim chuckle”—that is one of the possible responses to narratives and images pertaining to drunkenness. The idea of the “grim chuckle” draws on theories of “dark humour” (or “gallows humour”) and on the Freudian theory of laughter as a release of psychic or emotional tension.¹⁶ I have taken the term “grim chuckle” from a cover illustration that John Henry Walker produced for *Grinchuckle*, a Montreal-based political satire journal. *Grinchuckle* was originally the pseudonym of William Workman (1807–78), Montreal’s mayor, when he wrote for the comic journal *Diogenes*, to which Walker also contrib-

uted illustrations, including the cover image. In one version of Walker’s cover illustration for *Grinchuckle* the title erroneously appears as *Grimchuckle* (fig. 4),¹⁷ thereby evoking something darker than the periodical’s actual title (fig. 5).¹⁸ There is no evidence that the *Grimchuckle* cover was ever published, but it does invite us to consider Walker’s *The Pipe versus the Bottle* more broadly in terms of dark (or “black”) humour, particularly within the context of graphic satire and drunkenness. Read in light of the reality of Macdonald’s drinking, a “grim chuckle” might be one of many possible responses to this engraving and to other nineteenth-century representations of Macdonald that humorously represent him in relation to the bottle. Ultimately, then, *The Pipe versus the Bottle* functions well as an entry point for an engagement with the politics of drunkenness, that is, the discourses and anxieties revolving around the lived experience of excessive drinking, whether or not the drinker is identified as “alcoholic.”

John Henry Walker: Graphic Satirist and Bitter “Hireling”

Walker was born in Ballamony, County Antrim, in Northern Ireland. His family immigrated to Canada in 1824, moving briefly to Rochester, New York, then to Montreal. In 1845 he was apprenticed for three years to the engraver Cyrus A. Swett, under whom he was trained in copper and wood engraving. After a brief period in Boston, where Swett had moved, Walker returned to Montreal in 1848. He has received scant attention in art historical literature. To date, the most useful source remains Yves Chevrefils’s 1985 article, “John Henry Walker (1831–1899), Artisan-Graveur,” which reproduces in its entirety Walker’s brief autobiography-cum-history, *Wood Engraving in Canada*, and accompanies it with extensive explanatory notes. Walker wrote this text by hand on the blank pages at the back of J. W. Linton’s *Wood Engraving in America* on 4 April 1886. Although Walker set out to describe the history of wood engraving in Canada, the ten pages of manuscript relate more to his career and resentments. He had become disillusioned with the state of wood engraving in his adopted country and expressed bitterness toward a number of nineteenth-century figures, including John Dougall (although this falling out appears to have occurred after he depicted Dougall in *The Pipe versus the Bottle*).¹⁹

Walker was also resentful toward the Art Association of Montreal, for whom he produced a portrait of Christ.²⁰ Walker recalled that he was required to submit both the cut and the proof, and that the print had been attached to the wall of the exhibition space with a pin. After the show, Walker found it on top of a cupboard covered in dust.²¹ Because of this experience, he stated that he would never again participate in an organized art exhibition.

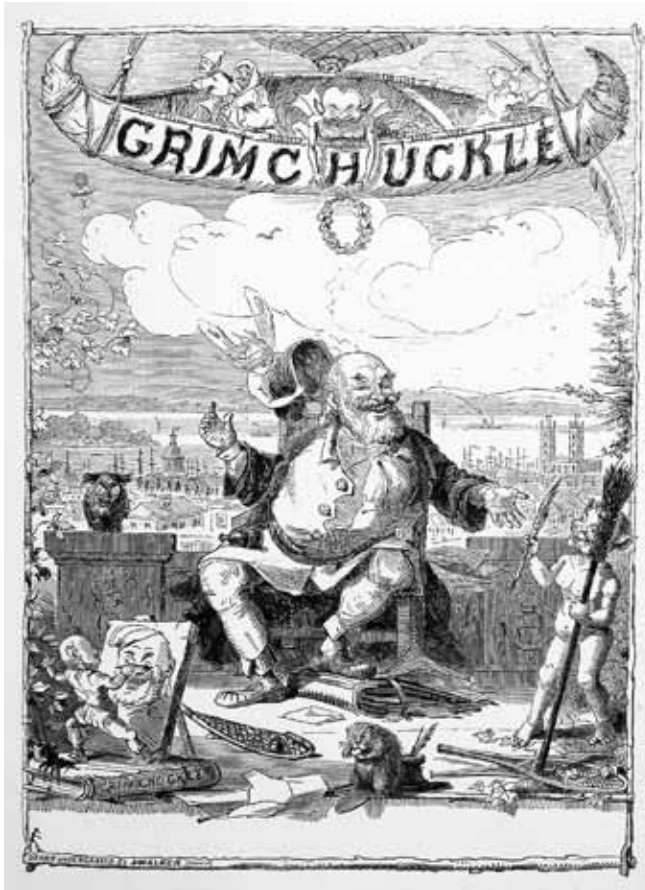


Figure 4. John Henry Walker, *Grimchuckle*, 1869. Ink on paper, 30.5 x 22.7 cm © McCord Museum, Montreal.

