

Gender and Alcohol Use in Early Modern Augsburg

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The use of alcohol in early modern German society was prescribed by carefully structured cultural norms. Drinking, even to the point of drunkenness, was not a sign of insecurity and "disorder" as many historians have claimed. Rather, participation in drinking bouts helped define and enhance men's social status. Drunkenness was therefore tolerated among men as long as they lived up to both the rules and norms of tavern society and the demands of their role as householder. Public drinking was a male prerogative, and drunkenness among women was universally condemned. Nonetheless, when alcohol abuse interfered with the household, women could and did deploy public power to impose limits on men's drinking behaviour.

Des normes culturelles structurées avec soin régissaient la consommation d'alcool au début de l'ère de la société moderne en Allemagne. La consommation d'alcool, même jusqu'à l'ébriété, ne constituait pas un signe d'insécurité ou de « désordre », comme bon nombre d'historiens le prétendent. La participation à des beuveries aidait plutôt à définir et à rehausser le statut social de l'homme. Par conséquent, on tolérait l'ébriété chez l'homme tant qu'il respectait les règles et les normes de la société de la taverne et qu'il remplissait les exigences de son rôle de chef de famille. La consommation d'alcool en public était le privilège des hommes et l'ébriété chez la femme était condamnée par tous. Néanmoins, lorsque l'abus d'alcool nuisait au foyer, les femmes pouvaient avoir recours aux pouvoirs publics pour limiter la consommation d'alcool des hommes.

WHEN I BEGAN MY examination of public drinking culture in early modern Germany, I expected that I would be dealing almost exclusively with men. My impression was that public taverns in Germany during this period were male strongholds, embracing a society that excluded women. Indeed, the drinking customs and rituals enacted in those taverns were ones that helped confirm a man's social standing and affirm his masculinity. Far from representing "unbridled pleasure seeking", "coarseness and savagery",

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or an “undisciplined” and “disorderly” pre-industrial working class, as has been the claim of historians in the past,¹ the use of alcohol was governed by a carefully structured set of rules and norms that helped sixteenth-century citizens at all levels of society to define order as they understood it and to establish publicly their place within it. Male behaviour within the tavern company, even violent behaviour, was prescribed and judged in accordance with these cultural norms.

At the same time, however, I found that women had a significant role in the tavern company. Women were a legitimate part of society in the tavern, and women at home, as the natural adversary of the tavern, actively participated in defining the ground rules for drinking behaviour. Drinking was often a major issue in the disputes that occurred between men and women over household responsibility. Using the issue of drink as a starting point, we are able to open windows on scenes normally hidden from historians of the early modern period, allowing a rare glimpse into not only the public tavern, but also the private household. Through these windows we can witness the negotiations for power that defined relationships between men and women, alcohol consumption and work discipline, and political order and family structure. Women do not emerge as passive spectators or victims in this process, but as active participants who were able and willing to protect their interests.

Printed sources such as popular literature, Reformation pamphlets, public ordinances, and graphic images lay the groundwork for my research, but these traditional sources, invariably written by male elites, raise more questions than they answer about gender relations among the urban commoners. The primary sources upon which this discussion is based are the excellent collection of interrogation records, punishment books, and protocols of the Augsburg city court, through which we are able to “listen” to the voices of drinkers in their own defence. The interrogation records provide not only the drinkers’ stories, but often those of their spouses and neighbours, whose statements as plaintiffs or witnesses illuminate the values and norms by which they lived, as well as the point at which these norms were violated.

The early modern German city was a patriarchal society in theory as well as practice. Civic government after the Reformation was based on an image of “fatherly” discipline and control with the city council acting in the role of city fathers. The Augsburg Reformation process, which reached a peak in the late 1530s, culminated in the establishment of new legal institutions

1 See, for example, Elvin Morton Jellinek, “A Specimen of the Sixteenth-Century German Drink Literature: Obsopoeus’ *Art of Drinking*”, *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, vol. 5 (1945), p. 648; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), p. 213; Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 350, and “Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism”, *Past and Present*, vol. 38 (1967), pp. 74–76.

— the “Marriage Court” and the “Discipline Lords” — to police marriage, morals, and private life. These measures were aimed at perfecting a Godly community based on the model of an orderly household.² At the head of the household was the *Hausvater*, a term that implied not only husband and father, but also master of a functioning economic unit consisting of a hierarchy of subordinates including wife, journeymen, children, apprentices, and servants. The master of this household was charged with certain responsibilities. Primarily, he was responsible for stable and continuing economic production, in urban society usually the practice of a craft; on a higher plane, however, it was his job to ensure that the members of his household accomplished this production with honour, virtue, and obedience to God. Thus the head of the household was answerable for the reputations, souls, and industry of all household members, as the council was in turn responsible for the moral, religious, and work discipline of its citizens. Providing the material blessings and spiritual grace necessary for this community of households to function was the ultimate *Hausvater*, God himself.³

The ideal, however, was difficult to achieve. One of the “fatherly” duties of the Augsburg city council was the settlement of marital disputes, and the records reveal many households in disorder. Domestic incidents might have been brought to the attention of the council by the complaints of neighbours and relatives or reported by barber-surgeons who treated wounds resulting from domestic violence. More often, however, the charges were brought by one of the battling spouses, either of whom had the right to petition against the other. The arguments brought into play by both parties in such a case often took the form of a direct confrontation between household and tavern. In a world in which the workshop was synonymous with the home, a tavern could be the only escape from the demands of the household. Where the household structure was cracking, the tavern and its male rituals often stood at the centre of the conflict between the domestic values associated with the Reformation (moderation, thrift, and an orderly household) and the traditional popular values associated with male sociability.

