

A detailed botanical illustration of a poppy plant. The plant has several large, deeply lobed green leaves. One stem features a large, faded, light pink flower with a darker pink center. Another stem has a green, ribbed seed pod (capsule) at the top. A third stem shows a bud that is beginning to open. The background is a light, textured beige.

Opium

The Flowers of Evil

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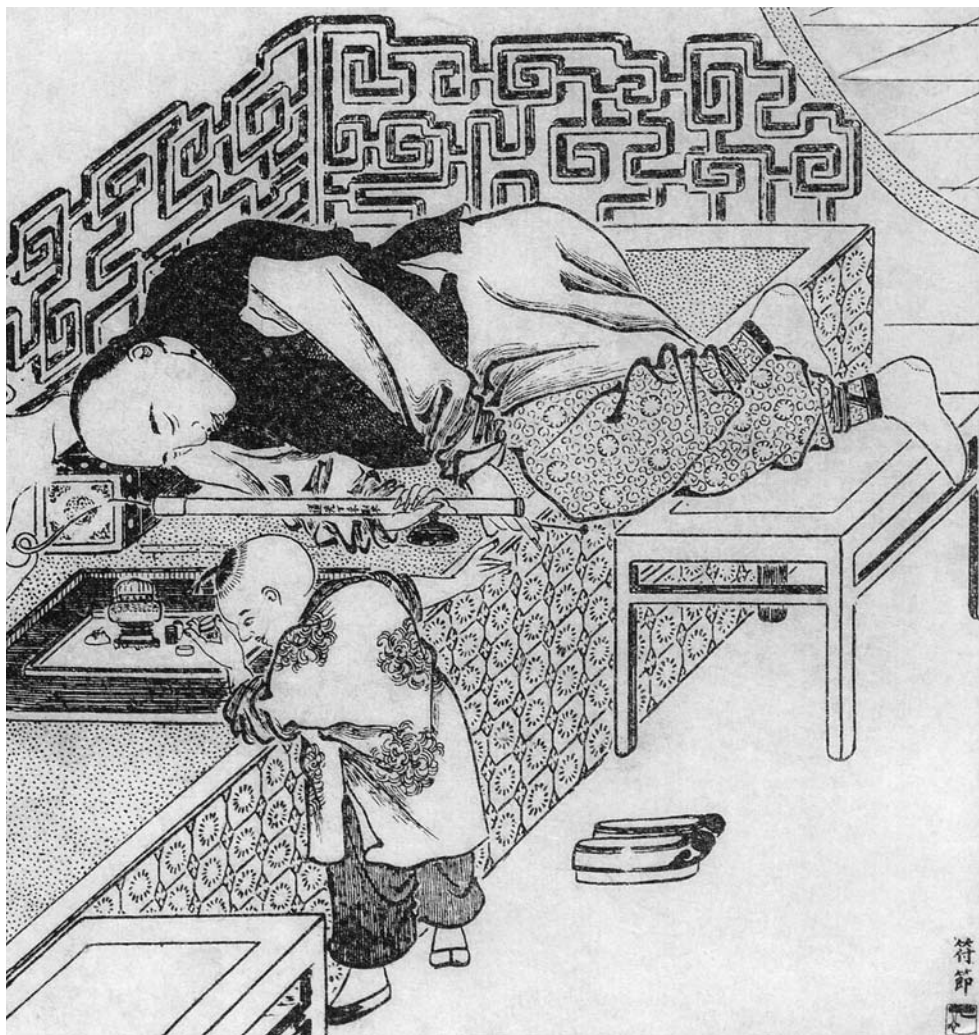
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"Everything one does in life, even love, occurs in an express train racing toward death. To smoke opium is to get out of the train while it is still moving. It is to concern oneself with something other than life or death."

— Jean Cocteau



Chronology

400	Opium may have been introduced into China by Arab importers around this time.
1500	The practice of 'smoking' opium begins.
late 1600s	The custom of smoking opium in tobacco pipes is brought to China by the Dutch.
1800s	This practice spreads to Europe and America.
1821	Thomas de Quincey's <i>Confessions of an English Opium-Eater</i> is published, and for first time, opium, rather than addicts, is portrayed as the hero.
1839 -1842	The First Opium War. To boost exports, the British force the importation of opium from India into China, where it is illegal. Demand for the addictive product intensifies and China orders all British opium destroyed. The British declare war. A year later, China surrenders and is forced to give the important port of Hong Kong to the British. Under British rule, opium becomes the main product of Hong Kong.
1856 -1860	Second Opium War.



- 1860s The hypodermic syringe is perfected. Patients with chronic pain are given morphine and a syringe, while physicians mistakenly believe that injecting morphine by syringe could cure opium-eating addiction.
- 1898 Heroin, *diacetylmorphine*, is discovered.
- 1945 American General Douglas McArthur, in charge of occupied Japan, forbids Japanese farmers to cultivate opium and halts all narcotic production.
- 1949 The UN Narcotics Commission establishes a committee in Ankara, Turkey, to control and supervise the trading of opium throughout the world.
- 1960 Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, portrays a Caucasian, middle-class heroine who becomes addicted to opium after it is prescribed for medicinal use.
- 1965 Chinese Premier Chou En-lai declares that the Chinese are encouraging opium consumption amongst American troops in Vietnam, in revenge for British strategies in China in the 19th century.
- 1984 Intense interest in the opium clipper, *The Frolic*, starts with the discovery in the Redwood Forest of California of many boxes of Chinese products from the ship which were intended to be sold to 'the '49ers'. Pieces of Chinese ceramics had been shaped into arrowheads by Native Americans.
- 2000s Opium production in Afghanistan, the world's largest producer of the drug, reaches record high levels. Cultivation peaks in 2007.



I. Turning On: Introduction

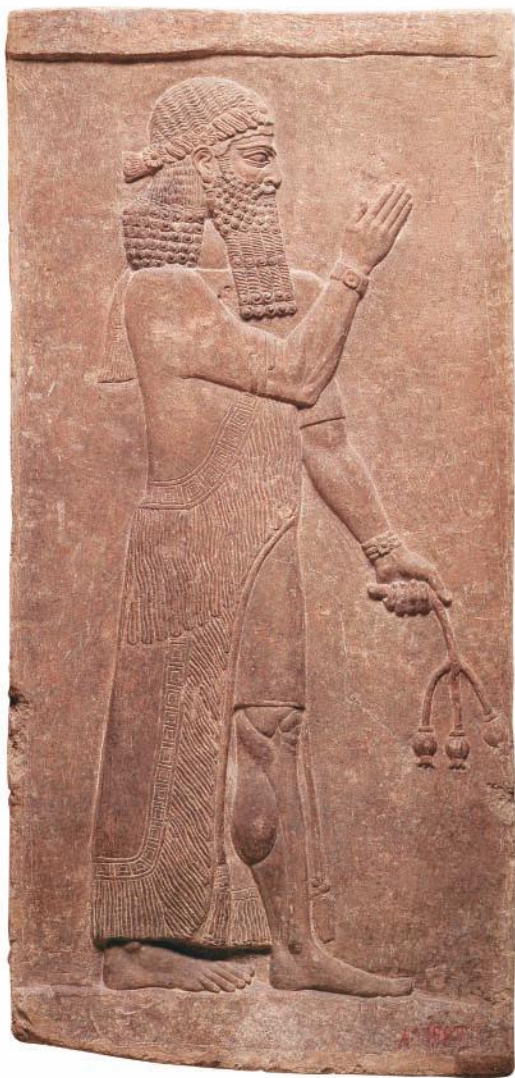
The Beautiful – and Dangerous

Intense interest in the opium clipper, *The Frolic*, started in 1984, with a surprising discovery in the Redwood Forest of California, off the coast of northern California at Mendocina. Pieces of Chinese ceramics which had been shaped into arrowheads by Native Americans were found. The sharpened pieces



Male Figure Holding a Poppy Plant

Neo-Assyrian period
Alabaster panel with relief, 110 x 52 x 28 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris





were discovered among the many boxes of Chinese products from *The Frolic* that were intended to be sold to 'the '49ers', those optimistic miners who rushed to California seeking gold in the mid-19th century.



The clipper had spent its previous six years smuggling North Indian opium from Bombay into China. The Baltimore-built ship was designed to be exceptionally fast. It could do an



The 'Glorification' of an Opium Flower

Fragment of a Greek funeral pillar

c. 470-460 BCE

Marble, 56.5 x 67 x 14 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris





amazing fourteen to fifteen knots, making it capable of escaping the best of Chinese vessels. *The Frolic* was the last of the ships out of Baltimore that embarrassed the slower British ships during the War of 1812.



Driving along the California coast today, thrill seekers might enjoy finding poppies growing wild. What could be more exciting than to find something that could produce the miraculous



Opium Poppy

Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, c. 1575
Watercolour and bodycolour, 27.4 x 19.3 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London





drug that is praised by scholars and poets, physicians and hedonists throughout history? It could be like the excitement Native Americans probably experienced 150 years ago when they found the treasure from *The Frolic*.



Opium has definitely been shown to relieve pain, reduce hunger and thirst, induce restful sleep, and reduce anxiety. However, like other great gifts to mankind, opium can either be of



Opium Poppy (*Papaver somniferum*, three varieties)
and Field Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)

16th century

Watercolour

Theodorus Clutius Collection

PAPAVER VVLGARE



PAPAVER FLORE VIOLACEI COLORIS,
v. duc prima, parif.

2



PAPAVER FLORE ALBO



MINOR TOIAZ
PAPAVER RHODAS.
ERRATUM FLUIDVM a. h.
valanga.



*fol. - double - foliole
de l'ovaire - l'ovaire
de l'ovaire - l'ovaire
de l'ovaire - l'ovaire*



Naturel - foliole - l'ovaire - l'ovaire - l'ovaire

Flores à l'ovaire - l'ovaire - l'ovaire



great benefit or be fatal, depending on how, when, and why people use it.

The California dreamers who pick up wild poppies from the side of the road will be brought back to reality after a little research. They will discover that the so-called California poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*) is in fact a wildflower in the buttercup family. It produces no capsule and therefore is not actually a



Red Horned Poppy (*Glaucium corniculatum*)

16th century
Watercolour

Theodorus Clutius Collection

PAPAVER COMMICULATVM
flor. purpurea *fol. pinnatifid.*

5



Scribitur nativ. in Gortia
Florat



member of the poppy family, albeit at first glance it certainly looks like its capsule-bearing cousin.

Obviously some basic facts and an appreciation about the poppy and opium are needed, even though surely most people have learned some basics already from everyday pop culture. It is almost impossible to watch recent mainstream movies or read pulp fiction without learning that opium is a narcotic drug.



Opium Poppy (*Papaver somniferum*)

16th century

Watercolour

Theodorus Clutius Collection

PAPAVERVM SPECIES

14

PAPAYER EVERVM

Flare per cithrenulides

1056

ΜΗΚΣΗΝ ΗΜΕΤΟΙ
PAPAYER HORTENSE sive SATIVVM

Ital. Papavers domestica.

Gall. Papaver.

German. Maysdunst, Mays, Maysir voll Oney.

Belg. Maysdunst off. Maysir.

Diap. lib. 4. cap. 15.

Descriptio in Gortio.

Flaret maxime hinc

papaver sativum Gortio fidei sub 1766 17. Jul. 1766

17





When it was studied more closely, researchers learned that opium is obtained from the juice of the immature fruits of the Oriental poppy. Careful observers will notice that typical opium poppies have four petals in white, violet, pink, or red. They surround a star-shaped stigma from which at least five and up to sixteen 'rays' fan out. A single pistil (containing from 150 to 200 stamens) is surrounded by five concentric circles. Fertilisation produces from 800 to 2,000 seeds.

Men's Chinese fan

One of the first works of art
showing the use of pure opium

End of the 18th century

Ink and paint on silk, radius: 16.5 cm





The true opium producing plant, *Papaver somniferum* L., is a member of the poppy family *Papaveraceae*. There are over 100 species in that family, several with many varieties. Most are found in temperate Asia and in central and southern Europe, not in the fields of California.



When opium-bearing poppies are studied, many varieties used for the production of poppy seeds and seed oil for baking are not included.



Chinese Opium Smokers

From *China in a series of Views*,
by George Newenham Wright
Thomas Allom, 1843
Engraving
Private Collection





Only a few of the many species of poppy contain the alkaloids found in opium. Morphine and codeine are two of the most familiar and useful of some twenty natural alkaloids of opium. Several synthetic drugs have been developed from opium, including *meperidine*, best known as Demerol™ in the US. It acts more quickly, but its effects are of less duration than morphine. It too is a narcotic and is habit-forming. Paregoric and laudanum also need to be mentioned.

