Intoxication and the Formation of Early Modern Society

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> *Sugar*: *Nutmeg*?
>
> *Nutmeg*: *Sugar*? Well met, how chance you wait not upon your Master, where's Wine now?
>
> *Sugar*: Oh sometimes without Sugar, all the while he's well if I be in his company, 'tis but for fashion sake, I wait upon him into a room now and then, but am not regarded; marry, when he is ill, he makes much of me ...[1] (A4).

So begins *Wine, Beer, Ale and Tobacco, Contending for Superiority*. This short, cheap text was sold by John Grove, a minor publisher of mostly legal texts, from his shop in Furnivall Inn Gate, in the heart of London's legal community, in 1629.[2] It was popular enough to warrant two further editions, in 1630 and 1658. It takes the form of a dialogue between 'Wine, A Gentleman' and 'Sugar, His Page'; 'Beer, A Citizen' with 'Nutmeg, His Prentice'; 'Ale, A Country-man' and 'Toast, One of his rural Servants'; 'Water, A Parson'; and, in the 1630 and 1658 editions, 'Tobacco, A Swaggering Gentleman'. Personified as social types, these drinks and their accoutrements spend their time moving in and out of each other's 'company' – as they term it – discussing their relative social standing and how much they dislike each other. It is a conceit that allows a humorous commentary on the cultural connotations of intoxicants and the politics of taste surrounding their consumption. It also enables the social pretensions of the various social groups so represented to be (albeit gently) satirized. As such, the subtitle 'Contending for Superiority' is double-edged. It refers at once to the drinks themselves, which vie for position in both the symbolic pecking order and market economy, and the social groups with whom they are associated, who jockey with each other for prestige and status. When Wine proclaims that 'Wine must be acknowledged the Nectar of all drinks, the prince of Liquors', Beer responds: 'To wash Boots'. When Ale declares 'Superiority is mine, Ale is the prince of liquors, and you are both my subjects', wine and beer reply 'We thy subjects?' 'O base Ale', 'O muddy Ale' (B3r).

Contending for Superiority nicely introduces the two main concerns of this paper. The first is the state of the English market in intoxicants *circa* 1629 and its relationship to economic conditions more generally. The second is the set of concurrent influences that shaped the manner in which intoxicants were drunk and by whom. The specific claim is that, for men of a certain disposition and means, the consumption of intoxicants became a legitimate – indeed valorised and artful – aspect of their social identity during the later

[1] Anonymous, *VVine, beere, ale, and tobacco. Contending for superiority. A dialogue* (1630), Aiiii. Reprinted in 1658.

[2] The dialogue was first published as *VVine, beere, and ale, together by the eares. A dialogue, vvritten first in Dutch by Gallobelgicus, and faithfully translated out of the originall copie, by Mercurius Britannicus, for the benefite of his nation* (1629).

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is not, perhaps, an unexpected state of affairs: if we know anything about intoxication it is that men have sought and done it throughout the ages.[3] More 'modern', however, were the cultural sources from which legitimacy, valorisation, and art were now derived; the kinds of associational forms and skills so appropriated; the range and quantity of intoxicants available; and the social and cultural distinctions they demarcated. As importantly, these new styles of masculine association were implicated in more general processes of change – economic, political, cultural, and social – which serve to emphasise the constitutive role of intoxicants in the formation of early modern 'society'. Indeed, the greater burden of what follows is to demonstrate that the ostensibly minor and frivolous subject of male drinking casts new light on the nature of social change in this period.

This is no small claim if only because the changes often associated with early modernity are so significant. Since the end of the nineteenth century these have generally been perceived in terms of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* – a complex set of interrelated processes which saw the medieval 'communities' of north-western Europe mutate into modern 'societies'.[4] This narrative was the bedrock of twentieth-century sociology and a touchstone of the 'new social history' of England, which underwent a 'sociological turn' in the decades following the Second World War.[5] The formation of a market economy and attendant social stratification; the long-term impact of ascetic Protestantism and the 'civilizing process'; the geographical and infrastructural incorporation of the 'nation-state' and 'public sphere'; colonial and commercial expansion both west and east – these are some of the well-known developments forming the spine of this narrative for early modern England.[6] The musculature has been enriched in recent years by a sustained and increasingly subtle focus on early modern 'consumption' and the wider ramifications of 'new consumer practices' – most notably in Jan de Vries account of north-western Europe's 'industrious revolution'.[7] This describes how, in the course of the seventeenth century, the increasing availability of consumable goods encouraged 'a growing number of households' to 'reallocate their productive resources (which are chiefly the time of their members) in ways that increased both the supply of market-orientated, money earning activities and the demand

[3] Andrew Sherratt, 'Alcohol and its Alternatives: Symbol and Substance in Pre-Industrial Cultures' in Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt, eds., *Consuming Habits. Drugs in History and Anthropology* (London, 1995), 11–46; Richard Rudgley, *Essential Substances. A Cultural History of Intoxicants in Society* (New York, 1994), first published as *The Alchemy of Culture: Intoxicants in Society* (1993).

[4] Richard Smith, '"Modernization" and the Corporate Medieval Village Community in England: Some Sceptical Reflections' in Alan R. H. Baker and David Gregory, eds., *Explorations in Historical Geography* (Cambridge, 1984), 143–44; Phil Withington and Alexandra Shepard, 'Communities in Early Modern England' in Shepard and Withington, eds., *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), 3–6.

[5] Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580–1680* (London, 1982), 12; E. J. Hobsbawm, 'From Social History to the History of Society', *Daedalus*, 100, 1, 1971, 20–45.

[6] Useful overviews over these themes include Wrightson, *English Society* and *Earthly Necessities. Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, 2000); Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, 1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000); Merry E. Weisner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789* (Cambridge, 2006).

[7] Jan De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution. Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008), 19.

for goods offered in the marketplace'.[8] In this way, householders decided to work in ways requisite of modern capitalism and precipitous of industrialization. However, they did so not simply through economic or spiritual compulsion, as Karl Marx and Max Weber argued, but also as a direct response to the allure of more and new goods.

This story of early modernity, especially when told in its cruder forms, is not without its critics. These range from medievalists more interested in underlying continuities, to early modernists suspicious of the 'modernizing' inferences of their own 'watchword', to modernists who regard the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution as more likely sources for the 'modern condition'.[9] Yet a more critical and historicised appreciation of the period's complexities need not obscure the cumulative and formative power of its diachronic processes. The history of intoxicants is a case in point. As the next section shows, the interconnected story of their production and consumption nicely exemplifies many of the core assumptions about English early modernity. However, it also raises interpretative tensions and contradictions which invite the narrative to be reconsidered in important respects. It is just such a reconsideration that this paper attempts.

The early modern market in intoxicants

Translated from the Latin, 'intoxication' carried two main inferences in early modern England. It denoted 'poisoning, or envenoming' and 'a tuddling or making drunk'.[10] While 'poisoning' tended to dominate vernacular dictionaries before 1700, it was the state of drunkenness that was more prevalent in literary usage and eighteenth-century lexicons.[11] Certainly sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples of the word collated by Samuel Johnson emphasised the idea of 'inebriation; inebriety; the act of making drunk; the state of being drunk'.[12] Often the condition was metaphorical or spiritual, the metaphor taking its power from the realities of social practice (for example, Milton's 'As with new wine intoxicated both,/ They swim in mirth'). The range of substances associated with intoxication was accordingly expansive. It certainly included particular kinds of 'drugs', a generic term

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[8] Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 10.

[9] Smith, 'Modernization', passim; David Aers, 'A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject' in Aers, ed., *Culture and History 1350–1600. Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* (New York, 1992); Garthine Walker, 'Modernization' in Walker, ed., *Writing Early Modern History* (London, 2005), 25–48; Randolph Starn, 'The Early Modern Muddle', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 6, 3, 2002, 296–307; Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?' reprinted in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London, 1984); Steve Pincus, '"Coffee Politicians Does Create": Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *Journal of Modern History*, 67, 4, 1995, 807–834.

[10] Edward Phillips, *The new world of words: or, A universal English dictionary. containing the proper significations and derivations of all words from other languages*, 5th edition (1700).

[11] Thomas Elyot, *The dictionary of syr Thomas Eliot knight* (1538); Robert Cawdrey, *A table alphabeticall, conteyning and teaching the true writing, and vnderstanding of hard vsuall English wordes, borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French, &c.* (1604).

[12] Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers,* I, (1773).

for ingredients in pharmacy, chemistry, dyeing or manufacturing processes which had also accrued the sense of having a physiological effect on a living organism by the seventeenth-century.[13] As Paul Rycaut noted in 1668, it was common for Ottomans 'to be drunk or license themselves from their Superior, to be drunk or intoxicate themselves with Aqua vitae, opium, or any stupefying drugs'.[14] The category also included, however, substances that lubricated the rituals and interactions of everyday life: 'old world' commodities like wine, beer, and ale; and 'colonial groceries' like tobacco, coffee, tea, and chocolate. Most striking about these substances is that it was not their innate qualities that were perceived to intoxicate (indeed the noun 'intoxicant' seems to have been a nineteenth-century coinage).[15] Rather intoxication derived from the manner and context in which they were consumed combined with the intellectual, emotional, and physical condition of consumers. It was for precisely this reason that established sources of drunkenness like the protagonists of *Contending for Superiority* nevertheless figured prominently in the most ascetic of dietary and medicinal regimes. In 1600 William Vaughan prescribed wine 'when moderately drunk' to 'refresh the heart and spirits, temper the humours, engender good blood, break phlegm, conserve nature, and make it merry'. Beer would 'nourish the body, cause a good colour' and be 'no less wholesome to our constitution than wine'. So could ale, though 'nowadays few brewers do brew it as they ought for they add slimy and heavy baggage unto it, thinking thereby to please tosspots'. Tobacco when 'well dried, and taken in a silver pipe ... cures the migraine, the toothache, obstructions proceeding of cold, and helps the fits of the choler'.[16] Conversely, the only example of the word 'intoxicate' in the Shakespearean corpus finds Fluellen in *Henry V* observing that Alexander the Great, 'being a little intoxicated in his brains, did, *in his ales and his anger*, look you, kill his best friend, Cleitus' (IV, 7; italics added). Intoxication was, in effect, a social condition.

The main protagonists of *Contending for Superiority* were all commodities associated with this condition. More to the point, the first publication of the dialogue in 1629 coincided with long-term developments in the production, marketing, and traffic of intoxicants which, viewed cumulatively, amounted to a major transformation in the scale and nature of their supply. Tobacco began to attract significant attention in Europe from the 1570s.[17] By the early 1600s tobacco had become a kind of testing ground for humanists and physicians to flex their rhetorical muscle, not least because the monarch of Scotland and England had entered the fray.[18] The visibility of tobacco in print culture and on the stage, combined with the

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[13] Oxford English Dictionary..

[14] Paul Rycaut, *The present state of the Ottoman Empire* (1668), 114.

[15] The first reference in the OED is 1868.

[16] William Vaughan, *Naturall and artificial directions for health, deriued from the best philosophers, as well moderne, as auncient* (1600), 10–11, 7, 26.

[17] Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: the Cultures of Dependence* (London, 1993), 44–45. The key publicist was Nicholas Monardes, *Joyfull Newes out of the newe founde worlde*, trans. John Frampton (1577).

