

*Women Drinking*  
*in Early Modern England*

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## Women Drinking in Early Modern England

Table of Contents	ii
Declaration	v
Abstract	vi
Acknowledgments	viii
1) Introduction	2
Historical Sources	3
Alcohol as a Drug	8
The History of Drinking	14
Dissertation Plan	21
<b>Part: I The Social Context of Drinking</b>	<b>27</b>
2) Quantities and Qualities	28
Available Alcohol	32
Ale and Beer	32
Wine	40
Spirits	43
“Other” Drinks	47
Drinking With Meals	54
Economic Constraints on Drinking	58
Conclusions	66
3) Medicinal Drinking	68
Popular Practitioners	75
Drinking in a Healthy Diet	84

Drinking to Cure Illness	99
Female Conditions	103
Conclusions	110
4) Prescriptive Literature	113
Defining a Drunkard	120
Male Drinking Behaviour	128
Consequences of Male Drinking Behaviour	136
Female Drinking Behaviour and Its Consequences	142
Conclusions	151
<b>Part II: Working With Alcohol</b>	<b>155</b>
5) Women in the Drink Trade	156
Alehouses, Women, and Authority	161
Women in the Drink Trade	171
The Reputations of Alewives and Hostesses	175
Conclusions	187
6) Selling Sex With Alcohol	189
Women Out After Dark	192
Lot's Daughters	195
Dishonest Sober Whores	199
Conclusions: Stereotypes and Comic Warnings	204
<b>Part III: Female Drinkers</b>	<b>209</b>
7) Drinking In Courtship	210
Courtship and Drinking in Literature	218
When, What, and Where Young People Drank	225
How They Drank	229

The Last Courtship Ritual – The Wedding	235
Conclusions	241
8) Ritual Drinking During Childbirth	244
The Roles of Women and the Obligations of Men	247
The Delivery	251
The Christening	260
The Gossip's Feast	266
The Churching	269
Conclusions	273
9) Female Friendships in Public Spaces	277
Perceptions of Female Sociability	278
Women Drinking in Public Spaces	290
Women's Drunken Behaviour	295
Conclusions	303
10) Conclusions	307
Female Drinking Behaviour	307
The End of an Era	316
Future Directions	317
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>319</b>
Primary Sources	320
Secondary Sources	383

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## Abstract

How much women drank, what they drank, when, and with whom all defined and determined a large portion of women's social identity. Moralists and legislators attempted to control female drinking, as they also attempted to control male. However, they did not consider male and female drinking equally dangerous to society. Female drinking threatened to subvert patriarchal control and overturn male priorities. Men attempted to control female drinking through social taboos about when women could drink, where they could drink, and even what they could discuss in their drunkenness. Women either subverted these restrictions or used them as leverage to signify their insubordination and defiance of men. A large portion of this dissertation deals with female drinking as a site of contention between insubordinate women and the dominant paradigm of male expectations about drinking and drunkenness. Much of the literature reveals male fears about the empowering effects of alcohol and the consequences (for men) of women using such a potent drug.

Women also constructed their own drinking patterns independent of their relationships with men. Women used alcohol in a variety of ways. As the regulators of diet in their households, they used drink to ensure the health of those under their care. As the participants in female social events, they excluded men and drank without regard to male approval. The literature regarding women and alcohol reveals how women used alcohol to build social networks that enhanced their lives. Drink was renowned for provoking lust, but women often used it to repel men. Male authors accused drunk women of verbal aggressiveness and insubordination towards their husbands and male authorities in general. Behind the male complaints in the literature about wives wasting

time and money and engaging in inappropriate conversations with their female friends was the outline for patterns of female drinking and sociability that had nothing to do with men at all. The central theme running through this dissertation is how female drinking patterns integrated drinking and drunkenness into women's lives in ways that enhanced bonding with their female friends, even if it inconvenienced their husbands and male authorities. Drunken sociability empowered women.

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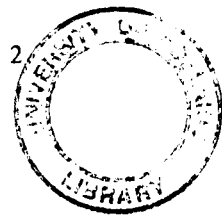


# **Women Drinking in Early Modern England**

Good ale is meat, drink, and cloth.\*

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\* Morris Palmer Tilley, ed., A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor, 1950), p. 6.



## 1. Introduction

The analogy of modern drug-taking should enable us to understand that -- in addition to the element of communal love-feast in such gatherings -- the use of tobacco and alcohol [in early modern England] was intended to heighten spiritual vision.<sup>1</sup>

Alcohol was a fundamental component of early modern cuisine. It also affected people's behaviour. Men and women of all status groups, political, and religious leanings sought to control drinking in their own lives and often the lives of others. This manifested itself as an attempt to increase or decrease the amount, quality, or frequency of personal drinking and the drinking of others. People constructed guidelines of acceptable drinking behaviour and circumstances for themselves, their husbands, wives, social betters, and social inferiors. This dissertation investigates female drinking patterns and how they impacted on women's lives. It begins in the sixteenth century with the availability of substantial records concerning female sociability. It ends with the beginning of the "gin craze" which changed what people drank, and therefore, how they used alcohol. Female drinking patterns were a large part of female sociability and women relied on their social ties to provide them with marriage partners, support groups, information, and entertainment. The following chapters display the resilience and persistence of drinking patterns over the social, religious, and political turbulence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution (London, 1972), p. 160.

## Historical Sources

Such a research project requires sources that describe typical behaviour rather than atypical events. These requirements severely limit the usefulness of many sources. For example, court records afford their own kind of fiction. If people did not openly lie in court, they at least adjusted their stories to render a telling that would win their case. Court records are not direct evidence of events. The desires and memories of the witnesses and the court reporter who did not always quote verbatim filtered the evidence. Court cases also centre on unacceptable behaviour. For instance, in his examination of court records in Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century, John Addy included a chapter on drunkenness. He could only collect two and a half pages on women before the courts for drunkenness. One of his examples was Mary Hatton from Great Budworth. Her case demonstrates how women before the courts for drinking were often exceptional examples. Several deponents accused her on various occasions of throwing a party, repeated drunkenness, being “of a lewd vicious and wicked life & Conversation,” and three accounts of adultery, all with different men. The court fined her and temporarily excommunicated her.<sup>2</sup> Her behaviour was highly insubordinate but also atypical. The sentence of excommunication demonstrates just how far she had moved beyond the realm of social acceptability. In contrast, Addy had enough evidence on male drunkenness to quantify male behaviour and extrapolate a pattern. Women sometimes ended up in court over their drinking, but it was not a common enough occurrence to constitute a pattern. Court records often illustrate a point about female drinking patterns, but they do not describe women’s typical

drinking behaviour because that behaviour rarely brought women before the court.

In another example diaries and correspondence tend to refer to mundane and “normal” activities only briefly. Women did not often record the particulars of their drinking. In her article “Stuart Women’s Diaries” Sara Mendelson outlined the potential problems in using women’s diaries as sources.<sup>3</sup> First, diarists or family members often edited or destroyed manuscripts. Historians know Samuel Pepys destroyed the diary of his wife Elizabeth, because he recorded tearing it up in his own.<sup>4</sup> Diaries containing objectionable material might have been destroyed. Drinking behaviour probably fell into that category. Second, women’s diaries concentrated on their spiritual life.<sup>5</sup> Many diaries were not ramblings about everything that happened in a given day but rather accounts addressed to God concerning spiritual matters and religiously relevant acts like charity and attendance at Church. As long as women did not transgress into sin, they had no reason to report their actions in their diaries. Third, because literacy was largely restricted to upper class women, most female diarists were elite women whose experiences were not representative of the majority of women.<sup>6</sup> These limitations are particularly relevant to the study of drinking because contemporaries probably considered drinking behaviour mundane in its “use” and scandalous in its “abuse.” Therefore, many detailed descriptions about drinking were probably edited out, particularly if the diarist was a gentlewoman concerned about her reputation. Male diarists, on the other hand, often recorded

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<sup>2</sup> John Addy, *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1989), pp. 109-11.

<sup>3</sup> Sara Mendelson, “Stuart Women’s Diaries,” in Mary Prior, ed., *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London, 1985), pp. 182-89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 188.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

incidental and scandalous drinking sessions. Sometimes they recorded the participation of women in these bouts but more often they concentrated on their own thoughts and behaviour. The limited information available in diaries adds to the overall picture of women's drinking patterns, but it is not enough to describe drunken comportment on its own.

Literature provides a large array of prescriptive and descriptive female drinking patterns. Female characters drank in poems, ballads, pamphlets, and plays. Authors from Shakespeare to the anonymous men and women who put traditional songs into print described various aspects of female drinking. Prescriptive writers of sermons, conduct books, household manuals and recipe books all discussed women's relationships with drink. In his book Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800 Anthony Fletcher points to the usefulness of ballads, drama, and other forms of cheap popular print in reflecting the preoccupations and mentalities of society at large.<sup>7</sup> Across these genres of literature, certain patterns of female drinking emerge throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 Linda Woodbridge reminds her readers "that there is some connection, however sublimated or oblique, between female literary figures and women of flesh and blood."<sup>8</sup> If historians look at the actions described rather than attitudes to those actions, drinking women act roughly the same in sermons preached in church and ballads sung in alehouses. The nature of alcohol studies also dictates that historians

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800 (New Haven, 1995), pp. xix-xx.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 (Brighton, 1984), p. 7.

cannot discount the literature describing drinking behaviour as unrealistic.

Drinking behaviour is learned behaviour. People learn how to act and what to expect from alcohol through the stories and advice to which their culture exposes them. People watched plays and listened to sermons and ballads at the very least. The patterns repeated throughout these sources had to affect their readers and listeners. Furthermore, they had to reflect some kind of reality or authors would not have repeated the stereotypes for two hundred years.

However, the literature does have certain limitations. One challenge popular literature presents is its lack of chronological precision. Most popular literature was the disposable waste paper of a largely oral culture. Often people performed ballads and plays long before and long after publishers printed them, and poems, character sketches, and pamphlets blatantly plagiarised one another throughout the period. While this makes change over time difficult to discover, it points to an important consistency over time since songs and descriptions written in the sixteenth century still had enough relevance one hundred years later to warrant republication. For example, Samuel Rowland's poem 'Tis Merry When Gossips Meete was first published in 1602 and continued to be republished for nearly a hundred years.<sup>9</sup> It was not, however, a great work of literature, and the genre's life span did not continue beyond the early modern period. Historians are left with material pointing to a consistency in attitudes throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but often not beyond. In a period of English history noted for its social instability, religious conflict, political upheaval, and gender issues, continuity and stability themselves are worth investigating. The possibility that such a fundamental set of cultural

parameters remained largely unchallenged in the literature reveals a social stability well worth exploring.

Another concern over using popular literature is its status as a male-constructed fiction. To what extent does any literary model reflect reality? What can historians learn about “real women” through fiction? One early modern writer observed that, “Poetes wrate agaynste women in wanton ditties to content men with newe fangled deuises.”<sup>10</sup> Historians have acknowledged the problems involved in using popular literature for historical investigations. Fletcher claims that all genres of popular literature “tell us how men wanted women to see the gender order, their place in it and themselves. They tell us what women heard, saw, read, or were taught. But they tell us nothing about what they thought.”<sup>11</sup> Behavioural models constructed in the literature might not have accurately depicted reality. However, popular literature does contribute to historians’ understanding of early modern social conditioning, particularly for those who did not leave behind personal letters, diaries, or court records; what J. A. Sharpe calls “the inarticulate classes.”<sup>12</sup> Non-elite women, with their relatively low literacy rate and their limited access to courts, fit into this category. These women did have access to and influence on popular literature. Even though men wrote the bulk of popular literature, they wrote for profit and therefore sought to appeal to the widest possible audience, which included women. Professional authors wrote what they thought men and women wanted to hear. Joy Wiltenburg points out in Disorderly Women and

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<sup>9</sup> Samuel Rowlands, ’Tis Merry When Gossips Meete (London, 1602; reprint 1656 and 1675).

<sup>10</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot, The Defence of Good Women [1540], Edwin Johnston Howard, ed. (Oxford, OH, 1940), p.30.

<sup>11</sup> Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination, p.xxi.

### Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany

that, “the authors’ conceptions of women’s preferences may or may not have matched women’s real attitudes, but the attempt to reach them had important effects on popular literature.”<sup>13</sup> Even women who could not read could sing a ballad or watch a play. Understanding the models and tools that the male hierarchy provided to women to build their identities and locate their behaviour in society is as important as knowing what individual women did with those models and stereotypes.

### **Alcohol as a Drug**

The role of alcohol in society is a source of academic debate. The chemical ethanol changes body chemistry and affects the brain; ethanol is a drug. In discovering how this drug affects human societies, researchers are faced with two main approaches. On the one hand, cultural anthropologists suggest that alcohol plays a necessary role in the social structures of the societies that use it. In his article “Alcohol and Culture” David G. Mandelbaum takes this approach. He considers drinking behaviour “important for the whole social order, and so drinking is defined and limited in accordance with fundamental motifs of the culture.”<sup>14</sup> While drinking and drunkenness are functional components of a well-ordered society, this approach compels some researchers

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<sup>12</sup> J. A. Sharpe, “Plebeian Marriage in Stuart England: Some Evidence From Popular Literature” Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, fifth series, XXXVI (1986), p. 73.

<sup>13</sup> Joy Wiltenburg, Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany (Charlottesville, VA, 1992), p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> David G. Mandelbaum, “Alcohol and Culture,” in Mac Marshall, ed., Beliefs, Behaviors, & Alcoholic Beverages: A Cross-Cultural Survey (Ann Arbor, 1979), p.14.



to deflate the social problems drinking causes.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, an epidemiological approach treats drinking and drunkenness exclusively as a social problem. In her introduction to Alcohol, Gender and Culture, Dimitra Gefou-Madianou remarks that, “The underlying assumption in these [epidemiological] studies is that alcohol is a drug and should always be treated as a problem.”<sup>16</sup> Consequently, some researchers deemphasise the positive aspects of drinking. Researchers often face a problem of alcohol “use” versus “abuse” in their debates.

Both anthropological and epidemiological approaches have a role in the study of alcohol because drinking practices both solve and create social problems. Any discussion of drinking and drunkenness must address both the proper use and improper abuse of alcohol within the context of particular social situations. To complicate matters further, the use and abuse of drink are culturally relative and the anthropological and epidemiological approaches themselves are subjective. They form part of every drinking culture’s attempt to subscribe boundaries for acceptable and unacceptable drinking patterns. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the struggle to define the limits of use and abuse of drink was even more complicated than it is today. Much of what people considered healthy drinking for one group, they condemn as problem drinking in another. Particularly in a society such as early modern England, the acceptability of various drinking patterns was contingent on the socio-economic groups and gender to which the drinker belonged. Almost everyone drank

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<sup>15</sup> Robin Room, “Alcohol and Ethnography: A Case of Problem Deflation?” Current Anthropology: A World Journal of the Sciences of Man, XXV (1984), p.170.

<sup>16</sup> Dimitra Gefou-Madianou, “Introduction: Alcohol Commensality, Identity Transformations and transcendence,” in Dimitra Gefou-Madianou, ed., Alcohol, Gender and Culture (London, 1992), p.5.

alcohol and so people constructed medical, practical and cultural arguments to both allow and control the drinking patterns of various groups in society. The regulation of drinking constituted the regulation of use and abuse rather than any restriction on the quantities of drink people consumed.

Modern researchers do not always agree on which aspects of drunken behaviour are purely physical and which are socially constructed. One view, simply stated, is that alcohol physically reduces anxiety and any behaviour modifications are manifestations of lower levels of anxiety.<sup>17</sup> In his article "Alcohol and Complex Society" Seldon D. Bacon elaborates this theory. He claims that,

alcohol lowers sensitivity, efficiency, and caution. . . . Personal aggression and irresponsibility are far more dangerous in a complex society, and, as an adjustment to this, child-training in complex society lays heavy emphasis on self-control -- on inhibitions and repression of aggression and irresponsibility; alcohol releases these inhibitions.<sup>18</sup>

Alcohol's function in society contributes to both its proper use and abuse. The release of socially constructed inhibitions can lead to dangerous actions and problematic behaviour. However, in less extreme cases, alcohol functions as a social lubricant. Kettil Bruun claims in his article "Drinking Practices and Their Social Function" that, properly used, alcohol "contributes to the smooth functioning of a social system."<sup>19</sup> Alcohol reveals social inhibitions by releasing them. People act out what they would like to do but social conventions have required them to suppress. Alcohol allows people to release inhibition and normally inappropriate behaviour.

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<sup>17</sup> Mac Marshall, "Introduction," in Mac Marshall, ed., Beliefs, Behaviors, & Alcoholic Beverages: A Cross-Cultural Survey (Ann Arbor, 1979), p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Seldon D. Bacon, "Alcohol and Complex Society," in David J. Pittman and Charles R. Snyder, eds., Society, Culture, and Drinking Patterns (New York, 1962), p.91.

Other researchers have pointed out a problem with the view that drink chemically suppresses inhibitions. The idea that alcohol reduces anxiety lacks medical evidence. In their book Drunken Comportment: A Social Explanation Craig MacAndrews and Robert Edgerton demonstrate that while alcohol chemically impairs a drinker's motor-sensory skills, the conclusion that drinking also necessarily lowers inhibitions and the control of reasoning is a popular misconception.<sup>20</sup> They challenge this misconception by presenting various societies in which people drink to the point of intoxication without displaying any "disinhibiting" effects. For example, they argue that people do not necessarily become violent or sexually explicit when drunk. They conclude that, "alcohol can be consumed -- and, in many societies it *is* consumed -- in immense quantities without producing any appreciable changes in behaviour save for a progressive impairment in the exercise of certain of one's sensorimotor capabilities."<sup>21</sup> The chemical ethanol slows down certain bodily functions, which impair a drinker's ability to talk, balance, and, among other things, have sex, but in cross-cultural studies, these were the only constants.<sup>22</sup> Given this, any disinhibiting effects or loss of reason associated with drunken comportment are socially constructed. Except for sensorimotor skills, drinking behaviour is learned behaviour in every other way. Therefore, drunken comportment does not simply reveal anxieties and inhibitions but rather drinking patterns contain their own rules of behaviour that may include releasing

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<sup>19</sup> Kettel Bruun, "Drinking Practices and Their Social Function," in Salvatore Pablo Lucia, ed., Alcohol and Civilization (New York, 1963), p.227.

<sup>20</sup> Craig MacAndrews and Robert B. Edgerton, Drunken Comportment: A Social Explanation (Los Angeles, 1969), pp.13-14.

<sup>21</sup> MacAndrews and Edgerton, Drunken Comportment, p.36.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13; and Jeanette Norris, "Alcohol and Female Sexuality: A Look at Expectancies and Risks" Alcohol Health and Research World, XVIII (1994), p.197.

inhibitions, but may also constitute a separate set of social codes. If drunkenness is a release from anxiety, it is only because a given culture has made it so. Drinking patterns are historical events; a given culture constructs drinking patterns over time and alters them to fit its needs.

Researchers have agreed on certain widely held similarities across cultures that use alcohol. Four of these broad similarities illustrate how drinking practices are historical events. First, drinking has social meaning in any given culture. Mac Marshall claims in Beliefs, Behaviours, & Alcoholic Beverages; A Cross-Cultural Survey that even though these meanings vary across cultures, “how one should feel, how one should act, what one may say, when and where one may drink and with whom -- these and other guidelines are specified in advance for the person who would consume alcoholic beverages.”<sup>23</sup> Before drinking a single drop, people know how society expects them to behave under the influence of alcohol. Cultural expectations guide drunken comportment. Second, alcohol consumption patterns tend to be communal, especially in pre-industrial societies.<sup>24</sup> Drinking is a form of social participation. Third, any given society defines its alcohol problems.<sup>25</sup> Researchers have not yet identified a culture where drunkenness is an acceptable excuse for doing absolutely anything.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, drunken comportment contains within it a scope of acceptable behaviour and alcohol only becomes problematic when drinkers move beyond the bounds of acceptable drinking behaviour. Every culture

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<sup>23</sup> Mac Marshall, “Introduction,” in Mac Marshall, ed., Beliefs, Behaviors, & Alcoholic Beverages; A Cross-Cultural Survey (Ann Arbor, 1979), p.2; also Mandelbaum, “Alcohol and Culture,” p.15.

<sup>24</sup> Mac Marshall, “Conclusions,” in Mac Marshall, ed., Beliefs, Behaviors, & Alcoholic Beverages; A Cross-Cultural Survey (Ann Arbor, 1979), p.451.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.452.

<sup>26</sup> MacAndrews and Edgerton, Drunken Comportment, p.82

defines the role alcohol plays in social events and describes the form and boundaries of drunken comportment.

The fourth similarity researchers have found is particularly relevant for social historians; drinking patterns are gendered. Drinking patterns do not simply vary across cultures, they vary within them as well. For example in Irvin L. Child's study "A Cross-Cultural Study of Drinking: III Sex Differences," researchers rated men and women from different societies on general alcohol related variables. In all cases, men behaved differently, drank more often, and in larger amounts than women.<sup>27</sup> In her article "How Women Drink: Epidemiology of Women's Drinking and Problem Drinking," Sharon C. Wilsnack proposes that women expect different effects from drinking than men do and that women drink for different reasons than men.<sup>28</sup> Dimitra Gefou-Madianou's book Alcohol, Gender and Culture provides a broad foundation for investigating female drinking patterns beyond simply looking at quantities.<sup>29</sup> It displays the range of different drinking patterns among women and in opposition to men. Gendered drinking patterns means that multiple drinking patterns are possible within a culture, not just between cultures. Women not only drink less than men, but also they drink differently. Social historians have the opportunity to investigate drinking as a set of patterns from which people choose to define, contest, or reject their position in society. While all researchers have accepted the idea that people assert a particular social position when they decide how much to drink, they have done little work on how people

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<sup>27</sup> Irvin L. Child, *et. al.*, "A Cross-Cultural Study of Drinking: III Sex Differences" Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol (April 1965) Supp.3, p.52.

<sup>28</sup> Sharon C. Wilsnack, *et. al.*, "How Women Drink: Epidemiology of Women's Drinking and Problem Drinking" Alcohol Health and Research World, XVIII (1994), pp.173-174.

<sup>29</sup> Gefou-Madianou, ed., Alcohol, Gender and Culture, *passim*.

manipulate their social stance by choosing from a range of drunken compartments available in their culture, particularly in western countries. People not only choose to drink or abstain, but also they choose to follow a prescribed drunken compartment for a particular reason.

### **The History of Drinking**

Several anthropologists and sociologists have claimed that the bulk of current academic research into drinking centres on contemporary cultures. They also point out that research favours alcohol use in developing countries. The dearth of studies on western countries leads Gefou-Madianou to point out that, “Alcoholic beverages have been favoured for centuries in European societies as the best means to achieve a transcendent state. Despite this, few of the ethnographic studies on alcohol have concentrated on European societies.”<sup>30</sup> Alcohol researchers have few studies on European drinking patterns that address alcohol as a functioning component of culture and as a problem within that culture. Such studies are difficult without the historical background of drinking patterns. Modern European drinking patterns are products of their history. The values, expectations, and concerns over drinking originated in the distant past. Several anthropologists have contributed to the history of drinking.<sup>31</sup> However, few historians have addressed the use and abuse of drinking in the past with enough detail to ascertain the social codes drinking patterns reflect. Recent publications, such as The Changing Face of Drink: Substance, Imagery, and Behaviour, have contributed to the historical debate but most of the material

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<sup>30</sup> Gefou-Madianou, “Introduction,” p.4.

begins in the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Historians might have neglected the history of drinking patterns because on the whole they have accepted the view that alcohol affects all people in the same way. This also explains why historians have not adequately addressed drinking behaviour until the beginnings of the temperance movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The goal of any temperance movement is to reduce the amount of alcohol people drink. Instead of changing drinking behaviour, such movements seek to eliminate it. If drinking behaviour were monolithic, it would make sense to study its history as an increase or decrease in the quantity consumed. Drinking patterns are not monolithic and historians need to analyse the variety of drinking patterns as well as looking at the quantity of drink consumed.

Historians have long investigated the economic and political structures of the alcohol trade. A large body of documentation survived on alcohol as a source of income both for individuals and the state. The English considered the regulation of the retail alcohol trade important enough to enshrine it in Magna Carta.<sup>33</sup> It standardised official measurements for wine, ale, and corn, which attested to the importance contemporaries placed on the drink industry. Early historical works on alcohol concentrated on the economics and legal regulations surrounding the drink trade. H. A. Monckton's A History of English Ale and Beer focused on production methods, consumption rates, and legislation.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, A. D. Francis contributes the commercial history of wine in England in The Wine Trade. Francis does demonstrate how political concerns dictated

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<sup>31</sup> For example Susanna Barrows and Robin Room, eds., Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History (Berkeley, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> Jack S. Blocker, Jr., and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, eds., The Changing Face of Drink: Substance, Imagery, and Behaviour (Ottawa, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> H. A. Monckton, A History of English Ale and Beer (London, 1966), p.44.

tastes in wine by manipulating taxation and forbidding or encouraging wine imports as part of English foreign policy.<sup>35</sup> However, his book is for the most part the economic history of a major import, and he spends little time discussing why wine was so important to English culture. These early works give historians a sense of the importance of alcohol in early modern England but do little to illuminate why alcohol was socially important and how it affected the lives of consumers.

Almost everyone consumed alcohol, yet historians have neglected many aspects of early modern drinking. Peter Clark establishes the main location of popular drinking in The English Alehouse. He discusses the role alehouses played in popular culture.<sup>36</sup> Included in his analysis is an appreciation of how people integrated drinking and drunkenness into their lives. However, he did not have much to say about women as alehouse customers. A recent study, Judith Bennett's Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England, centres on women and alcohol. She investigates how the production of ale and beer dramatically changed over the medieval and early modern period. Women produced ale and beer at home in England until the commercialisation of the alcohol trade. Bennett analyses why the changes in production scale and economic viability facilitated women's eventual exclusion from alcohol production and relegated them to simple alcohol provision. She cites economic, political, familial, and ideological structures as the main forces operating to change the role of women from alcohol producers to serving women in order to keep their status

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> A. D. Francis, The Wine Trade (London, 1972), pp. 75, 99.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Clark, The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830 (London, 1983), pp.123-165.



consistently low within a patriarchal society.<sup>37</sup> While her research illuminates women's economic position in the drink trade, it does not adequately address questions about women as consumers. These research projects discuss drink as a vital product, necessary for the good health of the economy. They lay the foundation for a discussion of drink as people consumed it. They point to how deeply drink was ingrained in the economic and political structure of society from Magna Carta to the village alewife.

Much of the historiographical literature addressing the drinking behaviour and practices of women is located within studies on gender relations. In The Changing Face of Drink Jack S. Blocker, Jr., describes drinking behaviour as “a receptacle for other social behaviours or, more precisely, as a vector whose direction and speed are determined by the interaction of social forces.”<sup>38</sup>

Drinking patterns show up in a multitude of studies that concentrate on other aspects of behaviour. For example, in her article “The Gendering of Popular Culture in Early Modern England” Susan Dwyer Ammusen discusses male and female violence at length. Within the context of that discussion, she points out that alehouse brawls were male events, and while women were often bystanders, they were rarely participants.<sup>39</sup> A pattern of gendered violence was also one of gendered drunken comportment. In other cases, historians analyse the gendered nature of male and female relationships without resorting to violence. In Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 Linda Woodbridge suggests that male authors resented female

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<sup>37</sup> Judith M. Bennett, Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England (New York, 1996), *passim*.

<sup>38</sup> Blocker and Warsh, eds., The Changing Face of Drink, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Dwyer Ammusen, “The Gendering of Popular Culture in Early Modern England,” in Tim Harris, ed., Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850 (London, 1995), p.64.

drinking and sociability or “gossiping” and so they portrayed it negatively in literature. She claimed that,

Men of the Renaissance resented gossips for a number of rather obvious reasons: they disapproved of feminine intrusions upon male preserves like the tavern; they were inconvenienced by their wives’ being occupied with women friends when they needed clean shirts; they feared domestic disturbances if their wives got ideas, from other married women, about liberty, better clothes, spending money, control of the household budget. but there is a less obvious reason for men’s resentment of married women’s friendships: they envied them.<sup>40</sup>

Men objected to women’s socialising patterns and either recognised that female gossip sessions, which invariable involved alcohol, were different from their own or did not accept that women could follow the same drinking patterns as their husbands without being insubordinate. Research into gender studies indicates that men and women expected different drinking patterns from one another.

Studies involving ritual celebrations, particularly childbirth, examine female drinking behaviour within the context of a given event. Adrian Wilson’s The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England, 1660-1770 discusses how “the ceremony of childbirth was created by women, and its customs are intelligible in the context of women’s lives.”<sup>41</sup> However, his book concentrates on the development of birthing practices, and he leaves this extended “context of women’s lives” unexplored. Drinking was an integral part of all the ceremonies associated with childbirth, but as drinking was not essential to giving birth, he does not concentrate on explaining it. David Cressy’s Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart

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<sup>40</sup> Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance, p.237.

England also addresses the role of female drinking in the female-dominated rituals of birth, christening and churching.<sup>42</sup> While he discusses female drinking during rituals, he does not locate these drinking bouts within their context of a “female” culture that linked ritualised and daily drinking patterns. Finally, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford’s book Women In Early Modern England 1550-1720 provides a thorough overview of the social lives of women of all ranks.<sup>43</sup> However, a more detailed look at the particular drinking habits of women would serve to illuminate further a part of their lives, which women regularly used to challenge the male hierarchy. Female dominated ceremonies and social outings afforded women the opportunities to forge drinking styles of their own away from the influence and dominance of traditional male authority.

Lynn Martin’s book Alcohol, Sex, and Gender directly addresses drunken comportment and how it affected gender relations.<sup>44</sup> He concentrates on the perception that alcohol provoked lust and violence in both sexes, but that this had very different consequences for men and women.<sup>45</sup> Throughout his analysis Martin demonstrates that the gendered nature of alcohol lay in its effects on the social positions of men and women and not in the drug itself. In other words, alcohol operated the same way in men and women but because normal behavioural codes were gendered, men and women experienced different consequences of their drunken comportment. For example, contemporaries felt

<sup>41</sup> Adrian Wilson, The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England, 1660-1770 (Cambridge, 1995), p.29.

<sup>42</sup> David Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>43</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, Women In Early Modern England 1550-1720 (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> A. Lynn Martin, Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (London, 2001), *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119 and *passim*.

alcohol made all people insubordinate and unruly. Men directed their behaviour towards alehouse keepers, other customers, and sometimes their wives in drunken brawls and physical violence. Women directed their behaviour towards their husbands and the idea of male authority in general by “gossiping” and insubordinate speech.<sup>46</sup> Martin’s analysis leads to the conclusion that in traditional Europe, drink empowered both men and women. It allowed them to disrupt, and therefore, challenge social conventions. Authorities sought to contain the consequences of empowerment by controlling what, where, when, and with whom men and women drank. Alcohol, Sex, and Gender serves as a thorough introduction to the idea of gendered drinking patterns in traditional Europe. It opens the door to more detailed and focused research on the topic and puts any future research into a broad chronological and geographic perspective.

A focused study of the drinking patterns English women faced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will help illuminate the broader social histories of alcohol, gender, and early modern England. Alcohol research will benefit from examining a set of drinking practices in a past society. Understanding the social codes of the past will contribute to any analysis of how contemporary societies use alcohol. Research reflecting gender or the history of women will benefit from a focused understanding of how society transformed one drug, which physiologically affects men and women the same way, into something that promoted gender-specific patterns of behaviour and misbehaviour. The gendered nature of drunken comportment was socially constructed. In other words, men and women behaved differently while

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-118.

drinking because they learned to do so. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England were also a time of great social change. Bennett and Clark both discuss the changes to the drink trade.<sup>47</sup> What people drank also changed. For example, Francis traces the rising popularity of wine, from a nobleman's drink to the proliferation of common taverns.<sup>48</sup> The face of drink changed, but women did not change how they drank. Martin illuminates the continuity of drinking behaviour over four centuries and across three countries. Continuity itself in the face of such drastic economic, political, and social changes is worth investigating. The elastic and resilient nature of drinking patterns warrants further research because it reveals a great deal about the flexibility, variety, and employment of social codes.

### **Dissertation Plan**

I have approached the material with the aim of discovering how women drank and what they might have intended in adopting various drinking patterns. In determining what constituted a drinking pattern, anthropological research into modern drinking patterns across cultures has guided my inquiry. However, I have been careful not to adopt anthropological findings wholesale as the epidemiological approach to alcohol studies also warrants consideration. In other words, I have tried to consider drink as a necessary ingredient in social activities and as a destructive drug of dependence. In dealing with women, I have addressed feminist theories and freely used the methodologies of authors like Sara Mendelson, Patricia Crawford, and Linda Woodbridge in dealing with

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<sup>47</sup> Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England*, *passim*; and Clark, *The English Alehouse*, *passim*.

the literary evidence.<sup>49</sup> By concentrating on a wide range of printed sources, I hope I have enhanced the works of historians like Judith Bennett and Susan Dwyer Amussen who concentrate on court records when analysing women's various social roles in drinking culture.<sup>50</sup> By combining anthropological and feminist methodologies, I hope to discover both how women drank and how those patterns enabled them to enhance their lives.

The following pages are divided into three sections. The first section sets the broad social context of alcohol in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The chapters discuss the forms alcohol took, how contemporaries expected people to use it and how they expected them to abuse it. They cover both men and women but emphasise the aspects of alcohol production, distribution and consumption that affected drinking patterns, particularly female drinking patterns. They set the stage for the social and behavioural patterns of female drinking. The second section deals with the two social stereotypes of women who used alcohol in their profession; alewives and prostitutes. How they drank, and what is more important, how they operated in public drinking culture outlined the social parameters of public expectations about drinking women in general. Alewives and prostitutes in literature encompassed standards of behaviour, almost exclusively negative, to which contemporaries compared other women. The stereotypes might not have reflected reality but the values they expressed were real. The final section discusses women drinking without any ostensible dietary or medicinal purpose, in other words, women drinking in

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<sup>48</sup> Francis, *The Wine Trade*, pp. 26, 61.

<sup>49</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*; and Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance*.

<sup>50</sup> Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England*; and Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988).

order to participate in public drinking culture for their own entertainment and satisfaction. It addresses the three broad recreational drinking patterns the majority of women faced. Women drank with men, they drank during socially prescribed celebrations, and sometimes they chose their own drinking occasions. Taken together, these three patterns cover the majority of women throughout their lives and experiences. Women constructed a unique environment for each pattern. They changed their location, their behaviour, and their purpose for drinking to intoxication. Women had multiple drinking patterns available to them, from the everyday use of alcohol as a drink to a realistic challenge to patriarchal authority. Each pattern contained its own brand of insubordination and overt sexuality. While historians can extrapolate each of these drinking stereotypes and patterns to appear to be the same type of behaviour, a close analysis reveals that the small variances resonated into radically different patterns.

The first section concerns the mundane use of alcohol. Chapter two attempts to give a picture of the quantities people drank throughout an average day. It discusses the various kinds of alcohol, the availability of different drinks and the use of each drink. Once the proliferation of drink is established, chapter three discusses the medical attitudes towards alcohol, both in the diets of the sick and the healthy. Humoral theory, essentially the idea that a balance among the four humours of the body governed health and sickness, was at the heart of lay and professional beliefs about diet and nutrition. Alcohol was essential to every diet because it was the quickest way to tune the balance between what people ate and how it affected their health. Chapter four moves away from the prescribed use of alcohol into the general arguments against its abuse. This

chapter focuses on the sermons and advice literature warning against the evils of drink to a largely unrepentant society. It gives an outline of the problems contemporary moralists associated with drink. These three chapters give the basic structure of alcohol in early modern society. Even at this fundamental level drinking was gendered in its amounts, access, and expected abuse. Contemporaries viewed the very nature of drinking as different experiences for men and women.

The second section deals with the stereotypes surrounding women who depended on alcohol for their livelihood. Chapter five discusses the gargantuan figure of the alewife in popular literature. Patrons recognised her as the authority figure in the alehouse. However, her position commanded her little respect as a woman or as the operator of a business. Yet the alehouse in literature clearly belonged to her even though magistrates increasingly removed her name from the legal license. The other woman plying her trade with alcohol at the local drinking establishment was the prostitute. Chapter six investigates how prostitutes' use of alcohol in literature contributed to male fears about women gaining control over men. Successful prostitutes did not get drunk with their clients; they used alcohol to get their clients drunk and then took control away from the drunk men. Sober women in and around the drink trade were dangerous. These women were everything women were not supposed to be, and yet their association with alcohol and sex often made them irresistible to men. Real women had to deal with the lack of respect and distrust that these stereotypes generated.

The final section also deals in stereotypes, but evidence from diaries and court cases suggests some aspects of these stereotypes were realistic portrayals



of learned drinking behaviour. This in no way means that all women aspired to emulating these drinking patterns, but the patterns described in the literature provided a blueprint of expected and acceptable behaviour that women could, and probably did, follow. Chapter seven looks at drinking in courtship. Drink fueled courtship. The relationship between alcohol and sex was not straightforward but it was present. Drink engendered lust and sexual activity but the occasions for drinking during courtship also afforded other activities that provided a “safe” sexual outlet for couples. Courting couples used the semi-public drinking environments of alehouses, fairs, holy day celebrations, and the company of other courting couples that all allowed for sexual banter without actual sex. Drinking patterns during courtship might have encouraged thoughts of sex, but they also protected men and women from it.

Chapter eight and nine move away from male companionship and sex for a closer look at women drinking with other women. Childbirth and the ensuing month of ritual celebrations took place in a largely cloistered space filled with women, food, and alcohol. Chapter eight examines these ritual celebrations. Women excluded men from the birth and developed a distinct female drinking pattern among their network of female friends. These networks spilled out into everyday life and women occasionally gathered with their female “gossips” at the alehouse just to drink and socialise. Chapter nine addresses the female enclave such women made in the alehouse. Most of the literature portrays these women negatively, but behind the misogynistic judgements men described how women behaved. Sex and insubordination combined, and women challenged men by complaining about their husbands, sharing stories about sexual escapades, and rejecting their prescribed role as passive subordinates in a world

dominated by men. They grounded their friendships in collective insubordination and drink. However, their actions never served as a serious threat to the wider patriarchal authority that dominated social codes. They operated within the bounds of social acceptability in that they often limited their challenges to personal grievances and verbal assaults. On the whole, female drinking patterns were not socially destructive.

**Part I:**  
**The Social Context of Drinking**

*In vino veritas.\**

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\* Morris Palmer Tilley, ed., A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor, 1950), p. 731.

## 2. Quantities and Qualities

Now if you put it to my liberty,  
Of all meats in the world that be,  
By this light I love best drink.<sup>51</sup>

Early modern English people drank large amounts of alcohol every day. Almost every meal contained alcohol. Alcoholic drinks were a source of nourishment as well as a widely used and socially accepted recreational drug. Imported drugs such as nicotine and caffeine were new and relatively scarce until the second half of the seventeenth century. Alcohol was native, and fermented drinks like ale, beer, wine, cider, perry, and mead were easy to brew. Alcohol permeated all levels of society including all ages and both genders. In the highly stratified society of early modern England, class and gender helped determine drinking patterns. So, who drank what and how much did they drink? The social implications of drinking patterns lay not in the *per capita* amounts but in relative amounts: rich *versus* poor, and men *versus* women. The poor might have drunk less than the rich, but when they did drink, did they behave the same way? Women probably drank less than men, but did they drink less frequently or behave differently? The gendered social functions of alcohol lay within the general framework of consumption patterns. This chapter shows the varieties and availability of alcoholic beverages in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. It also lays out the general consumption patterns across status groups as the groundwork for subsequent chapters.

The variety of forms and uses of alcohol complicate any attempts at deciphering just how much the average person drank. Nevertheless, contemporaries

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<sup>51</sup> John Rastell, The Four Elements, Roger Coleman, ed. (Cambridge, 1971), p. 54.

and historians have estimated the average ale and beer consumption for the period. Since ale and beer were the staple drinks of all classes, historians can take their consumption rates as a useful guideline to the minimum amount contemporaries drank. In The Present State of London (1681), Thomas De-Laune claimed that in 1667 the city consumed 52,538,752 gallons of ale and beer combined.<sup>52</sup>

Contemporary accounts estimated that London in 1667 had between 544,600 and 696,000 people.<sup>53</sup> On average, every man, woman, and child drank about a quart of ale or beer a day.<sup>54</sup> De-Laune based his statistics on the information commercial brewers provided to the government. He could not have accounted for any domestic brewing, illicit brewing, or drink imported from the suburbs. Most likely, a quart a day underestimated the amount of ale and beer normal adults drank.

Anthony Burnaby's Essay Upon the Excising of Malt (1696) attempted to account for domestic brewing and illicit brewing by comparing the total malt consumption in London to the total population of the city in 1689. He calculated that the average *per capita* consumption of either ale or beer of any strength was about a quart a day.<sup>55</sup> However, he could not account for any malt or drink imported from the suburbs. He probably also underestimated consumption rates. Historians such as H. A. Monckton, Peter Clark, and Judith Bennet have also accepted the figure of

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas De-Laune, The Present State of London, or, Memorials Comprehending a Full and Succinct Account of the Ancient and Modern State Thereof (London, 1681), p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, estimated that London was 25% smaller in 1667 than in 1681; Anthony Burnaby, An Essay Upon the Excising of Malt (London, 1696), p. 42, set London's 1696 population at 700,000 and estimated London was 10% of the national total; and Carlo M. Cipolla, Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000-1700 (London, 1980), p. 162, cited Sir William Petty, a contemporary who gave the population of London in 1667 as 696,000.

<sup>54</sup>  $\{[(52,538,752 \text{ gallons} \times 4 \text{ quarts}) / \text{gallon}] / 696,000 \text{ people}\} / 365 \text{ days} = .83 \text{ quarts per person per day}$  or  $\{[(52,538,752 \text{ gallons} \times 4 \text{ quarts}) / \text{gallon}] / 544,600 \text{ people}\} / 365 \text{ days} = 1.06 \text{ quarts per person per day}$ .

<sup>55</sup> Burnaby, An Essay Upon the Excising of Malt, p. 43.

around a quart of ale or beer a day as a broad average consumption rate.<sup>56</sup> A quart a day was probably a minimum for most adults. Lynn Martin compiles statistics that range from one to three quarts a day.<sup>57</sup> National averages are of limited use because they do not take into account the social differences in drinkers and therefore say nothing about the social function of alcohol. They are, however, useful in pointing out the general discrepancies between then and now. The national average daily consumption of beer in the United Kingdom was just under half a pint per person in 1995.<sup>58</sup>

Contemporaries by no means settled on the acceptable amount of ale or beer they should consume in a day. However, some records reveal what authorities felt was an acceptable amount of daily drinking. Several institutions left records behind of the ale or beer they rationed to those they serviced. For example, a seventeenth-century inmate in the Bury House of Corrections received only half a quart of beer a day.<sup>59</sup> Such a small amount could reflect an attempt to punish inmates rather than an attempt to provide a normal allowance of drink. By contrast, in 1686 St. Bartholomew's Hospital allowed one and a half quarts of beer a day to each inmate.<sup>60</sup> Men expected to do hard work were allowed even more. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sailors' rations averaged one gallon of ale or

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<sup>56</sup> H. A. Monckton, A History of English Ale and Beer (London, 1966), p. 95; Peter Clark, The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830 (London, 1983), p. 190; and Judith M. Bennett, Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600 (New York, 1996), p. 17.

<sup>57</sup> A. Lynn Martin, Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (London, 2001), p. 29.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>59</sup> Gregory Austin, Alcohol in Western Society From Antiquity to 1800: A Chronological History (Oxford, 1985), p. 186.

<sup>60</sup> J. C. Drummond and A. Wilbraham, The Englishman's Food: A History of Five Centuries of English Diet (London, 1939), p. 562.

beer a day, and soldiers' received about two-thirds of a gallon a day.<sup>61</sup> Institutional rations suggest that the average amount of ale or beer people felt they needed in a day varied greatly. Unfortunately, institutional records did not specify whether the ale or beer they provided was of ordinary strength or if it was the weaker "small" ale or beer. They point out the variances on the national average and suggest that average adults drank over a quart a day.

Children's conduct books also addressed the question of how much people should drink without falling into excess. James Cleland restrained himself in The Instruction of a Young Noble-man from the classical injunction to limit his readers to three cups at a meal. He advised only "never to drinke more then nature requireth."<sup>62</sup> The indication nevertheless, in Cleland and other works, is that the classical injunction was well known. Medical sources as well as advice literature cited the injunction "that no man ought to drinke foure draughts at one meal."<sup>63</sup> Three cups of an alcoholic beverage at any one meal should have been sufficient. William Fiston in The Schoole of Good Manners . . . Teaching Children and Youth How to Behaue Themselves in All Companies added that children should "drinke small drinke, or small Wine mingled with water; and that not too much of it, for their bloud will soone be inflamed, and they in danger to surfet; besides the weakening of their braine, and spoyle of their wits."<sup>64</sup> Even using a conservative estimate of early modern cup sizes -- say a modern wine glass -- and an injunction to drink small beer, the modern alcohol equivalent would be around two or three

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<sup>61</sup> Austin, Alcohol in Western Society From Antiquity to 1800, pp. 135, 186; and Drummond and Wilbraham, The Englishman's Food, pp. 562-3.

<sup>62</sup> James Cleland, The Instructions of a Young Noble-man (Oxford, 1612), p. 211.

<sup>63</sup> James Hart, KAINIKH, or The Diet of the Diseased (London, 1633), p. 112.

<sup>64</sup> William Fiston, The School of Good Manners, or A New Schoole of Vertue, Teaching Children and Youth How to Behaue Themselves in All Companies (London, 1629), ch. 6.

glasses of fullstrength beer or wine a day spread over two meals. Children were in no way expected to abstain from alcohol.

Given the number of times the medical literature condemned the practice of giving children strong alcohol, parents probably did not follow these injunctions to the letter. Several medical writers referred to their own experiences rather than just classical injunctions for good health. In Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick (1651) James Primrose complained, “For I have seen some frequently to give their children Wine, Ale, or strong Beere, which is indeed very hurtfull for them.”<sup>65</sup> Another source warned parents, “if you suffer them [infants] to drink Wine, or strong drink, or other Potions, before they have toothed them, they will be corrupted.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, their first baby teeth will rot. After their teeth had come in, babies could have wine. Given that physicians advised parents they should limit their children’s drinking, parents probably gave children more alcohol to drink than the prescribed amounts. However, a child of fourteen presumably drank more alcohol than a child of four. Older children presumably drank more than two or three glasses of beer or wine a day, and adults even more.

### Available Alcohol

#### **Ale and Beer**

Contemporary medical authorities and social commentators described ale, and later beer, as the staple drink of all English people. In A Dyetary of Helth (1554?)

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<sup>65</sup> James Primrose, Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick (London, 1651), p. 158.

<sup>66</sup> M. A., A Rich Closet of Physical Secrets, Collected by the Elaborate Paines of Four Severall Students in Physick, And Digested Together (London, 1652), p. 19.



Andrew Boorde referred to ale as the natural drink of an Englishman.<sup>67</sup> William Bullein claimed in The Gouvernement of Healthe (1558) that beer was the “co[m]mon drinke in moste places of England.”<sup>68</sup> While over the course of the sixteenth century beer replaced ale, both were widely available.<sup>69</sup> Descriptions of English drinking by William Harrison in 1587 and Edward Chamberlayne in 1669 as well as foreign observers, such as the Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius in 1560, all named ale and beer as common drinks in every household.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, household accounts and personal diaries confirm that people consumed large quantities of ale and beer as their staple beverages.

Ale and beer came in a variety of tastes and strengths. Brewers and brewsters fermented malted grain (usually barley), yeast, and water to make ale.<sup>71</sup> They added hops to this short list of ingredients to make beer. Although the ale connors who enforced the Assize of Ale sought to ensure that brewers and brewsters added nothing to this basic list of ingredients, the general public developed a taste for variety. Tracts on brewing techniques, such as W. P. Worth’s Cerevisiarii Comes from 1692 mentioned various additives: “Cypress, Cedar, Sassafrax, Wormwood, . . . Elder, Mint, Balm . . . [and] especially Purle and Scurveygrass, here in England.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Andrew Boorde, Here Foloweth a Compe[n]dyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Helth, Made in Mou[n]tpylor (London?, 1554?), plate Gii.

<sup>68</sup> William Bullein, A New Booke Entituled the Gouvernement of Healthe (London, 1558), f. cxi<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> For this trend towards beer drinking see Boorde, Dyetary of Helth, plate Gii; Thomas Cogan, The Haven of Health (London, 1584), p. 220; and Bennett, Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England, *passim*.

<sup>70</sup> William Harrison, The Description of England, Georges Edelen, ed. (Ithaca, 1968), p. 135; Edward Chamberlayne, Angliae Notitia, or the Present State of England (London, 1669), pp. 63-5; and Levinus Lemnius, “The Touchstone of Complexions” [1560] in William Brenchley Rye, ed., England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James the First: With Extracts From the Travels of Foreign Princes and Others (New York, 1967), p. 76.

<sup>71</sup> Brewers were male, brewsters were female. Most contemporary sources differentiated between the two.

<sup>72</sup> W. P. Worth, Cerevisiarii Comes: Or, the New and True Art of Brewing, Illustrated by Various Examples in Making Beer, Ale and Other Liquors (London, 1692), pp. 111-2.

Contemporaries also added more extravagant ingredients, like parboiled chickens, to their brews.<sup>73</sup> Ale and beer often served as the basic ingredient for a variety of drinks, much like carbonated water does today. The varieties of ale and beer attested to their popularity. The diarist Samuel Pepys mentioned Margate ale, Lambeth ale, Northdown ale, cock ale, lamb's wool, and buttered ale.<sup>74</sup> Though ale and beer were staples in their diets, drinkers cherished different tastes. In The Haven of Health (1584), Thomas Cogan took the time to praise Oxford's beer above all others.<sup>75</sup> The diarist Celia Fiennes commented on the good ale she found in Nottingham and Leeds and the good beer in Alford, Rippon and Manchester in her travels around England. She also mentioned beer as part of every meal she recorded.<sup>76</sup> A contemporary proverb claimed that, "Good ale is wine's equal."<sup>77</sup> These references to the qualities and varieties of drink indicate that ale and beer were social pleasures as much as necessities.

The alcoholic content of ale and beer also varied, and contemporaries brewed to obtain different alcoholic strengths. To increase alcoholic content, brewers and brewsters added less water to the malt. Contemporaries called the strongest beer double beer or march beer. They brewed it to maximize the amount of alcohol produced in a hogshead.<sup>78</sup> In his popular household manual, The English Housewife (1623), Gervase Markham used one quarter of malt to make one

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<sup>73</sup> Madeleine Masson, "Introduction," in Rebecca Price, The Compleat Cook; or the Secrets of a Seventeenth-Century Housewife, Madeleine Masson, ed. (London, 1974), p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> Oscar A. Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys (London, 1963), pp. 28-9, 36; and Samuel Pepys, The Diary and Correspondence of Samuel Pepys, Richard Lord Braybrooke and Rev. Mynors Bright, eds. (London, 1879), buttered ale, II, p. 95, III, p. 149, V, p. 36; cock ale, III, p. 461; lamb's wool, VI, p. 153; Lambeth ale, I, p. 314; Margate ale, I, p. 107; and Northdown ale, I, p. 182.

<sup>75</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 223.

<sup>76</sup> Celia Fiennes, The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes 1685 - c. 1712, Christopher Morris, ed., (London, 1982), ale, pp. 86, 182; beer, pp. 43, 97, 184 and *passim*.

<sup>77</sup> Tilley, ed., A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England, p. 6.

hogshead of march beer.<sup>79</sup> Rebecca Price recorded a recipe in her manuscript cookbook in the 1680s for march beer that was even stronger. She used one and a half quarters of malt to make one hogshead of march beer.<sup>80</sup> The exact alcoholic content of a brew also depended on the conditions under which brewers and brewsters made it as well as the sophistication of the brewing techniques they used. However, modern brewers estimate that a quarter of malt produces about 76 gallons of strong beer.<sup>81</sup> Even with imperfect brewing methods, Markham and Price would have made exceptionally strong beer by today's standards.

While historians can only guess at the exact alcoholic content of brewings, contemporary authorities felt march beer, or double beer, was too strong and promoted drunkenness. Willaim Harrison claimed in The Description of England (1587) that the domestic use of march beer was common only at noblemen's tables.<sup>82</sup> However, Markham's household manual and Rebecca Price's cookbook were both written for moderately well-off households. Furthermore, many commercial alewives could afford the cost and storage space of strong beer if they felt they could sell it at a profit. Legislation suggests strong beer was too popular for the comfort of authorities. Strong beer became such a problem in alehouses that Elizabethan authorities legislated against selling double beer for public consumption.<sup>83</sup> The fact that they legislated against strong beer on several occasions demonstrated that they had difficulty suppressing its drinking in

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<sup>78</sup> According to Harrison, The Description of England, p. 458, a hogshead of beer contained 64 gallons.

<sup>79</sup> Gervase Markham, The English Housewife [1623] Michael R. Best, ed. (Kingston, 1986), pp. 206-7. A quarter of wheat equalled 8 quarts of wheat or 28 pounds.

<sup>80</sup> Price, The Compleat Cook, pp. 295-6.

<sup>81</sup> Martin, Alcohol, Sex, and Gender, p. 33.

<sup>82</sup> Harrison, The Description of England, p. 130.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Fitch, "Norwich Brewers' Marks and Trade Regulations," in Norfolk Archaeology: or Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to the Antiquities of the County of Norfolk (Norwich, 1859), p.325.

alehouses. Double and march beer were highly alcoholic by contemporary standards, and strong beer seems to have been widely available.

The strength of ordinary ale and beer was by no means standardized. The recipes for ordinary beer recorded by Richard Arnold in 1502, Harrison in 1587, and Markham in 1615 all used one quarter of malt to make about three hogsheads of ordinary strength beer.<sup>84</sup> As Harrison put it, “such (I mean) as is meet for poor men as I am to live withal, whose small maintenance (for what great thing is £40 a year . . . able to perform?)”<sup>85</sup> The strength of ale and beer varied considerably, but contemporaries seemed to appreciate a strong brew. Wealthier households tended to make stronger drinks. In her book Country House Brewing in England 1500-1900, Pamela Sambrook claimed that, “every commentator seems to agree that the ale brewed in country houses was strong, if only because this was the easiest way to ensure a reasonable quality of brew.”<sup>86</sup> The growing fashion of bottled ale, often sold at alehouses, also provided a potent brew. Samuel Pepys gave a friend a bottle of Northdown ale in 1660, and wrote that one bottle “made the poor man almost drunk.”<sup>87</sup> Pepys, a seasoned drinker, often drank more than one bottle in a sitting.<sup>88</sup> Beer in larger households might have been strong as well. The aristocratic Percy household’s records for beer brewing at their estate in Topcliffe used six quarters of malt to make twelve hogsheads of beer. They used a malt to hogshead ratio of 1:2 rather than the 1:3 ratio indicated as “ordinary” in other sources.<sup>89</sup> Harrison was content with a weaker brew because it was all he could afford. Wealthier

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<sup>84</sup> Bennett, Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England, pp. 85-6; Markham, The English Housewife, pp. 205-6; and Harrison, The Description of England, pp. 137-8.

<sup>85</sup> Harrison, The Description of England, pp. 137-8.

<sup>86</sup> Pamela Sambrook, Country House Brewing in England 1500-1900 (London, 1996), p. 235.

<sup>87</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, p. 28.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

households seemed to brew stronger ale and beer. Contemporaries wanted strong ale and beer.

Even this “ordinary” drink was potent enough to induce drunkenness. Captain Adam Eyre, another seasoned drinker writing in the mid-seventeenth century, often recorded in his diary not only when he was drunk, but also how much he spent on drink. His expenses might have covered the costs of others on occasion, but others also bought drinks for him. Given that a quart of ordinary strength ale or beer cost around 2d. in the late 1640s, Eyre probably drank over five quarts on nights when he felt he drank too much. On January 8, 1647, he spent 10d. and was so drunk he lost his saddle cloth.<sup>90</sup> On August 11 of that year he spent 1s. 6d. and came home so drunk his wife shut him out of the house “and sayd shee would be master of the house for that night.”<sup>91</sup> The following March, after he spent 1s. in the alehouse, he was drunk enough to fall off his horse.<sup>92</sup> Later in the month he and his wife spent 2s. 6d. in the alehouse on a Sunday after church. He lamented that he came home drunk that afternoon.<sup>93</sup> Drinking to excess was both affordable and accessible to ordinary householders drinking at their local alehouse.

People obtained their drinks from several sources over the course of a week. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many households brewed much of their own ale. Over the next two centuries the ratio between home-brewed and purchased ale and beer shifted in favour of commercial brewers.<sup>94</sup> However, many

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<sup>89</sup> Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer*, p. 92.

<sup>90</sup> Adam Eyre, “A Dyurnall, Or Catalogue of All My Accions and Expences From the 1st of January, 1646-[7] -- Adam Eyre,” in *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1877), p. 9, 8 January 1647.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54, 11 August 1647.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101, 9 March 1648.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104, 26 March 1648.

<sup>94</sup> Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England*, p. 27, *passim*; and Keith Wrightson, “Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660,” in Eileen Yeo and

households still combined home-brewed ale and beer with purchased drink. Households like that of Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland, brewed their own beer and ale as well as purchased it depending on where they were.<sup>95</sup> Less substantial households like that of Adam Eyre also combined home-brewed beer with that purchased from commercial alehouses.<sup>96</sup> In June of 1647, Eyre made a six-mile trip “to borrow a pann for [his] wife to brue in,” and two months later he recorded helping her set up her brewing equipment.<sup>97</sup> In addition he recorded frequent purchases of ale to take home. For example, in December of 1647, he was at Sara Witherebe’s alehouse, and she promised him that she “should have 4 hogsheads [of drink] a weeke before Candlemas.”<sup>98</sup> For smaller purchases, Eyre attended and organised ales at which neighbours came to socialise and to buy ale or beer to take home to their families.<sup>99</sup> These ales, or “drinkings,” were no longer common forms of public charity, but several seventeenth century diaries still refer to them. James Jackson’s diary contains a detailed account of a “drinking” in 1664 that included the names of the twenty-five men who came and how much they spent. A gallon of ale or beer probably cost 6d. Fifteen of the men bought three gallons either to drink on the spot or to take home.<sup>100</sup> Most likely their wives and older children would have accompanied these men as ales were traditionally household events. Several diarists drank in alehouses on a regular basis. Eyre went

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Stephen Yeo, eds., Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure (Brighton, 1981), p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> G. R. Batho, ed., The Household Papers of Henry Percy Ninth Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632) (London, 1962), purchased malt for brewing, pp. 41, 46-7, 69 and 74; purchased ale or beer pp. 15-16 and 19.

<sup>96</sup> Adam Eyre’s household consisted of his wife, one or two servants and himself.

<sup>97</sup> Eyre, “A Dyurnall,” pp. 44, 14 June 1647, and 55, 16 August 1647.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78, 6 December 1647.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 1 June 1647, 41, 3 June 1647, 42, 6 June 1647, 43, 8 June 1647, 60, 2 September 1647, and 97, 15 February 1648.

to the alehouse twice a week on average. He recorded spending about £4 in various drinking establishments over the course of two years. He drank alone, with male and female friends, and with his wife.<sup>101</sup> James Jackson and Leonard Wheatcroft also recorded frequent visits to the alehouse.<sup>102</sup> Householders of all sizes continued to get their drink from diverse locations, and drink was readily available from several sources.

Servants also obtained their drink from various places. The household in which they lived provided for their basic needs. Records from the Cecil household in the 1630s indicated that servants drank mostly small beer rather than ordinary strength beer, and their masters did not often supply them with home-brewed ale.<sup>103</sup> Servants had other means of obtaining stronger drink. As intimates of the household, they could take it without permission. A female servant in Cheshire in 1666 found herself charged with stealing strong beer, nuts, apples, bread, and cheeses from her employer while home alone at Christmas. She then invited servants from other households over to eat, drink, and be merry.<sup>104</sup> If the master was at home or the servants were honest, they could frequent the alehouse. Peter Clark's analysis of early seventeenth-century magistrates' records concludes that over 20% of alehouse clientele were servants.<sup>105</sup> Roger Lowe filled his diary with references to meeting servants, apprentices, and other young people in alehouses. Lowe, an apprentice himself, recorded going to an alehouse almost twice a week on

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<sup>100</sup> James Jackson, "James Jackson's Diary, 1650 to 1683," in W. G. Collingwood and R. G. Collingwood, eds. Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society, XXI (1921), p. 111, 16 September 1664.

<sup>101</sup> Eyre, "A Dyurnall," *passim*.

<sup>102</sup> Jackson, "Diary," *passim*; Leonard Wheatcroft, "The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover, 1627-1706," in Dorothy Riden, ed., A Seventeenth-Century Scarsdale Miscellany (Chesterfield, 1993), *passim*; and Eyre, "A Dyurnall," *passim*.

<sup>103</sup> Sambrook, Country House Brewing in England, pp. 190-2.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 234-5.

<sup>105</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, pp. 127-8.

average in 1663 and 1664.<sup>106</sup> He was a moderate drinker and often spent only 2d. However, on a few occasions he drank enough to make himself sick the next day.<sup>107</sup> Other contemporary diaries commented on the excessive drinking of young people. Sir Humphrey Mildmay's mid-seventeenth-century diary recorded his complaints about his drunk and disorderly servants, particularly in hot weather.<sup>108</sup> Mildmay drank a lot himself and so was far from promoting abstinence. The combination of drink allocated to servants, taken out of the cellar, and purchased casually at the alehouse meant young people had access to alcohol and could drink as much as they wanted. Drink was readily available from a variety of sources for servants as well as their masters.

