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When Seeing is Believing: Women, Alcohol and Photography in Victorian Britain

When photography was invented in the early nineteenth century, William Henry Fox Talbot called it “the pencil of nature.” His statement suggested that, unlike artworks produced from the human imagination, photographs were objective, and therefore truthful, representations of the world.¹ Photographs were taken of female alcoholics in Victorian Britain under the auspices of both law and medicine. These photographs were viewed as not only neutral representations, but also as material objects that “spoke” truths about their subjects. In this article I examine visual and textual representations of female alcoholics in order to problematize some of the beliefs held about women who drank alcoholically in nineteenth-century Britain.² I borrow methodological strategies from the field of postcolonialism, and I offer alternative ways of thinking about female alcoholics, identifying them as subjects of discourse as well as objects of representation. My argument is that, like non-western persons in the nineteenth century, female alcoholics were de-individualized and discursively constructed as a “type” that was easily categorized as “other” to healthy, white, hard-working British citizens.

CONSTRUCTING BELIEFS: VILIFYING THE FEMALE ALCOHOLIC

Norman Kerr wrote in 1888 that “it was no uncommon thing at the present

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- 1 Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 31. William Henry Fox Talbot is considered the father of “modern photography” because he was the first to discover the process of producing a negative, which allowed multiple positive prints to be made.
 - 2 It is important to note that men and women who drank to excess at the risk of their health and economic security during the nineteenth century would not have been identified as alcoholic, but rather as “intemperate” or “drunkards.”

day, in London and other large cities, for young girls and grown-up women to treat each other in a public-house to beer, wine, or spirits....Scarcely a Sunday passed that [I] did not, while pursuing [my] professional avocation in London, see a number of women drunk in the streets.”³ The girls and women Kerr refers to were probably members of the working class, not because middle- and upper-class women did not drink, but because they diligently hid their drinking in private spaces. During the Victorian period, female alcoholics were regarded as “the most degraded of women...morally, socially, and physiologically,”⁴ and those who could do so concealed their drinking as much as possible. Public drinking among women of the upper and respectable middle classes became unacceptable in the nineteenth century because masculine spaces such as the saloon, tavern and public house were regarded as the “anti-home,” thus making them irreconcilable with the good wife and mother.⁵ Therefore, middle- and upper-class women who drank alcoholically withdrew from public spaces, and concealed their drinking, ironically, in the home. In the privacy of their own houses they became “perfume drunkards,”⁶ or they consumed the liquors kept in the home for medicinal purposes. Lower-class women often did not have this luxury, and because of the visibility of their bodies in public space the common belief was that only lower-class women drank to excess.

Nineteenth-century British society had very little sympathy for the female alcoholic, even less so than for the male alcoholic, because women were believed to have maternal instincts and sensibilities that would, and should, deter them

3 Norman S. Kerr, *Female Intemperance* (London: National Temperance Publishers, 1888), 7.

4 Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart’: The Drinking Woman in Victorian and Edwardian Canada,” in *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*, ed. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 71.

5 Cheryl Krasnick-Warsh, “John Barleycorn Must Die’: An Introduction to the Social History of Alcohol,” in *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*, ed. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 6.

6 This phenomenon is described in Krasnick-Warsh, “Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart,” 77.

from indulging in liquor. The idea that female drunkards got what they deserved is apparent in Frances Power Cobbe's 1878 essay "Wife Torture in England." In her discussion of what she satirically calls the "ideal Wife-beater," Cobbe notes that she has never actually come across such a figure in the courts or in newspaper reports. The mythical "ideal Wife-beater," she writes, is imagined to be "the sober, industrious man goaded to frenzy by his wife's temper or drunkenness."⁷ According to Cobbe's text, then, popular opinion on domestic abuse in nineteenth-century Britain excused a man for beating his wife if she committed the sin of excessive alcohol consumption. Although Cobbe contests the existence of the "ideal Wife-beater," she does call attention to that "universally condemned creature, the drunken wife."⁸ She asks, "How many have sunk into the habit because...degraded in soul by contempt and abuse, they have not left in them one spark of that self-respect which enables a human being to resist the temptation to drown care and remembrance in the dread forgetfulness of strong drink?"⁹ Although Cobbe is sympathetic towards female alcoholics, in this passage she perpetuates the belief that resisting the temptation to drink is simply a matter of willpower and self-respect.

