

*Points: the Blog of the Alcohol and  
Drugs History Society*  
(founded January 2011)

Joe Spillane and Trysh Travis,  
Founders and Managing Editors



Alex Tepperman, Editorial Intern

# Points: The Blog of the Alcohol and Drugs History Society

short and insightful writing about a long and complex history



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## Starting Points

Posted on [January 20, 2011](#) by [ttravis](#)

**Points (n.)** 1. marks of punctuation. 2. something that has position but not extension, as the intersection of two lines. 3. salient features of a story, epigram, joke, etc.: *he hit the high points*. 4. (slang; U.S.) needles for intravenous drug use.

Posted in [Trysh Travis](#) | Tagged [Points Blog](#) | [Edit](#)

## Victorian Woman on Drugs, Part 3: Visual Representations

Posted on [April 18, 2012](#) by [atepperm](#)

Points is pleased to present the third installment of guest blogger [Kristina Aikens'](#) four-part series on women's drug use in Victorian England. Today, Kristina looks at – among other things – visual representations of women's drug use and the male gaze.

In [my last post](#), I looked at autobiographical writing by women that reveals some surprisingly humorous and positive attitudes toward drug experimentation. Last week's writings, however, were not nearly as pervasive as certain visual images—many of them used in



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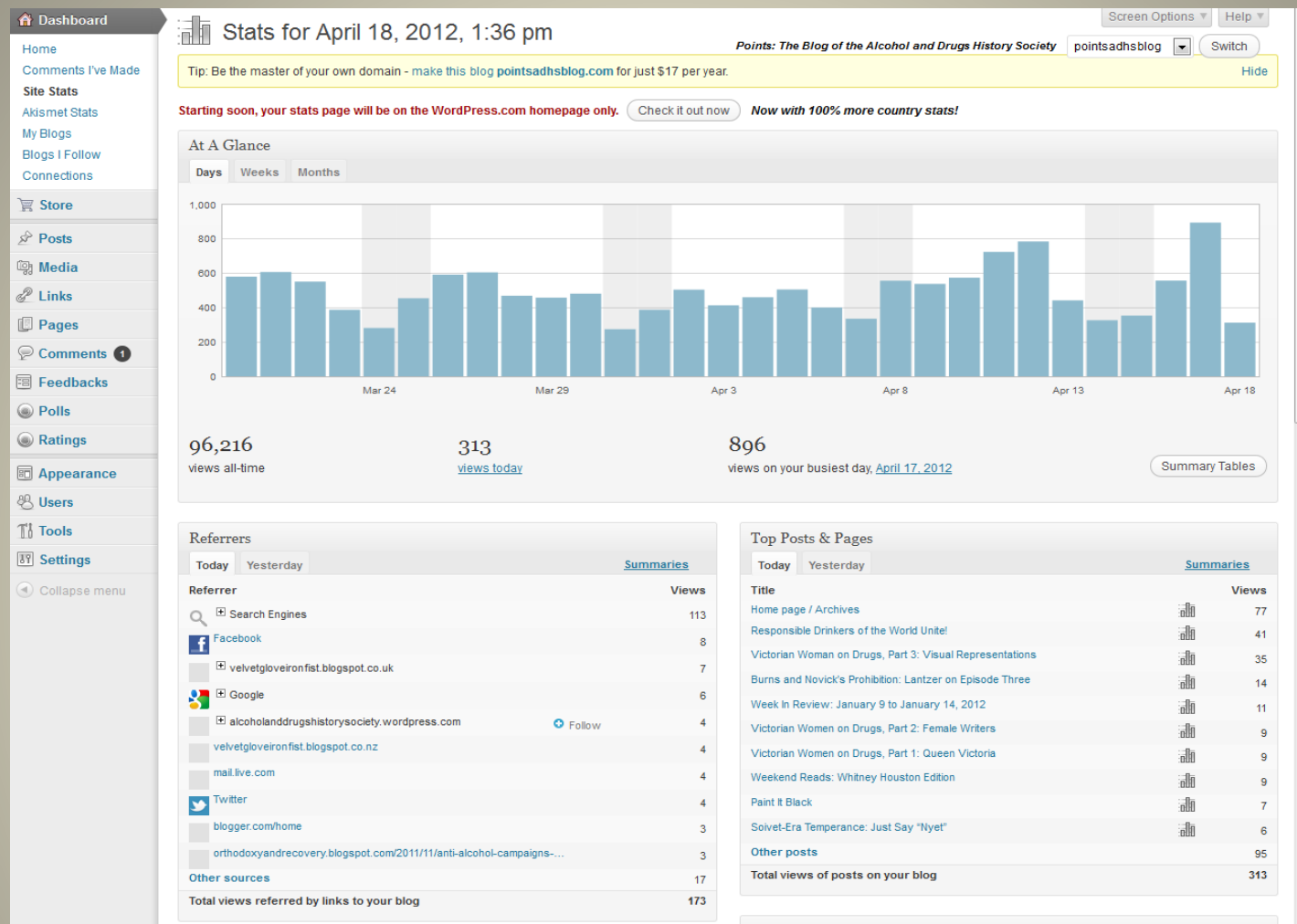
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Our Stats Page on a Random Day

