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## Cultural Representations

*Beat Kümin*

Just as early modern Europe was awash with drink and taverns, alcohol consumption pervaded the discourses and imaginations of its people. In many ways, “expansion” was the catchword of the age:<sup>1</sup> rising population figures (especially in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries); technological advances (with print and distilling as prominent examples); globalization of trade in many commodities (including wine and spirits); an increasing number and spectrum of drinking houses (mirroring the formation of a consumer society from the 1600s) and a concurrent amplification in the range and intensity of drinks-related discourses..

Understanding drinking “culture” – with Peter Burke – as encompassing all related norms, values, and representations,<sup>2</sup> we are opening a broad field of investigation. Whether we think of families, neighbours, contract partners, lovers or complete strangers, sharing a measure of beer, wine or spirits underpinned social exchange, forged bonds, and allowed participants to send out important signals. The latter have reached us in records of different media: oral, written, visual, musical, and material communication. Each of these, in turn, encompasses countless varieties: “texts”, for example, consist not only of deliberate “tradition” (in the form of chronicles, diaries or literary reflection), but also of incidental “survival” (through ephemeral records such as fines or receipts). Aspiring to an even remotely inclusive survey of our topic would be futile: Dutch still lives of richly-laid tables, French treatises on viticulture, Puritan rants against alehouses, fragments of Russian excise accounts, sketches of Jewish taverns in Poland, imports of colonial beverages, Bacchanalian motives in Renaissance Italy, collections of aquavit spoons from Scandinavia, German sermons against gluttony; the prohibition of alcohol in the Ottoman Empire ... an infinite wealth of aspects would merit discussion here, each worthy of an essay in its own right. Furthermore, as even such a random sample underlines, no one message or meaning can be identified; rather we get a cacophony of eulogies, warnings, incidental references, and outright condemnations.

Mindful of these parameters, the essay's main aim is to offer an overview of the diversity of cultural "representations", understood both as portrayals of drink(ing) for the communication of specific or symbolic messages and as ways in which consumption practice reflected the society in which it occurred. Its argument is structured in four parts: first, a sketch of the kind of signals contemporaries might have encountered in the period itself (for representations resonated with contemporary as well as later audiences); second, samples drawn from different media; third, a closer look at some principal themes for cultural historians; and finally, preliminary conclusions on what, if anything, we might consider particularly "early modern" about the evidence reviewed here. The geographical focus lies on Central Europe, with spotlights onto other regions of the globe.

## **1. The early modern experience**

At the mention of "cultural representations", thoughts naturally turn to the celebrated plays, paintings and compositions associated with artists like Shakespeare, Rembrandt or Vivaldi, i.e. protagonists of dynamic movements like the Renaissance and Baroque. With equal regularity, scholars zoom in on the most dramatic manifestations, relating to "altered states", loss of bodily control, sexual transgression, physical / verbal violence, and moral panics.<sup>3</sup> For present purposes, however, let us start with more ordinary examples. At the most basic level, thirst is a recurrent physiological phenomenon, which can be quenched with water, milk or juices – unspectacular, "natural" options unlikely to generate profound reflection in pre-modern times. Alongside, however, Europeans had developed a liking for fermented beverages, including regionally diverging preferences for ale, beer, wine, mead or cider. Since these involved specific production techniques, commercial transactions, and intoxicating effects, we are entering the realm of "culture" and its manifold "representations". Much consumption occurred purely for sustenance, be it in domestic settings (especially wealthier households having the resources to generate or purchase their own supplies), workplaces (with many labourers receiving part of their payment in kind), and in institutions such as monasteries or hospitals; sometimes it also reflected health concerns (where, e.g. due to pollution caused by certain trades, the quality of the local water supply appeared unsafe), but the lion's share of our evidence derives from "public" drinking on convivial occasions, a universal practice involving the lower orders, middling groups, and elites alike. Even here, although such matters are notoriously difficult to quantify, there is good reason to believe that

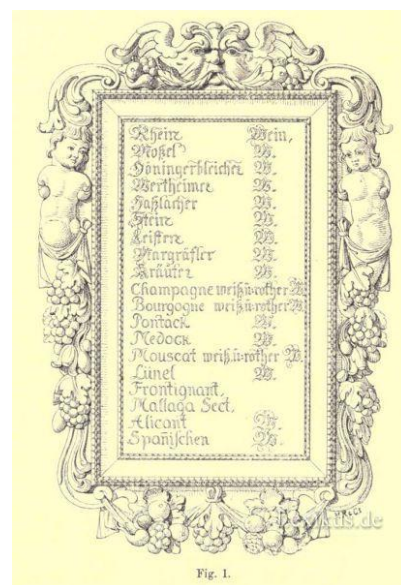
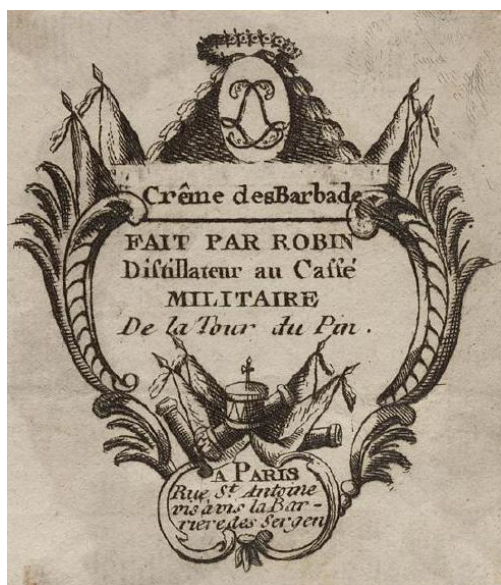
most people did *not* imbibe to get drunk, failed to engage in any kind of antisocial behaviour and simply appreciated drink as a key “social lubricant” and sign of “good fellowship”.<sup>4</sup> As always, therefore, empirical biases have to be borne in mind: the apparent deluge of pictures, tracts, and court records on “noteworthy” aspects is probably just the colourful tip of a rather more ordinary iceberg.