At the heart of this domestic debate lay a conflict that arose as a result of early modern notions of male honour. “Honour”, in the earlier medieval

2 For Agrippa von Nettesheim, the household served as metaphor for the State (“Das Haus ist ein Bild des Staates”). Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Die Eitelkeit und Unsicherheit der Wissenschaften*, Fritz Mauthner, ed. (Munich: n.p., 1913), p. 300. See also Paul Münch, *Lebensformen in der frühen Neuzeit 1500 bis 1800* (Frankfurt/Berlin: Propylaen, 1992), p. 192; and Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 21–27.

3 Julius Hoffman, *Die ‘Hausväterliteratur’ und die ‘Predigten über den christlichen Hausstand’* (Berlin: n.p., 1959), pp. 87–88; see also Gotthardt Frühsorge, “Die Begründung der ‘väterlichen Gesellschaft’ in der europäischen oeconomia christiana. Zur Rolle des Vaters in der ‘Hausväterliteratur’ des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland”, in Hubertus Tellenbach, ed., *Das Vaterbild im Abendland I* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), pp. 110–115.

sense, was more closely related to reputation than to righteousness. To establish and maintain honour required the public demonstration of power and wealth in the view of others and was closely tied to one's ability to provide, especially in displays of largesse. This concept remained an important aspect of early modern definitions of honour. For the householder, male honour was defined by virtuous behaviour and the economic health of his household,⁴ both of which were threatened by the virtually compulsory drinking rituals associated with craft and guild gatherings, business transactions, and male sociability. A man was expected to verify his masculine identity through generous consumption and provision of alcoholic drinks, while maintaining control of his bodily functions, his household, and his economic viability. It is not surprising that the foundations of many households cracked under the pressure of proving manhood.

Men who let tavern drinking get in the way of effective householding were placed under a tavern ban by the council. The ban on tavern visits, normally for one year, was applied most often in cases involving domestic violence and failure to provide. Certainly, banning a habitual pub crawler from visiting taverns would have curtailed his spending and drinking habits, and this was no doubt at least one motive of the council in establishing such a penalty. The tavern ban, however, affected more than a man's expenditure on drinks. The exclusion from normal male society was an honour punishment with its roots in medieval Germanic law. The right to "honourable society", like the right to bear arms, was exclusive, and those who were incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities as men were considered unqualified to carry weapons or participate in social rituals.⁵ Thus, the ban on tavern visits was often accompanied by restrictions on carrying weapons and walking the streets at night, also symbols of masculinity. These restrictions, however, could be applied independently and did not seem necessarily to relate to the crime. Restrictions on social drinking and carrying weapons struck at symbols and rites of masculinity that served to shame rather than to control. A husband might therefore be banned from social drinking for

4 In "Germanic, and in the low Countreys to banquet and feast their friends often ys thought a great and magnificent thing, though not so in other places." Robert Ashley, *Of Honour* (c. 1596), Virgil Heltzel, ed., (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1947), p. 53. See also Friedrich Zunkel, "Ehre, Reputation", in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reiner Kosselck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1975), pp. 1-64; George Fenwick Jones, *Honor in German Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 23; Hoffman, *Die Hausväterliteratur*, p. 88. On the requirement for public displays of wealth in general, see Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Fritz Blanke, "Reformation und Alkoholismus", *Zwingliana*, vol. 9 (1953), pp. 75-89; Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 183-186; Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

5 Rudolph His, *Geschichte des deutschen Strafrechts bis zur Karolina* (Munich: n.p., 1928), p. 93.

suspicion of adultery, although his drinking habits did not seem to be at issue.⁶ In other cases, repeated drunkenness or household violence led to weapons restrictions, even when there was no indication that the defendant used a weapon in the incident.⁷

City fathers knew that the husband was not always to blame for marital problems, but there was no female equivalent to the tavern ban.⁸ Generally, husband and wife were both admonished and required to take an oath “to house properly” (*wol zu hausen*); where the husband’s oath might have required him to stay away from the tavern, his wife also might have had to promise not to give him reason to go there. The men in these cases naturally tended to place the blame for their excessive drinking on their wives, complaining that they were nagging or shrewish and drove the husbands out of the house. A carter in 1592 excused his excessive tavern-going by claiming that “his wife ... leaves him no peace at home or at the table, so that he is forced to go out and seek peace elsewhere.”⁹ Another craftsman made the argument in 1542 that he drank for the sake of his marriage, for drinking wine in the tavern after a fight with his wife cooled his anger and allowed him to return home in a more peaceful mood.¹⁰

The most frequent tactic used by drinking husbands was to turn the tables on the notion of household honour and accuse their wives of refusing to fulfil their domestic duties. One unhappy husband’s complaint in 1590 was that “there is no one at home who wants to cook for him, so he goes out only out of necessity.”¹¹ Another beat his wife in a drunken rage after a fight that broke out because, he claimed, she refused to go out and buy food.¹² Ropemaker Ulrich Hemerle and his wife turned their domestic squabble of 1592 into a virtual battlefield of sexual honour. Hemerle not only accused his wife of contrariness and refusal to cook for him, but hinted at her possible unchaste behaviour by claiming that she refused to sleep with him and preferred the company of the journeymen. His wife retaliated with

6 Stadtarchiv Augsburg (hereafter cited as StadtAA), Strafamt, Urgichtensammlung (hereafter cited as Urg.), Jörg Fritz, March 28, 1542.

7 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1540, Hans Eisenhofer, October 4, 1540; StadtAA, Strafamt, Strafbuch 1540–1542, pp. 1v, 4v, 21, 24v, 25, 31v, 37, 39; and Strafbuch 1543–1553, pp. 1, 3v–4, 35.

8 One woman found guilty of chronic drunkenness had her consumption restricted to one pint of wine per day, but no specific restrictions were placed on drinking in company or visiting taverns. StadtAA, Urg. 1541–1542, Anna Krug, June 10, 1541; StadtAA, Strafamt, Protokolle der Zuchtherren, October 11, 1542–December 29, 1543, November 11, 1542.