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## Herding Khat

Posted on [February 1, 2012](#) by [travis](#)

On January 11<sup>th</sup> the BBC reported that the Netherlands government would ban the use of khat—the mild, leaf-based stimulant produced largely in East Africa. The ban came as something as a surprise, given the liberal Dutch approach to cannabis and the ubiquity of “Coffee Shops” selling joints in Amsterdam and other Dutch cities. Why this apparent inconsistency? The answer becomes clear in the comments of the immigration minister, Gerd Leers, who oddly enough, announced the ban. According to Leers’s comments on Dutch radio,

“I’m involved in the ban because it appears to cause serious problems, particularly in the Somali community.” He went on to claim that 10% of Somali men in the Netherlands were “badly affected” by khat consumption. According to the minister, “they are lethargic and refuse to co-operate with the government or take responsibility for themselves or their families.”

Khat (often called miraa in East Africa) is the only Africa-produced drug to develop any kind of international market. It is chewed on a large scale in Ethiopia, Somalia and elsewhere in East Africa, where truck drivers use it to remain alert. I first encountered it in the 1970s, when I was briefly stranded on the Kenya-Tanzania border and some friendly drivers tutored me in its use. I can’t say that it did much for me, except keep me awake enough to snag a ride to Nairobi. Although I didn’t get hooked, interest in khat has increased rapidly since then. As East Africans emigrated to Europe and North America, they carried the khat habit with them. Scholars soon followed that lead. The khat bible is



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Side Effects May Include Lethargy and Refusal to Cooperate

Feature Story by a Contributing Editor



Silver syringe case. American, early-20th century. Courtesy of www.phisick.com.

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## The Points Interview: Marni Davis

Posted on [February 9, 2012](#) by [jspillane](#)

Today's "Points Interview" features [Marni Davis](#), author of [Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition](#). Marni Davis is currently an Assistant Professor in the [Department of History at Georgia State University](#). *Jews and Booze*, the twentieth installment in the interview series, features a fantastic cover design (see below) and some really interesting reflections on alcohol, ethnic, and "American" identities.

**Describe your book in terms your mother (or the average mother-in-the-street) could understand.**

The subtitle – *Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* – does the heavy lifting. This book is about an immigrant group's process of adapting to life in the United States, and it focuses on a time when alcohol became one of the main sources of conflict between Jewish immigrant communities and native-born, white Protestant Americans. *Jews and Booze* asks: what happens when the cultural attachments and economic practices immigrants bring with them to their new home are seen as incompatible with American conventions? An examination of Jews' involvement in the production and sale of alcohol, and their outspoken defense of its legal availability, during the years of the prohibition movement's rise and fall provides an opportunity to watch acculturation, and the redefining of Jewish identity and tradition, in action. It was a messy, lurching process – especially at this time when American culture was itself undergoing such dramatic transformation.