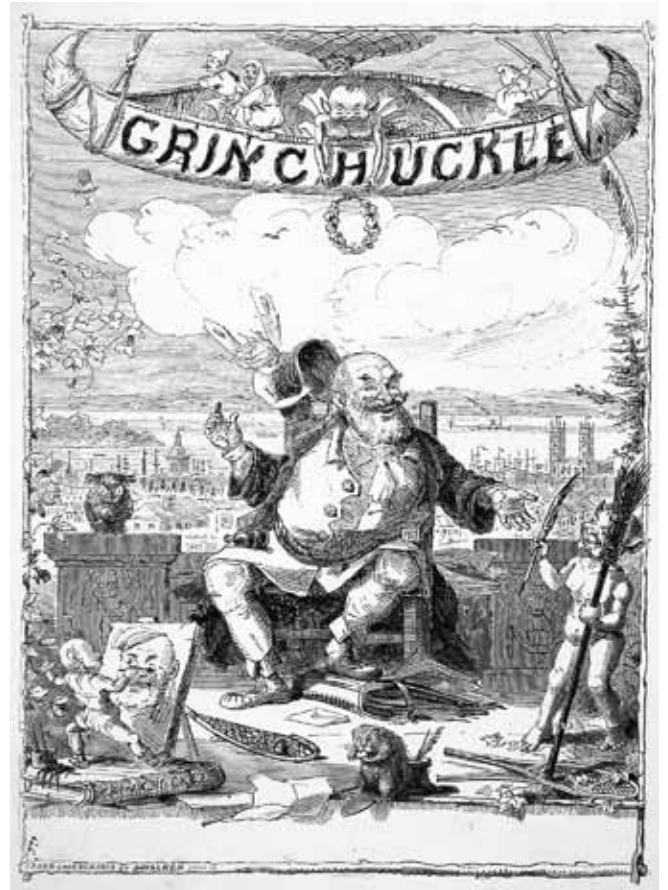


Figure 5. John Henry Walker, *Grimchuckle*, 1869. Ink on paper, 28 x 21.5 cm © McCord Museum, Montreal.

Walker’s general feelings of bitterness seem to have been largely based on the fact that he had rarely been regarded as a serious artist, a problem with which many eighteenth-century graphic satirists had grappled.²² Diana Donald has argued that the lack of writing about graphic artists in eighteenth-century England is due in large part to the lowly status of the satirist, a figure who was often labelled as a “hireling” and a “low painter” and whose work was regarded as ephemeral, unlike the “high art” of history painting.²³ A similar attitude toward wood engravers in nineteenth-century Canada led, at least in part, to Walker’s bitterness. It is clear from his text that Walker believed strongly that wood engraving was indeed an art and that he was a “real” artist.²⁴ He believed that the bias against wood engraving was particularly bad in Montreal, and he observed that, “wood engraving in the city of Montreal at the present time—1886—and for some years back, takes the lowest stand of any city in

Canada.”²⁵ Despite this resentment, Walker continued to produce wood engravings even though, as I discuss in greater depth below, he was indeed a “hireling” in the eighteenth-century sense of the word: he created hundreds of engraved advertisements for a range of Montreal clients and comic illustrations for the covers and inside pages of *Grimchuckle*, *Canadian Punch*, and *Diogenes*. It is in this context that he produced *The Pipe versus the Bottle*.

One layer of the satire in Walker’s portrayal of Macdonald and Dougall drinking together stems from the fact that Dougall founded and edited *The Montreal Witness*, which consistently supported the temperance cause in the Province of Canada and for many years after Confederation. Dougall was a prominent figure in nineteenth-century Montreal, not only as a newspaper editor, but also as a temperance advocate, moral reformer, and member of the social elite. He was the president of the Montreal Temperance Society for most of the years between



Figure 6. The Late George Cruikshank. From John Henry Walker scrapbook, M932.8.1.1, p. 102, no. 127 © McCord Museum, Montreal.

1835 and 1855.²⁶ Given Dougall's views regarding alcohol, it is likely that he and his fellow Montreal temperance advocates would have frowned upon Macdonald's frequent displays of public drunkenness.

Montreal was perceived as having one of the heaviest drinking populations in the nineteenth century. The city's high levels of alcohol consumption were due in part to the fact that it was a port city, and spirits, such as inexpensive rum, continuously arrived by ship from British colonies.²⁷ Social commentators were concerned about the alcohol consumption of working-class men in Montreal.²⁸ Walker, who chose Montreal as his professional base, seems to have had no clear opinion on alcohol. He created many engravings for the temperance movement, including temperance pledges (M930.50.3.197, McCord Museum) and an advertisement for the cause (M930.50.3.147, McCord Museum), but he also produced advertisements for companies such as G. Reinhardt and Sons Lager Beer (M930.50.5.485, McCord Museum). In his hand-written autobiography, he recalls that when *Punch in Canada* (1848–49) ceased production,

he began “working at whatever cuts I could get to do, principally seals for sons of Temperance Lodges.”²⁹ Walker's connection with temperance appears then to have been based on opportunity rather than moral belief. In other words, it is unlikely that Walker was, like Dougall, a temperance advocate. However, he was inspired by an English graphic satirist who was most definitely a temperance advocate and whose career suffered because of it.