## Wine

The English were not isolated from the broader European drinking culture. In the literature, the elite portrayed themselves as wine drinkers like their cousins across the channel. A. D. Francis' book, The Wine Trade, traces the commercial history of wine in England. According to Francis, contemporaries associated access to wine with nobility and privilege in the early sixteenth century. A Venetian ambassador in the 1550s reported that the English drank wines from throughout Europe.<sup>109</sup> Of course he probably observed only the aristocracy. However, by the end of the seventeenth century wine was available to all who could afford it.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Roger Lowe, The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-74, William L. Sachse, ed., (New Haven, 1938), *passim*. He went to the alehouse 32 times over 143 entries in 1663 and 41 times over 135 entries in 1664.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-2, 14-15 February 1664, 66, 14 July 1664, and 99, 25 March 1666.

<sup>108</sup> Philip Lee Ralph, Sir Humphrey Mildmay: Royalist Gentleman: Glimpses of the English Scene 1633-1652 (New Brunswick, 1947), p. 115.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>110</sup> A. D. Francis, The Wine Trade (London, 1972), pp. 26, 61.



Harrison also bragged about the availability of wine. He claimed that the English imported 20,000 to 30,000 tuns of wine a year or more. As for variety, he named

claret, white, red, French, etc., which amount to about fifty-six sorts . . . but also of the thirty kinds of Italian, Grecian, Spanish, Canarian, etc., whereof vernage, cute, piment, raspis, muscatel, rumney, bastard, tyre, osey, caprike, clary, and malmsey are not least of all accounted of, because of their strength and valure. For . . . the stronger the wine is, the more it is desired.<sup>111</sup>

André Simon in the History of the Wine Trade estimated that during the mid-sixteenth century, England might have imported as much as 30,000 tuns of wine in a year. However, by the late seventeenth century, official imports had fallen to almost half that amount.<sup>112</sup> Still, contemporaries had access to a variety of wines, which they drank according to their financial abilities and tastes.

As wine was a precious commodity, those who drank it did so less frequently than they drank ale or beer. Only the aristocracy drank wine as a matter of course with every meal. Wine drinking displayed their wealth and refinement. In the anonymous pamphlet Wine, Beere, and Ale, Together By the Eares, which was printed, revised and reprinted throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, the character Wine, a gentleman, described himself to Beer, a citizen, as

a companion for Princes, the least drop of my blood's worth all thy whole body. I am sent for by the Citizen, visited by the Gallants, kiss'd by the Gentlewoman. I am their life, their Genius, the Poeticall fury, the Helicon of the Muses, of better value then Beer.<sup>113</sup>

People who wished to emulate their betters also turned to wine drinking. The diarist John Evelyn sampled and evaluated local wines throughout his tour of Europe.<sup>114</sup> When he returned home, he continued to comment on the wine he drank

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<sup>111</sup> Harrison, The Description of England, p. 130. A tun equals 252 gallons.

<sup>112</sup> André Simon quoted in Francis, The Wine Trade, pp. 316-7.

<sup>113</sup> Anonymous, Wine, Beere, and Ale, Together By the Ears (London, 1629; reprint 1630 and 1658), p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> John Evelyn, The Diary of John Evelyn, E. S. deBeer, ed. (Oxford, 1955), I-II, *passim*.

during his travels around England. He drank exceptionally good Spanish wine, punch, and Canary.<sup>115</sup> His wife also drank sack. He recorded an incident in 1701 where his wife had brought only a bottle of sack to drink on her trip and was forced to use it to extinguish a coach fire.<sup>116</sup> Samuel Pepys and his wife also drank wine in abundance. Pepys was a regular customer at several Rhenish wine houses throughout London, often in the company of women other than his wife.<sup>117</sup> Still, wine was a luxury for Pepys. On July 7, 1665, he proudly recorded the contents of his wine cellar. He had various quantities of canary, claret, sack, tent, malaga, and white wines, which totalled well over one and a half hogsheads. He believed he had more than any of his friends “now alive ever had of [their] own at one time.”<sup>118</sup> Evelyn and Pepys drank wine frequently but not as a staple drink.

Those with less money also drank wine, but it seems only on special occasions. James Jackson, a poor country gentleman, recorded drinking wine only once. In 1680 he visited his son at Oxford and spent 4s. on Rhenish wine for himself and his six guests.<sup>119</sup> All Jackson’s other references to drinking indicate he drank ale and beer when at the local alehouse or in the houses of friends. Adam Eyre, a captain, and Roger Lowe, an apprentice, recorded drinking wine only once each among all their visits to alehouses. Wine was expensive. Eyre spent 3s. in the tavern in 1647, and Lowe split two pints of wine among three drinkers but would not allow one companion to pay for the shot, presumably because of the expense.<sup>120</sup> Wine remained a mark of wealth, privilege, and extravagance, but it

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, III, pp. 103, 313.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, p. 467.

<sup>117</sup> Mendelsohn, *Drinking With Pepys*, pp. 88-9.

<sup>118</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A New and Complete Transcription*, 11v., Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds. (London, 1983), p. 151.

<sup>119</sup> Jackson, “Diary,” p. 127.

<sup>120</sup> Eyre, “A Dyurnall,” p. 81, 21 December 1647; and Lowe, *The Diary of Roger Lowe*, p. 68, 14 August 1664.

was available to all. On rare occasions, small landholders and young apprentices indulged in a pint or two.

## Spirits

Several historians have commented on the explosive growth of the distilling industry in the late seventeenth century. In his article “No English Calvados? English Distillers and the Cider Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” John Chartres argues that spirits were widely established as a consumer good by the beginning of the seventeenth century. He cites a parliamentary debate on the spirit monopoly granted to Richard Drake as evidence that spirit consumption was widespread enough to warrant government regulation.<sup>121</sup> Traditionally, people used spirits as components of medicines.<sup>122</sup> The use of spirits as a recreational drink only developed slowly over the course of the seventeenth century. Before the commercialisation and promotion of spirits as a recreational drink, the distillation and distribution of spirits belonged to the women who ran the household. Authors put recipes for spirits in books they wrote for women, and the distillery was part of the kitchen. Furthermore, the few references in manuscript sources to drinking or making spirits name women as the providers. Pepys drank spirits infrequently, but of the five times he mentioned spirits, in three of them women provided the drinks. In 1663 a Mrs. Turner gave him “some spirits of her making.” In March of 1668, he had “a dram of brandy at Mrs. Hewlett’s,” and a month later Mr. Ackworth’s wife gave him several containers of spirits “of her own

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<sup>121</sup> John Chartres, “No English Calvados? English Distillers and the Cider Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in John Chartres and David Hey, eds., English Rural Society, 1500-1800: Essays in Honour of Joan Thirsk (Cambridge, 1990), p. 315.

<sup>122</sup> This topic is covered extensively in chapter 3.

distilling.”<sup>123</sup> Only in one of the five entries was the alcohol for medicinal purposes. One other rare glimpse at domestic distillation exists in the diary of the late seventeenth-century gentlewoman, Elizabeth Freke of County Cork. In 1696 she recorded, “I Gott my usquabath [whisky] on shore I stilled for my dear Father.”<sup>124</sup> She brought the whisky she made in Ireland back to England for her father’s personal use. Before and after the commercialisation of the distilling trade, women distilled spirits for their own use.

Apocatheries rather than alehouses sold spirits, and for the most part the sources treat spirits as medicines. However, household manuals and cookbooks provide a wider interpretation of the use of spirits. Larger households had distilleries. Markham, for instance, expected his English housewife to have a still early in the seventeenth century.<sup>125</sup> Later in the century Robert Codrington in his book Youths Behaviour: or Decency in Conversation Amongst Women (1672) echoed Markham’s expectations almost word for word.<sup>126</sup> Both advised that women needed a still for household “physic” and to obtain perfumes and oils. Small households could purchase spirits in order to make alcoholic infusions. Many household manuals provided an array of recipes for spirits and infusions without any medical prescriptions. Unlike Markham and Codrington’s introductions to distilling, these recipes betrayed a certain familiarity with distilling alcohol and therefore drinking it. These drinks could be described as recreational rather than medicinal.

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<sup>123</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, pp. 105, 80, 49.

<sup>124</sup> Elizabeth Freke of County Cork, 1671-1714, British Library Add. MS 45718, p. 107 [August 21, 1696.]

<sup>125</sup> Markham, The English Housewife, p. 125.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Codrington, The Second Part of Youths Behaviour: Or Decency in Conversation Amongst Women (London, 1672), p. 93.

Recipes for cinnamon water, whisky, and brandy appeared in household manuals and cookery books with only tenuous links to medicinal drinking. Some sources attributed medicinal properties to cinnamon water, but the recipe appeared often enough in non-medical tracts without prescriptive advice to suggest this was also a recreational drink. For example, Thomas Dawson's cookbook, The Good Huswifes Jewell (1587), contained two such recipes for cinnamon water, and Sir Hugh Plat's Delights for Ladies to Adorne Their Persons, Tables, Closets and Distillatories (1603) and John Murrell's A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen (1617) also gave versions of the recipe.<sup>127</sup> All recipes differed enough to disallow plagiarism, but they basically constituted a large amount of cinnamon infused in wine and distilled. Presumably people would have used such a "hot" drink combining cinnamon and spirits to keep warm on cold nights. Whisky held no solid medicinal reputation either, but authors still provided numerous recipes for it. In addition to Plat, two other cookery books, The Queens Closet Opened (1656) by W. M. and Hannah Woolley's The Cooks Guide (1664), contained whisky recipes.<sup>128</sup> Contemporaries acknowledged that whisky was an Irish import. Plat referred to it as "Irish *aqua vitae*."<sup>129</sup> James Howell, writing from Ireland in 1641, mentioned not only drinking whisky but also that the best whisky was made exclusively in Ireland.<sup>130</sup> Finally, the evidence for brandy's medicinal qualities was ambiguous. Most recipes for spirit alcohol involved

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<sup>127</sup> Sir Hugh Plat (?), Delights for Ladies, to Adorne Their Persons, Tables, Closets and Distillatories (London, 1603), plates E1<sup>2</sup>-E2, E4<sup>2</sup>-E7; Thomas Dawson, The Good Huswifes Jewell (London, 1587), pp. 47-8; and John Murrell, A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen (London, 1617), no. 68.

<sup>128</sup> W. M. , The Queens Closet Opened. Incomparable Secrets in Physick, Chirurgery, Preserving, Candyng and Cookery (London, 1656), p. 217; and Hannah Woolley, The Cooks Guide: Or, Rare Receipts for Cookery (London, 1664), p. 98.

<sup>129</sup> Plat (?), Delights for Ladies, plate E4<sup>2</sup>; see also Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 194.

<sup>130</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, p. 82.

distilling wine. Almost all cookery books gave at least one recipe for brandy. Women made brandy in England throughout the period under various names, including the all-encompassing *aqua vitae*, and with a myriad of additives. The tenuous links these three common spirits had to any real or imagined medical condition suggest they were recreational drinks, or at least served some quasi-medical purpose such as helping digestion or warming a cold person. Spirits for recreational drinking were available if not yet common.

Several authors commented on the abuse of spirits. James Primrose warned in Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick (1651) that the “custome of many” of drinking spirits to help digest venison, beef, salted fish, or fruits could be harmful if practised too often.<sup>131</sup> He was concerned that people drank spirits with their meals out of habit rather than to serve any real medicinal need. Some commentators already described the purely recreational use of spirits. As early as 1617 Fyne Moryson commented on whisky drinking in England. He claimed that, “these Drinkes the English-Irish drink largely, & in many families (especially at feasts) both men & women vse excesse therein.”<sup>132</sup> As an Irishman living in England, he did not even consider whisky a medicinal drink. By the end of the seventeenth century, some authors felt spirit drinking among the “better sort” had grown into a problem, and specifically a female one. Physicians and popular authors alike complained that women created medical excuses to drink spirits.

Thomas Tryon in Healths Grand Preservative (1682) complained,

that of late years many English Women have betaken themselves to the drinking of Brandy and other Spirits, and have invented the Black-Cherry Brandy which is in great Esteem, so that she is no body that hath not a Bottle

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<sup>131</sup> Primrose, Popular Errours, pp. 170-3.

<sup>132</sup> Drummond and Wilbraham, The Englishman's Food, pp. 138-9.

of it stand at her Elbow, or if ever so little Qualm or disorder be on the Stomack, or perhaps meerly fancied, then away to the Brandy Bottle.<sup>133</sup>

In the same vein Edward Ward commented on upper-class women drinking spirits. He claimed that, “as soon as she rises she must have a Salitary Dram to keep her stomach from the cholick, a whet before she eats to procure appetite, a plentiful dose for concoction, and to be sure a bottle of brandy under her bedside for fear of fainting in the night.”<sup>134</sup> While spirits still held their key position in the seventeenth-century pharmacopoeia, people increasingly used them for non-medical purposes. By the end of the seventeenth century recreational spirit drinking no longer hid behind medical excuses. When Rebecca Price completed her cookbook in the 1680s, she included one recipe for cherry brandy and three for brandy punches.<sup>135</sup> Spirits’ drinking had moved firmly into the realm of recreational drinking by the end of the seventeenth century and before the onset of the “gin craze” in the early eighteenth century.

### Other Drinks

Contemporaries and historians have concentrated on the major alcoholic beverages purchased and drunk in public such as ale, beer and wine. People also made other drinks like cider, perry, mead, metheglin and a host of mixtures. In some households, particularly in apple and pear growing regions, cider or perry replaced ale and beer as staple drinks. Again, recipe books provide a wealth of information about alternative drinks. The proliferation and variations of recipes suggest these drinks were well-known parts of popular culture. Published recipes

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<sup>133</sup> Thomas Tryon, Healths Grand Preservative: or The Womens Best Doctor (London, 1682), p. 9.

<sup>134</sup> Francis, The Wine Trade, p. 156.

<sup>135</sup> Price, The Compleat Cook, pp. 305-7.

were possibly reflections of widely known recipes rather than introductions to new drinks. Women seem to have shared and recorded most of these recipes. Price's manuscript cookbook is particularly useful because she credited 20 of her 39 drink recipes to other women.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, most recipes were not meticulous about methods, which suggests authors assumed women made these drinks often enough to need only minimal instructions. People made and consumed many drinks in their home and in commercial establishments in addition to the ale, beer, and wine they drank with meals. These drinks might have been rare when compared to the oceans of ale and beer consumed. However, contemporaries associated these drinks with domestic hospitality. They were available in commercial establishments but not nearly as often as they seem to have been in the home.

Part of the reason native fermented drinks not based on malt appear only sporadically in the literature was their regional associations. Apples for cider and pears for perry did not grow well all over England. In The Haven of Health (1584) Thomas Cogan pointed out that cider was "not in so common use anie where within this lande as in Worcester shire, and Glocester shyre, where fruites doe most abounde."<sup>137</sup> Yet uncommon did not mean unfamiliar as he remembered perry being sold in Oxford when he was a student.<sup>138</sup> John Taylor also listed cider and perry among his praise of English drinks in Drinke and Welcome (1637).<sup>139</sup> Contemporaries were familiar with cider, but Pepys' diary suggests it was not commonly drunk in public establishments. He recorded drinking cider four times in his diary, each at the home of a different friend or acquaintance.<sup>140</sup> Pepys also

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 291-307.

<sup>137</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 224.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>139</sup> John Taylor, Drinke and Welcome (London, 1637), *passim*.

<sup>140</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, p. 85.



received 42 gallons of cider as a gift from his nieces in 1674.<sup>141</sup> Celia Fiennes' travel diary discussed the poor cider made in Lyme at the end of the seventeenth century. She felt the makers were "careless . . . they press all sorts of apples together, else they might have as good sider as in any other parts, even as good as the Herriffordshire."<sup>142</sup> Fiennes was familiar with cider from various regions. Cider was rare but hardly exotic. When Cogan and Tryon discussed cider, they wrote mostly about how to make it rather than how to purchase it or drink it as with ale, beer, and wine.<sup>143</sup> Households that produced cider and perry were most likely not as familiar with its production as they were with the production of ale and beer. Fiennes noted that in Lyme they made "great quanteties of cider their presses are very large." Her idea of a large press still yielded only two hogsheads of cider.<sup>144</sup> Price's recipe for cider took five weeks to make and then produced only a hogshead of cider. By contrast, her recipe for march beer made one hogshead of march beer, two hogsheads of standard beer, and took only a week to make.<sup>145</sup> After making cider or perry, Hart recommended leaving it to ferment for four to five months at a minimum.<sup>146</sup> In addition, apple crops during the period produced significant numbers of apples only about once every four years, possibly less.<sup>147</sup> Households outside the major apple and pear regions that produced cider or perry probably did so irregularly and in quantities only sufficient enough for their household and guests on special occasions.

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>142</sup> Fiennes, *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, p. 41.

<sup>143</sup> Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, p. 224; and Thomas Tryon, *The Good Housewife Made a Doctor, Or, Health's Choice and Sure Friend* (London, 1685?), pp. 165-74.

<sup>144</sup> Fiennes, *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, p. 41

<sup>145</sup> Price, *The Compleat Cook*, pp. 292-6.

<sup>146</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 128.

<sup>147</sup> Chartres, "No English Cavaldos? English Distillers and the Cider Industry," p. 333.

At least some people had enough experience with cider and perry to consider it a normal drink. Andrew Boorde in A Dyetary of Helth (1554?) did not recommend it but conceded that, “they the whiche be used to it, yf it be dronke in haruest, it doth lytell harme.”<sup>148</sup> Those who were not accustomed to cider should be wary. A contemporary proverb ran, “Cider is treacherous because it smiles in a man’s face and then cuts his throat.”<sup>149</sup> Not all drinkers agreed. Price felt her family and guests enjoyed her homemade cider.<sup>150</sup> Hannah Woolley not only esteemed “Worcester-shire Redstreak” as the best cider but also provided a recipe to dress up cider as claret. She claimed her drink would “taste as quick as the briskest liquor whatever, and is a very pleasant drink, and much wholsomer than French-wine.”<sup>151</sup> The practice of substituting cider or perry for wine might have been common. Cogan claimed that, “one mistres G. solde Perie in steede of Rhenish wine, and so beguiled manie a poore Scholer.”<sup>152</sup> Tryon did not see the need for disguising cider as wine. He claimed good cider tasted “as good as White-Wine or Claret, and perhaps better than either of them for our English Bodies.”<sup>153</sup> Contemporaries were familiar with cider and perry even if they only had limited seasonal access to it.

Contemporaries also made fermented honey drinks. Authors spent little time discussing mead even though it was a native English drink. Harrison did not have a high opinion of English fermented honey drinks, but he deemed them important enough to mention in his Description of England. He noted that, “there is a kind of

<sup>148</sup> Boorde, Dyetary of Helth, plates Gii<sup>2</sup>-Giii.

<sup>149</sup> Tilley, ed., A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England, p. 101

<sup>150</sup> Price, The Compleat Cook, p. 292.

<sup>151</sup> Hannah Woolley, The Gentlewomans Companion; or a Guide to the Female Sex (London, 1682), p. 276

<sup>152</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 224.

<sup>153</sup> Tryon, The Good Houswife Made a Doctor, p. 168.

swish-swash made . . . with honeycombs and water, which the homely country wives . . . call mead, very good in mine opinion . . . [but] it differeth so much from the true metheglin as chalk from cheese.”<sup>154</sup> The mead recipes might have been inferior to Welsh metheglin, but they were alcoholic. Most sources treated metheglin as the most common fermented honey drink. Cogan remarked on how “maulse (*sic.*) it is to see howe the Welshmen will lye sucking at this drinke [metheglin] . . . . It is as naturall drinke for them, as Nectar for the gods.”<sup>155</sup> The cookbooks of the period suggest that mead and metheglin were popular drinks. Both the anonymous Compleat Cook published in 1656 and Price’s manuscript cookbook contained recipes for making metheglin.<sup>156</sup> Price’s manuscript also contained three mead recipes: one given by “Swanell,” one from Mrs. Whitehead, and one from Mrs. Renols.<sup>157</sup> Ann Cater’s manuscript cookbook from 1682 also provided a recipe for mead which she credited to her sister.<sup>158</sup> The proliferation of mead and metheglin recipes in contemporary cookbooks suggests English housewives made fermented honey drinks for their households and guests.

Women also took ale, beer, and wine and concocted their own drinks.

Popular literature acknowledged women’s role in providing alternative drinks. The author of the poem “Exaltatio Alae, the Ex-ale-tation of Ale” (1666) wrote of women making

Ale-berries, Cawdels, and Possets each one  
And Syllabubs made at the Milking-Pale,  
Although they be many, Beer comes not in any,

<sup>154</sup> Harrison, The Description of England, p. 140.

<sup>155</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 226; Methelgin was spiced mead.

<sup>156</sup> Anonymous, The Compleat Cook (London, 1656), p. 94; and Price, The Compleat Cook, p. 292.

<sup>157</sup> Price, The Compleat Cook, pp. 291-2.

<sup>158</sup> Ann Cater, “Rose Kendall and Ann Cater Their Book 1682,” in Patricia Crawford and Laura Gowing, eds., Woman’s Worlds in Seventeenth-Century England (London, 2000), p. 103.

But all are compos'd with a Pot of good Ale.<sup>159</sup>

These drinks were so common that variations on ingredients abounded in the written literature. Recipes probably drifted from oral to written culture and back again. For example, people usually made sillabubs with ale, but the author of The Compleat Cook (1656) suggested using cider, and Woolley gave recipes for making it with sack, Rhenish, or white wine.<sup>160</sup> Medical authors reserved caudles and posset drinks for the sick. However, like spirits, contemporaries probably did not limit their intake to only times of sickness. Recipes for possets and particularly sack possets abounded in the dessert sections of cookbooks.<sup>161</sup> Sack possets in particular seem to have come into fashion as a recreational drink by the middle of the seventeenth century. They were generally mixtures of cream, sugar and eggs. The mixture was heated and then curdled with sack and ale. The alcohol was not boiled off. Sack possets were social drinks. Pepys wrote about his wife's visit to a "Mrs. Jem's" to drink a sack posset in 1660.<sup>162</sup> Caudles were popular nourishing drinks for the sick, the old, and the very young. They usually consisted of some kind of porridge warmed over a fire and mixed with ale or beer. Another drink that appeared frequently in cookbooks was hippocras. The recipes for hippocras showed the least variance one from another. The basic ingredients included cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, sugar, and sometimes other spices infused in wine. The mixture was then strained through a cloth funnel known as the sleeve of Hippocrates so named after the ancient father of medicine who recommended it. Recipes appeared

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<sup>159</sup> T. C. P., Exaltatio Alae, the Ex-ale-tation of Ale (London?, 1666), p. 21.

<sup>160</sup> Anonymous, The Compleat Cook, p. 111; Woolley, The Cooks Guide, p. 91; and Hannah Woolley, The Queen-Like Closet; or, Rich Cabinet Stored With All Manner of Rare Receipts for Preserving, Candyng & Cookery, Very Pleasant and Beneficial to All Ingenious Persons of the Female Sex (London, 1670), p. 41.

<sup>161</sup> Anonymous, The Compleat Cook, pp. 80-1; Woolley, The Cooks Guide, pp. 3, 90; and Woolley, The Queen-Like Closet, pp. 48-50.

<sup>162</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, p. 40.

in medical texts, cookbooks and manuscripts throughout the period.<sup>163</sup> The diarists Henry Machyn and Samuel Pepys both recorded drinking hippocras on special occasions.<sup>164</sup> Most recipe books also contained several less common recipes for alcoholic concoctions. Historians have no way of knowing how much alcohol people consumed in these sorts of recreational drinks. However, the proliferation of recipes for recreational drinks not generally available outside the home suggests another non-commercial recreational drinking lifestyle, and it probably was an important source of alcohol and sociability.

Women not only created these drinks, but also might have been their major consumers. All of these were social drinks women made in the home, and contemporaries associated them with women. Pepys tended to refer to them as belonging to the woman of the household, even if the man was present. Literature associated female drinking with these mixtures. Authors of female-dominated literature (cookbooks) wrote most about these mixed drinks whereas in the male-dominated literature on food, drink, and diet (medical literature) they received only a passing mention. However, households kept no records, no licenses to regulate this kind of drinking, and therefore, little information survives on domestic recreational alcohol consumption. Women made these drinks and distributed them to their families and friends as part of female hospitality and drinking culture. Historians can only speculate on the role these drinks might have played. The only references left are found in cookbooks and a handful of references in literature and diaries. The drinks might have been more important to private female sociability

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<sup>163</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 232; Anonymous, The Good Huswives Handmaide for the Kitchin (London, 1594), plate 45; Price, The Compleat Cook, p. 306; and Markham, The English Housewife, p. 111.

than to the more public world of drinking ale, beer, and wine in alehouses and taverns.

### **Drinking with Meals**

People commonly began their day with a morning draught of ale, beer, or wine. Household records and diaries confirm the popularity of morning drinking. For example, the Percy family records for 1512 reveal that, at least on fish days, Lord and Lady Percy split a quart of beer and a quart of wine between them.<sup>165</sup> Pepy's diary also refers to morning draughts of strong bottled ale.<sup>166</sup> The physician James Primrose claimed that, "this is the most usual custome of all, that in the morning, after [people] are risen, they must have their morning draughts of strong Beer or Ale, and sometimes of Wine."<sup>167</sup> Other medical authorities such as Thomas Cogan and James Hart described a typical morning draught as a piece of toast soaked in a glass of strong wine such as muscadine, malmsy, or canary.<sup>168</sup> Most people began the day with a drink.

While morning drinking was a common practice, medical authorities registered concerns that morning draughts could be occasions of drunkenness. However, they restricted their advice to regulating the strength of a morning drink and advising people to eat as well rather than trying to eliminate the custom altogether. Primrose, for example, approved of morning drinking but objected to strong beer and ale.<sup>169</sup> Hart in particular acknowledged that medical opinions were

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<sup>164</sup> Henry Machyn, The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, From A. D. 1550 to A. D. 1563, John Gough Nichols, ed. (London, 1848), pp. 216, 264, 289; and Pepys, Diary, Braybrooke and Bright, eds., II, pp. 342, 515.

<sup>165</sup> Sambrook, Country House Brewing in England, p. 229.

<sup>166</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, p. 28.

<sup>167</sup> Primrose, Popular Errours, p. 168.

<sup>168</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 219; and Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 113.

<sup>169</sup> Primrose, Popular Errours, p. 168.

in contrast to popular practices. He advised his readers to eat some toast with their drink. He also cautioned that morning draughts were not healthy for every person “whatsoever our tost pots prate to the contrarie.”<sup>170</sup> Tryon also accused people of using the custom of morning draughts “to excuse their Morning-Debauches.”<sup>171</sup> Even though the comments of physicians reveal that morning drinking could lead to drunkenness, no commentator attempted to be rid of the practice altogether. The custom of beginning the day with alcohol was too firmly entrenched in most people’s daily routines to be disregarded.

People also drank with every meal. According to Harrison, everyone who could afford to do so ate a midday meal and an evening meal.<sup>172</sup> Household records and diaries give details of what people ate and drank but record little about the drinking customs which governed table etiquette. The prescriptive advice available, whether it was followed to the letter or not, provided people with guidance on how to drink while avoiding drunkenness at the table. Most authors started with the obvious injunction to drink weak drinks such as small ale and beer and wine mixed with water. Several sources also cited the classical advice that, “the first draught is good against drought, the second is for mirth, the third for pleasure and delight, and the fourth made one madde.”<sup>173</sup> Hart acknowledged that the classical advice depended on the size of the cup. He attempted to apply the classical cup sizes to this advice and came up with the guidelines that a moderate drinker should have about three quarters of a pint of wine with each meal. Immoderate drinkers had

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<sup>170</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 113.

<sup>171</sup> Tryon, The Good Housewife Made a Doctor, p. 153.

<sup>172</sup> Harrison, The Description of England, pp. 140-44.

<sup>173</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 112.

three pints of wine.<sup>174</sup> Authors also provided other strategies for avoiding drunkenness that often conflicted with one another. Harrison described drinking in a nobleman's house in 1587,

Each [person,] as necessity urgeth, calleth for a cup of such drink as him listeth to have, so that when he hath tasted of it, he delivered the cup again to some one of the standersby, who . . . restoreth it to the cupboard. . . . By this device . . . much idle tippling is furthermore cut off.

He explained that leaving the drinks on the table promoted drunkenness.<sup>175</sup> Cogan disagreed and complained that such practices allowed people to “carouse lustilie, a whole pynt or a quart of Wine, Ale or Beere.” He called the practice “beastlike rather than princelike.”<sup>176</sup> Several authors advised their readers to drink little and often during a meal to avoid drunkenness.<sup>177</sup> Yet some sources still advised people to drink a whole cup in one draught as late as 1671.<sup>178</sup> Prescriptive authors held no consensus on how to drink. However, the existence of the discussion shows they, and presumably their readers, were concerned with keeping quantities of drink under control during mealtimes.

Prescriptive authors also sought to regulate drinking before meals. In doing so they revealed many common beliefs about when to drink at the table. William Vaughan in Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health, Deriued From the Best Philosophers, as Well Moderne, as Auncient (1600) even recommended sack before a meal simply to provoke an appetite.<sup>179</sup> Apparently, people followed his advice.

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* See also Stefano Guazzo, The Ciuille Conversation of M. Stephen Guazzo, Written First in Italian, Diuided Into Foure Bookes, Richard Watkin, trans. (London, 1586), plate 195.

<sup>175</sup> Harrison, The Description of England, pp. 127-8.

<sup>176</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 202.

<sup>177</sup> Guilielmus Gratarolus, A Direction for the Health of Magistrates and Students (London, 1574), plate Ri<sup>2</sup>; Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 111; and Guazzo, The Ciuille Conversation of M. Stephen Guazzo, plate 195<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>178</sup> Anonymous, Rules of Civility (London, 1671), p. 109.

<sup>179</sup> William Vaughan, Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health, Deriued From the Best Philosophers, as Well Moderne, as Auncient (London, 1600), p. 11.



Hart observed that, “with us it is holden for an ordinary and inveterate custome to beginne our meale with a cup of sacke.”<sup>180</sup> Ostensibly, the alcohol helped prepare the stomach for digestion. Several authors deplored the practice. For example, Thomas Paynell’s loose translation of Erasmus’ *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium* taught that, “to begin [the] repaste with drink is for drunkardes.”<sup>181</sup> Cogan advised the same but acknowledged that the “common order” resisted this advice.<sup>182</sup> Authors knew their advice to drink only while eating ran against popular medical practices. Boorde advised his readers to eat before drinking “although there be olde fantastycall saynges to the contrarye.”<sup>183</sup> Even the medical literature made certain exceptions to their general advice. Physicians allowed people to drink strong wine before “grosse meats” and fruits and if they were old, had a cold stomach, or were of a hot or dry constitution.<sup>184</sup> Medical authorities never agreed, and by the mid-seventeenth century dietary advice no longer considered whether drinking before eating was appropriate or not. The question was never resolved. However, the practice of drinking before a meal was popular and by all later accounts seems to have continued.

A typical day allowed for at least three separate drinking bouts, all in the name of health and diet. People rose in the morning to a cup of drink and possibly some toast. Their midday meal and evening meal commonly started with a drink to help “concoction.” They then drank continuously throughout their meals.

Contemporaries considered alcohol a necessary part of a healthy diet. Most sources did not levy serious accusations of drunkenness at the dinner table. Rather, most

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<sup>180</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, pp. 113-4.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas Paynell, *The Civilitie of Childhode* (London, 1560).

<sup>182</sup> Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, p. 202.

<sup>183</sup> Boorde, *Dyetary of Helth*, plate Gi<sup>2</sup>.

excessive drinking took place after dinner and well into the night. Samuel Pepys, for example, in 1662 drank “five or six glasses of wine” after dinner but noted that it was against his oath of abstinence, which he regularly broke.<sup>185</sup> After-dinner carousing was a normal part of eating in company. John Evelyn recorded in his diary in 1682 how he “stole away” from a dinner party after eating to avoid the drinking session that would inevitably follow.<sup>186</sup> Mealtime drinking could easily slip into after-dinner drunkenness.

### **Economic Constraints On Drinking**

Given the abundance of alcoholic beverages as well as their varied strengths and availability, historians can expect to find a wide variety in the amounts people drank. Several factors acted to determine who consumed what alcohol and how much. One main factor was the economic and by default the social position of a particular drinker. The scale of drinking ranged anywhere from King Charles I’s household consuming 330 gallons of wine and 930 gallons of beer per day to the destitute subjects of the pamphlet The Present State of London (1647), which pleaded for inexpensive beer to sustain those who could not afford to make their own drink.<sup>187</sup> Income largely dictated the amount of alcohol a person drank. Another factor was gender. This section explains the indulgences allowed and restrictions on women as part of a socio-economic structure. It introduces only some of the complexities involved in understanding gendered drinking patterns.

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<sup>184</sup> For example, Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 206; and Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 114.

<sup>185</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, p. 177.

<sup>186</sup> Evelyn, Diary, IV, p. 296, 25 November 1682.

<sup>187</sup> De-Laune, The Present State of London, pp. 120-1; and Anonymous, A Vindication of Strong-Beere and Ale, Shewing the Excellency of our English Vineyard Consisting of Our Native Commodities (London, 1647), p. 3.

For example, a young girl employed as a servant in a household faced very different expectations and opportunities surrounding her drinking patterns from a married well-off housewife. Subsequent chapters deal with the varieties of female drinking patterns. The following section sets the restrictions of finance both men and women faced.

The great aristocratic households left behind accounts attesting to the oceans of ale, beer, and wine they consumed. Even though the records are incomplete and sporadic, they do provide a glimpse at the gentry's share of the national consumption rates. Contemporaries noted the large amounts of drink consumed at aristocratic parties and special events. At the feast of Epiphany in 1508 the Duke of Buckingham provided wine and 259 flagons of ale for his 459 guests.<sup>188</sup> Seventy-four years later Lord Burghley provided 1,000 gallons of wine for his daughter's wedding.<sup>189</sup> In 1661 Evelyn noted that on the king's arrival in London the public fountains ran with wine.<sup>190</sup> While the gentry threw grand, expensive parties, such events say little about the daily drinking habits of aristocratic households. If money was no object, how much did they choose to drink? Gregory Austin estimates that each member of a gentry household drank 2.5-4 quarts of beer and 0.5-1 modern standard wine glass a day in the normal course of household eating.<sup>191</sup> However, the gentry were often hard to separate from their households. Accounts covering long periods and the entire household tend to show a pattern of moderation. The Earl of Leicester's account for 1559-61 averaged just over a quart of beer per

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<sup>188</sup> Andrew B Appleby, "Diet in Sixteenth-Century England: Sources, Problems, Possibilities," in Charles Webster, ed., Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1979), p. 98.

<sup>189</sup> Austin, Alcohol in Western Society From Antiquity to 1800, p. 172.

<sup>190</sup> Evelyn, Diary, III, p. 281, 23 April 1661.

<sup>191</sup> Austin, Alcohol in Western Society From Antiquity to 1800, p. 172; based on 750-1250 gallons of wine a year in a household averaging 75 people and a 200 ml. standard wine glass.

person every day.<sup>192</sup> In contrast, the accounts for Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland, show an average for 1585-7 of four quarts of beer per person in addition to a standard glass of wine for gentry and high ranking servants every day.<sup>193</sup> In 1599, the Percy household drank six quarts of beer per person every day.<sup>194</sup> Unfortunately, the author neglected to record the amount of wine drunk. In 1634 each member of the household of William Cecil drank over 1.6 quarts of small beer a day. The nine gentry members of the household and their guests consumed together an additional 5.5 gallons a day of ale, beer, braggett, and wine.<sup>195</sup> Even these accounts give an incomplete picture. They do not always separate the gentry from servants, nor do they account for alcohol given as a gift, purchased abroad, drunk travelling, or bought and consumed at the local alehouses, taverns, and inns by gentry and servants alike. Individual members of the household probably drank much more.

Household accounts also contained some weekly expenses that gave a clearer picture of how much alcohol a member of the gentry might consume. The Earl of Leicester's accounts for 1558-9 recorded several small purchases of beer and Rhenish wine. They also often detailed where these small quantities were going. When the Earl went abroad, he took with him between 4.5 and 9 gallons of Rhenish wine and 1-2 gallons of beer.<sup>196</sup> The large amount of wine suggests he intended at least some of it to be a gift for the table. Unfortunately, the Earl's records did not provide information on who travelled and how long they were abroad. The

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<sup>192</sup> Simon Adams, ed., Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-1561, 1584-1586 (London, 1995), pp. 15-25.

<sup>193</sup> Batho, ed., The Household Papers of Henry Percy Ninth Earl of Northumberland, pp.45-7; I have assumed wine drinkers comprised half the household.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>195</sup> Sambrook, Country House Brewing in England, p. 193.

<sup>196</sup> Adams, ed., Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, pp. 92-6.

household of Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, provided better records. In 1591 Percy spent a week at Bath with nine other gentlemen and a dozen servants. He provided the party with almost seven quarts of beer a day per person and a standard glass of wine a day for each gentleman.<sup>197</sup> If they were like the Earl of Leicester, his guests could very well have brought additional wine with them to dinner. When Percy took his family to London for a week, it averaged 4.5 quarts of beer for each household member and roughly a quart of wine for each gentry member per day.<sup>198</sup> One week in the Cecil household in the seventeenth century averaged almost 3 quarts of small beer for everyone and over 3.5 quarts of ale for each member of the family, guest, and high ranking servant per day.<sup>199</sup> None of these records account for alcohol purchased in a public drinking establishment or brought as a gift by other guests. The gentry drank considerably more than general household records revealed.

At least one account detailed individual amounts wealthy householders drank during a meal. In 1662 Pepys wrote a quantitative description of a real drinking bout. After dinner one evening he drank “five or six glasses of wine” and added that he would continue to drink after dinner until he vowed to abstain from wine again.<sup>200</sup> Unfortunately, he gave no account of how much beer, ale, and wine he consumed with his meal or how big the glasses were. In 1685 Tryon possibly shed some light on what he considered excessive but not untypical drinking by people with the financial means to drink as they pleased. He complained of claret drinkers that, “if their Purse be but strong enough, they must have a Glass or two or three

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<sup>197</sup> Batho, ed., The Household Papers of Henry Percy Ninth Earl of Northumberland, pp. 8-15.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

<sup>199</sup> Sambrook, Country House Brewing in England, p. 192.

<sup>200</sup> Mendelsohn, Drinking With Pepys, p. 117.

before Dinner . . . and four or five Glasses at Dinner . . . and five or six more after Dinner.”<sup>201</sup> If Pepys confessed to five or six glasses after dinner, he might have consumed in total between ten and fourteen glasses of wine in an evening. Pepys’ extensive accounting of his own drinking also suggests that those with the financial means drank much more than what their household records revealed. Pepys bought drinks in taverns, drank at friends’ houses, and sent alcohol to his friends and family as gifts. Chances are, this was typical behaviour, and household accounts may gravely underestimate household drinking.

Servants also lived in gentry households, and accounts of “room and board” do not take into consideration the recreational drinking servants paid for themselves. Men and women who lived by their wages, either partially or entirely, also drank a portion of those wages away. Their earnings and the cost of drinks largely determined how much and what they drank. In The English Alehouse, Peter Clark discusses the difficulty in pinning down the cost of ale and beer.<sup>202</sup> Any prices are estimates only and might not have been standard measures or standard strengths. Difficulties aside, some comparisons are possible. In the early part of the sixteenth century, a male day labourer received about 4d. a day. Women’s wages were between three quarters and half that of men’s. Wine was about 2d. a quart and ale sold for 1-2d. a gallon.<sup>203</sup> A male labourer then could either buy two quarts of wine or between eight and sixteen quarts of ale for himself and his family. By the early seventeenth century a male labourer earned about 8d. per day. A quart

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<sup>201</sup> Tryon, The Good Houswife Made a Doctor, pp. 162-3.

<sup>202</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, pp. 104, 118-9n.

<sup>203</sup> Wages: Bennett, Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England, p. 1; wine: Cornelius Walford, “Early Laws and Customs in Great Britain Regarding Food,” Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 8 (1880), p. 79; and ale and beer: Judith M. Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” Past and Present CXXXIV (1992), p. 20n.

of wine now ranged between 4d. and 10d., and a quart of standard strength ale or beer cost almost 1d.<sup>204</sup> He could either buy 1-2 quarts of wine or over eight quarts of ale or beer. By the mid-seventeenth century the official prices for a quart of wine were 7d. for French wine, 12d. for Rhenish wine and 18d. for strong Spanish wines.<sup>205</sup> Beer and ale were around 5d. a gallon.<sup>206</sup> On average then a person could still buy about ten times as much beer as wine. Relative costs changed very little over the period. Wine remained expensive, and ale or beer remained cheap enough to be affordable. A quart of ale or beer a day in an alehouse cost roughly 12% of a daily wage for a labouring man throughout the period. Most labourers could then afford to purchase a quart of ale or beer every day.

If labourers were anything like their employers, they probably spent more than 12% of their wages at the alehouse. William Harrison's detailed description of his wife's monthly brewing included its costing. Harrison reckoned it cost him £12 a year to brew for his household. His income was £40 a year.<sup>207</sup> He spent around 30% of his income on drink for his household. If a poor labouring man did the same, he would have bought at least two quarts of standard strength beer a day or its equivalent in small beer. Captain Adam Eyre recorded spending £3 9s. 5d. in alehouses buying himself and his friends drinks in 1647. He found himself in debt at the end of the year and recorded that he had "not past 30l. per ann. to live on; wherfore [he was] resolved herafter never to pay for any body in the alehouse, nor

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<sup>204</sup> Wages: Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England*, p. 1; wine: mean between 1536 prices given in Walford, "Early laws and customs in Great Britain regarding food," p. 79 and the 1657 legal prices given in Francis, *The Wine Trade*, p. 57; and ale and beer: Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 119n.

<sup>205</sup> Francis, *The Wine Trade*, p. 57.

<sup>206</sup> Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 119n; based on a 66% rise in prices from 3d. per gallon in the 1570s.

<sup>207</sup> Harrison, *The Description of England*, p. 138.

never to entangle [himself] in company so much again.”<sup>208</sup> Eyre spent over 10% of his income in alehouses in addition to what his wife brewed at home. He felt this was too much, but his drinking and socialising in the alehouse continued throughout the following year despite his recorded reservations. As for servants, they too could afford such extravagance. If servants drank over a quart of small beer at home and perhaps a quart or two of standard strength beer abroad a few times a week, their alcohol intake started to look more like that of their masters. The apprentice, Roger Lowe, often went to the alehouse, and on 68 occasions he recorded how much he spent on drink. Since 40% of his entries were for 2d. and he drank ale by the quart, a quart of standard strength ale probably cost 2d. and small drink 1d.. With these costs in mind, 55% of his entries record him paying for more than one quart of beer. On those occasions, he most often bought three quarts.<sup>209</sup> Lowe bought drinks for others, but he also had drinks bought for him and more often than not simply paid for his own drinks. He did not record going to the alehouse every day, but he also did not write every day. When he did go, he averaged two quarts of ale each time. Two quarts of ale at the local alehouse seems about normal for working men and women. For some labourers, this represented their daily alcohol intake, but for servants and perhaps better paid workers it was only a minimum.

The very poor drank as much as they could afford. Historians J. C. Drummond and Peter Clark agree that a pint of small beer contained 150-200 calories as well as many of the vitamins and minerals needed in a relatively healthy 2000-2500 calorie daily diet.<sup>210</sup> In 1647 the author of the anonymous pamphlet, A Vindication of Strong-Beere and Ale, worried that the crackdown on alehouses

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<sup>208</sup> Eyre, “A Dyurnall,” *passim* and p. 81, 22 December 1647.

<sup>209</sup> Lowe, The Diary of Roger Lowe, *passim*.



disadvantaged poor families who depended on retail ale and beer for their diets.<sup>211</sup>

Ale and beer were often cheaper than a standard loaf of bread. In the early seventeenth century when standard drink averaged 1d. a quart, bread averaged 4.5d. for a standard loaf.<sup>212</sup> When the price of drink rose to 1.25d. a quart later in the century, bread rose to 6d. a loaf.<sup>213</sup> Beer and ale cost less than bread yet still provided the nourishment people needed. Those who lived in poverty and chronic underemployment made even less than day labourers. In 1685 Richard Dunning wrote a pamphlet aimed at reforming the county of Devonshire's poor relief. In it he revealed that authorities expected a person wavering between begging and minimal employment to live off £5 a year or about 4d. a day.<sup>214</sup> In 1685 a loaf of bread averaged 4.8d.<sup>215</sup> The logical alternative was to drink ale or beer. Compared to their richer countrymen, the poor did not drink large amounts. However, in proportion to what they could afford to eat, they probably did. Harrison's description of the "poorer sort" confirmed this. He described "the meaner sort of husbandmen and country inhabitants" as succumbing to

surfeiting and drunkenness, which they rather fall into for want of heed-taking than willfully following or delighting in those errors of set mind and purpose. It may be that divers of them, living at home with hard and pinching diet, small drink, and some of them having scarce enough of that.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Drummond and Wilbraham, *The Englishman's Food*, pp. 137-8; and Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 111.

<sup>211</sup> Anonymous, *A Vindication of Strong-Beere and Ale*, p. 3.

<sup>212</sup> B. R. Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 497; bread prices averaged 1600-30.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*; bread prices averaged 1651-85.

<sup>214</sup> Richard Dunning, *A Plain and Easie Method; Shewing How the Office of the Overseer of the Poor May be Managed, Whereby it May be 9000l. Per Annum Advantage to the County of Devon, Without Abating the Weekly Relief of Any Poor or Doing a Penny of Damage to Any Person* (London, 1685), pp. 5-6.

<sup>215</sup> Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, p.497.

<sup>216</sup> Harrison, *The Description of England*, p. 132.

They easily became intoxicated without much alcohol. Poor people relied on ale and beer for their nutritional needs, but they no doubt felt the effects of the alcohol as well.

## Conclusions

Despite the inability to pin down accurately the amount of alcohol average people consumed in a given day, historians still have a great deal of information about how much people drank. None of the sources recorded consumption patterns in order to ascertain drinking habits. Contemporaries wrote financial records, political policies, spiritual reflections, and personal diaries for other reasons. Inadvertently, they recorded how much they drank, how much they thought they should drink, what they drank, and when. In any case, accurate statistics can be misleading. They tend to present drinking patterns as monolithic when in fact they varied along all social, economic, regional, religious, and gender vectors. Drinking practices were also hotly contested. Contemporaries did not agree on how much or exactly what anyone should drink. More important is the scope of drinking available to everyone. People had a variety of drinks, venues, and schedules available to them to enact their chosen drinking patterns. For example, not everyone began the day with a morning cup of ale, but if anyone chose to do so, no one considered it unusual. Even commentators who disagreed with the practice acknowledged that it was widespread. Likewise, many people who drank ale and beer also occasionally drank cider, when it was available, and wine, when they could afford it. Also, while recreational spirit drinking was not widespread, no one seemed to consider it taboo. Variety and availability in drinks were the norm. The records from household brewings, diaries, and social commentators indicated that

those who could afford to do so drank a wide variety of strong brews in most social and culinary situations.

### 3. Medicinal Drinking

There are more old drunkards than old physicians.<sup>217</sup>

Drink wine and have the gout and drink no wine and have the gout too.<sup>218</sup>

The early modern pharmacopoeia was heavily dependant on alcohol as a solvent for medicine and a curative ingredient in prescriptions. How contemporary healers used alcohol reveals another aspect of both early modern drinking and women's wider roles as the producers, providers, and drinkers of alcohol. Drinking for "physick" constituted an important drinking pattern. Men and women took prescriptions both to prevent ailments from arising and to cure diagnosed illnesses. A person did not need to suffer from a recognisable disease to take "physick." People drank enough alcohol trying to preserve or restore their health for historians to consider medicinal drinking as a significant source of alcohol in many people's diets. Research into women's roles as medical practitioners suggests women made and prescribed most of these alcohol-laden medicinal drinks. Furthermore, women possibly "took physick" more often than men. Contemporaries had a gendered understanding of the body, health, and sickness. They not only believed that women were more susceptible to diseases but also that women endured a host of physical and mental ailments which men were spared. This chapter investigates women's roles as the producers, prescribers, and patients of medicinal drinking. It outlines the general medical principles that healers worked with as well as examines women's roles as medical practitioners. It also suggests women had a large

part in the role of alcohol in medicine as part of their household duties. Finally, by analysing contemporary discussions about the role of alcohol in the diet, this chapter suggests how the gendered view of women's bodies, their diseases, or menstrual cycles meant women might have consumed large amounts of alcohol for medicinal purposes. Women perpetuated and participated in general medicinal drinking both as a preventative and curative "physick".

To understand the effect medical practitioners and caregivers expected alcohol to have on male and female bodies requires a broad understanding of contemporary medical theories. Early modern medical theories stemmed from classical authors such as Hippocrates, Pliny, and Galen. Classical authors expounded the theory that the body was governed by four humors. Popular medical writers expected readers to understand some basics of this humoral theory. In his extremely popular book, The Castel of Helth (1541), Sir Thomas Elyot argued that all laymen, like himself, should understand basic medical theories to preserve their health. Elyot then went on to explain the humoral theory of how the body worked.<sup>219</sup> The four humours governed the body; blood, phlegm, choler (yellow bile), and melancholy (black bile.) An imbalance in these humours caused sickness. The purpose of medicine was to restore the balance among them.<sup>220</sup> Each humour had its own temperature; blood was hot and moist,

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<sup>217</sup> Morris Palmer Tilley, ed., A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor, 1950), p. 175.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 730.

<sup>219</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot, The Castel of Helth (London? 1541), plate Aii<sup>b</sup> and *passim*. For another explanation of the Galenic system see Mary Lindemann, Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, UK, 1999), pp. 10-17.

<sup>220</sup> Lindemann, Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe, p. 17.

phlegm was cold and moist, choler was hot and dry and melancholy was cold and dry.<sup>221</sup> Elyot's book was perhaps the most popular work on humoral theory written for the laity, but it was not unique. Books like Christopher Laugton's An Introduction Into Phisycke, Wyth an Úniuersal Dyet (1545?) and Everard Maynwarding's Tutela Sanitatis Sive Vita Protracta. The Protection of Long Life, and Detection of Its Brevity, From Diaetetic Causes and Common Customs (1664) provided similar outlines of humoral theory for lay readers<sup>222</sup>. In her article "Food, Status and Knowledge: Attitudes to Diet in Early Modern England," Margaret Pelling argues that the vernacular medical literature helped explain and "demystify" humoral theory.<sup>223</sup> Publications not specifically aimed at professional physicians attested to the popular understanding and acceptance of humoral theory. An indication of the widespread acceptance of humoral theory was the nearly universal use of hot, cold, moist, and dry descriptions for the medicinal properties of body temperments, foods, and drinks. General household manuals such as Gervase Markham's The English Housewife (1623) used the language of humoral theory without explanation.<sup>224</sup> Markham assumed it was common knowledge. Even popular printed works like almanacs gave information such as the best times for blood-letting

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<sup>221</sup> Christopher Laugton, An Introduction into Phisycke, With an Universal Dyet (London? 1545?), f. xliii-xliiii; and Elyot, The Castel of Helth, plates Bii-Biii<sup>a</sup>

<sup>222</sup> Laugton, An Introduction into Phisycke, *passim*; and Everard Maynwarding, Tutela Sanitatis. Sive Vita Protracta. The Protection of Long Life, and Detection of its Brevity, From Diaetetic Causes and Common Customs (London, 1664), *passim*.

<sup>223</sup> Margaret Pelling, "Food, Status and Knowledge: Attitudes to Diet in Early Modern England," in The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England (London, 1998), p. 52.

<sup>224</sup> Gervase Markham, The English Housewife [1623], Michael R. Best, ed. (Kingston, 1986), p. xxxii.

based on the humoral view of the body.<sup>225</sup> The basics of humoral theory formed the language with which authors discussed health and sickness and, more importantly, how readers understood it.

Contemporary medical practitioners, both lay and learned, sought to regulate health and illness through balancing the four humours. Blood-letting, plasters, clysters, and pills were popular, but more often people maintained and restored their health through regulating their diet. Alcohol, food, and personal constitutions combined either to create a humoral balance or to upset that balance and cause illness. “Contraries” in medical prescriptions cured imbalances in the body. For example, Guiliemus Gratarolus in A Direction for the Health of Magistrates and Students (1574) recommended, “to colde and drie complexions, the claret and sweet Wine (because it is very hoate.)”<sup>226</sup> Individuals had to consider whether their constitutions were hot, cold, moist, or dry and then try to correct any imbalances with food or drink of the opposite qualities. In The Haven of Health (1584) Thomas Cogan gave typical advice when he recommended a small quantity of sack or *aqua vitae*, both considered very hot drinks, to people with digestive problems or “cold” stomachs.<sup>227</sup> If people were healthy, they still had to balance the temperament of their food with appropriate drinks. For example, Cogan advised that, “the grosser, dryer, and colder the meat is the stronger should the drink be.”<sup>228</sup> Authors of medical handbooks sought to balance the health of their readers by

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<sup>225</sup> Doreen Evenden Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England (Bowling Green, OH, 1988), p. 52.

<sup>226</sup> Guilielmus Gratarolus, A Direction for the Health of Magistrates and Students (London, 1574), plate Gii<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>227</sup> Thomas Cogan, The Haven of Health (London, 1584), p. 205.

regulating what people drank. They discussed the various medical merits and pitfalls of drinking spirits, wine, ale, beer and water at length and concentrated on how these common drinks affected a person's health. Authors used biblical and classical advice as well as empirical observations to make their cases either for or against particular drinks. In doing so, they revealed the popular attitudes towards wine and beer, or alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks as well as the perceived effects of alcohol and the believed strengths of each drink. Most importantly, authors explained the central role alcohol played in promoting and restoring health. The medical beliefs about drink demonstrate another aspect of the multi-faceted role alcohol played in the health and behaviour of early modern people.

Humoral theory contained a gendered notion of what constituted a balance among the four humours. Since prescribed medications and diets depended on restoring a balance, the different balances between male and female bodies meant men and women reacted to diet and medication differently, even if they suffered the same afflictions. Men were hot and dry, but women were cold and moist.<sup>229</sup> An early fifteenth-century English gynaecological tract explained that female menstruation testified to the reduced "heat" of women's bodies; women bled what their bodies could not otherwise burn.<sup>230</sup> While men and women do have different metabolic constitutions, early modern medicine put them at fundamentally opposite ends of the scale that measured all illnesses and cures. For example, Leuine

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<sup>228</sup> Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, p. 205.

<sup>229</sup> Sara Mendleson and Patricia Crawford, *Women In Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 19.

<sup>230</sup> Beryl Rowland, ed. and trans., *Medieval Woman's Guide to Health: The First English Gynecological Handbook* (Kent, OH, 1981), p. 59.



Lemie, a Dutch physician who travelled in England, noted in The Touchstone of Complexions (1581) that “cold” and “moist” temperatures made men fat, weak, slothful and “for the most part . . . effeminate, nice, tender, without courage and spyrite.”<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, cold and moist constitutions were “defects and wants of Nature” and accounted for the reason that men were wiser than women.<sup>232</sup> Sometimes this resulted in different prescriptions for the same illness in men and women. For example, in The Kitchen Physician, the author cited a cure for “faintness of the heart” to be “some Aqua-vitae, or Metheglin, made a little warm, or Imperial water,” which were all various forms of spirits. He also warned that, “these means are good for men, but not for women.”<sup>233</sup> Medical practitioners treated men and women differently because their whole natures were different.

The dichotomy between male and female physiology was not necessarily organ-specific. However, most often the physical location of this dichotomy was the womb. Contemporaries thought women’s reproductive organs adversely affected their entire mental and physical stability.<sup>234</sup> Medical theories attributed so many problems to women’s uteri that the midwife, Jane Sharp, concluded; “If one womb in a woman be the cause of so many strong and violent diseases, she might be thought a happy

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<sup>231</sup> Leuine Lemie, The Touchstone of Complexions. Generallye Appliable, Expedient and Profitable for All Such, as be Desirous and Carefull of Their Bodyly Health, Thomas Newton, trans. (London, 1581), plate 82.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, plates 66, 81.

<sup>233</sup> T. K., The Kitchen-Physician: Or, A Guide for Good-Housewives in Maintaining Their Families in Health (London, 1680), pp. 70-1.

<sup>234</sup> Lucinda McCray Beier, Sufferers and Healers: The Experience of Illness in Seventeenth-Century England (London, 1987), p. 214; also see Edward Jordan, A Brief Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother (London, 1603) quoted in Lindemann, Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe, p. 34.

woman of our sex that was born without a womb.”<sup>235</sup> Physicians linked women’s metabolic constitutions, and thus the whole medical understanding of women, to the functioning of their reproductive cycle. The idea that “hysteria” or “rage of the womb” in women stemmed from an imbalance in the uterus was commonplace. Some physicians were also willing to admit the reverse. In The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse Wherein Methodically are Handled All Uterine Affects, or Diseases Arising From the Wombe (1636), John Sadler attempted to explain that some cases of ceasing menstruation

as in Viragoes and virill women, who through their heat and strength of nature, digest and consume all their last nourishment. . . . But these I judge rather to be *Anthromophræ*, women-eaters, than women-breeders, because they consume one of the principles of generation . . . the menstruous blood.<sup>236</sup>

He attributed a medical problem to a choice in behaviour. If a woman acted like a man, metabolically she became one. More commonly, theoretical metabolic differences between men and women translated into differences in physical and mental strengths, as Thomas Tryon claimed in Healths Grand Preservative (1682);

women cannot bear or endure any extreems, either in Meats, Drinks, or Exercises, without manifest danger to their Healths, they being generally more Sanguine then Men, their Central Heat weaker, therefore all kinds of Inequality makes deeper Impression on them, and they are sooner moved to all kinds of Passions . . . And for the same cause Women are more Chast then Men, and of colder Natures.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Jane Sharp, “The Midwives Book,” in Randolph Trumbach, ed., Marriage, Sex, and the Family in England 1661-1800: A Forty-Four Volume Facsimile Series (London, 1985), p. 335.

<sup>236</sup> John Sadler, The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse Wherein Methodically are Handled All Uterine Affects, or Diseases Arising From the Wombe; Enabling Women to Informe the Physician About the Cause of Their Griefe. (London, 1636), pp. 17-18.

<sup>237</sup> Thomas Tryon, Healths Grand Preservative: or The Womens Best Doctor. (London, 1682), p. 11.

Mixing physical strength and moral character into the language of medical theory meant authors gave women biological reasons to reinforce restrictions on their social conduct. Women's wombs made them weak, cold and chaste; any deviation was not only a moral lapse but also a medical problem. In a pharmacopoeia largely based on regulating drink, the gendered notion of female health and sickness meant men and women were assigned different medicinal drinking patterns.

### **Popular Practitioners**

While the majority of lay medical knowledge was probably transmitted through oral culture, many medical books accessible to lay people recorded popular medical beliefs, advice, and receipts. This chapter concentrates on drinking in the medical literature intended for lay use. In Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England Doreen Evenden Nagy examines eighty-three medical books published between 1640 and 1660. She finds that only nine were written in Greek or Latin, and therefore, were not accessible to most literate lay people. Furthermore, the authors of thirty-four books wrote explicitly for lay use.<sup>238</sup> Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries physicians and lay practitioners collected and corrected medical advice for a lay audience. Phillip Barrough wrote The Method of Phisick (1583), out of a religious conviction that the body was a gift from God, and it was every person's duty to look after their health.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, pp. 45-6.

<sup>239</sup> Philip Barrough, The Method of Phisick, Containing the Causes, Signes, and Cvres of Inward Diseases in Mans Body, From the Head to the Foote (London, 1610), sig. A7r-v; see also Andrew Wear, "The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern

In a similar vein, the physician James Hart wrote The Diet of the Diseased (1633) “to benefit the publike.”<sup>240</sup> Likewise, the physician Robert Wittie translated James Primrose’s Popular Errours (1638) from Latin into English to improve lay medical knowledge.<sup>241</sup> In a time when the prevailing medical culture was one of self-diagnosis and self-prescription, historians can use the proliferation of such texts to examine how people looked after their health more readily than the best physician’s case book.

These sources provide information about popular medical culture. First, readers who could afford the expensive medical books and herbals would have read them, used the information for their entire households and passed that information along to other healers. The information in the tracts reached beyond just their reading public and slipped into a more general, and more oral, medical culture.<sup>242</sup> Second, authors designed these texts to reassure their readers that they could tackle the illnesses and infirmities that confounded the lives of rich and poor alike.<sup>243</sup> They repeated many of the prescriptions, recipes, and general rules throughout different texts and attributed them to various people. Such repetition and borrowing suggest that popular healers were already familiar with much of the advice. The purpose of such texts was to jog people’s memories more than to teach them new information. Beliefs about the human body and how to maintain

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England,” in Roy Porter, ed., The Popularization of Medicine 1650-1850 (London, 1992), pp. 27-8.

<sup>240</sup> James Hart, KAINIKH, or The Diet of the Diseased (London, 1633), pp. 26-7; see also Andrew Wear, “The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England,” pp. 24-6.

<sup>241</sup> James Primrose, Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick (London, 1651), sig. A 3v; in Andrew Wear, “The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England,” pp. 24-6.

<sup>242</sup> Paul Slack, “Mirrors of Health and Treasures of Poor Men: the Uses of the Vernacular Medical Literature in Tudor England,” in Charles Webster, ed., Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1979), p.260.

it might have originated in popular or elite, learned or unlearned culture, but they reaffirmed one another. Authors confirmed this when they cited classical texts then credited “a gentlewoman” with a prescription or invoked common knowledge.<sup>244</sup> Furthermore, when professional and popular medical practices clashed, authors pointed out that their advice was a correction of popular opinion, thus revealing popular practices. A careful reading of elite texts, therefore, reveals many popular medical practices.

Information presented in books written by physicians for the laity were more a reflection of popular medical practices than an attempt to impose learned medicine on a separate popular medical tradition. Medical knowledge was in no way limited to male, university-trained physicians. Accompanying the classical Galenic view of the universities was the view that diseases were external, and practitioners could treat them all with medications.<sup>245</sup> For example, the *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis* (1618), which ostensibly contained the accumulated medical knowledge of the London Galenic physicians, listed one hundred and twenty-two chemical preparations.<sup>246</sup> Humoral and ontological approaches combined in practice to produce a range of dietary advice and specific medications to prevent and treat illnesses. Popular medical texts were rich in receipts for specific medications. Professional physicians, educated lay people and popular practitioners all contributed to the receipts used to cure various illnesses.