Chinese glass painting

Middle of the 19th century

50 x 35 cm





Heroin, *diacetylmorphine*, was discovered in 1898. It would become the most important drug synthesised from the natural alkaloids. Ironically, heroin was originally thought to be a cure for addiction to other opiates. In the 1860s, the hypodermic syringe was perfected. Physicians mistakenly believed that opium-eating addicts who took morphine by syringe would no longer be addicted to eating opium. Patients with chronic but not life-threatening pain were given

Opium, Compassion, the Good Life, and the Seed of Evil

c. 1850, Fuzhou
Painting on rice paper (*tongcao*), 21 x 33 cm





morphine and a syringe, with directions on how to inject themselves. But dependence on heroin turned out to be even more devastating than addiction to morphine or opium itself. The great syringe mistake is one example of why science must continually strive to learn.



Paregoric, given to children as well as adults to stop diarrhea, and rubbed onto the gums of



Nemesis, The Steamer with an Iron Hull, and the
Lifeboats of the Ships Sulphur, Calliope, Larne, and
Starling, Destroying Chinese War Junks
in Anson Bay, 7 January 1841

Edward Duncan, 1843
Colour lithography, 41.6 x 60.2 cm
National Maritime Museum, London

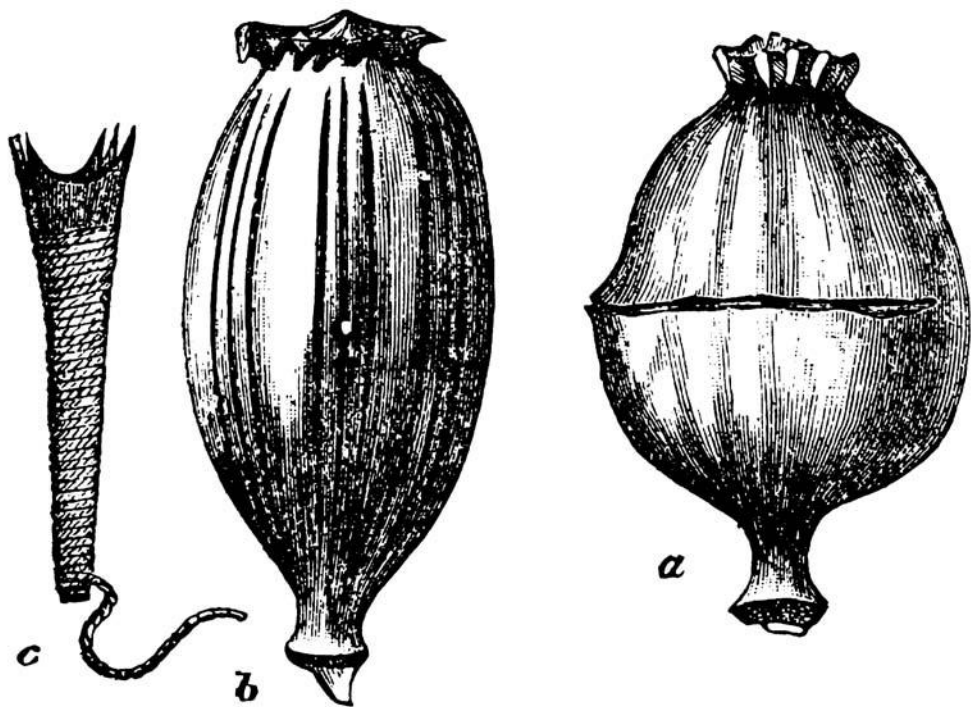




teething children, is also an opium tincture, sometimes camphorated. The opium content of camphorated tincture is twenty-five times less than opium tincture. The way paregoric works is well known. Taking it increases smooth-muscle tone in the gastrointestinal tract. It inhibits mobility and propulsion, thereby diminishing digestive secretions. The liquid form also contains alcohol. Standard nursing handbooks

Poppy Pods

Date unknown





advise that "it can be adjusted precisely to a patient's needs." It is not used as widely today as it once was.



Another form of opium, laudanum, is the modern equivalent of the opium and alcohol mixture that is mentioned by Homer in *The Odyssey*. As little as two dozen or so drops of laudanum might carry no more than a grain of opium.



Luxury opium lamps

Dates unknown

Silver

Left: 18.1 x 11 cm

Right: 16 x 9.7 cm





Laudanum's most notable use is reflected in the work of its most famous users, the most renowned of which is Thomas de Quincey.

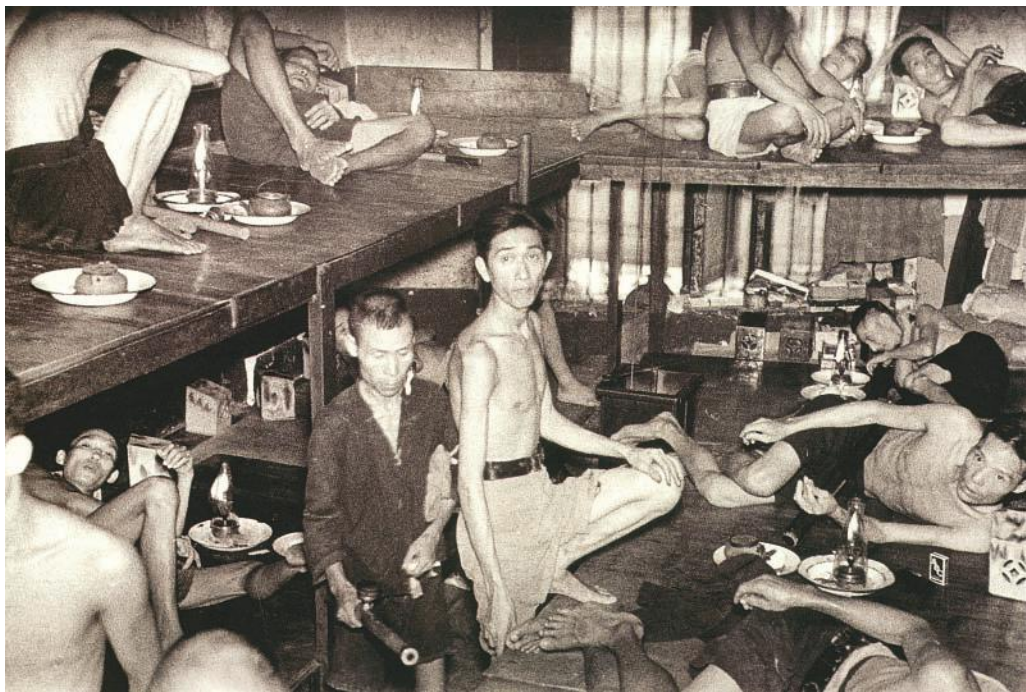


The mixture was widely prescribed and used in America as well as in Europe, even before Chinese immigrant labourers brought opium with them to the American mines and railroads where they worked. But, as the wave of Chinese



View of a Den Full of Drug Addicts

1930





people spread east into the United States, so did the establishment of opium dens, followed closely by anti-opium laws. Like the nearly-universal presence of prostitution and gambling, and later the consumption of alcohol during Prohibition, the laws concerning opium dens helped create an 'open secret' – something nobody denied, but also something that nobody admitted to knowing about. That is

Flower Boats in Canton, Place of Pleasure and Debauchery

c. 1900

Albumin paper on stereocard, 8.1 x 7.8 cm





reminiscent of the police in the film *Casablanca* who were 'shocked' to find gambling in their friend Rick's place.

Discovering Opium: Hippocrates Was Hip

This survey of opium's history begins with a few remotely related facts. The ancient Sumerians referred to the poppy as 'the plant of joy'. The word poppy is a Latinised form of the Greek, *opion*, as used by Hippocrates four centuries before Christ. Because of its fields of poppies,



Sumptuously-worked boxes with a spittoon

Dates unknown
Silver dross, average height: 4.5 cm





the Greek town of Kyllene was once known as Poppytown. It was there that a statue in honor of the goddess Aphrodite stood, holding a poppy plant in one of her hands.



Opium might have been introduced into China by Arab importers as early as 400. The practice of 'smoking' opium began about a thousand years later, as early as 1500.



A Shanghai Street with Various Signs Showcasing Opium Shops

End of the 19th century
Gelatin silver photographic print, 10 x 14 cm

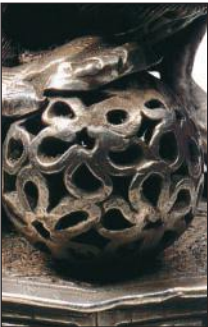




During Europe's great Black Plague, drinking coffee was thought to be a cure for addiction for those who used opium as a painkiller. Some physicians considered both opium and coffee as cures for several ailments. Coffee had invaded Europe from Africa in the early 1600s by way of Venetian traders, then spread to other continents during the decades of expansive colonisation.



Near the end of the 17th century, the practice of smoking opium in tobacco pipes was



Opium box with a dog-lion decoration

Date unknown

Silver, 4.9 cm





brought to China by the Dutch. By 1750, the use of opium was widespread. The practice expanded to Europe and America during the following century.



Such an innocent-looking little plant has played an amazingly influential role in the history of mankind's adventures for 'god, glory, and greed'.



Two opium boxes

Dates unknown

Openwork silver with a buffalo horn core

Left: 6.2 cm

Right: 5.1 cm





Follow the Money: The Opium Wars

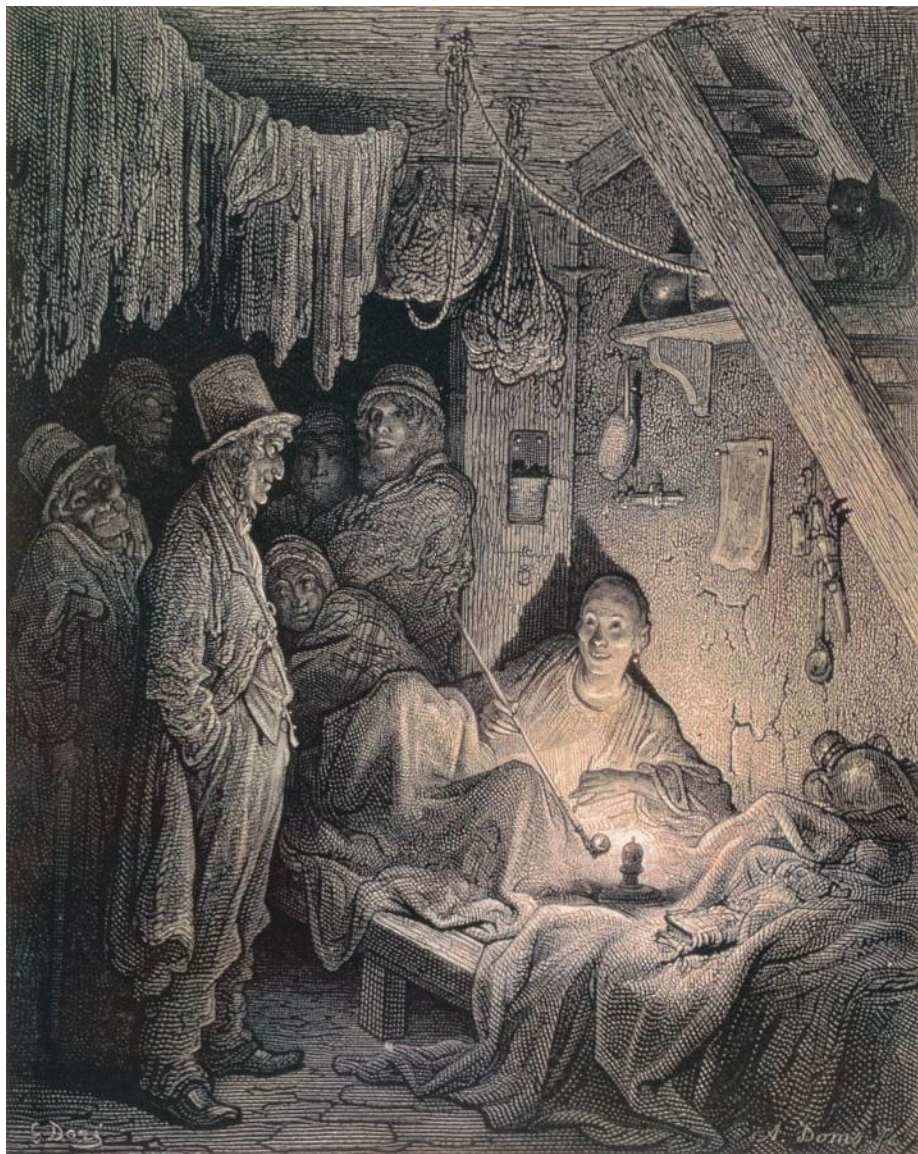
The opening text of the television movie, *Traffic: The Miniseries*, neatly summed up centuries of smuggling activity:

For most of recorded history, the wealth of the world came from Asia, reaching the West by sea routes and across remote deserts through desolate mountain pathways. It was guarded by private armies that made their own laws. At first



Opium Smoking - The Lascar's Room

Scene from *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*
by Charles Dickens, illustrated in *London, A Pilgrimage*
written by William Blanchard Jerrold
Gustave Doré (engraved by A. Doms), 1872
Engraving
Central Saint Martins, London





the route carried furs, silks, and spices. Later it was put to use transporting opium, hashish, and heroin by drug smugglers.