In one of the scrapbooks that David Ross McCord acquired for his collection from Walker's daughter in 1911, Walker pasted an engraved portrait of “The Late George Cruikshank” (fig. 6).³⁰ There are two holes at the top of the clipping, which suggests that Walker, at various points in his life, pinned the image to the wall, perhaps as a source of inspiration. Cruikshank (1792–1878) was, for a time, much respected while he was alive, and he has not been completely forgotten by art historians, but his temperance, rather than his infamous earlier episodes of drunkenness, negatively affected both his fortunes and his artistic legacy.³¹

George Cruikshank was known as a heavy drinker from an early age, and his father, Edinburgh-born graphic satirist Isaac Cruikshank (1764–1811), probably died from chronic alcoholism. Many of George Cruikshank's biographers, including Blanchard Jerrold, highlight both Isaac's and George's drinking exploits. Like his father, George Cruikshank was widely praised for his engravings, particularly his early social and political satires.³² He frequently satirized lower-class drinkers in engravings such as *The Gin Shop* (1829). George Cruikshank continued in this thematic vein until 1847, when he produced his successful series *The Bottle*, eight plates that depict the deterioration of a comfortably middle-class family because of the father's drinking. However, both the mother and father are portrayed as drinkers: an unusual choice, as Victorian temperance art and literature usually represent “drunkard” husbands and temperate wives.³³ *The Bottle* concludes with the man killing his wife in a drunken rage, and in the final plate he is shown shivering in a cell at Bethlem, London's oldest insane asylum.

According to some biographers, George Cruikshank showed *The Bottle* to the president of a temperance society, who asked the artist how he could continue to drink with this visual lesson in front of him. At that very moment, Cruikshank experienced a conversion to temperance. The sequel to *The Bottle*, *The Drunkard's Children*, followed in 1848. While Cruikshank had once been tolerated as a drinker who frequently went on long binges, he was shunned by many in the art world when he became a vehement temperance advocate. His biographers frequently mourn what they characterize as a waste of talent on such ill-advised projects as the large oil painting *The Worship of Bacchus* (1869, Tate Britain, London), which Cruikshank hoped would motivate *all* drinkers from all social strata



Figure 7. John Henry Walker, *Genre Scene*, 1848. Engraving on supporting paper, 6 x 8.7 cm © McCord Museum, Montreal.

to choose temperance over alcohol consumption. This painting was regarded as a great artistic failure, which also fell short in its objective to convince the English to cease drinking.³⁴ Whereas in his early engravings Cruikshank satirized only lower-class drinkers, once he had become a temperance advocate, he wanted all drinkers—even those who did not have a problem with alcohol—to become temperate. According to one biographer, he once knocked a drink out of an elderly gentleman's hand at a dinner. Such behaviour resulted in the loss of friends such as Charles Dickens, who was critical of Cruikshank's extreme views on alcohol.³⁵

Like Cruikshank's later work, Walker's images of drunkenness are usually serious rather than satirical. Cruikshank was likely a source of inspiration for Walker in his creation of images related to drunkenness and temperance. A bootleg, unattributed version of Cruikshank's *The Bottle* appeared in 1851 under the title *The Story of Latimer* in the *Canada Temperance Advocate*,³⁶ to which Walker would have had access. It is also probable that Walker was aware of Cruikshank's well-known series *The Bottle*.

The title of Walker's engraving, *The Pipe versus the Bottle*, may well have been inspired by the British artist's series of prints. In addition to the temperance pledges, Walker produced a wood engraving entitled *Genre Scene* (fig. 7)—the same year that Cruikshank produced *The Drunkard's Children*—which depicts a family in a small hovel-like space.³⁷ An empty bottle rolls from the man's hand, and the two children huddle against their temperate mother for warmth.

John A. Macdonald: Prime Minister and Living Caricature

In the Macdonald household, the prime minister was frequently the drunken husband, while his second wife, Agnes, took on the role of temperate wife and mother.³⁸ This complicates the reading of images that represent Macdonald's drinking as simply humorous. Even though Macdonald himself made light of his own drunkenness, I want to suggest that what was at stake in his self-deprecating humour was nothing less than his political and emotional survival.³⁹



Figure 8. John William Bengough, *How Long Is This Spree Going to Last?*, *Grip*, vol. 25, no. 10 (5 September 1885). Courtesy of Concordia University Libraries' Special Collections, Montreal.

Macdonald has long been celebrated for his charm, wit, and mischief. While scholars and biographers often refer to his “irresistible sense of humour,”⁴⁰ they also frequently link his sense of humour to his heavy drinking. According to P. B. Waite, for instance, “He was rather a man’s man, a man for evenings over whisky and talk with a few cronies.... [A]fter a few drinks he could get up and mimic a local preacher with devastating accuracy, sending his friends into roars of laughter.”⁴¹ David Swainson observes,

It was a rare situation in which Macdonald found no humour—particularly at the expense of his drinking. On one occasion (so it is reported) he went into a colleague’s constituency to make a speech. Heavy drinking had made him somewhat the worse for wear. While listening to a speech by a Liberal he vomited all over the platform. That embarrassment would have mortified and frightened many politicians, but not John A., who was not fazed in the slightest. He began his speech: “Mr Chairman and gentlemen, I don’t know how it is, but every time I hear Mr Jones speak it turns my stomach.” A potential disaster was dissolved in a roar of laughter.⁴²