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<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, p.273.

<sup>244</sup> Every text cited classical authors; the “gentlewoman” was cited in Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, p. 229; and Barrough, *The Method of Phisick*, p. 200, justified his medical advice with a common proverb.

<sup>245</sup> For a wider discussion see Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, p 77.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*.

Medical handbooks often made no distinction between learned and lay receipts; nor did they significantly favour the contributions of men over women. For example, in Nature Exenterata: or Nature Unbowelled By the Most Exquisite Anatomizer of Her (1655), of the one hundred and eleven listed contributors, only twenty-two were professional physicians and only sixty-three were men. Furthermore, a Mrs. Downing (by her title, she was not a gentlewoman) contributed the highest number of receipts -- sixteen.<sup>247</sup> Another popular work, The Queen's Closet Opened (1655) by W. M., listed not quite half of its sixty-four contributors as professional physicians and a quarter of its contributors as gentlewomen.<sup>248</sup> By contemporary standards medical publications significantly represented female contributions. Nagy's research into popular medicine leads her to conclude that lay and learned medicine used virtually the same theories and techniques. She found no "sharp distinction between 'popular' and professional medical practice and treatment in Stuart England."<sup>249</sup> Authors combined classical sources, empirical observations and the popular advice of lay practitioners in their medical handbooks.

Popular and professional practitioners were part of the same medical culture. In that culture university-trained physicians were not the mainstay of the field and popular practitioners were essential to providing medical care to the bulk of the population. The majority of people could neither

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<sup>247</sup> Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, p. 47.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53; see also Pelling, "Food, Status and Knowledge," pp. 38-62; Lindemann, Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe; Beier, Sufferers and Healers; and Wear, "The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England."

afford nor access university-trained physicians for themselves.<sup>250</sup> Necessity alone dictated that alternative practitioners were the mainstay of the medical field. The evidence from diaries, correspondence and published works suggests that the dearth of physicians was inconsequential. People relied on a network of popular medical practitioners for their health and ailments. A significant number of these practitioners were women. According to Nagy, historians have largely neglected studies of non-licensed practitioners. She speculates that, “when local studies for all the counties have been completed, they will disclose a significant number of women who were skilled and respected practitioners.”<sup>251</sup> Many women provided medical care and advice to their families and neighbours without a male physician overseeing them. They acted as medical practitioners, not nurses. They treated anything from basic dietary advice to the most serious life-threatening illnesses.

Diaries and “unofficial” sources on medical practices reveal a wide range of gentlewomen practitioners; the likes of Lady Margaret Hoby (1571-1633), Lady Anne Clifford (1590-1676), Alice Thornton (*ca.* 1626-1707), Lady Ann Halkett (1622-1699), Hannah Woolley (*ca.* 1621- *ca.* 1676), and the women in the seventeenth-century Fell family.<sup>252</sup> These women were exceptional for the records they left behind but probably not for their medical skills. Gentlewomen gave their daughters and female relatives a medical education. Lady Grace Mildmay (1552-1620) wrote that her childhood education under the direction of the women of the house

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<sup>250</sup> Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, pp. 5, 21; and Lindemann, Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe, p. 197.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

included studying medicine. As a practitioner she not only distilled her own medicines but also had read herbals and Galenic texts.<sup>253</sup> Women practitioners diagnosed illnesses and prescribed medications they made themselves. Lady Margaret Hoby and Lady Anne Clifford both recorded in their diaries that they made spirits as well as other medicines.<sup>254</sup> Jane Sharp, Hannah Woolley and Mary Trye all published their own medical handbooks for the benefit of other women.<sup>255</sup> Practicing “physick” was not only a gentlewoman’s charity; Ralph Josselin recorded the treatment of his and his family’s various ailments seventy-nine times in his diary. In only twenty-one instances did the Josselins consult medical authorities outside the family.<sup>256</sup> Beier’s close study of illness in the Josselin family leads her to conclude that Jane Josselin was the family’s primary source of medical care.<sup>257</sup> Undoubtedly many women provided the majority of medical care for their families and neighbours. Historians might only have good evidence of gentlewomen practitioners because only gentlewomen kept a significant number of diaries. Women were most likely the mainstay of the medical field which most people used to preserve and restore their health.

Popular medical writers acknowledged women’s wide role by claiming they wrote for female practitioners. Several medical texts

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>253</sup> Lindemann, Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe, p. 206.

<sup>254</sup> Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, p. 65.

<sup>255</sup> Sharp, The Midwives Book; Hanna Woolley, The Cooks Guide: Or, Rare Receipts for Cookery (London, 1664), *passim*; The Gentlewomans Companion; or, A Guide to the Female Sex [third edition] (London, 1682), *passim*; and The Queen-Like Closet; or, Rich Cabinet (London, 1670), *passim*; and Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, p. 71.

<sup>256</sup> Lindemann, Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe, p. 202.

<sup>257</sup> Beier, Sufferers and Healers, pp. 196, 199-200.



addressed their readers as female.<sup>258</sup> John Partridge even wrote The Widowes Treasure “at the earnesteste requeste and suite of a Gentlewoman in the Cuntry for her priuate use” and only later decided to publish it in 1588.<sup>259</sup> Authors actively sought a female audience because they accepted that women practised medicine. Men probably wrote the majority of the medical books for a male audience. However, women did use them, and some authors were conscious of the role women played as medical practitioners. Midwives were almost exclusively women. Since the Middle Ages female medical practitioners argued for their right to practice, particularly since the very modesty expected of women would put them in danger during an examination by a male practitioner.<sup>260</sup> Male practitioners did not often encroach on the medical prerogatives of midwives in handling pregnancy, birth and the resulting minor complications.<sup>261</sup> The titles of works on pregnancy and birth reflected the offer of advice rather than an authoritative demand. Works such as A Present for Teeming Women, The Ladies Companion, Every Woman Her Own Midwife, and A Companion for Midwives, Child-Bearing Women, and Nurses reflected the reality that women had to find prescriptive advice acceptable or they would not use

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<sup>258</sup> For example, John Partridge, The Treasury of Commodious Conceits, and Hidden Secrets, Commonly Called The Good Huswiues Closet of Prouision, For the Health of Hir Housholde (London, 1584), title page; and Thomas Tryon, The Good Houswife Made a Doctor, Or, Health's Choice and Sure Friend (London, 1685?), title page.

<sup>259</sup> John Partridge, The Widowes Treasure, Plentifully Furnished with Sundry Precious and Approoued Secrets in Phisicke, and Chirurgery for the Health and Pleasure of Mankinde (London, 1588), plate Aii; see also Wear, “The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England,” pp. 24, 26.

<sup>260</sup> Rowland, Medieval Woman's Guide to Health, p. 16. See also R. T., De Morbis Foemineis, The Womans Counsellour: or, The Feminine Physitian (London, 1657), title page and p. 4.

<sup>261</sup> For example, “The Book of Oaths” [1689], quoted in David Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England (Oxford, 1997), p. 65.

it.<sup>262</sup> If medical texts did not reflect acceptable practices, women (and men) would have disregarded them.

Several authors lauded women's medical skills as superior to those of the average physician. The author of The Kitchin Physician (1680), a "doctor in physick" himself, proclaimed that physicians were not always needed and that, "many times the diligent Nurse, or Housewife, by her plain and common Experience in Herbs and Plants, cures, when [physicians] by their sublime and too high strained applications, leave the Patient in a desperate condition."<sup>263</sup> The contemporary scientist and philosopher Robert Boyle agreed that female practitioners effected "more constant and easy cures than learned physicians."<sup>264</sup> Many contemporary authors respected the skills and knowledge of female practitioners. Nicholas Culpeper even went so far in A Directory for Midwives (1651) as to appeal to midwives to let him know if he made any mistakes.<sup>265</sup> Male practitioners were not alone in recognising women's medical skills. Beier suggests that men from all social and occupational groups accepted the advice and treatment of female practitioners without prejudice to their sex.<sup>266</sup> While female practitioners also had their critics, they continued diagnosing ailments and prescribing prevention and treatment plans throughout the period.

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<sup>262</sup> John Oliver, A Present for Teeming Women. Or, Scripture-Directions for Women With Child, How to Prepare for the Houre of Travel. (London, 1663); William Sermon, The Ladies Companion, or the English Midwife (London, 1671); Anonymous, Every Woman Her Own Midwife: Or a Compleat Cabinet Opened for Child-Bearing Women (London, 1675); and Robert Barret, A Companion for Midwives, Child-Bearing Women and Nurses (London, 1699); emphasis mine.

<sup>263</sup> T. K., The Kitchin-Physician, plate A2<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>264</sup> Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, p. 76.

<sup>265</sup> Wear, "The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England," p. 33.

<sup>266</sup> Beier, Sufferers and Healers, p. 241.

The duties of a good wife included administering food and medicine to her family, her servants and the deserving poor.<sup>267</sup> Cookery books contained an array of medicinal recipes and dietary advice. On the day-to-day level the line between “food” and “medicine” was practically non-existent, and books dealt in both cooking and medicine indiscriminately. The title page of A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen (1608) boasted “the Art of preseuing, Conseruing, and Candyng” but also “diuerse soueraigne Medicines and Salues, for sundry Diseases.”<sup>268</sup> Most other recipe books also contained medicinal recipes alongside ordinary fare. John Partridge wrote The Treasury of Commodious Conceits, and Hidden Secrets (1584), in which he gave advice on cooking, medical recipes and household cleaning.<sup>269</sup> Other lay authors like Thomas Dawson, Sir Hugh Plat, and Hannah Wolley also included medical recipes in their books. They directed their books at women performing general household duties such as cooking, perfuming, candying and preserving.<sup>270</sup> Women were familiar with spirits because they produced the vast majority of them. Cogan even learned his recipe for *rosa solis* “of an honest Gentlewoman.”<sup>271</sup> The long ingredient lists betray the large amount of time and effort required to produce these strong waters. Women created medicine as part of their household duties. In The English Housewife (1623), Gervase Markham included “skill in Physick, Surgery . . . [and] Distillations” among the required virtues of a

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<sup>267</sup> Markham, The English Housewife, pp. xxix-xxx.

<sup>268</sup> Anonymous, A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen, Or, The Art of Preseuing, Conseruing, and Candyng (London, 1608), title page.

<sup>269</sup> Partridge, The Treasury of Commodious Conceits, *passim*.

<sup>270</sup> Thomas Dawson, The Good Huswifes Iewell (London, 1587), *passim*; Sir Hugh Plat (?), Delights for Ladies, to Adorne Their Persons, Tables, Closets and Distillatories (London, 1603), title page; and Wolley, The Queen-Like Closet, title page.

<sup>271</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 229.

good housewife.<sup>272</sup> Furthermore, he expected housewives to treat anything from a toothache to more serious conditions like “the pestilent fever, which is a continual sickness full of infection and mortality.”<sup>273</sup> Household health and sicknesses were a woman’s responsibilities.

### **Drinking in a Healthy Diet**

To maintain and restore health in the prevailing humoral system of medicine people had to understand how everything they consumed affected the temperature of their personal constitutions. Consequently, authors ranked drinks on a temperature scale that corresponded to their attributed effects on the balance of the four humours. This loose ranking helps historians understand why people drank what they did or prescribed drinks for certain ailments. What contemporaries viewed as strong drink might or might not have corresponded to true alcoholic strength. However, the evidence suggests that the “hotter” the drink, the stronger the alcohol. For example, spirits such as *aqua vitae* and *usquebach* (whisky) were by far the hottest drinks.<sup>274</sup> Water, on the other hand, contemporaries considered very cold.<sup>275</sup> Authors ranked all the various drinks in between spirits, the purest available form of alcohol, and water. Overall, they considered wine hot and therefore suitable to correct “cold” imbalances. Yellow and sweet wines such as madera and canary, followed closely by muscatel and malmsey,

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<sup>272</sup> Wear, “The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England,” p. 34.

<sup>273</sup> Markham, *The English Housewife*, pp. 11, 19; and Wear, “The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England,” p.35.

<sup>274</sup> For example, Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 194 and Tryon, *Healths Grand Preservative*, p. 2.

<sup>275</sup> Primrose, *Popular Errours*, p. 133.

were the “hottest” wines.<sup>276</sup> They were also expensive and used sparingly, sometimes only a few spoonfuls at a time. Authors advised the use of sack, rumney, bastard, strong beer, and strong ale with more regularity and by the glass full. They also recognised them as “hot” and strong, even too strong to drink with meals.<sup>277</sup> Tryon, for instance, suggested that canary and sack were both “too rich for common Drink.”<sup>278</sup> Medical receipts frequently prescribed these hot and strong drinks in small enough quantities that, if taken as prescribed, they would not have caused drunkenness on their own. However, people drank them in addition to the relatively milder drinks they consumed with meals and as solvents for their medication.

To maintain their health, most people drank wine, ale, or beer with their meals. Authors also advised on the relative “hotness” and strengths of these milder drinks. Claret, Rhenish, and French red wines were all suitable for drinking during meals. They promoted digestion and general health. Bullein felt claret was “a holsome wyne with meate.”<sup>279</sup> Tryon further explained that it suited an English diet rich in “fat Flesh and succulent Foods” because it was strong enough to help digest such indulgent meals.<sup>280</sup> The health conscious sought a wine “hot” enough to help digest their meat but not strong enough to make them drunk. Rhenish wine, another good choice, helped digest meat, but Hart added that it was also mild enough to

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<sup>276</sup> Elyot, The Castel of Helth, plate 32<sup>b</sup>; Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 210; and Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 120.

<sup>277</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 210; W. B., The Philosophers Banquet second edition (London, 1614), p. 34; and Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 125.

<sup>278</sup> Tryon, The Good Houswife Made a Doctor, p. 144.

<sup>279</sup> William Bullein, A New Booke Entituled The Gouvernement of Healthe (London, 1558), f. cix.

<sup>280</sup> Tryon, The Good Houswife Made a Doctor, p. 160.

drink without adding water.<sup>281</sup> In other words, it was not too strong. White wines, particularly those from France, were the mildest wines. Cogan claimed these wines “inflameth or heateth least of all wines.”<sup>282</sup> White wines were the only wines authors allowed on an empty stomach.<sup>283</sup> They were also the most popular choice for cooking wines. Normal strength ale and beer, authors generally thought, were relatively cooler than all wines. Elyot thought they lacked the “heate and moysture which is in wyne.”<sup>284</sup> The alcoholic strength of ale and beer probably varied greatly. Contemporaries based their convictions about ale and beer’s cooling properties on Galen’s ancient assessment that barley had a “cold” nature and therefore drinks made with barley must be cooler than wine.<sup>285</sup> Contemporaries must have considered small ale and beer both cool in operation and weak in alcohol because Elyot, among others, equated them with barley water, which had no alcohol at all.<sup>286</sup> While this ranked scale of the humoral temperature of drinks did not exactly correspond to their real alcoholic contents, it does serve as a close approximation. What is more important, it serves as a model of contemporary understandings of the relative strengths of different drinks. They expected drinks like *usquebach* and sack to have more of an effect on them than white wine and small beer.

Most recipe sections in cookery books and household manuals contained at least a few recipes for highly alcoholic panaceas, and popular

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<sup>281</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 120.

<sup>282</sup> Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, p. 217.

<sup>283</sup> Bullein, *The Gouernement of Healthe*, f. cix; Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, p. 210; and Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 120.

<sup>284</sup> Elyot, *The Castel of Helth*, plate 34<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>285</sup> For example, *ibid.*.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

medical texts often discussed these “strong waters” in depth. According to Everard Maynwarding, “a good medicine [was] not so tyed up and restrained to one disease.”<sup>287</sup> Plenty of quacks sold miracle cures on the streets. One apothecary’s shop left behind a testimonial pamphlet on its wares consisting of thirteen “strong waters” ranging in cost from one shilling to one pound. It claimed these potions were “such an assistance to mans Nature as is really wanting, needful and effectual for supply of the daily wast and expense of Spirit, for heightening and rectifying of Diet, Medicine and Refreshment, and for relief in all necessities and extremities.”<sup>288</sup> However, most evidence on the use of medicinal spirits comes from the prescriptions and dosages of the recipes women made themselves. The woman of the house would have made her strong waters long before she needed them; therefore, the more useful they were in every illness the better. Various recipes for *aqua vitae*, *rosa solis*, imperial water, cinnamon water and the extremely popular Doctor Stevens Water most likely travelled from oral culture to manuscripts to print and back again. Most were concoctions of medicinal herbs steeped in ale, sack, or Gascon wine and then distilled.<sup>289</sup> *Aqua vitae* Markham reputed as “good for all manner of cold sicknesses.”<sup>290</sup> Another author explained that it was “good against many infirmities, as the Dropsie, Palsey, Ague, Sweating, Spleen, Worms, Yellow & black Jaundies; it strengthneth

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<sup>287</sup> Everard Maynwarding *Tutela Sanitatis. Sive Vita Protracta* (London, 1664), plate A8.

<sup>288</sup> William Walwyn, *Healths New Store-House Opened. Offering to Familiar Use Such Supplies as are Most Wanting and Really Needful to Human Frailty* (London, 1661), p.

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<sup>289</sup> Markham, *The English Housewife*, pp. 56-7, 127; Peter Levens, *A Right Profitable Booke For All Diseases Called The Pathway to Health* (London, 1582), pp. 219-20; Cogan, *The Haven of Health*, pp. 222, 228, 230-31; and W. M., *The Queens Closet Opened. Inconparable Secrets in Physick, Chirurgery, Preserving, Candyng and Cookery* (London, 1656), pp. 16-17, 87-88.

<sup>290</sup> Markham, *The English Housewife*, p. 127.

the spirits, Brain, Heart, Liver, and stomach.”<sup>291</sup> Doctor Stevens Water was even more useful. Cogan prescribed it to cure palsy, aching joints, barrenness in women, worms, the gout, a toothache, an upset stomach, dropsy, bladder stones, a backache, canker sores, bad breath, and to “make one seeme young very long.”<sup>292</sup> These alcoholic panaceas were the first line of defense against general illnesses.

Authors advised people to use such medicines with extreme caution since they were very “hot.” Dosage was always by the spoonful, but the amount and frequency varied. Cogan advised one spoonful a week for Doctor Stevens Water.<sup>293</sup> Another author was more liberal with his recommended dosage. He advised “two or three spoonfuls . . . with Ale, Beer, or Wine mingled with sugar” for *aqua vitae* and “six spoonfuls at a time in the morning fasting, & at 4 a clock in the afternoon” for Doctor Stevens Water.<sup>294</sup> The latter dosage for Doctor Stevens Water amounts to around a third of a cup of spirits a day along with any alcohol consumed with meals. One of Hannah Woolley’s panaceas required between eight and ten spoonfuls of distilled sack per day for a month.<sup>295</sup> In The Newe Jewell of Health (1576) George Barker advised drinking a spirit every day simply to “preserue yong age.”<sup>296</sup> While people might or might not have followed these prescriptions exactly, Adam Eyre’s diary gives at least one glimpse of the consumption rates of medicinal spirits. In May of 1647 Eyre developed

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<sup>291</sup> W. M., The Queens Closet Opened, p. 17.

<sup>292</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 231; also Markham, The English Housewife, p. 57, gave an abridged but similar description.

<sup>293</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 231.

<sup>294</sup> W. M., The Queens Closet Opened, pp. 17 and 118.

<sup>295</sup> Wolley, The Queen-Like Closet, p. 13.

<sup>296</sup> George Barker, The Newe Jewell of Health (London, 1576), plate 225.



a cold. On the fifth he paid 2s. for a bottle of strong waters. By the sixteenth of October he had to buy another bottle.<sup>297</sup> Presumably he went through a bottle of spirits over the course of five months. He did not record the size of the bottle, if anyone else drank from it, when he finished it nor who made the spirits. Regardless, Eyre's diary suggests that spirits were both affordable and used as a general medication. The rate at which Eyre's household consumed spirits was small but significant.

The proliferation of recipes for alcoholic spirits such as the water of life (*aqua vitae*), cinnamon water, and Doctor Stevens Water, attest to the use of spirits as preventative medicines. Authors made claims of prevention about these drinks as in William Lovell's testimony that they "comforteth the spirits, and preserveth greatly the youth of men".<sup>298</sup> Healthy people could legitimately use spirits to prevent illnesses and the natural progression of old age. In The Newe Jewell of Health (1576) George Baker gave his readers a recipe for a distilled wine that he believed if "druncke euerye morning, unto the quanty of one or two drammes at a tyme, preserueth the persone a long tyme in health."<sup>299</sup> In The Gentlewomans Companion (1682) Hannah Woolley boasted that one of her spirits was "a wonderful preserved of health, and continuer of life to long age, if constantly used."<sup>300</sup> Most texts contained at least one recipe for spirits designed to keep its

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<sup>297</sup> Adam Eyre, "A Dyurnall, Or Catalogue of All My Accions and Expences From the 1st of January, 1646-[7] -- Adam Eyre," in Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Edinburgh, 1877), pp. 31, 3 May 1647, 32, 5 May 1647, 68, 16 October 1647.

<sup>298</sup> William Lovell, The Dukes Desk Newly Broken Up (London, 1661), p. 82; see also Partridge, The Treasury of Commodious Conceits, f. D2<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>299</sup> Barker, The Newe Jewell of Health, p. 228.

<sup>300</sup> Woolley, The Gentlewomans Companion, p. 245.

drinker young.<sup>301</sup> The historian C. Anne Wilson notes that in the later sixteenth century people began to drink spirits at the end of a meal to aid digestion.<sup>302</sup> The sheer number of alcoholic concoctions available in medical texts, cookery books and particularly books specialising in expensive confectionaries and preserves attests to their popularity among the elite, not just as a medicine, but as a culinary delicacy.<sup>303</sup> Wilson attributes their move from a purely medicinal role to a more social one to the emergence of a separate course of sweetmeats at the end of a banquet in the late sixteenth century.<sup>304</sup> The inclusion of spirit recipes in books dedicated to sweetmeats and candying lends credibility to her theory. Women made these spirits and increasingly administered them as preventative medicines and as part of a healthy meal.

Authors recommended the moderate consumption of wine at meals.

They followed Galen's classical prescriptions and often elaborated them.<sup>305</sup>

Boorde's description of the virtues of wine was typical. He claimed that wine

doth acuate and doth quycken a ma[n]nes wyttes, it doth comforte the herte . . . scoure the lyuer . . . reioyce all the powers of man & doth norysche them, it doth ingendre good blode, it doth co[m]forte and

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<sup>301</sup> For example, Barker, The Newe Iewell of Health, plate 224 and 228; and Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, A Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets in Physick and Chyrurgery, published by W.I. Gent. (London, 1653), p. 5.

<sup>302</sup> C. Anne Wilson, "Water of Life: Its Beginnings and Early History," in C. Anne Wilson, ed., 'Liquid Nourishment': Potable Foods and Stimulating Drinks (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 158.

<sup>303</sup> For books on candying, etc. containing alcohol recipes see Plat (?), Delights for Ladies; and John Murrell, A Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen (London, 1617) for examples.

<sup>304</sup> C. Anne Wilson, "Water of Life: Its Beginnings and Early History," p. 158.

<sup>305</sup> For example, Elyot, The Castel of Helth, plate 32<sup>b</sup>; Henry Wingfield, A Compendious Treatise Conteynyng Preceptes Necessary to the Preservation of Health (London? 1551?), plate Biiii<sup>5</sup>; and Tobias Whitaker, The Tree of Humane Life, or, The Bloud of the Grape. Proving the Possibilitie of Maintaining Humane Life From Infancy to Extreame Old Age Without Any Sicknesse By the Use of Wine (London, 1638), p. 24.

doth norysche the brayne and all the body and it resolueth fleume, it ingendreth heate.<sup>306</sup>

Authors writing about diet universally accepted the importance of wine to good health. In The Schoolemaster, or Teacher of Table Philosophie (1576) Thomas Twyne described wine as the great panacea of the humoral system and claimed wine restored the balance of health; it “heateth colde bodies, and cooleth hot, it moistneth the drie, and drieth the moist. And many times it quencheth the thirst more then water.”<sup>307</sup> Wine regulated the temperature of foods and the body and worked to restore a humoral balance. The physician Tobias Whitaker felt wine was so important to good health that in 1638 he wrote a seventy-three page book in which he argued that wine was the only medicine people needed.<sup>308</sup> Only Cogan addressed the fact that many people in England never drank wine. Yet he added that wine was still “profitable for the life of man.”<sup>309</sup> Wine enhanced and maintained good health. For those who could afford it, wine was the ideal drink.

Authors did not recommend only wine with meals. However, when recommending native English drinks, they had no classical background on which to base their medical analysis. They often had to rely on popular perceptions and their own observations. Hart found that,

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<sup>306</sup> Andrew Boorde, Here Foloweth a Compe[n]dyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Helth, Made in Mou[n]tpylor (London? 1554?), plates Fiv-Gi; see also Wingfield, A Compendious Treatise Conteynyng Preceptes Necessary to the Preseruation of Healthe, plate Biiii<sup>5</sup>; Gratarolus, A Direction for the Health of Magistrates and Students, plate Gii<sup>5</sup>; Cogan, The Haven of Health, pp. 211-2; William Vaughan, Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health, Deriued From the Best Philosophers, as Well Moderne, as Auncient (London, 1600), p. 10; Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 122; and Whitaker, The Tree of Humane Life, pp. 24-5, for similar descriptions.

<sup>307</sup> Thoman Twyne, The Schoolemaster, or Teacher of Table Philosophie (London, 1576), plate Biii<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>308</sup> Whitaker, The Tree of Humane Life.

<sup>309</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 211.

the drinke wee make is both wholesome, and very agreeable to our nature . . . the which if any one wil deny, I will appeale to our owne experience: for where can you find stronger, healthfuller, and lustier people, than in those coutries, where this drinke is most ordinarily used.”<sup>310</sup>

Experience and observation replaced humoral theory. Cogan offered another empirical observation that beer made a person strong “as appeareth plainly by the viewe of those nations that use it most, for they be strongest & fairest.”<sup>311</sup> Alcohol was so important to contemporary diets that the choice in drink determined the good health of the nation. Non-medical sources were even more insistent on the positive role of ale and beer in maintaining health. Edward Chamberlayne’s Angliae Notitia, or the Present State of England (1669) attributed English good health to the people’s “use of Beer rather than Wine.”<sup>312</sup> An earlier author wrote the pamphlet A Vindication of Strong-Beere and Ale, Shewing the Excellency of our English Vineyard Consisting of Our Native Commodities (1647), in which he repeated medical opinions and subsequently argued that beer not only provided necessary nourishment for the poor but also disinfected their unwholesome food.<sup>313</sup> Even popular tracts displayed the medical opinion that drink rectified problems of diet. With or in spite of the long classical tradition of regarding alcohol as healthy, alcoholic drinks were an active and necessary component of every meal.

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<sup>310</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, pp. 125 and 127; see also Cogan, The Haven of Health, pp. 221-2.

<sup>311</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, pp. 221-2.

<sup>312</sup> Edward Chamberlayne, Angliae Notitia, or the Present State of England (London, 1669), pp. 81, 83-4.

<sup>313</sup> Anonymous, A Vindication of Strong-Beere and Ale, Shewing the Excellency of our English Vineyard Consisting of Our Native Commodities (London, 1647), p. 3. [a.k.a. The Brewer’s Plea]

Too much alcohol was unhealthy, drunkenness aside. In his book A Compendious Treatise Conteynyng Preceptes Necessary to the Preseruacion of Healthe (1551?) Henry Wingfield noted in the mid-sixteenth century that, “much and verye ofte drinkyng at meales or betwene meales” contributed to digestive problems he associated with excess moisture.<sup>314</sup> Excessive drinking could also cause more serious health problems. Cogan and the physician Thomas Sydenham felt that idleness and drinking caused both rheum and gout.<sup>315</sup> Wine, when drunk in moderation, dissipated phlegm. However, when immoderately drunk, the author of The Philosophers Banquet (1614) argued that the body converted excess wine into phlegm, creating an imbalance in the body’s humours.<sup>316</sup> Tryon thought an excessive consumption of spirits could be even worse. He claimed that,

such Liqueours or Spirits frequently taken, burn up the Radical moisture and Natural Heat, and are greedy devourers of the Sweet Oyl in the Body, whence procede General Obstructions, Crude Windy humours, Consumptions, unnatural Heats and Flushings, Loss of Appetite, Retching to Vomit, and many other disorders.<sup>317</sup>

The long-term degenerative effects of the excessive use of strong alcoholic concoctions like *aqua vitae*, *usquebach* (whisky) and Doctor Stevens Water were well recognised in popular medical literature.<sup>318</sup> Tryon complained that the excessive consumption of strong alcohol caused the reversal of

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<sup>314</sup> Wingfield, A Compendious Treatise Conteynyng Preceptes Necessary to the Preseruacion of Healthe, plate Biiii’.

<sup>315</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 222; and Thomas Sydenham “The Whole Works of that Excellent Practical Physician, Dr Thomas Sydenham” (1696) in A. W. Sloan, English Medicine in the Seventeenth Century (Durham, NZ, 1996), p. 55.

<sup>316</sup> W. B., The Philosophers Banquet, p. 179.

<sup>317</sup> Tryon, Healths Grand Preservative, p. 5.

<sup>318</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 194; and Primrose, Popular Errors, p. 173.

gender roles. It made “Men too Effaemenate and Women too Salacious.”<sup>319</sup>

The excessive consumption of strong alcohol eventually resulted in physical and behavioural sickness. Authors discussed the proper medical use of alcohol while warning against its abuse. In both cases they linked alcohol to physical and mental well-being.

Though they recommended that men and women drink moderately to benefit their health, authors did not recommend alcohol to every person in the same way.<sup>320</sup> The medicinal benefits of alcoholic drinks depended on people’s physical condition as well as more socially constructed elements of their identity. Boorde allowed wine to old men and women but not “for chylidren and maydens.” By maidens he meant unmarried women rather than biologically adolescent women.<sup>321</sup> Vaughan advised that “Muscadell, Malmesie, and browne Bastard,” all strong wines, were “only for married folkes.”<sup>322</sup> Hart claimed that because sweet wines were hot, only “antient, and married people” should drink them and not “the yonger sort.”<sup>323</sup>

Authors considered strong alcohol dangerous for the young and unmarried, particularly women. In 1682 Tryon provided the medical justification to condemning women’s use and abuse of spirits. He reasoned, “if those of the Female Sex take to Drink such Spirits, as of late years they do too frequently, the Evils are doubled unto them.”<sup>324</sup> Women, being weaker than men, could not endure the extreme “heat” of spirits.<sup>325</sup> Authors deemed

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<sup>319</sup> Tryon, *The Good Houswife Made a Doctor*, p. 147.

<sup>320</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 122.

<sup>321</sup> Boorde, *Dyetary of Helth*, plate Gi. The examples he provided were all of unmarried women rather than young women.

<sup>322</sup> Vaughan, *Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health*, p. 11.

<sup>323</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 121.

<sup>324</sup> Tryon, *Healths Grand Preservative*, p. 5.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

strong drinks as harmful to youth and women. The social regulation of alcohol masqueraded as medical advice.

A few authors perpetrated a small campaign to promote drinking water. Medical authors drew from many examples in which large portions of the population drank water. The most common observation was that the patriarchs drank only water. Furthermore, Hart claimed that, “by many passages, both of holy and prophane Writers . . . it might appeare that water was the most common and ordinary drinke . . . and it is even this day so used in many places.”<sup>326</sup> According to Primrose, water was “the ordinary drink of many Nations.”<sup>327</sup> Elyot and Cogan even gave the native example of Cornwall where the poor still drank water and lived long and healthy lives.<sup>328</sup> Surely Cornwall was not the only place where the poor drank water, but they presented it as a rarity. Furthermore, if only the poor drank water, it was presumably not the drink of choice. Water drinking was commendable and healthy but exotic and impractical.

The authors who commended water also condemned it. Physicians suspected that even clean water was unfit for general consumption. Popular beliefs might have held water to be too “crude” in England, but in line with humoural theory medical advisers felt water was too “cold” for unadulterated drinking.<sup>329</sup> Bullein advised that “to drinke colde water is euyll” because it stopped the flow of humours in the body and caused

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<sup>326</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 116; see also Elyot, The Castel of Helth, plate 31<sup>a</sup>; and Cogan, The Haven of Health, pp. 206-7. When the flood waters receded, Noah planted a vinyard, made wine, and quite accidentally got drunk. (Gen. 9: 20-1)

<sup>327</sup> Primrose, Popular Errours, p. 133.

<sup>328</sup> Elyot, The Castel of Helth, plate 31<sup>b</sup>; and Cogan, The Haven of Health, pp. 207.

<sup>329</sup> Primrose, Popular Errours, p. 133.

melancholy.<sup>330</sup> Boorde claimed that, “water is not holsome soole by it self; for an Englysshe man . . . [because] water is colde, slowe, and slack of dygestyon.”<sup>331</sup> People were not to drink water on its own or during a meal, as Cogan explained, because water drinking cooled down the stomach, which worked like a furnace, and therefore prevented digestion.<sup>332</sup> Certain people were to avoid drinking water altogether. Physicians warned people who were weak, old, phlegmatic, or melancholic to avoid drinking water.<sup>333</sup> Cogan claimed that excessive water drinking could cause illnesses after “great labour and trauaile” and instead a person should drink “a draught of Sack or good wine, or . . . a hoat posset . . . [rather] than small drinke or cold water.”<sup>334</sup> Water was the medical antithesis of wine. What wine cured, water caused to decay.

Contemporaries had good reasons to avoid drinking water. Sources of clean drinking water remained unprotected from pollution and disease throughout the period. Most rivers doubled as sewers for human, animal, and industrial waste. Bullein described the general state of affairs when he claimed that, “standing waters and water running neare unto cities and townes, or marish ground, wodes, & fennes be euer ful of corruption, because there is so much filthe in them of carions & rotten dunge, &c.”<sup>335</sup> Many writers recommended rejecting water if it smelled or was discoloured. They advocated purifying water through boiling and even distilling well-

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<sup>330</sup> Bullein, The Gouvernement of Healthe, f. Ciii.

<sup>331</sup> Boorde, Dyetary of Helth, no plate number.

<sup>332</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 207.

<sup>333</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 117, Elyot, The Castel of Helth, plate 32<sup>a</sup>; and Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 208.

<sup>334</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, p. 208.

<sup>335</sup> Bullein, The Gouvernement of Healthe, f. Ciii.



chosen water. Boiling would have purified water in most cases, but the common practice was to boil it lightly, which would have had little effect on most organic pollution.<sup>336</sup> Furthermore, boiling would not have removed many of the chemicals associated with industrial waste. Distilling water would have been the most appropriate source of clean water, but as Hart remarked, “we are not accustomed to distill ordinary water.”<sup>337</sup> William Vaughan gave a less complicated way of purifying water; he added *aqua vitae* to it.<sup>338</sup> No doubt some people managed to find clean water. However, authors did not generally provide this advice to advocate drinking clean water straight. People needed clean drinking water to add to their wine.<sup>339</sup> Contemporaries were aware of pollution problems and sought clean water, but they used it as an ingredient in their alcoholic drinks.

Regardless of the medical cautions against the effects of water, authors hinted that young women should drink water instead of alcohol. Hart pointed to the gendered aspects of drink choices when he singled out societies where women, and often just the young unmarried ones, drank only water. He wrote that,

women were forbidden wine among the Massilians and Milesians; and at this time is not usuall for women in France, to drinke wine before they be married, but water only. And among the Romans this same law against womens drinking of wine was in force.<sup>340</sup>

Andrew Boorde also pointed out that “in hyghe Almayne, there is no mayde shall drynke no wyne; but styll she shall drinke water, unto the tyme she be

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<sup>336</sup> Primrose, *Popular Errors*, p. 136.

<sup>337</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 190; see also Primrose, *Popular Errors*, p. 136.

<sup>338</sup> Vaughan, *Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health*, p. 5.

<sup>339</sup> Bullein, *The Gouernement of Health*, F. Ciii.

<sup>340</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 133.

maryed.”<sup>341</sup> They made no firm conclusions about their observations.

However, Tryon justified gendered drinking habits on the grounds of public health. He claimed that,

the wise Antients understanding this Nature and Constitution of Women, and considering that the whole welfare and health of Mankind depended chiefly on their Temperance and discreet Conduct did therefore direct them to a higher degree of Temperance, and thought it requisite, and so absolutely necessary, that both the drink allotted for Women in most Countries, was, and is to this day pur Water.<sup>342</sup>

Hart even claimed, “I know som honourable and worshipull Ladies who drinke little other drinke [than water]; and yet injoy more perfect health than most of them that drinke of the strongest.”<sup>343</sup> Authors used contemporary and classical examples to argue that people, particularly women, should drink water instead of alcohol. No source gave concrete reasons, however flawed, for women’s proposed abstinence from alcohol. The most they gave were vague references to women’s weaker natures and a greater responsibility for their own social conduct. According to humoral theories, women were colder and drier, and therefore logic would dictate that they should use warming drinks, which contained alcohol. Gender bias prevailed over the internal logic of contemporary medical theories. Furthermore, when confronted with female abstention from alcohol, authors did not excuse alcohol drinking; whereas when confronted with general abstention (including male), they went to great lengths to show that such strict standards did not apply to contemporary England. While healthy

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<sup>341</sup> Boorde, Dyetary of Helth, plate Gi.

<sup>342</sup> Tryon, Healths Grand Preservative, p. 12.

<sup>343</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 117.

drinking generally included alcohol, male authors accepted the possibility of female abstention from alcohol.

### Drinking to Cure Illness

Sickness required an altered diet, and medical advisers sought to restrict alcohol intake but not to eliminate it. Strong drink was too “hot” for most illnesses, especially fevers. According to Hart, “diseased are cured by contraries, and wine in the estimation of all Physitians is reputed hot, it will follow that to drinke wine, especially in hot diseases . . . is to increase the disease.”<sup>344</sup> Jacques Guillimeau was more specific in his immensely popular book, Childbirth, or the Happy Delivery of Women (1612). He explained that ale and wine made a fever worse, caused a headache, and heated up the liver and the whole body.<sup>345</sup> However, physicians felt they could not eliminate alcoholic drinks from a sick person’s diet altogether. Hart made a typical exception for those who “from their youth bee brought up with wine, [because] they will hardly admit of any drinke, neither will the stomacke commonly admit of any other liquor.”<sup>346</sup> Even Barrough’s cure “of headach caused by drunkenness” was to “vse water onely, if he hath bene accustomed thereto, and can well beare it.”<sup>347</sup> Other medical advisers had different ideas. Gervase Markham advised those who cared for the sick to give a feverish person weak or non-alcoholic drinks,

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<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>345</sup> Jacques Guillimeau, “Childbirth, or the Happy Delivery of Women” [1612] in Lloyd Davis, ed., Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance: An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents (New York, 1998), p. 294. Alcohol is in fact a diuretic and its consumption would worsen the dehydration that often accompanies fevers.

<sup>346</sup> Hart, The Diet of the Diseased, p. 191.

<sup>347</sup> Barrough, The Method of Phisick, p. 13-14.

and betwixt those times . . . suffer him to gargle in his mouth good wholesome beer or ale, which the patient best liketh, and . . . to spit it out again . . . and thus to do as oft as he pleaseth, till his mouth be cooled, provided that by no means he suffer any of the drink to go down.<sup>348</sup>

Older medical texts such as An Hospitall for the Diseased, published in the 1580s, recommended, “for your drinke, take Ale, and not strong” during a fever.<sup>349</sup> However, of the nine medicines in the book dealing with fevers, seven contained alcohol in significant amounts, and one even used “a peniworth of Aqua Vitae, [and] halfe a pinte of Ale”.<sup>350</sup> Even physicians had trouble imagining a healthy diet without alcohol.

Overwhelmingly the drink of the sick was a posset. Possets consisted of milk curdled with ale, beer, or wine in addition to any number of medicinal herbs prescribed for an illness. Primrose in Popular Errors attempted to correct what he saw as the abuse of possets. He complained that, “sometimes the milk is coagulated with strong Ale, or Wine.”<sup>351</sup> For example, a basic recipe for a sack posset consisted of a quart of thick cream, sixteen eggs, three quarters of a pint of sack, sugar and spices.<sup>352</sup> While this was a nourishing drink for the healthy, caregivers should not subject people sick with fevers to such a strong drink. Primrose thought people should make their possets “with thinne beer or small ale,” or, better still, take the alcohol out completely and curdle the milk with vinegar or verjuice, but he was aware that custom was against him.<sup>353</sup> Most authors were not willing to go completely against common practice and as a result provided

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<sup>348</sup> Markham, The English Housewife, p. 10.

<sup>349</sup> T. C., An Hospitall for the Diseased (London, 1580?), p. 11.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>351</sup> Primrose, Popular Errors, p. 154.

<sup>352</sup> Woolley, The Cooks Guide, p. 3.

compromise solutions -- watered wine, small ale and small beer. Popular medical texts reveal that medical advisers were conscious of popular medical practices and took them into consideration in their prescriptions for illnesses. The sick would not give up alcohol.

Many medical complaints were non-specific, and people could easily have imagined an illness when in reality they craved the alcoholic “cure”. Weak stomachs, melancholy, and scurvy were general complaints rather than specific illnesses. The common complaint of a “weak stomach” generated three prescriptions in Thomas Cogan’s The Haven of Health (1584). The first entailed “halfe a pound of Sugar . . . in a pottell of pure white wine or Claret” to be used “at your pleasure.” The second used the same sugar and alcohol concoction with different herbs and the third used a spoonful of “Aqua vita and Malmsey . . . with a draught of wine.”<sup>354</sup> The author of An Hospitall for the Diseased (1580?) gave a cure that included only half a spoonful of *aqua vitae* but mixed it in half a pint of ale.<sup>355</sup>

Alcohol was the main active ingredient in all four remedies. Another non-specific illness was “melancholy,” which manifested itself as depression or “sadness”.<sup>356</sup> Popular opinion claimed alcohol raised a person’s spirits, but medical tracts included prescriptions for the condition as well. Humphrey Brooke’s cure in A Conservatory of Health (1650) required the afflicted person to drink “halfe a pint of Claret Wine” sweetened with sugar.<sup>357</sup>

Elizabeth Grey’s cure required six gallons of ale. The afflicted person was

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<sup>353</sup> Primrose, Popular Errours, pp. 155-6.

<sup>354</sup> Cogan, The Haven of Health, pp. 233-35.

<sup>355</sup> T. C., An Hospitall for the Diseased, plate Ci.

<sup>356</sup> Laughton, An Introduction into Phisycke, f. XLVI.

<sup>357</sup> Humphrey Brooke, YTIEINH. Or A Conservatory of Health (London, 1650), p. 250.

to drink it “morning and evening for the space of one fortnight.”<sup>358</sup> Grey’s cure meant over three extra pints of ale a day. Scurvy was another non-specific state of “unwellness”.<sup>359</sup> Tryon claimed that, “the scurvey is of late Years become an Epidemical, or almost general Disease amongst English people.”<sup>360</sup> Tryon listed drinking too many spirits, strong wine, adulterated ale, “stale strong Beer,” idleness, and excessive eating and sexual activity as among the causes of scurvy.<sup>361</sup> While Tryon recommended moderation as a cure, other authors had more immediate solutions. Most cures involved infusing scurvy grass in ale or beer.<sup>362</sup> The author of The Queens Closet Opened (1656) prescribed, “a good draught in the morning, . . . another an hour before dinner, and another half an hour before you go to bed . . . three weeks or a month together.”<sup>363</sup> The cure for scurvy required an afflicted person to drink alcohol between meals. Authors did not recommend drinking between meals, but they seem to have made an exception for medical treatments. People could disguise any amount of drinking as medicinal. Women generally had weak stomachs, melancholic natures and the “corrupted blood” popularly associated with scurvy.<sup>364</sup> The physician who wrote The Womans Counsellour (1657) complained that women were

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<sup>358</sup> Grey, A Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets in Physick and Chyrurgery, p. 109.

<sup>359</sup> While scurvy did exist, it is unlikely that many people who claimed to have scurvy really had a severe vitamin C deficiency. Contemporary understandings of the disease were not related to any specific dietary requirements like vitamins.

<sup>360</sup> Tryon, The Good Housewife Made a Doctor, p. 216. Contemporaries understood scurvy as more of a general state of unwellness than a specific vitamin C deficiency.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-21.

<sup>362</sup> For example, W. M., The Queens Closet Opened, p. 169; W. P. Worth, Cerevisarii Comes: or, the New and True Art of Brewing, Illustrated by Various Examples in Making Beer, Ale and Other Liquors (London, 1692), p. 115; and The Compleat Servant-Maid: or, The Young Maidens Tutor (London, 1700), p. 50.

<sup>363</sup> W. M., The Queens Closet Opened, pp. 169-70.

ill so often their “complaints may be heard almost continually from the very Womb.”<sup>365</sup> Their frequent illnesses, real or imagined, would have made women active consumers of these various restorative drinks.

### Female Conditions

Contemporaries also recognised that specific illnesses afflicted only women. Many of these diseases medical practitioners diagnosed by observing socially inappropriate behaviours. They recommended highly alcoholic medicines to cure these “diseases” that caused women to misbehave. Physicians linked at least two female diseases to sexual practices and prescribed alcohol as a cure. The first was known as the green sickness.<sup>366</sup> Authors related it to the lack of sexual activity in young unmarried women; one physician advised marriage as a cure.<sup>367</sup> However, more immediate cures seemed to include large amounts of alcohol. Authors provided recipes for non-alcoholic cures alongside alcoholic cures, but presumably the non-alcoholic versions were for very young girls. Those who used the alcoholic versions could choose from recipes containing a glass of stale ale, a glass of white wine, or a glass of claret wine.<sup>368</sup> Furthermore, women took these drinks in the morning before eating and, if required, “two hours before supper.”<sup>369</sup> Another cure consisted of toast

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<sup>364</sup> Hart, *The Diet of the Diseased*, p. 190; and Tryon, *Healths Grand Preservative*, p. 12; for melancholy see Mendleson and Crawford, *Women In Early Modern England 1550-1720*, p. 23.

<sup>365</sup> R. T., *The Womans Counsellour*, p. 6.

<sup>366</sup> Mendleson and Crawford, *Women In Early Modern England 1550-1720*, p. 23.

<sup>367</sup> L. Lemnius, “A Discourse Touching Generation” [1667] in Mendleson and Crawford, *Women In Early Modern England 1550-1720*, p. 23.

<sup>368</sup> Levens, *The Pathway to Health*, p. 70; Markham, *The English Housewife*, pp. 38-9; and W. M., *The Queens Closet Opened*, p. 85

<sup>369</sup> Markham, *The English Housewife*, pp. 38-9.

soaked in strong wine and taken daily over a six week period.<sup>370</sup> These medicinal drinks did not replace the alcohol consumed at meals but supplemented it. The second “disease” was known as a “fit of the mother” or hysteria. The author of The Womans Counsellour advised that this fit often affected women accustomed to sex who no longer were sexually active. He prescribed sex as a cure, or alternatively he recommended that the woman avoid “all such things as increase natural sperme.”<sup>371</sup> A lack of sexual activity made women store “sperm,” and that imbalance made them sick. Apparently alcohol would restore their natural sexual balance. Boorde recommended three different alcoholic concoctions, and Culpeper recommended featherfew flowers in wine “drunk often in a day.”<sup>372</sup> Most authors advised young virgins and widows to drink large amounts of alcohol to combat the diseases brought on by their lack of sexual activity. For whatever medical reasons, alcohol was a replacement for the healthy sex of marriage.

Physicians linked their diagnoses of procreative disorders to social expectations and drinking patterns. If historians read the cures for barrenness as ways to restore a woman to her correct social position rather than simply as misguided medicine, they reveal one way in which alcohol was a social regulator. Authors advised barren women with hot and dry complexions to stay away from strong alcohol. “Hot and dry” was a predominantly male complexion. Sadler warned that women who stopped

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<sup>370</sup> Partridge, The Widowes Treasure, plate Fiii<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>371</sup> R. T., The Womans Counsellour, pp. 72-5.

<sup>372</sup> Andrew Boorde, The Breuiary of Healthe, For All Maner of Sickneses and Diseases the Which may Be in Man or Woman (London, 1542), f. lxxvi; and Nicholas Culpeper, The English Physitian Enlarged (London, 1684), p. 98.



menstruating because they had a hot and dry womb were commonly “Viragoes and virill women.”<sup>373</sup> Another physician described women with hot and dry wombs as “quick witted and crafty, thrifty and desirous after Carnal Copulation.”<sup>374</sup> He left out the negative label “virago”, but contemporaries would have understood his meaning. Women who socially usurped male assertiveness and attitudes took on male medical complexions. Even a female author and midwife, Jane Sharp, warned that women with hot wombs were subject to hysteria and lust.<sup>375</sup> Alcoholic drinks, according to humoural theory, would only make them worse. Barrough advised women diagnosed with hot or dry wombs to drink thin, white, or young wine diluted with water.<sup>376</sup> Sharp recommended that afflicted women avoid wine and strong waters.<sup>377</sup> Regardless of the theoretical backing spun out to justify their advice, medical practitioners warned that women who encroached on the social prerogatives of men risked their ability to fulfil their main role in the family -- producing children. To correct this, women needed to alter their drinking patterns.

At the other end of the spectrum, authors advised women who were barren due to a cold or moist uterus to drink strong alcohol. According to Barrough, these women were readily identifiable because they “despised carnal lust.”<sup>378</sup> Contemporaries could regard women who did not enjoy sex as barren. Barrough’s cure began with alcoholic pampering; “wine in this

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<sup>373</sup> Sadler, The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse, p. 17.

<sup>374</sup> R. T., The Womans Counsellour, p. 119.

<sup>375</sup> Sharp, The Midwives Book, pp. 313-14.

<sup>376</sup> Barrough, The Method of Phisick, p. 201.

<sup>377</sup> Sharp, The Midwives Book, p. 177.

<sup>378</sup> Barrough, The Method of Phisick, p. 200, also see Sharp, The Midwives Book, p. 314.

case measurably drunke, is to be preferred before water. For as the prouerbe is : *Sine Cerere & Baccho friget Venus*, that is, If you haue not bread and wine, carnal lust will coole and pine.”<sup>379</sup> In The Civilitie of Childehoode (1560) Thomas Paynell recommended that the afflicted woman “drynke good odoriferous and pleasaunt wynes alayed with water.”<sup>380</sup> Sharp also recommended good wine. She called for the woman to “take half a dram of Galingal and as much Cinnamon mingled in powder and drink it in Muskadel every morning.”<sup>381</sup> Muskadel was one of the strongest, “hottest” wines. For a slightly stronger drink Gervase Markham recommended Doctor Stevens Water.<sup>382</sup> Physicians encouraged women who exhibited symptoms of barrenness and disinterest in sex to drink. In the popular imagination alcohol served as a social lubricant associated with lust and sex. Medical advisers gave “scientific” credibility to the social role of alcohol. Consciously or not, authors used medical explanations to bind physical conditions to social conduct and then prescribed alcohol, its use or denial, in an attempt to regulate that conduct. Medical beliefs served to reinforce the way contemporaries used alcohol as a social regulator.

Although women relied almost exclusively on female practitioners and on an oral tradition of popular advice to guide them through pregnancy and childbirth, male authors wrote profusely on the subject.<sup>383</sup> Within their medical manuals they gave specific advice on alcohol consumption. The

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<sup>379</sup> Barrough, The Method of Phisick, p. 200.

<sup>380</sup> Thomas Paynell, The Civilitie of Childehoode, With the Discipline and Institution of Children, Distributed in Small and Compendious Chapters, and Translated Oute of French into Englysh (London, 1560), f. LXXXV p. Yi.

<sup>381</sup> Sharp, The Midwives Book, p. 176, see also p. 314.

<sup>382</sup> Markham, The English Housewife, p. 57.

<sup>383</sup> The social customs related to childbirth rituals are covered in a later chapter. This section concerns only the medical aspects of pregnancy and delivery.

midwives who advised women on their pregnancies and delivered babies left few records of their own. They trained each other through informal apprenticeships rather than textbooks and they did not generally keep casebooks. While the medical books of male practitioners are less than ideal sources, they are the best recorded sources of dietary advice and delivery medication available to historians. When used with caution, their treatment of drinking suggests some popular practices. First, they sought to explain why women should avoid strong alcohol. Second, the way in which they handled recipes for alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks suggests women were familiar with creating alcoholic caudles, possets and broths for their pregnant sisters but unfamiliar with non-alcoholic alternatives. Third, they suggest that women commonly administered alcohol to pregnant women and used alcoholic remedies to assist in the delivery and recovery of new mothers.

Authors sought to reduce the amount of alcohol pregnant women drank. Some physicians, like Jaques Guillemeau, were concerned with the effects of alcohol on the mother. He advised that too much drink would injure a woman's stomach.<sup>384</sup> Other authors, such as Thomas Raynalde and Nicholas Culpeper, feared too much alcohol would hurt the foetus. In The Byrth of Mankynde (1545) Raynalde warned that, "ouer much dronkenesse & excesse fedynge and surfetygne" would suffocate the unborn child.<sup>385</sup> Likewise, Culpeper expressed his fears that, "excessive drinking of Wine,

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<sup>384</sup> Jacques Guillemeau, "Childbirth: Or The Happy Delivery of Women" [1612], p. 301.

<sup>385</sup> Thomas Raynalde, The Byrth of Mankynde, Otherwyse Names the Womans Booke Newly Set Furth, Corrected and Augmented. (London, 1545), f. XLIII p. Liii.

Strong-Beer or Ale . . . [would] trouble the Childs Body with Choler.”<sup>386</sup>

All were worried about drunkenness and excess rather than normal drinking. Most physicians advised pregnant women to drink weak alcohol such as wine diluted with two parts water or small ale and beer.<sup>387</sup>

However, several authors also admitted the occasional indulgence in stronger drinks. Sharp, one of the few female authors, allowed the midwife to refresh a birthing woman with “some wine, or strong water, but moderately taken.”<sup>388</sup> The authors of The Compleat Midwives Practice (1656) and James MacMath, author of The Expert Midwife (1694), also allowed pregnant women a glass of strong wine “now and then.”<sup>389</sup> They allowed these occasional strong drinks as part of a pregnant woman’s diet. Physicians’ warnings about the adverse effects of alcohol and advice to limit women to weak drinks and only occasional strong wines suggest that standard practices allowed women to drink larger amounts of alcohol during pregnancy.

Authors prescribed an array of alcoholic aids to the various discomforts of pregnancy, delivery, and post-natal complications. The way in which they prescribed them suggests that caregivers were supplying possets, caudles, and ales anyway. In the late seventeenth-century

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<sup>386</sup> Nicholas Culpeper, A Directory for Midwives, or a Guide for Women (London, 1693), p. 150.

<sup>387</sup> James Guillemeau, Childbirth: Or The Happy Delivery of Women [1612] in The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile (Amsterdam, 1972), p. 192; T. C., I. D., M. S., and T. B., The Compleat Midwives Practice (London, 1656), pp. 39, 94; also John Pechey, The Compleat Midwife’s Practice Enlarged in the Most Weighty and High Concernments of the Birth of Man (London, 1698), is almost a word-for-word copy; and Sermon, The Ladies Companion, p. 39.

<sup>388</sup> Sharp, The Midwives Book, pp. 198-99.

<sup>389</sup> T. C., I. D., M. S., and T. B., The Compleat Midwives Practice, p. 39; and James MacMath, The Expert Midwife (Edinburgh, 1694), p. 51.

manuscript Observations in Midwifery the physician Percival Willughby advised midwives to give a birthing woman “mace-ale, or caudles, or a little wine with Alkermes” but nothing more specific.<sup>390</sup> Authors advised on what added medications delivering women needed but not on the basic drinks. For example, Markham recommended adding almond oil “either in posset drink or in a Caudle.”<sup>391</sup> In a similar vein Sharp recommended sage ale or garden tunsie ale as a morning draught but provided no recipe.<sup>392</sup> These alcoholic drinks were part of the popular pharmacopoeia. The familiarity with which authors mentioned them throughout medical and non-medical literature suggests women already knew how to make and use them.

However, women seem to have struggled with non-alcoholic drinks. Some women had a difficult time drinking alcohol while pregnant because it made them feel ill.<sup>393</sup> Authors treated this issue as a medical condition rather than a choice in diet, as if no one would choose to avoid alcoholic drinks. Authors gave specific instructions and detailed recipes for non-alcoholic drinks like cinnamon water or water sweetened with honey. They also recommended boiling the water.<sup>394</sup> In the humoral system, honey and cinnamon were both “hot” foods. People added them to counteract the coldness of water. They made non-alcoholic drinks that resembled the

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<sup>390</sup> Percival Willughby, Observations in Midwifery, Henry Bleukinsop, ed. (Wakefield, 1972), p. 20.

<sup>391</sup> Markham, The English Housewife, p. 40.

<sup>392</sup> Sharp, The Midwives Book, p. 181.

<sup>393</sup> For example, James Guillemeau, Childbirth: Or The Happy Delivery of Women [1612], p. 192; and anonymous, Every Woman Her Own Midwife, p. 2.

<sup>394</sup> James Guillemeau, Childbirth: Or The Happy Delivery of Women [1612], p. 192; anonymous, Every Woman Her Own Midwife, p. 2; and M. A., A Rich Closet of Physical Secrets, Collected by the Elaborate Paines of Four Severall Students in Physick, And Digested Together (London, 1652), p. 18.

humoral properties of alcoholic ones. Furthermore, the precision and details of the recipes reveal that authors did not expect women to be as familiar with non-alcoholic drinks for the sick as they were with caudles, possets, and medicinal ales. Clearly, alcoholic drinks were the medical standard.

## **Conclusions**

One of the functions of alcohol was to regulate health. Both drink and blood had hot and moist properties and therefore alcohol was associated with replacing and strengthening blood. Authors recommended drink as a medical necessity and re-enforced the dietary role alcohol played in society. They selected the recommendations of classical authorities that encouraged the consumption of wine. Classical authorities were silent on ale and beer, so authors had to rely on custom and their own observations. They observed that native drinks made their nation healthier than countries that relied on wine. Even spirits played a significant role in restoring health and youth. While authors acknowledged that alcohol could lead to illness if abused, in moderation it was an essential element of a healthy diet. This was so strongly promoted that authors nearly condemned water as unhealthy. Authors provided medical justifications for a diet rich in alcohol.

The medical understanding of the body spun reproductive differences out to encompass all aspects of sickness and health. Contemporaries defined women by what men were not. Women were cold and dry whereas men were hot and moist. Alcohol was embedded in this gendered system of

medical knowledge. For example, practitioners recommended that people who suffered from a fever should avoid drink. Empirical observations would render that advice sound since alcohol is a diuretic. Fevers were also clear, easily distinguished symptoms of illness. However, Galenic theories were flexible enough to supply medical justifications for the social regulation of drinking patterns. Practitioners also recommended the use or avoidance of drink to treat ailments with socially constructed symptoms. In cases of green sickness, hysteria, and female barrenness alcohol regulated socially constructed and diagnosed illnesses. These were all women's diseases, and alcohol could cure them. Authors couched their arguments about drinking in medical terms, but medical analyses were not without social and moral overtones. In diseases that caused unthreatening, yet unacceptable, behaviour, practitioners advised women to increase their drinking. Green sickness made a woman weak and tired, hysteria made her fretful and irrational, and barrenness from a cold womb made a woman unresponsive to sexual advances. Authors advised that all of these illnesses could be cured with regular draughts of alcohol between meals. Diseases that caused aggressive or insubordinate behaviour such as barrenness due to a hot womb required abstention from alcohol. All of these diseases were at least partly diagnosed by holding women responsible for standards of behaviour. They were either too introverted or too extroverted. Alcohol balanced out their personality extremes.

Women were central to the medical distribution of drink. The authors of medical and household handbooks were for the most part men, but they consciously wrote for a largely female audience. Ultimately women

promoted the use of alcohol in diet and medicine, even if those prescriptions added to their own social regulation. The story of female practitioners is often hidden from the historian's view. Women were not registered practitioners, and they often did not practice for financial gain. Furthermore, authors and authorities taught women that they were not professional practitioners, so women probably did not think of themselves as such. The practice of "physick" was part of their household duties, even though they often diagnosed the same illnesses and prescribed the same treatments as professional physicians. Andrew Wear points out that because women lacked the "learned theory of the physicians, they depended heavily on prescriptions."<sup>395</sup> Nagy contends that women's receipt books did not contain prescriptions that were fundamentally different from those of male medical practitioners.<sup>396</sup> A large number of these receipts were for spirits. Many of the most popular were panaceas good for almost any ailment. In addition, women regulated the diet of their households. As the mainstay of the medical field, women controlled the creation, distribution, and dosage of medicinal alcohol. For all practical purposes, they regulated the medicinal drinking patterns of the entire household, male and female. Alcohol regulated health, but women regulated alcohol.

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<sup>395</sup> Wear, "The Popularization of Medicine in Early Modern England," p. 34.

<sup>396</sup> Nagy, Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, p. 70.



#### 4. Prescriptive Literature

He is not then his own Master or his own man,  
 whose senses are fettered with Drunkenesse . . .  
 and instead of quenching his thirst drownes his  
 soule.<sup>397</sup>

Preachers and other concerned moralists wrote extensively about the evils of drunkenness. Most religious and secular authorities agreed that drunkenness was socially disruptive as well as morally reprehensible. Authors warned of the problems associated with habitual drunkenness. They described how drunken comportment affected order in the community and in the family. This chapter uses primarily sermons and advice literature to discuss the problems associated with excessive intoxication as opposed to moderate and socially acceptable drinking. Authors discussed the use and abuse of alcohol in their published works. These descriptions illuminate the behaviour contemporaries expected from drunkards and the consequences caused by habitual drunkenness. Sermons and prescriptive works also reveal that the consequences of drunkenness were different for men and women. Authors censured men for active, aggressive behaviour such as pledging healths, drunken brawling, and whoremongering. Women were predominantly guilty of risking their reputations by appearing vulnerable to male sexual aggression. Moralists also recognised that these gendered behaviour patterns affected communities and families in different ways. Men put their patriarchal authority as governors and husbands into danger when they lost control of their reason through drunkenness. Women

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<sup>397</sup> Thomas Ford, The Times Anatomiz'd, In Severall Characters (London, 1647), p. D10.

put the honour and reputation of their households into question through excessive drinking. Drunkenness was never just the problem of the individual. Authorities believed it affected gender relations in the community and the household. Authors argued that male drunkenness disadvantaged women. Likewise, female drunkenness disadvantaged men. They turned a drinking problem into a gender issue.