[18] James I, A counterblaste to tobacco (1604); J. H. (Joseph Hall), *Work for Chimney-sweepers, or, A warning for Tobaccanists* (1601); Edmund Gardner, *The Triall of Tabacco* (1610); William Barclay, *Nepenthes, or the Vertues of Tabacco* (Edinburgh, 1614); John Deacon, *Tabacco Tortured* (1614); Tobias Venner, *A Briefe and Accurate Treatise, Concerning The taking of the fume of Tobacco* (1621); Barnabe Riche, *The Irish Hubbub, or, the English Hue and Crie* (1617).

remarkable scale of its traffic by the later seventeenth century, can convey the impression that its popularity was instantaneous.[19] However, the many and varied representations of smoking preceded its emergence as an intoxicant of mass consumption; until the 1620s the vast majority of people talked and heard about smoking before they could ever afford to do it.[20] It was only between 1622 and 1638 that the successful establishment of American plantations and the protection of their monopoly over cultivation and traffic meant that the quantity imported rose from about 60,000 to 2,000,000 pounds weight per annum. By 1668 Virginia and the Caribbean imports were up to 9,000,000 pounds weight per annum and by 1700 the figure was 22,000,000 pounds weight per annum (although three-quarters of this was now re-exported into Europe).[21] In the meantime the burgeoning economy in domestic cultivation was suppressed.[22] In the 1610s Matthew Markland valued the stock in his Wigan shop in Lancashire as 9s per pound weight and Thomas Middleton suggested it cost 6d to fill a single pipe in London (the equivalent of three oranges). The most expensive crops could fetch up to 40s per lb. Yet in 1632 Thomas Harris's stock in the Cotswold town of Charlbury was valued at 1s 8d per ld weight; the plantation price dropped to 1d per lb in 1640; and in 1671 Thomas Robinson in York purchased five pipes of finest tobacco for only 10d.[23]

Contending for Superiority was published, then, at the very moment Atlantic colonialism was transforming tobacco from an over-hyped luxury to a commodity of mass consumption. One way or another, its smoke was on everybody's lips. Even as Englishmen and women were introduced to tobacco the brewing industry was undergoing profound infrastructural changes. Ale was the indigenous beverage.[24] Traditionally brewed in small qualities for local consumption, it was an important source of daily nourishment as well as mainstay of relatively impoverished household economies at the lower end of the social spectrum.[25] Beer, in contrast, enjoyed a protracted introduction into England from Germany

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[19] Goodman, *Tobacco*, 59–60; Jason Hughes, *Learning to Smoke. Tobacco Use in the West* (Chicago, 2003), 36–38.

[20] Notable stage representations include Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekkar, *The roaring girle. Or Moll Cut-Purse. As it hath lately beene acted on the Fortune-stage by the Prince his Players* (1611); Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fayre* (1614; published 1631). See Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005).

[21] Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, 180, 238; Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation* (Basingstoke, 1998), 54–55.

[22] Joan Thirsk, 'New Crops and their Diffusion': Tobacco-Growing in Seventeenth-Century England' in C. W. Chalklin and M. A. Havinden, eds. *Rural Change and Urban Growth: Essays in English Regional History in Honour of W. G. Hoskins* (London, 1974), 76–103.

[23] T. S. Willan, *The Inland Trade* (Manchester, 1976), 82–83; Thirsk, 'New Crops', Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekkar, *The roaring girle. Or Moll Cut-Purse. As it hath lately beene acted on the Fortune-stage by the Prince his Players* (1611), I. 2. 48; West Yorkshire Archive Service (Leeds Sheepscar), NH 2277/6/2.

[24] Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: a Social History 1200–1830* (Harlow, 1983), 20–24; Peter Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England 1700 – 1830* (Cambridge, 1959), xvii.

[25] Keith Wrightson, 'Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590 – 1660' in Eileen Yeo and Stepohen Yeo, eds., *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590–1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton, 1981), 1 – 11; Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World 1300–1600* (Oxford, 1996); 'Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, 134, 1992, 19–41, Peter Clark, 'The Alehouse and Alternative Society' in Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas, eds., *Puritans and*

and the Low Countries from the early fifteenth century.[26] After 1570 it eclipsed ale as the drink of choice among the majority of (certainly urban) households. This encroachment began in the early sixteenth century, when London ale and beer brewers were amalgamated into the same Company, and was signalled in the 1570s when beer rather than ale began to be consumed at civic feasts in the metropolis.[27] The rise of beer coincided with a general rise in consumption. In London alone it has been estimated that 51 million litres of beer per week was drunk in 1574, 106 million litres per week by the 1585, and 146 million litres per week by 1600.[28] Although the metropolitan market for ale was in relative decline – about 40,000 litres was consumed per week in the capital over the same period – the proliferation of alehouses in the provinces (both licensed and unlicensed) suggests an almost limitless thirst.[29] In addition to the local production of ale, this thirst was met by the commercialisation of beer brewing both in London and provincial towns. The key difference between ale and beer was that the addition of hops to the latter made for a more stable and durable product that was not only cheaper to brew (in terms of the proportional cost of ingredients to output) but could also be transported greater distances. This encouraged capital investment in equipment and other costs, not the least of which was fuel: developments in English beer brewing and coal mining were closely connected.[30] The result after 1570 was fewer, larger, and wealthier operations. Smaller brewers were driven out of business. So, too, were the 'alien' tradesmen who first introduced beer-brewing into London as well as the female 'brewsters' who dominated ale-brewing before the rise and commercialisation of beer.[31] By 1600 the Brewers' Company had emerged as a leading London guild and political force in civic and parliamentary politics; and in 1665 four of its members were wealthy enough to serve as London Aldermen.[32]

A similar scenario has been established by Thomas Brennan for the French 'long-distance wine trade', which after the depression of the late medieval era was in the vanguard of shaping 'a coherent national market' and so 'stimulating the commercial development of French society'. As with English beer it was Dutch merchants who were crucial to commercialisation – not in this instance by providing the requisite knowledge and skill so much as offering 'an enormous market, both for consumption and re-export'. [33] The impact of these developments on English tastes (taken in conjunction with the Spanish trade) has been

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Revolutionaries. Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill (Oxford, 1978), 53–57.

[26] Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 2004); 'Technical Change in the Brewing Industry in Germany, the Low Countries, and England in the Late Middle Ages', *Journal of European Economic History*, 21, 1992, 286 – 292; Bennett, *Ale, Beer*, 77–97.

[27] Lien Bich Luu, *Immigrants and the Industries of London 1500–1700* (Aldershot, 2005), 259–262, 267.

[28] Ibid., 275.

[29] Clark, *English Alehouse*, 47–51, 59.

[30] Unger, Beer, 137–140; David Levine and Keith Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560–1765* (Oxford, 1991), 1–10.

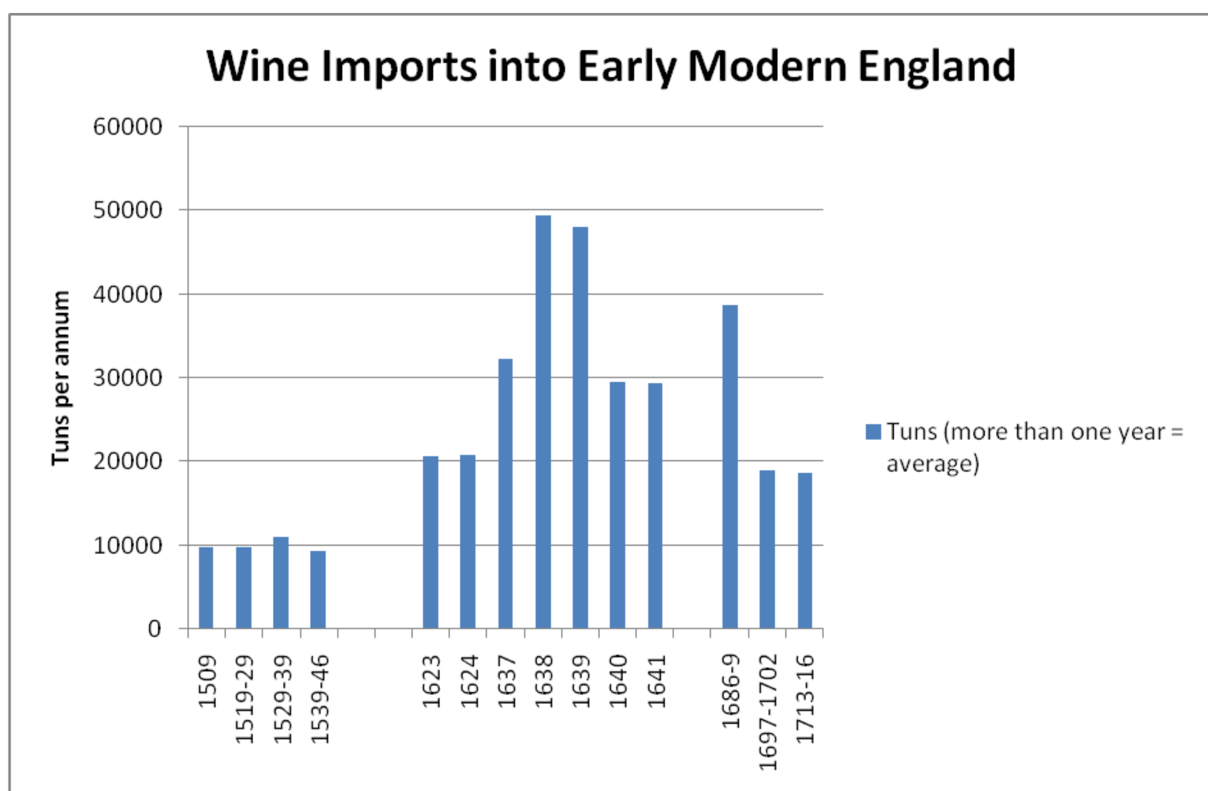
[31] Bennett, *Ale, Beer*, 8–10.

[32] Luu, *Immigrants*, 277.

[33] Thomas Brennan, *Burgundy to Champagne: the Wine Trade in Early Modern France* (Baltimore, 1997), 2, 3–4.

suggested by W. B. Stephens. While wine (along with textiles, timber and groceries) remained 'one of the four chief commodities imported into England throughout the early modern period', Stephens shows that the 'early seventeenth century was a period when the volume of wine imports was particularly large compared with preceding and succeeding periods'.[34] As Figure 1 shows, in 1509 the annual national average (in tuns) was 9,820 and between 1539 and 1546 it was 9,403. In 1623 the figure was 20,708 tuns and by 1638 it had risen to 49,446 tuns, dropping to 29,363 tuns by 1641. Stephens suggests that after the Restoration 'imports sometimes topped 20,000 tuns but was often well below that total'. Aside from the later 1680s, when imports reached 38,700 tuns per year, the average was almost half that of the 1630s.

Figure 1



Data from Stephens, 'English Wine Imports'

The profits that this accentuated taste for wine generated help explain the concerted attempts by the Caroline regime to establish a fiscal monopoly over its retail in the 1620s and 1630s – something it also attempted for the import and retail of tobacco.[35] The policy alienated

[34] W. B. Stephens, 'English Wine Imports c. 1603 – 40, with Special Reference to the Devon Ports' in Todd Gray et al, *Tudor and Stuart Devon: the Common Estate and Government: Essays Presented to Joyce Youings* (Exeter, 1992), 141.

[35] Anne Crawford, *A History of the Vintners' Company (London, 1977),* 116–127; Phil Withington, 'Public Discourse, Corporate Citizenship and State Formation in Early Modern England', *American Historical Review*, 112, 4, 2007, 1016–18; Thomas Cogswell, 'In the Power of the State': Mr Anys's Project and the Tobacco Colonies, 1626–1628, *English Historical Review*, CXXIII, 500, 35–64; M. W. Beresford, *Time and Place: Collected Essays* (London, 1984), 227–242.

producers and consumers alike; indeed it is not too much of an exaggeration to argue that the struggle to control the market in wine and tobacco was a contributory factor in the outbreak of civil war.[36] These politically incendiary attempts to exploit the market merely preceded, however, the imposition of the parliamentary excise after 1643 – an innovation which eventually saw intoxicants account for a staggering 60% of state revenues by 1788.[37] The early Stuarts were already conscious of the enormous financial potential of intoxicants; their problem was finding the means to exploit it legitimately.