Cheryl Krasnick Warsh has argued that the assumed "decline of moral character was the first and most serious casualty of alcoholism."¹⁰ Thus, as noted previously, upper-class women desperately hid their drinking in the home. However, lower-class women, "with few amusements and bad nourishment and living conditions,"¹¹ had less opportunity (or motivation) to hide their drinking, and would therefore visit taverns or drink publicly in other spaces. As a result, female drunkenness and poverty were increasingly linked in medical and social discourses, and the belief that alcoholism was a lower-class vice was often disseminated by

7 Frances Power Cobbe, "'Wife Torture in England,'" in *"Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors": Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, ed. Susan Hamilton (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press Ltd., 1995), 145.

8 Cobbe, "'Wife Torture in England,'" 144.

9 Cobbe, "'Wife Torture in England,'" 144-145.

10 Krasnick Warsh, "Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart," 80.

11 Krasnick Warsh, "Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart," 75.

proponents of temperance.

The British temperance movement was instigated in 1828. Initially the agenda was to promote voluntary abstinence from alcohol consumption with the hopes of quelling some of the social miseries thought to be the direct result of excessive drinking.¹² The movement had strong female membership, and many women of the middle classes voiced their willingness to help lower-class female drinkers, although these offers of assistance were often characterized by the middle-class women's sense of moral superiority.

Many articles describing temperance meetings, as well as the specific dangers of intemperance for women, were published in the nineteenth-century periodical *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions*. In an article from 1881 about inebriates' homes, Isabella Tod wrote, "Drink comes first in time, and often first also in importance, among the causes which lead women into crime, and having led them, keep them there."¹³ Had the photograph of Margaret Wilson – a 23-year old widow frequently arrested for drunkenness – been widely circulated, it would have encouraged the belief that women, alcohol and crime were inextricably related (fig. 1).¹⁴ This image, which would not have been exhibited or viewed as art in the nineteenth century, shows a downtrodden woman in a white dress with long sleeves and a high collar that covers almost her whole neck. Her large eyes do not meet the viewer's, but gaze downward to her left. Wilson wears a prison number on her right shoulder – inscribing her body as a convict body – and she clutches her hands protectively over her stomach. Her dark hair is parted severely in the middle, and while she is not shown within her cell, the tightly framed photograph invokes an uncomfortable sense of imprisonment. The full-frontal pose was typical of both mug shots and ethnographic photography in the nineteenth century (see fig. 2). Usually accompanied by a profile shot, full-frontal photographs of this sort were used to

12 Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872* (England: Faber and Faber Limited, 1971), 337.

13 Isabella Tod, "Inebriates' Homes," *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions*, 15 Jan. 1881, 247.

14 The photograph is reproduced in Harrison's *Drink and the Victorians*.

identify “types,” as well as physical signs of criminal tendencies or racial difference.

Wilson had been arrested for drunkenness seven times when this photograph was taken sometime around 1866. The image, according to nineteenth-century ideals of femininity,¹⁵ represents a wasted woman. The belly she covers with her hands does not hold a healthy baby to further populate the British nation; her occupation is described in the *Register of Prisoners in Bedford County Gaol* as calico weaver, but she is incarcerated, so she cannot contribute to the British marketplace. Although her expression might evoke sympathy in the viewer, the photograph itself was not meant to evoke empathy. The *Register of the Bedford County Gaol* contained photographs of criminals who were considered irretrievably other to the temperate Victorian viewer looking at them. The photographs themselves were produced in order to visually catalogue inmates, but they also functioned as material objects that spoke about the subjects represented. The photograph of Margaret Wilson spoke of her criminality, her addiction and her outcast status. It also ostensibly functioned as empirical evidence that women who drank alcohol would eventually become criminals.