This incident functioned on a series of complex registers for both Macdonald and his audience. John Morreall writes in his 1983 book on laughter that, “The pleasure of laughter in jokes, according to Freud, matches in intensity the effort it would have taken to suppress the feeling to which the joke gives release.” Quoting Freud, he adds, “The hearer of the joke laughs with the quota of psychical energy which has become free through the lifting of the inhibitory cathexis; we might say that he laughs this quota off.”⁴³ In the context of the vomiting incident, Macdonald’s enemies would have wanted him to fail; his supporters would have been anxious about both his drunkenness and his chances of success. His enemies experienced laughter that was perhaps grudging (but no less authentic), and his supporters would have experienced relieved laughter, but also pleasure in how quickly he was able to turn the situation around with a pun. Further to this, by laughing at himself, Macdonald would have experienced some release regarding the embarrassment of vomiting in public.⁴⁴

In “John A. Macdonald and the Bottle,” Martin recounts this piece of “jokelore”⁴⁵ and describes the extent to which Macdonald’s drinking was documented during his lifetime, particularly in George Brown’s the *Globe*, as well as the extent to which this drinking has sometimes been read as merely convivial and humorous in some of the secondary literature.⁴⁶ According to Martin,

By 1856, and at intervals for 20 years, Macdonald was a problem drinker, subject to intermittent binges that rendered him incapable of attending to his responsibilities. Some caveats are required to this general statement. The combination of public discretion and private gossip creates

unusual problems in assessing evidence: some episodes were glossed over in the press, while others were perhaps magnified in the telling.⁴⁷

Martin argues that “to recognize the severity of Macdonald’s drink problem is to underline his ascendancy in Canadian politics.”⁴⁸ In other words, Macdonald’s political success is *even more impressive* considering the fact that he irrefutably struggled with alcohol: getting drunk at the worst possible moments, not being able to stop drinking when he was needed, and experiencing the deleterious effects of alcohol, such as vomiting in public. As noted above, drunkenness can be framed as problematic (and potentially humorous), but it is not as stigmatized as alcoholism proper. To identify Macdonald as an alcoholic is to taint his record and his character.

John Morreall, in discussing laughter in relation to alcohol, notes that alcohol and other mood-altering drugs impact the way people perceive life or their own “reality.”⁴⁹ He focuses on visuality, which is relevant for this discussion because I am concerned both with how alcohol consumption and drunkenness have been represented in visual culture and how Macdonald’s drunkenness was perceived—or *seen*—in lived experience.⁵⁰ Morreall’s point is not unrelated to the concept of the “grim chuckle” as the complex response to representations or displays of drunkenness. Laughter can alter the way the viewer perceives both drunkenness and the drinker, and there is pleasure in the grim chuckle as a release of anxiety and possibly as part of a process of identification or recognition, which may be simultaneously accompanied by a rejection of the drinker. If a person recognizes her own experiences with alcohol in the experiences of another, she may laugh uncomfortably or she may laugh with abandon as a form of catharsis. In other words, *it’s funny ‘cause it’s true*, to quote that great philosopher, Homer (Simpson).⁵¹

Martin observes that Macdonald’s colleagues “would hardly have joked about” Macdonald’s drinking “had Macdonald’s behaviour aroused unease.”⁵² To make this argument is to ignore a fundamental truth about humour: that people frequently use it to deal with situations that cause them unease.⁵³ In examining visual and textual representations of Macdonald’s drinking we must be attentive to the fact that during this period, drunkenness, though frequent, was pathologized. This made it even more critical for Macdonald to employ humour to re-frame his own drunkenness. Macdonald’s self-fashioning as a charming, mischievous, *funny* drunk negotiated negative beliefs and images pertaining to drunkenness. He was in a precarious, highly public position, a public figure who had trouble controlling his drinking at a time when drunkenness was believed to be shameful. His use of humour both rejected the ostensible shameful of drunkenness and reconnected him with his contemporaries who would have viewed drunkenness as a vice and a sin.

As Thomas R. Kane, Jerry Suls, and James T. Tedeschi remark, “People are embarrassed when an identity they are fostering in front of others is seriously undermined by events.... One way to save the situation is to joke about it.”⁵⁴ Macdonald recognized that humour was crucial to his political survival as a counter-balance to his public bouts of drunkenness, and he therefore employed humour—very effectively—as a political strategy. It was a way for him to re-present himself *as* image. *The Pipe versus the Bottle* captures the physical and energetic aspects of this strategy. Walker depicts Macdonald in an elocutory, theatrical stance, gesturing broadly with his right arm and leaning forward into Dougall’s personal space. This is the body language of both an impassioned politician and a loud drinker at the end of a long night. For Macdonald, these two sides of his identity were inextricably tied together.