Contending for Superiority reflected, then, a burgeoning market in intoxicants; and the text's responsiveness to economic conditions can be seen simply in the difference between the first and second editions. The 1629 text (which was probably written in 1625) mentions tobacco in passing but the commodity is not a speaking character.[38] By 1630 'Tobacco, A Swaggering Gentleman' has a central role that accounts for 'his' market presence. This should not be too surprising. One of the striking findings of the 'new social history' has been to corroborate the conviction of earlier generations of historians that the sixteenth-century marked a decisive moment in the transformation of English economic culture and practice.[39] According to Craig Muldrew, not only were 'the thirty years after [1550] the most intensely concentrated period of economic growth before the late eighteenth century'. It was 'increases in internal trade and the increasing importation of luxury goods' which were the major catalyst for the 'new economic market'. Muldrew also notes that what particularly distinguished the later sixteenth-century from 'preceding centuries, and especially from the long depression of the fifteenth century, was that the scale of marketing expanded over such a short period of time, propelled by increasing demand and competition for the profits generated by higher prices'.[40] The provision of wine, beer, ale and tobacco was indicative of this more general intensification in economic activity. It also corroborates the view that the 'birth' of English commercialism was not 1700, as argued by historians of the 'consumer revolution', nor even 1650, as the 'industrious revolution' might suggest.[41] Rather *Contending for Superiority* is a salutary reminder that 'while the changes which took place in the eighteenth century were significant, and marketing undoubtedly became more sophisticated, if we wish to celebrate a birthday it should really be placed 150 years earlier'.[42]

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[36] Cogswell, 'In the Power', 62–63; Beresford, *Time and Place*, 241.
[37] Patrick K. O'Brien, 'The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660–1815', *Economic History Review*, 41, 1988, 11.
[38] James Holly Hanford, 'Wine, Beere, Ale and Tobacco: A Seventeenth-Century Interlude', *Studies in Philology*, 12, 1, 1915, 7.
[39] Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, 17.
[40] Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation* (Basingstoke, 1998), 20–21, 37.
[41] The alternatives are discussed in Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 37–39; Mark Overton, Darron Dean, Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households 1500–1750* (London, 2004), 1–12.
[42] Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, 20.

Intoxicants and social change

Even as cursory an overview as this suggests compelling reasons to regard intoxicants as drivers of the early modern economy. They have, in turn, received considerable attention from social historians, though not necessarily in ways that account for their economic prominence. Most obviously, intoxicants have proved integral to distinguishing 'traditional' or 'popular culture' from agents of social and cultural change. This is true in the sense that traditional communities – and the rituals and obligations that characterised them – are taken to have been saturated with alcohol.[43] It is also true in that drunkenness began to attract an enormous amount of moral criticism and governmental regulation from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, potential sites of excessive consumption, like the alehouse, as well as customary settings, like parish 'ales', became constitutive of a 'plebeian' or 'merry' identity that was at odds with the prevailing trajectory of modernity.[44] This trajectory was signalled, in turn, by the appropriation of alternative intoxicants in other settings. Most notably colonial groceries – or what Jordan Goodman styles the 'excitantia' of the Enlightenment – became the rudiments of 'modern' sociability and taste.[45] In the 100 years after 1650, coffee became synonymous with the 'bourgeois public sphere'; tea was subsequently popularised as the focal point for domestic meals and rituals; and tobacco was repackaged as snuff to become the hallmark of politeness.[46] In the meantime, traditional commodities also contributed to this more general culture of 'respectability'.[47] Wine continued to embody social class and connoisseurship (as well as political allegiance after the civil wars and subsequent deterioration of Anglo-French relations).[48] Beer encapsulated respectable and patriotic Englishness.[49]

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[43] Wrightson, *English Society*, 63–64; 'Alehouses', 6–7; B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and the Civic Order. The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville, 2001), 212; Mack P. Holt, 'Wine, Community and Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Burgundy', *Past & Present,* 138, 1993, 89–93; Robert C. Davis, 'Venetian Shipbuilders and the Fountain of Wine', *Past & Present*, 156, 1997, 84–86.

[44] The literature is large but see Wrightson, *English Society*, 167–70; David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603–1660* (Oxford, 1987), esp. 44–72; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England. The Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1996), passim.

[45] Jordan Goodman, 'Excitantia: or, How Enlightenment Europe Took to Soft Drugs' in Goodman et al, *Consuming Habits*, 126–147; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants* (New York, 1992), 148–9.

[46] Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee. The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (Newhaven, 2005); S. D. Smith, 'Accounting for Taste: British Coffee Consumption in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXVII:2, 1996, 184–88; Woodruff D. Smith, 'From Coffeehouse to Parlour. The Consumption of Coffee, Tea, and Sugar in North-Western Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in Goodman et al, *Consuming Habits*, 148–64; Hughes, *Learning to Smoke*, 73–77; Schivelbusch, *Tastes*, 131 – 46.

[47] Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability 1600–1800* (London, 2002).

[48] Rod Phillips, *A Short History of Wine* (New York, 2000), 143–51; Angela McShane, 'Roaring Royalists and Ranting Brewers: the Politicisation of Drink and Drunkenness in Political Broadside Ballads from 1640 to 1689' in Adam Smyth, ed., *A Pleasing Sinne. Drink and Conviviality in*

All of which suggests that intoxicants were deeply implicated in what Norbert Elias has styled ‘the civilizing process’.[50] Elias’s concept was deployed explicitly by Keith Thomas in his 1977 discussion of laughter, in which Thomas argued that the ‘revival’ of ‘classical doctrine’ facilitated a wide social ‘movement to develop new standards of bodily control and social decorum’ that ‘covered a wide range of behaviour’. This ‘cult of decorum led to a profound divergence between the streams of polite humour and folk humour’; by the end of the seventeenth century ‘it was only the vulgar who could go on laughing without constraint’.[51] The same is true of drinking and other kinds of excess. Complementary accounts of the ‘reformation of manners’ and the divergence of ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ culture also argue that, locally as well as nationally, social elites drew on biblical and classical learning in order to refine their own manners and, more importantly, segregate, reform and punish the behaviour of inferiors.[52] Alehouses and drunkenness were especially important targets in these campaigns, providing a context against which the ‘better sort’ in local communities could define their distinction and respectability.[53] At least two implications follow from this. The first is that renaissance humanism, as one of the foundation stones of early modern ‘civility’, was a monolithic ideology of restraint, order, sobriety, even aggressive humourlessness; one of the sources for what Alexandra Shepard has styled the normative values of patriarchal manhood.[54] Second, the normative qualities so ascribed were increasingly class-specific. Wrightson suggests, for example, that in the hundred years after 1580 ‘a deep social cleavage of a new kind opened up in English society. It was not simply between wealth and poverty, but between respectable and plebeian cultures, and it followed the line which divided not the gentry and the common people, but the ‘better sort’ and the mass of the labouring poor’.[55] Shepard describes the same scenario slightly differently: ‘alternative codes of manhood, rooted in values ranging across prodigality, excess, bravado, brawn, transience, and collectivism, were positively claimed by, and became increasingly associated (often negatively) with, the “meaner sorts of men”’. She accordingly suggests that the ‘emergent discourses of civility, and subsequently, politeness that have preoccupied

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Seventeenth-Century England (Woodbridge, 2004), 69–88; Charles C. Ludington, ‘“Be sometimes to your country true”: the Politics of Wine in England, 1660–1714 in Smyth, *Pleasing Sinne*, 89–108.

[49] Clark, *English Alehouse*, 222–242.

[50] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000); Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1996), 10–11.

[51] Keith Thomas, ‘The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England’, *Times Literary Supplement*, January 2, 1977, 79, 81; Peter Burke, ‘A Civil Tongue: Language and Politeness in Early Modern Europe’ in Peter Burke, Paul Harrison and Paul Slack, eds., *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford, 2000), 39.

[52] Martin Ingram, ‘Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England’ in Adam Fox, Paul Griffiths and Steve Hindle, eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1994), 51–55;

[53] Wrightson, ‘Alehouses’, 11, 17, 20–21.

[54] Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003).

[55] Wrightson, English Society, 227.

historians of eighteenth-century masculinity ... need to be approached as class-based codes of conduct'.[56]

This scenario largely corroborates David Courtwright's discussion of 'drugs and the making of the modern world'. Courtwright contends that 'the psychoactive revolution' – 'one of the signal events of world history' – 'had its roots in the transoceanic commerce and empire building of the early modern period'. He suggests that from around 1500 'people everywhere have acquired progressively more, and more potent, means of altering their ordinary waking consciousness'. However, following the lead of Piero Camporesi, Courtwright explains the initial allure and success of 'psychoactive substances' in early modern Europe as 'dire utility' – they helped 'peasants and workers cope with lives lived on the verge of the unliveable'. He suggests that it is 'no coincidence that the rapid growth of European distilling, and the explosive growth of tobacco imports, took place during "the general crisis of the seventeenth century"': for a whole host of reasons 'these were people who could use a smoke and a drink'. Moreover, just as ordinary people took drugs primarily 'to cope', so their betters and governors initially tried to prevent them doing it; as Courtwright explains, the 'nonmedical use of novel drugs provoked much disgust and repression during the first half of the 1600s, the great formative century of the psychoactive revolution' . These 'official' scruples were overcome, however, by the realization that huge fiscal gains could be made out of intoxicants. They were further eased by the introduction of other, non-hallucinogenic commodities in the later seventeenth century which were 'more compatible with the emergent capitalist order' and appealed to civil tastes.[57] It was precisely these modern goods – coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco – which helped drive de Vries' householders towards their 'industrious revolution': they now worked harder, longer, and in more specialist occupations in order to afford the consumables and the lifestyles they promised.[58]

At first glance the social and cultural signification of intoxicants so described fits fairly snug alongside the development of an early modern market. There are, nevertheless, interpretative tensions, the more so once the story of market development is told from the middle of the sixteenth rather than seventeenth century. Most obvious is the contradiction between the fiscal importance of intoxicants (old world and new) and the asceticism and self-control that supposedly characterised their legitimate consumption. Put another way: if the most affluent classes of society were avoiding or at least limiting their consumption of intoxicants then how and why did the market for intoxicants so significantly in the 100 years after 1550? The medicinal qualities of these substances might explain some of the increase. That ale and beer were dietary staples meant, in addition, that consumption patterns must to some extent reflect the sharp rise in population over the period. Yet this does not explain the peak in wine imports before 1640 nor the hubbub surrounding the excessive use of tobacco – a commodity generally purchased from 'tipplers' and closely connected (as *Contending for*

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[56] Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 252–53.
[57] David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge Mass., 2001), 2, 59, 152.
[58] Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 154–69.