Although students in the West usually learn something about such smuggling and the Opium Wars, details of the horrors of such traffic, and especially the wars, are probably minimised. The following is a brief review of the highlights of the wars.



Luxury needles with figures

Dates unknown

Silver

Left: 16 cm

Centre: 14.5 cm

Right: 17.5 cm





In 1840, England began making a series of bloody mistakes. The Empire was experiencing a serious imbalance of trade as Chinese imports were disproportionately more than England's exports to China.



Even though some respected drug experts in England warned their country against importing opium into England, the unfortunate economy-driven solution was to pour opium from India



Set of four opium boxes
with a water lily design

Date unknown
Silver, 5.8 cm





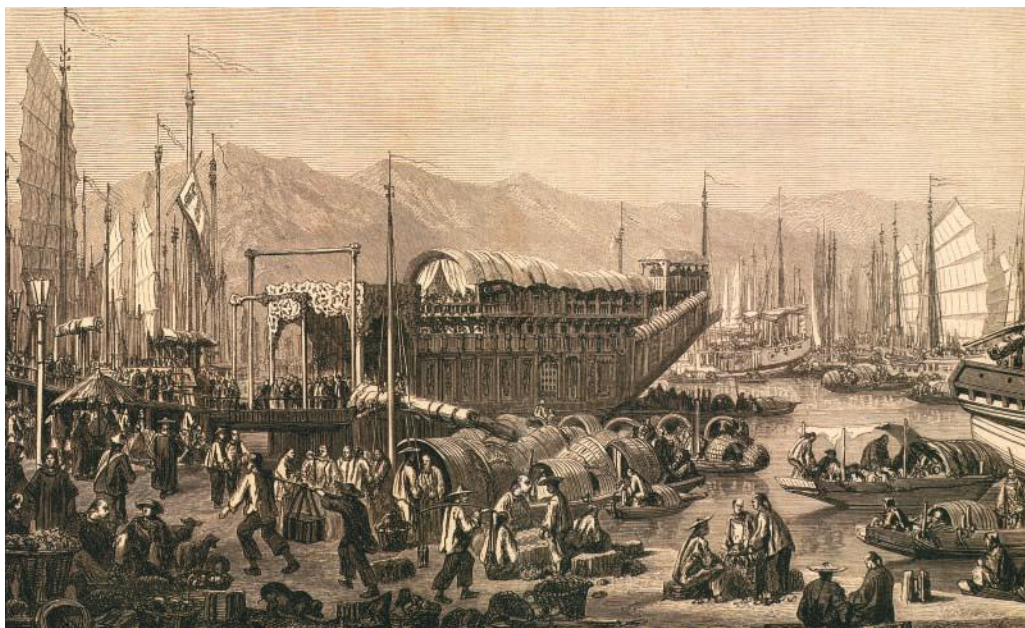
into China. England knew the drug was illegal in China. Nonetheless, they forced the import of the drug, thus intensifying a demand for their addictive product. England then tried to make a profit by selling the drug to the addicted masses. Shortly after, China ordered all British opium destroyed. Some British merchants were killed, and England declared war. Two years later, China surrendered and was forced to give the important port of Hong Kong to the British.



A Flower Boat (huafang) in Shanghai

c. 1858

From the journal *Le tour du monde*, 15.8 x 23.7 cm





Opium, still forbidden by the Chinese government, again poured into China. The major trade link to and from the West and China had always been Hong Kong. During its colonisation, the main product of Hong Kong became opium. China was forced by the West not only to allow opium to be imported, but missionaries were allowed to enter the country as well. The situation literally prepared the world for Marx's famous 1884 comment that, "religion is [...] the opium of the people."



Assortment of opium boxes

Dates unknown

Paktong





After the Opium Wars, Western missionaries resumed bringing Christianity to the Orient. Several churches were built in China, and congregations grew rapidly throughout the country. Both the government and the locals have considered Western influence to be a mixed blessing ever since.



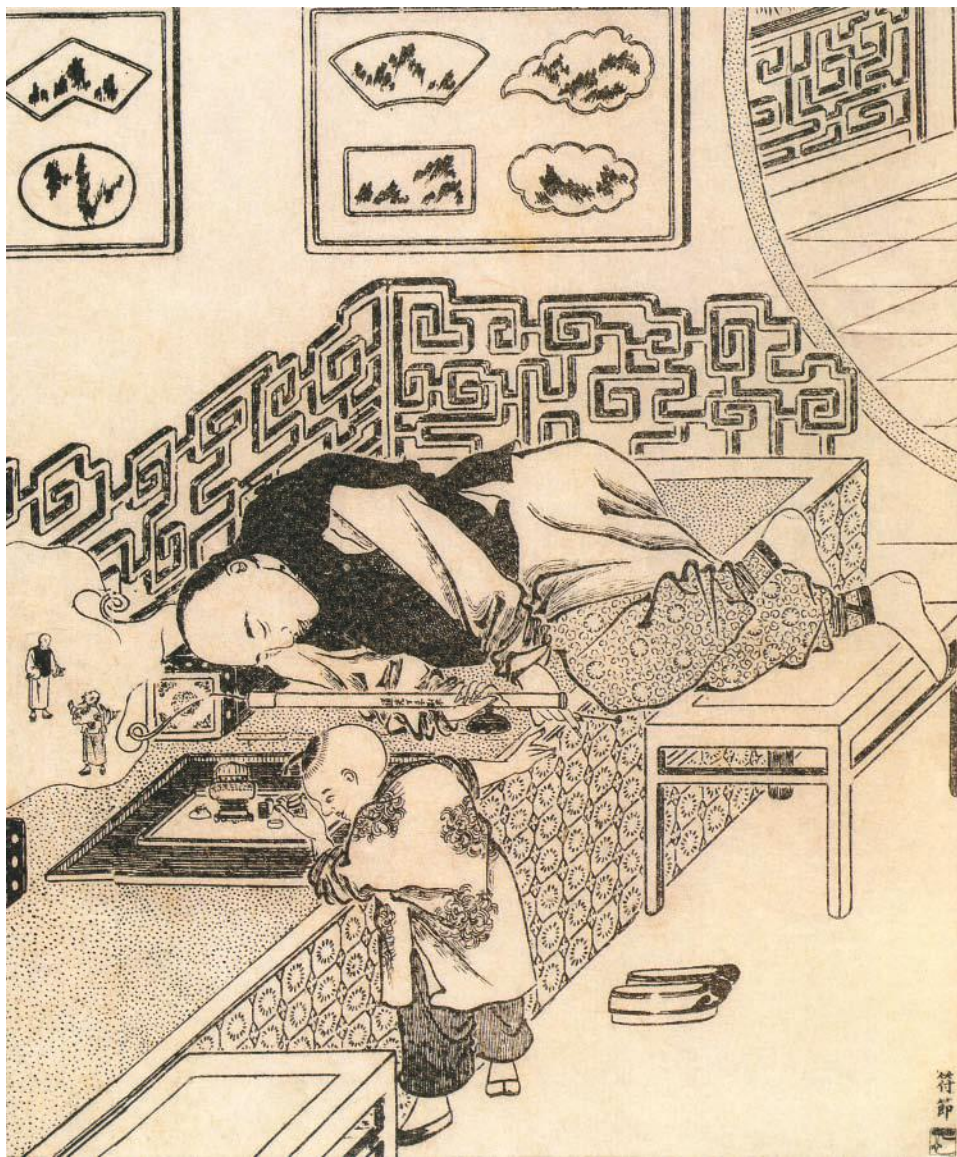
There was a second opium war in 1860, during which the Chinese capital, Peking, was sacked by British troops. In 1898, Britain signed a ninety-nine-year lease under which new



Opium Smoker Lost in His Dreams

c. 1884-1898

Lithography from a Shanghai magazine, 19 x 11.5 cm
L. van der Aalsvoort Collection





territories would also be part of Hong Kong. To take over the area, British troops also defeated armed Chinese peasants.



In 1900, a group of 40,000 militant Chinese called 'The Righteousness and Harmony Society', better known as 'The Boxers', rose up in China for the purpose of throwing out all Westerners. But England rallied her allies and together they formed 16,000 troops that rather quickly put down what became known as the 'Boxer Rebellion'.



Oil cruets

Dates unknown

Silver, 6 cm (bottom cruet)





China, rarely a country to move quickly, was to act out some revenge. In 1965, Premier Chou En-lai told President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt: "Some of them [the American troops in South Vietnam] are trying opium, and we [Chinese] are helping them. We are planting the best kinds of opium especially for the American soldiers in Vietnam... Do you remember when the West imposed opium on us [in the 19th century]? They fought us with opium. And we are going to fight them back with their own weapon."



A Man and Woman Smoking in a Luxury Opium House

c. 1884-1898

Lithography from a Shanghai magazine, 19 x 11.5 cm

L. van der Aalsvoort Collection





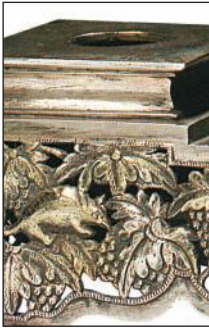
Not only has opium itself played a major role in the history of civilisation, but so has opium's natural source, the poppy. In the late 1990s, Afghanistan's Taliban earned worldwide attention with their destruction of statues of Buddha and their harsh laws restricting women's freedom. But they were angry about UN sanctions against them, feeling that the world should have congratulated them for eradicating some of the opium-producing poppy crops.



Production of Opium Balls in an Indochinese Factory

From the magazine *L'Illustration*, 29 February 1896





II. Turning On: Ritual and Practice

Inhaling or Shooting Up: Poppy Nose Best

The young ladies of the opium dens could earn their wages by applying the specialised skills required to master the elaborate preparations needed in producing the pleasant opium vapor as much as they could by being sexually professional. A precise ritual was needed to cause the vapor, requiring an exact amount of heat, as well as very specific instruments and skills.

Bowl holder

Date unknown
Silver, 11.3 x 22.8 cm





Using a special lamp and wick was imperative, as were the skills of heating, revolving and shaping the opium, then placing it perfectly into a pipe bowl while holding the pipe at the exact distance from the flame.

