Women, Men, and Taverns in Tavern-Keeper Ely Playter's Journal

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Ely Playter kept a tavern in York, Upper Canada, in 1801 and 1802. His journal depicts his public house and those he frequented as places in which women were seen as often as men. Yet gender was a powerful determinant of who enjoyed free access to the public life that taverns housed. Only within the context of close male companionship did women find room there. Taverns were also sites in which public life mixed with household life, and many women were thus literally at home in taverns. By constructing taverns as male spaces, we hide the complex experiences of these women. Without contradicting the power of male privilege, Playter's journal places taverns within the rest of the pre-industrial social landscape, as spaces in which women and men both belonged.

Ely Playter a tenu une taverne à York, dans le Haut-Canada, en 1801 et en 1802. Son journal décrit son établissement public et ceux qu'il fréquentait comme des endroits où l'on voyait aussi souvent des femmes que des hommes. Pourtant, le genre était un puissant déterminant de qui avait accès gratuitement à la vie publique des tavernes. Les femmes n'avaient droit d'y entrer qu'en compagnie de proches compagnons masculins. Les tavernes étaient également des endroits où s'entremêlaient vie publique et vie familiale, si bien que de nombreuses femmes étaient pratiquement à la maison dans les tavernes. En construisant les tavernes comme des espaces masculins, nous occultons l'expérience complexe de ces femmes. Sans contredire la puissance du privilège des hommes, le journal de Playter situe les tavernes sur le reste de la toile sociale préindustrielle comme des lieux d'appartenance tant des femmes que des hommes.

ELY PLAYTER kept a tavern in York, Upper Canada, in 1801 and 1802. At night, "after all had gone to bed", he "filled up the Journal of the Day".[1] On

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1 Archives of Ontario [hereafter AO], Playter [Ely] Diary, February 1801–December 1853 [hereafter EP], February 19, 1802. For his licence, see "Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace for the Home District, 13 March 1800 to 28 December 1811", in Alexander Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report of the Department of Public Records and Archives of Ontario, 1932* (Toronto: Herbert H. Ball 1933), pp. 16–17.

pages describing the routines of work and sociability in his well-patronized house, he wrote women and household life into the history of taverns. Though Playter's journal abounds with the names of men and accounts of their activities, the tavern-keeper clearly never thought of taverns as exclusively male spaces. Without questioning the precedence men enjoyed there, he depicted his public house and those he frequented as places where men and women both belonged. These were sites defined by the relationships between the sexes, as much as by the relationships among men.

When Playter writes about the female members of tavern-keeping households — especially Mary Thomson, who lived at his place, and Sophia Beman, a neighbouring tavern-keeper's daughter whom he courted — he brings the hidden, domestic side of the tavern into view. There are children who need tending, problems with the servants, and friends calling to visit not the bar, but the parlours and sitting-rooms of their tavern-keeping neighbours. In rooms that were sometimes household space and sometimes public space, "Miss T" and "Miss B" gathered with their polite acquaintances to drink tea and wine, make music and conversation, and read aloud in mixed company. They fostered forms of sociability entirely separate from the rituals of drinking culture playing out in the barroom. By revealing women's place in the taverns, Ely Playter's journal gives vivid content to late pre-industrial, gendered ideas about public and household life in a setting where the two met and occasionally collided.

Tavern studies, once the province of amateur enthusiasts, are currently enjoying a renaissance among academic historians. What public houses looked like, what the differences were between rural and urban taverns, how they worked as the pre-eminent communication nodes in oral societies, and how the rituals of drink both bound patrons together and set them apart are questions carefully addressed by the taverns' new historians.[2] They all agree that taverns had both public and private dimensions and that women sometimes frequented them. Yet more than one historian has confessed to an inability to address matters of gender or the relationship between home and public house. Evidence has proven to be unyielding or absent.[3] Female tav-

2 Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Tavern-going and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); David Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1995); Daniel B. Thorpe, "Doing Business in the Backcountry: Retail Trade in Colonial Rowan County, North Carolina", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, vol. 48, no. 3 (1991), pp. 387–408, and "Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier: Rowan County, North Carolina, 1753–1776", *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 62, no. 4 (1996), pp. 661–687. On the public houses of Europe, see Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200–1830* (London: Longman, 1983); Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Paris* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

3 See Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, p. 15 (and, on female patrons generally, pp. 75, 79, 85, 89, 98–89); Thorpe, "Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier", pp. 680–682,

ern-keepers, well documented in licensing records and sometimes in court records, are an important exception.[4] While we are well aware, then, that the taverns were neither entirely public places nor entirely male, ironically, the new historiography focuses on their publicness, especially the political implications of tavern association, and mostly on men.[5] Ely Playter's journal is thus an important source, containing rare insights into issues that have troubled, yet eluded, historians.