Most of the material for this chapter comes from sermons and conduct literature specifically about drunkenness written by men with puritan leanings. They wrote in order to change drinking patterns, and therefore might have exaggerated the intensity of the problems they described.<sup>398</sup> However, the patterns and the kinds of moral and social problems they attributed to drinking were real, if less intense. Puritan preachers and moralists focused their energy on the evils of drink, alehouses, and the immorality accompanying intoxication. For instance, in The Drunkards Character (1638) Richard Young devoted 692 pages to the evils he associated with alcohol.<sup>399</sup> Preachers vocalised the concerns of most men in authority. David Underdown points out in Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century, his study of puritan rule in Dorchester, that local magistrates everywhere punished drunkenness and its associated immorality. Puritan political policies called for a strict social morality but not a fundamentally altered one. The puritan campaigns were intense persecutions of drunkenness, but puritans shared their definitions of

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<sup>398</sup> Jack S. Blocker, Jr., "Introduction," in Jack S. Blocker, Jr., and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, eds., The Changing Face of Drink: Substance, Imagery, and Behaviour (Ottawa, 1997), p. 5.

problem drinking with most non-puritan authorities.<sup>400</sup> For example, Thomas Kingsmill, a respected member of the Church of England and the professor of Hebrew at Oxford, apparently was without puritan leanings. He published only three sermons in his lifetime, one of which was The Drunkards Warning. (1631).<sup>401</sup> Even men who were not professional preachers wrote against drunkenness. William Hornby was a poet who reformed his drinking habits and on reflection wrote The Scovrge of Drunkennes (1614).<sup>402</sup> The social effects of drunkenness were not politically or religiously contentious. While authorities might have disagreements over the intensity of campaigns to prosecute drunkenness, they seem to have agreed on what aspects of drunken behaviour were dangerous. Puritans differed only in their perception of the magnitude of problems associated with habitual drunkenness.

Particularly in the early seventeenth century writing against drunkenness became a popular genre. In her book An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England Susan Dwyer Ammusen claims that wide social and religious changes promoted a growing intolerance of social disorder among the ruling classes.<sup>403</sup> This would explain the large number of sermons published in the 1610s and 1620s on the socially disruptive consequences of drunkenness. Preachers had at least eleven new sermons published over the twenty-year period that attacked drunkenness

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<sup>399</sup> Richard Young, The Drunkards Character, or, A True Drunkard With Such Sinnes as Raigne in Him . . . Together With Compleat Armour Against Evill Society (London, 1638), *passim*.

<sup>400</sup> David Underdown, Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century (New Haven, 1992), p. 102.

<sup>401</sup> Dictionary of National Biography (London, 1885-1900), XXXI, p. 184.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII, pp. 355-6.

and public drinking behaviour. However, the flurry from the pulpit seemed to have little effect on society at large. Underdown acknowledges that the puritan campaign's biggest failure in Dorchester was the push against drunkenness.<sup>404</sup> By the 1640s new sermons targeting drunkenness rarely appeared. Printers continued to churn out the older puritan tracts. The essential message had not changed. Preachers continued to deliver sermons against drunkenness. John Evelyn recorded hearing at least five sermons against drinking in the second half of the seventeenth century. Two sermons Evelyn heard before the Restoration, and the other three he heard twenty years or more after.<sup>405</sup> The twenty years between 1660 and 1680 saw a decline in the popularity of new sermons against drunkenness. This was consistent with the general relaxation of puritan morality in the Restoration period. Sermons against drunkenness resurfaced in the late seventeenth century along with a few new tracts against spirits such as Thomas Tryon's book, Healths Grand Preservative: or The Womens Best Doctor (1682).<sup>406</sup> Once again moral campaigners lashed out against drinking. Despite these sermons' ebb and flow in popularity, the behaviour authors described remained constant. In From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England Anna Bryson contends that social conduct codes did not significantly change throughout

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<sup>403</sup> Susan Dwyer Amussen, An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England (Oxford, 1988), p. 176.

<sup>404</sup> Underdown, Fire From Heaven, p. 104.

<sup>405</sup> John Evelyn, The Diary of John Evelyn, E. S. deBeer, ed. (Oxford, 1955), III, p. 254, 26 August 1660, III, p. 258, 14 October 1660, IV, p. 196, 7 March 1680, V, p. 15, 23 March 1690, and V, p. 234, 15 March 1696.

<sup>406</sup> Thomas Tryon, Healths Grand Preservative: or The Womens Best Doctor (London, 1682).

the period.<sup>407</sup> Authors and publishers recycled sermons and advice manuals written in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries well into the late seventeenth century. Apparently, the periodic campaigns against drunkenness were not successful either in reducing drunkenness or in changing patterns of drinking behaviour. Authorities never approved of the drunken comportment associated with excessive alcohol consumption outlined in sermons and prescriptive literature. However, it seems they could do nothing to change it.

Sermons against alcohol were common, but many of them ostensibly about drunkenness were only loosely related to drunken comportment. For example, in his series of three sermons, The Fatal Banket (1614), the preacher Thomas Adams used drunkenness as a metaphor for several social evils not necessarily associated with intoxication such as pride, treason, murder, hypocrisy, theft, and general villainy.<sup>408</sup> Preachers often used the evils of drunkenness to discuss general irreverent behaviour. Because contemporaries claimed that drinking led to every other sin, any sermon on drunkenness could include injunctions against all other sins. Most sermons also included long biblical injunctions against excessive drinking. Explanations of biblical passages and drinking metaphors did little to illuminate the exact drunken comportment that preachers and authorities felt disrupted the social order. Besides referring to drinking, authors discussed concrete social problems and specific behaviours such as physical violence and illicit sex, which also disrupted the community. This chapter

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<sup>407</sup> Anna Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England (Oxford, 1998), p. 81.

concentrates on the social problems habitual drunkenness created rather than the general moral or religious degradation associated with a life spent in the alehouse rather than in church.

Several historians agree that drunkenness might have increased in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for a multitude of reasons. While admitting a lack of quantitative evidence, Peter Clark speculates that the growing popularity of strong beer might have increased drunkenness.<sup>409</sup> However, the higher cost of strong beer possibly meant people could afford less and so consumed the same amount of alcohol as they had previously. David Underdown traces what he called Puritan Dorchester's "epidemic of immorality and disorder," including drunkenness, to the population explosion of the last sixteenth and early seventeenth century.<sup>410</sup> He acknowledges that he found evidence indicating that drunkenness became less acceptable, but not that it increased. Laquita M. Higgs in her book Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester claims the legal prosecution of drunkenness increased in the late 1570s with the beginnings of the Puritan campaigns for the reformation of manners. She concludes this was a change in people's perception of the problem and not necessarily an increase in drinking.<sup>411</sup> Without conclusive quantitative evidence, historians can only conclude that the perception of drunkenness as a growing social problem persisted over the period. The increase in the

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<sup>408</sup> Thomas Adams, The Works of Thomas Adams. Being The Summe of His Sermons, Meditations, and Other Divine and Morall Discovrses (London, 1629), p. 178.

<sup>409</sup> Peter Clark, "The Alehouse and the Alternative Society," in Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas, eds., Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth Century History Presented to Christopher Hill (Oxford, 1978), p. 58.

<sup>410</sup> Underdown, Fire From Heaven, p. 22.

<sup>411</sup> Laquita M. Higgs, Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester (Ann Arbor, 1998), pp. 275-77.

strength of beer, a population explosion, or growing concern over immorality could all have contributed to the real or imagined increase in drunkenness. Regardless, preachers and other authorities thought drunkenness and the immorality for which it was responsible were on the rise.<sup>412</sup> The perception of an increase in drunkenness is unsurprising. Preachers and prescriptive writers were professional complainers. For them, society would always be on a downhill slide. Whether drunkenness was on the rise or in decline, drunken behaviour remained constant.

Authors of sermons and conduct manuals claimed unacceptable drinking practices were different for men and women. However, they had less to say about female drinking than about male drinking. Bryson suggests that, in comparison to advice directed towards men, most conduct books gave women only limited advice on how to conduct themselves in any aspect of manners.<sup>413</sup> The same was true of sermons. Some of this glaring omission was due to the gendered nature of the English language. When authors meant to speak about men and women, they frequently collapsed both sexes into just “men”. Authors expected women to follow basic male behavioural protocols unless specifically directed otherwise.<sup>414</sup> They meant any advice directed specifically towards women to be in addition to the general “male” advice they gave and not in place of it. For instance, authors complained about the practice of drinking healths. The continuity of complaints by several authors ranging throughout the period shows drinking healths remained popular regardless of the barrage of

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<sup>412</sup> Thomas Young, Englands Bane: or, The Description of Drunkenesse (London, 1617), Sig. Div; and R. Harris The Drunkards Cup p. 304.

<sup>413</sup> Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility, p. 38.

objections concerning men's health, conduct, or spiritual rewards.

However, authors did not single out women as guilty of drinking healths.

Women did drink healths, but authors saw the abuse of the practice as primarily a component of male problem drinking. Women, on the other hand, should not only avoid excessive pledging, but also they should avoid excessive drinking altogether. Many authors did not feel the need to labour this point. For instance, Thomas Thompson's sermon, A Diet for a Drunkard (1608), was eighty-two pages long and included six separate categories of men with reasons why each should not get drunk. He wrote only two pages discussing women and gave biblical and classical injunctions against female drunkenness instead of a reasoned argument.<sup>415</sup>

While the advice authors gave to women was short, it was also very different in form and content to the advice they gave to men. Authors avoided giving women reasoned arguments and instead relied on vague exhortations and classical examples to make their points.

### **Defining a Drunkard**

No authors recommended or expected abstention from alcohol. In The Drunkards Character Richard Young claimed that wine was not evil "in it selfe . . . or the use of it unlawfull."<sup>416</sup> Preachers did not blame alcohol for drunkenness. Thomas Kingsmill in The Drunkards Warning allowed not only the use of wine but also its enjoyment when he wrote, "I blame not all affection to, or delectation in drinking wine . . . 'Twas created for

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<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>415</sup> Thomas Thompson, A Diet For a Drunkard. Delivered in Two Sermons at Saint Nicholas Church in Bristol, Anno Domini 1608 (London, 1612), pp. 23-4 and *passim*.



iucundity.”<sup>417</sup> Wine was a gift from God. In A Monster Late Found Out and Discovered. Or The Scourging of Tiplers, The Ruine of Bacchus, and the Bane of Tapsters (1628) Richard Rawlidge claimed, “the Grape was appointed by God to make Wine to cheare vp the heart.”<sup>418</sup> Preachers expounded upon several passages in the Bible to illuminate what they saw as God’s intentions in creating such a potent drug. Daniel Dent in his Sermon Against Drunkenness (1628) advised his readers that, “wine moderately taken, saith Solomon, makes glad the heart, and therefore he would have it given to them that were of heavy hearts.”<sup>419</sup> Dent paraphrased Psalm 104:15 as did other preachers.<sup>420</sup> Preachers saw God’s purpose in creating alcohol as a way to alleviate spiritual grief and physical pain. They acknowledged the rightful role of alcohol in social gatherings. They objected to the habit of intoxication but not intoxication itself. Even for the “godly” alcohol had its place at the table.

Preachers and other moralists wrote to admonish and reform “drunkards” rather than forbid the proper use of alcohol. In A Delicate Diet, For Daintie Mouthde Droonkardes (1576) George Gascoyne feared that, “the pleasauntnesse of the drinke, and the infirmity of our nature doo beget one draught upo[n] another, so that beginning with curtesie, we ende with madnesse and beastlynesse.”<sup>421</sup> Gascoyne’s contemporaries knew him

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<sup>416</sup> Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 46.

<sup>417</sup> Thomas Kingsmill, The Drunkards Warning (London, 1631), p. 7.

<sup>418</sup> Richard Rawlidge, A Monster Late Found Out and Discovered. Or The Scourging of Tiplers, The Ruine of Bacchus, and the Bane of Tapsters (Amsterdam, 1628), p. 10.

<sup>419</sup> Daniel Dent, A Sermon Against Drunkenness: Preached at Ware by Daniel Dent . . . (Cambridge, 1628), p. 4.

<sup>420</sup> For example, Kingsmill, The Drunkards Warning, p. 7. See also Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 46. Young quotes Proverbs 31:6 and 1 Tim. 5:23.

<sup>421</sup> George Gascoyne, A Delicate Diet, For Daintie Mouthde Droonkardes (London, 1576), plate Ciiii.

as a poet with a lavish lifestyle rather than an austere moralist.<sup>422</sup> Anyone could slip into drunkenness without intending to do so. In a country where everyone had experience with alcohol, authors had to define which drinkers were drunkards and which were not. Puritans, such as Samuel Ward, were careful to separate the occasionally drunk from habitual drunkards. In his sermon Woe To Drunkards (1627) Ward pardoned people “who rarely and casually have Noah-like been surprised” by drunkenness.<sup>423</sup> In Genesis 9:20 Noah planted a vineyard, made wine, and then became drunk. Contemporaries assumed he did not know wine caused drunkenness. Kingsmill also used the example of Noah, yet he was not so forgiving in the contemporary comparison. He advised that, “Noah was once drunken and no more: follow him in repentance, and not in sinne.”<sup>424</sup> Other preachers also used the Bible to define “drunkards.” Daniel Dent explained that the prophet Joel did not mean that people who drank “either for hilarity, or refreshment of their spirits, much less for necessity” were drunkards. He meant only those people who drank “intemperately.”<sup>425</sup> Social and nutritional drinking was acceptable; excessive drinking was not. In A Sober Testimony (1675?) Richard Garbut also exonerated those who “perhaps once or twice, or the like, may through accident transgress in Wine.”<sup>426</sup> He allowed the “liberal use of Wine” on occasions, but the use of wine “for

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<sup>422</sup> Dictionary of National Biography, XXI, pp. 36-9.

<sup>423</sup> Samuel Ward, “Woe To Drunkards,” in A Collection of Such Sermons and Treatises as Have Been Written and Published by Mr. Samuel Ward, Preacher of Ipswich (London, 1627), p. 10.

<sup>424</sup> Kingsmill, The Drunkards Warning, p. 11.

<sup>425</sup> Dent, A Sermon Against Drunkenness, p. 5.

<sup>426</sup> Richard Garbutt, One Comes From the Dead, To Awaken Drunkards and Whoremongers: Being a Sober and Severe Testimony Against the Sins and the Sinners, in an Exact Description of the Nature and Danger of These Two Soul-Destroying Evils (London, 1675?), p. 17.

ordinary sensual Pleasure and delight ” was unacceptable.<sup>427</sup> Preachers did not agree on where to draw the line between the proper use and the immoderate abuse of alcohol. This amorphous quality of social unacceptability was hard to establish, because drunkenness was not quantifiable. Garbut even defined one type of drunkard as someone who “drinks . . . but very very little, so that there is no sensible Change or Alteration of the man, but yet he sits it out with Good Fellowes . . . approving and delighting in their drunkenish good Fellowship and Excess.”<sup>428</sup> A drunkard was someone who approved of drunkenness. Authors did not think about excessive drunkenness in terms of the amount of alcohol consumed. Social conduct while drinking was a much more important factor determining who was or was not a drunkard.

Authors lamented the acceptability of drunkenness in society at large. In 1550 John Bankes translated John Riiius’ complaints about the riotous behaviour of young men. He noted that although young men “drinke both nyght and day, there is nothyng sayde to it.”<sup>429</sup> Forty-five years later the author of The Glasse of Mans Folly also commented on the acceptability of drunkenness in society.<sup>430</sup> Moralists believed most people accepted drunkenness as a normal indiscretion. The puritan divine Arthur Dent gave his version of popular opinion when one of his characters in The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven(1603) defended social drinking by claiming that,

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<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18; see also Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 157.

<sup>429</sup> John Riiius, A Treatise Against the Folishnesse of Men in Differinge the Reformation of Their Liuing, and Amendment of Their Maners, John Bankes, trans. (London? 1550), plate Cv.

<sup>430</sup> B. H., The Glasse of Mans Folly, and Meanes To Amendment of Life (London, 1595), p. 3.

“if neighbours meete together, now and then, at the Ale-house, and play a game at Maw, for a pot of Ale, meaning no hurt: I take it to be good fellowship, and a good meanes to increase loue amongst neighbours; and not so hainous a thing.”<sup>431</sup> Another character argued against this lax attitude towards drunkenness. Dent’s published dialogue was popular. It ran through twenty-four editions by 1637 and continued to be published up to the forty-first edition in 1831.<sup>432</sup> Dent was not alone in his views. In 1629 the preacher Thomas Adams also objected to letting “drunkenness stagger in the robes of Good-fellowship, and shroud it selfe vnder the wings of merriment.”<sup>433</sup> Preachers were concerned their flock did not always recognise drunkenness as a sin. If they did know it was a sin, they considered it, as Garbut complained, “a very venial sin, a very pardonable sin, a very very Peccadillo, a Sin just and no more.”<sup>434</sup> Court records reveal that many people did take a lax attitude towards drunkenness. Several of the deponents, men and women, in Keith Wrightson’s study “Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660” referred to their occasional drunkenness without shame.<sup>435</sup> Preachers and other authority figures complained that the general population was too complacent in policing drunkenness.

Not only did people tolerate drunkenness, but also “drunkards” themselves were unashamed of their sin. Thomas Beard translated and

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<sup>431</sup> Arthur Dent, The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven (London, 1603), p. 165.

<sup>432</sup> Dictionary of National Biography, XIV, pp. 376-7.

<sup>433</sup> Adams, The Works of Thomas Adams, p. 776.

<sup>434</sup> Garbutt, One Comes From the Dead, p. 4.

<sup>435</sup> Keith Wrightson, “Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660,” in Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo, eds., Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure (Brighton, 1981), p. 6.

greatly expanded Jean de Chassauion's The Theatre of Gods Ivdgements in the early seventeenth century. The book was a compilation of examples of divine justice. Beard gave the sin of drunkenness a high priority and asked, "what sinne is more commonly vsed and lesse feared than this?"<sup>436</sup> Young attempted to explain why people did not fear drunkenness when he alleged that, "the multitude of offenders benumes the sense of offending, a common blot is held no staine."<sup>437</sup> Nicholas Proffet complained that it was common to see "both sexes reele and vomit in a brutish manner."<sup>438</sup> Drunkenness was a public nuisance not only for drinkers, but also for the people around them. Furthermore, drunkards were not ashamed of their sins. The sarcastic pamphlet, The Womens Sharp Revenge, explained that,

The Drunkard is more impudent and shamelesse then either Whoremaster, Whore, Bawd . . . or the Devil himself. For although these before named, are as bad, as wickednesse can make them, yet I did never reade or heare of any of them that at any time were so foolishly past shame, as to boast or glory in any of their villanies, as many Drunkards will; I have heard some to brag, how many they have out-drunk and drunk drunk in a day.<sup>439</sup>

Drunkenness was public by its very nature and recreational drinking required multiple participants. Preachers paid such diligent attention to drinking because drunkenness directly countermanded the idea that a sin was a source of public shame.

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<sup>436</sup> Thomas Beard, author and trans., The Theatre of Gods Ivdgements: Reuised and Augmented, Jean de Chassauion, add. author (London, 1631), p. 431. This work was later amended and published as J. Strenock, Gods Sword Drawn Forth Against Drunkards and Swearers, Blasphemers of Gods Holy Name, Whore-Mongers, Sabbath Breakers, and Other Lewd Livers of All Sorts (London, 1677).

<sup>437</sup> Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 339.

<sup>438</sup> Nicholas Proffet, "Englands Impenitencie Under Smiting" [1645], cited in Wrightson, "Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660," p. 6.

<sup>439</sup> Mary Tattle-well and Ioane Hit-him-home (a.k.a. John Taylor), The Womens Sharp Revenge: or an Answer to Sir Seldome Sober, that Writ Those Railing Pamphlets Called the Juniper and Crab-tree Lectures (London, 1640), pp. 190-1.

According to contemporaries, drunkenness encouraged all sins in both sexes. Ward felt that the ten commandments did not forbid drunkenness only because it was “no one sinne, but all sines . . . it [was] the In-let and sluice of all other sinnes.”<sup>440</sup> Other authors such as Fletcher and Young agreed.<sup>441</sup> Dent linked drunkenness to violent crimes; it was “the fountaine of all vice, the fewell of lust, the mother of whoredoms, rapes, murders, and all manner of abominations.”<sup>442</sup> The general role of alcohol as the road to self-destruction and sin was not just a belief of moralists but permeated popular literature. A character sketch of “A Drunkard,” written in 1641, concluded that drink was

The wrack of Reputation, Road to Riot;  
The Port to pains Eternal, the decay  
Of Life, Goods, Honour; Hels broad beaten way.<sup>443</sup>

Drunkenness destroyed a person in this life and the next. Parents also voiced their general concerns about the evils of drink. Elizabeth Jocelin advised her unborn children in 1624 that drunkenness led to a multitude of sins.<sup>444</sup> In 1632 Sir Walter Raleigh also warned his son that drunkenness was “a bewitching and infectious vice.”<sup>445</sup> Parents, preachers, and popular authors were aware that drunken comportment opened the door to a world of social problems for both men and women.

Drunkenness caused social problems that were rooted in ill-spoken words. Authors were concerned that drunkenness provoked blasphemy,

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<sup>440</sup> Ward, “Woe To Drunkards,” p. 15.

<sup>441</sup> Anthony Fletcher, Certaine Very Proper and Most Profitable Similes (London, 1595), p. 98; and Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 29.

<sup>442</sup> Dent, A Sermon Against Drunkenness, p. 14.

<sup>443</sup> T[homas] J[ordan], Pictures of Passions, Fancies, & Affections. Poetically Deciphered in Variety of Characters (London, 1641), p. B5.

<sup>444</sup> Elizabeth Jocelin, The Mothers Legacie to Her Vnborne Childe (London, 1624), pp. 70-73.

slander, and arguments in the community at large. Drunk people did not respect their place in the social hierarchy. In his sermon The Araigment of an Unruly Tongue (1619) George Web blamed drunkenness for promoting the verbal insubordination of wives and servants as well as the “bitter” and “insulting” comments of husbands and masters.<sup>446</sup> Not only did people speak out of turn but they also spoke viciously. The Glasse of Mans Folly (1595) claimed that, “the alebench hath a qualitie of euill utterance, of lying and backbyting all those that will not ioyne in excesse.”<sup>447</sup> Drinkers abused those who were not drinking with them. Furthermore, a drunkard was “unstauche of tounge” and a “revealer of secrets” who “discloseth all that he knoweth.”<sup>448</sup> People said things better left unsaid whether it was blasphemy, treason, or malicious slander. In his poem The Court of Conscience, or Dick Wippers Sessions. With the Order of His Arraigning and Punishing of Many Notorious, Dissembling, Wicket, and Vitious Liuers in This Age Richard West complained that drunkards were

Reeling, and staggering, and blaspheming God,  
With bitter oathes, and loathsome bawdie songs.<sup>449</sup>

The disrespectful vocabulary of most drunkards disrupted the community and individual families. Raleigh warned his son that, “in drinke men care

<sup>445</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh, Instructions to His Sonne, and to Posterity (London, 1632), p. 83.

<sup>446</sup> George Web, The Araigment of an Unruly Tongue. Wherein the Faults of an Euill Tongue are Opened, the Danger Discovered, the Remedies Prescribed for the Taming of a Bad Tongue, the Right Ordering of the Tongue, and the Pacifying of a Troubled Minde Against the Wrongs of an Euill Tongue (London, 1619), pp. 29, 43, 50.

<sup>447</sup> B. H., The Glasse of Mans Folly, p. 11.

<sup>448</sup> Gilbert Cousin, Of the Office of Servauntes (London, 1543), p. Bv; Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 27; and Barnaby Rich, My Ladies Looking Glasse, Wherin May Be Discerned A Wise Man From a Foole, A Good Woman From A Bad: And The True Resemblance of Vice, Masked Under the Visard of Vetrue (London, 1616), p. 34.

<sup>449</sup> R[ichard] West, The Court of Conscience, or Dick Wippers Sessions. With the Order of His Arraigning and Punishing of Many Notorious, Dissembling, Wicket, and Vitious Liuers in This Age (London, 1607), plate D2.

not what they say, what offence they give.”<sup>450</sup> Slander was perhaps the most tangible as well as the most common verbal sin. People virtually traded on their reputations in the community. A vicious rumour could have immediate economic consequences for men and women of all social levels. Authors dwelled on unacceptable loquaciousness because it did real damage to people’s lives. Drunkenness affected the respect and reputations men and women held in the community. Ill-spoken words diminished both. Drunken arguments and inappropriate pledging caused brawls. Drunken sexual behaviour, either real or perceived, destroyed the reputations of women. While authors were aware of the other ill affects of alcohol such as sudden death or prolonged illness, they concentrated on the social problems that began in drunken conversations and conviviality.

### **Male Drinking Behaviour**

Pledging a health served as an important social ritual. Clark estimates that pledging became entrenched among all levels of society from the late sixteenth century onwards. Before that it was only prevalent in upper-class circles associated with the court.<sup>451</sup> Once adopted by society at large, pledging became an essential element of social reconciliation, compliments, and neighbourliness. According to Bryson, a health pledged and accepted made the two parties equal in status. In The Courte of Civill Courtesie (1577) the author advised men to pledge healths only to social inferiors or

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<sup>450</sup> Raleigh, Instructions to His Sonne, and to Posterity, p. 90.

<sup>451</sup> Peter Clark, The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830 (London, 1983), p. 156.



equals, lest they insult their betters with presumptuous behaviour.<sup>452</sup>

Pledging was either a compliment to an inferior or a mark of inclusion among social equals. Pledging also reconciled local disputes and signified agreement, or at least forgiveness. This was the case for both men and women. For instance, Gowing provides examples from the consistory court records of defamation suits that settled out of court. They often concluded with each party drinking a ritual health in a local tavern or alehouse. The drinking began with a customary pledge such as the pledge between Anne Haynes and Rachel Cheeresey in 1622; “I drinke to you and all the malice or hatred I beare to you I putt into this glasse.”<sup>453</sup> Men and women used pledging to denote public agreement or reconciliation. The literature and court records are full of examples of pledges that did not result in excessive drinking. Even authors who wrote against pledging acknowledged the practice had an important, if misguided, social role. In his pamphlet A Divine Potion to Preserve Spirituall Health, by the Cure of Unnatural Health-Drinking (1648) the puritan divine John Geree admitted that, “custom hath made healthing a sign of respect.”<sup>454</sup> Pledging fulfilled the important social role of publicly binding neighbours to one another.

Preachers and other authorities were concerned that what started as a simple, complimentary ritual had evolved into an excuse for promoting drunkenness. Authors objected to several aspects of pledging which

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<sup>452</sup> Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility, p. 93, quoting from S. R., A New Yeere's Gift. The Courte of Civill Courtesie . . . Assembled in the Behalf of All Younge Gentlemen, and Others, to Frame Their Behaviour According to Their Estates, At All Times and In All Companies (London, 1577), ch. 9, 37.

<sup>453</sup> Anne Haynes c. Rachel Cheeresey (1622), DL/C 228, f. 140, in Laura Gowing, Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London (Oxford, 1996), p. 136.

exceeded any ritual function. Geree described an objectionable pledge as “a whole cup drunk in relation to the health of some person usually absent, which is to be pledged by all in company with the head uncovered.”<sup>455</sup> He claimed these rituals aimed at conviviality and drunkenness. Young and Adams both objected to pledges because they had become drinking games. Young described healths that required the drinkers to drink “so many quarts, as either of their names hath letters in it.”<sup>456</sup> Adams depicted men on their knees drinking to loose women and challenging each other to finish off their cups in one draught.<sup>457</sup> Pledging had become a mere excuse for drunkenness. Furthermore, men used the language of honour and respect to push each other into intoxication. In Englands Bane: or, The Description of Drunkenness (1617) Thomas Young listed examples of this language such as “I dranke to you, I pray pledge me, you dishonour me, you disgrace mee, and with such like words, doth [a man] vrge his consorts forward to be drunke.”<sup>458</sup> Authors objected to the distortion of pledging. People still used pledges as reconciliation rituals and social bonds, but men also abused them and made them an excuse for drunkenness.

Pledging required participation, and authors objected to its abuse because it drew people into drunkenness. They specifically accused men of getting drunk by drinking healths. To refuse a health was a rejection of the party who proposed it. Male drinking culture linked drunken camaraderie so closely to honour and insult that many arguments and physical assaults

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<sup>454</sup> John Geree, Theiopharmakon. = A Divine Potion to Preserve Spirituall Health, by the Cure of Unnatural Health-Drinking (London, 1648), p. 6.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>456</sup> Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 138.

<sup>457</sup> Adams, The Works of Thomas Adams, p. 505.

began over pledging. Several authors commented on brawls begun in drink.<sup>459</sup> William Prynne, the puritan pamphleteer, appealed to popular consensus when he asked in Healthe's Sickness (1628), "How many Quarrels, Murthers, Wounds, and Discontents do we hear of every year about the beginning, or refusing Healths?"<sup>460</sup> Pledging often served social disorder rather than reconciliation. Authors objected to the social obligation men felt to accept a pledge even if it meant excessive drinking. Rich referred to healths as "Art Magicke Charmes" that drew men into drunkenness.<sup>461</sup> Young claimed that drinkers held men accountable for breaking the laws of "good fellowship: if they dared leave some drink in the bottom of their cups."<sup>462</sup> Men who refused to participate in the drunken fellowship of healths did so to their detriment. Prynne complained that any man who refused on principal to accept a pledge was called a "Puritan," and the other drinkers "hate him in their hearts."<sup>463</sup> Young explained that a man must accept and return a pledge, for to do otherwise was a direct insult.<sup>464</sup> Men were caught in the trap of their own drinking sociability.

Men who refused healths not only slighted others but also disgraced themselves.<sup>465</sup> Court records and diaries confirmed authors' concerns. To refuse to drink with neighbours was a source of shame for men. In 1631

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<sup>458</sup> Young, Englands Bane, plate E.

<sup>459</sup> For example; William Hornby, The Scourge of Drunkenness (London, 1614 reprint 1859), pp. 17-8; anonymous, A Looking Glasse For Drunkards: or, The Hunting of Drunkenesse. Wherein Drunkards Are Unmasked To the View of the World (London, 1627) p. 10; Young, The Drunkards Character, pp. 138-9; and Geree, A Divine Potion to Preserve Spirituall Health, p. 3.

<sup>460</sup> William Prynne, Healthe's Sickness (London, 1628), p. 38.

<sup>461</sup> Rich, My Ladies Looking Glasse, p. 35.

<sup>462</sup> Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 138.

<sup>463</sup> Prynne, Healthe's Sickness, p. 37.

<sup>464</sup> Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 79.

John Sheffeld from Durham teased William Bell for refusing to drink with him. Sheffeld told Bell he should be ashamed because he was “so awebound to his wife that he durst not drink a cup of ale with a friend.”<sup>466</sup>

The Diary of John Evelyn also suggests men had a hard time avoiding excessive social drinking. In 1682 Evelyn attended a dinner party. He wrote; “I was exceedingly afraide of Drinking . . . & to prevent all, I stole away & left the Company as soone as we rose from Table.”<sup>467</sup> He snuck out of a dinner party to avoid the inevitable after-dinner carousing. Nine years later he lamented the fate of his thirty-five year old nephew whose illness, he believed, “was contracted by an habit of drinking much wine & strong waters to comply with other young intemperate men.”<sup>468</sup> His nephew submitted to male drinking customs. Men developed drinking patterns that required the forced and excessive consumption of alcohol if they were to uphold their honour.

Authors also portrayed male drunkenness as temperamentally violent. The author of The Glasse of Mans Folly noted that, “much quaffing maketh one unquiet, enuious, untemperate, incontinent, fierce, wrathful, ready to braule & fight, to curse, & sweare, stamp, & stare.”<sup>469</sup> Adams claimed that a drunkard “dares quarrell with euery man, fight with any man; nay, with postes and walles, imagining them to be men.”<sup>470</sup> Authors claimed drunkenness was responsible for most violent crimes. Beard blamed

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<sup>465</sup> Geree, A Divine Potion to Preserve Spirituall Health, p. 8; and Thomas Stoughton, Two Profitable Treatises: I. Of Davids Loue to the Word: II. Of Davids Meditation on the Word of God (London, 1616), plate A2, epistle dedicatory.

<sup>466</sup> Elizabeth A. Foyster, Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage (London, 1999), p. 40.

<sup>467</sup> Evelyn, The Diary of John Evelyn, Vol. IV, p. 296.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 54

<sup>469</sup> B. H., The Glasse of Mans Folly, p. 6.

drunken violence for the “vntimely ends” of thousands of people.<sup>471</sup> Garbut was more statistically specific when he stated that two-thirds of all brawls started while drinking in an alehouse or tavern.<sup>472</sup> Men perpetrated the majority of acts of drunken violence. Amussen singles out brawling as a male activity and connects it to drinking.<sup>473</sup> Bryson also determines that gentlemen could legitimately participate in the libertine behaviour, which included both excessive drinking and random street violence.<sup>474</sup> Contemporaries were well aware of the link between male drunkenness and violence. The Womens Sharp Revenge asked,

How many Women did you ever hear of, that doe drinke so much, that they doe quarrell and fight, and teare one anothers Bands and Cloathes; and then bee carried before a Justice, or else end the businesse by Arbitration, to their losse both of mony and time: or not so ended, doe challenge the field, and there sheath their swords in one anothers breast?<sup>475</sup>

However, the court records held notable exceptions. Historians’ analysis of court cases suggest a low level of alcohol-related murders, somewhere around five percent. In contrast, studies in modern societies name alcohol as a factor in over fifty percent of violent crimes.<sup>476</sup> Furthermore, men did not perpetrate every act of drunken violence. Amussen cites the example of the Metcalfs, a husband and wife, drinking together in a large party in 1638. Mrs. Metcalf started a general brawl by striking a maidservant and breaking

<sup>470</sup> Adams, The Works of Thomas Adams, p. 505.

<sup>471</sup> Beard, The Theatre of Gods Iudgements, p. 430.

<sup>472</sup> Garbutt, One Comes From the Dead, p. 37.

<sup>473</sup> Amussen, An Ordered Society, pp. 24, 27.

<sup>474</sup> Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility, p. 270.

<sup>475</sup> Tattle-well and Hit-him-home, The Womens Sharp Revenge, pp. 150-151.

<sup>476</sup> A. Lynn Martin, Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (London, 2001), pp. 111-12.

a jug on another employee's head.<sup>477</sup> Women were clearly capable of drunken violence. Still, authors were relatively unconcerned with admonishing female physical violence. Either it was relatively rare or it was so far-fetched from their ideal of womanhood that they did not know how to respond. Moralists portrayed only male drinking as potentially violent.

Authors felt that men risked their own chastity and that of women when they drank too much. Thomas Young was explicit in detailing how a man descended into Hell not long after his first drink: "First they visit the Tauerne, then the Ordinarie, then the Theater, and end in the Stewes. From Wine to Ryot, from that to Playes, from them to Harlots. From thence to the Diuell."<sup>478</sup> Richard Young added venereal disease to this general pattern.<sup>479</sup> Drunk men were not only a danger to their own chastity but also to the modesty and chastity of innocent women. According to Richard Young, men consorted with prostitutes and also verbally assaulted chaste women,

For drunkards . . . can no sooner spie a woman, or a maide, chaste, or unchaste, even in the open streets, but they will fall to imbracing and tempting her with ribaldry, scurrility, & turning every word she speakes to some lascivious & obscene sense, whereof they are not a little proud, though it would make a wise and modest man, even spue to heare them.<sup>480</sup>

Sermons abound with descriptions of the unchaste actions of young men out drinking sociably with their companions. Popular literature also portrayed

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<sup>477</sup> Susan Dwyer Amussen, "Punishment, Discipline, and Power: The Social Meanings of Violence in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies*, XXXIV (1995), p. 24.

<sup>478</sup> Young, *Englands Bane*, p. E3.

<sup>479</sup> Young, *The Drunkards Character*, pp. 58-9.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

drunk men projecting their unchaste thoughts onto women. In The Wild-Goose Chase the playwright John Fletcher claimed:

And if in *Vino veritas* be an Oracle,  
 What woman is, or has ever been honest?  
 Give'em but ten round cups, they'll swear Lucretia  
 Dy'd not for want of power to resist Tarquine,  
 But want of Pleasure, that he stayd no longer:  
 And Portia, that was famous for her Pietie  
 To her lov'd Lord, they'll face ye out, dy'd o'th' pox.<sup>481</sup>

Part of normal male drunken comportment was to project the sexual arousal alcohol stirred in them onto women either through visiting a prostitute or a verbal assault on female chastity and reputations.

If sermons and prescriptive pamphlets are to be believed, men were aggressive and out of control when they drank. By turning pledging into a spur to drink more, men abused their position as respected friends and neighbours and pushed others into drunkenness. They also tended towards violence when they drank. They verbally and physically assaulted one another and tarnished the reputations and honour of women. Authors accused men of actively seeking out illicit sex either by going to a whorehouse or propositioning women in and near drinking establishments. The consequences of male drunken comportment in the community and family concerned preachers as much as the moral implications of their sins in the next life. Authors described male drunken behaviour as actively disruptive for the entire community. In doing so, they explained how the actions of drunk men made drunkenness a community problem, not an individual one. Since much of their inappropriate behaviour concerned sex

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<sup>481</sup> John Fletcher, "The Wild-Goose Chase," in Fredson Bowers, ed., The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon (London, 1985) Vol. VI, p. 255.

and gender roles, women had to deal with the consequences of male drinking behaviour.

### **Consequences of Male Drinking Behaviour**

Habitual male drunkenness disrupted the public patriarchal structure of government. An Elizabethan homily warned that society could not tolerate habitual drunkenness in a magistrate and asked, “how might he be a guide unto other men, standing in need of a governor himself?”<sup>482</sup>

Likewise, Thomas Young explained that, “a drunken gouernour and ruler of any thing whatsoever, bringeth all to ruine and ouerthrow, whether it be a Ship, or a Wagon, or Armie, or any other thing committed to his charge.”<sup>483</sup>

John Lawrence published an entire sermon in 1624 called A Golden Trvmpet to Rowse Up a Drowsie Magistrate on the problems associated with persecuting drunkenness in the courts. He claimed that the drinking habits of magistrates accounted for the unchecked spread of drunkenness. He cited “stupiditie or blockishnesse, which is ingendered most commonly by gluttony and drunkennesse” and the “wallowing in delights and pleasures,” including drinking, as reasons magistrates failed to punish public drunkenness.<sup>484</sup> Much later in the seventeenth century Garbut asked, “if the Magistrate himself be much guilty . . . [of drunkenness] how shall he ever be hoped to do any great good in reforming this abuse?”<sup>485</sup> Authors

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<sup>482</sup> Anonymous, “An Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness” [1562?], in Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory (London, 1839), p. 329.

<sup>483</sup> Young, Englands Bane, p. E2.

<sup>484</sup> John Lawrence, A Golden Trvmpet to Rowse Up a Drowsie Magistrate (London, 1624), pp. 44, 45.

<sup>485</sup> Garbutt, One Comes From the Dead, p. 49.



agreed that magistrates guilty of drunkenness were unfit for the public offices they held. They could not punish a sin in others that they could not control in themselves. These accusations might not have meant a large number of magistrates were drunkards. However, clearly preachers felt magistrates should have persecuted charges of drunkenness more vigorously. Perhaps they also felt linking drunkenness to threats to patriarchal order would aid in reforming drinkers. The arguments they made linked drunkenness to a loss in a man's legitimate right to rule.

Authors also linked habitual male drunkenness to a loss of household authority. Contemporaries held men responsible for the moral conduct and government of their households. According to Gilbert Cousin in Of the Office of Servauntes (1534), part of that job was to control the drunkenness of their servants.<sup>486</sup> Garbutt questioned whether a man who, when drunk, could not rule himself could rule anyone.<sup>487</sup> Rawlidge complained that habitual alehouse haunting deprived a man's household of its rightful governor as well as causing "inconuenience," "discredit," and "neglect" at home.<sup>488</sup> Men claimed the right to leadership in their households through a superior intellect and reason. They ruled because they could think independently. A man could not properly govern his household while he was drinking because contemporaries believed drink impaired his reason. Richard Young's description of a drunkard was common to most sermons and advice literature. He claimed that, "a Drunkard . . . is not his owne

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<sup>486</sup> Cousin, Of the Office of Servauntes, plate Bv; see also Anonymous, A Plaine Description of the Auncient Petigree of Dame Sclaunder (London, 1573).

<sup>487</sup> Garbutt, One Comes From the Dead, p. 41.

<sup>488</sup> Rawlidge, A Monster Late Found Out and Discovered, p. 9.

man, though a master of others.”<sup>489</sup> Alcohol inhibited the use of “reason” and so impinged on a man’s ability to govern his subordinates. Habitual drunkenness made men unfit to rule over their households.

Male drinking behaviour had more tangible effects on men’s role as “providers” to their families. Authors accused men of drinking to avoid the responsibilities entailed in being the head of a household. When men drank too often, women suffered from a lack of financial support. Adams described the family of a drunkard as a “poore wife and children at home, that lamentably mone for bread, whiles he lanuisheth all in drinke.”<sup>490</sup> Other moralists also used the image of a starving wife with her children at home while her husband drank at the alehouse.<sup>491</sup> Richard Young accused drunk men of drinking “the very bloods of their wives and children.”<sup>492</sup> Authors suggested men’s families had a right to the money he earned. Samuel Pomfret in 1693 complained that, “many a man hath become by intemperance, worse than an Infidel, in wasting that Provision, that he was bound to preserve for Wife and Children.”<sup>493</sup> Thomas Young accused drunkards of wasting their wives’ portions and causing them “penury and misery.”<sup>494</sup> Garbut described drunkards as thieves who “steal, and most wickedly of all steal, from Wife and Children, suffering her, whom if they had but two bits in the world they should feed with one.”<sup>495</sup> Those who could afford their drinking habits did not escape the accusation that they

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<sup>489</sup> Young, *The Drunkards Character*, p. 2.

<sup>490</sup> Adams, *The Works of Thomas Adams*, p. 54.

<sup>491</sup> For example, B. H., *The Glasse of Mans Folly*, pp. 4-5; Dent, *The Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven*, p. 166 ; Barnaby Rich, *The Honestie of This Age* (London, 1614), p. 38; and Young, *The Drunkards Character*, p. 65.

<sup>492</sup> Young, *The Drunkards Character*, p. 65.

<sup>493</sup> Samuel Pomfret, *A Directory for Youth* (London, 1693), p. 203.

<sup>494</sup> Young, *Englands Bane*, p. C3.

somehow were not providing for their households. Rawlidge complained that most men in alehouses “haue houses of their owne, with Wiues, Children and seruants to looke vnto, and prouide for” and by dining in an alehouse, they neglected their dependants.<sup>496</sup> Male drunkenness disadvantaged the financial security of women. Even the courts recognised the financial consequences for a family whose provider spent too much on drink. In seventeenth-century Dorchester the court fined a man five shillings for drunkenness and gave half of the money to his wife.<sup>497</sup> Men spent money and time in the alehouse that they should have spent on their wives and children. Male drunkenness became a female problem. The obligations men had to their wife and households went unfulfilled.

Prescriptive and popular authors also acknowledged that women suffered emotionally when their husbands were drunkards. The author of The Glasse of Mans Folly pitied wives who came to the alehouse to fetch their intoxicated husbands only to have the other male drinkers abuse her.<sup>498</sup> Clark indicated that there were several court cases that described such scenarios.<sup>499</sup> In A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government (1598) Robert Cleaver defined alehouse and tavern haunting as a form of spousal cruelty.<sup>500</sup> This particular complaint against male behaviour crossed over from sermons and conduct books into ballads. Several ballads in the late seventeenth century contained examples of the emotional turmoil husbands caused when they spent too much time and money drinking. In A Caveat

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<sup>495</sup> Garbutt, One Comes From the Dead, p. 61.

<sup>496</sup> Rawlidge, A Monster Late Found Out and Discovered, pp. 8-9.

<sup>497</sup> Underdown, Fire From Heaven, p. 74.

<sup>498</sup> B. H., The Glasse of Mans Folly, pp. 4-5.

<sup>499</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 148.

for Young Men (1670s?), John Wade told the story of a “bad husband” who threatened to beat his wife when she refused to keep quiet about the amount of time and money he wasted in drink. The wife complained that she and her children “starve and pine” while he went to the alehouse.<sup>501</sup> Wade and his contemporary Thomas Lanfiere wrote at least four more ballads expressing the same sentiments.<sup>502</sup> Ballad writers wrote for the market; obviously, it was a popular theme. Authors appealed to the emotional suffering of women to persuade men to control their drinking.

If habitually drunk men were unfit to exercise their duties as leaders of their households, they left their leadership roles open to women. Some preachers openly suggested that a wife could replace her incapacitated husband. The Theatre of Gods Ivdgements contained the story of an emperor who often drank himself into a near coma. His wife became so disgusted with his behaviour that when he passed out drunk she buried him alive. Beard considered his death “a just reward of his drunkenesse.”<sup>503</sup> According to Edward Chamberlayne in Angliae Notitia, or the Present State of England (1669), a wife who killed her husband was guilty of *petite* treason. The punishment for *petite* and high treason was the same; the convicted person was drawn and burnt alive.<sup>504</sup> However, in this *exemplum*

<sup>500</sup> Robert Cleaver, A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government (London, 1598), p. 187.

<sup>501</sup> John Wade, “A Caveat for Young Men,” in The Roxburghe Ballads (London, 1880), III, p. 519.

<sup>502</sup> John Wade, “Heavy Heart, and a Light Purse,” in The Roxburghe Ballads (London, 1889), VI, pp. 337-8; Thomas Lanfiere, “The Good Fellow’s Consideration and “The Good Fellow’s Resolution,” in The Roxburghe Ballads (London, 1889), VI, pp. 339-45; John Wade, “’Tis Money That Makes a Man,” in The Roxburghe Ballads (London, 1889), VI, pp. 346-8; and see also anonymous, “The Careful Wife’s Good Counsel,” in The Roxburghe Ballads (London, 1881), III, pp. 478-80.

<sup>503</sup> Beard, The Theatre of Gods Ivdgements, p. 429.

<sup>504</sup> Edward Chamberlayne, Angliae Notitia, or the Present State of England (London, 1669), p. 71.

the husband's habitual drunkenness excluded him from governing his household and his wife's crime served justice. George Savile, the Lord Marquess of Halifax, provided a less extreme piece of advice. In his Advice to a Daughter (1700) he advised women married to habitually drunk husbands to use their situation to their advantage in gaining power in their marriages. He told his daughter to

Consider, that where the Man will give such frequent Intermissions of the use of his Reason, the Wife insensibly getteth a Right of Governing in the Vacancy, and that raiseth her Character and Credit in the Family, to a higher pitch than perhaps could be done under a sober Husband, who never putteth himself into an Incapacity of holding the Reins.<sup>505</sup>

Savile's advice illustrated the implications of patriarchal disorder. A woman could replace her husband if his drinking made him unfit to govern the household. Not all moralists agreed. Robert Cleaver advised women with drunkards for husbands to use patience, prayer, "gentle exhortation, and chearfull and louing entertainment . . . to induce him willingly to keepe home."<sup>506</sup> As an example of this the author of the ballad The Carefull Wife's Good Counsel portrayed a woman politely pleading with her husband to follow her advice and not spend all his money at the alehouse.<sup>507</sup> The historian Anthony Fletcher suggests that moralists continually reinforced the patriarchal ideal of women as silent, chaste, and obedient because women were not.<sup>508</sup> Authors could have grounded their warnings in reality. Popular literature was full of wives scolding their husbands for

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<sup>505</sup> George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, The Lady's New Year's Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter (London, 1700), pp. 22-3.

<sup>506</sup> Cleaver, A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government, p. 187.

<sup>507</sup> Anonymous, "The Careful Wife's Good Counsel," in The Roxburghe Ballads (London, 1881), III, pp. 478-80.

drinking too much.<sup>509</sup> Women possibly did step into leadership roles in their households when their husbands were too intoxicated to fulfil their responsibilities.

### **Female Drinking Behaviour and Its Consequences**

Authors wrote about female drunkenness in a very different way from male drunkenness. Sermons did not abound with descriptions of contemporary young women prowling the streets in a drunken stupor looking for sex. Moralists drew stories of female drinking and chastity from the classics rather than portraying negative contemporary examples. The most common example came from legendary Roman law. Thomas Young interpreted the classic story, “Romulus perceiuing the allurements of lusts that procedes from [drunkenness] made a law: That if a woman were ouercome with drinke, she should die for her offence: Saying, that this vice was the beginning of dishonestie and whoredome.”<sup>510</sup> Most sermons citing the classics used this extreme example of stringent punishment.<sup>511</sup> They also sought comparisons with their own times. For instance, Richard Young noted that, “the ancient Romans would not suffer their women to drinke wine; whereas many of ours are like Cleio, who was so practised in drinking, that shee durst challeng all men whatsoever to trye masteries who

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<sup>508</sup> Anthony Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800 (New Haven, 1995), p. 256.

<sup>509</sup> For example, John Taylor, A Juniper Lecture, With a Description of All Sorts of Women, Good and Bad (London, 1652), pp. 6-10, 20-26.

<sup>510</sup> Young, Englands Bane, p. B2.

<sup>511</sup> Thomas Nashe, The Anatomy of Absurdity (London, 1590), p. Diii; Gascoyne, A Delicate Diet, For Daintie Mouthde Droonkardes, p. 24; Richard Brathwait, The English Gentlewoman (London, 1631), p. 51; and Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 54.

could drinke most, and overcome all.”<sup>512</sup> No one advised reactivating the ancient Roman law. They used it, as Thomas Nashe did, “but to shew by the comparison, how farre we exceede them in excesse.”<sup>513</sup> In other Roman examples authorities either put women to death or utterly disgraced them, not for anything they did while drunk, but simply for being drunk.<sup>514</sup> Authors portrayed a Roman golden age that did not tolerate the unchaste behaviour associated with drunkenness. The draconian measures only existed for women. They hoped their readers would think of English intolerance of drunken behaviour in women as comparatively mild. Sermons had to make a case for “mildness” in comparison with the death penalty because contemporary prescriptive attitudes towards female drunkenness were not mild at all. Authors used brutal examples from a distant classical past to advocate a strict temperance for women. They avoided contemporary observations of anti-social behaviour in women whereas they concentrated on such behaviour in men. Either they did so because they were unaware of women displaying such behaviour or they did not consider it worth arguing against.

Women had to be extremely cautious of their chastity and their reputation every time they drank since they were the “weaker sex” and therefore open to male sexual aggression. In The Ladies Calling (1676), the royalist divine Richard Alestree advised young women that men would try to assault their chastity and honour. He recommended that women suspect

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<sup>512</sup> Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 44.

<sup>513</sup> Nashe, The Anatomy of Absurdity, p. Diii.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*

all men who approached them from the beginning.<sup>515</sup> Women had to take actions constantly to protect their reputations. In The English Gentlewoman (1631), Richard Brathwait advised women to ostracise other women who did not control their “unwomanly excesse . . . especially such, who carouse it in deepe healths, reioyce at the colour of the wine, till it sparkle in their veines, inflame their bloods, and lay open a breach to the frailty of their Sexe.”<sup>516</sup> He expected women to protect their collective as well as individual honour. Prescriptive literature implied that drunk women were easy sexual targets. Authors cautioned women that any sign of drunkenness would put their chastity into question. Alestree warned women that,

She who is first a prostitute to Wine, will soon be to Lust also: she has dismiss her Guards, discarded all the suggestions of reason, as well as Grace; and is at the mercy of any, of every assailant. . . . It will not be hard to guess the fate of that womans Chastity, which has no other bottom then that of mens. So that unless her vice secure her vertue, and the loathsomness of the one, prevent attempts on the other, ‘tis scarce imaginable a woman that loses her Sobriety should keep her Honesty.<sup>517</sup>

Like men, women were open to illicit sexual conduct when they drank. Unlike men, they were not sexually aggressive but rather open to attack. Alestree could not imagine a drunk woman without a reputation for dishonesty. According to Clark, neither could many contemporaries. He claims the court records give numerous examples of women accused of sexual promiscuity simply by being at the alehouse drinking.<sup>518</sup> Alcohol destroyed female honour. Women could not afford the unchaste drunken comportment men practiced. Nathum Tate argued in A Present for the

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<sup>515</sup> Richard Alestree, The Ladies Calling (Oxford, 1676), p. 17.

<sup>516</sup> Richard Brathwait, The English Gentlewoman (London, 1631), p. 51.

<sup>517</sup> Alestree, The Ladies Calling, p. 15.

<sup>518</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, pp. 131-2.



Ladies Being An Historical Account of Several Illustrious Persons of the Female Sex (1693) that few women were intemperate drinkers. He reasoned that women were inherently modest, and drunkenness violated their nature.<sup>519</sup> More practical authors recognised that women did not protect their chastity out of an inherent sense of propriety but rather a firm understanding of the consequences of their sexual behaviour. The Womens Sharp Revenge noted that if a woman's chastity "be once blemished or tainted, the staines and spots are of such a tincture, that the dye of the blemishes will sticke to her all her life time and to her Children after her."<sup>520</sup> A woman's actions in the alehouse followed her out the door.

Drunk women, unchaste by definition, threatened the patriarchal structure of society by damaging the property of the male head of their households. Historians such as Keith Thomas and Elizabeth Foyster trace the early modern sexual double standard to the idea that a woman's chastity and body did not belong to her but to the man who governed her.<sup>521</sup> Gowing finds that any sexual misconduct permanently damaged property in a woman, whereas for a man it was only a personal shortcoming.<sup>522</sup> A woman's reputation centred on her chastity alone. According to Gowing, no one could slander a woman without reference to her chastity.<sup>523</sup> In one court case a dispute over a piece of land turned into a case of sexual slander.

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<sup>519</sup> Nathum Tate, A Present for the Ladies Being An Historical Account of Several Illustrious Persons of the Female Sex. To Which is Added the Character of an Accomplished Virgin, Wife, and Widow, in Verse (London, 1693), p. 43.

<sup>520</sup> Tattle-well and Hit-him-home, The Womens Sharp Revenge, pp. 7-8.

<sup>521</sup> Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," in Maryanne Cline Horowitz, ed., Race, Gender, and Rank: Early Modern Ideas of Humanity (Rochester, 1992), p. 152; and Foyster, "A Laughing Matter? Marital Discord and Gender Control in Seventeenth-Century England," p. 7.

<sup>522</sup> Gowing, Domestic Dangers p. 94.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 118

One party could not attack the reputed honesty of the other without reference to her sexual conduct.<sup>524</sup> Thomas concludes that, “from [the] prime insistence on woman’s chastity emerged most of the other social restrictions upon her conduct.”<sup>525</sup> The prescriptive literature on female drunkenness is consistent with the findings of historians; authors discussed women’s drunken behaviour by referring to their chastity, and their chastity was a measure of their worth and obedience. Authors did not describe drinking behaviour in women beyond sexual indiscretions, which they couched in terms of “honesty” and “chastity”. These same authors vividly described the words, gestures, actions, and circumstances of male drunkards. Apparently they felt intimidating women with vague threats of dishonourable reputations would suffice.

Contemporaries linked drunkenness so strongly to chastity that the cultural injunctions guarding female sexuality manifested themselves as an attempt to control female drinking patterns. According to Barnaby Rich, a woman’s sexual conduct determined her entire reputation. He complained sarcastically in The Honestie of This Age (1614) that, “a womans honestie is pent vp in a litle roome, it is confined, but from her girdle downewards. . . . Is not this a happie age for women, menne haue manie faults whereby to taynt their credites, there is no imperfection in a woman, but that of her bodie.”<sup>526</sup> In general, men had to act on their drunken desires for authorities to consider them “unchaste” or dishonourable. For some mere drunkenness in a woman proved her unchaste. Even contemporaries noticed the

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<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>525</sup> Thomas, “The Double Standard,” p. 156.

<sup>526</sup> Rich, The Honestie of This Age, p. 7.

implication of this double standard as it applied to drinking. In A Womans Woorth, Defended Against All the Men in the World. Prooving Them to be More Perfect, Excellent and Absolute in All Vertuous Actions, Then Any Man of What Quality So Euer (1599) Anthony Gibson wrote, “perhaps you will say unto me, it is not seemely for a woman to drinke much, and therefore that folly may be tollerated in men.” He argued against the double standard but acknowledged that men “will approve that good in themselves, which they thinke bad and condemne in women.”<sup>527</sup> One of the few pamphlets written by a woman, Ester Hath Hang’d Haman (1617), also attacked the glaring double standard in drinking. Ester Sowernam commented, “What a hateful thing is it to see a woman overcome with drinke, when as in men it is noted for a signe of good fellowship.”<sup>528</sup> This one glimpse at a woman’s opinion suggests that women not only recognised a double standard but also disagreed with it.

Some male authors agreed with a double drinking standard. The result was a much stronger injunction against female drinking with less justification for the prescribed restrictions than men faced. Almost one hundred years after Gibson discussed gendered drinking standards, the advice book The Whole Duty of a Woman (1695) described intemperance in drinking as,

a Vice Detestable in all, but prodigious in a Woman, who in that case puts a double violence upon her Nature, the one in the Intemperance, and the other in the Immodesty; and thou such may take their Copy

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<sup>527</sup> Anthony Gibson, A Womans Woorth, Defended Against All the Men in the World. Prooving Them to be More Perfect, Excellent and Absolute in All Vertuous Actions, Then Any Man of What Quality So Euer. (London, 1599), p. 29.

<sup>528</sup> Ester Sowernam (pseud.), Ester Hath Hang’d Haman (London, 1617), p. 24.

from Men, yet nothing Humane is such a Beast as a Woman who gives her self every way up to Intemperance.<sup>529</sup>

The emphasis on sobriety as a guard to a woman's chastity permeated the literature. In the pamphlet The Man in the Moone telling Strange Fortunes (1609) the fortuneteller advised a young female virgin that, "touching inordinate drinking of wine, all are forbidden it, but you especially of all others . . . a virgine ought to reject wine, as poison, which is a twofold firebrand to kindle lust in youth: abstinence therefore is the first weapon to defend chastitie."<sup>530</sup> These admonitions and warnings went to all women regardless of social distinctions. Women faced the same dangers to their reputations that men did, but a woman's worth depended heavily on her perceived chastity. Since contemporaries associated female drunkenness with sexual vulnerability, women took a proportionately greater risk to their reputations when they became drunk.

Several authors acknowledged gendered drinking patterns even if they did not question them. Authors such as William Prynne described the drinking of healths as a problem among men, not women.<sup>531</sup> The preacher Thomas Thompson laid out reasons neither sex should become drunk in a sermon in 1608. He felt it sufficient to say women should not drink because it was immodest and then gave elaborate political, social, and religious reasons why men should not drink to excess.<sup>532</sup> He recognised that it was acceptable in many social circles for men to drink to excess, and thus they needed more persuading

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<sup>529</sup> Anonymous, The Whole Duty of a Woman: or, a Guide to the Female Sex. From the Age of Sixteen, to Sixty, & c. (London, 1695), p. 28.

<sup>530</sup> W. M., The Man in the Moone telling Strange Fortunes: or, The English Fortune-Teller (London, 1609), p. 125.

<sup>531</sup> Prynne, Health's Sickness, *passim*.

<sup>532</sup> Thompson, A Diet For a Drunkard, pp. 23-4, *passim*.

to steer them away from alcohol. Other works such as A Brown Dozen of Drunkards (1648) and Nicholas Murford's "Drunkenesse Satyr 3" (1650) described thirteen and thirty drunkards respectively and all of them were male.<sup>533</sup> Problem drinkers were men as a matter of course. Prescriptive writers such as Gibson and Nathum Tate in A Present for the Ladies (1693) were quick to point out that not only did the classics lack examples of intemperate women but also that few contemporary women drank to excess.<sup>534</sup> Prescriptive writers did not perceive women as habitual drunkards when compared with men. The author of Female Policy Detected, a 138-page book on female faults, took the time to admit that, "Men for the most part are touched with one Fault, which is Drinking too much."<sup>535</sup> All of this drinking took place in an alehouse, tavern, or some other public drinking establishment. Prescriptive definitions of problem drinking patterns did not include female drinking patterns on the scale they considered male drinking; while they mentioned women, they focused the bulk of their admonitions on men.

Moralists burdened women with the responsibility of household reputation and honour. The male authors of sermons and conduct literature gauged female honour by women's chastity and obedience to the men who ruled over them. Amussen claims that women interpreted their own reputations through their chastity rather than their obedient subordination to

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<sup>533</sup> Anonymous, A Brown Dozen of Drunkards: (Ali-ass Drink-hards) Whipt, and Shipt to the Isle of Gulls: For Their Abusing of Mr. Malt the Bearded Son, and Barley-broth the Brainlesse Daughter of Sir John Barley-corne (London, 1648), *passim*; and Nicholas Murford, "Drunkenesse Satyr 3," in Fragmenta Poetica: Or, Miscelanies of Poetical Musings, Moral and Divine (London, 1650), pp. 16-21.

<sup>534</sup> Gibson, A Womans Woorth, p. 29; and Tate, A Present for the Ladies, p. 43.

<sup>535</sup> E. W., Female Policy Detected: Or, The Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open (London, 1704), p. 72.

men.<sup>536</sup> As further support of this, Gowing's analysis of slander suits shows that both plaintiff and defendant used the language of female sexual conduct to describe any infringement on female honour. She points out that, "the words of slander, ostensibly about sex, turn out to be about almost everything else. The sexual insult of women absorbed and refracted every kind of female transgression."<sup>537</sup> Chastity was the language of female honour. Sexual chastity was at the centre of women's reputations, but all other aspects of their behaviour were also couched in terms of their sexual conduct. This made any drinking problematic for women, because drunkenness already had close ties to unchaste behaviour in men. Women not only had to be chaste, they had to appear so to protect their reputations.<sup>538</sup> Social advisers recommended that women avoid drunkenness to avoid even the appearance of unchastity. They centered all of their objections to female drinking on perceived chastity rather than actual conduct.