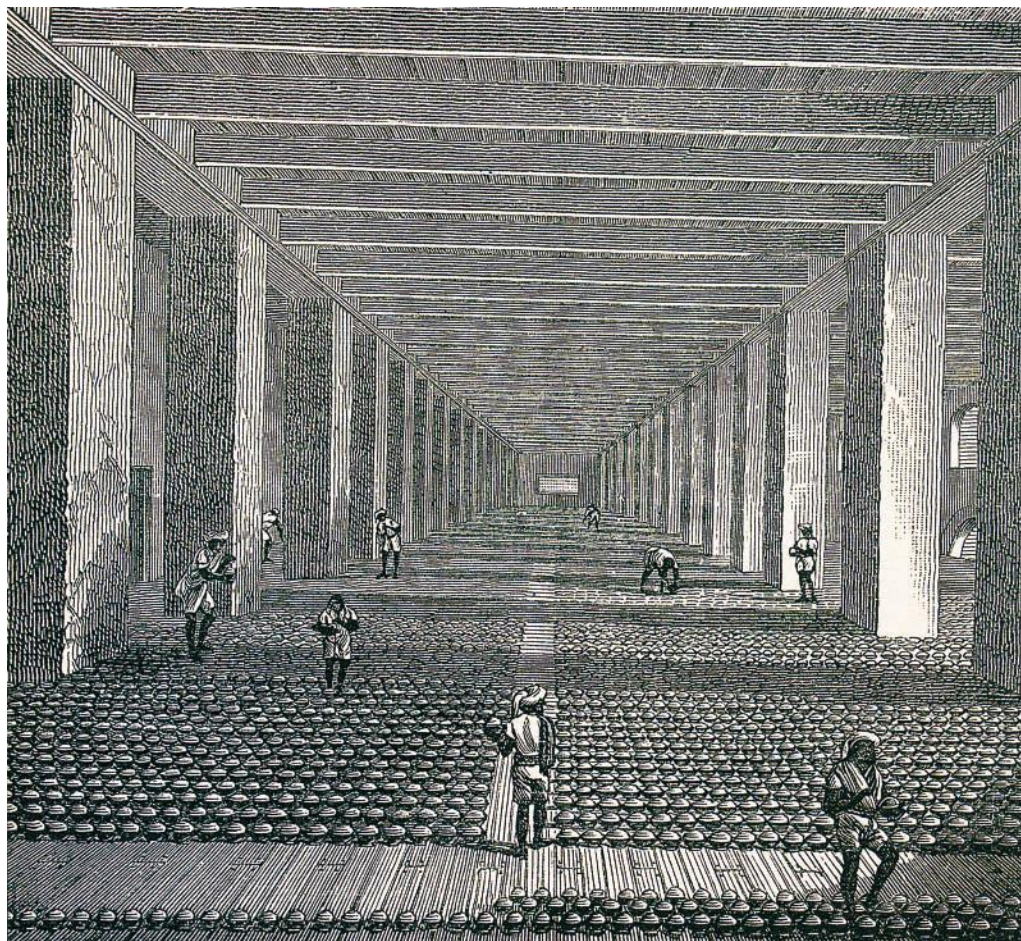


When opium burns, it does not actually smoke, but a vapor with qualities distinct from smoke is created. However, referring to the terms 'opium smoke' or 'smokers' is certainly commonly accepted.



Location for Drying the Opium

From the designs of Lieutenant Colonel Walter S. Sherwill
 From *The Graphic*, 24 June 1882
 Engraving





There seems to be a real liturgy involved. The ritual acting out, as in superstition, magic and even religion, often seems to be a part of drug-taking behavior. Here the famous saying of Karl Marx is reversed; we see that opium and other drugs can become the religion of the people.



Opium Dens: Where Everybody Knows Your Game

In the popular American television series, *Cheers*, a regular customer was routinely greeted by his



Needle holders

Dates unknown
About 2.8 cm





first name as he entered the pub, his home away from home. The show's theme song praised such a welcoming place, "where everybody knows your name". Appropriately, that bar's most frequent customer's name was 'Norm', suggesting it is normal for an individual to want to be accepted by his or her chosen community for who they are.



Opium dens could offer that kind of acceptance. Ironically, the word 'den' usually refers to an



A Well-Off Smoker in a Brothel

c. 1884-1898

Lithography from a Shanghai magazine, 19 x 23 cm
L. van der Aalsvoort Collection





attractive, domestic place for solitary work or study, whereas some opium dens in contrast were shabby commercial places for individual and social dissipation. Normal people – ‘Norms’ – found their comfort zone.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, reflecting his times, refers to the use of opium and heroin in several of his famous Sherlock Holmes adventures, including *The Man with the Twisted Lip*,



Five boxes with openwork lids

Dates unknown

Dross

Steven Martin Collection



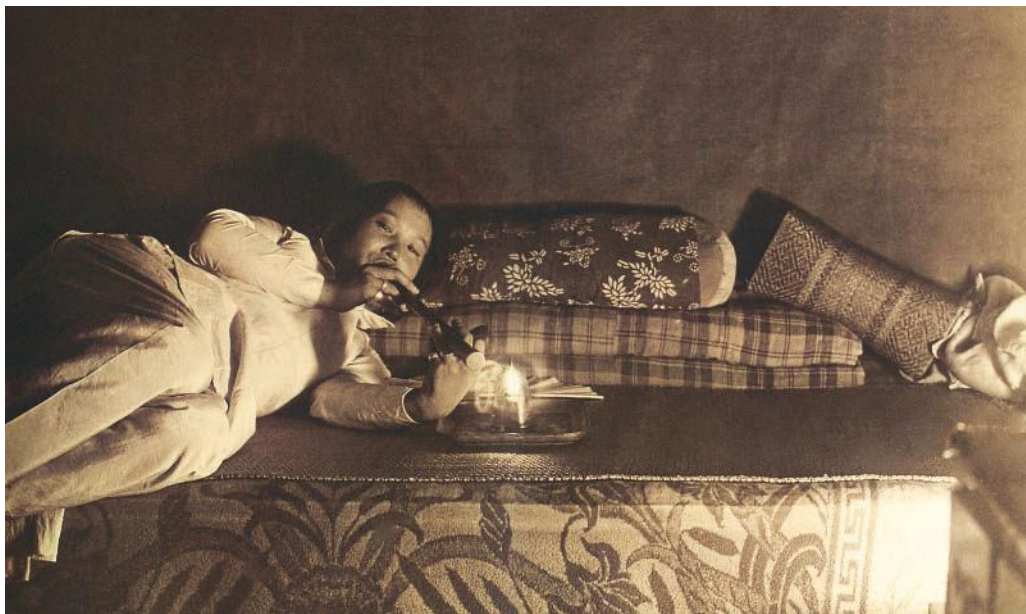


The Sign of the Four, and *A Scandal in Bohemia*. In the first of these, published in 1892, Holmes' loyal colleague, Dr Watson, visits an opium den in the East End of London to find a friend who is an addict. Martin Booth comments that "the opium den... became an image of transformation from truth into deceit, just as it was for addicted customers who escaped reality there."



Rare photographic print showing
an opium smoker in a private setting (detail)

Beginning of the 20th century
Gelatin silver photographic print, 8.9 x 7.4 cm





The romance of the opium den is vividly described by Nick Tosches: "Visions of a dark, brocade-curtained, velvet-cushioned place of luxurious decadence, filled with the mingled vapor and scents of burning joss sticks and the celestial, forbidden, fabulous stuff itself. Wordless, kowtowing servants. Timelessness. Sanctuary. Lovely-loosened limbs draped from

Opium lamps with cloisonné decoration

Dates unknown

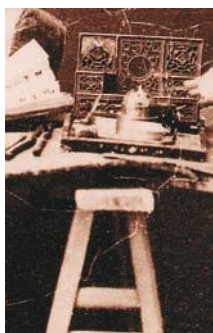
Lamp on the left: 11.8 x 8.5 cm





the high-slit cheongsams of recumbent exotic concubines of sweet intoxication. Dreams within dreams. Romance."

Highs and Lows: A Hip Gathering



The image of the opium den typically shows a user breathing in the vapors of his beloved drug. But why is the user nearly always seen lying on his side?



Opium Smokers with a Travel Set (detail)

William Saunders, c. 1865-1875
Photographic print on albumin paper
Bertholet Collection





Pharmaceutical chemist Frank Browne, government analyst in Hong Kong (1893-1915) describes in detail how opium is prepared and used, but he says nothing more about the opium den than "[o]pium-smoking is performed by the smoker laying on his side."



The current American writer most 'hip' about opium dens is Nick Tosches. He too does not



Two opium lamps

Dates unknown

Left: Copper and brass, inspired by an older style of lamp, 19.5 x 9 cm

Right: *Paktong* with copper parts, 12.5 x 12.4 cm





really explain why opium smokers lay on their side, but he points out that the word 'hip', as slang for those who are knowledgeable about drugs, dates back to 1904. It "may have derived from the classic, age-old, pelvis-centered, side-laying, opium-smoking position."



The slang may have been code for those who knew the where, how, when, who, if not the



Famous photograph of
a young opium smoker, in Shanghai

c. 1930
10.9 x 15.2 cm





why of opium use. Martin Booth, the writer who offers the most comprehensive work on the topic, says the term refers to an experienced drug taker. He adds that "addicts gained sore hips from reclining on their sides on hard, opium den bed-boards. "



A common sense explanation might simply be that inhaling opium vapors can make some



Complete set of equipment
on a large opium tray with three pipes

Dates unknown

Large tray, 70 x 46 cm

Pipes: Two bamboo and one brass (centre)

Inner tray: Copper





smokers too relaxed to stay standing, so it is logical that experienced users would prepare for that state by laying down from the outset. Also, when dining or attending social gatherings in the East, participants are not seated on chairs as they are in the West, but on cushions, maybe even on the floor or ground. The most popular image of 'The Last Supper' of Jesus and his

Nozzles in the shape of fists

Dates unknown

From top to bottom: Horn, 38.4 x 1.2 cm

Cloisonné, 45.5 x 2.1 cm

Shagreen, 5.9 x 2.3 cm

Horn, 46.5 x 3 cm

Wood, 42 x 2.2 cm





apostles is certainly the 1495-1497 masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci. However, the actual custom of reclining during such feasts, similar to the posture seen in opium dens, is more historically accurate, as shown in the painting of *The Last Supper* by Hieronymus Wierix (1553-1619) at the Fine Art Museum of San Francisco.



Assortment of bowls

Dates unknown
Porcelain





A connection between Jesus and opium might be made in John's gospel [19:29], in the reference to the sponge soaked with sour or common wine on a branch of hyssop, given to the crucified Jesus. Some scholars propose that the mixture might have been an opium and wine mixture, used as a painkiller at crucifixions of the time.



Chinese Sailor Smoking in his Junk

William Alexander, 1795
Watercolour on paper, 19 x 22 cm
The Makins Collection





III. Dropping Out: Taboos and Fantasies The Exotic Appeal: From Laudanum to Laurent

At certain times and places, especially before medical science better understood the problems of drug-related addiction, drugs enjoyed wide acceptance in general. In fact, some of the substances now considered harmful were once thought to be helpful. Examples range from the innocent to the fatal.



Yixing bowls in different shapes
with various decoration

Dates unknown





Use of hard drugs was not rare in the upper classes of Victorian England. On the probably-harmless side, Queen Victoria's personal physicians prescribed marijuana to Her Majesty for menstrual discomfort.



In France and England, the use of morphine was so common that women would 'shoot up' morphine during intermissions at the theatre,



Two Tonkin Smokers (detail)

Édouard Hocquard, c. 1884

From a photographic print on albumin paper, 17 x 2.5 cm





using beautifully designed syringes that they had customised for just that purpose.

Claims of opium's medicinal power to go beyond the reduction of pain are legendary, but some of those claims have also been proven to be true such as in its effectiveness in helping cure dysentery, asthma, rheumatism, and perhaps even diabetes.

There might be no claims that the scent of opium has therapeutic qualities, but its sweet



Yixing bowls with Chinese characters

Dates unknown





scent is not unpleasant. Relevant to that quality of the drug, in 1977 the designer Yves Saint-Laurent launched a line of products with the exotic name *Opium*. The perfume's fragrance is advertised as being "subtle and oriental". It is apparently a blend of rose, carnation, sandalwood, pepper, lily of the valley, and clove. While its name and promotion might suggest some of the mystique of the drug after which it is named, the perfume's delightful

Set of pipes

Dates unknown

Ivory, all made from a single piece

From top to bottom: 49.5 x 2.1 cm; 58.3 x 2.5 cm
61.4 x 2.8 cm; 55.3 x 2.5 cm; 50.9 x 2.2 cm; 55.1 x 2.5 cm





blend of scent is distinct, though admittedly not an imitation of the sweet and less complex scent of opium.

The Story of O: Cherchez la femme



In the wake of the controversial eugenics debate, it was believed that Orientals were more resistant to opium than Occidentals. Some even mistakenly felt Orientals were more resistant to addiction in general.



Six paintings on rice paper (tongcao)

Middle of the 19th century

19 x 28.6 cm





In the early 1900s, even some physicians held that certain people are genetically predisposed to addiction. Several agreed with one who opined that the ideal candidate for addiction was "a delicate female, having light blue eyes and flaxen hair".



Descriptions of infamous opium dens, past or present, typically include at least one



Rich Opium Addict with Two Women

c. 1850

Chinese painting on rice paper (*tongcao*), 19 x 28.6 cm





exotic woman. She is usually young, mysterious and subservient to the male opium user. She is usually presumed to be or often is identified as a *filles de joie*. As if exporting the mystique of the women who worked in the legendary Chinese opium dens, the screen goddess Anna May Wong played an elegant opium-eating Qing Dynasty princess who was transported to Victorian England.