Superiority suggests) to the consumption of alcohol.[59] More to the point, if the 'reformation of manners' or 'civilizing process' was as intensive and extensive as social historians suggest, then why did the seventeenth-century end as it began: with paranoia about the moral decrepitude of the nation and, more importantly, consensus among contemporaries that drunkenness was not limited to the lower orders. Certainly Daniel Defoe's popular dissection of 'the true-born Englishman' in 1701 goes far beyond Keith Wrightson's caveat that early modern 'drunkenness was not peculiar to the poor'.[60] Defoe contended that Englishmen 'seldom are good-natured, but in Drink'; 'will fairly drink as much,/As will maintain two families of Dutch'; and that 'they'll starve themselves and families' for ale. 'Nor do the Poor alone their Liquor prize'. On the contrary, when it came to drinking 'The Gentry lead and the Clergy drive'; 'The Learned Men who study Aristotle/Correct him with an Explanation-Bottle'; 'Statesmen their weighty politics refine/ And soldiers raise their courages by Wine'. The same was true for poets, doctors, and surgeons.[61] As E. P. Thompson famously extrapolated, Defoe was more attuned than most to social and cultural distinctions.[62] The propensity for drunkenness was, however, a source of national rather than class identify: 'English drunkards gods and men outdo/Drink their estates away, and senses too'.[63]

The apparent incongruity between the vibrant market in intoxicants and the implacability of the 'civilizing process' raises obvious questions about early modern consumption, not least the consumptive habits and conventions of more affluent social groups. Approaches to consumption have been characterized, however, by analytical tendencies which can obscure the meanings and uses of intoxicants – especially those social uses which might lead to intoxication. Most notable in this respect is the emphasis, especially among economic historians, on the household-family as both the primary site of consumption and the source of decision-making about what to consume.[64] There are, of course, good reasons for this focus. Probate inventories of household goods offer the most realistic (albeit problematic) chance of quantifying and comparing consumption patterns over time. Stressing the importance of familial roles, identities, and obligations avoids the anachronistic trap of assuming decisions were made by individualistic 'sovereign consumers' and also reflects the wider importance of the family within early modern culture.[65] More to the point, decades of work on the sociology of family formation have established the marked peculiarities of the 'European Marriage Pattern' and its likely (if elusive) significance for social agency and change. The characteristics are well known: north-western Europeans tended to form separate households rather than extend the size of existing families; they did so comparatively late in their lives (if they did at all) and by the volition of both partners; and while familial relations were often affective and resilient, it was nevertheless common for children to leave the

[59] The National Archives (TNA), E 178/5793.
[60] Wrightson, 'Alehouses', 7.
[61] Daniel Defoe, *The true-born Englishman. A satyr* (1701), 28, 29, 30, 31.
[62] E. P. Thompson, 'The Patricians and the Plebs' in *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), 16, 57.
[63] Defoe, *True-born Englishman*, 31.
[64] Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour & Material Culture in Britain 1660–1760*, 2nd Edition (London, 1996); Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990); Overton et al, *Production and Consumption*; Vries, *Industrious Revolution*.
[65] Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 7.

household at a relatively young age (most usually as a servant or apprentice in another household). The result for de Vries is a perennially '"weak" family' which nevertheless 'had the autonomy to respond to altered market conditions and act on the consumer aspiration of its members'.[66]

Yet it is not difficult to see how intoxicants and their consumption can slip (so to speak) through this analytical net. Probate inventories rarely record perishables (such as drinks); nor do the number of pewter tankards, clay pipes, or teapots listed in an inventory illuminate the rituals, meanings, frequency, sociology, or kinds of drinking that might have occurred in the house. Indeed when intoxicants were drunk sociably the household was by no means the only (or even likely) place of consumption.[67] Likewise, early modern people were not entirely confined to and by their familial roles and identities; neither did they make decisions (including decisions about what to consume) purely on that basis. On the contrary, contemporaries were supremely conscious of the influence of 'company' on a person's behaviour and reputation. Thomas Hudson merely reiterated a commonplace when he warned 'For look how your companions you elect/ For good or ill, so shall you be suspect' and, as Hannah Woolley more floridly exclaimed decades later, 'What a desert this world would seem without Company! And how dangerous would it prove were we not cautious in our election! For example is more forcible than precept, thus by bad company you may gain a bad custom, which all good instruction shall never root out'.[68] This was all the more so because the salient features of the European marriage pattern encouraged – indeed necessitated – the development of extra-familial institutions, roles, and relationships.[69] This was certainly the case for religious, civic, and other corporate institutions.[70] It was also increasingly true for other kinds of 'company' and 'society'. Indeed the flipside of de Vries' analysis must be that it was the unusual density of social roles, identities, and practices outwith the 'weak' family-household which helped shape north-western European tastes and habits, the English propensity for intoxication included. This is all the more likely given that, in England at least, the expansion of the early modern market in intoxicants coincided almost exactly with a new and distinct phase in the formation of 'society'. It is to this process that we can now briefly turn.

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[66] Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 19, 14–16.

[67] Phil Withington, 'Company and Sociability in Early Modern England', *Social History*, 32, 3, (2007), 291–308.

[68] Robert Allott, *Englands Parnassus: or the choysest flowers of our moderne poets, with their poeticall comparisons* (1600), ed. Charles Crawford (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1913), 331; Hannah Woolley, *The gentlewomans companion; or, A guide to the female sex: containing directions of behaviour, in all places, companies, relations, and conditions, from their childhood down to old age* (1673), 34.

[69] Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge, 2004).

[70] Katherine A. Lynch, *Individuals, Families, and Communities in Europe, 1200–1800: The Urban Foundations of Western Society* (Cambridge, 2003).

The formation of early modern society

The concept of 'society' has an ambiguous place in the lexicon of English social historiography. It is usually used instinctively and abstractly to describe what the sociologist Anthony Giddens terms the 'distinct system of social relations'.[71] This might mean the totality of institutions and relationships in a small rural village ('local society'), an entire country ('English society'), or the inter-penetration of the two. When applied to early modern England it often refers, in addition, to the processes implicit of the *Gemeinschaft*/*Gesellschaft* narrative – the kind of economic and cultural transitions outlined above which, as Keith Wrightson argues, 'did more than a little to shape the subsequent development of modern English society'.[72] In this way the word 'society' is everything and nothing: it describes 'the system of social relations' *in their entirety*; but unlike other categories of social analysis, such as 'the family' or 'the state', it is not an institution or set of practices *in its own right*. Instead 'social relations' in any given 'society' are taken to be constituted by more tangible and meaningful structures and processes: by families, states, 'neighbourliness', 'the market', 'the town', 'class', 'patriarchy', and so on. It is for this reason that Peter Laslett was able to describe 'pre-modern' England as a 'society of families' and why Margaret Thatcher could more famously pronounce 'There is no such thing as society'.[73]

In contrast to this somewhat nebulous and indeterminate sense of the term, early modern people had a very concrete and specific notion of 'society'. Derived from the Latin *societas*, 'society' was a synonym for the Anglo-Saxon 'fellowship' and Romance 'company'; its primary meaning was *purposeful and voluntary association*.[74] The initial translation of *societas* into the vernacular was in large part due to its conceptual importance for English humanists like Thomas More and Thomas Elyot, who took the communicative skills and mutual reciprocities requisite of 'society' to be defining features of the human condition.[75] The conceit of purposeful and voluntary association remained the core meaning of the term from Thomas Elyot's translation of *societas* in 1538 to Samuel Johnson's discussion of the term in 1755.[76] Thus Edward Phillips was entirely typical in defining 'Sociality' in 1678 as '(Lat.) fellowship, company' and 'Society' in 1698 as 'An assembly of several People in one Place, on purpose to assist each other in business ... a particular tie between some Persons, either for interest, out of friendship, or to live a Regular life ... a Company of them joined together in the study of some Art or Science'.[77] More to the point, it

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[71] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, Polity, 1990), 12–13.
[72] Wrightson, *English Society*, 14.
[73] Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost – Further Explored* (London, 2000), 8 – 10; see http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106689 for Thatcher's statement.
[74] Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: the Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge, Polity, 2010), chap. 5.
[75] Thomas More, The supplycacyon of soulys. Made by syr Thomas More knyght councellour to our souerayn lorde the Kynge and chauncellour of hys Duchy of Lancaster. Agaynst the supplycacyon of beggars (1529), II, 19; Thomas Elyot, The boke named the Gouernour (1531), III, sig. yiv.
[76] Elyot, *The Dictionary*; Johnson, *A Dictionary*.
[77] Phillips, *New World of Words* (1668 and 1698 editions).

was in the decades after 1570 that word and concept were popularized in the English vernacular and adopted as a form of social practice.

The extent of this assimilation is suggested simply by Samuel Johnson's examples of 'company'. He noted that 'persons assembled together' for 'the entertainment of each other', 'for conversation and mutual entertainment', 'fellowship', and 'the execution or performance of anything'. Other examples included 'a joint trade or partnership'; 'some particular rank or profession, united by some charter; a body corporate, a corporation'; 'a subdivision of a regiment; so many as are under one captain'. The formation of 'society' as a vernacular commonplace can be traced in more detail through the appearance of the word and its synonyms on the title-pages of printed texts published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These are available electronically on the *English Short Title Catalogue* (ESTC)*,* which can be consulted in conjunction with the *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) to create a database of meanings and applications. This method provides a basic chronology of usage that, within the parameters of the sample, is relatively systematic and complements the more familiar techniques of cultural and literary analysis: for example, the collation on anecdotal evidence (and the serendipity this entails), focus on one or two writers in their canonical contexts, or the close analysis of a text or genre of texts.[78] It is a crude index of discursive usage and change at best; but it is an index for all that.

Figure 2

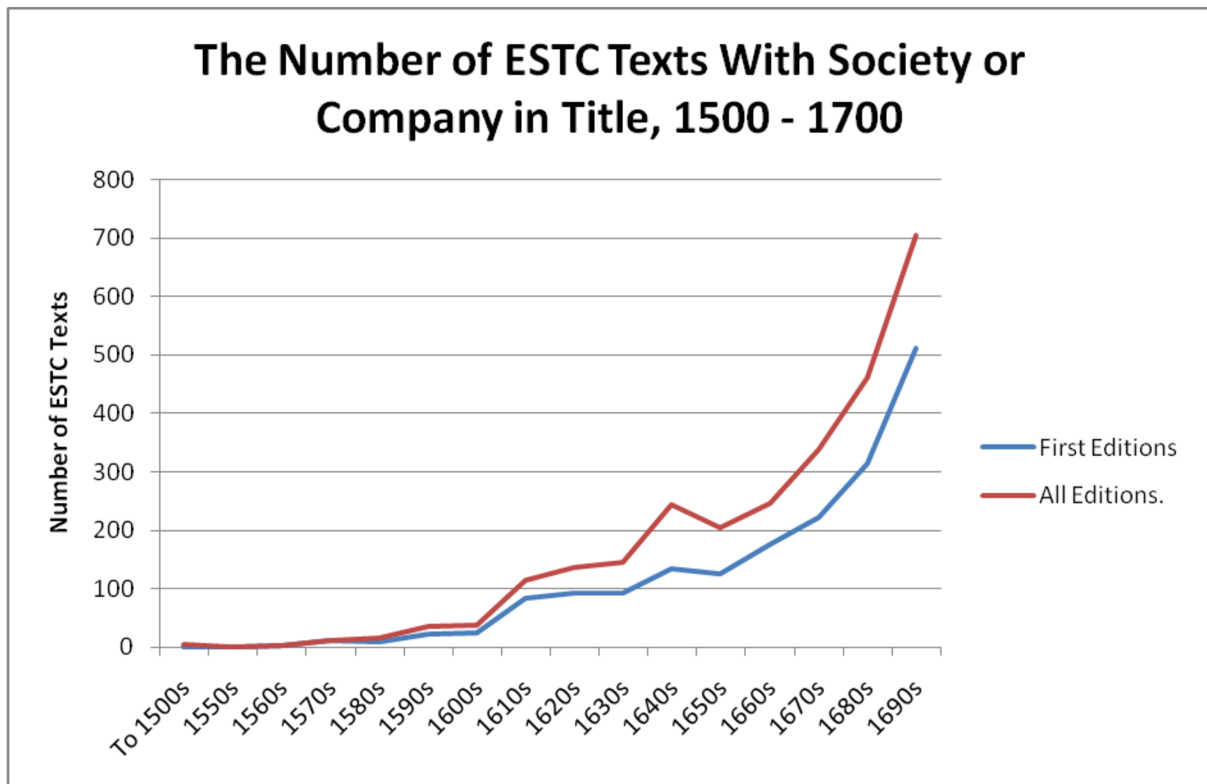
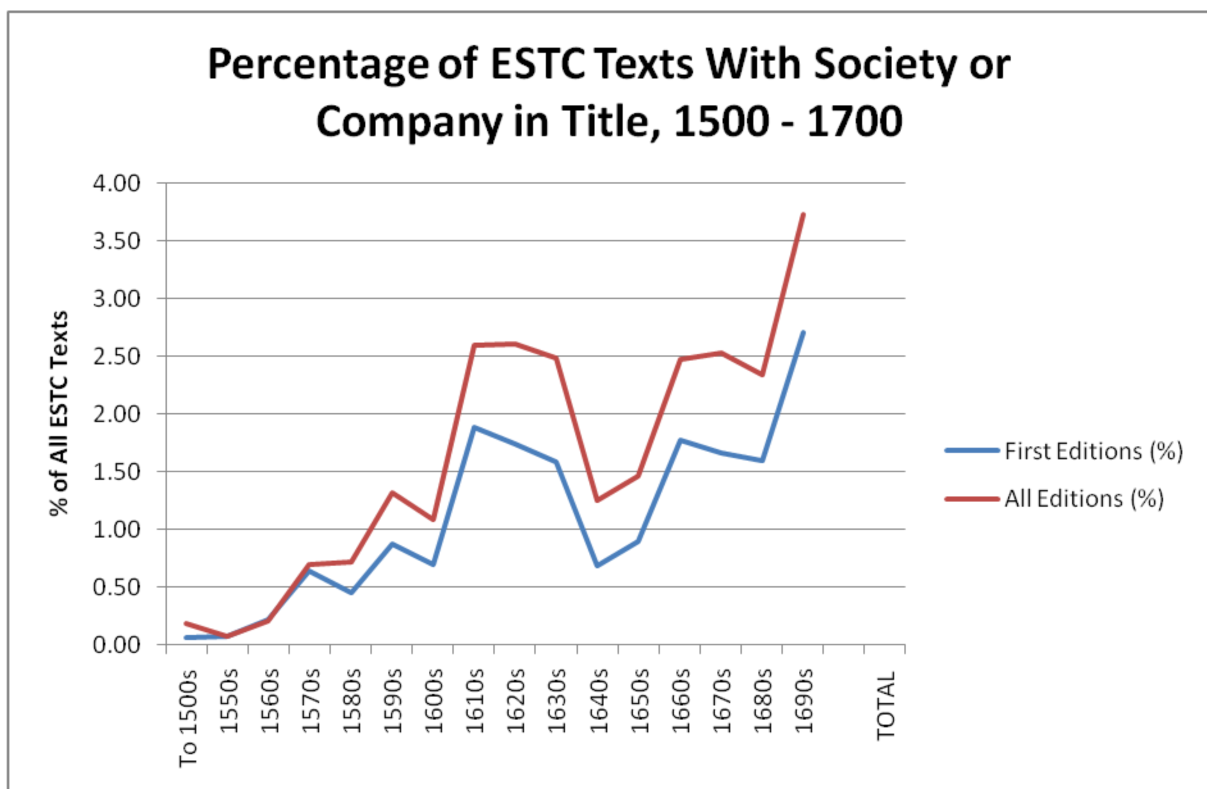