For some glimpses under the surface, let us pretend to be visitors to an early modern town. Drinking representations would have been ubiquitous. For a start, they helped travellers to move from one place to another, for both road maps and early guidebooks highlighted roadside taverns as staging posts and landscape markers, also recommending inns for meals, stables, and accommodation.<sup>5</sup> Having reached an intermediary or final destination, new arrivals would look out for hostelryes not just as providers of sustenance and services, but also as components of “mental maps” helping them “to understand and describe their physical environment. In places without street names and house numbers, signboards were crucial landmarks by which the early modern town or city could be navigated” (Figures 1-2).<sup>6</sup>



Figures 1-2: The board advertising the inn at Kandersteg in the Bernese Alps, dated 1789 (on the left), features an officer on horseback, suggesting superior quality and elite patronage, and the caption “One stops at the rider” (the name *Rytter*, probably deriving from an eponymous seventeenth-century publican, also translating as “knight”); while the inscription on the slightly earlier sign of the *Red Bear* at Freiburg im Breisgau (Baden-Württemberg/Southern Germany, documented since 1311), stakes one of the better claims among the countless establishments claiming to be “Germany’s oldest inn”. Pictures: BK.

Being in need of refreshment and company, we could have chosen from a wide range of beverage outlets, many vying for custom through early forms of advertising on doors, windows and walls as well as in newspapers and their own trade cards (Figure 3). Crossing any threshold, we would have had a sense of anticipation or apprehension about the clientele, services, and peculiarities awaiting inside (although certain basics, like restricted opening times and regulations of prices were near-universal). Indicators such as location and size, furnishings and lights, the publican's welcome, male or female waiting staff, dress codes, table arrangements, glasses and crockery, cleanliness, and the available infrastructure would have sent signals about whether/where to sit down, what to order, how to behave and the chances of an enjoyable experience – not really that different from an equivalent situation today. Looking around, there might have been a copy of the latest government mandate pinned to the door (addressing issues like beverage prices), a series of woodcuts on the walls (perhaps with a drinks-related themes), possibly even a religious picture or crucifix and maybe glass panels with the crests of princes or cities in some of the windows.<sup>7</sup> Each table / partition / lounge would have had a distinct social profile, with married couples, groups of artisans, apprentices, and strangers tending to sit among their peers, sharing a particular type of drink in line with their resources, traditions but – increasingly – also fashions and desire for conspicuous consumption. The latter could be satisfied by ordering, say, a sweet liqueur (alluringly advertised on a fancy label) or a bottled Champagne (picked from the wine menu of a premium hostelry, where well-stocked cellars allowed ever-expanding choice; Figure 4).<sup>8</sup>





Figures 3-4: *Left*, the label for Barbados Cream Liqueur, made by Robin, Distiller, Au Caffé Militaire de La Tour du Pin, c. 1780. Etching and engraving on paper; 80 x 70mm; courtesy of Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust) Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957; acc. no. 3686.3.19.50. Photo: University of Central England Digital Services; *right*, this elaborately carved wooden wine menu of an upmarket German inn from the early seventeenth century features regional choices (e.g. from the Rhine/Mosel valleys) and foreign denominations (Champagne, Malaga etc) as well as dry and sweet varieties. Weintafel HG 10565, reproduced with permission from *Mitteilungen aus dem germanischen Nationalmuseum*, Nuremberg (1894), p. 58.<sup>9</sup> [NB: Fig. 3 on condition of a copy of the relevant section sent straight after publication to Waddesdon Manor's Image Library; Fig. 4: Euro 55 image/reproduction fee advanced by BK]

Re-emerging from the premises in due course, with a much clearer impression of the participants, materialities, and customs of local imbibing, we would be better equipped to find our way around and access essential resources. This scenario may be fictitious, but we know from many written representations how important it was to comport oneself appropriately in an unknown public house:

[In 1788 at Thun in the Bernese Oberland, the party of German traveller von Reinach decided] to lodge at the so-called Freienhof, reputedly the best inn in town ... [They conversed with each other] before dinner in the large guest lounge, which (since it happened to be the time of the fair) was filled with a large number of country people and some rather ridiculous fellows. [Among them,] the most beautiful girls, blossoming like roses, sat beside their companions at various tables and embellished the meals with songs of love. [When some of the strangers tried to make passes at these ladies,] the local men frowned and made it very clear that their sweethearts were not for sharing. In order to avoid unpleasant complications, we thus admonished the gentlemen to behave with more modesty, a counsel they readily accepted. As a result, the peasant company calmed down again.<sup>10</sup>

Walking the streets on a Sunday or religious feast, be it in a Catholic or Protestant area, travellers would have passed churches and chapels reverberating with appeals for moderation in sermons warning of alcohol's propensity to turn humans into "pigs" (as Luther had done in 1539) or denouncing the "rapturous" feeling after a few glasses as a most "deficient kind of well-being" (according to the Bavarian Jesuit Jordan of Wasserburg in the early eighteenth century).<sup>11</sup> Sooner or later, any visitor made contact with the authorities' growing endeavours to promote the "common weal". Thun's Bernese overlords, for example, supervised drinking through the so-called *Vennerkammer* (an executive and judicial body of the treasury) which

generated no fewer than 228 volumes (roughly 75,000 pages) of business minutes between 1530 and 1798. These archival records, still awaiting systematic scrutiny, contain painstakingly detailed reports on anything to do with wine sales, taxes, imports, and regulations, from the granting of licenses via the issuing of orders to the punishment of offenders.<sup>12</sup> Here, as in any other source documenting the relationship between rulers and subjects, both parties attempted to “represent” their cases and interests as effectively as possible. On 31 March 1650, at the bottom of the government hierarchy, villager Hans Flühmann was hauled before his parish consistory “for drinking wine at the inn[,] staying well beyond closing time; and ... in particular, for abusing wine as a divine gift by spilling a whole glass and offending the name of Hl. God by coarse swearing ... However, since he was able to defend himself to a degree by claiming that he did not spill the wine deliberately, but only negligently in the course of an argument, he has on this occasion be punished only with a [small] fine”. Regardless of what had “actually” happened, Flühmann successfully minimized the consequences of his behaviour by pleading carelessness mitigated by the context of a heated dispute.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Representation media