In nineteenth-century Britain men’s alcoholism signified very differently from women’s alcoholism, and the result was material differences in how men and women were viewed, treated and punished for their intemperance. Whereas male alcoholics were regarded as nuisances at best and potential criminals at worst, female alcoholics held a special place in the popular imagination as a particularly villainous type of fallen woman; not only a threat to her own body and her children’s bodies, but also to the social body of the British nation. In an article on inebriates’ homes, Isabella Tod elucidates the gulf between social consequences for female drinkers and male drinkers:

Nor must we forget how much harder it is for a woman to escape from such a pit of despair than for a man [...] I must remind you of the bitter fact that the world is unspeakably harder to a woman who falls than to a man, and that doors of escape which stand open to him are

15 For a discussion of Victorian ideals of femininity and how they were represented in visual culture, see Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

closed to her [...] [If] a woman is seen drunk *once*...a dozen voices carry the tale; her husband is told, and there is a row – perhaps a beating; or her employer is told, and threatens instantly to turn her off, perhaps dismisses her on the spot, without even a threat.¹⁶

Class prejudice played a major role in the perception of female alcoholics in nineteenth-century Britain. Lady Frederick Cavendish read a paper at a temperance meeting in 1886 that voiced her regret that the “upper classes did not associate themselves as they might with the efforts to reclaim drunken women.”¹⁷ Here, as in many other nineteenth-century texts, “drunken women” would have been automatically read as “lower- or working-class drunken women.” However, textual evidence allows me to destabilize the belief that intemperate women were always members of the lower classes in Victorian Britain. Writing in 1886, one anonymous observer remarked that, although several homes for inebriate women of the poorer classes had been established in Britain by that time, many of the homes were “to a great extent filled up with the richer classes.”¹⁸

Krasnick Warsh highlights the class imbalance entrenched by discursive representations of female alcoholics when she observes that “The material bases for alcoholism among women were also accompanied by what female drinking represented in symbolic terms. Intemperance was a problem of all classes. Yet it was associated with filth, disease, immorality, and ignorance – all stereotypical of the ‘dangerous’ lower classes.”¹⁹ These stereotypes were further solidified in the popular imagination by social philanthropists in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain who engaged in “slumming.” The term “slumming” refers to the act of upper-class men and women exploring “Outcast London.”²⁰ While these individuals sometimes had

16 Isabella Tod, “Inebriates’ Homes,” 248.

17 Quoted in Anonymous, “The Church of England Temperance Society,” *Englishwoman’s Review of Social and Industrial Questions*, 14 Aug. 1886, 374.

18 Anonymous, “The Church of England Temperance Society,” 374.

19 Krasnick Warsh, “Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart,” 81.

20 See Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, N.J. and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

gallant intentions, there were also those who were simply voyeurs.

One example of the former category was Olive Christian Malvery, an upper-class woman who disguised herself as a coster – a type of hard-working street vendor – and recorded her experiences. Her article “Gilding the Gutter,” first published in 1905, provides an important record of not only how working-class women drank, but also how this drinking was viewed and conceived of by privileged women such as Malvery. She describes what she calls a “sad, but typical, experience,” recounting how her new working-class friend Liz suggested a “gargle,” following which they made their way to the common bar of a public-house. Malvery writes:

It was midday. The bar was full of women, some quite young, others grey-haired, but the majority middle-aged. All were drinking and talking loudly. The two or three men present were of the usual public-house loafer type. I found afterwards that this Monday drinking is quite a custom with women of the lower working class. In some parts of London more drunken women can be seen on a Monday afternoon than at any other time during the week. A visit to the police-courts on a Tuesday morning will illustrate to what a shocking extent this Monday tipping has developed.²¹

In her account, Malvery, an educated, sympathetic woman, positions herself as a detached observer, much like how the camera was thought of in the nineteenth century. By referring to the “usual public-house loafer type,” Malvery contributes to the accepted belief that people who drink alcohol at midday must be lazy. She also refers to the police-courts, thus linking alcohol and crime, although she did not witness any criminal behavior herself. Malvery describes the scene as “sad” and “typical,” yet the women she is observing are not described as appearing sad in expression or action. Her use of the word “sad,” then, must be a moral judgment, a not uncommon response to female drinking in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