John Wilson Bengough: The Politics of Drunkenness

The flipside of Macdonald’s image as a witty drunk was his association with political corruption, which, interestingly and not insignificantly, were frequently linked with his drunkenness in the political cartoons of John Wilson Bengough, the founder of the comic journal *Grip* (1873–94).⁵⁵ Bengough created *Grip* the year of the Pacific Railway Scandal that led to the fall of Macdonald’s Conservative government.⁵⁶ As Carman Cumming observes, “The life of *Grip* magazine coincided roughly with the final two decades of the Macdonald era.... Throughout most of this period, especially the first and last parts of it, Bengough showed a persistent if often subtle hostility to the prime minister and his Tory government.”⁵⁷ Bengough often used bottles as shorthand for Macdonald’s political corruption, both generally and in relation to specific incidents or scandals. For instance, in *How Long Is This Spree Going to Last?* (fig. 8), published on 5 September 1885, Macdonald, with open mouth and wild hair, has his arm around the waist of an allegorical female figure. In his left hand he holds two bottles, one labelled as rum and the other as gin. Around the figures float pieces of paper with inscriptions such as “PUBLIC DEBT \$300,000,000” and “RAILWAY SUBSIDIES FOR PARTY PURPOSES \$5,000,000.” Cumming has described this illustration as one of “the most destructive (and enduring) images that Bengough left of Macdonald,” likely because it combined Macdonald’s drinking with allusions to public debt and scandal.⁵⁸ Macdonald’s pose suggests carousing (not unlike the pose in Walker’s engraving of Macdonald and Dougall), and he has a lined face, a bulbous nose, squinting eyes, and obvious bags under the eyes. The implication here is that while the new country of Canada is embroiled in scandal, Macdonald is making merry. According to Cumming, “Bengough’s passion for prohibition brought out the worst of his tendency for melodrama,” resulting in “many



Figure 9. James Gillray, *A Voluptuary Under the Horrors of Digestion*, 1792. Hand-coloured etching and engraving, in stipple and line, 36.6 x 29.5 cm © Trustees of the British Museum.

humourless prohibition sketches.”⁵⁹ No doubt this passion also informed his depictions of the first prime minister of Canada.

For all of his disdain for the prime minister’s “shadowy politics,”⁶⁰ however, Bengough “had a grudging admiration for Macdonald’s wit and mischievousness.”⁶¹ Macdonald’s own use of humour to reframe his drunkenness is relevant here, for by self-fashioning as a drunken wit, Macdonald constructed himself as his own caricature, thereby defusing some of the power that actual caricaturists might have had in portraying him as a “drunkard.” His enemies’ laughter might have been begrudging, as Bengough’s apparently was, but it was laughter nonetheless. By laughing at his own drunkenness, Macdonald disempowered, in theory if not in practice, those who attempted to use his drunkenness against him whether in visual culture or the political sphere. According to Peter Desbarats and Terry Mosher, “It was Bengough’s ungainly, boozy and corrupt Macdonald that engraved itself on the public mind, particularly in the days before newspapers published photographs of politicians.”⁶² This

may be true, but Macdonald's jokes at his own expense helped to neutralize such representations by rendering his drinking humorous and ostensibly harmless, and therefore less worrisome and threatening to the fragile social and political order.

Both Bengough and Walker employed a strategy that British graphic satirist James Gillray (1757–1815) had previously used in his etching *A Voluptuary Under the Horrors of Digestion* (fig. 9), which portrays a corpulent George, Prince of Wales—later Prince Regent and George IV (reigned 1820–30)—seated at a table, picking his teeth with a fork, empty bottles on the floor beneath his chair. As Robert Patten has remarked, these are signs of the prince's corruption and dissipation.⁶³ In Walker's engraving of Macdonald and Dougall there is a bottle on the table and another one on the floor between Macdonald's feet. The Walker engraving is part of a long tradition of graphic art satirizing politicians and monarchs through the frameworks of drunkenness and consumptive excess more generally. But unlike Gillray's etching, Walker's image is not particularly cruel or grotesque, nor does it caricature Macdonald's features through exaggeration to the extent that Bengough does in his depictions of Macdonald, though there is slight hatching on his nose, suggesting the red nose of chronic drunkenness.⁶⁴ Walker does use deep crosshatching in both Macdonald's and Dougall's clothing, creating the impression of tatters—particularly on the right sleeve and right trouser leg of Macdonald's outfit. Walker employed hatching in temperance images such as *Genre Scene* to achieve similar results. This aesthetic strategy, namely the representation of tattered clothes, had also previously been used in William Hogarth's *Gin Lane* (fig. 1) and George Cruikshank's *The Gin Shop* to represent scenes of lower-class drunkenness. Walker's engraving seems, however, to play up the notion that Macdonald's drinking was convivial, if not harmless, although the poem complicates this interpretation to a certain extent. This veiling of the complex realities of Macdonald's alcohol consumption renders the prime minister's (possible) addiction doubly invisible—legible neither on the living body nor in visual images.

Conclusion

In bringing Macdonald and Dougall together in *The Pipe versus the Bottle*, one man known for his drunkenness, the other for his temperance, Walker shows two sides of the same coin, perhaps even subtly implying that there is a thin line between temperance and intemperance. The engraving may have evoked a grim chuckle from nineteenth-century viewers, or it might have invited a wink and a nudge. Viewing practices related to drunkenness are inextricably tied with a viewer's own relationship with alcohol as well as her own beliefs about drunkenness, and the grim chuckle is only one of many possible complex responses to satirical representations of alcohol consumption.