Les Vicieux de Paris

Delphi Fabrice, c. 1910

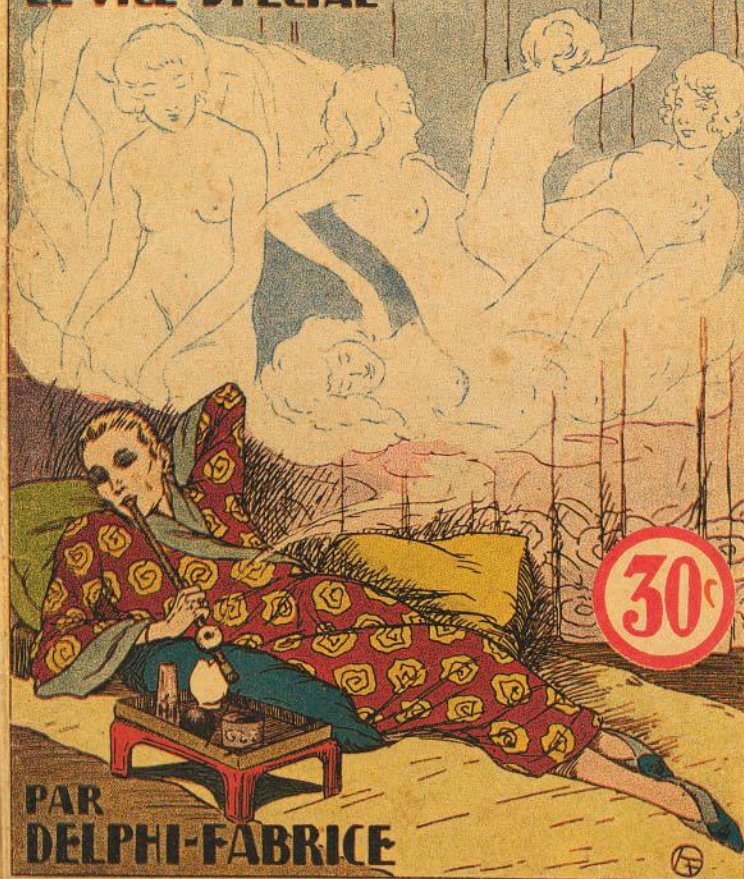
25 x 16 cm

A. de Lestrangle Collection

GRAND ROMAN DE MŒURS INÉDIT

LES VICIEUX DE PARIS

LE VICE SPECIAL



PAR
DELPHI-FABRICE



Opium historian Martin Booth notes that such conclusions may have been caused by the fact that morphine was widely used to treat menstrual problems. It was used for "disease of a nervous character" that many people believed women suffered from, and – if some of the trashy romantic fiction about those times is to be believed – women were even *expected* to suffer, especially where being fragile and



The Dragon Hunt, a New Method of Smoking Pure Opium

The man (right) smokes tobacco in a metal water pipe
Second half of the 19th century
Chinese painting on rice paper (*tongcao*), 19 x 28.5 cm





pampered was considered feminine. Hollywood movies about such women often showed them fainting or swooning for the slightest reason.



The hysterical women of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel, *Gone with the Wind*, contrasted with the later, more sympathetic descriptions of women of the American southern states.



Three pipes

Dates unknown

Top: Bamboo with silver plaque, 59.8 x 3.6 cm
 Centre: Lacquer with silver plaque, 54.4 x 1.6 cm
 Bottom: Bamboo with silver plaque, 65 x 2.2 cm





That was true in Harper Lee's only novel, the 1960 brilliant success, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The heroine was Caucasian, middle-class, and addicted to opium only after it was prescribed for medicinal use.



Morphine was also administered to women as an analgesic during pregnancy and labour. "Furthermore, prostitutes used opiates not only



Man Smoking Opium, Assisted by a Woman

Beginning of the 20th century
Wood, about 7 x 14 x 10.5 cm
Hogendoorn Collection





to sustain them in their long and arduous work, but also as a crude form of contraception because continued dosage disrupted ovulation.”



Jim Hogshire, an expert on the history of medicines, proposes that one reason women used opium even more than men did in the days of the Industrial-era sweatshops was because women were excluded from public bars,



Processes in the Manufacture of Opium at the Opium Factory at Gulzarbagh, Patna, in Bihar

Mixing of the opium, one in a series of nineteen drawings

Shiva Lal, c. 1857

Gouache on mica, 16 x 20 cm

Victoria and Albert Museum, London





where men could find relief drinking alcohol after their manual labours. He notes that both men and women used opium only when they could not afford gin. Opium was cheaper, healthier, and did not cause fights or hangovers that are so often associated with drinking alcohol. "A night's drinking could easily bankrupt one of these wage slaves, so opium was a staple."

Processes in the Manufacture of Opium at the Opium Factory at Gulzarbagh, Patna, in Bihar

Opium being created ready for despatch, one in
a series of nineteen drawings

Shiva Lal, c. 1857

Gouache on mica, 20 x 16 cm

Victoria and Albert Museum, London





O, Sweet Death: Dying for a Fix

It is natural to be apprehensive about death, because it is unknown. At most, some have had 'near death' experiences. Therefore, maybe only a man of science, when speaking as a scientist, can have the purely-scientific objectivity of Bermann Muller (1891-1866). He dispassionately noted that, "Death is an advantage to life... Its advantage lies chiefly in



Stop recalling the common image
of the dormouse

Date unknown





giving ampler opportunities for the genes of the new generation to have their merits tested out... by clearing the way for fresh starts."

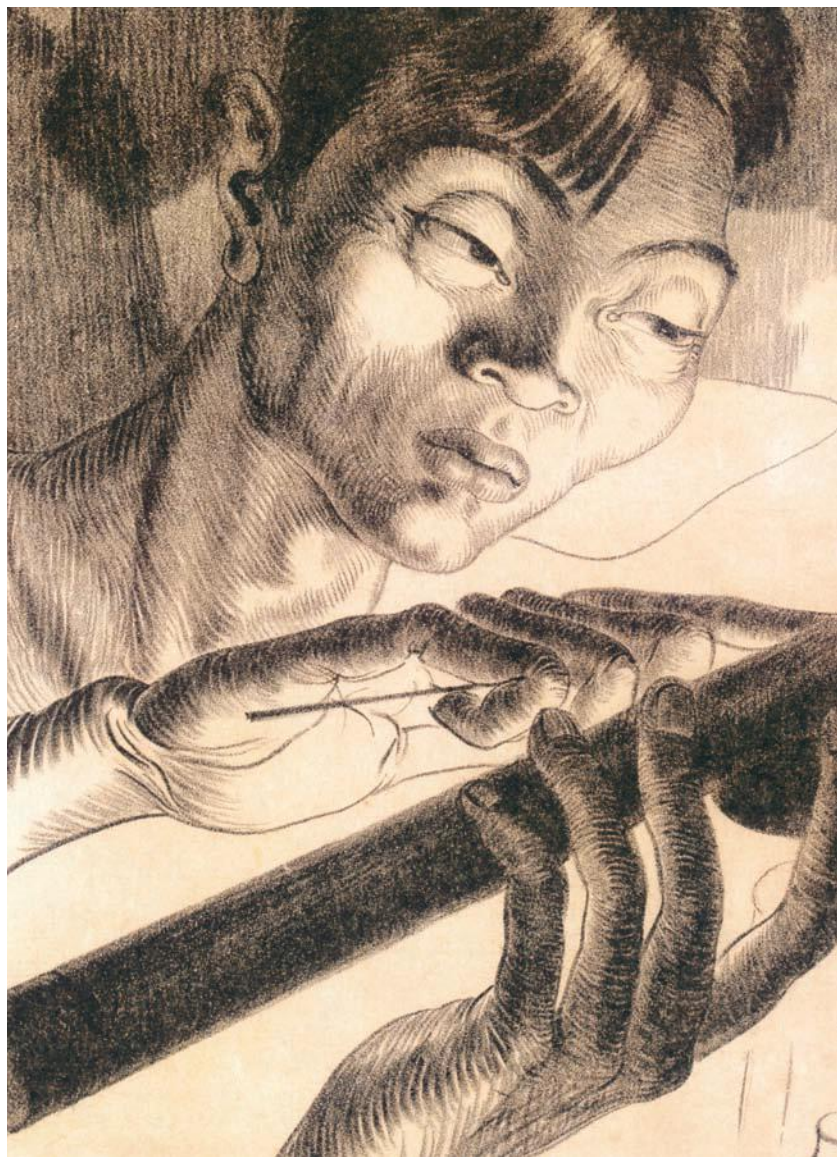


Spirituality can offer comforting support and maybe can even recommend ways to prepare for death. Religion can also contribute to satisfying the needs of the dying and to help their loved ones. In the prayer *Ave Maria*, many Christians pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary to "pray for us, now and at the hour of



Young Man Rolling a Pellet of Opium
in the Bowl, with the Help of a Needle

Léa Lafugie (attributed to), c. 1930
Lithograph, 35.8 x 24 cm





our death". The Catholic liturgy offers *The Anointing of the Sick*, or what was formerly called *Extreme Unction*, one of the sacraments rejected by Martin Luther. Some religious orders use monthly or at least annual prayerful preparations for death, because "we know not the day, nor the hour..." Moreover, the cautious faithful reason that at that hour we might not be conscious or otherwise able to pray for ourselves.



Segmented pipe

Date unknown
Ivory, 47 x 2.4 cm





Enter the field of bioethics to join moralists in addressing the role of pain relief for the dying. Critical of the restrictive drug laws that make pain relief difficult to get, Nancy Dubler, a lawyer who heads the bioethics division at New York City's Montefiore Medical Center, has stated that ninety-five percent of pain can be managed. That is the good news. The bad news is that at least fifty percent of patients die in moderate or severe pain.



Stop in the shape of a happy buddha

Date unknown
Ivory





Elizabeth Ford Pitorak, an expert in end-of-life care at the Hospice Institute at Western Reserve in Cleveland, mentions that "administering morphine or some other opium derivative are the best ways to relieve a [dying] patient's feelings of breathlessness and anxiety."



The fear of death and the preparation for it through pain relief, from mild analgesics to radical anesthesia, seems to show up in



Needles

19th century

Iron and enamel traces, tip set in dross spade





personal philosophies. It is seen from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the melancholic soliloquies of Shakespeare's Hamlet, De Quincey's 'confessions', or the Zen-like poetry of the beat generation, to the rambling, but often insightful, comedy of addict Lenny Bruce or Richard Pryor. Poet-singer Bob Dylan was "oppressed by fears of dying, since he had to face the fact that he had a following of

Original drawing for the cover of
Delphi Fabrice's *Opium in Paris*

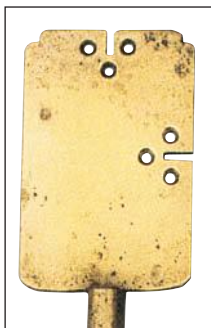
A. Douhin, 1914

Ink and watercolour on paper, 33.5 x 24.5 cm

A. de Lestrangé Collection

L'OPIMUM A PARIS





Messianic proportions." Throughout much of his lyrics he seems to be constantly aware that he is "*Knockin' On Heaven's Door.*"



On the other side of that door there is, according to a popular religious or superstitious notion, a record of one's good and bad deeds. De Quincey came to realise during opium dreams that for him "[t]he dread book of account is, in fact, the mind itself of



Opium palettes

Dates unknown
Paktong, about 9cm





each individual." He explained, "This, from some opium experiences of mine, I can believe; I have indeed, seen the same thing asserted twice in modern books, and accompanied by a remark which I was convinced was true: that the dread book of account, which the Scriptures speak of, is, in fact, the mind itself of each individual. Of this at least I feel assured, that there is no such thing as forgetting possible to the mind; a thousand accidents may, and will interpose a veil between our present

The Poppy Harvest in India

c. 1880

Watercolour, 34 x 23 cm





consciousness and the secret inscriptions of the mind; accidents of the same sort will also rend away this veil; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains for ever; just as the stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day, whereas, in fact, we all know that it is the light which is drawn over them as a veil - and that they are waiting to be revealed, when the obscuring daylight shall have withdrawn."