Which kinds of communications are still accessible to modern observers? Starting with the medium of *music*, the relationship between drinking and song has always been close. Building on classical precedents, pre-modern writers, composers, and imbibers perceived drinking songs as a congenial genre for convivial occasions where there was a “natural” demand for musical embellishment, be it simple tunes for the revellers themselves or more demanding fare for skilled professionals performing in front of an audience. From the twelfth century, for example, the “Goliard Poets” – a name alluding to *gula* (gluttony) – mounted a concerted campaign against the distrust of the body in contemporary theology. The collective oeuvre of Latin works, disseminated by itinerant scholars, featured titles like “Belly-worship”, “Small Beer”, “The Debate of Wine and Water”, and “Homage to Bacchus”, some of which thinly-veiled satires of religious hymns. *In taberna quando sumus* [When we are at the tavern] illustrates stock themes such as pleasurable company, mixed social/gender interaction, and the combination of drinking and games:

When we’re at the tavern, we

care not what this world may be,  
 But we set ourselves to dicing –  
 Sport of all sports most enticing. ...  
 First we throw a round to settle  
 Who shall pay, like men of mettle; ...  
 Host and hostess, he drinks, she drinks,  
 Even the parson on a spree drinks,  
 The captain drinks, nor drinks alone,  
 The tapster drinks with greasy Joan ...  
 To quench their thirst what would avail  
 A hundred mugs of penny-ale,  
 When all are drinking without measure  
 And all in drinking find their pleasure?<sup>14</sup>

The Renaissance reinvigorated and expanded this tradition, both in terms of languages and regional spread to Burgundy, France, England, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire. Thanks to growing literacy levels and the advent of print, source survival improves not just for lyrics but also musical annotations, allowing a more immediate impression of the aesthetic experience. A recent interpretation of the anonymous *Trinkt und Springt* [Drink and Leap About], a song from a collection made by Johann Pühler at Munich in 1585, conveys the sense of a joyful celebration of imbibing. The lyrics reassure the audience that “a small drink now and again will do you the world of good and the landlord is such an obliging fellow that he is bound to extend credit until tomorrow!” Far from being an easy sing-along, however, the sophisticated composition for several voices would have been aimed at connoisseurs, perhaps assembled in an urban guild hall or a princely court.<sup>15</sup> Further down the social scale, printers and minstrels entertained alehouse companies with the production and performance of countless ballads, featuring sensational events, moral tales, and patriotic appeals set to popular tunes. Many explicitly refer to the joys (and dangers) of convivial drinking and we know that literally millions of copies were snapped up by patrons for little more than the price of a pot of ale. Led by a literate companion, the singers would have struggled to drown out the background noise of clanging tankards and boisterous jokes, but no doubt appreciated the chance to hear the latest news stories packaged in an accessible style with plenty of double-entendres. Many reflect gender stereotypes of dominant and predatory men, but some – like the late medieval “Wives at the Tavern”, featuring a single-sex group of women



cherishing good wine and the chance to complain about their husbands – suggest a potential for subversion.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 5: A socially mixed group of – peasant, clerical, and seigneurial – male revellers drinking alongside a number of women outside a rural tavern in southern Germany. Extract from one of the Kermis woodcuts carved by the Beham brothers in Reformation Nuremberg (c. 1534-35): Geisberg ed. 1974, vol. 2, 132.<sup>17</sup>

Early modern *visual heritage* is equally rich in tavern connections, albeit with certain chronological and regional biases. Early examples include the Kermis prints of woodcut artists active during the German Reformation. Capturing rural sociability through the lens of religious festivals at a time of spiritual fervour, the messages are equivocal. Yes, the contrasting physical states of (sturdy) churches and (run-down) drinking houses or the inclusion of carousing and vomiting peasants invite moral censure, but the intermingling of different social groups over a drink simultaneously evokes nostalgia for an inclusive world threatened by confessional strife and economic polarization (Figure 5). More general analysis of the depictions of imbibing in cheap print underlines the ambivalence of messages conveyed, ranging from simple denouncements of gluttony via echoes of carnivalesque inversion to unambiguously positive associations of wine with the blood of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