9 The German source states: “und sey allain sein weib, welche ime zu haus und uber tisch kain ruehe lass, sonder setiges Zanck, an dism allem schuldig, das er ausgeen und ime anderer orten ruehe suechen muess.” StadtAA, Urg. 1592a, Hans Mair, February 5, 1592.

10 StadtAA, Urg. 1541–1542, Michel Alber, June 8, 1542. Alber undermined his own argument, however, by testifying that he had been drinking on the evening on which he beat his wife.

11 StadtAA, Urg. 1590c, Georg Bschorner, August 29, 1590.

12 StadtAA, Urg. 1544, Bernhard Hartman, July 26, 1544.

accusations that he would rather spend time in the tavern than in church, that he squandered household money on drinking, and that, after coming home drunk late at night, he sometimes cooked his own meals without proper attendance to the fire, placing not only their household but the entire neighbourhood in jeopardy. Hemerle believed these accusations to be purposeful attempts by his wife to get him dishonoured and banished from the city. He testified that she had told neighbours that she had gotten him banned from drinking and would turn him in when he did and so be rid of him. The result would be the effective destruction of their household unit.¹³ Unable to identify a guilty party in this case, the council took no action against the unhappy couple, whose only recourse was to go home and try harder.¹⁴

Although the authorities could do little to tame wild marriages like the Hemerles', the veiled threats of fire and economic ruin that they raised presented powerful images of the potential dangers of unstable household relations. Women most often used an economic argument in complaining against their husbands, presenting an unprofitable relationship between tavern and home in which drinking was possible only at the expense of providing for the household. Complaints of physical abuse often arose only as an aside to the budget issue. One wife complained that her husband "does nothing but sit in taverns, ... paying not only for his own drinks, but buying rounds for everyone, and leaving both his money and his clothes behind". Afterwards, she pointed out, she had to go and retrieve his pawned clothing from the tavern-keepers at her own expense.¹⁵ This and similar arguments by many other women seemed to mirror the concerns of city authorities, who issued multiple ordinances against immoderate drinking during the sixteenth century with the express purpose of limiting expenditures that left "wives and children in poverty, hunger and shame".¹⁶ Detailed lists of expenditures on household goods submitted by husbands in their own defence were not uncommon.¹⁷

What does this evidence tell us about the actual role of alcohol abuse in ruining marriages, squandering household resources, and breaking down family structures? Unfortunately, this is a question that the authorities during the early modern period did not ask. In applying the ban on tavern visits and social drinking, they did not — and in all probability could not —

13 StadtAA, Urg. 1592c, Ulrich Hemerle, September 3, 1592.

14 StadtAA, Strafamt, Strafbuch 1588–1596, p. 154v.

15 The German source states: "er sitz nur der Wurtzheuser ... zum welchen er dann nit nur fur sich selbst die zech, sondern fur jederman auss zalt, und zugleich das gelt unnd die klaider in den wurtzheusern gelassen." StadtAA, Urg. 1591d, Jacob Ritter.

16 StadtAA, Schätze 16 fo. 50v, 107; StadtAA, Handwerkerakten, Weinwirte 1591; StadtAA, Schätze 36/8 fo. 91; StadtAA, Reichsstadt/Chroniken no. 20, The Siedler Chronik 1055–1619, p. 176.

17 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1592d Georg Balin, November 18, 1592; Urg. 1592a, Hans Mair, February 5, 1592; Urg. 1592a, Hans Waltman, February 7, 1592.

distinguish between problem drinkers, whose marital relations suffered because of their alcohol use, and persons trapped in problem marriages, who sought in tavern sociability merely a refuge from the household storm. Furthermore, problem drinking did not always lead to marital problems. Not all wives took the side of the authorities against their husbands' drinking habits. Many women petitioned in favour of their husbands, particularly in cases in which they themselves had not been the victims of drunken violence. These wives urged the authorities to place the blame for unruly behaviour on "immoderate drink" rather than on the drinker, claiming their husbands were otherwise obedient, honourable, and hard-working.¹⁸ The wife of Hans Bausch, a city bailiff whose continuous drunkenness both on and off duty eventually cost him a suspension from his job, presented the remarkable defence that if her husband was at times "lazy and careless", it was only because he "sometimes got drunk", therefore he ought to be treated with lenience.¹⁹

Early modern society provided a number of likely reasons for this apparent tolerance. Many women were undoubtedly more concerned over the economic problems they would face if the family provider were banished or imprisoned than over the cost of his tavern visits. In the example above, the bailiff's wife had eight children to care for and was pregnant with the ninth when her husband was suspended in 1592.²⁰ Some women were certainly content in their marriages and viewed occasional or even frequent drinking bouts as an acceptable part of a man's social life. Ultimately, in a society in which women were rarely able to achieve economic independence and the only possible grounds for divorce were adultery or abandonment, a certain degree of tolerance may have been the wisest option for many women.²¹

Yet women were not helpless in the face of abusive or squandering husbands. When drinking interfered with a man's ability to provide for his family, his wife did have the power to have him banned from the city or locked in the tower, and those who were financially able to do so certainly exercised this power.²² Authorities often supported wives when marital problems took the form of a struggle over rights of property. This occurred, for example, in the case of Georg Bschorf whose marital troubles began,

18 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1592d, Hans Lochner, November 18, 1592; Urg. 1590c, Georg Hartman, September 22, 1590.

19 StadtAA, Urg. 1592c, Hans Bausch, June 10, 1592; Urg. 1591b, Hans Bausch, March 15–20, 1591.

20 StadtAA, Urg. 1592c, Hans Bausch, June 10, 1592. See also Urg. 1594d, Barbara Weberin, October 3, 1594, in which a baker's wife testified that she was willing to forgive her husband for meeting a lover in a tavern because she could not run the bakery without him.

21 Roper, *The Holy Household*, p. 170; see also Thomas Safley, *Let No Man Put Asunder: The Control Of Marriage in the German South West* (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1984).