Pipes

19th century

Top: Ivory pipe, ivory stopper, silver plaque, ivory bowl, silver ring, silver joint ring, 46 cm

Pascal Mergez Collection

Bottom: Bamboo pipe, silver rings, jade tip, silver plaque decorated with a Fo Dog and Tiger's Eye cabochon, *yixing* terracotta bowl, silver ring, 71 cm





In *Man's Fate*, Andrea Mairaux states that, "Opium teaches only one thing, which is that aside from physical suffering, there is nothing real." However, just as ecstasy is possible with sex, and some might say it is even more like universal joy, opium seems to offer a glimpse of paradise. After such an experience, the life of the initiate is thereafter wedded to it for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health,

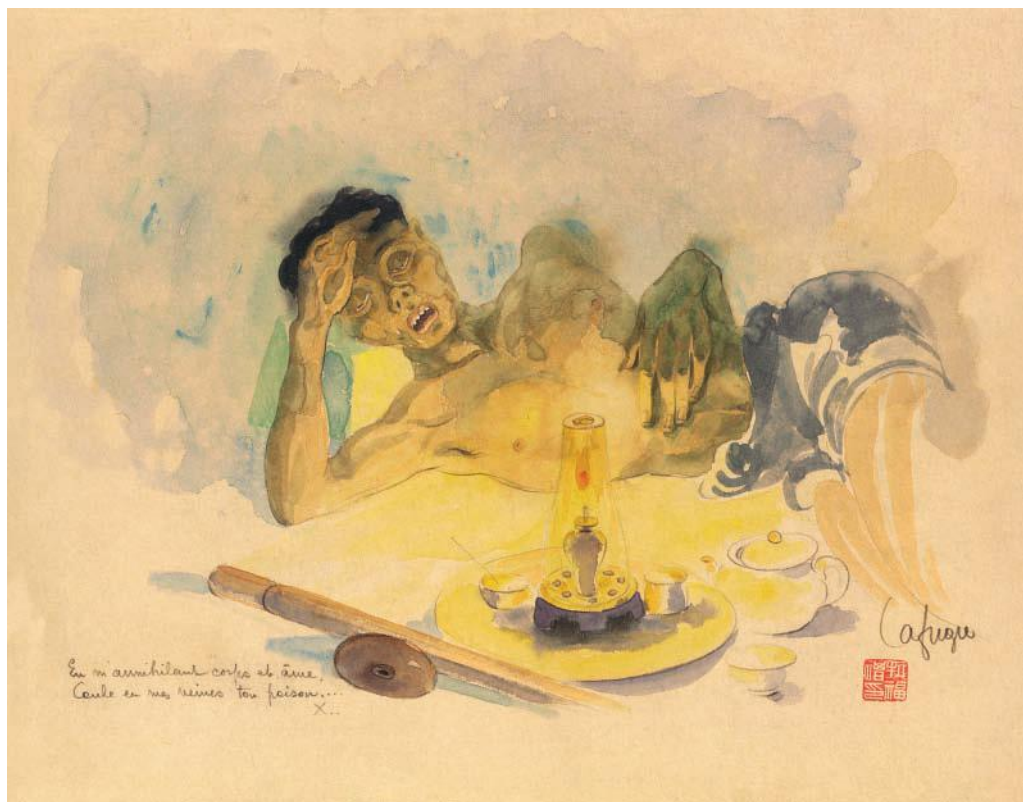


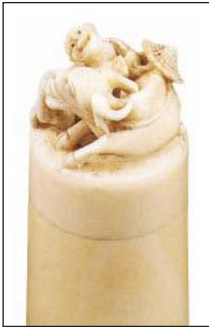
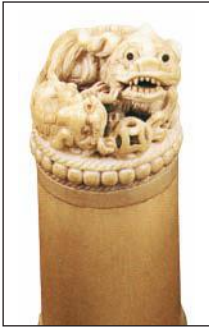
Coolie Stupefied with Opium

Inscription: *'En m'annihilant corps et âme
Coule en mes veines ton poison...'* ('Your poison flows through
my veins, destroying me, body and soul...')

Léa Lafugie, 1929

Watercolour, 37 x 49.4 cm





till death. Standup comic sensation Richard Pryor accidentally set himself on fire while ‘freebasing’, that is, preparing a highly volatile cocaine mixture. However, he survived and later recalled the near-fatal experience in a humorous autobiographical routine titled *Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life is Calling* (1896). He creatively addressed the need to cope with death by using warm wit rather than cold analysis.

Opium boxes with figurative decoration on the lids

Dates unknown

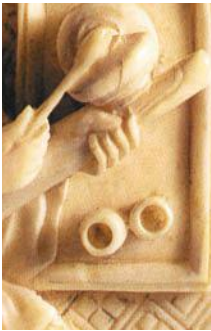
Ivory, second from left: 6.6 cm





Influential comedian Lenny Bruce took a fatal overdose at age forty. "Contrary to mythology, Lenny did not die of an overdose of heroin. He died of an overdose of drugs alright, but it was morphine, and somehow morphine is just not fashionable for myths, the lab report to the contrary notwithstanding."

Of his excessive use of drugs, Bruce once said, "I'll die young, but it's like kissing God."

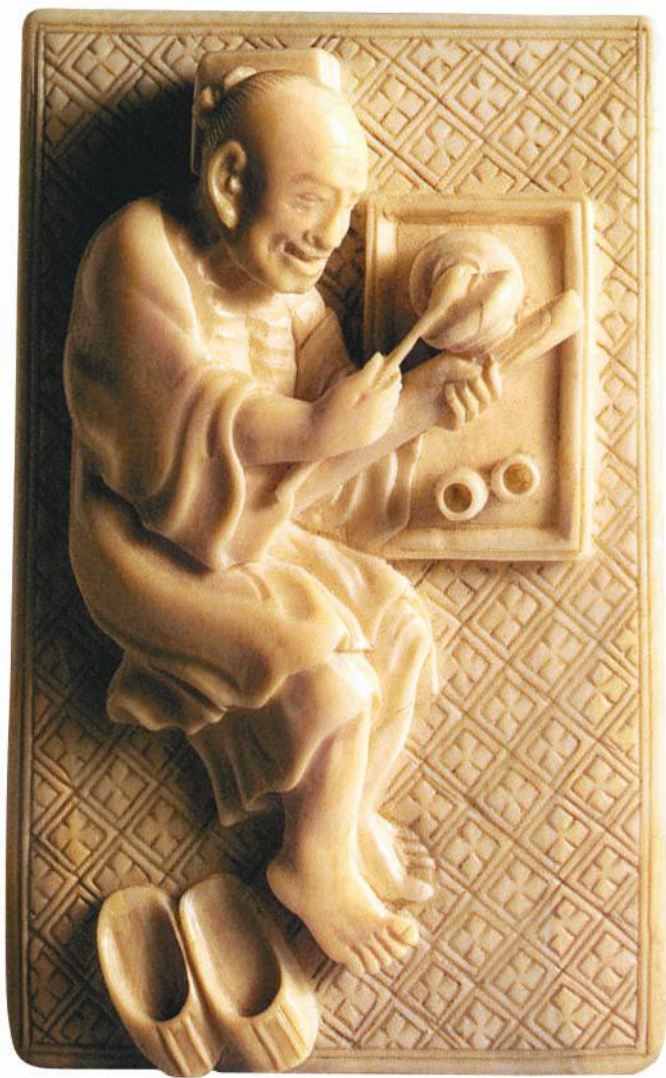


Man Using the Bowl of a Pipe to Roll Heated
Opium and to Make it the Desired Shape

19th century

Carved ivory, 7.5 x 4.6 cm







IV. Getting Real: Opening Out On Reality The Poppy Trail: Repeating History

William Willcox, a notable chemical pathologist in England in the second decade of the 1900s, wrote that there were two classes of drug addicts. The first group included those of the general population who became dependent on prescriptions for medical purposes. Typically those unfortunate addicts took drugs to seek relief from pain or sleeplessness.



Opium Farming on the High Plateaus of Yunnan Province

c. 1900

Photographic print on albumin paper, 15 x 10.5 cm





But addicts in the other group were hedonists who sought new excitement and pleasure through drugs. Morphine and heroin, as well as cocaine, were taken orally, by injection or inhaled as snuff, and were the drugs commonly used. Wilcox called those in the second category the 'vicious groups', but he acknowledged there were other factors that might have contributed to violence.

Some in the first group might have had morphine or heroin prescribed to control pain

Couple Lying Down, the Woman Smoking an Opium Pipe and the Man a Tobacco Pipe

19th century

Pumice stone, 6.4 x 10.3 x 6 cm





following a surgical operation. Willcox noted that heroine and morphine "often act as a charm", apparently meaning they seem to have magical qualities.



Therefore, it is understandable that a user can or might get 'hooked' rather quickly. Willcox estimated that the daily use of an addictive drug such as morphine or heroin for about four weeks "in most cases" could cause an addiction to develop.



Inner tray

Date unknown

Paktong and brass, 22.4 x 30.7 cm





Apparently he was describing addicts of both categories when he wrote that "a family history of insanity, neurosis, or alcoholism is usual amongst drug addicts, and they themselves previous to their addiction often present signs of nervous instability." He also felt that alcohol addiction was frequently combined with that of morphine, heroin, or cocaine.

Even a century ago experts knew that controlling the production of opium and the alkaloids

Opium lamp

19th century

Brass and enamelled detail, 11.5 x 6 x 6 cm





obtained from them would attack the very heart of the 'the opium problem'. However, they acknowledged that illegal trafficking of opium, morphine, and heroin "undoubtedly occurs to some extent". Willcox believed the new Dangerous Drugs Acts (1920) would bring matters under control. He later even stated that "the number of those actually engaged in it [illegal trafficking] is consequently very small."



A New Vice

Le Petit Journal, 5 July 1903





In the United States during the 1920s, about ninety-five percent of all narcotic addicts used opium in the form of heroin or morphine. The latter group outnumbered heroin users twelve to one. A representative of the US Department of Health, who specialised in the problems of drug addiction, reported that smoking opium had been fairly common, but that it was confined to "a few Chinese in large cities".

An Opium Den in France

Cover illustration for *Le Petit Parisien*, 17 February 1907

Le Petit Parisien

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UNE FUMERIE D'OPIUM EN FRANCE



That expert also claimed that most "normal subjects" and even many of the "less stable of the abnormal group" who became addicted through self-medication with opium, had been "cured permanently". The rest of the addicts were categorised as an unstable group that constantly relapsed, it was believed, "because of the instability that was the cause of their original addiction". He concluded that many of the unfortunate unstable ones have been 'cured' ten to twenty times.

Lamp, topped by a damper and a wick

19th century
Brass, 14.5 x 13.5 cm





There are two highlights in the history of opium during the 1940s. The first occurred in 1945, when American General Douglas McArthur, in charge of occupied Japan, forbade the farmers of that country to cultivate opium and ordered the halting of all narcotic production. The second was in 1949 when the UN Narcotics Commission established a committee in Ankara (formerly Angora), Turkey, to control and supervise the trading of opium throughout the world.

Smoking lamp

19th century

Brass, with copper glass-holder

Height: 15 cm; Diameter: 8 cm





Long before the new millennium, Vietnam was clearly identified by anti-drug agencies for playing an increasingly-important role in heroin trafficking throughout the 'Golden Triangle', an imaginary area encompassing parts of southwestern China and northern Thailand.



In Vietnam, possession or smuggling of 100 grams or more of heroin, or five kilograms or

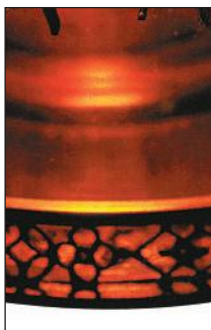


Opium scale, used to weigh gold, silver, medicinal herbs, powders, and opium

19th century

Rosewood case, brass studs, ivory beam,
brass feet, and tray, 34 x 9 cm





more of opium, has been punishable by death since 1997. Death sentences are frequently handed down to heroin and opium traffickers; in 1999, sixty people were sentenced to death for smuggling illegal substances into that country. According to Vietnamese newspapers, about 18,000 people were arrested for their involvement in drug smuggling and drug abuse in the first nine months of 1999 alone.

Light cover

Date unknown

Paklong, 4.2 cm

Guy Saguez Collection





The Pen in the Den: The Beat Goes On

In his 'ottobiography', as he liked to call it, Otto Preminger tells of how he, actor Gary Cooper and producer-writer Milton Sperling, each asked their physicians for a prescription for Demerol™. However, the doctors knew that the requests were actually being made for screenwriter Ben Hecht. In order to meet the team's pressing deadline, Hecht felt he needed the drug, which he had become hooked on after surgery the year before.



Pipe

19th century

Bamboo pipe, *yixing* terracotta bowl,
silver ringed, 71 cm





To get their work done, or perhaps using writing as their excuse, many famous writers have used alcohol. Some of these called on the help of opium instead, or as well. The following is a list of a few of the many intellectuals, writers, poets, artists, and other creative people who were either users or were otherwise intensely interested in opium or its derivatives. These include writers of the 'beat generation' (each indicated with an asterisk).