Figure 2 accordingly shows the chronology of appearances of society or company in printed title-pages between 1500 and 1700 (comparing first editions with all editions). It

[78] For a fuller discussion of the method see Withington, *Society in Early Modern England*.

demonstrates a marked increase in the use of either 'society' or 'company' from the 1570s onwards By the 1590s, 23 first-editions and 35 editions deployed either term. These numbers had risen to 511 and 705 by the 1690s. Figure 3 considers this trend as a percentage of all title-pages published over the period. It shows that the first sustained use of the words in the 1570s took the percentage of ESTC title-pages containing 'society' or 'company' over 0.5% for the first time; that a peak was reached by the 1610s and continued until the 1640s (when it dipped due to the huge increase in print prompted by the civil wars); that numbers returned to pre-war levels at the Restoration and increased exponentially in the last two decades of the century.

Figure 3



As Figure 4 demonstrates, the dramatic increase in the use of the Romance and Latinate terms to describe purposeful and deliberate association was in contradistinction to the fate of their Anglo-Saxon synonym, which never became a fixture on early-modern title-pages. This reflects the humanist basis of this particular process of discursive development. It also suggests that the burgeoning use of 'society' and 'company' between 1570 and 1700 was neither indiscriminate nor a simple consequence of the general expansion of the market in printed texts. Rather they were the terms of choice with which authors and printers identified themselves.

Figure 4

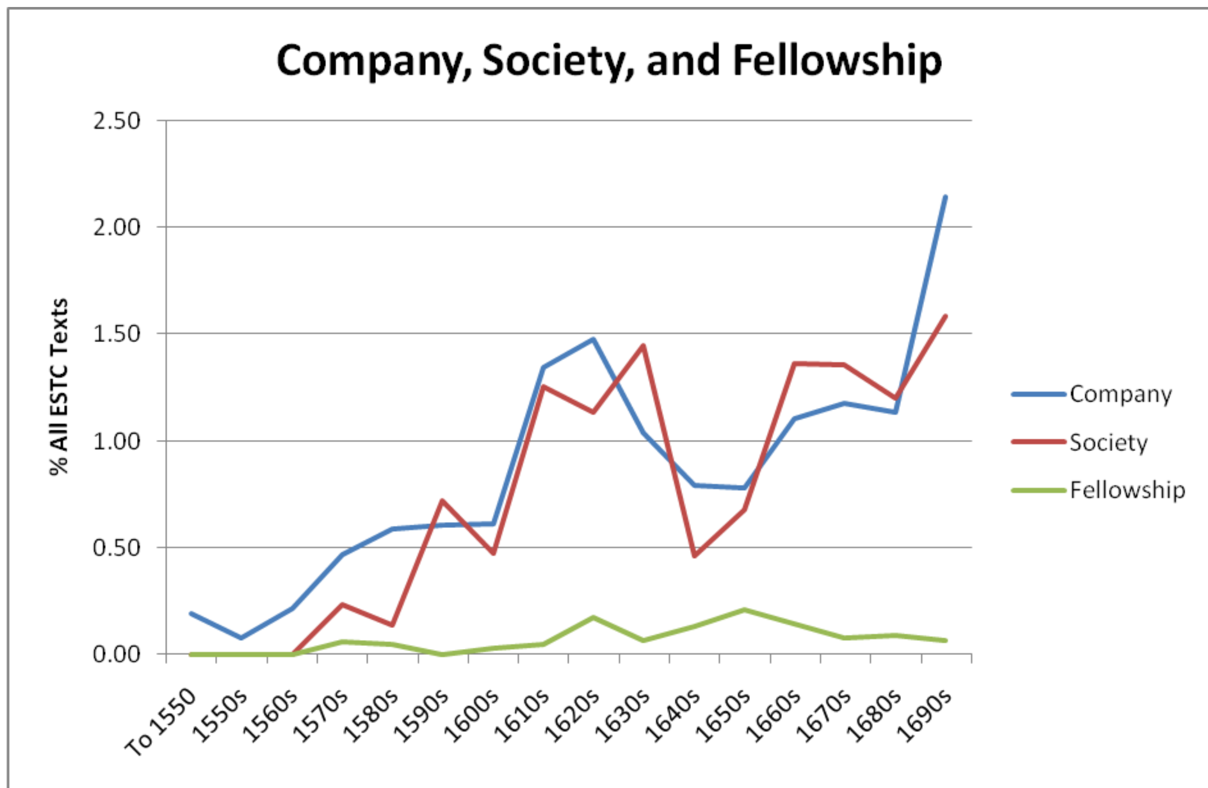
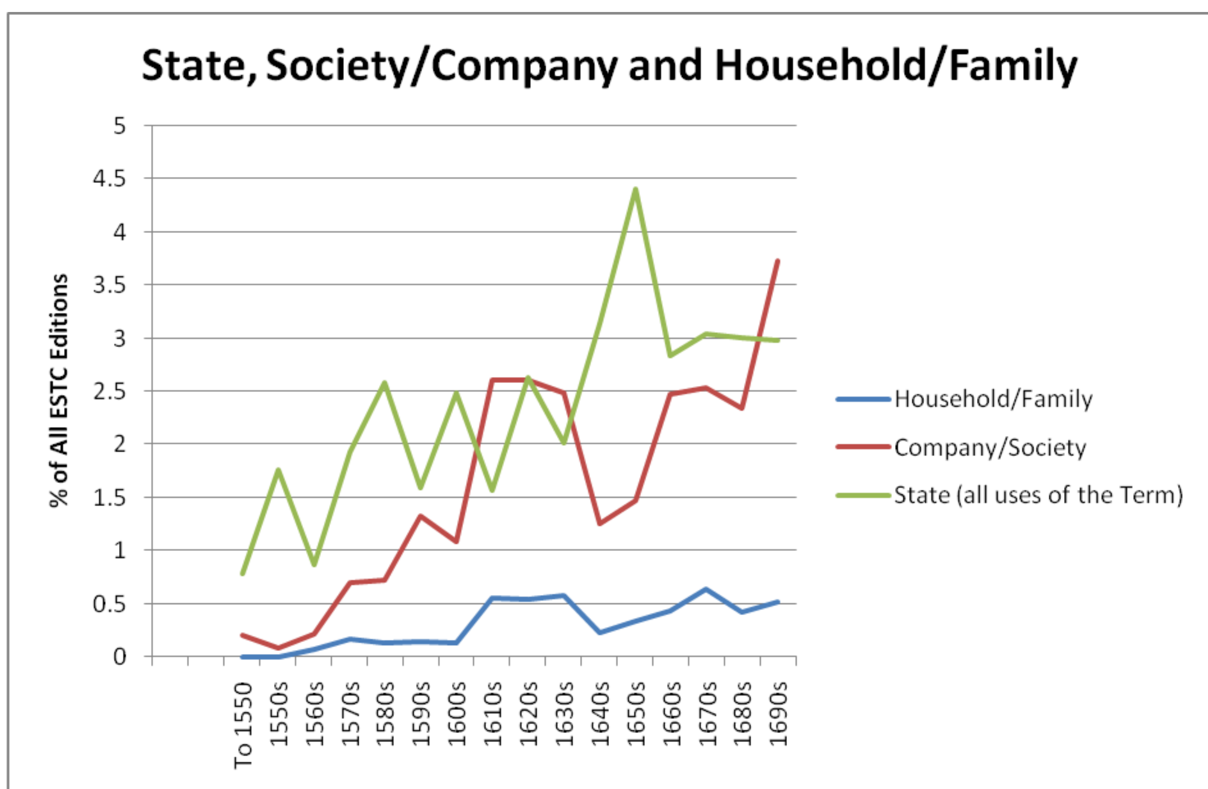


Figure 5



The significance of this is suggested by Figure 5, which compares the percentage of all ESTC title-pages containing society/company, household/family, and state between 1500 and 1700. The word 'state', which derived its many early-modern meanings and applications from the core concept of 'condition', was fairly ubiquitous throughout the period. Its discursive presence became particularly apparent during the 1640s and 1650s, when the political sense of the word was popularized. In the 200 years after 1500 'household' and 'family' figured much less frequently in the printed horizons of readers (if title-pages are anything to go by). This contrasts with the increasing visibility in print of 'society' and 'company' and the concept of deliberate and purposeful association they conjured.