22 Imprisonment in the tower was at the expense of the plaintiff; where women lacked personal resources, the costs were often carried by their families.

Bschorn testified, when his wife refused to give him money to buy a horse. Bschorn had to borrow the money elsewhere and blamed the "hurt" caused by his wife's lack of faith for leading him to drink and to threaten her. She ultimately locked him out of the house, and he moved into a tavern. Bschorn's wife took the case to the authorities, complaining that he had not provided for the household since moving out, and her petition resulted in her wayward husband's expulsion from the city. Only after she relented three months later and interceded on his behalf was he allowed to return.²³ In other cases, men who violated tavern bans excused themselves on the grounds that their wives had "allowed" them the occasional visit, thus conceding their wives' right to take control when their drinking habits got out of hand.²⁴ A traveller to Germany noted as well that, while men might make all manner of promises and bargains in their "pots", the consent of the "sober wife at home" had to be secured before any commitment was binding.²⁵

The fact that women had the power to take over the purse strings when men failed to live up to the expectations of their gender role seems to represent a reversal of the normal order, for the control of expenditure on drinks was traditionally a male preserve. In a satirical pamphlet published in 1516, the German moralist Johann Schwarzenberg credited alcohol with the ability to work "wonders", not only turning the rich to poor and making devils of angels, but also turning women into men.²⁶ Schwarzenberg's carnivalesque description apparently had some basis in reality. As we have seen, the abuse of alcohol could in fact cause sexual roles to be reversed, at least temporarily, and the rights of women to secure the economic means necessary for the household could thus extend to the male world behind the tavern doors.

Although the space inside those doors was predominantly a male preserve, women also had a place in the games and rituals of the public tavern. Women appear in many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century woodcuts and paintings of tavern scenes, serving, attending, and occasionally sharing tables or even drinking with men. They do not, however, display the attributes associated with drunkenness so clearly depicted by the men, who are often portrayed vomiting, passing out, fighting, or behaving like fools. The one vice in which women do take part in these scenes is that of sexual lust, and even here it is hard to tell if they represent a female vice or merely

23 StadtAA, Urg. 1590c, Georg Bschorn, August 29, 1590; Strafbuch 1588–1596, p. 81.

24 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1593b, Jonas Schmid, March 17, 1593; 1593c, Ulrich Hemerle, September 6, 1593.

25 Fynes Moryson, *Shakespeare's Europe: A survey of the condition of Europe at the end of the 16th century. Being unpublished chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary (1617)*, Charles Huges, ed. (London: n.p., 1903), p. 340.

26 Johann von Schwarzenberg, *Der Zudrincker vnd Prasser/Gesetze Ordenug/vnd Instruction* (Oppenheim: n.p., 1516), fo. D4–D5.

appear as passive vessels for the representation of male drunken behaviour. A series of etchings of tavern scenes by seventeenth-century Augsburg artist Hans Ulrich Frank illustrate graphically the different roles of the sexes in the world of tavern sociability. In each scene, men appear in the foreground, etched in bold lines and in exacting detail. The tavern women who serve their drinks and share their tables remain in the background, however, lightly etched, with details that are frustratingly obscure. Who were these tavern women? What role did they play in tavern society?

I have identified three categories of women who regularly frequented early modern Augsburg taverns. The first of these included the tavern keeper's wife and her female servants who played an important role in both serving and controlling the male customers. The wives of brewers especially were often left alone with the responsibility for the guests while their husbands busied themselves in the cellar tending to the beer. Brewers' wives thus appear more often than their husbands as witnesses to tavern violence, not infrequently as participants or victims. Brewer Leonhart Schiessler, for example, was in the beer cellar when his wife tried to evict a gambling party from their public room. When the gamblers refused to leave, she took away their cards and tossed them out the window, insulting their honour as she did so by calling them "scoundrels".²⁷ The gamblers reacted by attacking her physically, without regard for her advanced stage of pregnancy, and she fought back by swinging a beer stein until other guests were able to fetch her husband from the cellar. This incident was not exceptional. Tavern keepers' wives, daughters, and female servants were all subject from time to time to the angry outbursts of their customers, who did not refrain from disciplining the women in this public household as if it were their own.²⁸

A second important group of women who appeared in public taverns were artisans' wives, who visited taverns regularly with their husbands but rarely seemed to take part in drinking bouts or tavern incidents. These "silent" customers appear in the documents for the most part only indirectly in the testimony of men. Craftsmen might have reported coming home after drinking in a tavern with their wives, or the wives of artisans might have been named as witnesses present when a tavern incident occurred.²⁹ One husband charged with running up debts to tavern keepers testified that his

27 In the German source, "lumpen". StadtAA, Urg. 1594d, Leonhart Wolfmüller, November 9, 1594.

28 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1541–1542, Matheus Nate, April 6, 1541, and Bernhart Jager, February 3, 1542; Urg. 1593b, Christoff Rörle, April 29, 1593; Urg. 1640, Hans Mehrer, July 2, 1640.

29 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1591c, Hieremias Weilbach, June 5, 1591; Urg. 1593b, Michael Schmid, June 14, 1593; Urg. 1544, Hans Ettlich, May 17, 1544; Urg. 1541–1542, Hans Schuester, February 24, 1541. See also Urg. 1590, Christoph Stophel, January 9–11, 1590. Stophel, a tavern keeper accused of allowing prostitutes to solicit on his premises, pointed out that craftsmen often came into his place for a drink with their wives; as he depended upon their business for his livelihood, he did not find it appropriate to question every couple he did not know personally about their relationship.

wife and daughter shared the blame for the expensive tab, which did not seem to be out of the ordinary.³⁰ As we shall see, however, these visitors were dependent upon the presence of their husbands to legitimize their use of the tavern for socializing.