Authors warned women that they brought shame on themselves and their entire households if they became drunk. Men depended on their wives for household honour.<sup>539</sup> Robert Cleaver explained in A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government that the husband's role was to supply wealth to his household, and his wife's role was to provide honour.<sup>540</sup> Preachers invoked this sentiment with biblical citations such as Proverbs 12:4, "a vertuous woman is the crowne of her husband, but shee that maketh him ashamed, is

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<sup>536</sup> Amussen, An Ordered Society, p. 119.

<sup>537</sup> Gowing, Domestic Dangers p. 118.

<sup>538</sup> Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800, pp. 121-22.

<sup>539</sup> Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility, p. 233.

<sup>540</sup> Cleaver, A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government, p. 171.

a corruption in his bones.”<sup>541</sup> Authors credited women with the power to destroy the reputation of their households. Drunkenness was one way a woman could dishonour her husband and herself. Thompson concluded that a woman should not become drunk, “least it prove her own dishonor, as it is her husbands shame, and by that shame grieffe, and by that grieffe, a retchlesse decaying.”<sup>542</sup> Conduct books such as the English translation of Giovanni Bruto’s The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education for a Yong Gentlewoman (1598) and medical books such as Thomas Tryon’s Healths Grand Preservative: or The Womens Best Doctor (1682) also invoked the shame and repugnance which drunk women were supposed to feel.<sup>543</sup> Authors claimed female drunkenness brought a disproportionately large amount of dishonour down on a drunk woman, her husband and her household.

## Conclusions

Patriarchal theories of government, hierarchy, and household responsibilities were woven into the fabric of social relations and drinking patterns. Anthony Fletcher points out in Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800 that both sin and honour were gendered.<sup>544</sup> Men and women violated social conduct codes in different ways when they drank. Men had an obligation to provide government and financial support to their community and households. They violated this obligation by not fulfilling

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<sup>541</sup> Thompson, A Diet For a Drunkard, p. 24.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>543</sup> Giovanni Bruto, The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education for a Yong Gentlewoman, W. P., trans. (London, 1598), plate 14<sup>b</sup>; and Thomas Tryon, Healths Grand Preservative: or The Womens Best Doctor, (London, 1682), p. 10.

their duties as leaders. Patriarchal social conventions did not cast women as leaders, and so women violated social codes of conduct by being insubordinate followers. Fletcher claims authors consistently expounded their idea of women as silent, chaste, and obedient.<sup>545</sup> Men and women not only had to act differently, but they also paid different prices for breaking social codes. Bryson concludes that men and women who stepped out of line faced different consequences.<sup>546</sup> For instance, Laura Gowing's study of consistory court records concerning slander in Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London reveals that men and women could not be insulted in the same way. The vocabulary of insult had no male equivalent to calling a woman a whore. It also lacked the protocol for insulting a woman without reference to her sexuality.<sup>547</sup> In all areas concerning honour and reputation, contemporaries judged men and women by different standards of conduct. Drinking patterns proved no exception.

Moralists condemned male and female drinkers for different reasons. On the one hand, they berated men for the behaviour they exhibited while drunk. Sermons and conduct literature discussed male actions such as pledging, alehouse violence and aggressive sexual behaviour. All of these were specific acts, often vividly described and easily discernible from acceptable social practices. On the other hand, authors discussed women's drunken comportment in only the vaguest terms. They accused women of immodest and unchaste behaviour without defining what tangible actions constituted a violation of either. Presumably, unchaste behaviour did not

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<sup>544</sup> Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800, p. 101.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>546</sup> Bryson, From Courtesy to Civility, p. 272.



begin with illicit sex but something much milder. Furthermore, authors barely accused women of action at all. Women received men's sexual advances, and alcohol weakened their ability to rebuff them. Their drunken actions were really an inability or disinclination to react to men. Moralists condemned women's drunkenness without any explanation of their behaviour. They did so by condemning women for risking their chastity, however passively, since their sexuality belonged to their husbands and fathers. To incur the wrath of preachers, drunk men had to behave in a certain way whereas women simply had to drink. Consequently, prescriptive literature gives a description of male, but not female, drinking behaviour. It provides only an outline of what men in authority feared about female drinking and its link to sexual promiscuity.

Women did have an active drunken comportment unique to their sex; advice literature almost ignored it. Sermons and conduct literature saw drunken comportment as an idealised sin. Preachers did not simply observe and record behaviour. They selected some aspects, but not all, of drunken comportment and capitalised on their objections to those particular traits. For the most part, they selected the objectionable social aspects of drinking which disrupted orderly communities and households. They attacked men for actions that diminished their positions as leaders in their communities and responsible providers in their families. They attacked women for any suggestion of sexual insubordination. They spent most of their ink attacking men who neglected their patriarchal responsibilities. This suggests authors felt drunkenness was predominantly a male problem.

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<sup>547</sup> Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, pp. 1, 78.

Women might have become drunk as often as men, but their drunken comportment was proportionally less threatening to authorities than male drunkenness. Moralists might have disapproved of drunkenness in women more than in men, but they worried about it less. They spent less time justifying female sobriety because female drunken comportment was less socially disruptive and male drunkenness was both widespread and disruptive.

## **Part II: Working With Alcohol**

From women light and liquorish  
good fortune still deliver us.\*

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\* Morris Palmer Tilley, ed., *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, 1950), p. 746.

### 5. Women in the Drink Trade

Come all ye tribes of hostises,  
 That women against do rail,  
 Come lend me some of your advice,  
 Their [c]lamorous tongues to quail:  
 And I will make it plain appear  
 By nothing but what is true,  
 That all that we get in the year  
 Is nothing but what's our due.<sup>548</sup>

Contemporary debates over public drinking places all deeply involved the women who worked there; the drink trade was one of the most controversial industries of the early modern period. National and local governments attempted to regulate the brewing industry for economic and political gains as well as concerns over public order. Religious authorities accused alehouse and tavern keepers of promoting drunkenness. In response to the perceived threat drinking establishments posed, the godly attempted to regulate their licensing and hours of operation. They felt drinking was in serious competition with upstanding behaviour and the teachings of the church. Popular literature also displayed the broad role of drinking houses in people's lives. The alehouses and taverns in popular literature ranged from well-mannered community centres to dens of thieves organising themselves to corrupt youth, wreak havoc on the innocent, and destroy the social order. They were important for community gatherings both of upstanding neighbours and of less savoury elements of society. Yet, alehouses and taverns were not simply meeting places. They were businesses organised and run by members of the communities they served. Contemporary views on drinking establishments included opinions on the

people who ran them. The way in which governments, moralists, and popular authors viewed women and their role in the drink trade helped determine their stance regarding alehouses and taverns. In particular, contemporaries described drinking establishments as havens for disorder, insubordination, and illicit sex with the women who worked there. Many historians have studied these controversies over drinking establishments and have included women in their analysis. This chapter is an attempt to determine instead how society's views on women interacted with its assumptions about alcohol to help form opinions on the proper place of women who worked with alcohol. It relies heavily on popular literature because the expectations revealed in popular ballads, pamphlets, and plays about women in the drink trade shaped their reputations. It concentrates on female-run and staffed drinking establishments regardless of what type of alcohol they sold or what additional services they provided.

The image of the alewife, hostess, or tapster did not always place her traditional role as a woman (and usually a wife) in front of her economic role as the head of a successful business. The licensing system displayed the problems women faced in trying to fit their businesses into the existing patriarchal economic and legal structures. Magistrates did not have to be openly misogynistic to see the benefits of making men legally responsible for the businesses their wives ran and the debts they incurred. Popular literature provided a glimpse of what kind of economic behaviour was necessary for women to survive in the business and also how the dominant

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<sup>548</sup> "All Is Ours and Our Husbands; Or, The Country Hostesses Vindication," The Roxburghe Ballads, William Chappell and J. W. Ebsworth, eds. (1869-95) II, 8.

culture read such behaviour in light of current views on women. Alewives had to be tough businesswomen to keep their license and maintain order in their houses. They had to be authority figures, which ran against the grain of what male patrons expected from them as women. What was legally possible, economically necessary, and socially expected combined to provide a cultural script with which women working the drink trade had to deal.

The best evidence documenting the expectations contemporary customers put on their alewives comes from popular literature. Court records said little about what was expected in the character of an ale seller. In any case, the expectations of men in authority already hostile to the occupation of selling alcohol, whether filled by a man or a woman, gave no indication of what patrons thought of the women who served their drink. Real women in the drink trade, unfortunately, left few traces in court records or official documents since their economic authority in the business was increasingly marginalised. The few references to alewives in court records and diaries describe only events in their lives or often just their existence. They generally did not record how customers saw them. Popular literature on the other hand gives a wider view of what customers expected from women in the drink trade. All branches of literature provided a wealth of examples of alewives, hostesses, and tapsters. The variety of female characters also had several common threads which revealed customers' preconceived notions of women in the drink trade, rather than simply those of magistrates and moralists. This chapter seeks to describe the prejudices and expectations women in the drink trade faced. Where possible, it

addresses how women fulfilled or manipulated those expectations to their business advantage. It is not enough to say such women had a bad reputation. Women's reputations as alewives and hostesses were a necessary outcome of, as one ballad concluded, what "things must be if we sell ale."<sup>549</sup>

The story of the English alehouse as a social and economic force in the wider community has already been well told by Peter Clark in The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830. Clark details the rise of public drinking houses and their adaptation to the needs of their communities. According to Clark, the alehouse was the social centre for much of the non-elite's community life. He discusses the alehouse's role as a controversial community institution in the early modern period. Alehouses started as inexpensive businesses run chiefly by women in the medieval period. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, alehouses grew into important economic centres, particularly for the poor who could purchase small amounts of food and drink, often on credit. The ruling classes attempted to regulate alehouses and their functions as social venues. By the eighteenth century they had largely succeeded, and the alehouse became a respectable, regulated business.<sup>550</sup> Within the history of the alehouse though, Clark says very little about the large number of women who worked in alehouses.<sup>551</sup> The alehouse was an important part of life for most people, and as such the women who worked there were equally important. Yet no one in the community gave them credit

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<sup>549</sup> Richard Harper, "The Industrious Smith", Roxburghe Ballads, I, 158, 159.

<sup>550</sup> Peter Clark, The English Alehouse: a Social History 1200-1830 (London, 1983), p. 222.

for the role they played. In a time when people were identified by their occupation, the job of brewster, alewife, or tapster determined the status and reputation of a woman in her community. For women in particular, serving alcohol was more than simply a job. Men and women in the drink trade had distinct professional reputations, yet “Mine Hostess” had a very different reputation ascribed to her than “Mine Host.” This chapter compliments Clark’s more general analysis of the alehouse by exploring the social position of its staff.

In Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women’s Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600, Judith Bennett studies women in the drink trade. She traces a change in the provision of basic drinks from a female dominated and disbursed ale-brewing industry to a male dominated and more centralised beer industry.<sup>552</sup> She maintains that throughout this change in the industry, women remained at the forefront of brewing. In the fourteenth century alewives ran small and often temporary alehouses and provided their customers with ale. By the seventeenth century, women no longer owned or controlled the larger beer breweries, but they still faced customers and provided them with drink. Bennett points out that throughout the massive changes in the industry, women remained in low-status, low-paid positions.<sup>553</sup> They also kept their traditional roles as the providers of alcoholic beverages. While Bennett is chiefly concerned with the effect this had on women’s economic independence, this chapter attempts to put women’s roles as the immediate providers of alcohol into

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<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.



the social context of the drinking culture and women's various roles within it.

### **Alehouses, Women, and Authority**

Religious and secular authorities regarded alehouses and victualling houses as threats to order on four main levels. On each level female proprietors made magistrates' jobs difficult. First, government officials had trouble keeping alehouse numbers under control. They attempted to bring order to the drink trade by implementing legal licensing systems as early as the fourteenth century.<sup>554</sup> Since a license entailed legal responsibility, women, who generally had no legal independence, did not fit well into the licensing schemes. Their testimony in court held less weight than that of men, they generally were not entrusted with public offices or duties, and, in fact, the legal system considered them untrustworthy.<sup>555</sup> Second, authorities felt that the proprietors of drinking establishments encouraged drunkenness for their own financial gain. What made economic sense to ale and beer sellers was morally reprehensible to preachers and magistrates. Women were morally suspect and, by all accounts, had to keep a vigilant guard against sin and remain chaste. Third, authorities were concerned with regulating the type of person heading a drinking establishment. They entrusted the landlord with keeping order in a place they considered disorderly by nature. Women capable of keeping order in a rowdy alehouse

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<sup>552</sup> Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (Oxford, 1996), *passim*.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>554</sup> Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 28.

usually did not fit neatly into social conventions regulating femininity and an “honest” female character. Authorities attempted to control alehouses by installing legally responsible landlords whom they could trust to uphold some degree of order and morality. Finally, women who were capable of keeping order in their establishments did not fit accepted gender stereotypes. The ideals which the dominant culture held about women simply did not fit magistrates’ ideals about licensed landlords. While women disappeared legally and economically from the leadership of the drink trade, they did not disappear from their primary social function in the world of drinking establishments. Women were strong characters in alehouses, and they were successful there for the very reason magistrates gradually excluded them from holding licenses. They did not fit into the conventional social or legal hierarchy. They were often shrewd businesswomen willing to bend both rules and morals to make money. Commercially successful alewives were pictured as the antithesis of ideal womanhood.

Authorities sought to control alehouse numbers through the traditional legal channels of local government machinery. Keith Wrightson claims that, “it is an historical commonplace that the moralists, administrators and legislators of sixteenth and seventeenth century England were deeply preoccupied with ‘order,’” and this manifested itself in local magisterial attacks on alehouses.<sup>556</sup> Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and James I all issued

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<sup>555</sup> Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 49-52.

<sup>556</sup> Keith Wrightson, “Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660,” in Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo, eds., *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton, 1981), p. 11.

proclamations that expressed their concern over the superfluous number of alehouses in their realm and the apparent inability of local magistrates to keep their numbers under control.<sup>557</sup> However, research indicates that local magistrates tried hard to maintain control over alehouse numbers. Bennett discusses locally devised licensing schemes in the sixteenth century at Oxford, Norwich, York, Nottingham, Northampton, Leicester, and London.<sup>558</sup> Local authorities not only created their own licensing schemes, but they also sought to restrict alehouse numbers through enforcing existing laws. Puritan magistrates in particular sought to reduce the number of alehouses.<sup>559</sup> For instance, a note in the town records of Hull in 1574 recorded a complaint “against the blasphemy of the most holy name of God, drunkenness, disorder, and infinite other abominable and detestable sins which do abound by reason of the great number of alehouses.”<sup>560</sup> The licensing of alehouses was almost totally under the control of local magistrates.<sup>561</sup> Yet magistrates and court officers had not tamed the alehouse, and they had to work to enforce the law. The preacher, Isaac Archer, recorded in his diary in 1692 how he went on Sundays with officers of the court “to search the alehouses” looking for offenders.<sup>562</sup> Several historians have pointed out that any licensing scheme proved largely

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<sup>557</sup> 5 July 1511, 3 Henry VIII in Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Early Tudors (1485-1553), I (New Haven, 1964), p. 91; 14 January 1600, 42 Elizabeth I in Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Later Tudors (1485-1553), III (New Haven, 1969), p. 205; and 19 January 1619, in James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, eds., Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603-1625, I (Oxford, 1973), p. 409.

<sup>558</sup> Bennett, Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England, p. 107.

<sup>559</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 177.

<sup>560</sup> Laquita M. Higgs, Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester (Ann Arbor, 1998), p. 272.

<sup>561</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 179.

ineffective against the tide of market demand. Clark estimates that about half of the alehouses before 1600 were unlicensed.<sup>563</sup> In his analysis of puritan rule in Dorchester David Underdown claims that, “the most conspicuous failure was the campaign against excessive drinking. . . . Unlicensed houses were constantly being suppressed, yet they nearly always managed to continue, or at least resume, operations.”<sup>564</sup> The actual number of alehouses mattered less than the continued perception throughout the period that their numbers were too high. Whether national or local magistrates attacked, compromised with, or attempted to regulate the drink trade, they continually expressed concerns that alehouses multiplied out of control.

Since the licensing system for drinking establishments worked through existing legal channels, women were at a decisive disadvantage in holding licenses themselves. Women might have staffed many drinking establishments, but men staffed all the regulating machinery. Bennett points out that magistrates were much less likely to license women than men, not only because they believed women were less capable of running a financially successful and well-ordered business, but also because women and especially wives were not as legally accountable for their actions as were men.<sup>565</sup> According to Edward Chamberlayne in The Present State of England (1669), “the Law of England supposeth a Wife to be in so much Subjection and Obedience to her Husband, as to have no will at all of her

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<sup>562</sup> Isaac Archer, Two East Anglican Diaries 1641-1729, Matthew Storey, ed. (Woodbridge, 1994), p. 178.

<sup>563</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 170.

<sup>564</sup> David Underdown, Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century (New Haven, 1992), p. 104.

own.”<sup>566</sup> She could not sign a contract without his consent; she owned nothing of her own and he was responsible for any crimes or offences she committed.<sup>567</sup> Chamberlayne’s description, while not incorrect, was only a legal theory. Legal practice often held women responsible for their own actions and allowed them ownership of some property and access to law.<sup>568</sup> Yet, the ambiguities of both legal theories and practices allowed for confusion. For example, in 1628 the Book of the Corporate Assembly in Norwich recorded that, “in case of unlicenced Tiplers, if [the] Husband cannot be taken or imprisoned or whipped, the wife or Serv[ant] continuing the offence may be punished.”<sup>569</sup> While the husband was legally responsible, authorities understood that he was not always present and that punishing him might not stop the offence. Sometimes they needed to prosecute the person who ran the business, the alewife. Single women often encountered insurmountable obstacles. A law in Chester enacted in 1540 allowed magistrates to forbid women between the ages of 14 and 40 to sell ale.<sup>570</sup> Presumably any woman working for a man selling ale did not fall under the letter of the law. The Chester law was designed to restrict female proprietors to older women who were less threatening to the social and sexual order. For example, magistrates suppressed the alehouse of a young woman, Katherine Morris, in Bromsgrove in the early seventeenth century

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<sup>565</sup> Bennett, Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England, pp. 107-8.

<sup>566</sup> Edward Chamberlayne, The Present State of England (London, 1669), p. 451.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 450-1.

<sup>568</sup> See Tim Stretton, Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England (Cambridge, 1998).

<sup>569</sup> Robert Fitch, “Norwich Brewers’ Marks and Trade Regulations,” in Norfolk Archaeology, V (1859), p. 327.

<sup>570</sup> Bennett, Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England, p. 142; and Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 79.

because they thought she was of “lewd and light behaviour.”<sup>571</sup> While women could and did hold licenses on their own, particularly as widows, historians Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendleson believe many married women put their husbands’ names on the licenses of alehouses that the women of the household ran.<sup>572</sup> In one instance at the end of the seventeenth century, when licensing regulations had become tighter throughout England, the Bannister household’s alehouse was the site of a dispute. Both husband and wife told the court that the alehouse was the husband’s business and he held the license. However, their daughter’s deposition clarified the real working relationships at the alehouse. She testified that her father “never concerns himself with the drinking trade in his house and never draws any drink for any persons within or without his house.” She and her mother ran the alehouse.<sup>573</sup> Other court cases from the early seventeenth century also mention alehouses licensed to men but run by their wives.<sup>574</sup> Married women found a way to circumvent gender bias in the licensing system, and for all practical purposes many wives ran the family alehouse. Yet magistrates worked to limit the number of alehouses and to ensure that license holders held the legal and moral qualities they preferred. Women generally did not fit these ideals.

The most realistic threat public drinking establishments posed to order was as a site of collective drunkenness. Magistrates and law makers often held proprietors responsible for promoting drunkenness. During the

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<sup>571</sup> Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 79.

<sup>572</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 335.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

reign of Mary authorities in Norwich prohibited the sale of both double beer and the even stronger “doble doble bere.” By the ninth year of Elizabeth I’s reign authorities forbade alehouse keepers to sell double strength beer or ale for consumption on the premises. The fact that they repeated the order twenty years later demonstrates that authorities had trouble suppressing the practice.<sup>575</sup> It also suggests they still blamed the brewing practices of alehouse proprietors for drunkenness and not just the consumption patterns of drinkers. In 1619 James I’s government was concerned that alcohol retailers using large wine casks increased the strength of the ale or beer they sold “to the inticing of Our people to drunkennesse, and immoderate drinking.”<sup>576</sup> They too blamed the alehouse keeper for encouraging drunkenness. Several years later in 1637 Charles I’s government was also concerned that the practices of alcohol retailers, by doubling the malt in the recipe, “doe make strong, heady, and unwholesome drinkes, serving rather for drunkennesse and excesse, then for any good or necessary use.”<sup>577</sup> Authorities from the top down believed that hosts and hostesses actively promoted drunkenness to enhance their businesses.

Preachers believed alehouse keepers actively encouraged drunkenness for financial gain. The preacher Thomas Adams claimed in the seventeenth century that, “many tap-house-keepers, Taverners [and] Victuallers . . . secretly acknowledge, that if it were not for drunkennesse, they might shut

<sup>574</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, pp. 82-3. Clark gives examples from 1594, 1609, 1615 and 1650.

<sup>575</sup> Fitch, “Norwich Brewers’ Marks and Trade Regulations,” pp. 325-6.

<sup>576</sup> 9 December 1619, in Larkin and Hughes, eds., Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603-1625, I, p. 455.

<sup>577</sup> 9 July 1637, in *ibid.*, II, p. 563.

vp their dores, as vtterly vnable to pay their rents.”<sup>578</sup> He expected alehouse keepers to put their morality before their financial survival. Generally, preachers placed most of the blame onto the hostess rather than the host. Samuel Ward provided an example of God’s judgement on such practices when he claimed that an alewife who went to convince three servingmen to stay and drink more was struck dumb and died within three days. He linked a woman’s illness directly to her part in encouraging drunkenness for financial gain. His account was reprinted throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>579</sup> It attests to the popular notion that alewives were morally responsible for promoting drunkenness. Popular literature also condemned alewives for reaping the benefits of other people’s sins. John Stephens’ character sketch of “An Hostesse” claimed that “shee may abhorre drunkenesse; but in her own house conceales it, and receives the advantage.”<sup>580</sup> Men and women in the drink trade were in the precarious position of promoting another person’s sin for personal gain.

Richard Garbut’s scathing attack on drunkenness in A Sober Testimony (1675?) gave the women of the drink trade all the credit for enabling drunkenness. His argument is worth quoting at length. He wrote,

Are Drunkards the very Children of the Devil? Then Hostesses and Good Ale-wives had need look to it, . . . for why, they help to the begetting of Sons and Daughters to the Devil; and if the Devil be the Father of these, the Hostess, in a manner is the Mother, and he begets

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<sup>578</sup> Thomas Adams, “The White Devil,” in The Works of Thomas Adams (London, 1629), p. 54.

<sup>579</sup> Samuel Ward, “Woe To Drunkards” [1631], reprinted in J. Strenock, Gods Sword Drawn Forth Against Drunkards and Swearers, Blasphemers of Gods Holy Name, Whore-Mongers, Sabbath Breakers, and Other Lewd Livers of All Sorts (London, 1677), p. 556.

<sup>580</sup> John Stephens the Yonger of Lincolnes Inne, “Essays and Character, Ironical and Instructive, The Second Impression. With a New Satyre in Defence of Common Law and Lawyers, Mixt with Reproofe Against Their Common Enemy. With Many New Characters, and Diverse Other Things Added; and Every Thing Amended” [London, 1616; reprint 1631], in James O. Halliwell, ed., Book of Characters: Illustrating the Habits and Manners of Englishmen From the Reign of James I to the Restoration (London, 1857), p. 209.



them of her; at least if some other thing . . . their own intemperance and drunkenish Lust be the Mother, yet the Hostess is the Midwife, and without her help they could never be brought forth; but it is not good either to be Mother or Midwife to the Devils Brats.<sup>581</sup>

Garbut inverted women's traditional roles as mothers and midwives to portray women in the drink trade as destroyers of life rather than creators. He held these women responsible for the drunkenness of their customers. This sort of morally reprehensible behaviour that contemporaries attributed to hostesses could have damaging effects on women's reputations. One court case from the late seventeenth century illustrates the damage women could suffer; a clergyman in Oxford broke his marriage suit because the woman he was to marry supported herself in the drink trade after her father's death.<sup>582</sup> Working in the drink trade was by nature a dishonest and immoral occupation. The popular view that alehouse keepers put their business concerns before public morality particularly affected women, who relied on their reputations to secure themselves financially in a marriage.

The occupants of alehouses also posed a threat to order whether they were drinking or not. People frequented the alehouse when they should be at Church. Servants went there to avoid masters. Masters went there when they should be governing their servants or working. Women went there to challenge their husbands' authority or break their chastity. Authorities viewed alehouses as havens for criminals. For example, in 1638 the preacher Richard Young claimed that, "bastardies, Sheep-stealers, robbers,

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<sup>581</sup> Richard Garbutt, One Comes From the Dead, To Awaken Drunkards and Whoremongers: Being a Sober and Severe Testimony Against the Sins and the Sinners, in an Exact Description of the Nature and Danger of These Two Soul-Destroying Evils (London, 1675?), p. 89.

<sup>582</sup> Cited in Mendelson and Crawford, Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720, p. 335.

quarrellers, and the like . . . [all] gather into the Alehouse.”<sup>583</sup> Authors portrayed the proprietor as the worst offender. In his “Proclamation Concerning Ale-houses” (1619) James I referred to unlicensed alehouse keepers as “lawlesse” and “unruly.”<sup>584</sup> Furthermore, Derek Hirst and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh have both noted in their analyses of alehouse prosecutions that local courts held drinking house proprietors responsible for the disorder in their establishments.<sup>585</sup> For instance, an alehouse license issued to a woman in 1671 required her to ban gambling, vagrants, “disorder,” and Sunday drinking from her establishment.<sup>586</sup> Alehouse keepers were often bound over to the magistrate to maintain their “honesty.” A host or hostess had to maintain all aspects of a good reputation and minimise the perceived threat to order their establishment posed in the eyes of the licensing authorities. Magistrates and moralists largely held the host or hostess personally accountable for any breeches of public order that took place inside.

Women were not able to hold authority in an alehouse and still retain the feminine submissiveness that protected their “honesty.” Simply to be in charge of an alehouse meant a woman had to step out of her role as the “weaker sex” not only with staff but also with her customers and in a very public venue. Clark has demonstrated that the majority of alehouse

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<sup>583</sup> Richard Young, *Compleat Armour Against Evill Society* (London, 1638), p. 713.

<sup>584</sup> 19 January 1619, in Larkin and Hughes, eds., *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603-1625*, I, p. 409

<sup>585</sup> Derek Hirst, “The Failure of Godly Rule in the English Republic,” *Past and Present*, CXXXII (1991), p. 51 and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 75.

<sup>586</sup> Janet A. Thompson, *Wives, Widows, Witches and Bitches: Women in Seventeenth-Century Devon* (New York, 1993), p. 51

customers appearing in court records were men.<sup>587</sup> This is hardly surprising given that magistrates held the testimony of men in court as more reliable than that of women.<sup>588</sup> In the eyes of the law, men were in authority at the alehouse. An alewife could not be subservient to men as a woman and have authority over them as a landlord at the same time. Women did successfully run alehouses both in literature and in reality, but not as chaste, silent, and obedient wives in the eyes of their magistrates and neighbours. For instance, in Richard Brathwait's book, The History of Moderation (1669), the enemy of the young woman "Moderation" was a woman named "Disobedience" who ran an inn with her six daughters where they promoted drunkenness and prostitution.<sup>589</sup> While no woman exactly conformed to the assumptions the dominant culture made about their "nature," women who sold alcohol faced a clear set of assumptions about their character and honesty. Alewives had an "unwomanly" reputation.

### **Women in the Drink Trade**

With few job prospects and limited training opportunities, many women in need of work turned to commercial extensions of their household skills. Traditionally, many women entered the drink trade to provide or supplement a family income. Contemporaries called their establishments alehouses or victualling houses. Later in the period even some coffee houses fit the description of typical female-controlled drinking establishments. The name is less important than the shared characteristics:

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<sup>587</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 126.

<sup>588</sup> Gowing, Domestic Dangers, pp. 49-52.

a small family business with a predominance of female serving staff existing on the fringes of the drink trade. In many establishments women ran the business either in a working partnership with their husbands, other women, or alone. Inns, taverns, and large well-established alehouses tied to official town brewers were often too entrenched in the patriarchal economic structure to be left to the care of women. However, such large, well-organised and professional establishments, while highly visible, were also in the minority. Smaller drinking houses, in contrast, stood on the boundary between public and private life. People lived where they worked, and alehouses were public and private spaces at the same time. Judith Bennet comments that in the fourteenth century “an ale-wife was a wife first and only secondarily an ale seller.”<sup>590</sup> Barbara Hanawalt proposes in ‘Of Good and Ill Repute’: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England that the drink trade in the medieval countryside blurred the distinction between domestic and commercial labour, space and production.<sup>591</sup> Such confusion in a hierarchical society meant women working in alehouses had ambiguous social positions. This basic structure of small alehouses that women ran from their own homes was still common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Despite legal barriers, a large number of women worked in the drink trade as landladies, hostesses, and alewives. While they may not have had licenses themselves, their customers thought of them as proprietors. Even

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<sup>589</sup> Richard Brathwait, Esq., The History of Moderation (London, 1669), pp. 55-6.

<sup>590</sup> Judith M. Bennett “The Village Ale-Wife: Women and Brewing in Fourteenth-Century England,” in Barbara A. Hanawalt, ed., Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe (Bloomington, 1986), p. 30.

James I's government was aware that the trade was not dominated by men. The "Proclamation Concerning Ale-houses" swapped "he" and "she" interchangeably when referring to proprietors.<sup>592</sup> Women were everywhere in the drink trade. Alan Everitt traced innkeeping dynasties throughout the period and found that several widows managed inns, and innkeeping dynasties could descend through the female line of the family.<sup>593</sup> Wine taverns as well boasted female businesswomen. In 1636 John Taylor listed the names of wine taverns in 10 shires. Rather than listing who held the licenses, he recorded who ran the establishments. On average, 22% of the names Taylor listed were women. In Surrey a third of those listed were women, and in Deal, Kent, women ran all three listed taverns.<sup>594</sup> Given that inns and wine taverns were particularly difficult for women to run alone since importing wine was both expensive and more complicated than brewing ale and beer, the percentage of alehouses run by women must have been much greater. Diaries provide numerous examples of female-run alehouses. In 1647 Adam Eyre visited alehouses run by Sara Witherebe, Anne Swallow, and Susan Thwaytese. He frequented the first often enough to record it only as "Sara's."<sup>595</sup> Roger Lowe also recorded the names of

<sup>591</sup> Barbara A Hanawalt, *'Of Good and Ill Repute': Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York, 1998), p. 105.

<sup>592</sup> 19 January 1619, "A Proclamation Concerning Ale-Houses," in Larkin and Hughes, eds., *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603-1625*, I, pp. 409-412.

<sup>593</sup> Alan Everitt, "The English Urban Inn, 1560-1760," in Alan Everitt, ed., *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973), pp. 129-34.

<sup>594</sup> John Taylor, *The Honorable, and Memorable Foundations, Erections, Raisings, and Ruines, of Diverse Cities, Townes, Castles, and Other Pieces of Antiquitie, Within Ten Shires and Counties of This Kingdome; Namely, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Surrey, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire . . . . Also, a Relation of the Wine Tavernes Either by Their Signes, or Names of the Persons That Allow, or Keepe Them, and Throughout the Several Shires* (London, 1636), *passim*.

<sup>595</sup> Adam Eyre, "A Dyurnall, Or Catalogue of All My Accions and Expences From the 1st of January, 1646-[7] -- Adam Eyre," in *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1877), pp. 9, 8 February 1647, 32, 10 May 1647, 41, 3

alewives in his diary. He was familiar with several of them; Ellin Ashton, Anne Cason, Izibell Grundie, and the widows Clarke, Rainker, and Barker all ran alehouses in Lowe's local area in the 1660s.<sup>596</sup> Eyre and Lowe both knew their local establishments in the context of the women who ran them. Despite any legal fictions, women were the public faces of the drink industry.

Women not only brewed, but they also took care of other aspects of their businesses. The husband in the ballad "The Industrious Smith" told his wife, "I will shoo horses, and *thou* shalt sell Ale."<sup>597</sup> The smith kept his own job and left the alehouse to his wife, even though he owned it.

Husbands did not always claim to own or operate the businesses their wives ran. The diarist Leonard Wheatcroft wrote in 1669 that his wife had begun to sell ale. The business was not his because six years later when his wife had a baby, the couple could not afford to stop selling ale. His wife had to forgo her traditional month long lying-in period to get back to work because Wheatcroft could not run the business.<sup>598</sup> Male authors accepted that women were the financial decision-makers in the retail drink trade. In the ballad "The Good Fellow's Consideration" an alewife refused her male patron credit because she claimed that, "the Mault-man his money must have, also I must pay excise."<sup>599</sup> She did not defer business decisions to her

June 1647, 64, 30 September 1647, 78, 6 December 1647. Other entries referred to "the alehouse" and on p.90, 16 January 1648, he was clearly talking about Sara's although he did not name it.

<sup>596</sup> Roger Lowe, The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-74, William L. Sachse, ed. (New Haven, 1938), pp. 14, 6 February 1663, 79, 15 January 1665, 94, 27 December 1665, 96, 23 January 1666, 105, 3 September 1666, 106, 24 August 1666.

<sup>597</sup> Harper, "The Industrious Smith", Roxburghe Ballads, I 158, 159, emphasis mine.

<sup>598</sup> Leonard Wheatcroft, "The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover, 1627-1706," in Dorothy Riden, ed., A Seventeenth-Century Scarsdale Miscellany (Chesterfield, 1993), p. 85.

<sup>599</sup> Thomas Lanfiere, "The Good Fellow's Consideration," Roxburghe Ballads, II, 195.

husband and made it very clear that she held herself accountable for the debts her business incurred. Court deposition revealed that alewives did in fact take responsibility for the financial dealings in their alehouses. In 1590 Joan Smith, a London alehouse keeper, became involved in a dispute while she was abroad trying to settle debts accumulated at her alehouse.<sup>600</sup> Many more women were the public faces of drinking establishments than licenses and court records reveal. The literature gives the impression that married women ran drinking establishments, and their husbands occasionally assisted them rather than the other way around. In ballads like “The Alewives Invitation to Married-Men, and Batchelors” and “The Kind Beleeving Hostesse” the alewife decided who could and could not afford to drink in her establishment.<sup>601</sup> She had control over her customers. Whoever owned them, represented them in court, or worked in them, contemporaries considered alehouse keeping a woman’s business.

### **The Reputations of Alewives and Hostesses**

Popular literature portrayed both men and women in the drink trade as dishonest. Both were accused of selling short measure and adulterated drink often at inflated prices. In fact, the main job of the government ale-connor was to ensure ale sellers sold wholesome drinks at the regulated prices, strengths, and measures.<sup>602</sup> Alewives’ tricks were legendary. William Harrison in his Description of England (1587) warned that

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<sup>600</sup> Gowing, Domestic Dangers, pp. 240-1.

<sup>601</sup> “The Alewives Invitation to Married-Men, and Batchelors. Shewing How a Good Fellow is Slighted When He is Brought to Poverty,” Huth Collection; and “The Kind Beleeving Hostesse,” Roxburghe Ballads, I, 172, 173.

<sup>602</sup> Frank A. King, Beer Has A History (London, 1947), p. 21.

alewives put rosin in the bottom of cups to shorten the measure and salt in the ale to make drinkers thirsty. He also complained that brewers at fairs and markets brewed stronger beer and ale than the assize allowed.<sup>603</sup>

Ballads written by customers for other alehouse patrons often complained of short measure. The mid-seventeenth-century ballad “Nick and Froth” claimed “scarce one house in twenty” gave full measure.<sup>604</sup> Another ballad “All is Ours and Our Husbands; Or, The Country Hostesses Vindication” detailed how country hostesses gave short measure.<sup>605</sup> Even drama took the time to describe the cheating practices of the drink trade. James Shirley’s The Opportunity (1640) had the host and his boy discuss how to overcharge on stage, and Ben Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair (1631) had the alewife Ursula advise her servant,

Froth your cans well i’ the filling, at length, rogue, and jog your bottles o’ the buttock, sirrah, then skink out the first glass, ever, and drink with all companies, though you be sure to be drunk; you’ll misreckon the better, and be less asham’d on’t. But your true trick, rascal, must be, to be ever busy, and mis-take away bottles and cans, in haste, before they be half drunk off, and never hear anybody call (if they should chance to mark you), till you ha’ brought fresh, and be able to forswear’em.<sup>606</sup>

Men and women in the drink trade shared a dishonest business reputation, and there is no reason to suspect it was not occasionally deserved.

However, the literature detailing short measure and ale seller’s tricks falls into the category of light-hearted humour rather than serious concern. The same ballads and plays are full of equally dishonest customers who refuse to

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<sup>603</sup> William Harrison, The Description of England, Georges Edelen, ed. (Ithaca, 1968), p. 139.

<sup>604</sup> “Nick and Froth; Or, The Good-Fellow’s Complaint For Want of Full Measure,” [circa. 1665] Roxburghe Ballads, II, 376.

<sup>605</sup> “All Is Ours and Our Husbands; Or, The Country Hostesses Vindication,” Roxburghe Ballads, II, 8.



pay their debts or are generally disorderly on the premises. Dishonest business practices were the least damaging slurs on an alewife's reputation.

Even though both men and women were accused of professional dishonesty, the reputations of women in the drink trade were far worse than that of men in the same profession. Judith Bennett contends that, "attacks on alewives drew on three complimentary traditions: distrust of the trading practices of all victuallers, fears about the sins and disorders caused by excessive drinking, and hatred of women."<sup>607</sup> The interplay of beliefs about drunkenness and beliefs about women added to the negative image of the female alewife, hostess, and tapster. Contemporary judgements about alewives concerned a narrow definition of female honour, as opposed to male honour, and not outright misogyny. The research done by Elizabeth Foyster in Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage and Laura Gowing in Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London on male and female honour codes points to some of the reasons working in the drink trade held different connotations for men and women.<sup>608</sup> Foyster and Gowing agree that male honour had multiple sites such as their professional honesty, occupational status, sobriety, and sexual reputations.<sup>609</sup> Gowing further concludes that women's honour rested almost completely on their sexual honesty.<sup>610</sup> Foyster, on the other hand, argues that women also had non-sexual components to their honour such as

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<sup>606</sup> James Shirley, The Opportunity, A Comedy (London, 1640); and Ben Jonson, Bartholomew Fair, Edward B. Partridge, ed. (Lincoln, 1964), II ii, p. 46.

<sup>607</sup> Bennett, Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England, p. 131.

<sup>608</sup> Elizabeth A Foyster, Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage (London, 1999) and Gowing, Domestic Dangers.

<sup>609</sup> Foyster, Manhood in Early Modern England, pp. 7-8 and Gowing, Domestic Dangers, pp. 106-8.

their skill in housewifery, their descent, and their religion.<sup>611</sup> Neither argues that a woman's employment was a location of female honour. If women's dishonesty in their professional conduct could not be attacked in a meaningful way when patrons felt it should be, they were forced to attack women in a way that did insult them. Women could not be professionally dishonest because they were not supposed to have professions which made up part of their identity. They were maids, wives, and widows, and their honour had to be insulted as such to have a real effect on their reputations. This might explain why customers attacked alewives' reputations as *women* primarily and secondarily as professional alehouse keepers.

Women derived little positive reward for their role as successful businesswomen in the drink trade. Popular literature indicated that somehow running a drinking establishment was not real "work." For instance, the prologue of the ballad "The Industrious Smith" reads,

That, let a man do the best that he may,  
An idle huswife will work his decay.<sup>612</sup>

Idle? She brewed the drink, looked after customers, dealt with suppliers, and ran the alehouse. Instead of acknowledging women's capabilities in successfully running a thriving business, popular literature concentrated on portraying alewives and hostesses as inappropriately using their sexuality to secure their business interests. The character sketch Donald Lupton drew in 1632 claimed that, "if either the hostess, or her daughter, or maid will kiss handsomely at parting, it is a good shoeing-horn or birdlime to draw the

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<sup>610</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, *passim*.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>612</sup> Harper, "The Industrious Smith", *Roxburghe Ballads*, I 158, 159.

company thither again the sooner.”<sup>613</sup> Business success was a product of sexual flirtation, not hard work. Hostesses and alewives in ballads sexually teased their customers, not only to ensure their return but also to encourage them to buy more alcohol. For example, the narrator in the ballad “The Good Fellow’s Consideration” from the late seventeenth century claimed that his hostess

Sometimes she in a merry vein would sit upon my knee,  
And give me kisses one or twain, and all to sweeten me.

He later explained that women in the drink trade flirted with a customers only if he had enough money to pay for drink.<sup>614</sup> Several ballads complained that hostesses were kind and loving until all a man’s money was spent, and then the women refused to grant credit to their former customer and cast him out of doors.<sup>615</sup> Authors objected to the business-like attitude women held regarding their own sexuality.

Several sources in popular literature pointed out that men expected women working in the drink trade to be sexually dishonest. John Earl’s character of “A Handsome Hostess” in 1628 claimed that, “she may be an honest woman, but is not believed so in her parish, and no man is a greater infidel in it than her husband.”<sup>616</sup> Women in the drink trade had to work against expectations that they were dishonest. In the play Ram Alley (1611)

<sup>613</sup> Donald Lupton, “London and the Country Carbonadoed” [1632], in King, Beer Has A History, p. 76.

<sup>614</sup> Lanfiere, “The Good Fellow’s Consideration,” Roxburghe Ballads, II, 195.

<sup>615</sup> Lanfiere, “The Good Fellow’s Consideration,” Roxburghe Ballads, II, 195; Thomas Lanfiere, “The Good Fellow’s Resolution; Or, The Bad Husband’s Return From His Folly,” Roxburghe Ballads, II, 200; John Wade, “A Caveat For Young Men: Or, The Bad Husband Turn’d Thrifty” Roxburghe Ballads, II, 54; John Wade, “The Heavy Heart, and a Light Purse,” Roxburghe Ballads, II, 210; and John Wade, “‘Tis Money That Makes a Man: Or, The Good-fellow’s Folly,” Roxburghe Ballads, III, 80.

<sup>616</sup> John Earle, Microcosmography; Or, A Piece of the World Discovered in Essays and Characters, Richard Aldington, ed. (London, 1924), p. 235.

a captain in a tavern assumed the vintner's wife was sexually aggressive and would give him money, food, and drink in exchange for sex.<sup>617</sup> While the captain's portrayal of a woman in the drink trade was an extreme character, people could still relate to the stereotype. Alewives who were honest often had to be "crafty" and deceptive in order to retain their sexual honesty. The ballad "The Trappan'd Maultster; or The Crafty Ale-Wife" told the story of an alewife who was propositioned by her maltster. She and her husband had to trap the man in his attempted seduction to prove her innocence and sexual honesty.<sup>618</sup> She was sexually honest and she ran a business, but her colleagues assumed she was open to adultery. To protect herself she had to outsmart her suitor and deceive him; a simple "no" did not suffice.

Whereas ballads portrayed expectations of women, drama tended to portray exceptional women. Seventeenth-century drama boasted some larger-than-life hostesses who were honest against all odds. The heroine of The Honest Lawyer (1616) was a woman who managed miraculously to work in both a brothel and a drinking establishment without losing her sexual honesty. Her husband, unable to believe it, tried to kill her anyway.<sup>619</sup> His wife's death was preferable to his own dishonour. Thomas Heywood's The Fair Maid of the West (1631) was the story of Besse Bridges who successfully ran a tavern. One character found it almost unbelievable that Besse was sexually honest. He questioned her reputation solely on the grounds of her occupation. He asked, "Honest, and live there? What, in a public Taverne, where's such confluence of lusty and brave

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<sup>617</sup> Lodowick Barry, "Ram Alley, Or, Merry Tricks" [1611], in The Ancient British Drama (Edinburgh, 1810), II, p. 313.

Gallants? Honest said you?”<sup>620</sup> Besse maintained her sexual honesty while running the tavern at a profit only through her exceptional strength of character. She then went on to become a virtuous roving pirate until reunited in Barbary with her lover who, incidentally, owned the tavern.<sup>621</sup> It took a woman beyond any normal woman’s capacity to defeat sexual stereotypes. In the drama, the exceptions proved the rule that women in the drink trade were assumed to be sexually dishonest.

Women in the drink trade were also often accused of occasional prostitution to supplement the money they made from selling drink. Court records are full of alewives accused of prostitution and bawdry. One of the many examples was Grace Dives. In 1687 she faced an Exeter court charged with trying to persuade two other women “to be naught[y]” with men in her alehouse. She was additionally charged with conspiring to get her own maid drunk so that male patrons in another chamber “might do with her what they would.”<sup>622</sup> The court accused Grace of bawdry, but her husband William was the landlord. The magistrate did not prosecute him. Magistrates also prosecuted other alewives in Exeter. In 1677 the magistrate shut down Rebecca Lang’s alehouse even though she had a license. She was accused in court of “keeping of Inmates and of ill rule in her house.”<sup>623</sup> Authorities suspected that she ran a brothel. Many women, and men for that matter, probably did procure sex for their patrons. The

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<sup>618</sup> The Trappan’d Maultster; or The Crafty Ale-Wife,” Pepys Collection, III, p. 308

<sup>619</sup> S. S., The Honest Lawyer (London, 1616), plate H3-4.

<sup>620</sup> Thomas Heywood, “1 The Fair Maid of the West. Or, A Girle Worth Gold” [1631], in John Pearson, ed., The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood Now First Collected With Illustrative Notes and a Memoir of the Author in Six Volumes (London, 1874), II, p. 264.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>622</sup> Thompson, Wives, Widows, Witches and Bitches, p. 58.

problem, however, is that authorities constructed and implemented laws as if selling alcohol and selling sex were in fact one occupation. They legislated as if prostitution was inextricable from tippling, particularly if a woman ran the business. A regulation issued in Coventry in 1492 attempted to control sexual crimes by forbidding citizens to “kepe, hold, resceyve nor foav[u]r eny tapster, or woman of evell name, fame or condic[i]on to whom eny resorte is of synfull disposic[i]on, hauntyng the synne of lechery.”<sup>624</sup> Authorities assumed women who served alcohol were prone to prostitution as the rest of the law concerned controlling the activities of women so that they did not fall into prostitution. In the same vein, when Henry VIII’s government closed down the stews in 1546, it also closed down the victualling houses in the area unless proprietors presented themselves to the court and bound themselves over specifically “not to suffer any such disorder in their house, or lodge any serving man, prentice, or woman unmarried.”<sup>625</sup> The government did not close the houses down as drinking establishments but as unofficial brothels until they provided the court with evidence to the contrary. Authorities assumed many women in the drink trade were sexually dishonest and engaged in prostitution until they could prove otherwise.

Authors of popular literature reinforced the perceived link between selling drink and selling sex. They portrayed prostitution not just in drinking establishments but also by the women who ran them as a necessary

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<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>624</sup> Quoted from Martin Ingram, “Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England,” in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle, eds., The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England (London, 1996), p. 62, emphasis mine.

component of the drink trade. One ballad cited the proverb, “If tap should fayl, toot go the tail!” and explained that alewives must provide for their husbands and families through selling either alcohol or sex.<sup>626</sup> Another ballad’s narrator bragged that his hostess could supply her customers with any sort of prostitute along with a room.<sup>627</sup> Occasional prostitution was all part of the image of the alewife. Francis Lenton’s Characterismi (1631) included a character sketch of “A Country Alewife.” He described a shrewd, independent and not totally honest businesswoman. He also added that, “as Drunkards encrease, so doth her Tipping; and the Tap and she are tost up together.”<sup>628</sup> Popular literature drew no firm line between flirting with customers to sell drink and using drink to sell sex. This in no way meant all alewives sold both their drink and themselves. More likely, male authors were uncomfortable with women’s ability to move the boundaries of morality and social convention to fit their commercial interests. Furthermore, using sex as a marketing tool for selling drink was an option available only to women. Given the widespread belief that alcohol provoked lust and reduced a man’s ability to reason, it was a powerfully effective marketing tool. Therefore, male authors slandered the reputation of women in the drink trade in general by suspecting them all of the worst.

Not all women in the drink trade could get away with using sex as a marketing tool. Those who could not were faced with another slanderous

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<sup>625</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Early Tudors (1485-1553), I, p. 366.

<sup>626</sup> “All Is Ours and Our Husbands; Or, The Country Hostesses Vindication,” Roxburghe Ballads, II, 8.

<sup>627</sup> “The Kind Beleeving Hostesse,” Roxburghe Ballads, I., 172, 173.

<sup>628</sup> Francis Lenton, Characterismi: Or, Lentons Leasures. Expressed in Essays and Characters, Never Before Written On (London, 1631), plate D4.

reputation. Instead of assaulting their chastity, authors portrayed some alewives and hostesses as grotesquely unfeminine. Clark relays contemporary popular sentiment when he observes that, “to survive and prosper an alehouse-keeper needed a tough, resilient character, and an ability to give as much as he got both in terms of verbal and physical abuse; if his wife was as hard as nails even better.”<sup>629</sup> A strong, resilient character complimented ideals of manhood, but a woman “hard as nails” ran against the grain of ideal womanhood. Many descriptions of women successfully plying the drink trade on their own encompassed all the qualities Clark mentions, but as a result authors wrote about them as grotesque characters of distorted femininity. John Skelton’s classic description of the alewife Elynour Rummyng parodied descriptions of beautiful ladies.<sup>630</sup> Elynour was everything beautiful women were not. She was diseased, wrinkled, and dirty; she drooled, had a runny nose, and wore old threadbare clothing. To top it all off, she had pride in her appearance; “she thynketh her selfe gaye.”<sup>631</sup> Another alewife, Mother Bunch in Pasquil’s Jest With the Merriments of Mother Bunch (1629), was not only grotesquely unfeminine herself but spawned “all our great greasy Tapsters, and fat swelling Alewives, whose faces are blown as big as the froth of their Bottle-ale.”<sup>632</sup> The author described not just one alewife but a caricature of them all. Even sermons employed the grotesque stereotype of women in the drink trade. Richard Young in The Drunkard’s Character (1638), spoke out against

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<sup>629</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 87.

<sup>630</sup> John Scattergood, ed., John Skelton: The Complete English Poems (London, 1983), p. 449.

<sup>631</sup> John Skelton “The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng,” in Scattergood, ed., John Skelton, pp. 214-16.



the unmeasurable grosenesse of such, whose onely element is Ale, especially your Ale-wives, who, like German Froas, are all cheekes to the belly, and all belly to the knees, whose duges and chins meete without any forcing of either, . . . you may dayly see such fustilugs walking in the streets, like so many Tunnes, each moving upon two pottle pots.<sup>633</sup>

The profession of such women became their grotesque physical features. Their faces were “the froth of their Bottle-ale” and their legs were “two pottle pots.” Authors not only ridiculed alewives physical appearances but also their conduct. Ben Jonson’s character Ursula in Bartholomew Fair, in addition to being grossly fat and unattractive, swore and abused her customers, drank continuously throughout the play, got into a fight with a customer, and removed her hose on stage.<sup>634</sup> Real alewives had to contend with the unfeminine portrayal of their profession. Ned Ward in The London Spy (1700) provided a list of the usual nicknames given to poor alewives in times past; he claimed they were “new Christen’d by some Drunken Godfather or other, by the Name of Mother Huff, Mother Damnable, the Witch of Endor, Dame Saucy, Goody Blowze, Gammer Tattle, or the like.”<sup>635</sup> None of the names were particularly flattering, but most derived from their perceived unruly behaviour. All of these grotesque alewife characters were successful, independent businesswomen not totally unloved by their customers. Part of the cultural script of a successful woman in the drink trade required the physical and behavioural opposites to ideal womanhood.

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<sup>632</sup> “Pasquil’s Jest With the Merriments of Mother Bunch” [1629], in Bennett, Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England, p. 129.

<sup>633</sup> Richard Young, The Drunkards Character, or, A True Drunkard With Such Sinnes as Raigne in Him . . . Together With Compleat Armour Against Evill Society . . . (London, 1638), pp. 38-9.

<sup>634</sup> Jonson, Bartholomew Fair, pp. 60-1 and *passim*.

The one positive aspect of popular images of women in the drink trade was their success in providing good tasting ale and beer. The drink may have been adulterated, strong, short measure, or unconventionally made (Elynour put hen's dung in hers), but popular literature portrayed satisfied customers. Elynour's ale was incredibly popular with her customers.<sup>636</sup> Even in the early seventeenth century, popular authors remembered Elynour's good drink. The Author of Pimlyco. Or, Runne Red-Cap (1609) commented on Elynour,

whose fame spread saile,  
All England through for Nappy Ale.<sup>637</sup>

Ursula too sold a good quantity of her bottle ale throughout Bartholomew Fair.<sup>638</sup> In fact alewives were not commonly portrayed as business failures due to unpalatable drink, but rather because customers defaulted on the debts they accrued since they could not get enough of the drink. In the ballad "The Good Fellows Frolick" the landlady had trouble getting rid of her customers who could not pay and yet could not tear themselves away from the good ale.<sup>639</sup> In "The Industrious Smith" the alehouse failed because men could not pay for their drink.<sup>640</sup> In spite of alewives' otherwise poor reputations, authors gave women credit in a round-about way for brewing a highly desirable product.

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<sup>635</sup> Edward [Ned] Ward, The London Spy, 18v. (London, 1689-1703), I, part III, p. 4.

<sup>636</sup> Skelton "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng," *passim*.

<sup>637</sup> Pimlyco. Or, Runne Red-Cap (London, 1609), plate B2<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>638</sup> Jonson, Bartholomew Fair, *passim*.

<sup>639</sup> The Good Fellows Frolick, Or, Kent Street Clubb (London, no date).

<sup>640</sup> Harper, "The Industrious Smith", Roxburghe Ballads, I 158, 159.

## Conclusions

Many women put their reputations as honest women at risk to sell ale. Economic necessity was probably the greatest motivating factor. Regardless of why, alewives were women who found themselves in the precarious position of maintaining a potentially rowdy male-dominated space by the sheer force of their personalities. The literature portrays alewives as shrewd businesswomen who either capitalised on sexual persuasiveness or a grotesque, tough personality to control their businesses. Even the sexually persuasive alewives were not meek, coy women. They flirted with customers and procured sex for them as long as they could pay their bills. Once a customer spent all his money, the alewife threw him out. Alewives were tough, manipulative, and nasty. They put profit before emotional considerations, and they stood up to their drunk, rowdy customers. They were everything women were not supposed to be. Chaste, silent, and obedient alewives quickly went out of business. Successful alewives were the antithesis of successful femininity.

Alewives were successful businesswomen. Despite their bad reputations, alewives and hostesses could make a profit selling drink. Authors complained about the way in which women ran their businesses, but rarely did they claim they were economically unviable. While magistrates and popular authors deplored the immorality of selling drink with sex, the fact is they all agreed it worked. Women used any sexual power they had to enhance their profits. Authors also complained that alewives were emotionally dishonest and could turn on their customers when they ran out of money. This was good business. In “The Industrious

Smith” it was the husband who let the customers run up tabs they could not pay; his wife was less generous.<sup>641</sup> Alewives were renowned for refusing credit, which was an economically sound policy since several ballad narrators admitted they did not intend to pay their due anyway. Finally, women proved just as capable of short measure, misreckoned accounts, and adulterated ale as their male counterparts. The drink trade was a dishonest industry by all accounts. Women were not only capable of the standard dishonest practices necessary to keep a competitive business afloat, but they also had control of their own sexuality and emotional attachments.

Alewives were able to manipulate their sexual control over men to benefit their businesses and run their alehouses better than their husbands. They were both sexually aggressive and emotionally detached. While men created these expectations of alewives, they also stood in awe of them. Men expected alewives to have the power and self control they assumed ordinary women lacked.

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<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*

## 6. Selling Sex With Alcohol

Yea, Wine so inflames the Drunkard with Lust; that  
 were his power equall to his desire, were his  
 dreames and wishes all true, hee would not leave a  
 Virgin in the world . . . Popery might have many  
 Nuns, it should have no maids.<sup>642</sup>

Contemporaries believed alcohol provoked lust in men and women.

Lust itself was intoxicating; when combined with alcohol, lust was dangerous. People relied on conventions of behaviour to protect themselves from possible sexual immorality arising from drunkenness. Men went out at night to drink with their male companions, and honest women stayed home. Drunk men, fired with lust, then went to prostitutes to satisfy themselves. Since all honest women were safely at home, any woman found in or near a drinking establishment at night was by default sexually suspect. At least that was the accepted social convention available to anyone who wished to interpret a night-time encounter in that way. Ostensibly, women present during male late-night drinking sessions fit a distinct stereotype; women were not present to drink socially. Their primary purpose was to catch a gullible man and get his money. First, they used their sexuality as a temptation. Then they plied men with alcohol to weaken their self-control. Finally, the women took control and took what they wanted from men, whether it was sex, money, pride, or all three. Alcohol and lust empowered women by weakening men. Male authors proposed that all women in male drinking spaces were not drinking patrons nor companions but predators.

Ballads, sermons, pamphlets, and drama all contained similar stories about the interactions of drunk men and sober women. Popular literature created a stereotype of women who made men drunk and then took advantage of them, often humiliating them in the process. On one hand, this stereotype was an extreme and comical warning to gullible young men about the dangers of urban night life. On the other hand, it revealed real assumptions about the manipulative power women had when they used sex appeal and alcohol against men. This chapter is concerned with the stories in literature that both reflected and reinforced this stereotype of sober women among drunk men. Women who prowled the streets at night left no records of their own. Even court records reveal more about male assumptions than female attitudes. Women before the courts for sexual misconduct said whatever they needed to say to keep out of the local Bridewell. Still, research based on court records suggest this stereotype existed outside popular literature as well. Authorities suspected that women who associated themselves with late-night drinking culture were guilty of illicit sex or prostitution. The stereotype of the deceptive yet sober woman created an atmosphere that curbed the drinking habits of women and kept them out of traditional male drinking spaces at night. As such, it is worth exploring in depth.

Wherever alcohol and women combined in the literature, men saw their downfall. Descriptions of women and wine were often interchangeable; alcohol and lust were both intoxicating. The observation

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<sup>642</sup> Richard Young, The Drunkards Character, or, A True Drunkard With Such Sinnes as Raigne in Him . . . Together With Compleat Armour Against Evill Society (London, 1638), pp. 58-9.

that drunkenness was the *mother* of all sins was almost a proverb. All branches of literature took up the theme that the one needed the other to survive. Authors elaborated on Terence's classical injunction that, "Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus grows cold."<sup>643</sup> For example, the court mask The Springs Glory (1639) depicted cupid arguing that his arrows would never penetrate a heart if wine had not warmed it first. Venus then remarked that wine engendered only lust, not love.<sup>644</sup> Alcohol provoked lust, which was a sin, not love, which was not. In a less sympathetic vein and to a more mainstream audience, the anonymous sermon Gods Judgement Upon Drunkards, Swearers and Sabbath-breakers (1659) was explicit about the link between alcohol and sex. The preacher wrote that, "Wine is to most men the milk of Venus, he can never have a pure soul in a chaste body, that sucks at these breasts, that frequents the society of this Baude of lust."<sup>645</sup> Wine was a woman whose nurturing qualities were an aid to illicit sex. Sermons abounded with such allusions. The preacher Richard Young invoked the popular expression that he would "never believe that chastity ever slept in the Drunkards bed."<sup>646</sup> Pamphlets also warned readers of the tenuous links between alcohol and loose women. Edward Foord's thirty-page poem, Wine and Women: Or A Brief Description of the Common Courtesie of a Curtezan. Written Solely For the Benefit of Immodest and Intemperate Youth (1647), alternated between

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<sup>643</sup> A. Lynn Martin, Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (London, 2001), pp. 9 and 45.

<sup>644</sup> Thomas Nabbes, "The Springs Glory. A Maske" [1639], in A. H. Bullen, ed., The Works of Thomas Nabbes, III (London, 1887), p. 225.

<sup>645</sup> Anonymous, Gods Judgement Upon Drunkards, Swearers and Sabbath-breakers (London, 1659), p. 10.

<sup>646</sup> Young, The Drunkards Character, p. 56.

attacking drunkenness and attacking women. Not only did he use the proverbial saying, "'Tis hard to find a drunkard that is chaste," but also he added that "he that loves women, doubtless favours wine."<sup>647</sup> Throughout the poem he linked drunkenness to illicit sex and prostitution. Both alcohol and women could destroy male supremacy and self control in the same way. The combination of the two was particularly lethal.

### **Women Out After Dark**

Women on the streets and in drinking houses after dark endangered their reputations. In Youth and Authority Paul Griffiths claims that, "women made scant use of the alehouse." Furthermore, those women who did "were exposed to a heavy load of suspicions and innuendoes."<sup>648</sup> His reading of the court records suggests authorities regarded women in alehouses and out on the streets at night as sexually suspect. Peter Clark in The English Alehouse also points out that social conventions ruled women's visits to drinking establishments, and this, on the whole, excluded solitary visits or visits at night.<sup>649</sup> Women put themselves in a precarious position simply by being on the streets at night. Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford in Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720 conclude that, "merely to walk unescorted at night rendered a woman liable to be

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<sup>647</sup> Edward Foord, Wine and Women: Or A Brief Description of the Common Courtesie of a Curtezan. Written Solely For the Benefit of Immodest and Intemperate Youth (London, 1647).

<sup>648</sup> Paul Griffiths, Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640 (Oxford, 1996), pp. 208, 212.

<sup>649</sup> Peter Clark, The English Alehouse: a Social History 1200-1830 (London, 1983), p. 131.



arrested for immorality and sent to the local Bridewell.”<sup>650</sup> Women out after dark in drinking houses or on the streets faced the full consequences of established stereotypes.