The relationship between satire and drunkenness is a fraught one, but one that has had significant, complex functions in a range of contexts. Caricatures and cartoons portraying John A. Macdonald as drunk or in relation to bottles are important visual sources for the study of drunkenness in the Canadian context, because they unveil beliefs, representational strategies, and social anxieties related to alcohol consumption in the nineteenth century. Graphic satire, when considered as part of the visual culture of addiction, provides insights regarding the purposes of humour for the producers, consumers, and sometimes even the subjects of these images.⁶⁵ Freud believed that laughter had a liberating effect. In laughing at or about drunkenness, the laughers may be laughing in identification with, or in rejection of, the drinker. Regardless, this laughter, whether it is a grim chuckle or a belly-busting guffaw, is often infused with anxiety. Hogarth, Cruikshank, Bengough, and Walker are all part of a long line of graphic satirists who have employed the bottle and the glass to communicate messages about moral proscriptions and social anxieties. No doubt Walker would have been gratified to be included in such company.⁶⁶

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Notes

- 1 See Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Art in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven and London, 1999), 204, and Julia Skelly, *Wasted Looks: Addiction and British Visual Culture, 1751–1919* (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT, 2014), especially chapters 1 and 2. It is one of the premises of this article that drunkenness is not necessarily symptomatic of alcoholism.
- 2 There have been several biographies written about John A. Macdonald. See, for instance, Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician* (Toronto, 1952), and Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (Toronto, 1955). For a more recent biography see Richard J. Gwyn, *Nation Maker: Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times* (Toronto, 2011).
- 3 John Henry Walker, "The Pipe versus the Bottle," *Grinchuckle* 1, 4 (28 October 1869), 34. Walker's pictogram signature, a figure of a walking man, is visible in the lower left hand corner of the engraving. This engraving is one of many that are pasted in a series of eleven scrapbooks of Walker's prints now held in the McCord Museum's collection. When David Ross McCord received these

- scrapbooks in 1911 from Walker's daughter, he removed the labels accompanying the engravings.
- 4 Sir Francis Hincks (1807–85) was born in Cork, Ireland, and immigrated to York (Toronto), Upper Canada, in August 1832. In December of that year, he opened a wholesale dry goods, wine, and liquor warehouse. He established the *Examiner* in Toronto in 1838 and later entered politics. In 1869 Macdonald offered him the post of minister of finance as a replacement for John Rose. Hincks accepted and took up his office on 9 October 1869.
 - 5 Kristina Huneault, *Difficult Subjects: Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880–1914* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT, 2002), 210.
 - 6 For a discussion of the “earliest caricatures that are known to have been made in what is now Canada,” see Dominic Hardy, “Caricature on the Edge of Empire: George Townshend in Quebec,” *The Efflorescence of Caricature, 1759–1838*, ed. Todd Porterfield (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT, 2011), 11–29. Hardy examines graphic satires by British aristocrat, politician, and caricaturist George Townshend that represent his commander-in-chief, General James Wolfe. Townshend produced the images while he served Britain's campaign to win Quebec from France. As Hardy comments, “Offering us a portrayal of Wolfe as an effete, sniveling, latrine-obsessed womanizer and as a vindictive and cruel military commander, they provide an iconoclastic alternative to the ubiquitous martyr-hero image known to generations through Benjamin West's endlessly reproduced painting of 1770, *The Death of General Wolfe*. Never published in Townshend's lifetime, these caricatures were withheld from public record until their emergence in 1921 as part of the inaugural collection of Montreal's McCord Museum of Canadian History.” Hardy, “Caricature on the Edge of Empire,” 11.
 - 7 See Mary Anne Poutanen, “The Homeless, the Whore, the Drunkard, and the Disorderly: Contours of Female Vagrancy in the Montreal Courts,” *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, ed. Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell (Oxford and New York, 1999), 29–47. See also Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (Carbondale, IL, 1998) and Sharon Anne Cook, “*Through Sunshine and Shadow*: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874–1930 (Montreal, 1995). Women's alcoholism was deemed even worse than men's, because women were expected to be naturally disinclined to drink due to their roles as wives and mothers. See Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “Oh, Lord, Pour a Cordial in Her Wounded Heart: The Drinking Woman in Victorian and Edwardian Canada,” *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*, ed. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal and Kingston, 1993), 70–114.
 - 8 For more on this see Skelly, “Closeting Addiction: Confinement, Punishment, Concealment,” *Wasted Looks*, 99–127.
 - 9 Norman Kerr, *Inebriety, its Etiology, Pathology, Treatment and Jurisprudence* (London, 1888), 3.
 - 10 Susan Zieger, *Inventing the Addict: Drugs, Race, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature* (Amherst, 2008), 5. I use the terms “alcoholism” and “addiction” in this article to signify a physical and/or psychological dependence on alcohol, even when discussing figures in the nineteenth century.
 - 11 See, for example, Marcus Boon, *The Road to Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London, 1968); Jane Lilienfeld, *Reading Alcoholisms: Theorizing Character and Narrative in Selected Novels of Thomas Hardy, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf* (New York, 1999); Kathleen McCormack, *George Eliot and Intoxication: Dangerous Drugs for the Condition of England* (New York, 2000); Thomas L. Reed Jr., *The Transforming Draught: Jekyll and Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson and the Victorian Alcohol Debate* (Jefferson, NC, and London, 2006); and Zieger, *Inventing the Addict*.
 - 12 See Skelly, “Introduction: The Visual Politics of Addiction,” *Wasted Looks*, 1.
 - 13 Barbara Roberts has criticized Macdonald biographer Donald Creighton for blaming the prime minister's two wives for his heavy drinking. See Barbara Roberts, “‘They Drove Him to Drink’: Donald Creighton's Macdonald and his Wives,” *Canada: An Historical Magazine* 3 (1975): 51–64.
 - 14 Ged Martin, “John A. Macdonald and the Bottle,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40, 3 (Fall 2006), 163.
 - 15 This term is frequently used to describe Macdonald's drinking, even if the authors do not identify him as an alcoholic or “drunkard.” See Carman Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country: The Images of Grip Magazine* (Toronto, 1997), 24; Martin, “John A. Macdonald and the Bottle,” 164, 171; and Louise Reynolds, *Agnes: The Biography of Lady Macdonald* (Toronto, 1979), 37.
 - 16 Robert Barshay, “Black Humour in the Modern Cartoon,” *It's a Funny Thing, Humour*, ed. Anthony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot (Oxford, 1976), 57–59.
 - 17 There is a wood block from 1869 (M12187) in the collection of Montreal's McCord Museum that was used to print the front page of *Grinchuckle*, which Walker engraved for Workman. Writing in 1886, Walker remarked, “Mr. W. Workman engaged me to prepare a design for the cover of a serial comic paper which he called ‘Grinchuckle’.... It would be too long a story to write all about Mr. Workman and his treatment of me. How he would not pay me for the work he caused me to do. How I foolishly sued him. A wealthy man and me a poor man—only one result in a case of this kind—he *denied* all connection with the paper and I could not prove the contrary however *true* it was. I published a small portrait of him in the Dominion Directory for which he took out an action against me for \$10000 damages. The result of all this misery was that I withdrew my action (to recover \$300) against him and all costs \$700.... The debt he owed me and injuring my business, through neglect of it—thus the rich man beat me—he