The Dutch Golden Age in the seventeenth century brought an unprecedented expansion in “secular” and non-aristocratic art, reflecting the need to find representations congenial for a mercantile, multi-confessional, and republican environment. Alongside landscapes, street scenes, still lives, and domestic interiors showcasing the natural and human resources of a prosperous and industrious society, rural feasts and urban tavern scenes constituted two distinctive genres. Works by painters like Adriaen Brouwer, Frans Hals (Figure 6), Jan Steen, Adriaen van Ostade, and others supply a wealth of “incidental” information on settings and furnishings in drinking houses,<sup>19</sup> displaying such technical mastery and powers of perception that they have been conceptualized as an “art of describing” fundamentally different from the classically-inspired canon conveying deeper meanings and morals.<sup>20</sup> Yet at the same time, everyday scenes populated by country folk and the lower orders were targeted at patrons from the urban elites, often treating stock characters with condescension if not outright ridicule. Peasants appear with coarse features, in awkward poses, and unable to control their tempers and bodily fluids, although this might have simply served to amuse viewers or – more subtly – feed a lingering nostalgia for the “bucolic freedom” of country life.<sup>21</sup> Within drinking houses, the postures, clothes, and surroundings of keepers and guests carry equally rich symbolism, with broken egg shells, dishevelled dress, phallic symbols etc. suggesting a pervasive concern about the consequences of loose sexual manners and excessive consumption, some even illustrating Dutch proverbs or sayings. The traditional dichotomy between a more “realist” and morally censorious tendency in northern European paintings versus a more “symbolic” and sympathetic southern tradition thus deserves to be questioned. Although Bacchanalianism could be idealized in Italian art, the God’s more sinister aspects were never far away, while works from the Dutch Golden Age struck a careful balance between the benefits of sociability and the praise of temperance as a “prerequisite of civic harmony”. In fact, given the complex combination of “positive” and “negative” signals in the oeuvres of southerners like Caravaggio as well as northerners like Hals (even within the same individual work, as Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s “Peasant Dance”), “early modern visual art must be seen as particularly well-suited to register cultural ambiguities on its delusional surfaces”.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 6: “Mr Peeckelhaering”, a print of Jonas Suyderhoef (d. 1686) after a painting by Frans Hals (c. 1628-30). The “pickled herring” character, who – according to the caption – always enjoys a fresh mug of beer because of his permanently dry throat, represented intemperance and self-indulgence in Renaissance comedy and art. Intriguingly, Jan Steen – a prolific tavern artist and indeed publican himself – bought the Hals painting and included it in the background of some works of his own, e.g. *Doctor's Visit* of 1662. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum: <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.181410> (accessed 29/7/2015; public domain).

Apart from its appearance in art history, much information on *material culture* can be gained from early modern inventories drawn up for auctions, property sales, and testamentary provision. Glasses, cups, and jugs were needed in every household, with the biggest and – again – ever-expanding ranges naturally found among publicans’ possessions.<sup>23</sup> Entire drinking lounges from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries survive at the *Tiroler Volkskunstmuseum* in Innsbruck, where visitors can step into rural taverns complete with wooden benches / tables, wall decorations, and tiled stoves: a tantalizing prospect for drinking historians, but now – without their erstwhile patrons – also a frustratingly stale experience.<sup>24</sup> Searching the holdings of other specialized institutions like London’s Victoria & Albert Museum, meanwhile, produces dozens of hits, ranging from simple wooden, earthenware, and pewter cups for everyday consumption via delicate Venetian glasses for higher social groups to large-scale decorative vessels used on ceremonial occasions (Figure 7).<sup>25</sup> Similarly, many colleges, guilds, and cities preserve extensive treasuries of plate,

including “loving cups” filled to the brim with wine or beer and passed from member to member during feasts and on commemorative occasions. This was done according to prescribed rituals of friendship and bonding, in essence analogous to the “healths” (toasting routines) practiced by drinkers all across the social hierarchy, which in turn had intriguing similarities to religious rites. For post-Reformation England, in fact, attention has been drawn to striking overlaps between the Protestant Holy Communion and the classically inspired “loyal-healths”, “creating a new kind of ‘prophane sacrament’ (as it was dubbed), with which any and all who professed loyalty to the monarchical state and Protestant religion were expected to comply”.<sup>26</sup> While most beer and wine continued to be stored in wooden barrels of up to several hundred litres capacity each, glass bottles also appeared surprisingly early and seem to have become widespread in more elite environments by the seventeenth century. At Oxford, keepers of taverns such as the Crown or Three Tuns used them for consumption on and off the premises, marking each with a personalised seal to distinguish them from those of other suppliers.<sup>27</sup> Upmarket vintners did the same. We know from Thomas Jefferson’s accounts and correspondence that his stint as United States minister to France in the late 1780s kindled a life-long passion for sophisticated French wines. In a notorious auction some two hundred years later, Christie’s sold a bottle etched with the word “Lafitte” and the initials “Th.J.”, allegedly retrieved from a wall in an old Parisian house, for no less than £105,000, although subsequent scientific tests and legal proceedings have cast doubts on its credentials.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 7: According to its inscription, this Bohemian *Reichsadlerhumpen* (imperial eagle tankard), a gilded and enamelled drinking vessel of 27 cm height, dates from 1571. It features the so-called *Reichsquaternionen*, a symbolic representation of the Holy Roman Empire which became widespread from the fifteenth century. Below the double crown and flanking the crucified Christ, the affiliated estates of electorates, secular / ecclesiastical principalities, cities, and even villages appear with four members each, a number and selection which owed more to the desire of symmetry and harmony than the infinitely more complex political reality. British Museum, Online Collection, no. S.836. [\[image can be reproduced free of charge from website\]](#)

Moving to *written sources*, drinking scenes offer authors (of all periods) opportunities to engage audiences through a universally familiar experience and to reveal the virtues or weaknesses, emotional states or innermost thoughts of their characters. The settings of public houses, furthermore, afford prime stages to bring protagonists (whether friends or complete strangers) together, to get them interacting with each other (be it in a friendly and cohesive or acrimonious and subversive manner); and – through techniques such as allegory and symbolism – mould taverns into microcosms of the world around them.<sup>29</sup> Dramatists, in particular, appreciate them as “natural” venues for chance encounters and the advancement of plots. From the late fifteenth century, German (and especially Nuremberg) carnival plays – often actually performed on drinking premises by groups of players moving from one convivial gathering to another – were full of stock characters like naïve or manipulative keepers / landladies and attractive maidservants alongside a coterie of patrons including cuckolds, impostors, and drunken peasants.<sup>30</sup> Throughout Europe, the rapid expansion of print allowed for the emergence of a publishing industry and unprecedented dissemination of an ever-widening range of works.<sup>31</sup> In England, this included Renaissance plays such as Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* (Part I, Act 2 has the young prince and his irreverent companion Sir John Falstaff drinking in Eastcheap’s *Boar’s Head* tavern) and Ben Jonson’s *New Inn* (set at the *Light Heart* in Barnett), alongside a wide spectrum of cheap literature which included not only ballads, but also chapbooks and tracts like Ned Ward’s *London Spy* (1700), an account of metropolitan low life offering some of the “best tavern scenes in literary history”.<sup>32</sup> Arguably the early modern “poet laureate” of public houses was the English waterman John Taylor (1580–1653). His prolific *oeuvre* examined the trade from all imaginable angles, encompassing odes to drinking, accounts of personal experiences and drinking trade directories.<sup>33</sup>