Authorities had trouble classifying women whose conduct did not fit into recognised social norms. In the literature all single women open to casual sexual liaisons fall under the title of “prostitute” because that is how contemporaries classified them. Ruth Mazo Karras in her article “Sex and the Singlewoman” seeks to illuminate the reasons authorities classified unmarried women who engaged in heterosexual activities as prostitutes. She claims the social system lacked a category encompassing non-commercial sexual activity by women who never married.<sup>651</sup> Therefore, the literature about “prostitutes” refers to any woman engaging in illicit sexual activities from casual liaisons to organised brothels. Clark also discusses the affiliation between alehouses and casual prostitution. He states that while most women prostituting themselves were amateurs, they did operate out of alehouses. Also professional urban brothels might have doubled as drinking establishments.<sup>652</sup> Descriptions in literature of prostitutes confirm Clark’s investigation of the court records. Prostitutes either met their clients while drinking, or they offered them drinks at their own houses. Women on the streets or in drinking establishments at night ran risks to their bodies and reputations. The taboo on women out drinking at night was

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<sup>650</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 212.

<sup>651</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, “Sex and Singlewomen,” in Judith M. Bennet and Amy M. Froide, eds., *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 128.

<sup>652</sup> Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 149.

so strong that most women obeyed it. If not, historians find them before court authorities who assumed they were sexually dishonest.

Popular authors left the best documentation of the attitudes and assumptions women faced when men associated them with public drinking establishments at night. Thomas Nashe warned in his pamphlet Christs Tears Over Ireusalem (1593) that he saw in the alehouses and taverns

a number of whores making men drunke to cosen them of their money. . . . others of them sharing halfe with the Baudes their Hostesses, & laughing at the Punies they haue lunched. . . . reuelling, dauncing, and banquetting till midnight. . . . a number of wiues cockolding their husbandes, vnder pretence of going to their next neighbours labour. . . . Gentlewomen baking in their painting on their faces by the fire. . . . theft, murder, and conspiracie, following their busines verie closelie. . . . Those whom the Sunne sees not in a month together, I nowe see in their cuppes and their iolitie.<sup>653</sup>

Nashe painted a picture of late-night drinking houses full of deceptive and sexually promiscuous women. Women were aware of these expectations and modified their behaviour to avoid being associated with late-night drinking and illicit sex, particularly by those in authority. Griffiths gives several examples from the court records of women forced to explain their presence on the streets or in the alehouse after dark. Women claimed they were returning from work or going to a woman's labour. One young woman claimed she was afraid to leave the alehouse. He also points out that some women hid from the watch to avoid being mistaken for prostitutes.<sup>654</sup> Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's play, The Coxcomb (1646), suggested how distressing young women could find being caught out after dark. Viola, a virtuous young girl, was out at night alone and

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<sup>653</sup> Thomas Nashe, "Christs Tears Over Ierusalem" [1593], in F. P. Wilson, ed., The Works of Thomas Nashe (Oxford, 1966) II, pp. 150-151.

<sup>654</sup> Griffiths, Youth and Authority, p. 212.

everyone who met her assumed she was a prostitute and treated her as one. The ordeal so upset her that she ran away and spent the rest of the play in disguise.<sup>655</sup> Viola had an extreme reaction to the accusations, but the audience would have understood the implications of her mistaken identity. Nashe's description might have been a work of fiction, but to contemporaries it was believable. Griffiths shows that the language of court cases presented prostitutes as preying upon sexually vulnerable men.<sup>656</sup> This was the story the male litigants and court reporters told. Popular literature revealed how men formulated the idea that prostitutes, women hired to serve them and the lowest of the "weaker sex," could find their way into a position to overcome their masters. The key was their use of alcohol. The story of women manipulating male intoxication and temptation crossed genres and developed over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to constitute a standard warning to young men about the powerful combination of alcohol and sex.

### **Lot's daughters**

Popular literature was rich in biblical and classical stories. Authors wove biblical examples into a larger narrative designed to instruct the reader or listener by providing examples of positive or negative conduct. They tended to use and reuse certain stories to make a point about contemporary morality and values. The stories they chose and the morals they extracted from them were important social comments on the expected

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<sup>655</sup> Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, "The Coxcomb" [1646], in Fredson Bowers, ed., *Beaumont and Fletcher Dramatic Works*, I (London, 1966), pp. 284, 293, *passim*.

<sup>656</sup> Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, p. 217.

values of their day. One common story was a tale of sex, deception, and the inversion of the social order caused by excessive drinking. Sermons and popular literature used the story of Lot to warn men about how women used alcohol to subvert male power. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the loss of his wife, Lot, the sage, retired to a cave with his two daughters. The biblical rendition of this tale runs as follows:

And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. . . . Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. (Gen. 19:31-33,36)

The original story contained no clear judgement on the parties involved.

The retelling of the tale in English literature was always in the context of a moral lesson, but the lesson itself changed over time.

Medieval English literature emphasised the drunkenness of Lot and his role in the story. Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale" cited Lot as an admonition against drunkenness stating,

Lo, how that dronken Looth, unkyndely,  
Lay by his doghtres two, unwityngly;  
So dronke he was, he nyste what he wroghte.<sup>657</sup>

The emphasis was on Lot's improper behaviour while drunk. Lot drank so much that lust overcame him, and he sexually violated his daughters without knowing it. William Langland likewise emphasised Lot's responsibility in the event:

Loot in his lyue throw likerous drynke

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<sup>657</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Pardoner's Tale" [1387-1400], in Larry D. Benson, ed., The Riverside Chaucer (New York, 1987), p. 196, line 485-7.

Wykked[ly] wroghte and wrathed god almyhty.  
 In his dronkenesse aday his daughteres he dighte  
 And lay by hem bothe as þe boke telleth;

...

Thorw wyn and thorw wom[e]n there was loot acombred.<sup>658</sup>

Lot's decision to drink led him into incestuous sex, which angered God.

These fourteenth-century accounts told the tale of Lot as the story of a drunk man guilty of the sin of gluttony and through it illicit sex. Medieval authors discussed what Lot did to his daughters, not the conscious role the daughters played. The stories served as warnings to men against hard drinking and the unbridled lust it invoked. Alcohol drew men into illicit sex and further sins.

While the medieval interpretation persisted, throughout the literature of the early modern period the daughters took on a more prominent role than they had previously. Where medieval authors emphasised the drunkenness of Lot alone, early modern authors added to this the powers of manipulation the sober daughters had over their father.<sup>659</sup> Sixteenth-century authors emphasised the role the daughters played in Lot's sin. The author of The Scole House of Women (1560) claimed,

The doughters twayne, of Loth the sage  
 Hauynge lyke tykle, in theyr tayle  
 Coude not refrayne, theyr wylful rage  
 To satysfye, with euyl hayle  
 Theyr father teasted, with costly vitayle  
 Made hym dronke, and so at laste  
 Medled with hym, he slepyng faste.<sup>660</sup>

<sup>658</sup> William Langland, "Will's Vision of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best" (c. 1381) in George Russell and George Kane, eds., Piers Plowman: The C Version (London, 1997), pp. 213-214, line 26-32.

<sup>659</sup> For example, Young, The Drunkard's Character, p. 56; and "An Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness," in Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory (London, 1839), p. 324.

<sup>660</sup> Anonymous, Here Begynneth the Scole House of Women: Wherein Every Man May Reade a Goodly Prayse of the Condicyons of Women (London, 1560), verse 104.

Lot's daughters used alcohol to deceive the patriarchal authority in their life to get what they wanted. For example, the author of The ix Drunkardes (1523) claimed that the two young women got their father drunk to trick him into committing incest, which he would not have done while he was sober.<sup>661</sup> The author's main point was that alcohol and the manipulations of women robbed Lot of his rightful powers. In his poem Fatal Friendship; or The Drunkards Misery (1692) Richard Ames emphasised the deceptive nature of the two girls. He wrote,

But in a Cave the Girls contriv'd a Plot,  
By pushing on the well-fill'd Bowl,  
To warm their Father's aged Soul<sup>662</sup>

The girls knew they were using alcohol to manipulate their father into sex. The anonymous pamphlet The Deceyte of Women (1560?) told the biblical story and then continued on to condemn contemporary women of using alcohol to manipulate men into sex.<sup>663</sup> While many stereotypes about women and their relationship with alcohol coexisted, Lot's daughters exemplified at least one stereotype. Two young sober girls used alcohol to reverse the normal social order of such a stable relationship as father and daughter to obtain sex. Authors portrayed men's fears that their own drunkenness and lust were weapons a sober woman could use to seize social control. These women could then take advantage of their drunk

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<sup>661</sup> Anonymous, Here Begynneth a Lytyll New Treatyse or Mater Intytuled + Called The ix Drunkardes Whyche Tratythe of Dyurse and Goodly Storyes Ryght Plesaunte and Frutefull For All Parsones for to Pastyme With. (London, 1523), no page numbers, story 2.

<sup>662</sup> Richard Ames, Fatal Friendship; or, the Drunkards Misery: Being a Satyr Against Hard Drinking (London, 1692), p. 5.

<sup>663</sup> Anonymous, The Deceyte of Women. to the Instruction and Ensample of All Men, Yonge and Olde, Newly Corrected (London? 1560?), p. Biii.

companion's state and reverse the proper male-dominated gender order with dire consequences for men.

### **Dishonest Sober Whores**

Griffiths describes the world of young male sociability as “the Batchelor’s social round.” He claims that, “there is ample evidence in contemporary sources of the social significance of the alehouse, brothel, playhouse, and tables in the lives of young men.”<sup>664</sup> Griffiths reveals through court records the very consequences about which contemporary authors warned their audiences. Authors referred to such young men as “gulls,” meaning “unfledged birds” and indicating their youth and innocence. A young man entering the sexual and alcoholic freedom of adulthood would most likely fear naivety in himself and therefore laugh at in others. While such fears may be common to young men in many times and cultures, how these anxieties manifested themselves can illuminate how men came to understand what society expected of their public behaviour. They also illuminate how society interpreted the behaviour of women involved in male sociability.

Popular authors developed female characters who were often sober, sophisticated prostitutes. Since contemporaries thought alcohol encouraged lascivious behaviour, they associated drinking establishments with prostitutes and women of loose morals. However, this link did not explain the behaviour many authors assigned to prostitutes. Prostitutes in literature drank large amounts of alcohol, but not with their clients. They drank with

their co-workers while narrating their tales. Such anti-heroines plied their clients with alcohol to enhance their chances of stealing from them; these were the literary descendants of Lot's daughters. Instead of stories of gallant knights and their chaste lady loves, the rogue literature portrayed gullible young men and thieving prostitutes. Authors described men's worst fears about the criminal underworld in graphic detail. These pamphlets were voyeuristic sexual comedies written as much to shock their young single male audience as to excite them. In disclaiming a pornographic or instructive intent, authors revealed their intended audience. The extended title of The Crafty Whore included the author's intent: The Mistery and Iniquity of Bawdy Houses Laid Open . . . Whereby They Insnare and Beguile Youth, Pourtraied to the Life . . . For the Benefit of All, But Especially the Younger Sort.<sup>665</sup> The author wrote for young men. Furthermore, these young men were single. None of the stories referred to wives waiting at home, but many suggested the possibility of a girlfriend expecting them elsewhere.<sup>666</sup> The young men who fell victim to "crafty whores" were also victims of their own naivety. The anonymous poem Gallantry A-la-mode (1674) told of a young man who allowed someone to ply him with wine. His host then offered a prostitute. After his experience

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<sup>664</sup> Griffiths, Youth and Authority, p. 206.

<sup>665</sup> Anonymous, The Crafty Whore; or, The Mistery and Iniquity of Bawdy Houses Laid Open, In a Dialogue Between Two Subtle Bawds, Wherein, as in a Mirrour, Our City-Curtesans May See Their Soul-destroying Art, and Crafty Devices, Whereby They Insnare and Beguile Youth, Pourtraied to the Life, By the Pensell of One of Their Late, (But Now Penitent) Captives, For the Benefit of All, But Especially the Younger Sort. Whereunto is Added Dehortations From Lust Drawn From the Sad and Lamentable Consequences it Produceth (London, 1658), title page.

<sup>666</sup> Peter Aretine Cardinall of Rom, pseud., Strange Newes from Bartholomew-Fair, Or, the Wandring-Whore Discovered, Her Cabinet Unlockt, Her Secrets Laid Open, Vnvailed, and Spread Abroad in Whore and Bacon-lane, Duck-street and the Garrison of Pye-Corner (London, 1661), p. 4.



he regretted falling into her trap and “for such a Feast, kept Twelve-months Fast.”<sup>667</sup> In A Mirour For Magistrates of Cyties (1584) George Whetstone warned that prostitutes lured young men back to their brothels with the promise of “a Pottle or two of wyne” and sex.<sup>668</sup> The stories focused on the women, whose deceptions served as instructive examples for their young, single, and male audience.

The tradition of rogue literature extended back to Robert Green’s cony-catching pamphlets of the 1590s. Even then a she-cony-catcher explained that women made better thieves than men, because “he that is most chary of his crowns abroad, and will cry, ‘Ware the cony-catchers,’ will not be afraid to drink a pint of wine with a pretty wench.”<sup>669</sup> In the relaxed censorship accompanying the Restoration, authors elaborated on the stereotype of the “crafty whore.” The genre was rich in imagery that played on the association men made between the intoxicating effect of alcohol and sex. The narrators were sometimes crude but always clear. One prostitute bragged, “To entice young punys, I lye as open as Noon-day, sit down at the dore, set one foot to the right, the other to the left, as far distant as I can spread my imperfect Limbs, and cry Lads: her’s a can of the best liquor in the fair.”<sup>670</sup> The female narrators drank throughout their conversation as they told stories of how pretended temperance aided them in tricking drunk

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<sup>667</sup> Anonymous, Gallantry A-la-mode, A Sattyrical Poem (London, 1674), pp. 6, 16.

<sup>668</sup> George Whetstone, A Mirour For Magistrates of Cyties (London, 1584), plate Hii<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>669</sup> Robert Greene, “A Disputation Between a He-Cony-Catcher and a She-Cony-Catcher” (1592) in A. V. Judges, ed., The Elizabethan Underworld (London, 1965), p.212; see also The Lawyers Clarke Trappand by the Crafty Whore of Canturbury, or, a True Relation of the Whole Life of Mary Mauders the Daughter of Thomas Mauders a Fidler in Canterbury (London, 1663), *passim*; and A New Merry Ballad I Hauē Here to Shew, Come Pence a Peece For Them, I Tell You But So (London, 1630?).

<sup>670</sup> Peter Aretine, Strange Newes from Bartholomew-Fair, p. 3.

men. These women were con-artists as well as prostitutes. One prostitute described how she turned men into customers:

I did eate very little meat, and drank lesse wine, unless: it was tempered with water. . . . Supper being ended, the wine he drank began to sparkle in his veines, and my beauty intoxicating his braines, he could not forbear his amorous imbracements.<sup>671</sup>

She gained a client by getting him drunk. Loose women exploited the associations men made between alcohol and sex.

Prostitutes also exploited the purely physical effects of alcohol. One revealed that while others turning the same number of tricks had not grown rich, she had done so “by two long fingers made for that purpose, to dive into the Pockets of such Gulls, who after the receipt of two or three Cups, forget the strength of their own Estates.”<sup>672</sup> The literature portrayed such women preying on their drunk clients as standard and expected. Another pamphlet professed to reveal the “orders” of a secret society of prostitutes.

Rules included

that it shall be lawful for such as enter themselves into our community to have free leave . . . to pick any mans pocket . . . if he put his hands in their plackets . . . [and] . . . that such as pick their Rumpers pocket when they be drunk deny it to them when they are sober for the credit of our good-old-cause.<sup>673</sup>

Throughout this genre the prostitutes played on the imagery of sexual and alcoholic intoxication to entice their customers into an alcoholic lull while they themselves stayed sober enough to steal from men. In The Wandring Whore (1661) two prostitutes enticed a sea captain into drinking and sex

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<sup>671</sup> Anonymous, The Crafty Whore, p. 13.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>673</sup> Peter Aretine Cardinal of Rome, pseud., Strange and True Newes From Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills: or the Crafty, impudent, Common-Whore (turnd Bawd) Anatomised, And discovered, in the unparallel'd Practises of Mrs Fotheringham, her

and then stole all of his money.<sup>674</sup> Prostitutes aggressively preyed on unwary men. One author described them as pirates. The prologue to the seventeenth-century ballad “The City Caper” boasted,

a true relation how a small she Pickaroon lately sail'd from the park,  
and Crusing abroad in the night, seiz'd on a rich Marchant-man,  
whom she tempted to board her, and then she disabl'd his Ship, took  
all his Cargo, spoil'd his Tackle, and burnt his Rudder.

She plied him with wine, had sex with him and then stole everything he had on him.<sup>675</sup> Although these men were prepared to pay for sex, once in control the women took more than their fair share.

In his intoxicated and pre-occupied state, the man did not realise he had become the victim of a “crafty whore” until the woman escaped with her victim’s money and often his dignity. A prostitute from the pamphlet The London Bawd (1705) described how a goldsmith’s apprentice propositioned her. When she found he had no money, she ordered more wine, and while they were drinking she managed to trick him out of his clothes. She then ran off with the clothes as her payment, leaving him in one of her old petticoats to pay the bill.<sup>676</sup> Another prostitute took a rich friar to a tavern, got him drunk, then persuaded him to swap clothes with her. She then stole everything and escaped. Left with a bill he could not

whores, Hectors and Rumpers, in their manner of living, and erecting a Half-Crown Chuck-Office. (London? 1660), pp. 3-4.

<sup>674</sup> John Garfield, attributed, “The Wandring Whore. A Dialogue Between Magdalena a Crafty Bawd, Julietta an Exquisite Whore, Francion a Lascivious Gallant, and Gusman a Pimping Hector. Discovering their Diabolical Practises at the Chuck-Office” [1661], in The Wandring Whore Nubers 1-5 1660-1661 (Exeter, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>675</sup> Anonymous, “The City Caper: or, The Whetstones-Park Privateer,” Huth Collection (London? no date).

<sup>676</sup> Anonymous, The London-Bawd: With Her Character and Life: Discovering the Various and Subtle Intrigues of Lewd Women. The Third Edition (London, 1705) p. 146.

pay, the man ended up in prison.<sup>677</sup> “Crafty whores” were common in ballads and pamphlets. Another “Lady of Pleasure” at Bartholomew Fair supplied a rich man with alcohol “till he was not able to drink any more.” He passed out, and she not only stole £140 from him but also packed him in a trunk and sent him home to his wife.<sup>678</sup> The woman in a ballad subtitled “The Ranting Hector Well Fitted by This Cunning Miss” not only stole all her victim’s money, put him in women’s clothes, packed him in a chest, and sent the chest to his home, but also she drugged his wine to ensure he would fall into unconsciousness.<sup>679</sup> Women did not opportunistically take advantage of drunk men; they planned their capers. In their tales these women made it clear they used alcohol and a promise of sex to steal from men, just as Lot’s daughters had encouraged their father to drink in a plot to get themselves pregnant.

### **Conclusions: Stereotypes and Comic Warnings**

Humour served the twofold function of acting as a safe way of challenging social boundaries while at the same time re-affirming them.<sup>680</sup>

In his book The Language of Humour Walter Nash discusses the need for a set of circumstances and stereotypes familiar to the audience for a joke to

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<sup>677</sup> Anonymous, “The Crafty Miss of London; or, the Fryar well Fitted,” in W. G. Day, ed., The Pepys Ballads: Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge (Cambridge, 1987), p.505.

<sup>678</sup> Anonymous, The Miser Mump’d of His Gold (London, 1680-92?).

<sup>679</sup> Anonymous, “The Subtil Miss of London: or, The Ranting Hector Well Fitted By This Cunning Miss,” Huth Collection (London? no date).

<sup>680</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, “A Laughing Matter? Marital Discord and Gender Control in Seventeenth-Century England,” Rural History, IV (1993), p. 18; Roger Thompson “Popular Reading and Humour in Restoration England” Journal of Popular Culture, IX (1975), p. 658; and Chris Powell “Humour as a Form of Social Control: A Deviance Approach” in Antony J Chapman and Hugh C. Foot, eds., It’s A Funny Thing, Humour (Oxford, 1977), p. 55.

work.<sup>681</sup> For the historian these common aspects reveal the prejudices, stereotypes, and assumed behaviour patterns of the audience. Together these elements constitute a set of messages the genre was trying to convey to its audience. The type of humour found in this genre of pamphlets and ballads reinforced what was and was not acceptable by exploring the possibility of humiliation if a young man crossed a social boundary. Take, for example, excessive drunkenness while in the company of strangers or alone. A young inexperienced man could get so drunk that he lost his sense of reason. He could chance upon a woman who was not drunk and therefore able to take advantage of him in his intoxicated state. She might be a dishonest woman who promised him sex, stole all of his money, and exposed him to public humiliation once he sobered up and faced the consequences of his actions. The constant reappearance of these elements reveals they are crucial to "the joke." Every story started with the man getting drunk and ended with his poverty and humiliation. Furthermore, the lowest of women, a prostitute, orchestrated these events. However, authors did not mean for these stories to terrorise young men into staying sober and away from women; they were comedies. One clear message this type of humour put across was the danger of drinking too much. Authors did not bemoan the effects of drinking as a waste of health or money nor did they complain about general lasciviousness and the increased chance of conflict with other men. Rather the danger came from reducing a young man's self-

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<sup>681</sup> Walter Nash, The Language of Humour: style and technique in comic discourse (London, 1985), pp. 6-10.

control to such a level that the lowest of women, if she was sober, could seize control, expose his naivety, and humiliate him.

A prostitute was the one woman who could afford to drink and risk her sexual reputation because by definition chastity was not an issue. However, she did not drink. In general, prostitutes in the literature who drank to excess did not steal from nor humiliate their clients. Only by staying sober would a prostitute have relative power over a drunk man. This indicated a second warning to young men about women in public drinking establishments. The pamphlet The Wandering Whore began with a warning to its readers to “take notice, that the Publisher hereof hath not intended these Dialogues, for the encouragement of Vice and Profaneness . . . but to discover the persons, who like Spiders, watch all opportunities for trappanning.”<sup>682</sup> Women were manipulative in their immorality. Men fell to whoremongering through excessive “good fellowship.” Women did not need alcohol to encourage them to sin and to steal. Even if men offered them alcohol, they could always resist drunkenness and lie in wait, like spiders, to prey upon a poor, debilitated drunk man. In the context of “the joke” the anti-heroine prostitute was as crucial to the action as the debilitating drunkenness of the young man. She used the powers alcohol provided her to no good purpose except the laughter and instruction of the audience.

The rogue literature of the Restoration brought this anti-heroine type to the fore front in full force, but the stereotype persisted throughout

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<sup>682</sup> Garfield, attr., The Wandering Whore, p. 2.

popular literature. The character sketch The Character of a Town Misse (1675) described a typical young girl's descent into prostitution:

But making a Sally abroad one Night, she pickt up a Drunken Cully and at a Tavern (whilst he was no less pleasantly employed) pickt his pocket of a Gold Watch, and some strangling Guinnes and left him to Pawn his Sword and Perriwig for the Reckoning.<sup>683</sup>

She preyed on a man because he allowed her to do so by being drunk.

Another work, Richard Ames' poem Fatal Friendship also commented on the conduct of these women:

Late from the Tavern, Reeling drunk,  
A Gentleman (well bred, and nobly born,  
Who sober, would such Actions scorn)  
Perhaps shall seize upon a stroling Punk;  
She likes her Prize, for well those Vermin know,  
What with a Drunken Man to do<sup>684</sup>

Eventually the prostitute robbed the drunk gentleman. In a male-dominated society men would have feared the humiliation of being tricked by the lowest of women. The original purpose of this literary type was to warn young men of the ultimate danger drinking posed; manipulation, domination, and humiliation by women. However, the stereotype of the deceptive prostitute grew from a pamphlet character into a more general pattern of perceived behaviour throughout all genres of literature. In Cosmo Manuche's play The Loyal Lovers (1652) the "common strumpet" Riggle helped some pranksters get a man drunk so they could play a trick on him. In doing so, she stayed sober, refusing to drink with the men. When she finished, she allowed the other male characters to humiliate the drunk man.<sup>685</sup> Historians can only speculate that the appearance of this stereotype

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<sup>683</sup> Anonymous, The Character of a Town Misse (London, 1675), p. 4.

<sup>684</sup> Ames, Fatal Friendship, p. 8.

<sup>685</sup> Cosmo Manuche, The Loyal Lovers: A Tragi-Comedy (London, 1652), p. 21.

and its message beyond its original use corresponded to its acceptance as a realistic portrayal of sober women with drunk men. “Crafty whores” were not just the anti-heroines of a joke but an accepted stereotype about women’s drinking behaviour independent of any genre.

As for the women involved, many might have acted the part of the deceptive prostitute. The pressure for “good” women to stay out of the alehouses and taverns unescorted at night was strong enough to curb the practices of most women. Those who did venture out either had no reputation to lose or a lot to gain by risking it. The literature portrayed them as strong, street-smart women who were in control of their sexuality and were dangerously aggressive. Their sobriety signified their self-control. Such women orchestrated male drunkenness and thus consciously subverted male power. Prostitutes in literature were not dangerous for their immorality so much as for the abuse of their power over men. Social convention banned women from male drinking and sociability to protect men as much as women. Men imposed this stereotype on women, and it kept most of them away from public drinking at night. The stereotype helped construct a male-dominated drinking culture, but it also deeply influenced female drinking patterns. It effectively banned women from alehouses and taverns after dark.



### Part III: Female Drinkers

I hold it requisite . . . that every woman of sense should take delight to please . . . her taste with all daintie and dear fare, with either fowl or fish, with sweet wines and sweet meats.\*

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\* A Parliament of Ladies: With Their Lawes Newly Enacted (London, 1647), plate B.

### 7. **Drinking In Courtship**

A jovial crew of lively Lads,  
 all in a merry vain,  
 Did drink unto their sweethearts all,  
 their true loves to obtain  
 for men and maids,  
 to be Comrades  
 Is counted a gallant thing  
 and he that gains his Sweethearts love,  
 Conceits himself a king.

*Let pottles flie*

*Drink barrels drie.*

*Whilst rivers fill with rain,*

*and when the bowle is passed round*

*Wee'l drink to them again.<sup>686</sup>*

Young men and women took part in the wider community's drinking at public festivals and private celebrations almost from birth, but they did so as the subordinates of their parents and masters. Young women encountered their first independant recreational drinking as part of a distinct youth culture that spanned roughly the ten years between age fifteen and twenty-five.<sup>687</sup> This period constituted a unique state for young men and women. They operated along social guidelines that did not apply to their childhood and would not apply to their adulthood. Among the features of youth culture was the role of drink and the etiquette that surrounded it. For young men and women, alcohol became not only a food or medicine but also a part of their independant peer group entertainment. A new set of social rules which outlined the use and abuse of drink accompanied their new public recreational drinking. Intertwined with this drinking was another prominent feature of youth culture -- the pursuit of a good marriage

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<sup>686</sup> "Loves Carouse, Or, The Youngmens Healths," in "Humorous, Political, Historical and Miscellaneous Ballads," Luttrel Collection, II, part II, no page number.

match. Although only a third of the total population was married at any one time, contemporaries considered the married state the “normal” progression to adulthood.<sup>688</sup> At least as an ideal, the most important and permanent decision anyone made was whom to marry, if at all. As a whole, youth culture aimed at a long courtship loosely scripted by social guidelines. The consequences of a couple’s words and actions during courtship could alter the course of their futures. Contemporaries learned to drink while negotiating the most important decisions in their lives. Couples were aware that when they made decisions about their future partners publicly, they often could not reverse them. Despite the allegations that drink promoted illicit sex, young people drank substantial amounts while interviewing potential partners at alehouses, fairs, and other public celebrations. They also ignored the popular perception that drink impaired reason, quaffing liberally while discussing their futures together. The final courtship ritual that marked their exit from the youth culture, the wedding, was also a notorious site of heavy drinking and conviviality. The life-changing decisions young men and women made during courtship took place amid a seemingly endless round of drinking, parties, and dancing.

Contemporaries marked off the culture of youth from the culture of childhood and adulthood because it entailed specific jobs. Contemporaries expected young people to gain their independence from their parents’ household, yet they did not saddle young people with the responsibilities of

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<sup>687</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 111; and Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), uses the term “youth culture.”

<sup>688</sup> John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages 1600 to the Present* (Oxford, 1985), p. 11.

running their own households. They expected most early modern youth to find a way of becoming independent by learning a trade, husbandry, or housewifery. Attached to this idea of independence was the stipulation that a married couple constituted the base of a proper household. Men who never married might still enter full adulthood, but women who never married remained perpetual legal and economic adolescents. Once a man and woman married, their economic and political functions in the community changed. Men came into their full political rights and gained control over the economic output of their households. Women became *femme covertes*, and their political and economic rights subsided into their husband's rights. When the political and financial roles of both parties changed, so too did their social obligations and behaviour. However, until that time, young men and women followed a set of social rules unique to their stage in life.

Early modern youth had a dynamic and widespread culture. Several historians have detailed the unique experiences of youth. In For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present, John R. Gillis points out that the majority of youth, excluding the very rich and the very poor, left their parents' household to become servants or apprentices. He estimates some 15 percent of the population at any one time were servants.<sup>689</sup> Most of the young women who left home did so to find work as domestic servants. Service cut young men and women off from parental authority and allowed them the leeway to form their own individual relationships and a collective culture of youth. Paul Griffiths in Youth and Authority: Formative

Experiences in England 1560-1640 claims that young men and women found “ample time and space to meet, talk, play, jest, flirt, and fall in love at alehouses, dances, revels, wakes, hiring fairs, church, fields, greens, and other open spaces.”<sup>690</sup> Peter Clark in The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830 also believes that servants and young people in general were “one of the largest groups of drinkers.” He points out that contemporary moralists complained about young people spending too much time at the alehouse.<sup>691</sup> A large part of courtship activities consisted of drinking in mixed company at alehouses, festivals, and events such as hiring fairs and haymaking. The mobility of service allowed young people opportunities they would no longer have when they had their own household. At the same time the diminished responsibilities and lack of private space associated with living under another householder’s roof pushed young people onto the greens and into the alehouses to socialise in their spare time. Though they were away from their masters and parents, young people were still under the public scrutiny of their friends and the wider community. Youth culture was not without its own set of social rules and behaviour patterns.

Courtship and marriage were public events conducted and negotiated through loosely scripted rules and rituals rich in local variances. In Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage Richard Adair plotted the wide path of courting couples arranging their first marriage.<sup>692</sup> In the initial stages young

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<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>690</sup> Griffiths, Youth and Authority, p. 258.

<sup>691</sup> Peter Clark, The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830 (London, 1983), p. 127.

<sup>692</sup> Richard Adair, Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England (Manchester, 1996), pp. 129-187. Most historians agree with the patterns Adair describes.

men and women had several courting partners whom they arranged themselves. For instance, the Lancashire apprentice Roger Lowe took Jane Wright out for a night in the alehouse in 1663 and considered himself “in a very fair way for pleasing [his] carnell selfe, for [he] knew [him] selfe exceptable with Emm Potter, notwithstanding [his] love was entire to Mary Naylor.”<sup>693</sup> He was in different stages of courtship with three girls. At least one of these girls, Emm Potter, was also frequenting the alehouse with another suitor.<sup>694</sup> As young people settled on a single partner, their community of friends, relatives, and other advisers afforded them a larger degree of freedom. Most couples felt parental and community consent was important but recognised it was not binding. At some point the couple either pledged their intent to marry or declared themselves married in the present tense. This promise, called a spousal, handfasting, or some local variant, was legally binding in public or private. However, since public declarations provided reliable witnesses, in practice, spousals before witnesses were normal. The largely unscripted ceremony often sealed the bargain the couple made with a toast or a drink from the same cup.<sup>695</sup> Traditionally, couples could have sex after a spousal. Chaperoning decreased as it became more apparent the couple would marry. The couple called the banns in church, and while a church wedding was not essential, it often finalised the marriage. Throughout the courtship process young people took the opportunity to secure their relationships by publicly

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<sup>693</sup> Roger Lowe, The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-74, William L. Sachse, ed., (New Haven, 1938), p. 45, 13 November 1663.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68, 8 August 1664.

<sup>695</sup> Laura Gowing, Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London (Oxford, 1996), p. 143.

celebrating their move towards marriage. Gillis claims that the courtship process and the traditional ceremonies constituted the real marriage. The church ceremony was not the defining event.<sup>696</sup> The courtship process was public and often took place among friends over drinks. While public drinking did not define any one event, it facilitated the process of courtship. Alcohol sealed bargains, publicly displayed intimacy, and afforded young people an opportunity to negotiate their futures.

Couples varied the details of their courtship according to their status, financial abilities, local customs, and personal preferences. Laura Gowing's research on consistory court suits over breaches of marriage contracts suggests that even contemporaries had different understandings and expectations of courtship rituals and events. The fact that couples sued each other over the breach of a marriage contract reveals that they were not always sure what constituted a binding commitment.<sup>697</sup> Proper courtship behaviour varied perhaps even more than proper courtship procedures. The drinking behaviour of couples depicted in this chapter was only one set of acceptable models of behaviour. Generally, the growing upper middle class and the aristocratic class recorded less time drinking together in unsupervised public venues, but these couples were always a minority of the population. However couples decided to announce the various stages of their move towards marriage, all the records clearly point to the overall importance of doing so publicly. An overwhelming number of them incorporated drinking into each stage of the various public stages of

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<sup>696</sup> Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>697</sup> Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 20.

courtship. For most young apprentices and domestic servants courting culture was very much an active drinking culture. The most substantial decisions in a young person's life seemed to take place over an endless round of drinks.

Courtship was a time when a woman's sexual "property" was negotiable. It belonged to her father or master, but she was arranging its transfer to another man. The point of transaction was not always at the church door. As many as one third of English brides went to the altar pregnant.<sup>698</sup> Negotiating any kind of property transfer required contracts sealed with token gifts or promises. Courtship was no exception with the transfer of rings, coins, or fairings from young men to young women.<sup>699</sup> Alcohol also traditionally signified the sealing of a contract, particularly an emotional one. Drinking with someone signified consent to a proposed relationship whether it was a business transaction, friendship, or courtship. Alcohol indicated agreement with the proposed terms of a contract of any sort. This common principle applied to courtship meant a young woman accepted a man as her suitor if she drank with him. Gillis notes that young people used a "token" drink or other small gift to signify the beginning of courtship.<sup>700</sup> Lowe bought drinks for several of the girls he courted.<sup>701</sup> William Lloyd sent wine to the chamber of Jane Salisbury to further his prospects with her. When their courtship broke down and ended up before

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<sup>698</sup> G. R. Quaipe, Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England (London, 1979), p. 57.

<sup>699</sup> David Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England (Oxford, 1997), pp. 263-4.

<sup>700</sup> Gillis, For Better, For Worse, p.29.

<sup>701</sup> Lowe, The Diary of Roger Lowe, p. 23, 5 July 1663, p. 41, 19 October 1663, p. 45, 13 November 1663, p. 68, 8 August 1664, p. 79, 15 January 1665, p. 97, 3 February 1666.



the church courts in 1574, Salisbury pointed out the gift of wine was not evidence of a binding contract because she sent him “10 shillings in golde” to pay for it.<sup>702</sup> Accepting alcohol as a gift meant accepting the man who purchased it as a suitor.

Drinking in mixed company was fraught with moral dangers for young women. David Underdown claims in Fire From Heaven Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century that any young person out drinking was a potential threat to patriarchal authority.<sup>703</sup> Authorities potentially viewed youthful drunkenness as a symptom of inappropriate independence from rightful adult governors, as happened in 1630 to Mary Savage; the magistrate stocked her for drunkenness before ordering her into service.<sup>704</sup> The courts linked her drinking to her independence from patriarchal authority. Social conventions regulated the drinking practices of young women more so than those of young men. Writing about Puritan Somerset, G. R. Quaife argues that, “single girls who made a habit of drinking hard and long at disreputable tippling houses and in dubious company were rare and their fate considered a just reward for their behaviour by both villagers and the authorities.”<sup>705</sup> Single girls could drink in public, but the key to their reputations was the “dubious company” they kept. When Clark listed the occasions on which a woman might go to the alehouse, the only acceptable occasion for a young unmarried woman was in the company of a man who courted her and even then often with other

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<sup>702</sup> Gowing, Domestic Dangers, p. 161.

<sup>703</sup> David Underdown, Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century (New Haven, 1992), p. 79.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>705</sup> Quaife, Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives, p. 239.

couples.<sup>706</sup> She needed to place herself into the context of patriarchal authority and under some man in order for the community to accept her public drinking. If she did not do so, she risked her reputation. Men in the alehouse might take her for a prostitute, or they might sexually assault her. Single women in the company of suitors were looking for sex. What set accompanied single women apart from other women was the assumption that they were looking for sex within marriage. They entered male drinking spaces looking for the only legitimate form of sex available to women.

### **Courtship and Drinking in Literature**

Young people were well aware of the seriousness of courtship and the implications their decisions had on the rest of their lives. Marriage meant the start of a new economic, political, and social relationship with their whole community.<sup>707</sup> Ballads and pamphlets surrounded young men and women and provided them with courtship advice. For example, both The Young Man's Counsellor and its answer Direction for Damosels advised young men and women on what qualities to look for in a partner. Ostensibly, the author shaped his advice on hair colour, but in reality he provided a list of qualities to avoid. He advised men to avoid women who were flirtatious, vain, scolds, jealous, heavy drinkers, violent, or physically unattractive.<sup>708</sup> He advised women to avoid men who were demanding, lazy, drunkards, liars, unfaithful, jealous, or physically unattractive.<sup>709</sup>

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<sup>706</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, p. 131.

<sup>707</sup> Gillis, For Better, For Worse, p. 11.

<sup>708</sup> "The Young Man's Counsellor," in William Chappell and J. W. Ebsworth, eds., The Roxburghe Ballads (1869-95; reissued 1966), IV, pp. 66-9.

<sup>709</sup> "Directions for Damosels," in Roxburghe Ballads, IV, pp. 70-3.

Other ballads such as The Batchelor's Feast warned against marrying at all unless a man could "chuse a loving wife."<sup>710</sup> Still others were more cautious about marriage. The ballad The Country Lasses Good Counsel To All Her Fellow-Maids warned young women,

At fairs when young-men and maids they do meet,  
There is nothing but courting and kissing so sweet  
They take you to the tavern & feast you with cakes & wine  
But when you are married, [Aye] then you starve and pine.<sup>711</sup>

Audiences read or heard most of these works as warnings about what to avoid in a partner and the negative consequences of hasty decisions about sex and commitment. Popular authors and preachers also provided serious discourses on how to choose a partner in such works as Miles Coverdale's The Christen State of Matrymonye, Wherein Housebands and Wyves Maye Lerne to Kepe House Together Wyth Loue (1552), William Bradshaw's sermon A Marriage Feast. A Sermon On the Former Part of the Second Chapter of the Evangelist John (1620), and Alexander Niccholes' A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving (1620).<sup>712</sup> These works and many like them provided practical and religious advice on courtship conduct and expectations as well as advice on the proper conduct of newlyweds.

Contemporary youth recorded in their diaries their concern with proper courtship behaviour and how to find a suitable partner. Their diaries indicated that they felt pressure to find a suitable partner. For instance,

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<sup>710</sup> "The Batchelor's Feast," in Roxburghe Ballads, V. I, p. 66.

<sup>711</sup> "The Country Lasses Good Counsel To All Her Fellow-Maids," in W. G. Day, ed., The Pepys Ballads: Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge (Cambridge, 1987), IV, p. 539.

<sup>712</sup> Miles Coverdale, The Christen State of Matrymonye, Wherein Housebands and Wyves Maye Lerne to Kepe House Together Wyth Loue (London, 1552); William Bradshaw, A Marriage Feast. A Sermon On the Former Part of the Second Chapter of the Evangelist John (London, 1620); and Alexander Niccholes, "A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving," in Lloyd Davis, ed.,

Roger Lowe went to an alehouse with a male friend in 1663 to drink and talk about “how to gett wives.”<sup>713</sup> Young men were concerned about their prospects as marriage partners and they sought out advice. In 1716 Dudley Ryder likewise confided in more than one friend and in his diary his desire to be married. Ryder explained that he found “a strong inclination towards [marriage], not from any principle of lust or desire to enjoy a woman in bed, but from a natural tendency, a prepossession in favour of the married state.”<sup>714</sup> Young men took courtship and marriage seriously. Leonard Wheatcroft, a Derbyshire yeoman, felt the events leading up to his marriage were important enough to record in his diary.<sup>715</sup> Unfortunately, no young woman’s diary recording her thoughts on courtship has yet surfaced. However, Gowing’s work has demonstrated that young women took courtship seriously enough to sue their suitors in ecclesiastical courts over broken promises, and not always due to an impending birth.<sup>716</sup> That the magistrates enforced private emotional contracts suggests that the community at large recognised courtship as serious business. Young people were well aware of the consequences of their words and actions. They sought advice from friends and historians have every reason to believe they also took into consideration the advice available in the popular literature surrounding them.

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Sexuality and Gender in The English Renaissance: An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents (New York, 1998), pp. 213-230.

<sup>713</sup> Lowe, The Diary of Roger Lowe, p. 37, 8 October 1663.

<sup>714</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, ed., English Family Life, 1576-1716: An Anthology From Diaries (Oxford, 1988), p. 47.

<sup>715</sup> Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 371.

<sup>716</sup> Gowing, Domestic Dangers, p. 139.

Drinking behaviour during courtship went largely unrecorded in diaries, letters, and court records. However, historians know a great deal of drinking took place because court records, diaries, and occasional correspondence mentioned it in passing, but the drinking behaviour itself was rarely described. Most of the material on courtship and weddings available to historians concerned elite weddings. The more money a family had, the less likely they were to allow young lovers to take risks during courtship by staying out late, drinking, and dancing in unsupervised groups of young men and women. The drinking bouts that characterised the courtship of servants, artisans, and day labourers (who made up most of the population) were not available to the daughters or sons of the well-to-do. Ballads and pamphlets that describe heavy drinking and unsupervised socialising do not discuss the hallmark of elite unions – the marriage portion. Court records provide only limited information on non-elite drinking patterns. They located people in alehouses or mention local festivities, but they contained little about who drank what and how it affected people. Furthermore, most of the records detailing drinking violations concern men, not women. Diaries and letters also provided limited information. Lowe's diary is perhaps the best record detailing the drinking and courtship that occurred in the daily flow of his life as an apprentice. However, he often detailed his drinking simply by recording a list of companions and how much he spent. On occasion he noted that he and his company were "very merry" or that he was sick after a night at the alehouse.<sup>717</sup> No other young courting people regularly catalogued their

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<sup>717</sup> Lowe, *The Diary of Roger Lowe*, p. 56, 22 March 1664, *passim*.

drinking behaviour. More diarists mentioned festivities associated with courtship and marriage, but again rarely with much detail. Ralph Houlbrooke, in editing early modern diaries for his book English Family Life, 1576-1716, claimed that, “the best accounts of nuptial festivities are not to be found in diaries.”<sup>718</sup> Historians are faced with concrete evidence that young people drank together but without sufficient descriptions of real events to illuminate the drinking patterns of youth.

Popular literature, on the other hand, concerned itself with the drinking patterns of young men and women. Because men wrote most, if not all, of the literature, it does not directly reveal how women responded to the stereotyped drinking patterns men described. Advice and conduct literature recommended that young women avoid drinking socially in mixed company. Plays concerning courtship also tended to follow this advice with young virtuous virgins pouring scorn on drinking and drinking establishments. In contrast, ballads and pamphlets portrayed working women drinking freely with their suitors at fairs, wakes, alehouses, and other public places. Ballads and pamphlets described the attitudes towards drinking that young women learned to expect from the wider community. They learned what was acceptable through what they read or heard. The literature, particularly the literature describing wedding plans, described what was desired rather than what was possible. As such, it reveals more about acceptable standards of behaviour than true behaviour. In other words, the literature reveals what people wanted and expected rather than what they did.

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<sup>718</sup> Houlbrooke, ed., English Family Life, p. 17.

Several works of literature include drinking behaviour in their general descriptions of courtship. Ballads in particular were more accessible to young women. Peddlers and ballad mongers often sold their wares at fairs, in markets, and at alehouses where young women congregated. They were affordable even to servants. Women who could not read or afford ballads could still listen as ballad mongers sang out their wares. Ballads crossed over into oral culture, which was the form of communication most accessible to the largely illiterate and poor class of servants.<sup>719</sup> At a certain level ballads were the practical proscriptive literature of courting youth. Many songs included an explicit “warning” to young men or women about the tricks and rules of courtship. Ballads in particular provided snapshots of courtship drinking. On the one hand, ballads such as A Ditty Delightful of Mother Watkens Ale ostensibly warned young women that drinking with a suitor could lead to sex.<sup>720</sup> On the other hand, ballads such as The Milkmaid’s Resolution warned young men that many girls would allow men to buy them “bottles of Ale, and other fine things” without falling into the same trap.<sup>721</sup> Still other ballads such as The West Country Jigg portrayed large groups of couples dancing, drinking, and pairing off without any hint of deceptions.<sup>722</sup> Ballads treated the effects of alcohol in courtship

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<sup>719</sup> For a discussion on the availability and appeal of ballads see David Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England (London, 1980), p. 14; and Joy Wiltenburg, Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany (Charlottesville, VA, 1992), pp. 40-1.

<sup>720</sup> “A Ditty Delightful of Mother Watkens Ale,” in Joseph Lilly, ed., A Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides; Printed in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, Between the Years 1559 and 1597 (London, 1867), pp. 254-5.

<sup>721</sup> “The Milkmaid’s Resolution,” in Roxburghe Ballads, VI, pp.529-31

<sup>722</sup> “The West-Country Jigg,” in Roxburghe Ballads, VII, pp.343-4.

extensively and provided a wide variety of reactions to the drinking practices of courting couples.

Pamphlets and plays also provided cohesive descriptions of drinking in courtship. The black letter pamphlet A Pleasant Dialogue Betwixt Honest John and Loving Kate. The Contrivance of Their Marriage and Way How to Live (1685) provided an instructive example of how to behave during courtship and what to expect at a wedding.<sup>723</sup> The couple met at the alehouse to discuss their wedding plans over a few drinks. Neither mentioned parental involvement nor a marriage portion, and both were currently in service. The author depicted them as a typical courting couple successfully arranging and providing for their marriage. The couple planned an appropriate celebration by ensuring they had enough ale for the ceremonial feast.<sup>724</sup> Thomas D'Urfey provided a less bucolic and ideal description of courtship in his play The Richmond Heiress; Or, a Woman Once in the Right (1693). Sophronia, the courted virgin, complained of play houses:

Fogh! how many fine things are said there, perfum'd with the Air of sour Claret! Which the well-bred Nymph as odoriferously returns in the scent of Lambeth-Ale and *Aqua-vitae*. . . . [After the play house] the supper coming in, the Glasses go about briskly. The Fools think the Wenches heavenly Company, and they tell them they are extream fine Gentlemen; 'till at last few Words are best; the Bargain's made, the Pox is cheaply purchas'd at the price of a Guinea, and no repentance on neither side.<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> A Pleasant Dialogue Betwixt Honest John and Loving Kate. The Contrivance of Their Marriage and Way How to Live (London, 1685).

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>725</sup> Thomas D'Urfey, The Richmond Heiress; Or, a Woman Once in the Right (London, 1693), p. 14.



Courtship took place over rounds of drinks until both parties were drunk, and the reckoning paid for the ensuing sex. Whether portrayed positively or negatively in rural or urban settings, courting culture was drinking culture.

### **When, What, and Where Young People Drank**

Young people favoured fairs, wakes, and holy days as occasions for both heavy drinking and courtship. Quaife's research into Somerset demonstrates that in a third of bastardy cases before the courts the young women claimed their lovers first seduced them on a holiday. Of those, 17.2 percent claimed it took place at Christmas, 13 percent each claimed the Midsummer and Whitsun holidays as dates and 5.7 percent of women claimed it happened on May Day.<sup>726</sup> They could have been lying, but if so, then they expected sympathy from magistrates if they told a story of socially acceptable holiday merrymaking followed by a suitor's seduction. Youth culture seems to have had its own traditions on holidays: young women carried the wassail bowls at Christmas time from house to house caroling and providing drink in exchange for donations; courting couples dominated May Day festivities; and Halloween was traditionally the night on which lovers used various methods, some involving drink, to predict whom they would marry.<sup>727</sup> Contemporaries popularly associated all of these holidays with youth, drinking, and drunkenness.

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<sup>726</sup> Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, p. 84.

<sup>727</sup> Peter Brears, "Wassail! Celebrations in Hot Ale," in C. Anne Wilson, ed., "Liquid Nourishment" *Potable Foods and Stimulating Drinks* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 111-12; Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, p. 84; Charles Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550," Peter Clark and Paul Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns* p.66; and Brears, "Wassail! Celebrations in Hot Ale," pp. 124-5.

Strong drink was an important part of winter festivities. William Harrison pointed out in his Description of England (1587) that the more refined householders drank strong malmsey, bastard, or muscatel wines to help them digest their heavy Christmas dinners. Those who could afford neither wine nor fine food drank beer which “at that season is generally very strong, and stronger indeed than in all the year beside.”<sup>728</sup> Young people spent the winter holidays drinking and eating with their friends and community. They might have spent the evenings in private homes with neighbours and friends, as did Samuel Pepys’ servants. He gave them 12d. to have a party on Twelfth Night in 1661.<sup>729</sup> Alternatively, they could have joined more public festivities like the woman and girl who sang to Pepys in an alehouse with a wassail bowl full of drink in December of 1661.<sup>730</sup> The Shuttleworth accounts also recorded a visit by “maides which came with the wassel-boule” in 1608.<sup>731</sup> The carols they sang were probably similar, if not identical, to ones sung and written down in later centuries. The songs referred to young women not only selling the drink in their wassail bowls but also drinking it themselves.<sup>732</sup> The Christmas season was a time to drink, and any excuse would do.

Several holidays in the warmer months gave young people ample opportunities to dance, drink, and socialise. In the popular imagination serious courting couples consummated their relationship during the May Day festivities when young people were out all night gathering rushes for

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<sup>728</sup> William Harrison, The Description of England, Georges Edelen, ed. (Ithaca, 1968), p. 313.

<sup>729</sup> Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A New and Complete Transcription, Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds. (London, 1983), II, pp. 7-8, 6 January 1661.

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 239, 26 December 1661.

<sup>731</sup> Brears, “Wassail! Celebrations in Hot Ale,” p. 112.

the day's festivities.<sup>733</sup> May Day was also a general occasion to drink. The diarist Henry Machyn recorded the May Day celebrations in London in 1562. He described how the Mayers erected a may pole, and then "they mad grett chere" with several barrels of fish to eat and "grett plenty of wyne, that yt came to viijl."<sup>734</sup> The amount of food and wine available to the young Mayers impressed him. William Schellinks' journal recorded his enjoyment of the Midsummer festivities in Kensington in 1662. At the White Hart Inn he found

an enormous crowd of people from all the towns around, and the inns, taverns, dives and pubs were so full of all kind of populace that it crawled. And because of the stifling heat a great deal of wine and beer was consumed under musical accompaniment, of which we got a turn near us during our meal, that is to say, a dance by two couples of country folk. Many nicely dressed up country women and girls too were prettily dancing English country dances.<sup>735</sup>

Both Machyn and Schellinks pointed out the participation of young women in the festivities. Lowe also mentioned the role of alcohol and courtship in local festivities. In August of 1664 while courting Emm Potter, Lowe found her at two community celebrations. At Ashton wake he looked for her at Tankerfields, the local alehouse, where she was drinking with another suitor. He waited for her and then persuaded her to stay and drink with him.<sup>736</sup> Later in the month Lowe took the opportunity to talk and drink with Potter while they participated in a funeral procession.<sup>737</sup> Lowe did not meet Potter at local celebrations by chance. He sought her and expected her to

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<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>733</sup> Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, p. 84.

<sup>734</sup> Henry Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, From A. D. 1550 To A. D. 1563*, John Gough Nichols, ed. (London, 1848), p. 283, 25 May 1562.

<sup>735</sup> William Schellinks, *The Journal of William Schellinks' Travels in England 1661-1663*, Maurice Exwood and H. L. Lehmann, trans. and eds. (London, 1993), p. 94, 4 July 1662.

<sup>736</sup> Lowe, *The Diary of Roger Lowe*, p. 68, 8 August 1664.

drink with him. Courting partners were drinking partners for the various community celebrations that both young men and women attended.

Public drinking establishments were also important venues for courting couples. Couples in alehouses and taverns could have their privacy and yet be in public enough to safeguard their sexual reputations. One way of doing so was to avoid, as the puritan John Brinsley the elder put it in 1611, “private company of man and woman together, [even if] otherwise both honest and intending no euill.”<sup>738</sup> However, young couples needed enough privacy to negotiate their courtship. For those couples not yet intimate enough for night-time visiting, alehouses and taverns were ideal locations. Clark proposes that young people in general might have congregated in alehouses and taverns to avoid

the severe restrictions on personal behaviour and living space in their home households, restrictions which may have increased as a result of the diffusion of Puritan attitudes among the urban and rural well-to-do from the late sixteenth century.<sup>739</sup>

Many establishments had private rooms, booths, or simply corners where couples could talk (and sometimes more) in private, yet they were never completely out of range of witnesses to their behaviour. For example, Lowe indicated that Tankerfields had private chambers. However, they were not so private that Lowe did not know Emm Potter, the object of his affection, was in the next chamber with another man one afternoon in 1664.<sup>740</sup> Much of Lowe’s courting took place in alehouses. He recorded at least ten occasions on which he took young women to the alehouse to drink with

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70, 22 August 1664.

<sup>738</sup> Adair, *Courthship, Illegitimacy and Marriage*, p. 130.

<sup>739</sup> Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 127.

<sup>740</sup> Lowe, *The Diary of Roger Lowe*, p. 68, 8 August 1664.

him.<sup>741</sup> Lowe never implied that he or his friends did anything untoward at the alehouse, but court records indicate not all youth were so well mannered. Christopher Guise confessed to wasting his time as a student at Oxford in drinking and courting women in alehouses.<sup>742</sup> Another apprentice, Robert Cowell, revealed to a friend that he had “the use of . . . Anne Kitchen’s bodie,” with whom he had just been drinking at a London alehouse.<sup>743</sup> Away from the prying eyes of parents and masters, couples could negotiate the terms of their courtship with a degree of independence.

### **How They Drank**

Young men and women did not take their decisions about sex lightly, and yet the literature portrayed couples as making these decisions over a seemingly endless round of drinks. Popular literature portrayed alcohol as crucial to courtship, and the drinking practices of young women during courtship were similar to those of any other hard-drinking group; they drank frequently, they drank until they were drunk, they went to drinking establishments in the company of others, and they often had sex as a result of their intoxication. Authors charged popular literature with moral values dividing the drinking behaviour of successful courting women who attempted to end their courtship in a happy marriage and unsuccessful woman who did not. On the one hand, successful women managed to handle their alcohol socially; they might have been physically sick, but they

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<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16, 17 March 1663, p. 23, 5 May 1663, p. 25, 16 July 1663, p. 26, 9 August 1663, p. 41, 19 October 1663, p. 45, 13 November 1663, p. 68, 8 August 1664, p. 75, 3 November 1664, p. 79, 15 January 1665, p. 97, 3 February 1666.

<sup>742</sup> Stephen Porter, “University and Society,” in Nicholas Tyacke, ed., The History of the University of Oxford (Oxford, 1997), p. 73.

did not mar their reputations when they drank. On the other hand, unsuccessful women destroyed their reputations through drinking and the illicit sex that often followed. The stereotypes in the literature reveal what men expected in a potential wife and how they treated women who failed to measure up to their expectations.

Drinking with a suitor conveyed affection and intimacy, and so successful courtship began with frequent drinking. In the ballad The Milke-Maids Life Martin Parker portrayed the idyllic courting behaviour of the young women in the countryside. He stated,

If they any sweet-hearts have,  
                   that doe their affection crave,  
   . . .  
 With them they may walke,  
 And pleasantly talke  
                   with a bottle of Wine or Ale.<sup>744</sup>

Several other ballads also referred to young men buying ale and cakes for their sweethearts.<sup>745</sup> “Cakes and ale” were tokens of affection. Even published examples of letter writing contained such common elements of courtship. One young man wrote, “upon Friday, Ile meete you at the market, where we wil haue a cake and a pot,” and his girlfriend answered, “Ile meete you . . . to relish a cup of Ale.”<sup>746</sup> A Pleasant Dialogue Betwixt Honest John and Loving Kate told the story of a young man’s proposal to his sweetheart. He took her to the alehouse where they discussed their

<sup>743</sup> Griffiths, Youth and Authority, p. 242.

<sup>744</sup> Martin Parker, “The Milke-Maids Life,” in Roxburghe Ballads, II, p.434.

<sup>745</sup> “Sack for My Money,” in Roxburghe Ballads, VI, p.322, “The Unconscionable Batchelors of Darby,” in Roxburghe Ballads, VII, p.225, “The Scotch Wooing,” in Roxburghe Ballads, VII, p.305, “The Bony Bryer,” in Roxburghe Ballads, VII, p.167; and “The Country Lasses Good Counsel to All Her Fellow Maids” The Pepys Ballads, IV, p.539.

<sup>746</sup> Nicholas Breton, A Poste with a Packet of Madde Letters: the first part (London, 1605), p. G2.

wedding plans. The reckoning included “three Cakes and four Pots of Ale, and two Pipes of Tobacco” between the two of them.<sup>747</sup> Courtship largely took place over a bottle of ale. The author of the ballad Sack For My Money claimed men bought cakes and ale as presents to “please a Maid that is decay’d,/ and make a Body lusty.”<sup>748</sup> Peter Clark details the role the alehouse played in courtship as a location, but he does not expand on what attracted the majority of couples. Couples engaged in legitimate courtship were not always “escaping” to the alehouse.<sup>749</sup> Popular literature revealed that these couples went to the alehouse not so much to “get away” as to get some ale.

Authors took full advantage of the positive imagery of a festival in portraying courtship. This was a time to drink large amounts of alcohol in mixed company. Young women drank and behaved as riotously as their male counterparts. One group of girls in the ballad Sweet Williams Kindnes

Drank full hard it doth appear,  
Yea 16 quarts, of 3 penny Beer.<sup>750</sup>

Given that the cost of beer rose with the alcoholic strength, three penny beer was quite strong.<sup>751</sup> Another group in The Jovial May-Pole Dancers drank and ate until “the Women were sick.”<sup>752</sup> Yet while they abused the nourishing role of alcohol, the ballad did not accuse them of abusing its

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<sup>747</sup> A Pleasant Dialogue Betwixt Honest John and loving Kate, p. 22.

<sup>748</sup> “Sack for my Money,” in Roxburghe Ballads, VI, p.322.

<sup>749</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, pp.148-151.

<sup>750</sup> “Sweet Williams Kindnes, or, The Hertford-Shire Frolick,” in English Ballads, British Library, p. 79.

<sup>751</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>752</sup> “The Jovial May-Pole Dancers: or, The Merry Morris,” in English Ballads, p. 128.

social functions. Suitors commended young women on their drinking efforts, as the author of the ballad Hey Ho Hunt About pointed out,

And thus the brave Lasses,  
Did tittle up the glasses,  
Their sweet hearts being in company then  
To sweeten their wine,  
With kisses most fine.<sup>753</sup>

The young men rewarded these women for their drinking efforts with small sexual favours. Not just in the quantity but in the quality of their drunkenness young men and women often stood on equal ground. As the author of Roaring Dick of Dover put it,

They are Lads and honest Lasses  
that to each other are kind  
They'l sing & roare, break pots and glasses,  
when their heads are tipt with wine.<sup>754</sup>

Women could drink all day in mixed company without marring their sexual reputations if their companions deemed their courtship behaviour as honest; the amount they drank was inconsequential.

Authors considered the behaviour of young men and women honest when they specifically drank in groups associated with successful courtship aimed at marriage. Several ballads such as The Winchester Wedding and The Easter Wedding placed young courting couples at weddings.<sup>755</sup> If not a wedding, then authors had other devices to link the large parties of heavily drinking couples to legitimate courtship. One group got so drunk the ballad concluded with a few of the couples marrying on the spot.<sup>756</sup> Another author identified a rowdy group of young couples with May Day

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<sup>753</sup> "Hey Ho Hunt About," in English Ballads, p. 50.

<sup>754</sup> "Roaring Dick of Douer," in The Pepys Ballads, I, pp. 434-5.

<sup>755</sup> "The Winchester Wedding," in W. G. Day, ed., The Pepys Ballads, IV, p. 532; and "The Easter Wedding," in Roxburghe Ballads, VII, p. 457.



festivities.<sup>757</sup> Authors went to great lengths to demonstrate that these were not occasions of sin. When they did not locate the couples within a legitimate festival associated with courtship, they pointed out, “no harm was thought spoken or ment,” and “a good Bottel full then will do them no harm.”<sup>758</sup> The common theme was an emphasis on proper courting conduct in an idealised setting. The preface of one ballad outlined expected behaviour:

A pretty merry meeting of young men and Maids,  
 Who went to the Tavern by Cupids strong aids,  
 They drank and were merry and sang a new Song,  
 They talkt and discours'd but did no body wrong,  
 They kindly imbrac'd, and each other did kiss,  
 You know there could be no great harm in this.<sup>759</sup>

The song then continued to detail the massive amount of alcohol drunk and not much else. Rather than condoning drunkenness, the literature marked these courtship parties as legitimate occasions of festive drunkenness and harmless fun.

Many of these portrayals of drinking during courtship simply illuminated the male fantasy that men could overcome their girlfriend's objections to premarital sex through a combination of alcohol and persuasion. These stories professed to be warnings by young unmarried women about men who tried to trick them out of their prized chastity. The most common method of seduction invariably involved alcohol. Young men plied women with drink to help them disregard their caution against premarital sex. After a suitor took her to the tavern where she “drank

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<sup>756</sup> “The West-Country Jigg,” in *Roxburghe Ballads*, VII, pp.343-4.