The document itself was maintained for more than half a century (1801–1853). Entitled "E. Playter's Daily Journal", it was written on plain pages and periodically "corrected & stitched up". It contains a mixed record of business calls and obligations,[6] personal reflections, accounts of community events, and sketches of social encounters in public and private houses.[7] Playter went to church when he could, warmly recalled his Quaker upbringing, and in later life became a deeply engaged Methodist. His journal, however, is entirely secular for this period.[8] Most likely his Quaker past and the diary-

for a discussion of the problems in reading tavern account books for women's patronage. In England women were "a minority of those sitting by the alehouse fire" but benefitted from the increasing respectability of alehouses after 1750. See Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 225, 235–236, 287–288, 311–312, 320–322, 341. In Paris women felt "ambiguous" about entering wineshops and were subject to verbal and physical abuse within. Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture*, pp. 146–151, 222, 225, 260, 275.

4 Conroy, *In Public Houses*, pp. 99–100, 109, 111–112, 119–122, 131–139, 146–147; Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, pp. 32, 43–46, 64–67; Cynthia B. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700–1835* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 19–20, 22–25, 119; Thorpe, "Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier", p. 680.

5 The exception is Barbara A. Hanawalt, *"Of Good and Ill Repute": Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 104–123, in which the chapter entitled "The Host, the Law, and the Ambiguous Space of Medieval London Taverns" looks directly at the gender dynamics of tavern space and the gendered roles of tavern-keepers. Women and female space in the public houses also figure prominently in Scott W. Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789–1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

6 Playter kept separate formal accounts and the phrase "spent the morning at my account books", or a variation, occurs virtually daily (EP, February 15, 1802). None of these books is extant.

7 The 1801 entries are limited to eight pages describing a trip in the wilderness north of York. Regular, daily entries of life in York begin February 14, 1802, but probably the journal was already an established habit by then. Playter offers no rationale at the beginning of the first extant volume, as would be customary for a new diarist, and he maintains a consistent format for entries and a steady authorial persona, both indications that he had already found his comfortable style. Because there are other significant gaps in the journal (September1806 to May 17, 1809, for example, the period in which Playter married; January 7, 1834 to January 1, 1839, the period in which he moved to Medina, New York), it seems likeliest that the years previous to 1802 have been lost. The reference to the diary being periodically corrected and stitched is taken from EP, June 8,1802. The title is on the page covering the second volume, dated January 10, 1803. On form and persona in diary writing, see Robert A. Fothergill, *Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), especially pp. 14–18, 66.

8 Playter's Quaker past is discussed below. In York he enjoyed eclectic religious tastes, attending Anglican, Methodist, and Dutch Reformed services and Quaker meetings. Playter later became a dedicated

keeping traditions of that faith had encouraged him to keep a journal in the first place. It served classic purposes.[9] Here he relived the day's events and his role in them. It was his means of taking stock of himself and his situation in life. In it he sighed over being a bachelor. He chafed at slights to his reputation. He brooded about his dissatisfactions with his trade — "the trifling profit that could be made by it, the disagreeable life it was &c."[10] At the same time the journal reveals a man at ease with the conventions of his society and with its notions of authority and success. It also reveals that he had an interest in dressing his slim build well.[11]

The eight months between February 14 and September 11, 1802, when Playter lived in the public house, is admittedly a narrow time-frame. Despite this limitation, the journal's uniqueness demands attention. It is the only tavern-keeper's journal known to have survived in all of British North America, including the Thirteen Colonies. There are tavern-keepers' account books, records of licensing matters, and an assortment of wills. None of these sources contains a comparable daily record of the ins and outs of the trade. None offers literate reflection upon the men and women who frequented colonial taverns or upon their varied activities there. No other source takes us so vividly inside to connect the particular experiences of particular patrons to more general patterns of Anglo-American tavern culture.