As Krasnick Warsh has pointed out, advocates of temperance placed much

21 Olive Christian Malvery, “Gilding the Gutter,” in *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920*, ed. Ellen Ross (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), 145.

emphasis on the maternal role. In 1891, Annie Parker, an executive member of the Dominion Woman's Christian Temperance Union, stated that the home was "a matriarchy ordered by God [...] wherein maternal drinking thus became a profanity that inflicted physical, moral, and genetic hardship upon the innocents."²² This moral framing of maternal drinking has been absorbed into some Victorianist scholarship, such as Ellen Ross's *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (1993). For instance, Ross writes that "Mothers' heavy drinking and their concomitant neglect and mismanagement of their infants figure in many Old Bailey cases, for their dereliction had dire consequences for their families."²³ Likewise, Alice Neal is identified as both a "bad mother" and a "bad wife" because of her drinking, which caused the death of one of her children.²⁴ Although it would be difficult to argue that Neal was a "good" mother, Ross's judgment recalls Victorians' unforgiving stance on women's alcoholism: she does not take into account how powerful Neal's addiction must have been for her to contribute in some way to her own child's death.

Infanticide was just one of the crimes connected with women's drinking in the nineteenth century. According to Ross, women consistently made up around a fifth to a quarter of those arrested on drunk and disorderly charges, and under the Habitual Inebriates Act of 1898 women could be confined in detoxification homes for as long as three years if they were charged with drunkenness at least four times during one year.²⁵ Unfortunately for women like Margaret Wilson, confinement was not necessarily enough to recover from alcoholism, as her repeated arrests for drunkenness attest.

22 Quoted in Krasnick Warsh, "Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart," 82.

23 Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 71.

24 Ross, *Love and Toil*, 71.

25 Ross, *Love and Toil*, 71.

PSYCHIATRIC PHOTOGRAPHY: PATHOLOGIZING THE FEMALE ALCOHOLIC

Charles Dana remarked in 1909 that “Taking it altogether, some observers have asserted that alcohol is directly or indirectly the means of inducing nearly one-half the cases of insanity.”²⁶ In nineteenth-century Britain, alcoholism, and particularly women’s alcoholism, was often conceived of and treated as madness. As Elaine Showalter observes in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (1985), “moral insanity” was a phrase coined in the nineteenth century that redefined madness, “not as a loss of reason, but as a deviance from socially accepted behavior.” Because “this definition could be stretched to take in almost any kind of behavior regarded as abnormal or disruptive by community standards,”²⁷ intemperance could be, and was, identified as moral insanity. Whatever the symptoms or the causes of moral insanity, many Victorian doctors believed that individuals could conquer their mental illness with willpower.²⁸ Furthermore, patients were expected to avoid excess, which, for an alcoholic, is not only a cause of her suffering (excessive consumption of alcohol leads directly to drunkenness and physical and mental agony), but also a symptom (the excessive consumption of alcohol is an index of an alcoholic’s addiction).

In *The Female Malady* Showalter reproduces a photograph of a woman wearing a dress with long sleeves and a high collar (although not as high as Margaret Wilson’s) as well as a cross. Showalter identifies the woman as an alcoholic.²⁹ However, the same photograph, which was taken by Hugh Welch Diamond, the inventor of psychiatric photography, is identified in a text edited by Sander L.

26 Charles L. Dana, “Alcoholism as a Cause of Insanity,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Race Improvement in the United States (Jul., 1909), 81.

27 Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 29.

28 Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 30.

29 The Diamond Collection is held at the Royal Society of Medicine in London, England. See http://www.rsm.ac.uk/librar/diam_coll.php. The images discussed in this article are not currently available online, but are expected to be available by the end of 2008. For an example of Diamond’s psychiatric photography, see *Seated Woman with Bird*, which is in the collection of the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (<http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=51855>).