<sup>757</sup> The Jovial May-Pole Dancers: or, The Merry Morris,” in *English Ballads*, p. 128.

<sup>758</sup> “Hey Ho Hunt About,” in *English Ballads*, p.50; and “A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottel,” in *Roxburghe Ballads*, VI, p.472.

brimmers of the best," one young woman in The Bashfull Maidens No, No, No Turned to I, I, I got so drunk she finally consented to sex.<sup>760</sup> In A Ditty delightful of mother Watkins Ale the young woman told how her suitor promised her a taste of Watkins Ale. The ale was not all alcohol because she became pregnant as a result.<sup>761</sup> The moral ran:

For women will refuse  
the thing that they would chuse,  
Cause men should them excuse  
Of thinking ill.<sup>762</sup>

In other words, women really did want to have sex; they just did not want to mar their reputations. Some ballads ventured so far into the realms of male fantasy they were ridiculous. In The Winchester Wedding, everyone got drunk and had sex at the wedding.<sup>763</sup> In Sweet Williams Kindnes William had sex with a new girl in each stanza, all at the same drinking party.<sup>764</sup> In the context of the ballads the couples' orgiastic behaviour bore no ill consequences for the girls' reputations even if it did swell their bellies. Clearly, the message was that young women would not only be easier to seduce when they drank too much, but they would not regret their decisions to have sex on more sober reflection. If the young women expressed regret in these ballads, it was because they became pregnant, not because they did not enjoy the sex. Furthermore, authors did not refer to these unchaste women as prostitutes or habitually loose women. Even though society in

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<sup>759</sup> "Hey Ho Hunt About," in English Ballads, p.50.

<sup>760</sup> "The Bashfull-Maidens No, No, No Turn'd to I, I, I," in The Pepys Ballads, III, p.103.

<sup>761</sup> "A Ditty Delightful of Mother Watkins Ale," in Lilly, ed., A Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides, pp. 251-55.

<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254-55.

<sup>763</sup> "The Winchester Wedding," in W. G. Day, ed., The Pepys Ballads, IV, p. 532

<sup>764</sup> "Sweet Williams Kindnes, or, The Hertford-Shire Frolick," in English Ballads, p. 79.

general might not agree, a large number of ballads allowed young single women sexual license.

### **The Last Courtship Ritual -- The Wedding**

The wedding marked the last courtship ritual and the end of youth culture for the couple as much as it did the beginning of adulthood and marriage. In many ways it was also the last big drinking bout where young men and women followed courtship drinking patterns. They drank in mixed company, danced, and at least one couple retired to bed together at the end of the night. Weddings also attracted the attention of the entire community. They were both serious and convivial events. As such, authors described them in sermons, pamphlets, plays, and ballads. Diarists recorded them, and sometimes events got out of hand and led to court cases. Weddings were the courtship rituals with the best documentation. The comments and descriptions concerning the traditional festivities at weddings revealed the central role of communal drinking involving young men and women.

Preachers and moralists expected drinking at wedding feasts. They did not object to “good cheer,” but many of them felt their contemporaries used wedding feasts as an excuse for excessive alcohol consumption and general debauchery. In The Christen State of Matrymony Miles Coverdale complained that the wedding party began drinking early in the morning, “and wha[n] they come to the preaching they are halfe dro[n]ke, some altogether, therefore regard they nether the preaching nor prayer, but stande ther only because of [the] custome.” Furthermore, after the party left the church they feasted, drank, and danced again. He complained that, “as for

supper, loke how much shamelesse, and dronke[n], the euenynge is more then the mornynge.”<sup>765</sup> Coverdale did not object to “honest mirthe” but “unte[m]perate & unmeasurable mirthe.”<sup>766</sup> Seventy years later the Jacobean puritan, William Gouge, echoed Coverdale’s sentiments. Gouge objected to “gluttony and drunkenness” rather than customary rituals, feasting, and drinking.<sup>767</sup> Puritan detractors expressed their concern that the drinking and secular festivities overshadowed the religious commitment of the wedding ceremony. From all accounts they were often right. Weddings seem to have been secular eating and drinking celebrations, which the church invaded and eventually took over.

A few moralists were clear on exactly what kinds of drinking practices they felt were out of place at weddings. William Bradshaw provided a warning against excess in his sermon A Marriage Feast (1620) that, “youth, and wine, and mirth, and other delights, are pleasing and enticing objects, and cary the wisest oft unawares further then Religion well warranteth.”<sup>768</sup> Particularly he objected to

the brutish and swinish disposition of those that thinke there is no true welcome, nor good fellowship, as they tearme it, vnlesse there be deepe carousing and drinking of healths to Bride and Bridegroom, and euery idle fellowes Mistris, till the whole companies wits be so drownd in drinke, that not religion onely, but reason it selfe is vtterly exiled, and the meeting may well seeme to be rather a drunken match then a Mariage Feast.<sup>769</sup>

Even non-puritan commentators like Matthew Griffith warned that though it was “lawfull to feast, and make merry, and weare good clothes: & c. . . .

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<sup>765</sup> Coverdale, The Christen State of Matrymonye, ff. 56-57<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 58<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>767</sup> Cited in Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 353.

<sup>768</sup> Bradshaw, A Marriage Feast, plate E2<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, plate E2<sup>2</sup>- E2<sup>3</sup>.

under this cloake, and colour, come Riot, Luxury, and Pride, staulking into the world.”<sup>770</sup> He complained about guests who “drinke Healths so long till they lose it, and (being more heathenish in this than was Abasuerus at his Feast) they urge their companions to drinke by measure, out of measure.”<sup>771</sup>

The practice of continually drinking healths encouraged drunkenness.

Excessive drinking and the eating, dancing, and the singing of bawdy songs that accompanied the wine never seemed to go out of fashion.

Contemporaries continued to practise the local customs and superstitions associated with weddings. Preachers continually warned their audiences about excessive drinking, and the sickness, dancing, and immorality that accompanied the drunkenness at wedding feasts but their admonitions fell on deaf ears.

The marriage feast was the culmination of a successful courtship, and drinking was a major focus of weddings. For example, couples had special posset pots made to commemorate their weddings. At least three such pots survived the late seventeenth century, one of which Peter Brears describes as having “pairs of couples holding hands . . . modelled in high relief around the walls of [the] pot, while the lid is surmounted by the lively figure of a fiddler.”<sup>772</sup> The pot suggested courtship and dancing took place at the wedding, but the couple commissioned it to hold drink. Drink was central to the celebrations. The church ceremony lasted only a few moments, but the drinking, eating, and dancing could continue for anything

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<sup>770</sup> Matthew Griffith, Bethel: Or A Forme For Families: In Which All Sorts, of Both Sexes, Are so Squared, and Framed, by the Word of God, as They May Best Serve in Their Severall Places, for Usefull Pieces in God's Building (London, 1633), p. 278.

<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>772</sup> Brears, “Wassail! Celebrations in Hot Ale,” p. 125.

from a day to over a week.<sup>773</sup> Henry Machyn recorded an aristocratic wedding in 1563 that lasted four days.<sup>774</sup> Not all elite weddings were such extravagant affairs. Samuel Pepys attended the wedding of his aristocratic patron's daughter on 31 July 1665. Since the bride and groom did not know each other well, the families chose a relatively sober affair. The wedding celebrations lasted only one day. While Pepys enjoyed himself, he also remarked that the festivities were "in such a sober way as never almost any wedding was in so great families."<sup>775</sup> Pepys expected more drinking and general merriment. A couple's financial resources governed the extravagance of non-elite weddings. The weddings of the working classes were often shorter but still lavish. Contemporaries expected weddings that reached the practical limits of hospitality. Machyn attended a citizen's wedding in 1562. After the church ceremony the guests went "to the Bryghouse to dener, for ther w[as a great dinner] as ever was sene and all maner musykem and d[ancing all the] day longe . . . for [there were] no maner mettes nor drynges that cold be had for m[oney that were wanting]."<sup>776</sup> Leonard Wheatcroft left the specific accounts of his expenses when he wined and dined 220 people at his wedding feast in 1657. Unfortunately, the actual accounts have not survived, but Wheatcroft recorded in his diary that he spent £62 9s. 9d. on beer. Given the conservative estimate of 5d. per gallon for purchased beer in the mid-seventeenth century, Wheatcroft provided around 3,000 gallons, or just over

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<sup>773</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 372. Cressy states a typical wedding lasted two days.

<sup>774</sup> Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 300, 17 February 1563.

<sup>775</sup> Samuel Pepys in Houlbrooke, ed., *English Family Life*, p. 27.

<sup>776</sup> Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 288, 20 July 1562.

a dozen gallons of beer a head.<sup>777</sup> The Wheatcrofts were not a rich couple as evidenced when they later had to brew ale to make ends meet.<sup>778</sup> The marriage feast was an extravagant affair that focused on excessive consumption, especially of drink.

For most people of little means, a day and night feasting in an alehouse was enough of a celebration. Traditionally couples held bride-ales both to celebrate and pay for their wedding. They brewed the ale, and the neighbours came to buy it and drink with them. Bride-ales were still popular in the sixteenth century, but by the end of the seventeenth century the drinking had moved into alehouses and taverns.<sup>779</sup> A rare glimpse of lower class wedding festivities survived in the court records for Ealing, Middlesex, in 1613. Thomas Moulder, his new wife, and a few friends all ran up against the courts for violating the Sabbath. Moulder explained that they were celebrating his marriage by eating and drinking at a local alehouse during the time of divine service, “as [was] usual at marriages.”<sup>780</sup> He was following a local custom. A few diaries also mentioned plebeian weddings. Lowe recorded in 1663 that he “was engaged in the Ale house att a wedding of Isibell Hasleden.”<sup>781</sup> When Edward Barlow, a seaman, married in 1678, he invited about a dozen people to the Kings Head tavern to eat, drink, and dance.<sup>782</sup> These few examples illuminate the essentials of lower class weddings. The bare bones ritual that even the poorest couples

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<sup>777</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 371.

<sup>778</sup> Leonard Wheatcroft, “The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover, 1627-1706,” in Dorothy Riden, ed., *A Seventeenth-Century Scarsdale Miscellany* (Chesterfield, 1993), pp. 84, 85 and 90.

<sup>779</sup> Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, p. 64.

<sup>780</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 354.

<sup>781</sup> Lowe, *The Diary of Roger Lowe*, p. 13, 3 January 1663.

would not abandon was the marriage feast with its eating, drinking, and dancing.

Popular literature provided the best descriptions of what lower class couples required at their nuptials. The two servants in A Pleasant Dialogue Betwixt Honest John and Loving Kate, described their wedding plans. The wedding consisted of a church ceremony, dancing, ribbon favours, a sack posset made by the bridesmaids, and enough ale that they might “invite all the wedding people to drink with [them].”<sup>783</sup> The pamphlet was prescriptive; it provided young couples with an outline of how to plan a wedding and their proper attitudes towards the festivities in a popular format. Kate revealed she was uncomfortable with being the centre of attention.<sup>784</sup> However, she unabashedly confessed that she loved ale, and both she and her lover, John, were eager to provide enough drink for the festivities.<sup>785</sup> An earlier, less practical portrayal of a plebeian couple discussing wedding plans also emphasised the role of drinking on the day. In the play The London Chanticleers (1659), a broom man described the wedding he planned to his prospective bride, an apple wench; “dolphins shall bring Musicians on their backs, and sprout out cans of Beer beyond the Conduits on the Mayors Day. . . . and Tritons Trumpet shall echo up each Messe, while we sound the bottom of our Ocean Cups, and drown God Neptune in a Sea of wine.”<sup>786</sup> The poor fantasised about drinking at their weddings. In the ballad The Easter Wedding people from “every Village all

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<sup>782</sup> Edward Barlow in Houlbrooke, ed., English Family Life, p. 34.

<sup>783</sup> A Pleasant Dialogue Betwixt Honest John and Loving Kate, pp. 12-15.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 14-15.

<sup>786</sup> The London Chanticleers (London, 1659), p. 21.



round” came to see the bride and groom. The author described the wedding feast:

a most plentiful Table did to all persons appear:  
Feasting and filling the Glasses, Bacchus did flow like a Spring,  
And the young Lads and Lassés drank a good deal to the King.

After the feast they danced and then put the newly wed couple to bed.<sup>787</sup>

Literature depicting non-elite wedding plans emphasised the importance of heavy drinking on the day, even if it was only in fantasy. The essential element of a good wedding was the provision of enough high quality drink to fuel the merry making, dancing, and legitimate sexual activities that marked the culmination of courtship for the marrying couple.

## Conclusions

Drinking patterns emerge in the context of wider social circumstances. In this case drinking served to blur social codes enough to allow contact between young men and women that would be inappropriate in any other period of their lives. Drinking during courtship was wrapped up in the creation of a “good match.” Couples actively used the associations between alcohol and sex to fuel their courtship and encourage intimacy. The connotations alcohol held as a gift or the seal to a bargain further bound courting couples into open relationships. The traditional role of alcohol as a fuel to lust and the sealing of a bargain operated in courtship just as it did in other social situations. The difference was only in the unique transaction of marriage. The ballads, pamphlets, and plays suggest

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<sup>787</sup> “The Easter Wedding,” in *Roxburghe Ballads*, VII, p. 457. See also “The Winchester Wedding,” in *The Pepys Ballads*, IV, p. 532.

alcohol-induced sex to their audience and promoted the topic to the newly sexually active. It suggested alcohol had a role in sexuality. As long as the end result was marriage, a little drunken sexual fumbling served a legitimate purpose in negotiating a life partner. Therein lies the pattern; drunken sexual activity was only legitimate if it led to sex in the confines of marriage. All the literature taught young courting couples how to use alcohol to get what they really wanted; marriage. Lust was acceptable in courtship because it facilitated marriage. The bargain sealed was a permanent, life-altering emotional bond. Young couples used drink and the wider social connotations associated with drinking to negotiate the possibilities of legitimate sexual relations. In this way the negative connotations of drunken comportment facilitated courtship and marriage.

At the same time, the particular manifestation of courtship drinking patterns offered some protection to couples from turning their courtship into unwanted, illegitimate sexual relations. The drinking and dancing located couples outside their masters' homes and yet still in the public eye. It gave courting couples something to do other than have sex. Drink and drinking activities were a substitute for sex. Courtship drinking patterns included dancing, late nights, and an excuse for mixed company in the alehouse. The literature, ballads, plays, and even sermons described youth culture as full of activities that were sexual, but not sex. Holiday festivities and fairs provided opportunities for sex but they also provided many other activities. Dancing was sexually provocative by nature and encouraged close contact between men and women, but it was not sex and took place in the public eye. Drinking itself was at least somewhat supervised in alehouses and

taverns. Much of the drunken immorality moralists and masters decried as encouraging lust could have been a substitute for sex.

### 8. Ritual Drinking During Childbirth

And when the young Women do chance to Cry out,  
 they straightways are call'd to their Labours,  
 And then after this comes a Gossiping buot,  
 to do as the rest of their Neighbours:  
 They in their Apparel are Deck'd neat and fine,  
 To prattle and likewise to tipple in Wine,  
 Until all their Noses with Claret does shine:  
*O Tis' a fine thing to be Marry'd.*<sup>788</sup>

Women had their own “arena” of activities in which men were for the most part not involved. The pinnacle of all-female ritual bonding and sociability was the delivery of a child. Childbirth centred not so much on the child but on the mother. Childbirth began a ritual month when women came together for a series of celebrations as well as medical and religious tasks.<sup>789</sup> The delivery itself was an event of monumental social significance. At the onset of labour the pregnant woman’s husband sent for the midwife and female attendants or “gossips.” The women entered a room in the house prepared for the occasion. The windows were darkened and if possible a fire kept the room warm. Over the fire warmed the mother’s caudle, an alcoholic drink she and those visiting her would drink throughout the month. After the delivery a minister christened the baby either in church or, later in the period, in the home. What is more important, the celebrations that followed the christening announced the birth to the wider community. The birthing mother, or child-wife, was still cloistered in her lying-in chamber. About two weeks after the delivery,

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<sup>788</sup> The Merry Milk-Maid: Being Her Longing-Desire After Matrimony: That She Might Be One of the Honourable Society of Gossips (London, 1688-92?).

<sup>789</sup> For a more detailed description see David Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England (Oxford, 1997), *passim*; and Adrian Wilson, “The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation,” in Valerie Fildes,

depending on her health and how close she followed tradition, the new mother had her “up-sitting” when she officially rose out of bed. She celebrated with an all-female banquet in her home. Finally, about a month after the delivery she resumed her normal duties. She marked the end of her lying-in, often with a church ceremony, but more consistently, with another banquet attended by the friends and relations who supported her during her ordeal. Women did not always follow the exact traditional pattern, but they used some combination of these ceremonies depending on their health and financial resources. Fashion and religion changed the composition and details of the ceremonies, but the alcoholic sociability remained and in some cases might have propped up the traditional ceremonies themselves.

From “the quickening” the pregnant woman became the main actor on a ritual stage of female-dominated celebrations. Tradition excluded men from many of these events. The few ceremonies they attended they did so as interlopers on female sociability. Of all these only the christening was centred on the child, and even then the mother’s female friends and “gossips” hosted the christening party rather than the father. Women created their own, exclusive space around the new mother, away from the prying eyes and control of men. In that space they developed a pattern of sociability independent of the male-dominated social hierarchy. They ate good food, dominated the conversations with subjects that concerned their areas of expertise, and drank a large quantity of alcohol. The birthing chamber was a female-dominated drinking space with its own gender rules

and codes of conduct. Birthing rituals provide historians with a chance to look at women's drinking and socialising habits largely free of patriarchal constrictions. By physically isolating themselves and locking themselves behind the veil of "secret women's business," women were free to develop drinking patterns that fitted their socialising.

Unfortunately men wrote most of the literature, diary entries and court records detailing the sociability of lying-in. Their descriptive accounts reveal little about the intimate secrets of childbirth because men, though they might speculate, did not know what women did in the cloistered lying-in chamber. For example, in 1664 Samuel Woodforde recorded in his diary at four in the morning that the women "have got my wife out of her bed according to the country fashion; what they will do with her my God I cannot tell."<sup>790</sup> Another diarist Adam Eyre recorded that he spent his time at a local alehouse with other men waiting out a close neighbour's labour in 1647. The woman's delivery was important enough that he congregated with other men to celebrate it (he spent 10 d.), but the woman did not invite Eyre to her house until after she had delivered.<sup>791</sup> The male authors of pamphlets and satires often claimed they were not interested in participating in these areas of work and sociability. Such attitudes hide the fact that, whether men were interested in all female gatherings or not, they were not welcome. However, nothing was completely private in early modern life.

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<sup>790</sup> Samuel Woodforde, 9 January 1664, in Ralph Houlbrooke, ed., English Family Life, 1576-1716 An Anthology From Diaries (Oxford, 1988); see also William Coster, "Purity, Profanity and Puritanism: The Churching of Women, 1500-1700," in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, eds., Women in the Church (Oxford, 1990), p. 378.

<sup>791</sup> Adam Eyre, "A Dyurnall, Or Catalogue of All My Accions and Expences From the 1st of January, 1646-[7] -- Adam Eyre," in Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Edinburgh, 1877), p. 5 17 January 1647.

In the absence of sources written by women, male authors did at least provide a basic outline of female sociability, and therefore historians cannot discount them. By reading the literature for what women did rather than how men felt about it, male sources reveal the distinctive outlines and actions of female sociability.

### **The Roles of Women and the Obligations of Men**

Regardless of how women celebrated it, childbirth was the linchpin of female sociability as it existed independently of patriarchal constraints. The religious and health issues that surrounded childbirth raised controversies and weathered changes throughout the period. Regional and class variations always existed. What remained constant over time was the impulse for women to celebrate childbirth with female-centred sociability and often large quantities of alcohol. In Sociable Letters Margaret Cavendish observed that, when women began their ritual month of lying-in, “they [seemed] nothing so well Pleased, nor so Proud, as when they were great with Child.” As proof that women thoroughly enjoyed their month of festivities, Cavendish listed the expensive and extensive preparations women made, including “such strong Drinks, as methinks the very Smell should put a Childbed-Wife into a Fever, as Hippocras and Burnt-Wine, with Hot Spices, Mulled Sack, Strong and High-colour’d Ale, well Spiced, and Stuff’d with Tofts of Cake, and the like.”<sup>792</sup> The focus of the protracted partying was always on “the woman in the straw.” The women who rallied

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<sup>792</sup> Margaret Cavendish, Sociable Letters, James Fitzmaurice, ed. (New York, 1997), pp. 58-9. Cavendish was critical of both childbirth rituals and female drinking, but she was also not a typical woman as she was childless and abstained from alcohol.

around the delivering woman drove the various celebrations throughout the month of lying-in. Men participated and perhaps hosted parties in the parlour parallel to their wives' celebrations, but they were not the focus of events, nor were they in control of them. Almost every woman at some point in her life participated in childbirth rituals. These all-female gatherings could constitute a challenge to patriarchal authority or a refuge from patriarchal control. Adrian Wilson contends that the "ritual of childbirth was constructed and maintained by women *because it was in the interests of women*; and it represented a successful form of women's *resistance* to patriarchal authority."<sup>793</sup> Another historian Bernard Capp has suggested that, "though women never demanded equality, their networks provided a refuge from patriarchal authority and a means to contain and accommodate it."<sup>794</sup> Most women participated in childbirth ceremonies and festivities for reasons, perhaps to the shock of male authors, that had nothing at all to do with men. Women attended these celebrations to bond with their sisters, mothers, female neighbours, and friends. According to Sara Mendelson in her article "Stuart Women's Diaries," women emphasised the communal and emotional support they received and gave at these moments of physical trauma and recovery.<sup>795</sup> If they needed a forum to challenge, to negotiate, or to temporarily escape patriarchal constraints, they could do that along with the main purpose of establishing and

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<sup>793</sup> Wilson, "The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation," p. 88, emphasis in original.

<sup>794</sup> Bernard Capp, "Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England," in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle, eds., The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England (London, 1996), p. 139

<sup>795</sup> Sara Mendelson, "Stuart Women's Diaries," in Mary Prior, ed., Women in English Society 1500-1800 (London, 1985), p. 196.



strengthening matriarchal bonds. For the most part women sidelined patriarchal issues to form bonds of friendship and mutual support with other women.

Male authorities acknowledged that childbirth ceremonies were women's private domain and should remain so. The Book of Oaths issued in 1689 required midwives to swear that they "shall be secret, and not open any matter appertaining to [their] office in the presence of any man, unless necessity or great urgent cause [constrained them] so to do."<sup>796</sup> Authorities also acknowledged the female nature of such events by referring only to women in the town ordinances governing childbirth rituals.<sup>797</sup> Men did their part in acknowledging and upholding the exclusivity of female space, even if they did try to contain and regulate it. What they did not try to do was destroy it. Medical tracts as well accepted childbirth as an all-female affair, even if they did not relish handing control of a medical event to physicians' competition, the midwives. When the physician John Jones in 1579 recommended who should be at a delivery, he called for "a few . . . godly, expert and learned *women*."<sup>798</sup> Medical authorities recognised that childbirth was women's business. The mid-seventeenth-century physician James Primrose agreed with the continental authority Rodericus a Castro that women assisting at a delivery operated under "laws and rules . . . sacred

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<sup>796</sup> "The Oath That is to be Administered to a Midwife by the Bishop or His Chancellor of the Diocese, When She is Licensed to Exercise that Office of a Midwife," in The Book of Oaths [1689], quoted in Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 65.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-5, 201.

<sup>798</sup> John Jones, The Arte and Science of Preseruing Bodie and Soule in Health, Wisedome, and Catholike Religion: Phisically, Philosophically and Diuinely Deused (London, 1579), p. 31, emphasis mine.

to themselves” of which male practitioners were ignorant.<sup>799</sup> Most authorities accepted and worked with the established female exclusiveness of childbirth whether they agreed with it or not.

Men did have an important role to play in childbirth ceremonies; their wives expected them to supply the assembled women with what they needed to “make merry.” In other words, men financed female drinking. If they did not, they risked a sleight to their own honour rather than to their wife’s. Sometimes this obligation manifested itself in a real attempt to curb expenditure and display. In Birth, Marriage and Death David Cressy noted that several town ordinances sought to limit the size and scope of women’s childbirth festivities and cited excessive expenditure as their reason.<sup>800</sup> As Cressy points out, disorder and lack of male supervision were probably motivating factors. However, men cited financial reasons because such reasons were their only legitimate role in women’s festivities. When Margaret Cavendish complained about the excessive expenditure of most childbirth rituals, she blamed husbands for indulging their wives’ vanity.<sup>801</sup> Cavendish also noted that if women “have not what they Please” for their lying-in, “they will be so Fretfull and Discontented, as it will indanger their Miscarrying.”<sup>802</sup> A man ultimately had control over expenditure, but he risked killing his unborn child if he did not indulge his wife in her alcoholic festivities. Women also expected their husbands to provide for the midwife, nurse, and any visiting friends. Thomas Dekker’s pamphlet The

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<sup>799</sup> James Primrose, Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick (London, 1651), p. 180.

<sup>800</sup> Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, pp. 84-5.

<sup>801</sup> Cavendish, Sociable Letters, p. 59.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Batchelars Banquet (1603) revealed that the husband's honour was at stake if he did not provide enough "good cheer" for his wife's gossips. Dekker portrayed a wife warning her husband that "though the sorow be mine, the shame will be yours" if he did not pay for her ritual festivities.<sup>803</sup> On the other hand, the ballad Roger's Renown from the 1680s told the story of the proud father of triplets who willingly provided a banquet for his wife's female friends and described the account of the "jovial gossiping" as "much to the credit of Roger."<sup>804</sup> Whether complaining about or congratulating the new mother, popular literature portrayed her hospitality as a point of honour for the husband. He needed to prove to her friends and family that he was a good provider and a caring husband. He could not insist on being present, and he could not regulate what women did once they entered the birthing chamber. A husband was not in his customary role of authority, if only for a month.

### **The Delivery**

Women had cause to celebrate after a successful delivery. Roger Shofield estimates an average woman had between a six and seven percent chance of dying from complications either during her pregnancy or delivery. While this was no worse than her chances of dying from other diseases and

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<sup>803</sup> Thomas Dekker, The Batchelars Banquet: Or A Banquet for Batchelars: Wherein is Prepared Sundry Daintie Dishes to Furnish Their Table, Curiously Drest, and Seriously Serued In. Pleasantly Discoursing the Variable Humours of Women, Their Quicknesse of Wittes, and Unsearchable Deceits (London, 1603), plate C3.

<sup>804</sup> "Roger's Renown: Or, The Fourth and Last Merry Ditty of Cold and Raw," The Roxburghe Ballads, William Chappell and J. W. Ebsworth, eds. (1869-95; reissued 1966), VII. p. 236, emphasis original.

accidents, it was still a risky endeavour.<sup>805</sup> Regardless of their real statistical chances of survival, women perceived their pregnancy as a dangerous ordeal and often prepared themselves for a possible death.<sup>806</sup> Even if they survived, delivering a child was physically painful and debilitating for the mother and time consuming for her female attendants. For example, in 1675 Elizabeth Freke was in labour for four or five days during which time at least four midwives visited her, and two of her female attendants stayed with her for several days.<sup>807</sup> Women gave each other medical and physical support and re-affirmed female bonds across social classes and generations. Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford point out in Women in Early Modern England that the social dimensions of childbirth were as important as the medical ones.<sup>808</sup> Midwives attended women from all economic situations and imparted knowledge, support, and authority. Non-professional women also assisted in child delivery. Gentlewomen often distributed the medical concoctions they made to their lower-status neighbours. Cookery and medical handbooks aimed at gentlewomen were full of concoctions to assist in delivery and recovery from giving birth. While a gentlewoman's assistance rarely made it into the court records, in 1569 the church courts did record that Margaret Roos, a gentlewoman, gave gynaecological assistance to Agnes Bowker, an unmarried servant.<sup>809</sup> The

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<sup>805</sup> Roger Schofield, "Did the Mothers Really Die? Three Centuries of Maternal Mortality" quoted in Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 30 and Pollock, "Embarking on a Rough Passage," p. 47.

<sup>806</sup> Pollock, "Embarking on a Rough Passage," pp. 48-9.

<sup>807</sup> Elizabeth Freke of County Cork, BL Add. MS 45718-19, p. 88, 2 June 1675.

<sup>808</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720 (Oxford, 1998), pp. 208-9.

<sup>809</sup> David Cressy, Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissention (Oxford, 2000), p. 12. Bowker's delivery is detailed in the court records because she claimed to have given birth to a cat.

social rules governing childbirth allowed for a gentlewoman to administer to a poor unwed mother. Women of upper and middling status took the time to attend the delivery of their socially inferior neighbours. For example, Elizabeth Pepys not only rushed off to assist with the delivery of her husband's clerk's wife in 1661 but also promised to be a godmother to her tailor's child six years later.<sup>810</sup> Women forged and maintained bonds that crossed social classes and generation gaps and stood independent of the male hierarchy.

All this bonding took place over an extended period of time. For example, Leonard Wheatcroft's pregnant daughter sent for her younger sister on April 4, but she did not deliver until May 12.<sup>811</sup> She might have been the maid hired, or in this case, borrowed for the last stage of her sister's pregnancy. Mothers also came early for the birth. In 1704 Mary Evelyn went to London for her daughter's delivery five days before she went into labour.<sup>812</sup> Childbirth was a time for women to gather.

Presumably they stayed on for the ensuing month of festivities. Women could spend all day at another woman's labour, and delivery and the ensuing festivities consisted of about one new banquet a week. Women had enough time during any one woman's lying-in to make lasting bonds.

Women averaged between six and seven pregnancies over their lifetime.<sup>813</sup> Childbirth festivities were regular occurrences. In the eight

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<sup>810</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A New and Complete Transcription*, Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds. (London, 1983), II, p. 150; III, p. 164.

<sup>811</sup> Leonard Wheatcroft, "The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover, 1627-1706," in Dorothy Riden, ed., *A Seventeenth-Century Scarsdale Miscellany* (Chesterfield, 1993), p. 97.

<sup>812</sup> John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, E. S. de Beer, ed. (Oxford, 1955), V, p. 582, 13 November 1704.

<sup>813</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 30.

years covered by Samuel Pepys' diary, he recorded that his wife Elizabeth was called to three births and seventeen christening parties.<sup>814</sup> Even though Elizabeth had no children of her own, she was well-versed in the female bonding of childbed rituals. John Evelyn also noted in his diary that, "many of [his] Relations & neighbours [were] present," and that, "the Goships return'd that Evening," when his wife Mary bore their first child in 1652.<sup>815</sup> Mary bore seven more children over the next seventeen years. The same neighbours and family members would have gathered for each one. Ralph Josselin also recorded some details of the birth of his daughter Jane in 1645. When his wife went into labour at about midnight, he first called up some neighbours, then sent for the midwife. At daybreak he "called in the women . . . [and] almost all came." His wife was delivered around noon so most attendants had already been there for six hours or more. Josselin had prepared for the company; he recorded they "had made a good pasty for this houre."<sup>816</sup> Other diarists such as Adam Eyre and Sir Humphrey Mildmay peppered their writings with comments about their wives attending births, feasts, churchings, and christenings throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>817</sup> Pregnancy was a regular enough occurrence that the bonds women formed could work as a viable female network that ran throughout their lives.

The ritual of childbirth sought to relieve the medical reality of the ordeal by making the mother-to-be the focus of a protracted social event.

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<sup>814</sup> Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, I, pp. 234, 303; II, pp. 109, 150, 171, 216, 236, 237; V, p. 265; VI, p. 102; VII, pp. 128, 329, 394; VIII, pp. 177, 108, 202, 404-5, 540; IX, pp. 84, 260.

<sup>815</sup> Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, III, p. 75, 24 August 1652.

<sup>816</sup> Ralph Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683*, Alan Macfarlane, ed. (London, 1976), p. 50, 24 November 1645.

For most women it was an occasion to eat, drink, and talk with other women. Elizabeth Freke recorded that, “a greatt many of my Fri[e]nds were mett together att my d[ea]r Fathers to be Merry” during her lying-in.<sup>818</sup>

Women expected to have several attendants at their delivery as well as the midwife and a nurse. Wilson contends that over five women were usually present.<sup>819</sup> Even the unmarried servant Agnes Bowker had at least six women assisting her delivery in 1569.<sup>820</sup> Too few women were a cause for concern. Ralph Josselin worried when “only two or three women” attended his wife’s eighth delivery along with the midwife and the nurse.<sup>821</sup>

Elizabeth Pepys reported to her husband that she and the midwife alone delivered the child of a friend since labour came on so fast. Both she and her husband were concerned about the health of the mother.<sup>822</sup> Men and women felt several attendants were necessary for a safe delivery.

Unfortunately, the medical rationale remains hidden behind the veil of “childbed mysteries.”

Male authors portrayed women preparing for their physical ordeal and social gathering as if the two were inseparable. Some religious advisers objected to women’s preparations and alcoholic sociability. In his tract The Drunkard’s Character (1638) Richard Young complained that, “Many of our

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<sup>817</sup> For example, Eyre, “A Dyurnall,” p. 42; and Philip Lee Ralph, Sir Humphrey Mildmay: Royalist Gentleman Glimpses of the English Scene 1633-1652 (New Brunswick, 1947), p. 109.

<sup>818</sup> Elizabeth Freke of County Cork, BL Add. MS 45718-19, p. 89.

<sup>819</sup> Wilson, “The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation,” p. 71.

<sup>820</sup> Cressy, Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England, p. 14.

<sup>821</sup> Josselin, The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683, 14 January 1658; also see Wilson, “The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation,” p. 71.

<sup>822</sup> Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, VIII, p. 177, 22 April 1667.

children are half killed, before they are borne, with distempered drinkes.”<sup>823</sup>

Most preachers were less vehement about their objections. The preacher John Oliver wrote A Present for Teeming Women in 1663 to help women prepare spiritually for their delivery. In it he revealed what he considered as common preparations for lying-in, which included the bare essentials of “linen and other necessities for the child, a nurse, a midwife, *entertainment for the women that are called to their labour*, a warm convenient chamber, etc. . . . which things . . . every one according to their ability should be mindfull of.”<sup>824</sup> All these “necessities” were the minimal medical preparations for a successful birth except the stipulation that a woman prepare “entertainment,” presumably meaning food and alcohol, for her female attendants. The physician James Primrose discussed the entertainment available at deliveries. He complained that midwives gave birthing women burnt wine and cinnamon water, both of which were alcoholic, only because “the by-standers are solicitous of those strengthening meats and drinks.”<sup>825</sup> The alcohol was for the gossips more than for the medical needs of the mother. The women threw a party that at least some men envied. In 1633 Thomas Salmon faced the archdeacon’s court to answer charges that he disguised himself as a woman to gain entrance to a lying-in chamber and drink with the other women.<sup>826</sup>

Alcoholic sociability was so essential that as late as the eighteenth century

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<sup>823</sup> Richard Young, The Drunkards Character, or, A True Drunkard With Such Sinnes as Raigne in Him . . . Together With Compleat Armour Against Evill Society (London, 1638), p. 44.

<sup>824</sup> John Oliver, A Present for Teeming Women. Or, Scripture-Directions for Women With Child, How to Prepare for the Houre of Travel. (London, 1663), sig. A4<sup>2</sup>; see also Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 51; emphasis mine.

<sup>825</sup> Primrose, Popular Errorrs, p. 177; see also Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 83.



parish overseers provided alcohol for a poor woman's lying-in.<sup>827</sup> The seventeenth-century pamphlet The Gossips Braule, or the Women Wear the Breeches suggested even the poorest of women provided each other with ritual necessities when they gave birth. The author portrayed a fish-woman, Doll Crabb, talking to a hostess, Bess Bung-hole. Crabb claimed she provided Bung-hole with money, a posset, and food when Bung-hole delivered her third bastard child.<sup>828</sup> Whatever religious or medical reasons brought women together, they also expected a festive female drinking space surrounding the pregnant woman.

Authorities were concerned that women drank too much and became unruly at births. Jones feared the women at a normal delivery, especially in the north and west of England, were "a rude multitude given either to folly, banqueting or bravery."<sup>829</sup> The late seventeenth-century physician Robert Barret was even more specific about whom to exclude from the delivery room. He advised the husband to "take care there be no frightful, whimsical, resolute, head-strong, drunken, whispering, talkative, sluttish Women amongst them . . . . One of such Women may do more harm than three modest, wise Women can do good."<sup>830</sup> Barret objected to the party atmosphere because it might in some way harm the mother. Percivall Willughby showed his concerns about drinking and sociability by giving examples in his case notes. He detailed the case of a gentlewoman who was

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<sup>826</sup> Cressy, Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England, pp. 92, 114.

<sup>827</sup> Wilson, The Making of Man-Midwifery, p. 28.

<sup>828</sup> The Gossips Braule, or, The Women Wear the Breeches (London, 1655), p. 6. See also The New Brawle, or, Turnmill-Street Against Rosemary Lane. Being a Mock Comedy (London, 1654) for a similar account.

<sup>829</sup> Jones, The Arte and Science of Preseruing Bodie and Soule in Health, Wisedome, and Catholike Religion, p. 32; see also Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 55.

successful in delivering several children because she always followed Willughby's directions, including his injunction "not to have her chamber thronged with much company."<sup>831</sup> In contrast, another woman he attended did not follow his advice, and Willughby felt it contributed to her death. He recorded that,

her husband kept an alehouse, and having but few roomes to entertain his guests, her chamber was made a place to receive them . . . when the danger [of post-natal complications] was lest thought of, the ensuing night being disquieted with drinking companions . . . shee died.<sup>832</sup>

The protracted party around her contributed to her declining health.

Obviously, hers was an extreme case.

Women attending the new mother were there to foster a positive atmosphere. The popular Childbirth; or, The Happy Deliverie of Women (1612), a translation of a French work by Jacques Guillimeau, warned that women visiting the child-wife might endanger her health. Guillimeau was more worried that the gossips might "tell her any thing to trouble her or make her sad."<sup>833</sup> The approval or disapproval of physicians does not detract from their intent to impose some control over the behaviour of women while they drank with the new mother. Medical considerations, as opposed to misogyny, might have guided their intentions. If the parties surrounding deliveries were large and boisterous, they did pose a medical threat to a newly delivered, exhausted, and weak woman. The objections of

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<sup>830</sup> Robert Barret, A Companion for Midwives, Child-Bearing Women and Nurses (London, 1699), p. 7; see also Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 55.

<sup>831</sup> Willughby, Observations in Midwifery, p. 38.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>833</sup> James Guillimeau, "Childbirth: Or The Happy Delivery of Women," (1612) in The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile (Amsterdam, 1972), p. 193.

physicians included nothing about the moral implications of boisterous female gatherings. Respectable midwives (which most were) could well have had the same advice. These objections reveal that post-natal celebrations might very well have become large and unruly by male or female standards.

Along with admonitions about unruly and drunk female attendants, authorities were concerned that the woman in charge of the event, the midwife, might herself drink too much. In 1590 Archbishop Whitgift emphasised in his visitation for the diocese of Winchester that midwives should not only be of “uncorrupt religion” but also of “sober life.”<sup>834</sup> While a “sober life” did not always refer directly to drinking, in the case of the midwife it probably did, given other commentator’s elaboration on the same theme. The popular seventeenth-century manual The Compleat Midwives Practice (1656) also called for a sober midwife, as did the physician William Sermon in The Ladies Companion, Or, the English Midwife (1671). Sermon further explained that, “It is not fit to commit [a pregnant woman] into the hands of rash and drunken women, that is in travel of her first Child.”<sup>835</sup> Authorities recommended that midwives be sober because they believed midwives drank while they worked. Popular literature portrayed midwives drinking and socialising with the other women while they went about their duties. For example, the play The Vow Breaker (1636) contained a birthing scene with a midwife named “Prattle” who talked and drank until the other attendants fell into a drunken sleep while

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<sup>834</sup> Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 67.

waiting for the pregnant woman to go into labour.<sup>836</sup> Midwives were more than just medical practitioners they were masters of ceremony and sociability as well. Male physicians, on the other hand, entered the room during labour and exited as soon as the child was delivered.<sup>837</sup> Authorities were concerned that a midwife's social role might eclipse her medical one.

### The Christening

Among the women's celebrations of their travail and triumph over a possible death was another actor on the stage, the newborn baby. While the christening of the child was a necessary religious ceremony, it was also the occasion of a very large party. Families had their children christened between three and five days after they were born, although occasionally they delayed baptism until the day the mother was churched.<sup>838</sup> The late seventeenth-century book The Diseases of Women with Child, and in Child-bed warned against typical urban christenings. It claimed that,

The Citizens Wives have a very ill Custom . . . they cause their Children to be christened the second or third Day after their Labour; at which time all their Relations and Friends have a Collation in the Child-bed Room, with whom she is obliged to discourse and answer the Gossips and all Comers a whole Afternoon together, with the usual Compliments of those Ceremonies, enough to distract her; and though there is scarce any of the Company which do not drink her Health, yet by the Noise they make in her Ears, she loses it.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> T. C., I. D., M. S., and T. B., The Compleat Midwives Practice (London, 1656), p. 76; the fifth edition (1698) was credited to John Peachey but the passage was identical; and William Sermon, The Ladies Companion, or the English Midwife (London, 1671), p. 6.

<sup>836</sup> William Sampson, The Vow Breaker, or, The Faire Maide of Clifton (London, 1636), plates H1-H2.

<sup>837</sup> For example, Willughby, Observations in Midwifery, *passim*.

<sup>838</sup> Coster, "Purity, Profanity and Puritanism," p. 382; for examples of delayed baptism see Wheatcroft, "The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover," p. 100.

<sup>839</sup> Francis Mauriceau, The Diseases of Women with Child, And in Child-bed, Hugh Chamberlen, trans. (London, 1697), p. 244.

Diarists' experiences at christenings confirmed these customs but without the tone of disapproval. The sixteenth-century London diarist Henry Machyn recorded the events at several christenings he attended. At an alderman's christening in 1559 he ate sweets and drank "epocras and muskadyll [in great] plente."<sup>840</sup> In both 1561 and 1562 he attended the christenings of noble children and afterwards returned to the couples' homes for a banquet.<sup>841</sup> After one christening party he remarked on the presence of "a grett bankett as I have sene, and wass[ail, of] epocras, Frenche wyne, Gaskyn wyne, and Renynys [wine], with grett plente."<sup>842</sup> Drink was a focus of the festivities, particularly hippocras as Machyn mentioned its presence at every occasion. In 1666 Samuel Pepys described the progress of the christening festivities he attended; "After the christening comes in the wine and the sweetmeats, and then to prate and tattle, and then very good company they were, and I among them." Wine, good food, and casual conversation were the essence of a christening party. At another in 1667 he recorded that he and his wife had "gloves and wine and wafers, very pretty, and talked and tattled."<sup>843</sup> Female drinking patterns governed the behaviour of all the guests: they ate delicate food, they drank copious amounts of alcohol, and they talked about nothing male sources considered of any consequence. As Margaret Cavendish observed, after the ladies had drunk enough wine to "heat" themselves, "their Discourse was most of

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<sup>840</sup> Henry Machyn, The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, From A. D. 1550 To A. D. 1563, John Gough Nichols, ed. (London, 1848), p. 216, 27 October 1559.

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264, 16 July 1561, p. 288, ? July 1562.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288, ? July 1562.

<sup>843</sup> Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, VII, p. 394, 2 December 1666 and VIII, p. 202, 5 May 1667.

Labours and Child-beds, Children and Nurses, and Household Servants, and of Preserving, and such like Discourses as Married Women and Mistresses of Families usually have.”<sup>844</sup> The tone was decisively female, domestic, and light.

Christening parties were reputed to be notorious for women’s excessive drinking. In popular literature female drunkenness and female ritual went hand in hand. The play The London Chanticleers (1659) was only one of many works that referred to the proverbial saying “as drunk as so many . . . Nurses at a Christening.”<sup>845</sup> Authors also used christening scenes and women drinking in them to promote political messages, as in The Gossips Feast Or, Morrall Tales (1647) and in doing so described the female drinking patterns with which readers were familiar. In the book the lower-class Mother Brumby invited the two godfathers, the priest, and several women home where she had “already prepared an hogshead of nappy Ale, with a Gammon of Bacon & other good accowtrements.” They ate, drank, and told thinly veiled pro-royalist stories. One gossip objected to their story-telling, not for its obvious political content, but because “they in doing so should lose much time, which they might thriftily employ in tipling.”<sup>846</sup> The author chose to deride royalist political support by putting it in the mouths of drunk old women involved in “women’s business.” The three men present said nothing. The stereotype of women drunk at a christening was strong enough that authors could convey political messages

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<sup>844</sup> Cavendish, Sociable Letters, p. 112; see also Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 170.

<sup>845</sup> The London Chanticleers (London, 1659), p. 13; see also Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 202.

<sup>846</sup> The Gossips Feast Or, Morrall Tales (London, 1647), p. 2.

underneath it. The audience was familiar with female drinking during childbirth rituals.

Strictly recreational writings portrayed much the same pattern. The christening party in Thomas Middleton's Elizabethan play A Chaste Maid in Cheapside consisted of a dozen women gathered in the lying-in chamber. The women ate costly sweetmeats, drank wine until one woman was so drunk she fell over, and talked about people they knew. The godfather and the husband were present but only for the ceremony, and then they left the stage. The men commented to the audience but did not participate in the conversations of gossiping women.<sup>847</sup> In a reversal of gender roles men were seen but not heard. Ned Ward in The London Spy (1700) referred to his nephew's christening as controlled by the female "gossips." They pushed the husband and two reluctant godfathers to eat, drink, and kiss all the women present. The banquet at the christening consisted of "a very good hot Supper . . . and two or three dozen of several sorts of Wine, to Entertain their Ladyships."<sup>848</sup> After dinner Ward reported that, "three or four Glasses [of wine] had wash'd away their Counterfeit or acquir'd Modesty, which restrain'd 'em from that Freedom of the Tongue which their Natures prompt them to," and the women began to talk about their households, each other, and their husbands. Again the men said nothing.<sup>849</sup> In popular literature women who drank their way into lively conversations populated the stage of the christening.

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<sup>847</sup> Thomas Middleton, "A Chaste Maid in Cheapside," in Kathleen E. McLuskie and David Bevington, eds., Plays on Women (Manchester, 1999), pp. 106-11.

<sup>848</sup> Edward [Ned] Ward, The London Spy (London, 1689-1703), II, Part V, p. 11 and *passim*.

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*, II, Part V, pp. 12-3.

Christenings could be occasions of conspicuous consumption and display for men as well. Both the clergyman Ralph Josselin and the lawyer John Greene memorialised the grand extent of the christening parties they threw in the 1640s by recording how much they spent, £6. 13s. 4d. “at least” and “about £4” respectively. Josselin’s expense represented nearly ten percent of his annual income.<sup>850</sup> Like the accounts in popular literature the husband paid for everything, but unlike popular literature these men were not complaining. They were using their expenses as a reminder of the lavish party. They recorded evidence that they had fulfilled their expected financial role. Other accounts indicate the money went into extravagant drinking and display. Sir John Oglander described the Jacobean aristocratic christening party for Bowyer Worsley’s son as “the greatest drinking and uncivil mirth that ever I knew.” He gave an example of the lavish drinking;

After dinner they were to drink healths, and he had provided one hundred musketeers, fifty in the garden and fifty in the court, and at every health these must come and discharge into the parlour doors, where they drank as much smoke as wine.<sup>851</sup>

Christening parties gave couples the opportunity to celebrate their new child and display their hospitality and wealth. Men seem to have taken pride and enjoyment in participating in what was still essentially female space.

For the most part women still dominated christening parties. The proud new father probably dreamt up the militant display at the Worsley christening rather than it being a standard ritual. Contemporary accounts indicate that more women than men attended christenings. Margaret Cavendish described those attending a christening with her as “being most

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<sup>850</sup> Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 166.



married women as is usual at such gossiping meetings.”<sup>852</sup> Pepys’ diary also indicated christenings were primarily female affairs. In the eight years between August 1660 and July 1668 Samuel Pepys attended seven christenings, all with his wife Elizabeth. In addition, he recorded Elizabeth attending ten christenings without him and often in the company of her female friends. Elizabeth probably attended far more since for at least one birth Pepys recorded her attending the birth but nothing about the christening that she probably attended as well.<sup>853</sup> At the christening parties Samuel Pepys did attend, he noted not only that they were mostly women but also that he, as a man, was in a secondary role. At a christening in May of 1661 Pepys recorded he was “with the women” but worried that, “whether we carried ourselves well or ill, I know not.”<sup>854</sup> He felt out of place. At another christening in November of the same year he attended as one of the godfathers. After the ceremony he, the other godfather, and the minister left the women in the mother’s lying-in room to eat and to drink in another room. When he went home, he left his wife at the party to continue the celebrations.<sup>855</sup> Although fictional, Ward’s account of a christening also entailed the two godfathers waiting to fulfil their ceremonial role in another

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<sup>851</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>852</sup> Cavendish, Sociable Letters, p. 112; see also Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 166.

<sup>853</sup> Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, I, p. 234, 30 August 1660, p. 303, 27 November 1660, II, p. 109, 29 May 1661, p. 150, 9 August 1661, p. 171, 3 September 1661, p. 216, 19 November 1661, p. 236, 21 December 1661, p. 237, 22 December 1661, V, p. 176, 12 June 1664, p. 265, 7 September 1664, VI, p. 102, 14 May 1665, VII, p. 128, 20 May 1666, p. 329, 18 October 1666, p. 394, 2 December 1666, VIII, p. 180, 25 April 1667, p. 202, 5 May 1667, pp. 404-5, 28 August 1667, p. 540, 21 November 1667, IX, p. 84, 21 February 1668.

<sup>854</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 109, 29 May 1661.

<sup>855</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 216, 19 November 1661.

room while the women in attendance visited the new mother.<sup>856</sup>

Apparently, a normal christening party included the husband, two godfathers, and the officiating cleric as the only men, and even then these men entered the ceremony to fulfil their role and then exited again.

Christenings were women's occasions. Families often invited men, but women's customs restricted their participation.

### **The Gossip's Feast**

After the birth of a child women celebrated the return of their health. About two weeks after delivery women celebrated their "upsitting" with an all-female banquet referred to as the "woman's feast" or the "gossips' feast." Contemporaries left few records of these banquets. Male sources did not clearly record them as they did not attend them. Furthermore, the banquets held no religious connotations and were private affairs, held in the woman's home as she was not yet well enough to leave the house. Even so, authorities sometimes reached into women's private space to have their say. The councillors voting to regulate "the superfluous charge and excess" of feasts in Leicester in 1568 referred to them as specifically for "gossips and midwives."<sup>857</sup> Custom allowed men in to visit the new mother, as Samuel Pepys' diary attests, but it did not allow them at the women's feast.<sup>858</sup> Despite the infrequent appearance of these all-female parties in court records and to the prying eyes of men, authors of popular literature freely elaborated on what they believed went on behind closed doors. For

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<sup>856</sup> Ward, *The London Spy*, II, part V, p. 8.

<sup>857</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 85.

example, The Batchelars Banquet provided details of what the gossips' feast entailed. The husband reminded his wife, "you must remember that this night is our Gossips supper . . . therefore we must provide something for them especially because it is your upsitting, and a fortnight at the least since you were brought to bed."<sup>859</sup> The husband even insisted on the banquet because he did not want to break with custom.<sup>860</sup> In fact, the gossip's feast was only a female custom. It had no medical or religious connotations that accompanied it as the rest of the ceremonies of childbirth did. It existed solely in the realm of exclusive female sociability.

At the gossips feast, women ate, drank, and talked. The gossips' feast in The Batchelars Banquet described how the husband served a meal and drinks to a room full of women in the lying-in chamber;

down they sit and there spend the whole day, in breaking their fasts, dining, and in making an after-noon's repast . . . where they discharge their parts so well, in helping him away with his good Wine and Sugar . . . and so they merily passe the time away, prattling and tatling of many good matters.<sup>861</sup>

The women carelessly ate and drank the husband into debt. The equally misogynistic poem The Gossips Greeting (1620) described a similar scene for a woman's upsitting. One gossip remarked;

And as for wine, I am sure we cannot scape,  
Till we are stained with the purple grape.<sup>862</sup>

They ate and drank until they were "all drunke for company together."<sup>863</sup>

Narrators in both works complained about the lack of compassion women at

<sup>858</sup> Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, II, p. 146, 1 August 1661, pp. 150-1, 9 August 1661, p. 171 4 September 1661; and VIII, p. 177, 22 April 1667.

<sup>859</sup> Dekker, The Batchelars Banquet, plate C3.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*, plate C3<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>861</sup> *Ibid.*, plate D.

such gatherings had for the husband who had to pay for all and cater to the women. Women might not have had compassion for the husband because they felt they had a right to a sumptuous feast and drinking party as part of their traditional festivities. The one positive description of a women's feast in literature that has surfaced is the late seventeenth-century ballad Roger's Renown. It also portrayed woman eating good food, drinking until they were drunk, and talking. The author of the ballad bragged;

Forty wives there was at least, who fed on Cock and Bacon,  
The Nappy Ale still kept its rounds, and some cou'd tip up a Pottle,  
At last the Liquor got into their Crowns, & then they began to  
Twattle.

The women drank to the husband's health and then to his wife and newborn children. Finally they went home to have sex with their husbands.<sup>864</sup>

Women's feasts were more about eating, drinking, and socialising than they were a realistic challenge to patriarchal authority.

Even the negative accounts of gossips' feasts did not complain about the amount women drank. What authors primarily complained about was the women's disregard for the husband's expense and their willingness to disregard their own husbands' authority by talking about him behind his back. As one gossip put it, "we neede not now our husbands feare" since they were all safe within the lying-in room.<sup>865</sup> If these women challenged patriarchal authority, they did so by ignoring it. The husband in The Batchlars Banquet had to endure the "quibs & taunts" of the arriving gossips, and the two gossips in The Gossips Greeting spent their time

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<sup>862</sup> W. P., The Gossips Greeting: Or, A New Discovery of Such Females Meeting (London, 1620), plate B3<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>863</sup> *Ibid.*, plate C.

<sup>864</sup> "Roger's Renown," Roxburghe Ballads, VII. p. 236.

discussing marital matters their husbands would rather have kept private.<sup>866</sup>

Male authors worried that women talked about men inappropriately in general; the exclusively female sociability exacerbated their fears.

However, any feelings of empowerment faded at the end of the feast and the women returned to their husbands. The women's drinking behaviour was unthinking and selfish rather than a challenge to male authority. In all the works ultimately the husband decided to provide the delicate food and costly wine. If anything, his wife manipulated him into the task; she did not challenge his authority in the open. Furthermore, when women talked about their husbands, they made it clear that the all-female space made it somehow safe rather than malicious and dangerous gossip. Men might not have liked what women ate, drank, and said, but they did not challenge women's right to have their women's feast because in reality it posed no real threat to patriarchal authority.

### **The Churching**

The remaining ritual, while run by women, made room for men and the wider world. At the end of her month's lying-in a woman returned to her normal duties but often not without a formal conclusion. Many historians have written about churchings, women's purification, or women's thanksgivings and the political, religious, and gender issues involved in the actual ceremonies. Cressy notes that a woman's churching "in its customary operation . . . was *her* occasion, even if the church strove

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<sup>865</sup> W. P., The Gossips Greeting, plate B3<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>866</sup> Dekker, The Batchelars Banquet, plate C3<sup>4</sup>; and W. P., The Gossips Greeting, plate B3<sup>2</sup>-B4<sup>2</sup>.

repeatedly to make it theirs.”<sup>867</sup> Wilson also points out that churching remained popular with women throughout the political and religious controversies that surrounded it.<sup>868</sup> For example, Mary Evelyn always held her churching at home and used the parson of Eltham because, as her husband explained, their own parish minister “durst not (or perhaps would not) have officiated according to the forme & usage of the Church of England, to which I allwayes adhered.”<sup>869</sup> The Evelyns found a way around the religious confusion of the 1650s. The court case in 1597 involving Jane Minors of Barking might illustrate the answer to the continued popularity of some formal occasion to mark the end of a woman’s lying-in. According to court records, Mrs. Minors

very unwomanlike, came to be churched at the end of the said month, together with her child to be baptised, and feasted at a tavern 4 or 5 hours in the forenoon; and [in the] afternoon came to the church . . . to be seen . . . [and] went out of the church, unchurchd, unto the tavern again. And when she was spoken unto by the clerk to return to church again and to give God thanks after her delivery, she answered it was a ceremony.<sup>870</sup>

While Mrs. Minors did want her clergyman to church her, the tavern and its ensuing party were a higher priority. She was not alone, and other women also feasted and drank before they went to church. In 1635 Agnes Turner “had wine and cakes in the morning before she went to be churchd.”<sup>871</sup>

Women sought to keep these ceremonies alive because women enjoyed them, in spite of the ceremonies’ religious or political connotations.

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<sup>867</sup> Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 229.

<sup>868</sup> Wilson, “The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation,” pp. 88-9.

<sup>869</sup> Evelyn, The Diary of John Evelyn, III, p. 90, 7 November 1653.

<sup>870</sup> Wilson, “The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation,” p. 90.

<sup>871</sup> Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 201.

The descriptions of the festivities following a churching or thanksgiving reveal that many were family affairs attended by men and women alike. Henry Machyn attended a churching in 1561. After church he and the other guests went to the woman's house where he had "a grett dener . . . [attended by] mony worshephull lad[i]es and althermen wyffes and gentyll women and odur."<sup>872</sup> While he recorded the presence of women, Machyn was also in attendance and presumably not the only male. Various aristocratic couples attended Lady Strange's churching in 1589.<sup>873</sup> Mary Evelyn was churched after the births of all eight of her children, which spanned the years 1652 to 1669. Her husband recorded the occasions only briefly. His most elaborate entry was his first in which he noted that he "had divers friends Eng[lish] & french at dinner."<sup>874</sup> Some churchings involved whole families. Leonard Wheatcroft recorded attending a churching in 1671 not only with his wife but also two of their children.<sup>875</sup> The churching, or thanksgiving, was the first party the new family gave as re-united husband and wife. William Harrison suggested that these festivities in rural areas were often informal occasions attended by couples who brought their own food so "that the goodman of the house is not charged with anything saving bread, drink, sauce, houseroom, and fire." Urban churchings, he implied, were more expensive and formal occasions.<sup>876</sup> Churchings were more popular with men than the other childbirth festivals. Diarists looked back on them fondly. While women

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<sup>872</sup> Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 249 27 February 1561.

<sup>873</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 201.

<sup>874</sup> Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, III, p. 76, 21 September 1652.

<sup>875</sup> Wheatcroft, "The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover," p. 89.

ran the festivities associated with churchings, men had no cause to complain since they often joined in the celebrations.

Churchings were still female affairs, and unruly ones at that. Some authorities felt churching parties could get out of hand. At Leicester in 1568 and Kirkby Kendal in 1575 town authorities attempted to curb the size of churching parties. Leicester's ordinances restricted the length of the event by allowing "only one competent mess of meat provided for gossips and midwives." By restricting the amount of food, authorities hoped to curb the "superfluous charge and excess" of the party-going women.<sup>877</sup> The ordinances said nothing about men. Kirkby Kendal took a more direct approach by limiting to twelve the number of women allowed to accompany the new mother to the church as well as restricting the drinking and eating after the ceremony.<sup>878</sup> Again the emphasis was on curbing the women involved. The Batchelars Banquet provided a possible male point of view of churching festivities. In it Dekker complained that after a woman's churching, "she invited by some of her neighbours and friends, who [were] received [and] feasted with al kindnes, which banquet doth perhaps cost her husband more then would have kept the house a whole fortnight."<sup>879</sup> Though many men attended churchings, authorities concerned themselves with the behaviour, expense, and number of women in attendance.

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<sup>876</sup> William Harrison, The Description of England, Georges Edelen, ed. (Ithaca, 1968), p. 131.

<sup>877</sup> Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 201.

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>879</sup> Dekker, The Batchelars Banquet, plate E.



## Conclusions

Ultimately men accepted women's childbirth festivities because they did not threaten the position of men. Male authorities were concerned with the scale of women's festivities but not the fact of them. They couched their concerns in terms of financial obligations and healthy recoveries. Never did they really tackle women's unsupervised drinking behaviour head on. Instead they couched their concerns in terms of the "male" arenas of economics and medicine. The objections of magistrates and physicians never grew louder than indirect grumblings because women's festivities never posed a direct threat to the patriarchal social or political order. First, women constrained their festivities to one location. They were almost all held in the privacy of the woman's home and mostly in the female space of her lying-in chamber. Women cloistered their drinking activities into one small room rather than the public space of alehouses and taverns and the streets. Women circumvented patriarchal concerns about their behaviour by physically removing themselves from shared or public space. Unlike public drinking establishments, women founded their drinking space on secrecy and exclusivity. Men could only speculate on what happened behind closed doors.

Second, women's drinking space moved with the rhythms of marriage. Women got pregnant and nine months later they had their lying-in regardless of any wider gender issues. While frequent enough to forge lasting social bonds, women's festivities could never serve as real political or social challenges to patriarchal authority. Biological factors beyond the collective planning or control of women launched the festivities. The

rituals and accompanying drunken unruliness served as a release for pent up anti-male sentiment rather than a real challenge to authority. Each birth was a self-contained month of bonding. At the conclusion of the month, nothing prevented the re-establishment of patriarchal authority.

Men complained about women drinking in the lying-in chamber, but they limited their complaints to indirect attacks in popular fictions.

Literature, with few exceptions, portrayed individual men as the unfortunate victims of their wives' lying-in festivities. Diaries and letters gave no such indications. Furthermore, even in misogynistic tracts the husband never complained openly about his lot; the narrator, often his friend, complained on behalf of the long-suffering husband and men in general. Even in fiction husbands ultimately consented to serve their wives' friends, submitted to the whims of the midwife and nurse, and paid for all. Men were willing in literature and other sources to fulfil their customary duties in providing for their wives' traditional festivities. Their new offspring was a source of pride and their generosity at childbirth rituals a point of male honour.

Female unruliness and usurpation of control were less threatening when in celebrating childbirth the women inadvertently celebrated the "besieged" husband's virility as well. A husband's role as the head of the household was only temporarily "threatened" in the celebration of his sexual honour.