It is worth noting, finally, the spectrum of activities and practices described by 'society' and 'company'. Viewed schematically, they extended in two directions. At one end of the associational spectrum, 'society' and especially 'company' described *sociability* of the most informal and transient kind: those quotidian and innumerable interactions that gave structure to everyday life.[79] At the other end of the spectrum, 'society' was used to denote idealised notions and theories of association: abstract ideals of 'Christian society', 'humane society', and 'civil society'. Between these two poles lay a host of associational bodies and groupings, the participants of which increasingly sequestered the labels 'society' or 'company' as their own. These ranged from formally constituted and legally recognized *corporations*, to regular *institutions*, to more amorphous *networks* – indeed the first printed text to emblazon 'society' on its title-page, John Barston's *The Safeguard of Societie*, used the term to characterise all these types of association.[80] Figure 6 shows that abstract notions of 'society' were rarest on title-pages, accounting for only 1.8% of the data between 1500 and 1700. Corporate societies and companies were, in contrast, the most common, largely because they were often the patrons of texts as well as the subject-matter. These were organizations claiming incorporated status. This meant their institutional structures, powers, privileges, and resources were at once formalized and sanctioned by a higher power – the papacy in the case of the Society of Jesus, the sovereign state (monarchical or otherwise) in most other instances.[81] In England they ranged from university colleges, Inns of Court, the Royal Society and urban corporations to international trading companies like the East India Company and Virginia Company and guilds and craft companies closer to home.[82] Second in terms of printed visibility were institutional societies and companies. These were associations claiming degrees of structure and permanency, though without the full trappings of corporate status and power. Prominent examples included the entourages and retainers of noblemen

[79] Withington, 'Company'; Karin Sennefelt, 'The Politics of Hanging Around and Tagging Along: Everyday Practices of Politics in Eighteenth-Century Stockholm' in Michael J. Braddick, ed., *The Politics of Gesture: Historical Perspectives* (Oxford, Past & Present, 2009), 172–190.

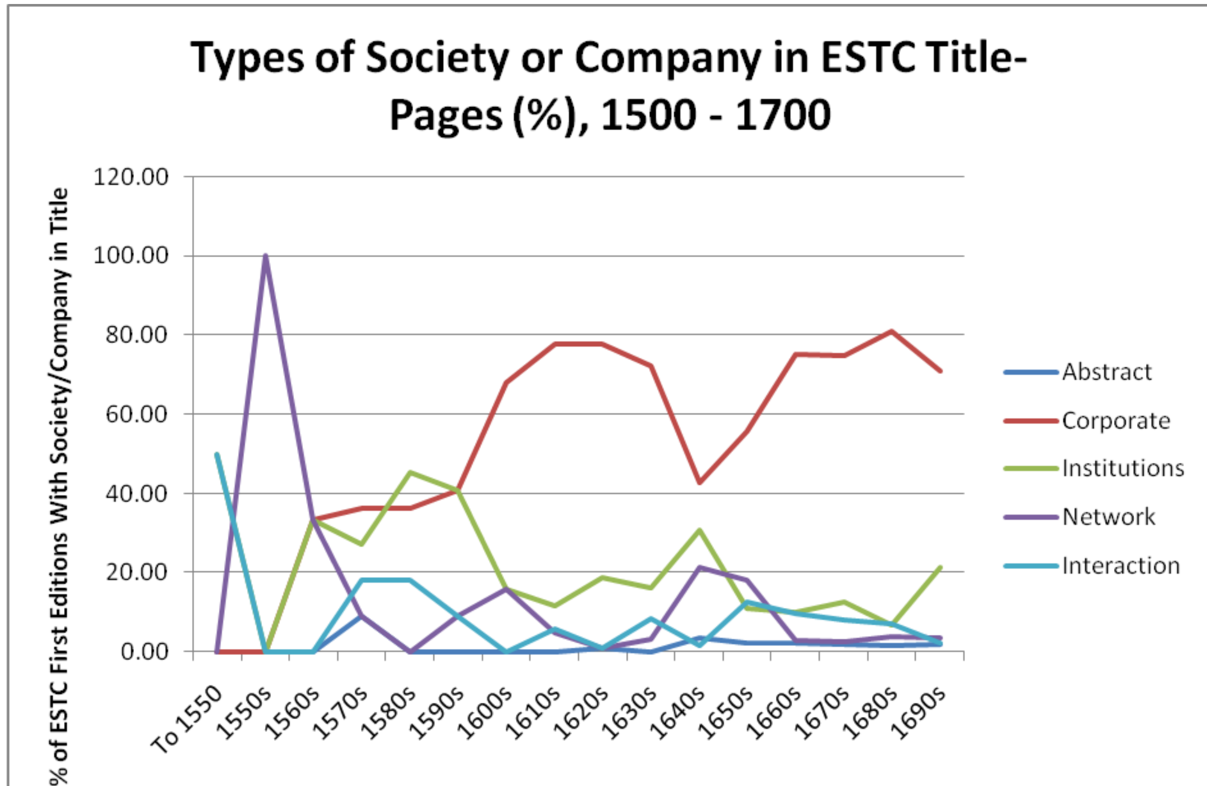
[80] John Barston, *The safegarde of societie: describing the institution of lavves and policies, to preserue euery felowship of people by degrees of ciuill gouernement: gathered of the moralles and policies of philosophie* (1576).

[81] John O'Malley,*The First Jesuits* (Cambridge Mass., 1993)

[82] The first example of this kind of 'company' on a printed title-page is John Awdelay, *An epitaph, of Maister Fraunces Benison, citizene and marchant of London, and of the Haberdashers Company* (1570).

from the early sixteenth century.[83] Theatrical companies, military companies, gentleman's clubs, and voluntary societies (including the Society for the Reformation of Manners) proliferated thereafter.[84]

Figure 7



Networks of societies and companies were constructed as much through the idea of companionship and communality as its practice. Although they could have quite pronounced institutional features, the bonds and reciprocities they assumed depended as much on informal interactions (fictional or otherwise) for their viability. Examples include the 'companies' of criminals who haunted the later Elizabethan literary imagination and religious groups – 'elect', 'godly', separatist or nonconformist – described as 'societies' from the 1630s.[85] Last (and vastly under-represented in the data) were the more ephemeral moments of co-presence and sociability which, in the absence of formal structures and roles, followed

[83] Earliest examples include Anon, *This is the begynnynge, and contynuaunce of the pylgrymage of Sir Richarde Guylforde Knyght, [and] controuler vnto our late soueraygne lorde kynge Henry the. vij. And howe he went with his seruauntz and company towardes Iherusalem* (1511); Anon, *The destruction and sacke cruelly committed by the Duke of Guyse and his company, in the towne of Vassy, the fyrste of Marche* (1562).

[84] See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford, 1996); Roger B. Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms: The Origins of the British Army 1585–1702* (Oxford, 2006); Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000).

[85] Bartholomew Traheron, *An aunsuuere made by Bar. Traheron to a priuie papiste vvhich crepte in to the English congregation of Christian exiles vndre the visor of a fauorer of the Gospel* (1558); John Awdelay, *The fraternitye of uacabondes. As wel of ruflyng vacabondes, as of beggerly, of women as of men, of gyrles, as of boyes, with their proper names and qualities. With a description of the crafty company of cousoners and shifters* (1575).

tacit conventions, rituals, and codes. The first instance of such association on surviving printed title-page is Richard Whitford's bestseller, *A Work for Householders*, in 1530.[86] This outlined the opportunities for 'company' within the community and the responsibility of heads of household to police them. It was the same type of company that *Contending for Superiority* took as its subject matter 100 years later.

Intoxicants and early modern society

It is worth taking stock of the argument so far. The first part of the paper outlined the growth in the English market for intoxicants in the decades after 1570. It also noted the tension between the levels of expenditure needed to drive this expansion and the role that intoxicants are thought to have played in signifying 'the civilizing process' and 'the dissociation between polite and plebeian culture'.[87] Addressing this tension clearly requires the consumption of more affluent groups be revisited. However, the traditional focus of economic historians on the household-family fails to illuminate the conventions and rituals informing how beer, ale, wine and tobacco were drunk. Much more promising, it has been suggested, is the concurrent emergence of 'society' and 'company' within the English vernacular. Denoting the concept of purposeful and voluntary association, this vocabulary accounted for a variety of practices and organizations that increasingly characterised the social topography of England after 1570. These included traditional corporations like the Vintners Company and Inns of Court as well as new enterprises like global trading companies and Royal Society. The vocabulary encompassed new institutions like theatre companies, gentlemen's clubs, and artisan 'combinations' as well as more extended networks of fellow travellers (whether religious, intellectual, or criminal). And it included instances of (more or less) ephemeral sociability – on street corners and doorsteps; in the vestry and council chamber; in the alehouse, inn, and tavern; in the coffeehouse and assembly room. Intoxicants were clearly integral to the development of English corporate and institutional life so described. Not only was their traffic central to the fortunes of both the great trading companies and the increasing number of smaller trading partnerships established in the seventeenth century (which were operating as 'companies' by the 1650s).[88] Intoxicants were also integral to the rounds of feasting, ritual, and 'consociation' which characterised organized associational life.

The full extent of this relationship is yet to be written. When it eventually is it may well reveal that consumption driving the market in intoxicants was as much corporate as familial. In the meantime the final section of this paper considers those more elusive instances of quotidian sociability which were not necessarily tied to either corporate or household locations. Of particular concern is the kind of studied male 'company' parodied in *Contending for Superiority* – a text which provides important insights into the 'modern'

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[86] Richard Whitford, *A werke for housholders, or for them ye haue the gydynge or gouernaunce of any company* (1530).

[87] Wrightson, *English Society*, 14.

[88] Smith, 'Accounting for Taste'; Cogswell, 'Power of the State'; Edmund Morgan, 'The First American Boom: Virginia 1616 to 1630', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, xxviii, 1971, 169–98. TNA E 190 319/4.

codes and conventions informing the drinking habits of educated and (by implication) prosperous young men.[89] Although the dialogue was ostensibly anonymous it is fairly easy to place in terms of its authorship and audience. James Holly Hanford long ago argued that it should be read as a contribution to the genre of 'farcical interludes' written for performance at the University of Cambridge in the 1610s and 1620s – it belonged to the milieu (if not the actual pen) of Thomas Randolph, the most talented writer (and drinker) of this generation of 'university wits'.[90] Alternatively there is strong circumstantial evidence that the professional playwright James Shirley wrote the dialogue. Shirley was the only playwright published by John Grove when Grove published *Contending for Superiority* in 1629.[91] When Grove moved shop in the 1631 Shirley continued to publish with the new occupant of Furnivall Inn Gate, William Cooke.[92] Shirley also joined Grey's Inn in 1632 as a kind of in-house poet, preparing a series of masques and interludes which shared many of the conceits and themes of *Contending for Superiority*.[93] The precise authorship of the dialogue is less important, however, than its general provenance in this educated male 'society'. Not only was there significant mobility between the universities and the Inns of Court; both were axiomatic to the construction of early modern gentility. As Wrightson notes, in 1584 about half the active JPs in Somerset and Northamptonshire had attended a university or Inn or both. By 1636 the respective proportions were 86% and 82%.[94]

These antecedents are reflected simply in the themes and style of the dialogue, which bears important similarities to the work of one of the most important constitutional writers of the period, the humanist and civil lawyer Sir Thomas Smith. Most obviously, the social stereotypes speaking in the text – wine/gentlemen, beer/citizen, and ale/countryman – echo Smith's famous delineation of 'sorts' of 'gentlemen', 'citizen', and 'yeoman' in *De Republica Anglorum*, which was published eleven times between 1583 and 1640 and would have been compulsory reading for all budding lawyers.[95] Likewise Smith's concern to place servants, bondsmen, and household dependents within the commonwealth is echoed by the inclusion of sugar/page, nutmeg/apprentice, and toast/servant. The dialogue differs from

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[89] Wrightson, *English Society*, 29, 49.

[90] Hanford, 'Wine', 13, 16; Jason Scott Warren, *Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge, Polity, 2005), 86.

[91] James Shirley, *The vvedding. As it was lately acted by her Maiesties Seruants, at the Phenix in Drury Lane* (1629); *The gratefull seruant. A comedie. As it was lately presented with good applause at the priuate House in Drury-Lane, by her Majesties Servants* (1630). Both plays were sold by John Grove in Furnivall Gate.

[92] James Shirley, *Changes: or, Love in a maze. A comedie, as it was presented at the Private House in Salisbury Court, by the Company of His Majesties Revels* (1632). In 1632 John Grove published Marmion Shackley, *Hollands leaguer. An excellent comedy as it hath bin lately and often acted with great applause, by the high and mighty Prince Charles his Servants; at the private house in Salisbury Court* from Swan Alley within Newgate.