Many literary genres thus provide valuable perspectives on our themes. Among the most relevant are conduct books (sketching out acceptable social behaviour for both men and women<sup>34</sup>), picaresque romances/novels (like Cervantes' *Don Quixote* from the Spanish Golden Age, Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus* of 1668 and Fielding's *Tom Jones* of 1749, whose narrative structures depend on network of inns for their protagonists' progress), and moral literature (as in the *Teufelsbücher* series flourishing in the Reformation era, where the devil of drink is held responsible for the decline in personal manners, popular piety, and sexual propriety<sup>35</sup>).

Qualitatively and quantitatively, however, the most detailed written insights into early modern drinking culture derive from diaries and travel reports. There can be few individual works with more captivating information than the copious shorthand notes taken by Samuel Pepys during the 1660s. As an upwardly-mobile navy official with a fondness for public house conviviality (variously involving family, friends, workmates, and strangers for both business and pleasure), he recorded what he drank where and with whom practically every single day. No less than four index pages of the modern edition are taken up with entries for London taverns alone, ranging from the Anchor by Doctors' Commons to the World's End at Knightsbridge. Readers thus gain an unrivalled picture of metropolitan drinking culture in the Restoration period: on 25 November 1661, for example, Pepys met with Captain Lambert at the Dog in Westminster's Palace Yard ("where we had oysters and good wine") in the morning, with two knights and a Major-General at the nearby Swan inn for lunch at noon, and – following visits to a play and opera in the afternoon – with a friend at the Mitre tavern in Cheapside for evening entertainment (well "past 12 at night, till I had drank something too much").<sup>36</sup> Three years later, we catch him in a somewhat less respectable establishment:

after office done ... I to the [Royal Ex]Change: and thence [William] Bagwell's [a ship carpenter's] wife with much ado followed me through Moor-fields to a blind alehouse, and there I did caress her and eat and drank, and many hard looks and sithes the poor wretch did give me, and I think verily was troubled at what I did; but at last, after many protestings, by degrees I did arrive at what I would, with great pleasure ... and so home to bed – weary and full of thoughts.<sup>37</sup>

Alongside, travel writings feature among our most informative sources. Surviving from the late Middle Ages and reaching a peak in the age of the coaching inn and aristocratic Grand Tour during the eighteenth century, thousands of texts await systematic perusal.

Admittedly, the methodological hurdles are legion: all straddle the boundary between factual report and artistic imagination; many tell us more about the authors' cultural prejudices than the customs of the time; most come from the pens of social elites; and some simply copy from others, but there is surely nothing more tantalizing than to play "fly-on-the-wall" when early modern people raised their glasses in different companies and locations.<sup>38</sup> Another bonus is the genre's propensity towards comparison: many travellers note similarities and differences between the various destinations they visited or indeed between conditions at home and abroad. During the 1590s, the Cambridge-educated scholar Fynes Moryson embarked on a tour of Continental countries with the explicit intention to study their various customs and cultures. Commenting on regional and social peculiarities of the Swiss, he observed that they showed:

for drinking ... farre lesse excesse then the Saxons, somewhat lesse then they of vpper *Germany*. They haue strict lawes to imprison Drunkards for a yeere, and at solemne feasts, the vulgar sort are admonished to behaue themselues modestly, yet drunkennesse hath such patronage among the best sort, as it cannot be banished. They bragge of their ancient temperance, and say, that excesse came into the Commonwealth, together with the accepting of military stipends from forraigne Princes.<sup>39</sup>

### 3. Drink, Identity and Early Modern Society

Two important themes keep reappearing in recent scholarship on cultural representations: the role of drink in identity-formation and the complex negotiation of social benefits and costs.<sup>40</sup> Starting with the former, alcohol consumption reflected/affected virtually all components influencing how individuals or collectives were perceived by themselves and others. Like other markers such as confession or political systems, beverages interacted with emerging national identities. Written on the back of England's strong brewing tradition, notably small-scale domestic production by alewives, John Taylor's *Drinke and welcome: or the Famous Historie of the most part of Drinks* (1637), disapproved of corroding foreign influences:

For now our Land is overflowne with wine:  
With such a Deluge, or an Inundation  
As hath besotted and halfe drown'd our Nation.



Some that are scarce worth 40 pence a yeere  
 Will hardly make a meale with Ale or Beere:  
 And will discourse, that wine doth make good blood  
 ...Thus Bacchus is ador'd and deifide,  
 And We Hispanializ'd and Frenchifide:  
 Whilst Noble Native Ale, and Beeres hard fate  
 Are like old Almanacks, Quite out of Date.<sup>41</sup>

Depending on the political climate, consuming imported Claret, Malaga or Port could become decidedly “unpatriotic”, especially at times of war with the respective countries of origin.<sup>42</sup>

Religion mattered too: guided by Tridentine standards of restrained consumption and the Catholic association of mass wine with the blood of Christ, Spanish travel writers recorded their abhorrence at how inebriation seemed to be tolerated by the Germans and the Dutch.<sup>43</sup>