A less significant part of this group consisted of peddlers, servants, and wives who came to the tavern to sell their wares, make deliveries, purchase wine and beer to take home, or make other minor business transactions. Not unlike men, women were often dependent upon tavern space for the conclusion of public business; unlike them, however, women did not generally conclude the transaction with a drink and they did not stay to participate in drinking bouts. These women, although often important as witnesses to tavern incidents, were only passersby in the world of tavern sociability.

The women described above all belonged to legitimate tavern society; the following group, however, did not. It consisted of the prostitutes or women accused of prostitution or other sexual crimes. Single women and married women who visited taverns without their husbands fell into this group automatically, for they ran the risk of being accused of sexual crimes simply by associating with men in taverns. By far the majority of cases involving women in taverns were of this type.

Prior to the Reformation, prostitution was legal in Augsburg in a city-run brothel. The brothel, which offered drinks, games, and sociability as well as sex, shared many of the functions of the public tavern. The strict moral world demanded by the Reformers, however, left no room for such an institution, and the council closed the brothel doors in 1532.³¹ After its closure, some prostitutes continued to operate out of taverns, and tavern keepers' wives gained a reputation as procuresses. In reality, however, procuresses depended upon privacy for their business and were more likely to operate out of private homes.³² Those prostitutes who worked independently were for the most part an impoverished group who could hardly afford the comforts of the tavern, more often conducting their business in the streets. Tavern keepers enjoyed an above average economic status and had little to gain by tolerating prostitutes on their premises and thereby risking the loss of their licences and livelihood. Nonetheless, the association of taverns with prostitution was not forgotten by city authorities. Tavern keepers had to be careful about offering lodging to unaccompanied women or they could face charges of involvement in prostitution.³³

30 StadtAA, Urg. 1590b, Hans Pleig, May 26, 1590.

31 Lyndal Roper, "Discipline and Respectability: Prostitution and the Reformation in Augsburg", *History Workshop*, vol. 19 (Spring 1985), pp. 3-28.

32 StadtAA, Urg. 1541-1542, Ursula Heckmairin, August 10, 1541; Appolonia Saylerin, June 21, 1542; Ursula Mullerin, August 8, 1542; Barbara Rugerin, January 18, 1542; Ursula Paumaisterin, 1542. On procuring, see Lyndal Roper, "Mothers of Debauchery: Procuresses in Reformation Augsburg", *German History*, vol. 6, no. 1 (April 1988), pp. 1-19.

33 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1590d, Balthasar Eckh, December 17, 1590; Urg. 1594d, Barbara Weberin, October 3, 1594.

In the majority of tavern cases involving sexual crimes, however, the women accused cannot actually be identified as professional prostitutes. More often, they were women of either single or married status who made the mistake of appearing in public with men to whom they were not married. Men and women could be arrested and interrogated for nothing more than sharing a drink, especially if they had fallen under suspicion for sexual crimes in the past.³⁴ No other questionable behaviour was necessary to raise suspicion, for the shared drink implied social intimacy. An expression of this attitude is provided in the case of Rosina Leinauer, wife of a clockmaker, who was arrested in 1591 after sharing two measures of wine in a public tavern with a journeyman formerly employed by her husband. Although she linked the drink to business they had conducted together and pointed out that they drank only in the large common room in the presence of many witnesses, returning home “in full light of day”,³⁵ the council nonetheless characterized the behaviour as not “proper or fitting for an honourable woman”.³⁶

Even in cases that did not directly involve accusations of sexual crimes, the language of tavern patrons seems to suggest that honourable women did not, or should not, visit taverns alone. Witnesses and defendants in tavern cases tended to describe women alone or in pairs as “common” (*gemeine*) or “dishonourable” (*unzüchtig*).³⁷ Although the tavern keeper’s wife, daughter, and female servants were accepted members of tavern society, they also seem to have abstained from drinking with the customers. The one case I have seen in which a tavern keeper’s wife admitted to drinking with her customers falls easily into the category of illegitimate behaviour, for she was accused of having an affair with her drinking partner.³⁸ Women were obviously aware of this typecast, and those who wished to avoid suspicion did their drinking at home. Although the risk of being seen was naturally reduced, however, drinking with a man in a private home was no more acceptable than drinking in a public house. The intimacy implied by the shared drink was sufficient to raise suspicions even within the private domain.³⁹

34 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1591a, Anna Kienlerin, February 9, 1591; StadtAA, Strafamt, Strafbuch 1588–1596, p. 101; Urg. 1592c, Zacharias Prenner, September 18, 1592.

35 In the German source, “beim hellen tag”. StadtAA, Urg. 1591c, Rosina Leinauer, August 16, 1591.

36 In the German source, “ob sie auch vermain dz solches einer Erbarñ frauen gebür oder wol ansthehe”. *Ibid.*

37 For a discussion on the use of this term to describe prostitutes, see Lyndal Roper, “‘The common man’, ‘the common good’, ‘common women’: Gender and Meaning in the German Reformation Commune”, *Social History*, vol. 12, no. 1 (January 1987), pp. 1–22.

38 StadtAA, Urg. 1541–1542, Agnes Axtin, May 26, 1542.

39 Two girls described as “whores” in 1593, for example, refused to accompany customers to a tavern, insisting instead on sending out for beer to drink at home. StadtAA, Urg. 1593d, Andreas Merckht, October 14, 1593. For examples of suspicion in cases of men and women drinking together in a private home, see StadtAA, Urg. 1592c, Jacob Frantz, September 30, 1592; Urg. 1592d, Felicitas Reichlerin, September 30 and October 1, 1592; Urg. 1591b, Michael Eberhart, April 1, 1591.

Virtually everyone in early modern society drank alcohol and naturally women were not immune to its negative effects. There were female drunkards, but they constituted a small minority. Less than one per cent of the fines collected for drunkenness during the sixteenth century came from women.⁴⁰ Their drinking also took different forms. The scant number of women who emerge as problem drinkers apparently drank at home and, according to the accounts of their husbands and neighbours, did so alone or only in the company of their servants.⁴¹ Unlike men, women facing interrogation did not attempt to excuse or explain their actions by claiming that they were drunk at the time of the incident. Drunkenness, widely tolerated among men as an unavoidable side-effect of normal sociability, was universally condemned as unfitting for an honourable woman.