Opium box, to arrange all the necessary tools
for smoking opium

19th century

Lacquered wood encrusted with different
coloured mother-of-pearl, 49 x 40 x 24 cm





Apollinaire, Guillaume	Collins, Wilkie
Auric, Georges	Crabbe, Fr. George
Baudelaire, Charles	Crowley, Alistare
Beardsley, Aubrey	De Quincey, Thomas
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett	Detzer, Eric*
Bukowski, Charles*	Dickens, Charles
Burroughs, William*	DiPrima, Diane*
Carso, Gregory*	Doyle, Arthur Conan
Cassady, Neal*	Dreser, Heinrich
Cocteau, Jean	Dylan, Bob*
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	Ferlinghetti, Lawrence*

Restoration of a tray to smoke opium, with 19th-century objects

Date unknown
Rosewood, 57.5 x 33 cm





Galen

Ginsberg, Allen*

Greene, Graham

Hippocrates

Huxley, Aldous

Jones, Leroi*

Keates, John

Kerouac, Jack*

Kesey, Ken*

Kosterlitz, Hans

Laloy, Louis

Linnaeus

Malraux, André

Marcus Aurelius

McClure, Michael*

Paracelsus

Pert, Candace

Picasso, Pablo

Poe, Edgar Allen

Poulenc, Francis

Radiguet, Raymond

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel

Vietnamese bowl holder

19th century

Rosewood, inlaid mother-of-pearl detail, 28 x 6.5 cm





Sertürner, Wilhelm

Snyder, Gary*

Snyder, Solomon

Sydenham, Thomas

Thompson, Francis

Vlice, Charles

Ward, Arthur

Wilberforce, William

Wilde, Oscar



Users of cocaine and other hard drugs, even if just limited to popular musicians, would require a much longer list, of course. Also not addressed here are the LSD-users of the 1960s, many of whom were influenced by Timothy Leary, even before his influential 1968 work, *The Politics of Ecstasy*.



The Poor Man's Den

From the journal *Harper's Weekly*, 4 September 1880
Page printed from a wood engraving, 23 x 30.4 cm





Martin Booth is especially helpful when he shows how opium is presented in the works of certain writers.

The most famous writer who confessed to drug abuse is undoubtedly De Quincey. In 1802, at the age of 17, De Quincey ran away from the security of a stable home. In London, he befriended a prostitute with whom he lived while studying at Worcester College, Oxford.



Travel pillow chest

19th century

Lacquered leather, gilt traces
on the design, brass hinges, 51 x 14 x 14.5 cm





De Quincey took opium for the first time in order to relieve the pain of facial neuralgia. By age 28, he had become a regular and confirmed 'opium-eater'. He took his 'celestial drug' in the form of laudanum, and he always kept a decanter of it nearby and steadily increased the dose. He remained an addict for the rest of his life, dying at age seventy-four in 1859.

Rack with two pipes, one segmented with a nozzle in the shape of a fist, and a separate bowl

Dates unknown

Rack: Mahogany, 64 x 2.5 cm

Top pipe: 38.8 x 1.8 cm

Bottom pipe: Jade, 49.6 x 2.5 cm

Bowl: Amber





De Quincey's 'confessions' were published in 1821, when he was thirty-six. It was, as Martin Booth said, "the first time that opium addiction... was laid bare in a book in which the author stated opium, rather than himself, was the true hero of the piece."



De Quincey also reflected on the point of how guilty he felt because he neglected responsibilities while under the influence of opium. He is the



Red lacquered bowl holder and four bowls

Dates unknown

14 x 48.5 cm





most famous of opium-addicted writers and is eloquent in describing the ecstasy of taking the drug.

Since the 19th century, De Quincey's influential shadow has fallen over subsequent writers. A survey of a few highlights about famous writers who used or wrote about opium continues with Dickens. In his unfinished last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), the main character is an opium addict.



Hongs, or Trade Establishments, in Canton

Sunqua, c. 1835

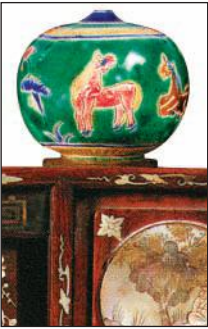
Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 82.5 cm

Martyn Gregory Collection, London





Booth mentions, "For Dickens, opium was a symbol of degeneracy, of a surrender of basic human values, a corruption of decency." Dickens himself used laudanum as a cough mixture to help him relax during his speaking tours.



Wilde was also a user of laudanum. The title character of his novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), visits an opium den in hopes of escaping his feelings of guilt. Booth notes,



Bowl holder and three glazed bowls

Dates unknown

Bowl holder inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 11 x 27.3 cm





"The opium, from which there was also no escape, is [in this Wilde work] an image of entrapment: no amount of opium can alter the truth."



The range of 'confessions' includes Doyle's comparatively-subtle references to opium in his Sherlock Holmes adventures. They probably reflect the writer's own addiction.



Upper-Class Woman Smoking Opium, Tonkin

Léon Busy, 1915
Photograph





Arguably the best work of Greene was his 1955 novel, *The Quiet American*. It was prophetic in describing the failure of US foreign policy in Indochina. The first filmed version of the novel, directed by Joseph Mankiewicz. In the Philippines, it was called *The Spy*.



In Germany, it was called *Der Stille Amerikaner*. A 2002 version, directed by Phillip Noyce, was much less successful, albeit the topic was still timely. Greene first enjoyed opium in 1951, but he was never addicted.



Pipes

Dates unknown

Top: Bamboo with white metal
and copper plaque, 58.5 x 2.4 cm

Bottom: Bamboo with a silver plaque embellished
with gold and an openwork bowl, 59.5 x 3.2 cm





However, he did have a public love-hate relationship with his Catholicism, and might have brought that religion's fascination for ritual and ambience to his worship of *fumeries* (opium dens). The theme appears most obviously in *The Quiet American*, as well as in his 1980 autobiography, *Ways of Escape*.

But even more dramatic evidence of the influence of opium in writing is seen with Coleridge.



Two Prostitutes in an Interior (detail)

c. 1900

Photographic print on albumin paper, 12 x 16.6 cm





While still somewhat in an opium dream, he wrote his most famous poem, 'Kubla Khan'. Several generations later the Beatnik generation would revive this work and call it their own.



Burroughs is now seen to be a prophet not only for his own time but for our time as well, such as in his *The Last Words of Hasan Sabbah*, which condemns terrorism, e.g. government intelligence



Three pipes with plaques decorated
with mythological Taoist figures

Dates unknown

Left: Tortoiseshell, 62.2 x 2.8 cm

Centre: Ivory, 55.3 x 2.5 cm

Right: Bamboo, 61 x 2.6 cm





agencies and big business. Burroughs, a seminal voice for the beat generation, coined the phrase 'shooting gallery', which he felt described his living room where his fellow addicts met. Some biographers claim Burroughs coined the word 'beat' itself, but others point to Kerouac as the more likely inventor of the word that describes the movement. Either way it apparently refers to both 'beat down' (rejecting conventional consumerism,

Opium bed

End of the 19th century
126 x 84 cm
Casper Reinders Collection





for example) or to 'beatific' (vaguely referring to a non-institutional spirituality possible to achieve through drugs) by the works of Burroughs and the poets Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, and Corso. To some degree, each expressed an involvement with drugs, a form of Zen Buddhism, contemporary jazz, and "a heightened respect for the individual over the masses".

Travel set

Date unknown

Inlaid with mother-of-pearl,
about 20 x 47.5 x 25.5 cm (open)





American writers known as the 'beat generation' became prominent, first in New York's Greenwich Village and then in San Francisco. By that time, Ginsberg's very popular poem 'Howl' (1956) began to be the movement's anthem. He became the Walt Whitman of the beat generation.



Influenced by Burroughs, Kerouac was the influential theorist of the beat generation,



The British Laying Siege to the Town
of Sinkiang (Zhenjiang) on the Grand Canal

Date unknown
Engraving





particularly as seen in his seminal novel, *On the Road* (1957). It was a "major document of beat-generation thinking and writing." [Kerouac typed it onto twenty-foot long rolls of poster paper that he taped together forming one continuous manuscript.] Kerouac, whom Booth calls "the archetypal addict writer", was a self-proclaimed mystic or secular contemplative. With a unique and witty voice, he reported on the social disillusionment assuaged by drugs and alcohol.

Wooden travel set

Date unknown

12 x 29 x 20.5 cm (open, with lamp glass)





The poet Bob Dylan was very different kind of spokesman for his generation, but like Kerouac he too knew it was a generation that was disillusioned and felt alienated. Some of his album covers became icons of the age. His interest in drugs was evident in his lyrics, as in 'Mr Tambourine Man'.



The most frequently recommended anthology of the beat generation is *The Portable Beat Reader* (1992), edited by the Kerouac biographer,



Luxury travel set
with a travel pipe in three parts

Dates unknown
Wood and silver, 19 x 26 x 23 cm (open)





Ann Charters. But there is no substitute for reading the unabridged works also, especially *On The Road*.



Sam Kashner is one of the writers who was influenced by the beat founders. Many of the anecdotes included in his work: *When I was Cool* (2004), capture the twilight years of the founders as he knew them in the late 1970s.



Still from *The Dividend*

1916, U.S.A.

Directed by Walter Edwards and Thomas H. Ince





He was a student at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colorado, where he sat at the feet of Burroughs, Ginsberg, and Corso. Kashner recalls Corso had commented to him over twenty years before, "We're just old men, soon to poof into the air."

But, the beat goes on.



Bowl in the form of twins

Date unknown
Terracotta





Poppy and Popcorn: Finding the O in Movie

There have been at least thirty-five feature movies released between 1890 and 2004 that are specifically about opium, including at least eighteen documentaries.



The ones named here are specifically about opium, selected from hundreds of films about addiction that have been made throughout the world.



London Sketches - an Opium Den in the East End (1874)

From *The Illustrated London News*, 1 August 1874
21.4 x 30 cm





Even among the very earliest silent motion pictures there was an interest in opium. It was considered an exotic subject. It was perfect for the new medium of 'moving pictures'. A short documentary entitled *Chinese Opium Den*, was made in 1894.



Four years later, a two-part documentary entitled *A Chinese Opium Joint* was released. The title referred to a location, not a marijuana



Set of opium weights

Date unknown
Bronze, between 3.4-15 cm





cigarette as 'joint' later came to mean. There were at least two follow-up documentaries in the next five years.

The French film, *Le Rêve d'un fumeur d'opium* (1908), was known in the US that same year as *Dream of an Opium Fiend*. Later presentations that anticipated the more sinister side of opium traffic were dramas about opium smuggling, which were made at least once a year over the



Wooden tray with an inner tray, two pipes, a lamp, opium boxes, and various implements

Dates unknown

Tray: wood; Interior Tray: Cloisonné; Pipes: Cloisonné
Left-hand pipe: 58.5 x 1.9 cm; Right-hand pipe: 56.2 x 2.5 cm







next decade. In 1914, the documentary *The Opium Cigarettes* was released, as was a film informally known to English speaking audiences as *Opium Dreams*.



The next year the documentaries *Satan Opium* and *Opium* (1919), in the style of German expressionism, would be the final feature films on the topic for over twenty years.



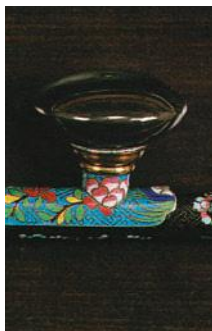
Inside a Grocer's Store in San Francisco

Apart from the usual medicaments, herbs, and everyday use products, this shop possibly also sold opium
Date unknown





The 1930s film *The Cocaine Fiends* was not a documentary, but was given some attention because movie-goers then were mostly interested in seeking entertainment that would help them, if only for a brief time, avoid the painful realities of the crash of Wall Street and the Great Depression.



It was a time when several classic 'escape' movies were successful, including *The Wizard of Oz*. In it, the main character, Dorothy, steps into



Large tray with three pipes

Dates unknown

Tray: Wood; Pipes: Cloisonné

Top pipe: 57.4 x 2.3 cm

Centre: 59.5 x 2.2 cm

Bottom: 58 x 3.2 cm





a colorful world where she takes an adventurous and at times nearly psychedelic journey through a poppy field with her friends along the Yellow Brick Road.