Alongside the “national” – and “regional”: among the most important features of the European drinking topography were the boundaries separating areas dominated by wine (in the south and west), beer or ale (in the centre and north-west) and spirits (in the north-east of the Continent); pear- and apple-based perry and cider, meanwhile, were associated with much smaller units like north-eastern Switzerland, Normandy and the English South-West – drinking shaped people’s view of further spatial dimensions. Overseas expansion brought explorers and settlers into contact with entirely unknown and mysterious cultures. Some, like the Ottomans, advocated abstention, others challenged post-Reformation ideals of moderation by – what appeared to outsiders – extreme overindulgence. A prime example is the highly developed civilization of the Incas in America, whose pre-Columbian customs included long periods of sobriety punctuated by moments of socially acceptable excess during religious rituals. The customary choice for both regular and celebratory occasions was *chicha*, a fermented drink made from maize by women, heavily regulated and served in lavishly decorated vessels (Figure 8).<sup>44</sup> Once the colonial masters had established themselves, New World observers represented contrasting assessments of indigenous and European drinking habits. Many interpreted the former’s apparent dedication to drink as a sign of despair (at the traumatic loss of self-determination), clerical missionaries saw it as a symptom of inherent “paganism” and “barbarism” (legitimizing Christianization and civilization campaigns), while a rare native voice – the Peruvian Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in the early seventeenth century – actually blamed the corrupting influence of his Spanish overlords (and the import of strong wine and spirits). Similar debates reverberate in modern scholarship,

with the addition of new – and equally controversial – explanations like genetics. Firm conclusions remain elusive, apart from the recognition that we should be less concerned with retrieving “facts” and more with what period discourses reveal about prevailing aspirations and fears.<sup>45</sup> But globalization did not just bring clashes and “negative” demarcations between different cultures. In more favourable circumstances, the cultivation, trade and marketing of new beverage brands like “Madeira” could forge lasting transnational bonds, even helping to shape a supra-regional construct like the “Atlantic World”.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 8: Inca drinking cup (*qero*) from the colonial period (wood and lacquer, 20.3x17.5 cm, 18th century). Credit: Sean Pathasema / Birmingham Museum of Art, available under Creative Commons ([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cup\\_\(Qero\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cup_(Qero).jpg); accessed 29/7/2015).

Sharing drinks also transmitted messages about gender relations (Figure 9). There has been much historiographical discussion of the respective norms, especially the double standard of male bravado / female restraint (justified not least with reference to sex-specific humoral constitutions), and whether “boisterous” adolescents and established patriarchs subscribed to diverging ideals of masculinity.<sup>47</sup> The same can now be said for social identities, as the conventional post-Reformation polarization between an increasingly “sober” elite culture (flourishing in the new coffee houses) and a resiliently “bibulous” popular world (left behind in alehouses and taverns) comes under growing critique.<sup>48</sup> Studies on the Holy Roman Empire, Swiss Confederation, and England have all emphasized the continued presence of the middling and upper sorts in public houses and the importance of (at times copious) alcohol consumption for early modern civic culture, including that of merchants and magistrates.<sup>49</sup> This did not equate to a blurring of status distinctions; drinking groups were

acutely aware of the existence of hierarchies, but also the possibility of transgression and inversion. In the humorous dialogue *Wine, beere, ale, and tobacco. Contending for superiority* (London: John Grove, 1630), “Wine, A Gentleman”, “Beer, A Citizen”, “Ale, A Country-man”, “Water, A Parson”, and other personified Intoxicants “move in and out of each other’s ‘society’ and ‘company’ ... discussing their relative social standing and superiority over each other”.<sup>50</sup> In everyday sociability, such roles and positions were constantly re-negotiated through rituals of inclusion/exclusion, as described by Barnabe Rich in 1617:

The institution of drinking an Health, is full of ceremony, and observed by Tradition, as the Papists doe their praying to Saints. He that begins the health . . . first uncovering his head, he takes a full cup in his hand, and settling his countenance with a grave aspect, he craves for audience . . . [he names] some Honourable personage . . . worthy of a better regard than to have his name polluted . . . among a company of drunkards . . . [and] turns the bottome of the cup upward. The cup being newly replenished to the breadth of an haire . . . thus it goes round through the whole company.<sup>51</sup>



Figure 9: By offering her husband H[e]inrich a drink, Mrs Johansen symbolizes marital bonds of love and friendship. Sharing a measure of beer or wine at a public house was in fact a very common “leisure” activity for early modern couples, both before and after their wedding. Glass panel of 1635 reproduced with permission. © St. Annen-Museum – Fotoarchiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, Germany.  
[NB on condition of 1 copy of our book]

Moving to the second theme, early modern representations explored a wide spectrum of benefits and dangers. At one end, there were unambiguous celebrations of the joys of drinking. We have come across ballads extolling good fellowship and merry-making at the level of the alehouse, but leading Renaissance writers – building on classical precedents like the Greek Symposium and the medieval Goliard poets – showed equal appreciation of liquid inspiration. In early seventeenth-century London, literary societies like the “Sons of Ben [Jonson]” met in fashionable taverns such as the Mitre, where they discussed aesthetic theories, their latest works, and perhaps also the current affairs of the day.<sup>52</sup> A couple of generations later, when the interlude of Puritan austerity had given way to the more permissive environment of the Restoration, convivial imbibing lubricated much of courtly society and libertarian circles such as that around John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. His “Nestor” (c. 1673), “a delightful drinking song with a problematic last stanza”, opens a window to a world of copious consumption and sensual pleasure:

Vulcan, contrive me such a cup  
 As Nestor used of old;  
 ...  
 Make it so large that, fill'd with sack  
 Up to the swelling brim,  
 Vast toasts on the delicious lake  
 Like ships at sea may swim.

Engrave no battle on its cheek:  
 With war I've nought to do;  
 ...  
 But carve thereon a spreading vine,  
 Then add two lovely boys;  
 Their limbs in amorous folds entwine,  
 The type of future joys.

Cupid and Bacchus my saints are,  
 May Drink and Love still reign!