Gilman as representing a woman who exhibits “religious melancholy” and not alcoholism. Gilman’s text, *The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origins of Psychiatric Photography*, reproduces many of Diamond’s photographs, as well as Diamond’s lecture from 22 May 1856 when he presented his photographs to the Royal Society of Medicine in London.³⁰ The subject of one of the photographs is a woman in her twenties or thirties with curly blonde hair, a plump face and eyes that peer distrustfully at the camera. I believe that the woman in this photograph was an alcoholic, as she also appears, along with another woman, in an engraving with the words “Insanity Supervening on Habits of Intemperance” inscribed along the bottom.³¹

John Connolly, a professor of medicine at the University of London, discussed the photograph of the blonde woman, among others taken by Diamond, in his lectures on insanity in 1858.³² He described the two women represented in the engraving as having “fallen into habits of intemperance, on which derangement of the mental powers has ensued to a great or less extent.”³³ Mary Warner Marien has remarked that “For Diamond, the photograph was a transparent medium that allowed the therapist and the patient to interpret the language of nature,”³⁴ and Connolly shared this belief in photography’s potential to communicate objective

30 In this lecture Diamond proposed that psychiatric photography had three functions: first, to be used in order to study mental patients’ appearances in relation to theories of physiognomy; second, as a means of identification for readmission; and third, as an accurate portrait that the patient could recognize as him or herself. Diamond believed that this would be fundamental to the treatment of mental illness.

31 I have no explanation for why Showalter identifies the religious melancholic as an alcoholic in her book, although it could simply be an editorial error, as she also reproduces the photograph of the woman with blonde curly hair, identifying her in a caption as a religious melancholic. The engraving is reproduced in Gilman’s *The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origins of Psychiatric Photography*.

32 Connolly used lithographs taken from the original photographs.

33 John Connolly, “Plates 16 & 17,” in *The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origins of Psychiatric Photography*, ed. Sander L. Gilman (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1976), 67. Originally published in *The Medical Times and Gazette* (1858).

34 Warner Marien, *Photography*, 37.

truths about patients. The engraving absorbed the aura of objective truth because it was copied directly from Diamond's photograph. There are important differences, however. A woman with disheveled, shoulder-length dark hair has been added,³⁵ and the blonde woman's hands, which in the photograph are pressed against her chest as though she does not know what to do with them, have been transformed into a very deliberate gesture of prayer. This difference is significant, as Connolly described in his lecture how he imagined the woman having kind words said to her in the Surrey Asylum where she was a resident, and "religious thoughts...gradually introduced" as part of her treatment.³⁶ Religion was sometimes identified as a cure-all for women's alcoholism in Victorian Britain.

In Connolly's hands the engraving essentially functioned as a class-based visual (and moral) analysis of alcoholism. The unknown artist juxtaposed the two women so that the viewer can compare their physical appearances, and Connolly described the subjects in terms of their different social ranks:

The two portraits represent different patients, of different character and of different history. The poor creature on the right having been nurtured in low life, almost brought up in early acquired habits of drinking, left to do their sure and uninterrupted work on body and mind until both have acquired the impress of a misfortune unavoidable, and slowly ripened into vice, and bringing the whole creature into a sort of chronic and indelible appearance of sottishness. In the left-hand portrait is represented another patient, of a respectable station in life, but also ruined by drink; but by drink so gradually indulged in, however, that her altered state bewilders her, and fills her, fallen as she is, with distressful remorse.³⁷

This passage is significant because it contradicts assumptions about class and alcohol consumption voiced in periodicals such as the *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions* by identifying the woman on the left as having been "of

35 There is also a photograph of this woman in Gilman's text [Plate 29].

36 John Connolly, "Plates 16 & 17," 71.

37 Connolly, "Plates 16 & 17," 67.

a respectable station in life.” However, Connolly’s interpretation of the women’s intemperance is colored by their respective classes. For instance, the woman “nurtured in low life” is linked with the term “vice,” suggesting deliberate immoral action, while the more respectable woman is “ruined by drink,” making her the passive party in her own self-destruction. Moreover, she is “bewildered” and filled with “distressful remorse,” the only socially acceptable response for a respectable woman in this particular situation.