With World War II very much on the minds of all movie audiences during the 1940s, the first film about the Opium Wars was released, followed by another in 1943. Similarly, a Chinese documentary film was released in 1959,



Opium box

19th century

Partitioned enamel on copper
Height: 8 cm; Diameter: 7.5 cm





and was known to American audiences as *The Opium Wars*. As expected, the film presents a much-needed Chinese point of view concerning the cause of the Opium Wars.



With Vietnam and real wars dominating the world in the 1960s, documentaries about past wars brought realities home, and yet another documentary about the Opium Wars was released in 1964. A 1997 documentary was known in the US as *The Opium War*.



Tray

19th century

Partitioned enamel on copper
and nickel silver, 27 x 19.5 cm





The film's story begins in 1839 when British merchants are about to be executed by the Chinese for importing illegal opium into China. A year after the US film, *To the Ends of the Earth* (1948) was released, it was re-titled *Opium* for Austrian and West German audiences. Other films with that same title were released in 1919 (mentioned above) as well as a Russian film with the same name in 1991.

An Austrian film, *Luftfracht Opium* (1958), was a German version of *Tip on a Dead Jockey* (1957),

A Pleasant Pastime in an Upmarket Brothel (detail)

From an album of twelve plates
19th century

Lavish gold paint and coloured pigments
on black lacquer, 27 x 26 cm





also known as *Time for Action*. The German film, *Vier Pfeifen Opium*, was also distributed that year.



The Albert Zugsmith documentary, inspired by the popular 1821 autobiographical book of Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an Opium Eater* (1962), was known in England as *Evils of Chinatown*, and was reissued in the US under the unfortunate title, *Souls for Sale*.



Inner tray with a money design and pipe

Dates unknown

Tray: Cloisonné, 32 x 21 cm

Pipe: Ivory with cloisonné plaque, 55 x 2.3 cm





The opium documentary with the most alternative titles and translations is the 1966 film, *Poppies Are Also Flowers*. It was an adaptation of Ian Fleming's story about UN plots to inject radioactive material into opium in hopes that the plant would then lead them to an illegal heroin distributor.

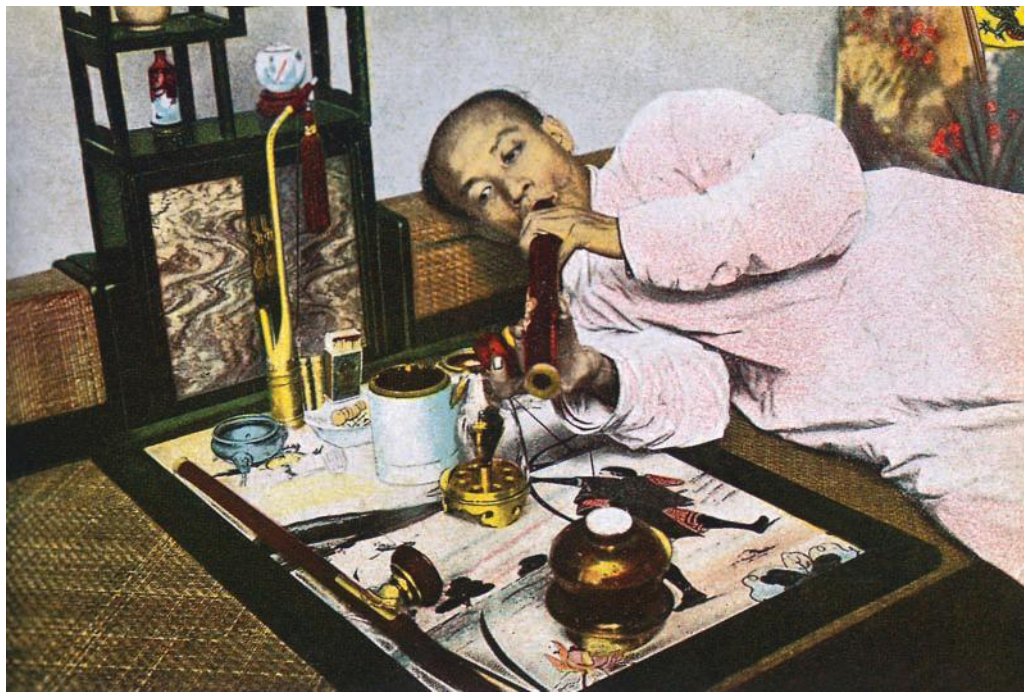


Its alternative title in England was *Danger Grows Wild*, and in Austria was *Mohn ist auch eine Blume*. Even within the US it had alternative titles, including *The Opium Connection* and



An Opium Smoker and
his Material - Two Opium and One Water Pipe

c. 1910





The Poppy Is Also a Flower. A 1972 film known in West Germany as *The Opium Connection* was called *Action héroïne* (1978) in France. In the video edition it is called *La Filière*. The dubbed Canadian version of the film is entitled, *The Sicilian Connection*, (1977) also known as *Opium Connection*.



And during the 1960s the film was known as *Deadly China Doll* or *The Opium Trail*. A 1969 South Korean documentary is popularly known as *Opium Flower*.



Rich Chinese Men Smoking Opium in a Private Room

From *The Living Races of Mankind*
by H.N. Hutchinson et al., c. 1900





Few noteworthy feature films about opium were made during the final quarter of the 20th century. One exception is *L'Opium et le bâton*, a 1971 film directed by Ahmed Rachedi in Algeria. Very few films deal with the topic in the 1980s. One is a Cantonese movie from 1984 known as *Lightning Fists of Shaolin*, or *Opium and the Kung Fu Master*.



More recently, a 2000 Swedish documentary addressed the subject of opium and movies



Assortment of four small trays

Dates unknown

Cloisonné, each about 11 x 11 cm





about the drug that have been made for television include the documentaries *Opium Eaters* (1990) and *L'Opium des Talibans* (2000).

The HBO series, *The Wire*, went through an evolution similar to that experienced by the genre itself, shifting its focus from drugs in the first season to trafficking of young prostitutes in the second season.

The theatre also often tries to deal with opiates, albeit often with less intimacy than does film.



Inner cloisonné trays

Dates unknown





The latter can zoom in on the horrors of an overdose as well as provide an overview of its global impact.



A brilliant exception to this is Eugene O'Neill's four-hour masterpiece, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, of which critic Clive Barnes once said "just might be the worst great play ever written". Through chilling dialogue, it presents the story



Cloisonné opium boxes

Dates unknown





a morphine matriarch and her impact on her family. It dramatises both the physical and psychological ravages of addiction.



"Drugs were just the beginning", was a timely tag line used by *Traffic: The Miniseries*. It suggests that illegal drugs have contributed greatly to how we each think, act and feel about ourselves and our world.



Cloisonné tray with sumptuous decoration

Date unknown

44.5 x 31.4 cm





Traffic Jam: Drugs Were Just the Beginning

As previously mentioned, the original routes from East to West were set up in order to trade furs, spices, and silk. The routes were later used to transport opium, hashish, and morphine. And now in this age of terrorism, the routes are used to transport dangerous weapons from the heart of Asia to nearly every part the Western World.



Inner cloisonné tray

Date unknown





As of this writing, Taliban loyalists and terrorists threaten stability of Afghanistan's shaky government.



Resurgent drug trade ultimately provides funds to terrorists, feeds political unrest, and promotes violence. Paul Barker of CARE reports that over seventy-five percent of the world's illegal drug production comes from Afghanistan.



Opium Den, 614 Jackson Street

Date unknown





Recently, opium production in Afghanistan has reached record high levels, certainly many times more than the needs of legitimate medical industries. NATO reports that there is a "palpable risk that Afghanistan will once again turn into a failed state", due in large part to the influence of illegal drug production.



"Drugs have been replaced by other things", according to director and producer Stephen Hopkins. He states, "drugs have now become



Inner cloisonné tray

Date unknown





the tender to pay for smuggling. The same routes have been used for thousands of years, for slave trading, illegal smuggling of all types.

“Obviously, drugs became huge in this last century. Now smuggling immigrants and refugees is a multi-million dollar business.”

This short overview of opium’s use in the 19th century shows the concern of the civilised world regarding illegal drugs and how territorial



Smokers in an opium den

From *The Evils of Opium Smoking*
19th century, China
Coloured engraving
British Library, London

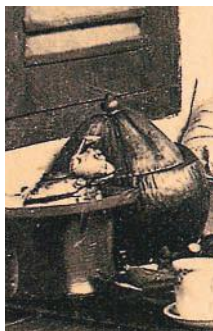




conflicts led to *regional* wars. The survey then shows how the focus morphed in the 20th century into concern about this same conflict expanding to *nations*. Now the world must face the challenge of dealing with drugs on a *global* scale to fight terrorism in the 21st century.



The awesome medicinal benefits of drugs derived from opium, and the beautiful artifacts seen on these pages associated with the use of opium,



Preparing an Opium Pipe, Saigon

L. Crespin, c.1926
Postcard



75. - Préparation d'une Pipe d'opium



must not hide a brutal reality. Some terrorism is typically funded by illegal trafficking of drugs, of biological and other weapons, of slaves for prostitution, and of illegal aliens. Again, drugs were just the beginning.



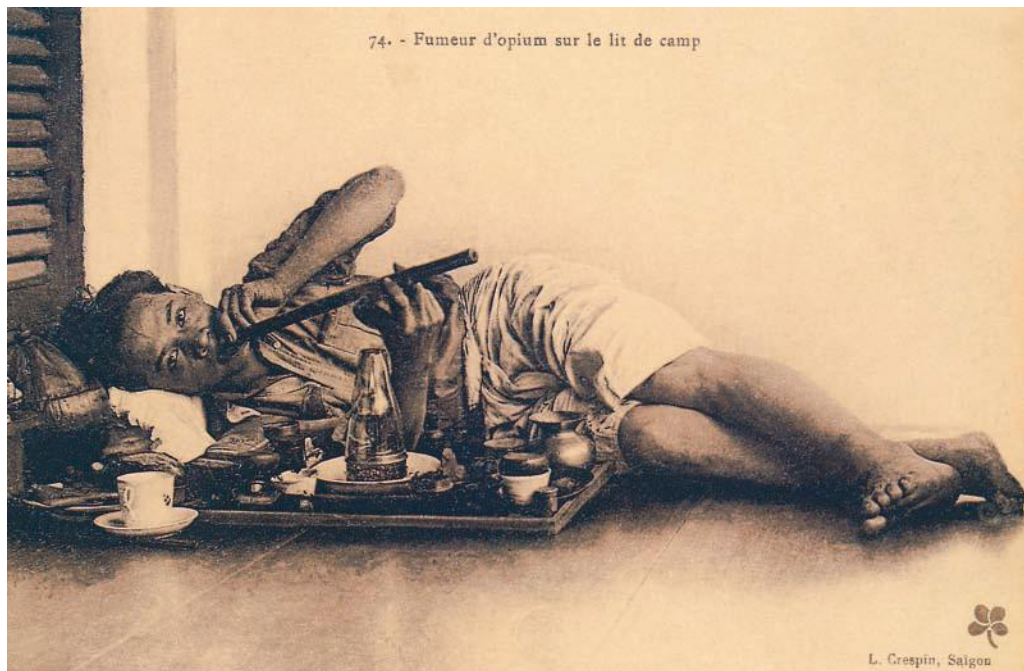
What Hopkins said of the television miniseries *Traffic* could be said also of this book: "Maybe it just opens up the boundaries of looking at things. There are no real answers to a lot of these [illegal traffic] problems, so we don't pretend to give them."



Opium Smoker Reclining, Saigon

L. Crespin, c. 1926
Postcard

74. - Fumeur d'opium sur le lit de camp



L. Crespin, Saigon



The purpose of this informal survey is to encourage thoughtful discussion and appropriate social action that flows from an appreciation for the mystique and important role that opium plays in human history and its art.



Like religion, opium and its derivatives can also be beneficial, beautiful, spiritual, and even channels of ecstasy. Or, again like religion, they can be depressing, destructive, seriously harmful,



Still from *The Man Who Came Back*

1930, U.S.A.

Directed by Glen Pitre

Adapted from Jules Eckert Goodman's play





or even fatal to individuals and to cultures, depending on how they are managed by their worshipping faithful.



In a free society, individual priorities about these very personal matters will vary, but the common good of society must be a factor. Many people can live their lives without either religion or drugs, but lives can be enhanced with their appropriate use.



Black Opium

Cover of the 1958 translation of *Fumée d'opium*
by Claude Farrère

BERKLEY



BOOKS

G-120

35^c

THE SHOCKING ECSTASY OF THE FORBIDDEN

BLACK OPIUM

*Claude
Farrère*



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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