With wine I wash away my cares,  
And then to love again.<sup>53</sup>

At the other extreme, as we have also seen, numerous voices joined in resounding denouncements of drinking excess. Government mandates, Church ordinances, and moral literature unanimously warned against its financial, physical, and spiritual dangers. “Do you want to see the house of sins and actions against God?”, asked a Tyrolean medic in a diatribe against all devastators of the human race; “Well look no further than the tavern!”.<sup>54</sup> Yet hardly anyone called for total abstinence yet (except in some Anabaptist circles<sup>55</sup>), since wine possessed impeccable scriptural credentials. Even the most austere Calvinist preachers could not deny that it was a gift from God,<sup>56</sup> and the rather less radical Luther – himself not averse to the odd glass or two – happily conceded the psychological benefits of “a little elation” in his 1539 “Sermon on Soberness and Moderation”.<sup>57</sup> What mattered in most representations was not to cross the line. Since the ability to hold one’s drink formed an important part of male honour, contemporaries abhorred the loss of bodily control. In a pioneering study for France, Matthieu Lecoutre found a wealth of normative, moral, medical, economic, and judicial sources directed against over-indulgence, but at the same time plentiful – written, visual, and musical – evidence for the tenaciousness of the phenomenon. All across the social spectrum, from noble elites to humble labourers, a deeply-ingrained and colourfully described “culture of inebriation” persisted throughout the Ancien Régime, leading in practice to a kind of informal toleration.<sup>58</sup> But how homogenous was this social negotiation across time and space? As has recently been argued with respect to “intoxication [as] a universal and essential feature of the human condition”, its rituals, connotation, and sociology require careful “culturally and historically specific” analysis.<sup>59</sup> Here, much painstaking research remains to be conducted.

The great majority of period opinions, of course, were not extreme, but reflective of society’s ambivalent attitudes towards drink. Alongside restrictive policies, directed above all against unauthorized and disorderly uses, early modern authorities certainly acknowledged legitimate grounds for consumption. In seventeenth-century Bern, for example, groups as diverse as church-goers, travellers, the sick, and women in childbed received official encouragement to refresh and strengthen themselves with good wine.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4. Early modern representations of drink – some preliminary conclusions

Concerns over inebriation and its social effects are salient, but hardly unique features of this period; neither are links between drinks and social or gender identity. The chronologically distinctive characteristics of the discourses examined above relate to the larger developments of early modernity: state building in the political realm (manifesting itself, negatively, in “social disciplining” and indirect taxation; positively, in a more proactive promotion of the “common weal”), post-Reformation fragmentation in religion (adding confessional angles to all areas of social exchange), widening spatial horizons in both the economic and cultural spheres (prompting not just imports of tea, coffee, and chocolate, but also deeper reflection on what it meant to be “European”), the rise of middling-sort consumers (able, as in the Dutch Republic, to commission “tavern scenes” and enjoy a growing range of alcoholic as well as non-alcoholic drinks), and the first mass medium of print (allowing unprecedented circulation of ever-expanding forms of written, musical, and visual communication).<sup>61</sup> From the sixteenth century, beverages of all kinds became important commodities boosting the globalization of trade, linking nearly all Continents, but also creating new problems in the colonies, as we have found in Latin America.<sup>62</sup> Overall, perhaps, the early modern drinking landscape appears more regimented, fragmented, and commercialized than in the late Middle Ages, but – at least in the Christian World – as yet unaffected by the pressures for prohibition that the modern period would bring. Among a cacophony of messages, the most influential was “moderation”, boosted – at various stages and in differing degrees – by neo-stoicist strands in Renaissance thinking, the fear of divine censure in the (Counter-)Reformations, and – ultimately – the pervasive emphasis on reason in the Enlightenment. Not everyone always lived up to this ideal, of course, not even the philosophers, governors, and churchmen themselves.<sup>63</sup> In contrast to previous scholarly views, early modern social elites did not withdraw from “traditional” drinking culture; many consumed alcohol in vast quantities, but new venues like coffee houses augmented their conviviality options.<sup>64</sup> Returning to a point made at the outset, faced with the period’s unprecedented “expansions” – of choices, horizons, rules, concerns, and genres – cultural representations strove ever harder to strike the right “balance”.

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<sup>1</sup> Dürr ed. 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Burke 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Martin 2008; Lecoutre 2011; Withington and McShane eds. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Martin 2001, 2; Hailwood 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Denecke 2002, 459-69.

<sup>6</sup> Dent 2011, with reference to Gould and White 1974; cf. Kümin 2009.

<sup>7</sup> See evidence from inventories: Pennington 2002, and research on early modern visual culture: Watt 1993; Butts et. al. 2000.

<sup>8</sup> A search of the richly-stocked cellars of the Golden Falcon in Bern in the late eighteenth century resulted in the discovery of prohibited foreign brands: State Archives of Bern [hereafter: StAB], B VIII 517, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> Discussed in Bösch 1894, 57-60 (online at: <http://www.lexikus.de/bibliothek/Zwei-Weintafeln-des-17-Jahrhunderts-im-germanischen-Museum-Nuernberg>; access 23/12/2014).

<sup>10</sup> Von Reinach 1790, 62-4; translated in Brennan ed. 2011, vol. 3, ch. XII.

<sup>11</sup> Doberstein ed. 1959, 291-9; Moser-Rath 1991, 302 (Jordan). “The vices available in inns and taverns were stock targets for sermons and homilies” already in the late Middle Ages: Hanawalt 1998, 111.

<sup>12</sup> StAB, B VII 32-255.

<sup>13</sup> Gemeindearchiv Neuenegg, Chorgerichts-Manuale, vol. I.1, transcribed in Brennan ed. 2011, vol. 3, ch. XIV. More generally on the use of drunkenness as a legal defence see Tlusty 2001, 80-1.

<sup>14</sup> Whicher ed. 1949, esp. 2, 221 and 227-31 (quote).

<sup>15</sup> The Orlando Consort 2001, CD and explanatory notes by Angus Smith; for audio samples, see <http://www.harmoniamundi.com/#!/albums/619> (accessed 29/7/2015).

<sup>16</sup> Marsh 2010, esp. chapter 5 and alehouse ballad examples like ‘My Dog and I’ (1675) performed by the Dufay Collective (track downloadable from [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)). The intriguing “Wives at the Tavern” appears in Kowaleski ed. 2006, 196-99.