[93] Ira Clark, 'Shirley, James (*bap.* 1596, *d.* 1666)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004. See in particular James Shirley, *The triumph of peace· A masque, presented by the foure honourable houses, or Innes of Court. Before the King and Queenes Majesties, in the Banquetting-house at White Hall, February the third, 1633. Invented and written, by James Shirley, of Grayes Inne, Gent* (1634). The play was sold by William Cooke in Furnivall Inn Gate.

[94] Wrightson, *English Society*, 192.

[95] Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (1583), ed. by Mary Dewar (Cambridge, 1982), 66–77.

Smith's schema by introducing the tobacco/swaggering gentleman character – tobacco and 'gallants' both becoming fixtures of English culture only after Smith had died – and by giving water/parson a distinct role as social mediator. These interlopers replace 'the fourth sort who do not rule' from Smith's hierarchy of 'sorts', so emphasising that this is a dialogue between Englishmen (and their drinks) who have distinct and legitimate roles in the public life of the commonwealth. In an ideal world, Wine 'shall be in most request among Courtiers, Gallants, Gentlemen, Poetical wits'; Beer 'shall be in most grace with the Citizens, as being a more staid liquor for them that purpose retirement and gravity'; and even the 'credit' of ale 'shall not be inferior, for people of all sorts shall desire your acquaintance' and 'the Parson shall account you one of his best Parishioners and the Churchwardens shall pay for your company'.[96]

If *Wine, Beer, Ale and Tobacco* echoes one of the definitive texts of the Elizabethan and early Stuart polity then its underlying theme – how to reconcile competitive 'private' interests with both each other and the needs of the commonwealth – is strongly reminiscent of another text by Smith: *A Discourse of the Commonweal of the Realm of England*.[97] Written in the turbulent 1540s, *A Discourse* involved five-way dialogue between a Knight, Merchant, Husbandman, Capper, and Doctor to consider 'the manifold complaints of men touching the decay of the Commonweal that we be in'.[98] The eventual conclusion reached by the company is notable for at least two reasons. First, Smith broke with conventional wisdom to accept 'the widespread reality of self-interested economic behaviour'.[99] Rather than perceiving self-interest as covetous and socially damaging – as previous moralists had done – he suggests that well-regulated and responsible pursuit of gain is a fillip to the common good. Second, in having his characters adopt this position Smith redefines normative conceptions of sociability and commerce according to the Ciceronian concept of *honestas*, an attribute of civility which has been usefully defined as 'the self-restraint of potentially domineering speakers'.[100] This civility required individuals to develop qualities requisite of self-possession and control – discretion, wisdom, decorum – enabling rational discourse, or 'civil conversation', between people of contrasting perspectives, conflicting interests, and unequal wealth and status.[101] As Jennifer Richards has argued, the *Discourse* propagated this mode of civility in at least two ways: it represented 'civil conversation' in action; and the kind of behaviour it recommended as normative was itself imbued with the values of 'honestas'.[102] In this way what has been

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[96] *Contending for Superiority*, C2.
[97] This was circulated in manuscript during the troubled 1540s and published as William Stafford, *A compendious or briefe examination of certayne ordinary complaints, of diuers of our country men in these our days* (1581). The modern edition is Thomas Smith, *A Discourse of the Commonweal of the Realm of England*, ed. Mary Dewar (Charlottesville, 1969).
[98] Smith, *A Discourse*, 15.
[99] Wrightson, Earthly Necessities, 154.
[100] Jennifer Richards, *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: 2003), 2.
[101] Phil Withington, ''For This is True or Els I do Lye': Thomas Smith, William Bullein and the Mid-Tudor Dialogue' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, *1485–1603*, eds. Cathy Shrank and Mike Pincombe (Oxford, 2009), 461–65.
[102] Ibid., 101–6.

called 'the most brilliant and most enduring' work of sixteenth-century political economy' owed its prescience to the vernacularization of a classically inspired literary form.[103]

The same idealism pervades the conversation between *Wine, Beer, Ale and Tobacco* in at least three respects. First, it has a happy ending. Thanks to the intercession of Water – the 'kinsmen' of Wine, Beer and Ale – mutually profitable reconciliation is achieved (C2). This is true in terms of servant-master relations. As Sugar puts it to Nutmeg and Toast:

> *Sugar*: Let's all be one rather: and from henceforth since they are so well accorded, let's make no difference of our Masters, but belong to them in common: for my part, though I wait upon Wine, it shall not exempt my attendance on Beer, or Ale, if they please to command Sugar. (C3)

It is also true of the 'masters' themselves. As Wine pronounces in the dialogue's final speech:

> *Wine*: Tobacco, you are a good fellow, all ambition laid aside, let us embrace as friends; excuse us, that we have been a little merry with you, we acknowledge you a gentle drink and you shall have all the respect wilt become Wine, Beer and Ale to observe you with: what should we contend for primacy, quarrel about titles, which if to any we acknowledge most properly belong to you, for they are all but smoke. Let us unite and be confederate states for the benefit of men's Low Countries, live and love together. Wine doth here enter league with Tobacco.
>
> *Beer*: And Beer.
> *Ale*: And Ale. (D2r)

Second, the company is reconciled through the discursive *process*, the very act of conversation facilitating reason and overcoming inherent prejudices and rivalries. For example, the effeminate Sugar – he is teased at the start of the dialogue by his master, Wine, for keeping 'women's company too much' (B) – begins the dialogue deeply antagonistic towards the aggressive and rustic Toast:

> *Sugar*: I'll tell thee Nutmeg, I do not care much for [Toast's] company, he's such a choleric piece, I know not what he's made of, but his quarrelling comes home to him. For he's every day cut for it, I marvel how he escapes, this morning he had a knife thrust into him.
> *Nutmeg*: Indeed he will be very hot sometimes. (A5r)

The dislike is clearly mutual yet, by the end of the dialogue, Toast can announce that 'Sugar, I am now friends with thee' (C2r). Likewise Tobacco, the 'New World' interloper who only enters the dialogue after the other substances have already made friends, is initially shunned:

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[103] Smith, *A Discourse*, ix.

> *Wine*: Who's this Tobacco?
> *Beer*: Why comes he into our company?
> *Wine*: ... we take it very ill you should intrude yourself into our mirth (C4).

Tobacco's eventual inclusion in the group is due to his powers of persuasion, the 'excellent discourser' (as Ale describes him) (D) reminding the other drinks of his various qualities and the esteem with which many people, not least 'Princes and Poets', already hold him. Just as the intoxicants previously accepted Water's arguments for reconciliation, now Wine successfully recommends that:

> *Wine*: This ruffle may be troublesome, we were best admit him to our society, he is a dry companion, and you may observe, how he hath insinuated already with the greatest; the ladies begin to affect him, and he receives private favours from their lips ... for our own sakes, let us hold correspondence with him, least he seduce men to forsake us, or at least to make use of us but for their necessity (D2).

In the third instance, therefore, intoxicants are presented as the signifiers and lubricants of not only 'singular' social groups but also the melting pot of 'civil society'. The acceptance of Tobacco by Wine into the company on the reasonable grounds that his inclusion is safer for the group than his exclusion is a quintessential statement of the kind of civility propagated by Smith. That Water can engineer the 'reconcilement and qualification' of the drinks by persuading them that the 'singularity' of each need not threaten that of the other is likewise an exercise in civil ratiocination. The implication is that the best way to ameliorate contemporary social tensions – and for 'gentlemen', 'citizens', 'countrymen', 'parsons', and 'swaggering gentlemen' to learn their appropriate place in 'society' – is to drink, listen and talk to each other. It is not for nothing that the stationer John Groves opens the dialogue's preface to his 'Readers' with: 'Gentlemen; for in your Drink, you will be no less' (A3).

Smith was one of many moralists influential in prescribing civility – and the social and discursive skills implicit to it – as the basis for public and domestic sociability. Over the course of the period it became the ideal *modus operandi* for city councils, guild assemblies, parliament, courts, Inns of Court, universities and colleges, and other corporate and public companies, as well as company in private, domestic, and other settings.[104] The 'moderate' or 'temperate' consumption of intoxicants was, as the dialogue suggests, integral to civility of this kind. Yet the practice of civility, especially when lubricated by intoxicants, was much more ambivalent, and indeed hazardous, than its theory. To give just one example: The attempt by Edward Guy and John Hacker to resolve their differing religious opinions in an alehouse in Fincham in Nottinghamshire in 1672 illustrates (among other things) how intoxicants and civility do not always mix. Guy, the parish minister, and Hacker, a local gentleman, joined others 'in company' in Henry Drury's alehouse to 'have words about their

[104] The process of dissemination is discussed in Phil Withington, 'Skill and Commonwealth in Early Modern English Cities' in Maria Pia Paoli, ed., *Saperi a Confronto Nell'Europa dei Secoli XIII–XIX* (Pisa, 2009), 57–83.

former familiarities and also some discourse about their former differences and quarrels': i.e. to reconcile their religious differences civilly. The choice of venue, while socially inevitable, was unfortunate. Another gentleman, John Hattoft, explained that Guy 'began to tell and admonish [Hacker] to refrain conventicles and meeting houses ... and amongst other arguments to persuade him told him that as he [Guy] was the minister of the parish it was his duty to admonish him of these things'. For 'further persuasion' Guy told Hacker 'he had been "ingeniously educated at the university and Inns of Court and that therefore not only he but the most gentlemen thereabouts extremely wondered that a person of his quality and education should run to such places to hear weavers and cobblers or such like fellows"' and 'that "it was a disgrace to him so to do"'. Hattoft continued: 'Whereupon the said Mr Hacker very angrily replied "Hold you babbling your sirrah you are drunk" and another local gentleman, Samuel Tidsdall, testified that he called him "drunken fellow and drunken priest". Guy then (usefully) 'replied that "he [was] never so drunk as to lose his horse" at which 'Hacker very passionately by and with great fury smote him upon the belly with his double fist and then violently pressed his hands under Mr Guy's chin and took hold of his collar and violently pulled him to the ground'.[105]

Here, then, were local gentlemen with university educations forming an alehouse 'company' to resolve, in a civil fashion, quite fundamental differences in religion and social outlook. The requisite intoxicants proved on this occasion to be counter-productive. Grove's dialogue between *Wine, Beer, Ale and Tobacco* is very much in this 'civilizing' tradition. However, it also appropriates and subverts the ideal in ways that reflect the kind of audience for whom it was written. Grove's shop served a clientele of lawyers who lived, worked and studied in Holborn and its environs – in Whitehall, Westminster, and the Inns of Court (where John Hacker of Fincham spent time). Since the middle of the sixteenth-century this legal community had not only grown demographically at an exponential rate, reflecting the remarkable expansion of the legal profession and the burgeoning culture of litigation that (among other things) lawyers and solicitors serviced. From the 1590s the neighbourhood also witnessed the development of new modes of sociability, with their locus in the taverns and inns, as a supplement to the rich culture of *communitas* that characterised the life of the Inns themselves. As Michelle O'Callaghan observes, 'These companies had well-defined rituals based on cultures of revelling at the universities and the Inns of Court and the humanist revival of classical convivial traditions'. Typical was the 'Sireniacs', who 'looked back to the Greek *symposium* and Roman *convivium*, as well as placing themselves in the company of the drinking societies of contemporary Europe'.[106] What was already 'a highly diversified and sophisticated culture' of 'convivial societies' at the turn of the century accelerated 'in volume and tempo' in the 1620s.[107] Timothy Raylor notes that a new spate of fraternities had their antecedents not merely in the humanist nexus of grammar school, university and Inns of Court but also the 'military companies' which performed so lamentably in the Thirty Years

[105] Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (BIHR), CPH 2924, 1674.
[106] Michelle O'Callaghan, *The English Wits. Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), 5.
[107] Timothy Raylor, *Cavaliers, Clubs and Literary Culture. Sir John Mennes, James Smith and the Order of the Fancy* (Newark, 1994), 160–1.