While court cases involving women in taverns tell us something about the limits of their social world, they provide only extremely sporadic evidence of exclusively female social groups. Frustrated by this scarcity, I began to look further for evidence of drinking practices at women's gatherings, but my search shed very little light on the private world of female sociability. Graphic representations of women's social groups are rare and generally originate from male artists. If any conclusion can be drawn from this incomplete evidence, it would support the obvious one that ritual drinking did not play a part in female sociability. The illustrations to twin poems by Hans Sachs satirizing marital complaints show men comparing notes over drinks in the tavern; women, in contrast, are depicted sitting around the public fountain, socializing but not drinking. Scenes of women gathered at childbed do show women eating and drinking in a sociable fashion, but the classic icons of immoderation so often present in male drinking scenes are lacking.⁴² Women appear in some representations of rural spinning bees as unruly and uninhibited in their behaviour, and accusations of drunkenness do appear in ordinances aimed at controlling these events, but they tend overwhelmingly to concentrate on sexual behaviour and sociability rather than drunkenness *per se*.⁴³ The rare cases describing women's drinking groups among the documents of the court make no reference to drunkenness, and no incidents are recorded in which women were drunk and disorderly as a result of waiting at childbed, attending sewing groups, or gather-

40 Based on two five-year samples of the records of the Discipline Lords (StadtAA, Strafamt, Protokolle der Zuchtherren, 1540–1544 and 1590–1594).

41 StadtAA, Urg. 1641, David Lutz, December 24, 1641; Urg. 1541–1542, Anna Krug, June 10, 1541; Urg. 1594d, Michael Dielin, November 16, 1594.

42 Examples of these scenes can be seen in Thomas Hauschild, Heidi Staschen, and Regina Troschke, *Hexen: Katalog zur Ausstellung* (Hamburg: Hamburgische Museum für Völkerkunde, 1979), pp. 22, 31.

43 Hans Medick, "Spinnstuben auf dem Dorf. Jugendliche Sexualkultur und Feierabendbrauch in der ländlichen Gesellschaft der frühen Neuzeit", in Gerhard Huck, ed., *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit* (Wuppertal: Hammer, 1980), pp. 19–49.

ing at the market. Again, the one exception to this generalization supports the rule: the only case in which women appeared as drunk and disorderly in the open street after participating in a social drinking bout involved two self-confessed prostitutes.⁴⁴

Eventually, one notable example of women's sociability that seemed to involve drunkenness did surface: the witch's sabbath. Representations of the sabbath show women not only participating in unchaste behaviour, but also decidedly drunk.⁴⁵ The association of alcohol use with the wanton sexuality that supposedly characterized the sabbath is not surprising. Contemporary theorists ascribed to women an irrational nature that was particularly sensible to strong drink; alcohol released the disorderly desires inherent in women.⁴⁶ Again, however, these theorists were men. Would women characterize their own sensibilities in this way?

Many women did confess to attendance at a witch's sabbath and described their activities. Historians are beginning to recognize the value of these confessions as viable sources, not of truth, but of fantasy, which should be read as "psychic documents".⁴⁷ A cursory examination of the descriptions by confessed witches in Augsburg, however, revealed no mention of immoderate drinking at sabbaths. Accused witches reported eating and drinking with the devil or taking part in a demonic feast, which are icons of social intimacy, but I have not yet found a case in which a woman confessed to drunkenness. What, then, are we to make of these drunken scenes? One thing is clear — the witch's sabbath was one form of female sociability that men did not witness. It would perhaps be reasonable for the male fantasy to ascribe its own masculine notions of sociability and unruly behaviour to women at those social events from which men were excluded. Women, on the other hand, in exercising their own imagination, painted a different picture.

The witch's sabbath serves as an example to underscore the difference in cultural meaning attached to the use of alcohol by men and women in early modern German society. Everyone in that society drank, but public drunkenness was a male prerogative. The space defined by tavern walls, which could taint the sexual honour of an unaccompanied woman merely by her presence, served in contrast to verify and enhance the honour of men.

44 StadtAA, Urg. 1593d, Anna Völkhin and Margreth Mayrin, December 3, 1593.

45 Examples can be seen in Hauschild *et al.*, *Hexen*, pp. 11–13, 19, 75; see also Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (Berlin and Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1936–1937), pp. 1262–1263.

46 This was the view held by French political theorist Jean Bodin. Richard S. Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars, 1559–1715*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1979), p. 129. On the disorderly nature of women, see also Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

47 This term was coined by Lyndal Roper in "Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany", *History Workshop*, vol. 32 (1991), p. 21. For a related approach to other types of criminal trials, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987).



A detail from "Witches' Sabbath" (copper engraving, Michael Herz, c.1650). Courtesy of the *Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde, Hexenarchiv*, Hamburg, Germany.

Social drinking in some form was virtually compulsory to the social and professional lives of men in all but the poorest sectors of society. The tavern provided a public theatre for social exchange and a place to reaffirm the popular values of generosity, reciprocity, and sociability, which included elements not only of friendship and camaraderie, but also of rivalry and competition.