Both Diamond and Connolly used the photographs to study physiognomies, which ostensibly told them about the subjects’ “internal derangement.”³⁸ Physiognomy, the study of human character using facial features as visual evidence, was widely practiced in the nineteenth century but has since been dismissed as a pseudo-science. It was used not only on mental patients, but also on non-western subjects, and the parallels between how female alcoholics and non-white peoples were “studied” are not insignificant.³⁹ Furthermore, lower-class drinkers were often racialized in nineteenth-century Britain, and we will recall Krasnick Warsh’s observation that female alcoholics were linked with filth, which would have evoked images of dark skin. As Anne McClintock has pointed out, nineteenth-century ideas about filth and dirt were inextricably linked with discursive representations of poor and racialized “others” who were all grouped together under the title of the “great unwashed.”⁴⁰ The strategies of those responsible for pathologizing women’s alcoholism in the nineteenth century intersected with, and drew from, discourses on class, gender and racial difference. These discourses all contributed in some way to the construction of beliefs about women who drank alcohol in nineteenth-century Britain.

38 Warner Marien, *Photography*, 37.

39 Another similarity is the way that both women in the engraving are not identified by their names. This might have been done for purposes of anonymity, but it recalls the way that non-western persons were usually not named in nineteenth-century ethnographic photographs. J.T. Zealy’s photograph (fig. 2) is known by the woman’s slave name, Delia, not her birth name.

40 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 207.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have attempted to illuminate some constructed beliefs about women alcoholics in order to destabilize them. An alternative approach to discussing female alcoholics would be to recuperate a first-person account of alcohol dependence, but the voices of actual women who drank alcoholically in nineteenth-century Britain appear to have been largely lost. I will conclude with a late eighteenth-century anecdote that describes a woman's alcoholic drinking, but I wish to highlight the fact that like any other representation, this one cannot necessarily be read as objective truth. Indeed, it is a second-hand account of one woman's experience, thus it is already once removed from the female drinker herself. Written in 1797 by Hannah More, and entitled "The Cottage Cook; or, Mrs Jones's Cheap Dishes," the short narrative about the economics of country life begins unremarkably by recording Mrs. Jones's money troubles. A few pages in, however, we find Patty Smart's account of her problem with alcohol. She is quoted as saying that the slop – a concoction of liquid wastes or watery soup – she made at home began to cause her stomach pain, and "at last (I am ashamed to own it) I began to take a drop of gin to quiet the pain, and in time I looked for my gin as regularly as for my tea. At last the gin, the ale-house, and the tea began to make [both my husband and I] sick and poor."⁴¹ While it goes without saying that biographical writing is always a representation, Patty Smart's story is valuable, because it documents her experience of alcohol dependence. Moreover, it provides not only the reason she began drinking in the first place, but also the way in which her drinking progressed rapidly to the point at which she knew she needed to stop.

The language associated with alcohol consumption and alcoholism cannot be disregarded in a study of visual and material culture. The word "wasted" is now a colloquial term for intoxicated, but it also holds significance for how the female

⁴¹ Hannah More, "The Cottage Cook; or, Mrs. Jones's Cheap Dishes," in *Women's Writing, 1778-1838*, ed. Fiona Robertson (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 546.

alcoholic's body was, and is, conceptualized and represented. In the nineteenth century, excessive alcohol consumption was thought of as a waste of money, a waste of potential labour, and a waste of the maternal gifts that a woman "naturally" possessed. The body of the female alcoholic was, then, by definition, wasted. Through a critical study of visual and textual representations, it is possible to begin to understand how this belief was accepted and circulated in Victorian Britain. Just as postcolonial scholars have done important work in problematizing western representations of colonized subjects, so too can scholars of addiction critically examine visual and textual representations of alcoholic women that have been categorized as objective, neutral and disinterested.

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