- withdrew his \$10000 action and I paid costs. I may say that it was through my lawyer's advice that I published the portrait because they said it was not actionable." Yves Chevrefils, "John Henry Walker (1831–1899), Artisan-Graveur," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* 8, 2 (1985), 182. Italics in the original. Walker's *Grimchuckle* cover illustrations and the *Grimchuckle* image all represent a sinister Santa Claus-like figure laughing. This satirical character is the eponymous Grinchuckle, and Walker included him in a range of illustrations in the periodical from its inception in 1869 until it ceased to be published on 24 February 1870.
- 18 The *Grimchuckle* illustration was in the Walker family's collection until Kathleen Walker-Burns donated it to the McCord Museum.
- 19 According to Walker, Dougall was one of his greatest patrons for many years after about 1856, but in its special "Carnival" number of 1885, *The Montreal Witness* refused to identify Walker as an artist. Chevrefils, "John Henry Walker," 185.
- 20 This wood engraving was produced either for the association's first exhibition in 1860 or for its second one, in 1864. According to Chevrefils, it was likely the first, as Walker's name does not appear in the catalogue for the 1864 exhibition. Chevrefils, "John Henry Walker," 192.
- 21 Chevrefils, "John Henry Walker," 192.
- 22 For discussions that address the notion that graphic art was considered "low art" in the eighteenth century, see Romita Ray, "All that Glitters: Diamonds and Constructions of Nabobery in British Portraits, 1600–1800," *The Uses of Excess in Visual and Material Culture, 1600–2010*, ed. Julia Skelly (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT, 2014), 19–40; Robin Simon, *Hogarth, France and British Art: The Rise of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2009); and Christina Smylitopoulos, "Graphic Satire, Hudibrastics and 'Missionary Influence': *The Grand Master; or, the Adventures of Qui Hi? In Hindostan* by Thomas Rowlandson and William Combe, 1816," *The British Art Journal* 8, 3 (2008): 39–49.
- 23 Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven and London, 1996), 27.
- 24 Chevrefils, "John Henry Walker," 183.
- 25 Chevrefils, "John Henry Walker," 186.
- 26 Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades before Confederation* (Montreal and Kingston, 1995), 81.
- 27 Noel, *Canada Dry*, 14.
- 28 See, for instance, Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897–1929* (Toronto, 1974), and Peter DeLottinville, "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869–1889," *Canadian Working Class History*, ed. Laurel Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth, 2nd edn (Toronto, 2000), 190–214.
- 29 Chevrefils, "John Henry Walker," 180.
- 30 Both the page number and item number have been added in pencil by a McCord Museum employee.
- 31 For more on this see Skelly, "From Graphic Satire to Temperance Art: George Cruikshank's Addiction to Sobriety," *Wasted Looks*, 43–72.
- 32 Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790–1822* (Oxford, 1994).
- 33 Scott C. Martin, *Devil of the Domestic Sphere: Temperance, Gender, and Middle-Class Ideology, 1800–1860* (DeKalb, IL, 2008).
- 34 For more on this, see Skelly, *Wasted Looks*, chapter 2.
- 35 See Harry Stone, "Dickens, Cruikshank, and Fairy Tales," *George Cruikshank: A Reevaluation*, ed. Robert L. Patten (Princeton, NJ, 1974), 213–47.
- 36 The *Canada Temperance Advocate* was edited by none other than John Dougall. See Noel, *Canada Dry*, for a reproduction of this series (unpaginated plates). Noel does not mention Cruikshank's *The Bottle* in her text.
- 37 It seems unlikely that Walker would have been aware of *The Drunkard's Children* when he produced *Genre Scene*.
- 38 See Reynolds, *Agnes*, 51–53.
- 39 Michel de Certeau suggests "some ways of thinking about everyday practices of consumers, supposing from the start that they are of a tactical nature. Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the 'weak' within the order established by the 'strong,' an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunter's tricks, maneuverable, polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries." We might add to this list of everyday practices both drinking and joking. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1988), 39–40.
- 40 "He was genuinely funny, unlike any predecessor or successor (Pierre Trudeau possessed a rapier wit but always with a sharp edge)." Richard J. Gwyn, "Canada's Father Figure: Sir John A. Macdonald has been caricatured as a drunkard and a crook. But without him there would be no Canada," *Canada's History* 92, 5 (Oct.–Nov. 2012), 34.
- 41 P. B. Waite, *John A. Macdonald* (Don Mills, ON, 1976), 3.
- 42 Donald Swainson, *Sir John A. Macdonald: The Man and the Politician* (1971; Kingston, 1989), 64.
- 43 John Morreall, *Taking Laughing Seriously* (Albany, 1983), 29.
- 44 Martina Kessel, "Landscapes of Humour: The History and Politics of the Comical in the Twentieth Century," *The Politics of Humour: Laughter, Inclusion, and Exclusion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Martina Kessel and Patrick Merziger (Toronto, 2012), 16. See also Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966; New York and London, 2001).
- 45 Martin, "John A. Macdonald and the Bottle," 168. See also Emerson Bristol Biggar, *Anecdotal Life of Sir John Macdonald* (Montreal, 1891), 193.
- 46 George Brown (1818–80), a Liberal and a temperance advocate, was Macdonald's nemesis. This largely explains why the *Globe* so