The association of economic health with manhood was not limited to the requirement to provide for a family. The other side of the coin was the

pressure for public displays of largesse. This display took its most luxurious form for all levels of society at weddings, yet the requirement for a public display of wealth, or for the common man at least of economic health, was not limited to special occasions. Men of honour who participated in tavern society were expected to pay their share of the tab, and being able to “pay one’s round” was a basic requirement. A craftsman who left his drinking fellows with the tab was subject to insults and could even be accused of dishonouring his entire craft,⁴⁸ and beggars or takers of alms, who were incapable of running a household through honourable labour, were forbidden to enter taverns at all.⁴⁹

The rules of male sociability required not only the ability to reciprocate in buying rounds but also participation in drinking them. Failure to consume a drink offered in “brotherhood” by a companion was an insult, for the refusal of a drink represented a symbolic refusal of social contact. This could be taken very seriously in early modern German society, in which sharing a drink with those persons labelled “dishonourable” could lead to expulsion from a craft and social ostracism.⁵⁰ Rejection of a drink might therefore be understood as socially demeaning to the man who offered it, and the violent reactions to such rejections could mean serious injury or even death to one of the participants.⁵¹

Even when drinking rituals themselves did not lie at the root of disputes, taverns offered two commodities that tended to fuel physical violence: a public stage and alcohol. Tavern brawls took place in the presence of witnesses and were therefore a form of public display. Certain insults required a physical response, for ignoring provocative remarks shamed the slandered party in front of his peers.⁵² As the barriers of propriety were weakened by alcohol consumption, minor disagreements quickly escalated into conflicts of honour. Most fights between male antagonists were handled by fines, in which case the details surrounding the incidents are not avail-

48 StadtAA, Urg. 1591c, Caspar Aufschlager, August 16, 1591; Urg. 1593b, Philip Schach, May 19, 1593.

49 StadtAA, Ratsbücher, vol. 14, 1501–1520, p. 18, Bettlerordnung 1519; StadtAA, Ratsbeschlüsse 1507–1599, Ordnung der Allmosenherren, 1522; StadtAA, Almosen Amt, Almosen Ordnung, 1543, 1569. Alms recipients were also forbidden to beg in taverns.

50 See, for example, StadtAA, Handwerkerakten, Lodweber 157, 1550–1582, Hans Seidler, who was threatened with expulsion from his craft for drinking with a skinner. For the contaminating nature of dishonourable persons, see Kathy Stuart, “The Boundaries of Honor: Dishonorable People in Early Modern Augsburg” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1993).

51 See, for example, StadtAA, Urg. 1593b, Michael Hurler, March 22, 1593; Urg. 1593d, Lucas Fischer, November 22, 1593; Urg. 1544, Andreas Stemmer, March 7, 1644.

52 For a model of the association of male honour with “public display”, see David D. Gilmore, ed., *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987). On the necessity of the public view for the working out of honour disputes, see Martin Dingels, “‘Weiblichkeit’ in ‘Männlichkeitsritualen?’ Zu weiblichen Taktiken im Ehrenhandel in Paris im 18. Jahrhundert”, *Francia*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1991), pp. 71–74.

able; in the public brawls for which interrogation records exist, the overwhelming majority of participants reported drinking socially before the fight started.⁵³

City authorities required that all fights be reported to the council and charged tavern keepers particularly with reporting incidents that occurred on their premises. The public nature of the tavern thus provided not only witnesses, but a built-in control factor. Violence under these circumstances tended to take ritualized forms, as the presence of peers and the authority of the tavern keeper encouraged participants to adhere to the unwritten ground rules of popular society. As a result, few tavern fights led to serious injury. Only a third of the fights described in interrogations as following social drinking bouts took place within tavern walls, the majority having occurred in the city streets after the men left. Less than a third of those fights that did occur in taverns led to personal injury, defined as the shedding of blood. Fights that escalated beyond mere fisticuffs typically moved into the streets, where the restraining effect of tavern society was lacking.

The settlement of the dispute itself was also a drinking affair. Formally instituted by an appearance and an oath taken before the council, the peace was invariably sealed afterward by a drink in front of witnesses in a public tavern. Persons under a tavern ban and takers of alms in some cases risked expulsion from the city to take part in this obligatory ritual.

Added to the demands of informal sociability among men were the professional requirements of craft and guild. Membership in a craft guild carried certain responsibilities, one of which was participation in communal drinking bouts. Journeymen met monthly in their guild drinking-rooms or craft hostels (*Handwerkherberg*) to elect officials, conduct business, and honour visiting journeymen with drinks. Failing to participate in drinking bouts or leaving early could result in a fine, which would then be spent on drinks for the remaining company.⁵⁴ The council recognized the importance of these rituals to the working life of journeymen and sometimes allowed exceptions to bans on social drinking for participation in guild drinking rituals.⁵⁵

53 The following figures are based on all existing interrogation records held in Augsburg's city archive for the years 1540–1544, 1590–1594, and 1640–1644. Of these records, 114 concerned public brawls. Social drinking was clearly involved in 111 cases of violence between men, while only two cases provide evidence that the defendants had not been drinking, and one that the defendant became drunk at home with his wife. These incidents include fights with city guards, which, although most often occurring in the course of an arrest, resembled other fights insofar as they generally escalated to violence only after insults had been exchanged. Domestic incidents, including violence between male members of the same household, are not included.

54 StadtAA, Reichsstadt/Chroniken no. 20, *The Siedler Chronik 1055–1619*, p. 200. See also Merry E. Wiesner, "Guilds, Male Bonding and Women's Work in Early Modern Germany", *Gender and History*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1989), pp. 125–137, and "Wandervogels and Women: Journeymen's Concepts of Masculinity in Early Modern Germany", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1990–1991), pp. 767–782.

55 StadtAA, *Strafamt, Protokolle der Zuchtherren, 1540–1542*, no. 8, p. 132.

Exceptions from tavern bans were also allowed for day labourers invited to drink with their employers, for it was the communal drink that officially sealed the work contract.⁵⁶ The toast necessary to the conclusion of any business transaction was an ironclad tradition practised throughout Germany at all levels of society and one that persists to this day. Augsburg tavern keepers, in protesting a law initiated in 1590 against drinking in taverns during the week, were able to gain concessions from the council by pointing out the importance of this tradition to the reputation of the city.⁵⁷ Craftsmen placed under a tavern ban excused violations by pointing out the necessity of drinking with customers who purchased their goods.⁵⁸ One clockmaker even refused to take the oath to stay out of taverns because he believed it could ruin his business. The clockmaker, Hainrich Frey, reportedly said in 1593 that he would “rather rot in the tower than allow that the tavern be forbidden to him”, and was subsequently locked in the tower until he agreed to take the oath. He spent eight weeks thus incarcerated as a result of his obstinacy.⁵⁹ This degree of resistance to the tavern ban probably indicates that Frey found more to be at stake than possible loss of business, for eight weeks of incarceration certainly interrupted his profits. The right to participate in drinking rituals was a matter of personal and professional honour, in defence of which this craftsman was willing to make a considerable sacrifice.