In the limited time and space of childbirth festivities women developed a specifically female drunken comportment. Throughout the various female rituals and the sources written on them the women followed one basic drinking pattern. They ate the best food they could afford, drank large quantities of good alcohol until they were intoxicated, and then they

talked, ostensibly about their own spheres of influence such as their neighbours, servants, and spouses. This pattern ran contrary to many of the ways contemporaries felt alcoholic intoxication affected people in more public drinking establishments. First, alcohol consumed in alehouses, taverns, and other public venues was not necessarily an accompaniment to food. It was often drunk for its own sake, not as part of a meal. However, at childbirth festivities alcohol was always associated with eating. Women in their own space used alcohol in a different way; they used it as an accompaniment to a meal rather than the one focus of their gathering. Second, hard drinking in alehouses and taverns was usually binge drinking resulting in the intoxicated person not being able to “speak or stand.” Even in misogynistic tracts on childbirth festivities women never got so drunk they could not speak. In fact, the very point of drinking for the women was so they could speak freely and often. Women in their own space seem to have drunk large amounts of alcohol but over longer periods of time, and so they did not drink themselves under the table. Third, people usually associated alcohol with feelings of lust and sexual activity. Yet authors and diarists made much of women’s talking at childbirth festivities but nothing about their sexual activity. Women might have participated in sexual banter or complained about their husband’s sexual performance, but no one wrote that they committed adultery in association with drinking at childbirth festivities. Women bonded with women at childbed festivities, and the impulse to do so was so powerful it seems to have over-ridden the urge for sexual activity so strongly linked to intoxication. If popularly perceived “normal” drunken comportment consisted of binge-drinking for the sake of

intoxication followed by either a loss of bodily control or by sexual activity, then women attending the drinking space of the lying-in chamber had a unique drunken comportment. Gossips incorporated their drinking into a meal, they drank continuously over a long period without excessive intoxication, and they expressed themselves loquaciously rather than sexually. When women created their own drunken comportment, it did not closely resemble the male dominated public paradigm at all.

## 9. Female Friendships in Public Spaces

“Gossips and frogs, they drink and talk.”<sup>880</sup>

Women’s friendships flourished in their daily activities as well as in the periodic festivities associated with childbirth. Except for the veil of secrecy and medical urgency that surrounded childbirth, women were open to the scrutiny and criticisms of men. Women had to construct their drinking patterns to drink in public without damaging their reputations. They drank together in alehouses and taverns as a matter of course. However, they left few records of their own detailing these events. Literature provides the best examples of attitudes towards all-female sociability. Male authors, though excluded from this female drinking space as much as possible, nevertheless constructed a clear model of the behaviour they expected in “gossip sessions.” First, women created a festive female drinking space by excluding men in the bastion of male space, the alehouse or tavern. Second, women defied their husbands’ authority by spending time and money on alcohol when they should have been working. Third, women changed their drinking habits and drank without inhibitions. Fourth, as a direct consequence of their intoxication they spoke freely and, while they talked of many things, their conversations always turned to their subordination to their husbands. Authors portrayed all female intoxication as leading to a general desire to escape the financial, sexual, or physical limits husbands set on their wives. Male authors

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<sup>880</sup> Morris Palmer Tilley, ed., A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor, 1950), p. 271.

expressed general fears that women were not content with their position in society. Furthermore, they expected alcohol to unleash women's discontent and facilitate their insubordination. Men wrote about how women used alcohol to empower themselves and take back control over their lives. Men labelled this as unruly insubordination. The few records women did leave behind indicate that women labelled it as support and friendship.

### **Perceptions of Female Sociability**

Only recently have historians begun to look at female friendship and sociability on a wider scale than the individual elite women who left their own records. In his article "Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England" Bernard Capp suggests that women's social networks "constituted a semi-separate domain outside the family structure and beyond male control."<sup>881</sup> Furthermore, Capp believes that women used these networks to accommodate, compromise with, and defy patriarchal constraints.<sup>882</sup> Accordingly, male sources were often hostile to female networking even though men did not prohibit their wives from establishing such networks. Men often benefited from the knowledge, experience, and support women shared among themselves. Linda Woodbridge in Women and the English Renaissance has also suggested that men envied female social networks. Marriage and childbirth served to strengthen female

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<sup>881</sup> Bernard Capp, "Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England," in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle, eds., The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England (London, 1996), pp. 129-30.

<sup>882</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

networks, whereas on the whole they weakened male networks.<sup>883</sup> Women gained independence through associating with other women. The more subordinate a woman became as she moved from maid or widow to wife, the stronger those networks became.

Even though men might have regarded female sociability unfavourably, historians have shown how female networks were crucial to women. Susan Cahn in Industry of Devotion points out that contemporaries considered women's friendships deep and strong, sometimes more so than their marriages. She cites the Flood in the Chester cycle of biblical plays presented annually throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Most of the plays were medieval but the scene containing Mrs. Noah and her friends was added during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>884</sup> When Mrs. Noah learned she was to leave her friends behind, she said to Noah,

They shall not drowne, by sayncte John  
and I may save there life.

They loved me full well, by Christe.  
But thou wilte lett them into thy chiste,  
elles rowe forthe, Noe, when thy liste  
and gett thee a newe wyfe.<sup>885</sup>

Mrs. Noah's loyalty to her friends surpassed her wifely subordination.

While ultimately Mrs. Noah boarded the ark, her friends drowned while singing a drinking song over one last round.<sup>886</sup> The gossips' drinking round was a sign of female friendship, solidarity, and insubordination to male

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<sup>883</sup> Linda Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 (Brighton, 1984), pp. 237-8.

<sup>884</sup> Mary Wack, "Women, Work, and Plays in an English Medieval Town," in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson, eds., Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England (New York, 1999), p. 34.

<sup>885</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44; see also Susan Cahn, Industry of Devotion: The Transformation of Women's Work In England, 1500-1660 (New York, 1987), p. 76.

<sup>886</sup> Wack, "Women, Work, and Plays in an English Medieval Town," p. 33.

priorities. Even unsuccessful female networks were important to women. Laura Gowing in Domestic Dangers details the disputes and insults exchanged between women. While she concentrates on female reputations, she also shows the importance of female networks by displaying the lengths women went to repairing these networks. They dragged their neighbours, husbands, and the church courts into disputes involving the existence or breakdown of female friendships. Even if two women hated each other, they did so with enough passion to inflict real damage on each other because the friendship networks they destroyed or repaired had real meanings.<sup>887</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford in Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720 claim that friendships allowed women to carry out their daily tasks as well as life-cycle rituals such as childbirth. Through such associations “women developed a shared consciousness and a different set of priorities from those of men.”<sup>888</sup> The research of these historians suggests that female social networks gave women independence and strength, a collective body of popular knowledge, and physical and mental support if their marriages or families were in trouble. The “work” of women, the maintaining of a household, depended on female friendships.

The many variations of female socialising were no doubt known only to women who never recorded them. In particular, women neglected to record the role alcohol played in female sociability. Several logical reasons explain this omission. First, diaries, especially published and edited diaries, recorded exceptional events rather than mundane sociability. No known

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<sup>887</sup> Laura Gowing, Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London (Oxford, 1996), *passim*.



female diarist wrote with the regularity of Samuel Pepys or even John Evelyn who filled eleven and six volumes respectively with the observations of their daily lives including a great deal about their drinking habits. Second, most women who kept diaries did so as a religious obligation.<sup>889</sup> They recorded their deliverance from dangers, their thanks to God, and sometimes their sins, but never their drinking. Drinking itself was not a sin; both God and government considered only drunkenness a sin. Third, the dominant male culture defined drunkenness, and therefore unless a woman could not “stand or go” or behaved along the lines of typical male drunkenness she could deny that she was drunk. One aspect of female drunken comportment men were quick to point out was that women denied their own drunkenness. Women did not brag about how much they drank. Diaries and letters suggest to historians how women saw their own behaviour. Drinking in quantities or circumstances that any future reader might have construed as “unruly” or improper women neglected to record in the same way that women simply omitted their own sexual experiences.

The talk and behaviour, that is, the “gossiping” of women, were also things women denied doing themselves. Gossiping was something “other” women did outside the rituals of childbirth. By the seventeenth century the term “gossip,” while retaining its original meaning, had also acquired its modern meaning; a gossip was a woman who engaged in frivolous conversations and activities. Women writing about themselves did not

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<sup>888</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720 (Oxford, 1998), p. 242 and *passim*.

<sup>889</sup> For a wider discussion on women's diaries see Sara Mendelson, “Stuart Women's Diaries,” in Mary Prior, ed., Women in English Society 1500-1800 (London, 1985), pp. 181-210.

often consider their words or actions frivolous. However labelled, most women did participate in female sociability. Gossip was a judgemental term but it did refer to socialising women. For example, in his diary in the mid-seventeenth century, Sir Humphrey Mildmay recorded with disgust that his wife was “a gossip.” He also described a group of women talking in church as “such a racket . . . as [he] never saw and desire to see no more such. God make them wiser.”<sup>890</sup> Mildmay disapproved of female sociability. One woman’s social networking was another woman’s gossiping, but their behaviour was the same. For instance, in Sociable Letters Margaret Cavendish first presented herself as above the “foolish” conversations of gossips.<sup>891</sup> Later she defended her own “Idle, Vain Discourse” and told of singing old ballads to her female friends.<sup>892</sup> Furthermore, the entire book consisted of letters concerning female socialising and behaviour. “Gossip” was simply a derogatory term used by both sexes to describe female sociability.

If women did not describe their own drunken sociability, at least men did. Popular literature portrayed public female sociability and drinking with a regular consistency. Behind the misogyny, humour, and veiled fears about female sociability was a consistent description of basic female public drinking. Historians can ascertain from male literary sources how women behaved without falling into the trap of believing the misogynistic slant of most satirical tracts. The “gossip” at the alehouse was a stock figure of

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<sup>890</sup> Philip Lee Ralph, Sir Humphrey Mildmay: Royalist Gentleman Glimpses of the English Scene 1633-1652 (New Brunswick, 1947), p. 109.

<sup>891</sup> Margaret Cavendish, Sociable Letters, James Fitzmaurice, ed. (New York, 1997), p. 129.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178, 217.

comedy in poems, character sketches, ballads, pamphlets, and drama. However, the frequency of her appearance in literature varied. She featured in sixteenth-century works such as John Skelton's The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng (c. 1521) and The Scole House of Women (1560).<sup>893</sup> Early in the seventeenth century Samuel Rowlands wrote two successful poems about socialising women, 'Tis Merry When Gossips Meete (1602) followed by A Crew of Kind Gossips (1613).<sup>894</sup> Thomas Dekker's Batchelar's Banquet (1603) also featured socialising women but as a misogynistic satire against them.<sup>895</sup> The gossip's appearance in literature increased through the Civil War and the Interim. From about the 1620s authors described the gossip in more detail, but her character and patterns of behaviour remained the same. For example, John Taylor managed to write three pamphlets on the subject of socialising women in the 1640s: The Juniper Lectures, The Crab-Tree Lectures and the refutation of the first two, The Women's Sharp Revenge.<sup>896</sup> After the Restoration gossiping women all but disappeared in new tracts. No new tracts written explicitly about female sociability appeared until the late seventeenth century when two black letter ballads

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<sup>893</sup> John Skelton, "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng," in John Scattergood, ed., John Skelton: The Complete English Poems (London, 1983), pp. 214-230; and Here Begynneth the Scole House of Women: Wherein Every Man May Reade a Goodly Prayse of the Condycons of Women (London, 1650).

<sup>894</sup> Samuel Rowlands, 'Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete (London, 1062); and Samuel Rowlands, A Crew of Kind Gossips, All Met to be Merrie: Complayning of Their Husbands, With Their Husbands Answeres in Their Owne Defence (London, 1613).

<sup>895</sup> Thomas Dekker, The Batchelars Banquet: Or A Banquet for Batchelars: Wherein is Prepared Sundry Daintie Dishes to Furnish Their Table, Curiously Drest, and Seriously Serued In. Pleasantly Discoursing the Variable Humours of Women, Their Quicknesse of Wittes, and Unsearchable Deceits (London, 1603).

<sup>896</sup> John Taylor, A Juniper Lecture, With a Description of All Sorts of Women, Good and Bad, 3ed edition (London, 1652); John Taylor, Divers Crab-tree Lectures. Expressing the Severall Languages that Srews Reat to Their Husbands, Either at Morning, Noone or Night (London, 1639); and John Taylor (alias Mary Tattle-Well & Joane Hit-Him-Home), The Womens Sharp Revenge; Or An Answer to Sir Seldome Sober, That Writ Those Railing Pamphelets Called the Juniper and Crab-Tree Lectures (London, 1640).

surfaced. Both The Gossips Meeting, Or, The Merry Market-Women of Taunton (1672-95) and The Merry Gossips Vindication, To the Groats Worth of Good Council Declaration (1672-95) were sung to the tune of “Digby’s Farewel.”<sup>897</sup> The Merry Gossips Vindication was an answer to the ballad A Groatsworth of Good Counsel For A Penny; Or, The Bad Husbands Repentance (1672-95), which was against male drinking practices.<sup>898</sup> However, publishers reprinted poems, ballads, and pamphlets throughout the period. For example, Rowland’s ‘Tis Merry When Gossips Meete was published until 1675. Several historians have attempted to explain an increase in hostility towards assertive or unruly women from the 1620s to the 1640s.<sup>899</sup> Their work suggests that, while acknowledging that men and women always contested the gender system, the increasing social unrest leading to the Civil War might have increased male interest in female threats to a patriarchal social order. Also men might have had a reason to fear female power. Women could have presented themselves as less willing to submit to male priorities as more general political and economic stability crumbled.

Male authors found female sociability unnecessary at best and threatening at worst. Woodbridge suggests that men felt threatened because they felt compelled to alter their own friendships after marriage whereas

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<sup>897</sup> The Gossips Meeting, Or: The Merry Market-Women of Taunton (London, 1674-79?); and “The Merry Gossips Vindication, To the Groats Worth of Good Council Declaration,” in English Ballads (London, 1674-79?), British Library, p. 150.

<sup>898</sup> A Groatsworth of Good Counsel For A Penny; Or, The Bad Husbands Repentance (London?, 1672-95?).

<sup>899</sup> For example, Capp, “Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England,” p. 122; Martin Ingram, “Scolding Women Cucked or Washed”: A Crisis in Gender Relations in Early Modern England?” in Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, eds., Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England (London, 1994), pp. 48-

women's could "absorb such a formidable male intrusion as marriage with scarcely a ripple."<sup>900</sup> Elizabeth Foyster in Manhood in Early Modern England suggests men feared their wives spoke about private matters that might have damaged male reputations.<sup>901</sup> They feared that women valued the confidence of their female friends over their husbands. Through their friendships women continued to have a life, not only outside their family, but often in competition with it. For example, the author of the advice book Matrimoniall Honovr (1650) advised women to be subject to their husbands in every way. In particular he warned that, "a gadder, a gossip, one, whose heeles are over her neighbours thresholde, and, being there, is in her Element, licentious, and talkative, is no subject wife."<sup>902</sup> Women's friendships were incompatible with wifely subjection. Furthermore, he indicated such women were also drinking by comparing them to men at the ale-bench.<sup>903</sup> Descriptive literature also linked female sociability and drinking. In The Seven Sorowes That Women Haue When Theyr Husbandes Be Dead (1560) Robert Copland claimed new widows complained about their loneliness to persuade their female friends to visit them for a drink.<sup>904</sup> The Scole House of Women (1560) claimed women feigned illnesses for the same reason.<sup>905</sup> These authors objected to

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80; and Keith Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects," Past and Present, 13 (1958), p. 44.

<sup>900</sup> Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance, p. 239; see also Elizabeth A. Foyster, Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage (London, 1999), p. 129.

<sup>901</sup> Foyster, Manhood in Early Modern England, p. 60.

<sup>902</sup> D. R., Matrimoniall Honovr: Or, The Mutuall Crowne and Comfort of Godly, Loyall, and Chaste Marriage (London, 1650), pp. 252, 277.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>904</sup> Robert Copland, The Seven Sorowes That Women Haue When Theyr Husbandes Be Dead (London, 1650), plates Bvi-Ci.

<sup>905</sup> Here Begynneth the Scole House of Women, plate Alll.

women's lack of due subjugation and the form it took. They glossed over the very idea that women felt they needed an excuse to be social and objected to female sociability in principle. Ned Ward's poem "The Character of a Gossip" (1700) described a woman "too Stubborn to be Bow'd" who loved wine, ale, and brandy, drank with her friends until she was drunk, lied to her husband, and boasted to her friends about her mastery over him.<sup>906</sup> Her friends and her drinking took priority over her marital duties and subjugation. Male authors complained that women turned to other women to alleviate their sorrow, sickness, or just their boredom. They displayed no sympathy for women who felt a husband was not enough company and found no relief in sober subjugation.

The biggest complaint authors voiced about female sociability was that it was a waste of time and money. Richard West's Court of Conscience (1607) warned "makebates & tatling gossips" that,

To earne your liuing should be all your care,  
 And not by th'ale-house fire still to lurke.  
 Gaging your husbands goods for Ale and Beere,  
 Youl' sell your smocks & kerchers for good cheere.<sup>907</sup>

Authors were concerned that women pawned the symbols of their married status and occupation to pay for their drinks. For example, Elynour Rummyng's customers pawned a wedding ring, their husbands' hoods and caps, and household tools such as a spinning wheel, a cradle, and sewing

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<sup>906</sup> Edward [Ned] Ward, The London Spy. The Second Volume. Part III (London, 1700), pp. 15-6.

<sup>907</sup> Richard West, The Court of Conscience Or Dick Whippers Sessions. With the Order of His Arraigning and Punishing of Many Notorious, Dissembling, Wicked, and Vitious Liuers In This Age (London, 1607), plate F.

equipment.<sup>908</sup> Women's sociable drinking had the power to undermine the economic and emotional stability of a marriage. The chorus of The Merry Gossips Vindication advised that men must have their wives' permission to thrive. Without it their wives would "lye at the Ale-house and consume all their gains."<sup>909</sup> Authors portrayed female sociability as an addictive, all-consuming pastime that took priority over wifely duties to their husbands and households. While some women no doubt did drink to excess, such a broad generalisation indicated that men objected to women occasionally putting their extra-marital friendships over their duties in marriage.

Men objected to women drinking socially regardless of the cost to the household. When Richard Brathwait advised women on how to conduct themselves among their female friends in The English Gentlewoman (1613), he warned against gossiping, particularly when it coincided with excessive drinking.<sup>910</sup> Contemporaries allowed less leeway for women who drank to excess than they did men. The female writer of Ester Hath Hang'd Haman (1617) pointed out the double standard in public drinking behaviour when she proclaimed, "What a hateful thing is it to see a woman overcome with drinke, when as in men it is noted for a signe of good fellowship?"<sup>911</sup> She indicated that men did not allow "good fellowship" or sociability as an excuse for drunkenness in women. Other writers such as

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<sup>908</sup> Skelton, "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng", pp. 214-230, line 280, 283, 285, 296, 384, *passim*.

<sup>909</sup> "The Merry Gossips Vindication," p. 150.

<sup>910</sup> Richard Brathwait, The English Gentlewoman, Drawne Out to the Full Body: Expressing What Habilliments Doe Best Attire Her, What Ornaments Doe Best Adorne Her, What Complements Doe Best Accomplish Her (London, 1631), p. 51. The colour of the wine refers to the common practice of adding water to wine. The less water, the more colour and also the more alcohol the wine contained.

Anthony Gibson in A Womans Woorth Defended Against All the Men in the World (1599) also acknowledged the double standard in drinking. He compared male and female drinking patterns in Germany, “The empire of all drunkenesse and servitude of the sober.” He claimed women did not often drink to excess “where contrariwise the men, they hardly respect any other exercise, then tossing & emptying of the pottes.”<sup>912</sup> Female “good fellowship” was not as socially acceptable as was male.

Authors included expectations about female drinking in their poems, pamphlets, and plays. They indicated that women were not only familiar with the expectation that women drank less than men in public social situations, but also that women conformed to these expectations willingly. In ‘Tis Merry When Gossips Meete the widow admitted that if men were present she would drink less. The maid also feared that the copious amounts of alcohol they consumed meant they “drinke like men.”<sup>913</sup> These women acknowledged that in the presence of men they conformed to the double standard in drinking. The author of the pamphlet The Maids Petition To the Honourable Members of Both Houses (1647) promised that if Parliament allowed servant girls a holiday they would behave themselves, including “drinking no more then well satisfie nature, by way of sypping, abhorring that staggering vice of Drunkenesse.” Furthermore, their good example would “dam up [the] overflowing cupping” of the male

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<sup>911</sup> Ester Sowernam, pseud., Ester Hath Hang’d Haman: or An Answere to a Lewd Pamphlet, Entituled The Arraignment of Women With the Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Husbands (London, 1617), p. 24.

<sup>912</sup> Anthony Gibson, A Womans Woorth, Defended Against All the Men in the World. Prooving Them to be More Perfect, Excellent and Absolute in All Vertuous Actions, Then Any Man of What Quality So Euer. (London, 1599), p. 29.

<sup>913</sup> Rowlands, ‘Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete, plate C and C3<sup>2</sup>.



apprentices.<sup>914</sup> The author assumed women consented to moderate public drinking in mixed company. Authors who condoned drinking expected men to consume large amounts of alcohol in public, while they expected women to drink daintily and abhor drunkenness.<sup>915</sup> In Thomas Shadwell's The Woman-Captain (1680) a woman disguised as a man risked blowing her cover. The other men invited her to an evening's drinking bout, and she feared she could not drink enough wine to pass as a man.<sup>916</sup> William Congreve's The Way of the World (1700) suggested men felt female carousing impinged on male drinking prerogatives. Mirabell, a young man negotiating marriage with his girlfriend, advised her that while she could have female friends over for tea, they were not to drink "orange brandy, all aniseed, cinnamon, citron, and Barbadoes waters, together with ratafia and the most noble spirit of clary."<sup>917</sup> He feared that by doing so the women might "encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows." His future wife had no objections.<sup>918</sup> Alcohol made people bold and unruly and only men had the right to be so. Men coveted hard drinking as their pastime. Female hard drinking threatened male social space and activities.

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<sup>914</sup> The Maids Petition To the Honourable Members of Both Houses. Or, The Humble Petition of Many Thousand of the Well-Affected, Within and Without the Lines of Communication, Virgins, Maids, and Other Young Women Not Married &c. And in the Behalf of the Whole Kingdome, For Their Lawful Days of Recreation. With Their Declaration, to Hold Out Stifly and to Comply With the Apprentices or Others for Their Tollerable Tolleration. Presented on Tuesday the 9. of August the 2nd Recreation Day for Apprentices. 1647 (London, 1647), pp.2-3.

<sup>915</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>916</sup> Thomas Shadwell, The Woman-Captain (London, 1680), p. 49.

<sup>917</sup> William Congreve, The Way of the World, Kathleen M. Lynch, ed. (London, 1965), p. 87-8.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

## Women Drinking in Public Spaces

Men did not have an exclusive hold on alehouses and taverns, and women did frequent public drinking houses. Clark estimates that about 4% of the alehouse customers in Kent and 7% of the customers in Dorchester were women.<sup>919</sup> Clark bases his estimates on magistrates' records. He does not take into account the possibility that magistrates did not always consider women reliable enough to testify in court. Other records suggest women frequented public drinking establishments more often than Clark estimates. For example, the Swiss traveller Thomas Platter remarked at the end of the sixteenth century that, "the women as well as the men, in fact more often than they, will frequent the taverns or alehouses for enjoyment."<sup>920</sup> Platter might have exaggerated. Historians will never get an accurate picture of how many women were in alehouses and taverns. However, the literature was clear that they did not always belong there. In a patriarchal society men could exclude women from public drinking establishments with the force of social pressure. Despite male resistance, women had enough power and desire to carve out their own drinking enclaves in male drinking spaces. Men and women did not drink alongside one another with ease. Instead, groups of women created a private female space within the alehouse. Women kept to themselves, avoided much of what authorities considered problematic drinking, and frequented establishments during daylight hours when authorities did not enforce restrictions on opening times. Their drinking patterns made them almost invisible in court records.

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<sup>919</sup> Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 126.

<sup>920</sup> Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance*, p. 243, n. 11.

Women used alehouse or tavern space in their own way. Clark discusses how both men and women used alehouses to sell or pawn goods, conduct business, or find food and shelter while travelling.<sup>921</sup> Also, like men, women used alehouses to drink and socialise. The difference was not in the presence of women so much as in how women behaved in alehouses and taverns. Groups of women went to drinking houses, not to socialise with other patrons, but to be together. In 'Tis Merry When Gossips Meete the three women met by chance and went into the nearest tavern where they took a private room to drink a pint of wine together.<sup>922</sup> The “two Gossiping women” in John Taylor’s Divers Crab-tree Lectures met in the market and moved to a private room in a tavern to drink sack and talk.<sup>923</sup> The three friends who met at the bakehouse in The Gossips Greeting went off to a “good Tauerne in some honest streete, /Where for an houre [they] may priuate sit.”<sup>924</sup> While they sat in the bastion of male space, men were unwelcome intruders on their sociability. Other pamphlets and poems portrayed larger groups of women out socialising together.<sup>925</sup> Historians can only speculate on why women really went to alehouses and taverns in groups. They might have gone to drinking establishments in larger groups in order to defend their reputations. They also might have sat apart from male customers to prevent accusations of sexual impropriety reaching their husbands’ ears. They had enough witnesses to their behaviour among their

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<sup>921</sup> Clark, The English Alehouse, pp. 135-39.

<sup>922</sup> Rowlands, 'Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete, plate B4.

<sup>923</sup> Taylor, Divers Crab-tree Lectures, pp. 117-8.

<sup>924</sup> W. P., The Gossips Greeting: Or, A New Discovery of Such Females Meeting (London, 1620), plate C<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>925</sup> For example, Rowlands, A Crew of Kind Gossips, and William Goddard, Satirycall Dialogue Or A Sharplye- Inveciue Conference, Between Alexander the Great, and That Truelye Woamn- Hater Diogynes (London, 1616), both have groups of six gossips.

companions that no one could falsely accuse them of any sexual impropriety. Also they might have isolated themselves from male company because it was an unwelcome intrusion on their freedom to talk and drink without patriarchal constraints.

Contemporaries portrayed women drinking during the day whereas alehouse haunting at night was still the prerogative of men and their sexually questionable female companions. In 'Tis Merry When Gossips Meete, Diverse Crab-tree Lectures and The Gossips Greeting the women met by chance for a drink while out doing household chores. Other women planned to meet during the day for a drink. The ballad The Gossips Meeting, Or: The Merry Market-Women of Taunton told the story of four women who met for a drink after they had been at the market.<sup>926</sup> Even when not out working, women met to drink during the day. In the ballad Fowre Wittie Gossips Disposed to be Merry Refused Muddy Ale, to Drinke a Cup of Sherrie the women met to drink sack because their husbands were still in bed with hangovers from drinking ale together the previous night.<sup>927</sup> Sometimes court records provided glimpses of women's drinking activities. A market woman, Elizabeth Wilson of West Ham, told the court in 1623 how, after she sold her family's produce in the city, she went to the King's Head near Leadenhall to drink wine with her gossips before heading home.<sup>928</sup> Women integrated their drinking into their daily chores. They arrived at the alehouse after they had been at the market. They left in order

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<sup>926</sup> The Gossips Meeting.

<sup>927</sup> "Fowre Wittie Gossips Disposed to be Merry Refused Muddy Ale, to Drinke a Cup of Sherrie," in W. G. Day, ed., The Pepys Ballads: catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge (Cambridge, 1987), I, pp. 436-7.

<sup>928</sup> Capp, "Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England," p. 128.

to finish their chores or get home to their husbands.<sup>929</sup> Both literature and court records suggest female drinking patterns incorporated a great degree of self-control.

Authors who described women's "nature" and in particular those who gave advice on suitable wives were very clear that "good women" did not make a habit of drinking and socialising with other women in public. In his Praise and Dispraise of Women C. Pyrrye "dispraised" women who were "oft dronken with good ale," whereas he "praised" the woman who not only "drinckes no more then doth suffice" but also "abrode she doth not reuell much."<sup>930</sup> Even female authors associated female sociability with bad wives. Margaret Cavendish reported that a young woman she knew would make a good wife because, among other things, she was sober, obedient, and did not "desire variety of Company."<sup>931</sup> Authors juxtaposed social drinking and operating a successful household. Thomas Tusser in The Points of Housewifery, United to the Comfort of Husbandry (1580) compared "Good Housewifery and Evil." He claimed that,

Ill housewifery moveth with gossip to spend,  
Good housewifery loveth her household to tend.<sup>932</sup>

Socialising in public with female companions and running a successful household were mutually exclusive activities.

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<sup>929</sup> W. P., The Gossips Greeting, plate C3; and The Gossips Meeting.

<sup>930</sup> C. Pyrrye, The Praise and Dispraise of Women, Very Fruitfull to the Well Disposed Minde, and Delectable to the Reader Therof (London, 1569?), plates AVI, CI<sup>2</sup> and CII.

<sup>931</sup> Cavendish, Sociable Letters, p. 22.

<sup>932</sup> Thomas Tusser, "The Points of Housewifery, United to the Comfort of Husbandry," in Joan Larsen Klein, ed., Daughters, Wives & Widows: Writings by Men About Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640 (Urbana, 1992), p. 229.

Authors recommended judging a woman's worth by her sociability, including her drinking. In 1619 Richard Brathwait advised his bachelor readers,

Chuse thee no liquorish Gossip, whose delight  
Is how to please her taste, for seldome can  
One that's exposed to her appetite  
Conforme her to the state of any man,  
Which to an honest minde would be a spite,  
That when thou wish's thy wife a competent  
Fitting her ranke, she will not be content.<sup>933</sup>

Sociable, drinking women made unruly, insubordinate wives who refused to accept the social and economic restraints their husband placed on them.

Almost fifty years later Lawrence Price in The Vertuous Wife is the Glory of Her Husband (1667) advised that, "a Vertuous wife, is a map of sobriety . . . [and] she scorns the company of tatling Gossips."<sup>934</sup> After choosing a wife, the husband was responsible for ensuring that his wife stayed out of the loop of female socialising. An Elizabethan ballad portrayed a husband lecturing his wife,

be you content;  
You shall to church and to market go,  
And to neighbours to, at time conuenient,  
But not to gossip, the truth is so; --  
Tauernes to haunt? no wyfe, no, no!  
Nor yet alehouses, with Jacke nor Gyll.<sup>935</sup>

The wife lost her argument with her husband because she was a "good" wife and submitted to his authority. Good women had to restrain themselves from female sociability, and good husbands ensured they did so.

<sup>933</sup> Richard Brathwait, A Happy Husband. To Which Is Adjoyned the Good Wife (London, 1619), plate B3.

<sup>934</sup> Lawrence Price, The Vertuous Wife is the Glory of Her Husband; or, A Good Woman in Her Proper Colours (London, 1667), p. 12.

<sup>935</sup> "A Merry Balade, How a Wife Entreated Her Husband to Have Her Owne Wyl," in Joseph Lilly, ed., A Collection of Sevety-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides;

Therefore, every woman out drinking with her female friends in an alehouse or tavern was by definition insubordinate to her husband's authority.

### Women's Drunken Behaviour

Authors portrayed women as drinking large quantities of alcohol during their socialising. Rowlands had his women in 'Tis Merry When Gossips Meete order wine every few stanzas and still complain about slow service. The three of them drank about six pints of claret and two pints of sack.<sup>936</sup> In A Crew of Kind Gossips the six women drank 5s. in claret.<sup>937</sup> Given the average wine prices of the early seventeenth century, they drank around four pints each.<sup>938</sup> The tapster in The Gossips Braule presented three women with a bill for "three shillings Strong Waters, two shillings in Ale, and twelve Pence Tobacco" in 1655.<sup>939</sup> Given that a gallon of ale was around 5d., they drank over four gallons of ale alone.<sup>940</sup> Such large amounts were amplified by the indications that women spent less time drinking than men did. Men caroused well into the early hours of the morning. Women generally drank for only a few hours. In The Gossips Meeting, Or: The Merry Market-Women of Taunton four women drank twelve pots of ale after their day shopping in the markets and before they went home to make dinner.<sup>941</sup> Other sources were more specific about the time women spent drinking. The half a dozen gossips in A Strange Wonder

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Printed in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, Between the Years 1559 and 1597 (London, 1867), pp. 129-132.

<sup>936</sup> Rowlands, 'Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete, *passim*.

<sup>937</sup> Rowlands, A Crew of Kind Gossips, plate E.

<sup>938</sup> Claret was not an expensive wine. See chapter 2 for wine prices.

<sup>939</sup> The Gossips Braule, or, The Women Wear the Breeches. A Mock Comedy (London, 1655), p. 8.

<sup>940</sup> See chapter 2 for ale prices.

or a Wonder in a Woman (1642) drank fourteen or fifteen shillings worth of wine over the space of two or three hours.<sup>942</sup> This would have amounted to almost five pints of medium-priced wine each.<sup>943</sup> In the play The Richmond Heiress (1693) four women shared twelve pints of wine and a bottle of spirits over a two-hour period.<sup>944</sup> The literature probably exaggerated the amount women drank for dramatic effect. However, all authors agreed that women consumed enough in their socialising to get drunk.

Drunkenness was fundamental to female social gatherings in alehouses and taverns. The women did not part company until alcohol had affected their behaviour. Elynour Rummyng's customers all came to get drunk. One in particular

as she was drynkyng,  
She fyll in a wynkyng  
With a barlyhood;  
She pyst where she stood.  
Than began she to wepe,  
And forthwith fell on slepe.<sup>945</sup>

She lost all control of her bodily functions and passed out. Among the laws of drinking described in Philocothonista, or, The Drunkard Opened, Dissected, and Anatomized (1635) was a rule for gossips. It required that they split their bottle of spirits until the last one was standing, and then she might claim the rest of the bottle.<sup>946</sup> Other portrayals of socialising women

<sup>941</sup> The Gossips Meeting.

<sup>942</sup> I. H., A Strange Womder or a Wonder in a Woman, Wherein is Plainly Expressed the True Nature of Most Women (London, 1642), p. 3.

<sup>943</sup> See chapter 2 for wine prices.

<sup>944</sup> Thomas D'Urfey, The Richmond Heiress; Or, a Woman Once in the Right (London, 1693), p. 13.

<sup>945</sup> Skelton, "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng," pp. 214-230, line 370-75.

<sup>946</sup> Thomas Heywood, Philocothonista, or, The Drunkard Opened, Dissected, and Anatomized (London, 1635), p. 68.



also noted their impaired motor skills. The gossips in A Strange Wonder or a Wonder in a Woman were “scarce able to stand on their Legs.”<sup>947</sup>

Another group of gossips in the ballad Choice of Inventions drank until two were drunk, and the third was so drunk she fell into the alehouse fire.<sup>948</sup>

Women in literature drank to the point of physical impairment as part of their public sociability. Men heartily disapproved. After drinking ale and brandy, the women in The Merry Gossips Vindication, To the Groats Worth of Good Council Declaration

tottor and wattor and fall in the Dirt  
then the Boys they will shout and them will make Sport  
Sometimes cry a Nave and sometimes cry a Whore  
to see them so drunk then they cry out the more,  
It’s an inconvenience for a Woman do so  
to take so much drink that she hardly can go<sup>949</sup>

Drunk women were objects of ridicule. Boys in the street made fun of them. However drunk women in literature did not start brawls, abuse hosts and hostesses, or do anything to get themselves arrested. Even in the literature written against them women seemed to handle their drunkenness. Men judged their behaviour as embarrassing, but it was not destructive or violent.

Drunk women violated male ideals of feminine beauty and behaviour. Authors considered drunk women so unattractive that Richard Allestree in The Ladies Calling (1676) suggested that a woman’s drunkenness might protect her chastity if “the loathsomness of the one, prevent attempts on the other.”<sup>950</sup> Alcohol might provoke lust in men and women, but too much

<sup>947</sup> I. H., A Strange Wonder or a Wonder in a Woman, p. 3.

<sup>948</sup> “Choice of Inventions,” in The Roxburghe Ballads (London, 1873) I, p. 144.

<sup>949</sup> “The Merry Gossips Vindication,” p. 150.

<sup>950</sup> Richard Allestree, The Ladies Calling (Oxford, 1676), p. 15.

alcohol made women abhorrent to men. Skelton's final words on Elynour Rummyng dedicated the poem to "all women who are either very fond of drinking, or who bear the dirty stain of filth, or who have the sordid blemish of squalor, or who are marked out by garrulous loquacity . . . . Drunken, filthy, sordid, gossiping woman, let her run here."<sup>951</sup> Skelton described drunk women as physically repulsive in their intoxication. Not all authors were so direct. Two servants in John Fletcher's The Woman's Prize (1646) described a woman so drunk among her female friends that she fell out of her chair. They commented that she was attractive but then detailed her ale-induced belching.<sup>952</sup> The ultimate symbol of unfemininity in the 1620s was *Hic Mulier*, the cross-dressing woman. The pamphlet Muld Sacke: Or The Apologie of Hic Mulier: To the Late Declamation Against Her (1620) claimed that, "she who sitteth a gossiping till she be drunke, is, *Hic Mulier*."<sup>953</sup> Male authors found women drinking with other women until they were drunk not just unattractive but unfeminine and unnatural.

Authors did not generally accuse women drinking among women of lascivious behaviour. Instead, drunkenness made women talk among themselves. The author of The Scole House of Women claimed women "babe fast, and nothyng forget."<sup>954</sup> George Web, author of The Araignment of an Unruly Tongue (1619), complained about slander in society at large. He also linked slander to drinking and women by placing an unruly tongue in "Ale-houses, Tavernes, Play-houses, Bake-houses,

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<sup>951</sup> Skelton, "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng," p. 452.

<sup>952</sup> John Fletcher, "The Woman's Prize; or The Tamer Tamed," in Fredson Bowers, ed., The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon (London, 1979), IV, pp. 64-5.

<sup>953</sup> Muld Sacke: Or The Apologie of Hic Mulier: To the Late Declamation Against Her (London, 1620), plate B2.

Wooll lofts, and Gossip meetings.”<sup>955</sup> Male authors often had their female characters describe their own loquaciousness. One woman noted in William Goddard’s Satirycall Dialogve Or A Sharplye- Invectiue Conference, Between Alexander the Great, and That Truelye Woman- Hater Diogynes (1616) that,

as at our meate we Satt twas hard to knowe  
Whether our teeth or tongues, did fastest goe.<sup>956</sup>

She also noted they were all drunk. Whereas men who were drunk among other men became ruled by their lust, women drunk among other women became ruled by their tongues. A character sketch first printed in 1616 and re-issued in 1631 described “A Gossip”:

She carries her bladder in her braine; that, is full; her braine in her tongues end; that she empties: It was washed down thither with pintes of Muscadine; and being there, she looses it like urine, to ease her kidneyes: which would otherwise melt with anger, if she might not speake freely.<sup>957</sup>

Alcohol inverted the biological order of women. Their heads became full of urine that they must expel through their tongues. Women were no more in control of their talking while drunk than any normal person was of needing to urinate while drinking. The metaphor of female tongues as uncontrollable continued throughout the period. The pamphlet A Strange Wonder in a Woman described women drinking together “in the hight of their Cupps, shal . . . Every one Iustifie themselves . . . Truely Goshopp . . .

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<sup>954</sup> Scole House of Women, p. Aiii.

<sup>955</sup> George Web, The Araignment of an Unruly Tongue (London, 1619), p. 50.

<sup>956</sup> Goddard, Satirycall Dialogve Or A Sharplye- Invectiue Conference, p. D2.

<sup>957</sup> John Stephens the Younger, New Essays and Characters. With a New Satyre in Defense of the Common Law, and Lawyers: Mixed with Reprooffe Against Their Enemy Ignoramus (London, 1631), p. 367. This is a reprint of the edition from 1616.

the Tongue is an unruly Member.”<sup>958</sup> This metaphor was so strong in The Gossips Braule that the author introduced the three female characters as their intoxicated tongues:

All to try the Mastery of their Tongues,  
New wet their Whistles, Barly-Oyl their Lungs,  
Then rais'd with Choller, Spleen and Gaule,  
Their Tongues advance, and then begins the Braule.<sup>959</sup>

Women's drunken comportment replaced aggressive sexual pursuits with aggressive speech. Women might well have been more verbally aggressive when intoxicated. However, a voracious sexual appetite was not part of all-female drunken comportment.

Alcohol determined not only how much women talked but also the subject of their conversations. Overwhelmingly gossips in literature talked about men and how they felt and acted as their subordinates. The poem The Scole House of Women from 1560 set the scene of women drinking “A gossyps cuppe” or “Brewes of the best, in a halfpenny pot” and then detailed women complaining about the inadequacies of their husbands and advising each other on how to deal with their men;

Thus lerne the yonger, of the elders guiding  
Day by day, keypyng suche scoles  
The symple men, they make as foles.”<sup>960</sup>

The pamphlet Westward for Smelts (1620) was the story of “a company of Westerne Fishwiues . . . with their heads full of Wine” who told five stories about female insubordination and mastery over men.<sup>961</sup> Authors did not

<sup>958</sup> I. H., A Strange Wonder or a Wonder in a Woman, p.3.

<sup>959</sup> The Gossips Braule, title page.

<sup>960</sup> Scole House of Women, p. Aiii.

<sup>961</sup> Kinde Kit of Kinstone, Westward for Smelts. Or, The Water-mans Fare of Mad-merry Western Wenches, Whose Tongues Albeit Like Bell-clappers, They Never Leave Ringing, Yet Their Tales are Sweet, and Will Much Content You. (London, 1620), p. A3.

portray any of this as coincidental. A female character in John Fletcher's Rule a Wife and Have a Wife (1624) called together three "old Ladies" to counsel her on whom she should marry. On arrival her maid advised them to

drink a good cup or two,  
To strengthen [their] understanding.

To which one replied, "and good wine breeds good counsell, wele yeeld to ye."<sup>962</sup> They then advised their hostess to marry her most pliable and easily deceived suitor so she could do as she pleased. Female drinking in literature signified insubordination and the undermining of traditional male authority. Alcohol was the key ingredient and it changed the conversation. Another group of women "began to change their discourse, as the inspiration of good drink, and the volubility of their tongues gave them utterance."<sup>963</sup> The conversation turned into an account of the shortcomings of one woman's four husbands. Two themes ran through all of these female conversations. First, women discussed the problems of being subordinate to a man in marriage. Second, they developed a practical plan to circumvent female subordination. Women drinking among women were not ruled by their lust. The advice they gave was quite the opposite. Their insubordination was related to escaping, if only for a short time, from the domination of men.

Authors portrayed women as not only aware of their drinking behaviour but also willing to use it to empower themselves and verbally dominate their husbands. In John Taylor's pamphlet A Juniper Lecture a

woman advised her daughter how to be successful in getting her own way with her husband. She recommended that,

your tongue be sharp, quick, nimble and can hold out untired. For the which purpose you may whet your wits with a cup or two extraordinary of nappy Ale, strong Waters, Sack, or some other kind of Husse-cap drink that may quicken your spirits, and elevate your braine... it is not amiss to liquor your tongue, it will go with the more ease, (like a new oyl'd Jack) for it will run so nimble, that *you* shall hardly know what it says, or to what end it runs so fast.<sup>964</sup>

Women's tongues overpowered them when they drank. Alcohol transformed women as it empowered them. They became verbally powerful and insubordinate but they were not quite themselves. The implication was that, if these women had not been drinking, they would have controlled their speech. The difference between groups of drinking women and truly insubordinate women was that these "gossips" were only insubordinate on occasion. All women were verbally insubordinate towards male domination when they drank in packs, but when they were sober and alone the majority of them returned to their role as the subordinates of men. John Fletcher's seventeenth-century play The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed illustrated this idea. A group of women banned together and blockaded themselves into a house to negotiate with their strict husbands and fathers. After successful negotiations fuelled by a large, boisterous drinking party the women returned to their subordinate and sober positions in their respective households. Communal female insubordination engendered

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<sup>962</sup> John Fletcher, "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife" [1624], in Fredson Bowers, ed., The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon (London, 1985), VI, p.510.

<sup>963</sup> Taylor, A Juniper Lecture, pp.124-5.

<sup>964</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.51-2.

communal female drunkenness as the women celebrated their defiance of men.<sup>965</sup> To keep them from insubordination, keep them from alcohol.

## Conclusions

Men wrote about female insubordination because it was the topic in female conversation, or at least imagined conversation, which interested them. The literature on female drinking companions reveals more about male fears of drinking women than it does about drinking women. However, male fears imposed meaning on female drinking sessions. If women wished to challenge patriarchal authority they knew they could do so by drinking in alehouses with female friends because men perceived it as insubordinate behaviour. Men might have created the stereotype of the drunken gossiping woman but real women could use the stereotype for their own purposes. As Foyster points out, "What women actually talked about matters less to us than what men thought was the content of female gossip."<sup>966</sup> The content of drunken conversations in literature revealed male anxieties about female drinking patterns. Men believed their wives did not engage in inappropriate insubordinate talk unless under the altering intoxication of alcohol. The female space of drunk women interested men. Openly misogynist authors disliked anything women did that their fathers or husbands had not sanctioned, but on the whole male authors were not hostile to the temporary insubordination drinking engendered among women. Most male authors were not radically misogynist and in fact poked

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<sup>965</sup> John Fletcher, "The Woman's Prize; or The Tamer Tamed," IV, pp. 1-148, *passim*.

<sup>966</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, p. 65.

fun at dominating husbands as much as shrewish insubordinate wives. Women drinking with other women might not have been ideal, but they were also not beyond the boundaries of acceptability. None of the women cuckolded their husbands, although they might talk about it. They did not cross the boundary of irrevocable insubordination towards their husband's authority. These women also did not cross the boundary of public order and honesty. Authors often concluded their tales with a discussion of paying the reckoning, not just as a way of displaying how much they drank but of pointing out that these women still fit into society. They might be insubordinate, but they were not dishonest and, when sober, they were redeemable.

The form this mild drunken insubordination took consisted of three elements. First, women impinged on the male prerogative of public drinking and drunkenness. Groups of women usurped a corner of male drinking space for a few hours during the day. Men realised they had the potential to stay longer and drink more. Second, men felt women's friendships excluded patriarchal household authority. Women asserted their independence by going outside the household for their recreation. Whether women really did spend their time airing grievances about their husbands or not is less important than the message they sent by going "gossiping." If female space was the private domestic space of the household, then any time a woman spent outside that space indicated her assigned space did not meet her needs. Women socialising in public acted as if a husband and household were not enough to satisfy them. Female sociability exposed male emotional inadequacies and made men uneasy. Finally, men feared



their wives wasted time and money, which rightfully belonged to the household. A man's "credit" in part consisted in his ability to support his household. Any time or money his wife spent threatened to disrupt his finances and impinged on his social standing, not hers. By drinking in public with her friends a wife threatened to damage her husband's reputation as a successful, authoritative man. Furthermore, she did so in the very space he used to assert his identity in public.

Women continued to visit alehouses and taverns with their friends despite their husbands' fears and objections. Female drinking bouts might have given women a sense of power and support that men interpreted as insubordination. If alcohol reduced inhibitions, then drinking sessions revealed some of those inhibitions. Drunk wives did not become sexually promiscuous. The majority of women talked about sex in marriage, not out of it. Women in the literature about gossips also made other points not related to sex. They felt uninhibited while drinking about spending money and time. Perhaps women's financial inhibitions concerned them more than their sexual ones. Women also insisted that their husbands would not keep them from their female friends. Male-imposed priorities impinged on their friendships, and they felt their spouses kept them from enjoying the company of other women, not other men. Male authors complained that women wanted the freedom to decide how much time and money they spent with their friends. They also wanted the freedom to drink and talk as they pleased. Authors complained that women felt justified in taking these liberties even if it meant trouble at home. The literature on gossips overall suggests women were capable of taking control of their own social lives and

setting their priorities. High on their list of priorities was socialising for the sake of enjoyment, manifested in gossips' drinking sessions. For an afternoon they put themselves above their household duties and wifely subordination.

## 10. Conclusions

Women must talke when they meete, and men not be scorned, though not entertained: and hee that keepeth a house, must seeke to defraie the charge.<sup>967</sup>

### Female Drinking Behaviour

Female drinking behaviour incorporated women producing drink, their various roles in the distribution of drink, and their choices and behaviour as drinkers. They interacted with drink on every level, and in each case they developed behavioural patterns that protected their reputations. Despite the loud injunctions of moralists to avoid the dangers of drink altogether, women used a variety of drinking patterns to work alcohol into their lives. Overall, female drinking patterns revolved around special occasions. Women might have drunk at any time, but the patterns that authors accused them of indicate that women at least claimed they drank on special occasions such as weddings, childbirth festivities, and reunions with friends. Rarely did authors accuse women of claiming a right to drink without any sort of celebratory justification or with anyone they pleased. Moralists and authorities sought to control female drinking but women also sought to build drinking patterns that allowed them to rebel against their husbands and the very social rules men attempted to enforce. In many ways, female drinking was a site of conflict for gender relations.

Women had a large degree of control over the keys to the cellar. They created and provisioned alcohol for themselves, their families, and their

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<sup>967</sup> Nicholas Breton, *A Poste With a Packet of Madde Letters: The First Part* (London, 1605), plate B3.

neighbours. Even though the increasing regulation and economics of the brewing industry pushed them out of the commercial production of ale and beer, many women still brewed at home for their families. They also made cider, doctored wines, and made spirits. With the alcohol they either brewed themselves or bought, they then made specialised drinks such as hippocras, possets, and herbal infusions. Women also administered and regulated a good portion of their household's wine. They were the primary medical practitioners of the period, and the early modern pharmacopoeia was based on alcoholic drinks. Medical practitioners diagnosed illnesses and prescribed cures containing alcohol as a solvent and as a cure itself. Women also ran many of the public drinking establishments, particularly alehouses. They might not have been answerable to the law for their licence, but the evidence concerning alewives overwhelmingly points to the alewife as the central authority figure. In all of these roles women served alcohol to their communities. Their proximity and familiarity with provisioning drink integrated it into their lives. In provisioning alcohol they exercised a degree of control over its quantity, quality, and distribution. Alcohol permeated so many arenas of sustenance and sociability that women could choose to drink any amount they wished under different guises. They could drink for their health, during a meal, as a social obligation to a neighbour, or in the course of their domestic duties as brewsters and cooks. Drink was so plentiful, external regulation was impractical. No one could realistically stop a woman from drinking. Drinking patterns had to be self-imposed regulations. The dominant male hierarchy might have imposed upon women the consequences of what men

considered inappropriate sexuality and insubordination, but women constructed their own drinking patterns, and they favoured ones that protected them from accusations of female impropriety.

Women were familiar with the effects of alcohol because they learned to use it to regulate their own health and the health of the people for whom they cared. The prevailing medical theories required all people to drink for the sake of their health and to use alcohol-based drinks in their sicknesses. However, the amounts and the frequency of doses each person needed required women, who were the first line in a family's defence against sickness, to use their own judgements and observations. The prevailing system of maintaining health and well-being was one of self-diagnosis. That diagnosis took into consideration a gendered notion of the body, how it worked, and what it needed. Within this system, authors provided medical justifications for women to drink. Alcohol "heated" the body and by definition women were colder than men. Furthermore, authors recommended that specifically female diseases such as hysteria and greensickness be cured with alcohol. The symptoms of these and many other diseases were not physical but behavioural. Medical justifications hide the reality that many of the courses of medicinal drinking people undertook aimed at altering their behaviour. "Good health" was largely a socially constructed state of mind partly regulated by alcohol.

Religious authorities warned of the consequences of excess. However, authors of sermons and advice literature related drunkenness to drinking behaviour more than to quantities. They refused to deal with the issue of female drunken comportment in a meaningful way. They were not

interested in the problem and left women to their own devices. Their criticisms of female drinking patterns dealt in classical examples and stern but vague warnings about “unchaste behaviour” rather than providing practical advice for drinking women based on contemporary observations. However, without any proper guidance from moralists, women learned early on to regulate their drinking. They did so because the idea of female drinking threatened male authorities. Men displayed unruly patterns of behaviour when they were drunk, but they could label women as unruly and insubordinate for any kind of social drinking. Furthermore, men could restore their patriarchal authority by reforming their behaviour. Women risked their sexual reputations when they drank, and, once damaged, they could not restore their reputations. The permanent consequences women faced for violating any social drinking codes meant prescriptive authors warned them away from alcohol completely. Women did not need moralists to provide sound and relevant arguments against female drunkenness because the risk to their reputations was well known. Women knew they risked irrevocable damage to their respectability through drunkenness whereas the risk to men was both less and repairable.

People in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not effectively standardise drink measures, opening times, drinking venues, or official guidelines regarding how much was too much in the eyes of the law. Magna Carta attempted to standardise drink measures and qualities but the regulations, comments, and recipes demonstrate an inability to agree on quantifiable drunkenness and acceptable drinking patterns that encompassed the entire society. People could choose from a variety of medical, religious,

practical, and social guidelines about how much, when, where, and with whom to drink. Concern for reputation and social standing guided their choices. Women tended to choose conservative drinking patterns. They drank during the day, often after work and before returning home to their husbands. They also drank within their duties associated with childbirth. They fit their drinking into their daily round of tasks. They often drank in large groups and in a private or semi-private single sex environment. Their social networks served as a guard against the intrusions of patriarchal power. Within the physical guidelines of time and place they drank in large quantities. Female self-regulation was not about quantity but rather about appropriate atmosphere.

Female drinkers had to be cautious of their proximity to drinking men. Women had before them the stereotypes of alewives and prostitutes. Both were unfeminine, negative portrayals of women who spent too much time in male drinking space. Women associated with male drinking space lost their femininity. Either they were unnatural creatures who manipulated their sexuality to commit robbery, or they were so physically atrocious that they no longer qualified as female. They were not insubordinate women because they were no longer women. Their association with male drinking robbed them of the respect that theoretically protected women from unruly men. Both of these stereotypes were comic warnings to men about the tricks of prostitute and alewives, but they also served as warnings to women about the consequences of invading male space. Apart from any associations people made between drinking women and sexuality, these

stereotypes warned women that they could not populate male drinking spaces without losing their femininity.

The drinking patterns women developed protected them from the unchaste behaviour popularly associated with alcohol. Sexual banter served constructive purposes. As a social lubricant, drink allowed courting couples to discuss and explore a sexual relationship before engaging in one or marrying without knowing what to expect. Drinking venues and activities also allowed young couples time away from their respective masters without leaving them completely to their own devices. Young women probably risked less of their reputations by drinking with a man in an alehouse than by walking alone with him in a field. A woman's courtship behaviour placed her in drinking establishments under the guardianship of one man who, presumably, had a stake in protecting her sexual reputation since a man's reputation centred on the reputation of his wife. While courting couples were sexually attracted to one another, they also had every reason to avoid the consequences of premarital sex. Alcohol fuelled the discussion and suggestion of sex, but the drinking patterns portrayed in the evidence hindered the opportunities for sex. Casual drinking largely took place in public, often among other courting couples. Festive drinking was planned drinking and couples were aware that they would be drinking on that day, that drink provoked lust, and that everyone else also knew these things. The pattern ensured that alcohol-induced lust would not catch men and women unaware. Young men and women expected lust to overcome them when they drank, and so they could plan their social interactions around how much they wanted to give in to their sexual desires.



Female drinking patterns benefited women. In all-female rituals like childbirth the social conviviality served to forge female bonds and lighten the burden of a physically debilitating, exhausting, and often frightening ordeal. Women's festive presence around a new mother protected her from external stresses and supported her while she recovered. Women gathering in alehouses also served to re-enforce female bonds. Significantly, they did so in the bastion of male space. They drank, talked, and shared advice around their work schedules. Men feared they talked exclusively about their husbands but they could have talked about anything. The heart of female drinking patterns was always conversation and the sharing of information. Whether men approved of them or not, women found these conversations, lubricated by drink, useful in their lives. They never drank explicitly for drunkenness, although that was often the ensuing result. Even the male-dominated literature admitted the heart of female drinking was the sharing of information.

In festivities associated with childbirth or in "gossip" groups at the alehouse drink bound women to other women. Women did not invite men and did not welcome male intrusions. This protected women's sexual reputations while they drank. Both men and women believed alcohol caused lust and illicit sexual liaisons. To combat what they perceived as the inevitable effects of alcohol, women developed drinking patterns that protected their reputations by removing them from the possibility of illicit, casual sex. They physically excluded men from their company during childbirth and gossip sessions. The lust that alcohol provoked became all talk because men were not available. At least, that was how male authors

portrayed groups of drinking women. Men accused women drinking with other women of insubordination, but it was not sexual insubordination and women were able to protect their reputed chastity.

All-female drinking sessions served to bind women together into a social network that also acted as an economic network. Women's household duties often depended on their informal networks of female friends. Childbirth required the expertise and physical assistance of several women. Except for the midwife and the nurse, the pregnant woman did not employ any of the other women she needed to assist her. They came out of social obligation and friendship. Childbirth is only the extreme example of how female networks operated. Female networks revolved around social obligations rather than economic transactions. All people cemented social ties with alcohol. The drinks, the parties, and the "gossiping" were the payments to women for assisting each other through the physical and mental stresses of their lives. Women's friendships and networks of mutual support depended on the sociability and conviviality that drink promoted.

Women mitigated the relationship they experienced between alcohol, sex, and insubordination by time, place, and the company they kept. When women drank throughout the day with their meals it did not provoke sexual insubordination. When they dealt with alcohol in their work, as either alewives or prostitutes, they were insubordinate and sexual, but they did not drink. When women did drink recreationally and get drunk, they did not always desire sex and insubordination. Women at the alehouse drinking with their suitors did behave sexually when they drank, but they were not insubordinate. They were subordinate to the man they were at the alehouse

courting. Nowhere in literature did a courted woman get drunk and either run off with another man or rebel against the man with whom she came. Women drinking with other women, either at childbirth rituals or in alehouses, did participate in sexual banter. Their discussions about sex were usually extended complaints about unfulfilled desires rather than attempts to engage men in sexual activities. They were insubordinate in their drinking and conversation but not exceedingly so. Women attending childbirth ceremonies were insubordinate towards husbands and male authorities in general who were not present. These patterns carried over to the alehouse where wives reportedly complained about husbands who were not there. Female drunken insubordination was impotent. Drunkenness suggested sex and unruliness in female drinking patterns but often did little to carry them over into any action beyond getting another drink.

All the evidence suggests that women found alcohol a useful tool for negotiating their social positions. It was affordable, and it was an acceptable form of recreation. They acknowledged the associations between alcohol, sex, and insubordination, but they tailored their reactions to suit their purposes. The same woman might have been a courted maid, a "gossip" at a birth, and a participant in an all-female alehouse binge. Before a drink passed her lips she would have consciously guided her behaviour to avoid acting like a "typical" alewife or prostitute. Furthermore, she would have tailored her behaviour to the situation at hand. If she was with a suitor, she might give a free rein to sexual inclinations, particularly if this was the man she intended to marry. If she was at an alehouse with other women, she might then complain about her new husband's sexual shortcomings and vow he will not keep her from her friends

and her drink. If she was at a birth, historians do not really know what she would have done but she would have stayed long into the night, drinking and talking to the other women, possibly with no thought to sex at all. Her drug of choice was always the same, but her behaviour varied to suit her needs.

### **The End of an Era**

Tea and coffee altered traditional drinking patterns in the eighteenth century. The increased availability and popularity of tea and coffee provided alcohol-free alternatives to ale, beer, and wine. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the people of London drank more coffee than any other city in the world.<sup>968</sup> Coffee and tea replaced alcohol with a new drug; caffeine. Alcohol was no longer a necessary component of diet. Furthermore, the new drinks introduced people to new drugs that altered their state of mental awareness. They provided an alternative experience and traditional drinking patterns shifted to incorporate coffee houses and tea services. Alcohol became one of many acceptable social drinks.

People still drank large amounts of fermented alcohol, but spirit-drinking was also on the rise. The “Act for the Encouraging of the Distillation of Brandy and Spirits from Corn” and other initiatives of William III’s government encouraged the inexpensive and legal production of spirits. Furthermore, William made the consumption of gin fashionable by his example.<sup>969</sup> People started consuming spirits in large amounts. The

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<sup>968</sup> Gregory Austin, Alcohol in Western Society From Antiquity to 1800: A Chronological History (Oxford, 1985), p. 259.

<sup>969</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

increased production of spirits also meant people could get cheap alcohol in high enough concentrations to bypass the social role of alcohol and move straight to dead drunk and sometimes just dead. While some people could drink enough beer or wine to cause alcohol poisoning, anyone could inadvertently do so with gin. Spirits caused medical, social, and behavioural problems that fermented alcohol rarely caused. In the eighteenth century the definitions of alcohol use and abuse shifted to cope with the new drinks on the market. Once broad social definitions of use and abuse shifted, the early modern drinking patterns adjusted to their new environment and traditional female drinking patterns changed to incorporate tea, coffee and spirits.

### **Future Directions**

Historians have not yet exhausted the possibilities of research into early modern drinking patterns. For example, they have not yet fully documented male drinking patterns. Only when historians understand the various drinking patterns available to men and women can they begin to compare how men and women interacted when they drank. All the evidence on the attitudes towards women drinking indicates that men allowed women much less leeway in their drunken comportment than they allowed themselves. However, it was usually men who were before the courts for their drunken conduct. Women usually appeared in the court records only when they were extremely drunk, sexually promiscuous, and physically violent. In other words, they ended up before a magistrate when

they acted like drunk men. Historians need to account for the discrepancies in male and female prosecutions.

Historians would also benefit from a closer scrutiny of manuscript cookbooks and other incidental sources detailing how and when people used alcohol in the pursuit of health and diet. Early modern people drew no distinct line between drinking for health and drinking for pleasure. How much drinking really took place under the guise of spring purges, digestive drinks, and cold constitutions? These sorts of enquires will allow historians to develop a clearer picture of the fundamental role of alcohol in people's lives.

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