Indeed, most of Playter's patrons are very familiar to readers of European and American public house histories. Men gather to drink, dine, exchange news and gossip, meet in association, do business, and, occasionally, to scuffle. His tavern fulfilled common needs. Like other colonial and pre-industrial drinking houses, it supported political and economic life and offered room for community events. The annual Town Meeting convened at Playter's, for example. The tavern was also a stage upon which men could play out their masculinity by drinking and jockeying for status. Two patrons, for example, a little the worse for wear, staged a boxing match on the premises. Others celebrated a different and more privileged masculine aesthetic by organizing

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member and lay preacher in the Methodist faith. See John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 52, 223.

9 On the diverse kinds of diaries and motivations of diarists, see Thomas Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1984).

10 EP, February 25 and 26, May 24, April 1, 1802.

11 Playter weighed 149 pounds according to the scales in Samuel Heron's store (EP, June 13, 1802). Average height for white men born in North America ranged between 5 feet, 6 inches and 6 feet in these years, with most between 5 feet, 8 inches and 5 feet, 10 inches. At any of these heights Playter would have been slim; if tall, he was skinny. The statement of average height is based on the clothing ordered by the U.S. Army in the 1812 era. Proportionally, one of six suits was for men 5 feet, 6 inches; two for men 5 feet, 8 inches; two for men 5 feet, 10 inches; and one for men of six feet. My thanks to Carl Benn, Chief Curator, City of Toronto Museums and Heritage Services, for this information. Playter's interest in dress is indicated by the purchase of a pair of pantaloons at Mosley's Shop, just two years after they became fashionable in Paris (EP, June 26,1802). See also Elisabeth McClellan, *History of American Costume, 1607–1870* (New York: Tudor Publishing 1937), p. 546.

polite, secluded dinners away from the public rooms.[12] In such ways Playter's was a typical pre-industrial tavern in which men conducted themselves much as they did in taverns elsewhere. There is no reason to suspect that what the journal tells us about women was any different. It is the source that is rare and unusual, not the presence and activities of women that it chronicles.

There is, therefore, a need to reassess long-held assumptions about the maleness of taverns in the pre-industrial and pre-Victorian period. Their importance for working class formation and for male association is well documented for a later date.[13] But in Playter's time there was no working class in an analytical sense. Nor had the division of male and female space yet taken on its more rigid, mid-nineteenth-century characteristics. By analysing Playter's journal, we add depth and complexity to our understanding of the gendered nature of pre-industrial tavern space, acknowledging its particularity in the process. The source invites us to add women's work, family life, courtship, mixed-gender parlour gatherings, and female participation in drinking culture to our male-centred history of the pre-industrial tavern. More widely, it suggests colonial public space itself (outside the taverns) as a rewarding field of enquiry for gender history and women's history.

Playter held his tavern licence (issued by the Justices of the Peace in the Court of Quarter Sessions) jointly with merchant Abner Miles, a much older man, his brother's father-in-law and the owner of the tavern building.[14] According to the journal, Miles was not at all involved in the day-to-day running of the tavern. Often about the house with his wife Mercy and their nearly grown daughters Bettsey and Lucy, he figures most prominently as harassing Playter about the state of the accounts. Miles spent most of his time running an attached slaughterhouse-butchery and at his farm north of town. Playter himself spent most mornings "dunning" for local merchants and lawyers, as he was, aside from keeping tavern, a pre-industrial bill collector and accountant.[15] For reasons never addressed in the journal but which seem to stem from mutual fatigue with each other and their shared trade, Playter and Miles transferred their licence to William Moore early in May 1802. He was the first in a string of short-lived, problematic keepers. Miles and his family left the premises. Playter stayed on until he moved to his own (private) house in September and began working for Robert Isaac Dey Gray, the Solicitor-General, drawing up legal papers on a commission

12 EP, February 27, March 1, June 30, 1802.

13 Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

14 Craig Heron, "Abner Miles", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), pp. 596–597. In 1801 Ely had kept the tavern jointly with his brother James (who was married to Hannah Miles). See the list of tavern-keepers for 1801 in Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report*, "Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions", p. 16.