- gleefully reported on Macdonald's many misadventures with alcohol, often using euphemisms to describe his drunkenness, but rarely if ever shying away from reporting on the prime minister's frequent benders and episodes of intoxication in public. See Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country*, 75; Noel, *Canada Dry*, 132; Swainson, *Sir John A. Macdonald*, 63.
- 47 Martin, "John A. Macdonald and the Bottle," 163.
- 48 Martin, "John A. Macdonald and the Bottle," 164.
- 49 Morreall, *Taking Laughing Seriously*, 58.
- 50 W. J. T. Mitchell has defined "visuality" as "practices of seeing the world and especially the seeing of other people." W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago and London, 2005), 337.
- 51 Simpson's immortal line was in response to a stand-up comedian on television who says, "Don't you hate it...when you go to the bathroom...and there's no toilet paper?" From the episode "Homer vs. Lisa and the 8th Commandment." Richard Bell comments in an essay on the *other* Homer: "Why characters in the *Iliad* laugh, and why readers are invited and entitled to laugh, are complicated issues." Laughter about drunkenness is no less complicated. See Robert H. Bell, "Homer's Humor: Laughter in *The Iliad*," *Humanitas* 20, 1–2 (2007), 97.
- 52 Martin, "John A. Macdonald and the Bottle," 166.
- 53 See Chris Powell and George E. C. Paton, "Introduction," *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*, ed. Chris Powell and George E. C. Paton (New York, 1988), xviii.
- 54 Thomas R. Kane, Jerry Suls, and James T. Tedeschi, "Humour as a Tool of Social Interaction," *It's a Funny Thing, Humour*, ed. Chapman and Foot, 15.
- 55 In the 15 March 1854 issue, Dougall's *Montreal Witness* aligned "the corrupt politicians of the Province of Canada" with "the corrupt practice of drinking," although not explicitly in relation to Macdonald. Noel, *Canada Dry*, 84.
- 56 See J. W. Bengough, *A Caricature History of Canadian Politics. Events from the Union of 1841, As Illustrated by Cartoons from "Grip," and Various Other Sources* (1886; Toronto, 1974).
- 57 Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country*, 40.
- 58 Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country*, 43.
- 59 Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country*, 220.
- 60 Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country*, 19.
- 61 Cumming, *Sketches from a Young Country*, 75.
- 62 Peter Desbarats and Terry Mosher, *The Hecklers: A History of Canadian Political Cartooning and a Cartoonists' History of Canada* (Toronto, 1979), 48–49.
- 63 For more on this image see Robert L. Patten, "Signifying Shape in Pan-European Caricatures," *The Efflorescence of Caricature*, ed. Porterfield, 145–46.
- 64 Desbarats and Mosher have observed that Macdonald "was a godsend for our cartoonists. His angular profile, ungainly figure, intemperate habits and the blatant corruption of nineteenth-century politics created a popular image that could be traced even by cartoonists with little natural talent for caricature." Desbarats and Mosher, *The Hecklers*, 12.
- 65 Very little has been written about the visual culture of addiction, that is, images that have been produced and/or viewed in relation to discourses of addiction. Next to nothing has been written about the visual culture of addiction in Canada. For more on the visual culture of addiction, see Skelly, *Wasted Looks*. For more on alcohol consumption in Canada, see Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, ed., *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays* (Montreal and Kingston, 1993).
- 66 In writing this article I have been cognizant of Dominic Hardy's discussion of "historiographical ruptures in research on humour in the visual arts and visual culture"—that is, the lack of humour in scholarship about humour—and his desire to "account for what might be missing in art history's methodological and theoretical framework." Dominic Hardy, "Humour in the Visual Arts and Visual Culture," *RACAR* 37, 1 (2012), 3.