The custom of concluding business with a drink was not entirely limited to contracts between men. Prostitutes and procuresses also accepted drinks as legally binding them to a sexual transaction.⁶⁰ Again, this drinking behaviour only serves to verify the illegitimacy of women’s participation in a ritual reserved for men. Respect for the validity of commercial contracts in this period of budding capitalism was a requirement of male public life and part of the male honour code. The business transactions of a prostitute,

56 StadtAA, Strafamt, Protokolle der Zuchtherren, 1540–1542, pp. 8, 88.

57 The law against drinking during the week was in effect from 1590 to 1596 and was reinstated in 1614. Exceptions applied only to business conducted with visitors to Augsburg. StadtAA, Handwerkerakten, Weinwirte 1551–1704, 1591; Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg, 4° Cod.Aug.132, Zucht- und Policey-Ordnung 1621; StadtAA, Reichsstadt/Chroniken no. 20, The Siedler Chronik 1055–1619, p. 614. See also B. Ann Tlusty, “Das ehrbare Verbrechen: Die Kontrolle über das Trinken in Augsburg in der frühen Neuzeit”, *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für Schwaben*, vol. 85 (1992), pp. 133–155, especially pp. 148–149.

58 StadtAA, Urg. 1541–1542, Sixt Rötting, March 22, 1542; Urg. 1591d, Veit Bacher, December 16, 1591; Urg. 1592c, Jacob Ritter, August 13, 1592; Urg. 1593b, Jonas Schmid, March 17, 1593. See also Urg. 1592b, Georg Lempel, March 21, 1592. Lempel was a butcher who promised not to drink in taverns, but said he needed to go into them to make contacts and deals for buying and selling pigs and calves.

59 StadtAA, Urg. 1593b, Hainrich Frey, March 20, 1593. Whether or not Frey agreed to the tavern ban when he was finally released is not clear, but there is no mention of a ban in the punishment records.

60 Roper, “Mothers of Debauchery”, p. 9.

however, could only be understood as the antithesis to early modern notions of female honour.

The carefully structured cultural rules and norms that governed the use of alcohol in early modern German society did not seem to represent the “undisciplined” and “disorderly” pre-industrial working class described by many historians.⁶¹ Drinking traditions instead helped citizens at all levels of society to define and maintain their respective social status. Drunkenness was tolerated, but only among the group that it helped to legitimate: men who could afford to pay for drinks. A particularly explicit expression of the connection between buying drinks and masculine honour is provided in the case of sixteenth-century baker Hans Hohenberger, who violated a social drinking ban by gambling for rounds with a number of drinking companions. The drinking bout began at Hohenberger’s house and then moved to a tavern. Hans Liepart, a fellow baker in the group, later became drunk and left the tavern, returning to Hohenberger’s home in search of his former companions. Fuddled by drink, he claimed he then became confused and thought himself at home, so he undressed and got into bed — with Hohenberger’s wife. In the interrogations that followed this breach of propriety, Hohenberger defended his right to “squander” money on drink by pointing out that he earned as much in one week as Liepart did in two. The statement seems at first glance irrelevant, for Liepart was not on trial for wasting money. Yet to Hohenberger, shamed by the liberties Liepart had taken with his wife, the issue of economic viability was inseparable from that of sexual honour. He thus attempted to prove his superiority to this male rival in his wife’s bed by citing his superior income, as well as his right as a man to spend it on drink. The right, however, had been revoked, and to the council Hohenberger was guilty of running a disorderly household. The council elevated his social drinking ban to house arrest.⁶²

Drinking was not only a right of responsible men but a requirement of early modern German manhood. It should come as no surprise that men dominated the space of the public tavern, just as they did the hierarchy of public life. Although women had a place in the public tavern, it was a place limited and defined by male patterns of behaviour, and the tavern doors

61 See, for example, Jellinek, “*Art of Drinking*”, p. 648; Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 350, and “Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism”, pp. 74–76; Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 213; and Joseph Gusfield, “Benevolent Repression: Popular Culture, Social Structure, and the Control of Drinking”, in Susanna Barrows and Robin Room, eds., *Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 404–405.

62 StadtAA, Urg. 1541–1542, Hans Liepart, Hans Hohenberger, Barbara Hohenbergerin, April 27–30, 1542; Strafbuch, 1540–1543, pp. 46, 50. Liepart was beaten, exposed on the pillory, and exiled from the city for two years, and Hohenberger was placed on house arrest, then pardoned a few months later at the request of his wife. Hohenberger’s wife was found innocent of any impropriety in the case.

remained closed to respectable women unaccompanied by their husbands. The requirement for women, to whom contemporary belief systems ascribed a highly sexual nature that was oversensitive to the effects of alcohol, was moderation. Consequently, public drunkenness, prevalent and widely tolerated among men, was extremely rare among women. Yet just as male dominance of the home workshop in early modern society blurred the line between the domestic and the professional spheres, the long arm of domestic responsibility could also reach into the public space of the tavern. Male dominance did not extend to absolute hegemony over expenditure on drinks, for women had the right to protect the financial interests of the household. The right to manhood, expressed through tavern sociability, was revocable, and even in this patriarchal world women had the power to revoke it. The key to the male world in the tavern could ultimately lie in the hands of the wives at home.