15 EP, March 3 and 4, 1802 (Miles anxious about the accounts); April 1, 1802 (slaughterhouse); March 13, 1802 (dunning). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines one who duns as "an importunate creditor; a debt collector" and the verb to dun as "mak[ing] repeated and persistent demands upon, especially for money owed".

basis, as well as farming his own land.[16] Any journal record of the year spent keeping tavern in 1801 has not survived. Later dates concern Playter's own tavern-going in the Town of York, in its surrounding townships, and during a trip to Niagara Falls in 1805.

Only a tavern-keeper could have written this journal, but not just any tavern-keeper. Though much of what it reveals about his trade, the layout of his house, and its varied clientele conforms to patterns of public-house life observed in other times and places, what it reveals about gender relations and women could only have come from Playter in the winter of 1802. He was 25 years old, single, and envious of married men.[17] He paid an abundance of attention to unmarried women: "see a young woman here from the Bay of Quinty, a Miss Rea & her Brother come up to settle at York."[18] With his bachelor friends, lawyer Thomas Ward and government clerk Stephen Heward, who came daily to his tavern to dine, Playter frequently "sat talking", cigars in hand, "on our favourite Conversations of our Amours with the Ladys".[19] His journal does include references to men and their wives, to his mother and sisters and the female members of his and other tavern-keeping households. But mixed gender gatherings in tavern parlours drew the bulk of his remarks, sometimes in extraordinary detail, because they held out the promise of courtship.

Naturally much of what Playter wrote about the gender dynamics of tavern space had also to do with the quirks of his personality and intellect. The journal proper opens on St. Valentine's Day, Sunday, February 14, 1802. Aside from a quick note that the "house was clear of company", the reader is given no sense of being in a tavern as we have understood them. "Miss T asked me for a book. [I] gave her the *Adventures of Versorand*[20] and we read [till] Past 9 o'Clock, she in the book I lent her & I in M[onsieur] Zimmermann's *Influence of Solitude on the Mind & the Heart*."[21] The entry provides

16 EP, May 3, July 14 and 22–23, August 3, 1802 (Moore and Moore's troubles); September 25 and 29, 1802 (Mr. and Mrs. Clark as new tavern-keepers); October 11, 1802 (Playter moves); November 2, 1802 (agreement with Gray).

17 EP, February 25, 1802: "I have just entered yesterday's remarks and now begin to think of following my friends example, and throw myself into the arms of Morpheus for the remainder of the night, As I'm destitute of those pleasing sensations experienced by many[?] more fortunate youths, in the Arms of a loving Consort to slumber the night away."

18 EP, July 10, 1802.

19 EP, September 16, 1802; see July 10, 1802, for Ward's political difficulties getting called to the Bar. He became a prominent barrister under whom William Henry Draper, a prime minister during the Union period (1841–1867), articled. See George Metcalfe, "William Henry Draper", in J. M. S. Careless, ed., *Pre-Confederation Premiers: Ontario Government Leaders, 1841–1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 33.

20 Henri-François de la Solle, *Memoirs of a Man of Pleasure, or, the Adventures of Versorand* ..., trans. John Hill, 5th ed. (London: T. Osborn, 1751). The novelist (d. 1761) is obscure, meriting only the briefest of entries in the *Dictionnaire des Lettres françaises XVI^e siècle*, vol. 4, pt. 2 (Paris: Libraire Arthème Fayard, 1960), p. 46. He published four other multi-volume novels.

21 EP, February 14, 1802.

an example of domesticity within the tavern. It also positions the tavern-keeper in a particular relationship to both public life and household life. Johann Georg Zimmermann was a "favourite auther" of Playter's.[22] Swiss by birth, educated in Germany, appointed Royal Physician to the King of Great Britain at Hanover in 1768, and later knighted, he was a prolific popular philosopher, translated into multiple editions in English and French.[23]

The book that made its way to Playter's York tavern centred on the tension between "the enjoyments of Society" and "the tranquillity of Solitude", which included an idyllically conceived domestic circle. It argued that only by finding a balance between them could human beings attain "true felicity".[24] The resonance these themes evoked in Playter explains much of what he has to tell us about taverns. He wrote about public life and household life because they co-existed at his house and also, as his favourite reading material suggests, because he invested each with significance in the pursuit of a meaningful human existence.