War.[108] Known by names like the 'Order of the Bugle' and the 'Order of the Blue' they emulated the ancient Greek *hetaireia* and *komos* – modes of 'ritualized degenerate behaviour' – rather than the *symposium* and *convivium*. And they brought a new level of 'riotous speech and behaviour' to an already 'complex *habitus* in which young men could learn and practice ways of speaking, dressing and modes of behaviour that distinguished them within a wider society of gentlemen'.[109]

It was in this veritable maelstrom of elite homo-sociability that, in the first instance at least, *Wine, Beer, Ale and Tobacco* would have been read and quite possibly performed. The upshot is that Groves' dialogue not only echoes the civil aspirations of Smith but also parodies them. The text is predicated, after all, on a ridiculous and amusing conceit (that drinks can talk). It is packed with word-play and social and political satire (including a dig or two at James I: 'I am confident it is easier for a poet not born to sovereignty to aspire to a kingdom, then for a king not born with fancy to be made a poet' (D2)). It involves a song between Wine, Beer and Ale (chorus: 'Then let us be merry, wash sorrow away/Wine, Beer and ale shall be drunk today' (C3v)) and a very funny impersonation of a soldier by Ale (who at one stage goes through the 24 steps, or 'military postures', required to light a pipe). Moreover, it climaxes with a dance in which Sugar, Nutmeg and Toast are ritually re-subordinated to their masters (e.g. in the first act 'Wine falling down, one takes Sugar by the heels and seems to shake him upon Wine'). As the likely authorship of Shirley or Randolph suggests, the tenor of the dialogue and quality of the vignettes are reminiscent of the annual revels staged at the Inns of Court and Cambridge and Oxford University as well as the kind of jocular 'entertainments' enacted by the clubs and fraternities that met in the adjacent taverns. And the prevailing cultural idiom here was not so much civility as a permutation on that classical theme: 'wit'.

'Wit' was, of course, an old word that had long described 'the seat of consciousness or thought, the mind' and 'the faculty of thinking and reasoning' (*OED*). For early moderns this faculty could be firmly rooted in knowledge and emulation of the ancients, as Ben Jonson (for one) insisted; or it could be taken as a mark of 'the Genius' – the '*ex tempore* inspirations' 'of our Moderns', as Edward Phillips sneered in 1656.[110] It certainly implied conversational attributes – such as mirth, laughter, and opinion – which were less obvious in the more restrained, reasonable, and potentially calculating tradition of Ciceronian civility. O'Callaghan and others have persuasively argued that, during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries, the noun was successfully appropriated by the 'distinct milieu within early modern London that cultivated a fashionable, urbane reputation'.[111] The literary and sociable activities that 'wit' valorised (the two were closely connected) were deeply and knowingly rooted in classical precedent. However, they generally 'incorporated ritualised

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[108] Ibid., 162.
[109] Raylor, *Cavaliers*, 71; O'Callaghan, *English Wits*, 13.
[110] Edward Phillips, *The mysteries of love & eloquence, or, the arts of vvooing and complementing; as they are manag'd in the Spring Garden, Hide Park, the New Exchange, and other eminent places* (1656), A5.
[111] O'Callaghan, *English Wits*, 1.

forms of aggression' rather than 'reconciliation and qualification' and tended to 'the assertion of power (individual or group) through displays of wit, wealth or violence'.[112] Such assertions could range from 'flyting, a type of verbal duelling associated with communities of honour that aggressively defined the in-group' to 'classically low and ludic genres, such as burlesque and mock-encomium', to 'making merry', 'drunken singing', intensive toasting, and other forms of stylised debauchery.

Whether taken moderately or excessively, intoxicants lubricated wit; and intoxication, whether from the drinking or the words, was an ideal outcome. As the clergyman, poet and wit Robert Herrick explained in 'When He Would Have His Verses Read' – 'In sober mornings, doe not then rehearse/The holy incantation of a verse;/But when that men have both well-drunk, and fed,/Let my Enchantments then be sung, or read./When Laurell spirit 'ith fire, and when the Hearth/Smiles to it self, and guilds the roof with mirth;/When up the *Thyrse* is rais'd, and when the sound/Of sacred *Orgies* flyes, a round, A round./When the *Rose* raignes, and Locks with Ointment shine/Let rigid *Cato* read these lines of mine (*Hesperides* (1648), p. 3).[113] Or, as a founder member of the Order of the Bugle explained more prosaically in 1623, 'their Company ... at that time made no other association but only to be merry, and drink wine and take Tobacco'.[114] And as Wine boasted to Beer in the course of their conversation in 1629: 'I am a companion for Princes, the least drops of my blood, worth all thy body. I am sent for by the Citizens, visited by the Gallants, kissed by the Gentlewomen. I am their life, their Genius, the Poetical fury, the Helicon of the Muses' (B2). The outbreak of civil war in 1642 only intensified the relationship between 'wit', wine, and the rituals and practices that constituted male elite male identity.[115] They were integral to the persona of the royalist Cavalier and poet and, following the Restoration, to various genteel and political stereotypes. Samuel Pepys, in many respects the archetypal product of the English renaissance, gained an early insight of the potential excesses of a culture so constructed. In April 1661, the night of the king's coronation Pepys recorded that:

> At last I sent my wife and her bedfellow to bed, and Mr Hunt and I went in with Mr Thornbury (who did give the company all their wines, he being yeoman of the wine cellar to the King) to his house; and there, with his wife and two of his sisters and some gallant spark that were there, we drank the king's health and nothing else, till one of the gentlemen fell down stark drunk and there lay spewing.

Later in bed Pepys own 'head began to turn and I to vomit' and 'when I woke I found myself wet with my spewing. Thus did the day end, with joy everywhere' (87).[116] The same could not be said for Mr Reginald Hopwood, whose experience of 'drinking in company' in a Yorkshire alehouse in 1673 nicely illustrates the cultural strictures of both civility and wit.

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[112] Raylor, *Cavaliers*, 72.
[113] Robert Herrick, *Hesperides: or, The vvorks both humane & divine of Robert Herrick Esq* (1648), 3.
[114] Raylor, *Cavaliers*, 77–78.
[115] McShane, 'Roaring Royalists', 73–75.
[116] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: a New and Complete Transcription*, *Vol. II,* ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (London, 1995), 87.

The company began as civil business between Hopwood, a clergyman, and John Robinson, his lawyer. When another lawyer 'Thomas Squire came into the room and sat down in company with them ... they began to be merry'. The veer to wit involved Latin word games and competitive drinking, Squire accusing Hopwood of *falso latine*. The 'ale and the passion ... did somewhat intoxicate' Hopwood to the extent that he ended slumped over the table with his breeches down. It was then, apparently, that Squire 'touched the said Mr Hopwood's prick with a tobacco pipe'; contending for superiority indeed. [117]

Conclusion

Intoxicants were the lubricant of medieval society, an integral component of the rituals of worship, hierarchy, governance, and commonalty. The sacred was soaked with it, the civic and the quotidian also. Intoxicants were also deeply implicated in the formation of early modern 'society', by which contemporaries meant the various kinds of purposeful and voluntary association which proliferated, both discursively and in practice, in the 130 years after 1570. Viewed in these terms society was not the endpoint of social change, as the shibboleth of *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* suggests, so much as a context for behaving socially and means of acting collectively. Its formation suggests that asymmetrical affluence rather than simple immiseration drove the growth in the market for intoxicants. Viewed in these terms intoxication was not merely a source of solace, escape, or insubordination; nor was it the preserve of the meaner sort of men.[118] On the contrary, it also signified material, social, and cultural distinctions – the improved circumstances of some at the conspicuous expense of others.

Then as now 'company' came in many shapes and forms.[119] What distinguished the masculine sociability parodied in *Contending for Superiority* was not sobriety, nor even moderation. Rather it was the more general appropriation of classical templates to shape a contemporary – or modern – social aesthetic. This recourse to classical culture made for the dissemination of two basic *habitus* among wealthy Englishmen in early modern England: civility and wit. Although they should not be juxtaposed in any simplistic fashion the tension between sociability as ratiocination and sociability as recreation – between the classical models of (for example) Cato and Bacchus – captures a basic fault-line running through templates of English elite homo-sociability from at least the 1570s onwards. This is the more so because of the various mutations and intersections of each position. Civility fed into not only civic (corporate) culture but also more stringent versions of reformatory moralising (Protestant or Catholic). As importantly, denuded of its moral purpose eloquence and civility could merely appear manipulative, calculating, and mannered. Wit in turn underpinned the fraternal, sceptical, and libertine 'companies' that proliferated after 1600 and 1660, as well as the fetishism for spontaneity and ingenuity that became associated with later seventeenth-

[117] BIHR D/C CP 1673. I first discussed the incident in Withington, 'Company', 291–93, though without the interpretative framework of civility and wit.
[118] Karen Harvey, 'Barbarity in a Teacup? Punch, Domesticity and Gender in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Design History*, 21, 3, 205–221
[119] Withington, 'Company', 301.

century modernism. As templates for consuming intoxicants, crude distinctions can probably be drawn between the essential 'moderation' expected of civil company and the valorised and sometimes normative excesses of its witty equivalent. In practice the lines would have always been blurred, though the availability of less potent hot drinks after 1650 perhaps made civility easier to police.[120] What is clear is that both kinds of company consolidated and expanded the market for intoxicants among those elite sections of the population who were supposed to be overseeing large historical processes like the 'civilizing process' and the 'reformation of manners'.

The point was well-made by Daniel Defoe. A proponent of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, Defoe nevertheless pamphleteered against the London Society in 1700 and quit the Edinburgh branch in 1709. His point was simple. While the targets of reforming campaigns were invariably 'the Commons', 'the Poor', and 'the Plebs', the main culprits of drunkenness, both historically and contemporaneously, were 'the Gentry'. He suggested that 'would the Gentry of England deny the Modishness of Vice by their own practice; would they but countenance by disowning it; that Drunkenness and Oaths might once more come into disesteem, and be out of fashion ... that he shall swear and be drunk, shall be counted a Rake, and not fit for Gentlemen's Company'; then, only then, could they look 'to reform the Nation'. As it was, the 'Gentry caressed this Beastly vice at such rate, that no companion, no servant was thought proper, unless he could bear Quantity of Wine'. [121] Josiah Woodward likewise railed against the more recent 'Sons of Wine' and 'Libertines' who were 'indefatigable in raking out of all the Heathen Authors, and our Modern plays, all expressions that may seem to favour his Licentiousness'.[122] Both authors traced England's chronic drunkenness to the Restoration. However, not only did these habits have much longer and more complex antecedents. They emanated, in large part, from the same renaissance culture that encouraged the call for civility in the first place. The consequences – in terms of the sort of person at once prosecuted and punished by the Society for the Reformation of Manners – were not only hypocritical but iniquitous. Defoe observed that 'Tis hard, Gentlemen, to be punished for a crime, by a man as guilty as ourselves'; that 'this is really punishing men for being poor, which is no crime at all'.[123] It is an observation that still resonates today.

[120] Though see Cowan, *Social Life of Coffee*, 31–54; Smith, 'Accounting for Taste', 187–88.
[121] Daniel Defoe, *The poor man's plea, to all the proclamations, declarations, Acts of Parliament, &c. which have been, or shall be made, or publish'd, for a reformation of manners, and suppressing immortality in the nation* (1700), 16.
[122] Josiah Woodward, *An account of the societies for reformation of manners in London and Westminster, and other parts of the kingdom. With a persuasive to persons of all ranks, to be zealous and diligent in promoting the execution of the laws agaist prophaneness and debauchery, for the effecting a national reformation* (1699), 154–5.
[123] Defoe, *The poor man's plea*, 11.