<sup>17</sup> Dates, attributions and variants of Barthel and (Hans) Sebald Beham’s Kermis woodcuts are discussed in Stewart 2002, 95-115; cf. e.g. the reproductions of “Large Kermis” by Sebald Beham c. 1530 (Figures 3-4; pp. 100-1). For general methodological guidance see Burke 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Tlusty 1998a, 177-203.

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<sup>19</sup> For samples see the artists' pages in the Web Gallery of Art; a specialized, if somewhat dated, study is Renger 1970.

<sup>20</sup> Alpers 1983.

<sup>21</sup> Tlusty 1998a, 187.

<sup>22</sup> Nichols 2014, esp. 163, 167.

<sup>23</sup> Pennington 2002; for the 1792 handover of the Abbey Tavern at Worb (Bern), serving guests in just two small rooms, keeper Benedicht Lenz recorded several calibrated jugs holding  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and full measures of wine, 68 standard-size bottles of 1.67 litres and no fewer than 242 glasses. His sales regularly exceeded 16,000 l. / year (over 43 l. a day): StAB, HA Worb Bücher 9, p. 546, and associated manorial documents.

<sup>24</sup> See its online *Stuben* collection at <http://www.tiroler-landesmuseen.at> (accessed 29/7/2015).

<sup>25</sup> Online catalogue available at <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/> (accessed 29/7/2015); cf. Glanville and Lee eds. 2007.

<sup>26</sup> McShane 2014, 248.

<sup>27</sup> Banks 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Radden Keefe 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Kaemena 1999, esp. 207-13; and Earnshaw 2000, *passim*. Earle 1675 originally formed part of the author's "Micro-Cosmography", a collection of vignettes illustrating seventeenth-century society; Tschudi 1719, 118-28, similarly used public houses as windows into human nature.

<sup>30</sup> Simon 2003. Earlier still, in Jacobus de Cessoli's association of chess figures with late medieval estates, one of the pawns represented the publicans' profession: Kramer 1995, e.g. 37-9.

<sup>31</sup> For a debate on the wider socio-cultural impact see "How revolutionary was the print revolution?" 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Earnshaw 2000, 2, 111 and ch. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Collected in Taylor 1967-; for context and interpretation see Capp 1994.

<sup>34</sup> Sample documents and commentaries appear in the online database "Defining Gender, 1450-1910".

<sup>35</sup> The best-know example of the latter is Friderich 1552/1980, 1-114 .



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<sup>36</sup> Pepys 1970-83, vol. 2, 219-20; the 1893 edn by H. B. Wheatley is online at: <http://www.pepysdiary.com/> (accessed 29/7/2015); cf. Earnshaw 2000, ch. 6, and Westhauser 1994.

<sup>37</sup> Pepys 1970-83, vol. 5, 322 (15 November 1664). For lists of other diarists see e.g. “The Diary Junction” and Jancke, “Selbstzeugnisse”.

<sup>38</sup> Maczak 1995; Turner 2001.

<sup>39</sup> Moryson 1617/1967, Part 3, Book 2, Chapter 3, p. 91.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. Tlusty 2001, chs 7-8, and Martin 2008, *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> Taylor 1967, Second Collection, 8, 20. For the brewing tradition cf. Bennett 1996.

<sup>42</sup> Ludington 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Earle 2014, 87.

<sup>44</sup> Hames 2012, 35-7.

<sup>45</sup> Earle 2014, 85, 97.

<sup>46</sup> Hancock 2009.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Tlusty 1998b; Shepard 2005; and the chapter by Mark Hailwood in this volume.

<sup>48</sup> Classic formulations in Wrightson 1981, and Muchembled 1985.

<sup>49</sup> Tlusty 2001, esp. ch. 8: “Drinking and Social Identity”; Kumin 2002 ; Withington 2011.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 631.

<sup>51</sup> McShane 2014, 260.

<sup>52</sup> O’Callaghan 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Accessed at <http://www.luminarium.org/eightlit/rochester/nestor.htm> (29/7/2015); in some editions, an alternative last line (“And then to cunt again”) tilts the meaning towards the obscene, a not entirely implausible variant given Rochester’s general reputation: Hammond 2006, esp. 202.

<sup>54</sup> Guarinonius 1610/1993, 828.

<sup>55</sup> The need for separation from all abominations required bretheren to “shun and flee from ... drinking houses”: “Schleitheim confession of 1527”, Article IV.

<sup>56</sup> Blanke 1953.

<sup>57</sup> Doberstein ed. 1959, Sermons vol. 1, 292-3.

<sup>58</sup> Lecoutre 2011, which includes reproductions of paintings, illustrations of archival evidence and a frequency analysis of over 100 different terms for inebriation in different

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types of sources (with “être emboicté de vin”, “pris de vin” and “dans le vin” emerging as the most common: Appendix 1).

<sup>59</sup> Withington’s introduction to idem and McShane eds. 2014, esp. 10, 24-5.

<sup>60</sup> StAB, B V 143: Register of Public Houses (1688), pp. 8 (ill and pregnant inhabitants), 19 (tavern needed at Eggiwil, “considering that peasants from distant valleys and mountains go to church there, and that old and sick people would not be able to do so without the availability of some food and drink”), 36 (travellers).

<sup>61</sup> See e.g. Raeff 1983; Greengrass 2014, esp. ch. 6: “Europe in the World”.

<sup>62</sup> Through payments to African traders and the production of Caribbean rum, drinks also played a major part in the promotion of slavery: Hames 2012, 46.

<sup>63</sup> “It is deeply misleading to argue ... that intoxication was and remains primarily the distraction or solace of the subordinate classes”: Withington’s introduction to idem and McShane eds. 2014, 23.

<sup>64</sup> Soon creating problems of their own: see e.g. Charles II 1675.