NYU Press, 2012

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## Recurring Feature: The *Points* Interview



particularly noteworthy. “A Female Junkie Speaks,” which appeared in the collection [Notes from the Second Year](#), a volume that might well be subtitled “greatest hits of women’s liberation,” is also difficult to obtain. Edited by [Shulamith Firestone](#), *Notes* collects various writings by the group New York Radical Women; it appeared in limited numbers in early 1970 and has never been reprinted. Key essays within it form the canon of the movement and are widely anthologized— Pat Mainardi’s “[The Politics of Housework](#),” Anne Koedt’s “[The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm](#),” Carol Hanisch’s “[The Personal is Political](#),” and Kathie Sarachild’s “A Program for Feminist ‘Consciousness-Raising,’” (a later version is [available here](#)) to name just a few.



Consciousness Raising Session, 1969  
(Photo: Mary Ellen Mark)

“A Female Junkie Speaks,” however, is not a canonical text, despite its subject’s facility with key concepts in women’s liberation. In this short “interview” with feminist poet and NYRW member Lucille Iverson, she articulates white middle-class culture’s propensity for the symbolic annihilation of women, theorizes the normative female subject position as a form of prostitution, and endorses women’s consciousness-raising and female community as key antidotes to oppression— and addiction. But late in the piece, “Susan” notes her consciousness-raising group’s negative response to her admission that she is a drug addict; the text is frustratingly silent on what prompts the members’ “resent[ment].” It concludes with a hopeful call to radical feminists to actively engage with “female junkies.” Exactly why that call was not heeded will, I hope, be the subject of future posts.

#### A Female Junkie Speaks Interview by Lucille Iverson

Susan, the girl speaking here, has been a drug-user and junkie off and on for almost ten years; she has recently joined Women’s Liberation.

*No one can be liberated alone....*

To come home and be all alone, man, I can’t stand that.

I was turned on by an article in the *Village Voice* by Vivian Gornick, and a few days after that I ran into a friend who told me about a consciousness-raising group forming.

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## Recurring Feature: Found Documents

Silver syringe case, American, early-20th century. Courtesy of www.phisick.com.

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## Weekend Reads: Trayvon Martin Edition

Posted on April 1, 2012 by [atepperm](#)

Geraldo Rivera made [a truly catastrophic appearance](#) on *Fox & Friends* last week, when the man famous for [finding bupkis in Al Capone's vault](#) felt the need to weigh in on the most tempestuous news story of the moment. When asked about [the shooting death of Trayvon Martin](#), Rivera launched into a tirade denouncing the malevolent force that caused Martin's death. He wasn't referring to the actual shooter, George Zimmerman, who gunned down the unarmed black youth, but instead blamed hooded sweatshirts for Martin's passing.



Rivera made the rather case that Trayvon was a “gangsta wannabe,” pointing out that “everyone that ever stuck up a convenience store” was wearing a hoodie. Even though Rivera subsequently apologized ([if you want to call it that](#)) for his call for young black men to accede to racial profiling, his stupefying comments became a key talking point for conservative pundits, Zimmerman's staunchest defenders. You don't wear a hoodie, the reasoning goes, unless you *want* to be considered a “gangsta.” Certainly there aren't any troubling implications to [that line of reasoning](#).

It seems that the central rationale of the now-infamous hoodie argument is the idea that, if the public understands Martin as [having “asked for it,”](#) rather than having been the victim of an attack from a prejudiced quasi-vigilante, the affair will not raise any troubling questions about gun ownership, concealed firearms, and the sort of “self-protection” so cherished by gun enthusiasts. Those who are primarily motivated by a desire for unhindered gun ownership must, in particular, find a way to show that the events of February 26 do not throw into question Florida's [“stand-your-ground” law](#), which

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