Playter was also a Loyalist. Born in the midst of Revolution, on November 30, 1776, in Chesterfield Township, Burlington County, New Jersey, he never actually chose his allegiance, but had Loyalism and its repercussions thrust upon him. In the year of Ely's birth, his father George, an English cabinet maker, joined the British army at Trenton and remained in its service "procuring Intelligence" until the peace.[25] The price for his loyalty was the confiscation and sale of all his real and personal property, assessed at £1,181.16s. His wife and Ely's mother, Elizabeth Welding Playter, was born and raised a Quaker in New Jersey. The family lived on one of two small plantations left

22 EP, February 15, 1802.

23 See *Solitude: Written Originally by J. G. Zimmerman to which are added Notes Historical and Explanatory* ..., 2 vols. (London: Thomas Maiden for Vernor & Hood, J. Cuthell. J. Walker *et al.*, 1804–1805). The book was available in English translation from 1796, under various titles. The first American edition was *Solitude considered, with respect to its influence on the mind and heart/ Written originally in German by M.[onsieur] Zimmermann; translated from the French of J. B. Mercier* (New York: Printed by Mott & Lyon for Evert Duyckinck & Co.,1796). Biographical details on Zimmermann are from the *Brockhaus Enzyclopädie*, vol. 20 (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1974), p. 691. Probably the work's popularity for English readers had to do with Zimmermann's list of the three most virtuous societies: "the ancient Greeks, the Romans, and the modern English" (vol. 1, pp. 8–9).

24 Zimmermann, *Solitude*, pp. v–vii. In his interest in the relationship between society and solitude, Playter was far from alone. Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), remarks that "the most overdrawn dualism drawn on in discussion of leisure and culture was that of fashionable worldliness versus philosophical retirement" (p. 282).

25 AO, 13/111 [microfilm copy], Public Record Office, London, Audit Office, Claims, American Loyalists, George Playter's Loyalist Claim for compensation to the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, pp. 108–121, quote at p. 110; E. Alfred Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey: Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc.* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1927), p. 173; Francis B. Lee, ed., *Documents Relating to the Revolutionary History of the State of New Jersey, Volume 2: Extracts from American Newspapers 1778* (Trenton: John L. Murphy, 1903), pp. 543–544, and *Volume 3: Extracts from American Newspapers Relating to New Jersey 1779* (Trenton, 1906), pp. 111–112.

to George by her grandmother.[26] With the loss of their comfortable home in 1778, the growing Playter family was reduced to "greatest distress".[27] Elizabeth and six children fled to Pennsylvania to live "disperst" amongst her "relations". She saw George often enough to bear two more children during this period. When the British evacuated New York, he returned for good in November 1783, intending "to collect my family together ... to go to Nova Scotia". Instead, with George taken ill "from Ulcers on his lungs" (but not too ill to father two more children), the Playters remained in the new State of Pennsylvania until late in 1789.[28] Perhaps they attempted to make a life in the new republic and found it, as did many Tories, too difficult. Perhaps George's consumption was the real reason for their long stay. In any case, in about 1790 George, Elizabeth, and nine of their children, from two-year-old George to 24-year-old Watson with his wife and child, migrated north.

In 1793 George Playter appears in the Upper Canada Land Books at York. He owned a prime town lot on the waterfront and three parcels of wild farmland, totalling 500 acres, an hour's ride north.[29] "Playter's Bridge" over the Don River (which flowed into the harbour to the east of town) is marked on a map drawn that year by government surveyor Alexander Aitkin.[30] This land at the Don became the farms and busy households to which Ely referred nine years later in his journal as "Father's", "Watson's", "James' ", and "John's".

In 1801 York, on the northwest shore of Lake Ontario, near the gateway to the Toronto Passage long used by Native and French traders,[31] was "just emerging from the woods but bid[ding] fair to be a flourishing town".[32] Founded in 1793 as the naval arsenal and temporary capital of the new British colony of Upper Canada, the town itself extended a mile and a half along the lakefront above Toronto Bay. The garrison was another mile to the west, separated from the town by its Reserve. Yonge Street ran north through an emerging agricultural hinterland, passing through settlements of Germans from Genesee County, New York, at Markham; French Royalists at Vaughan; to the

26 There is a copy of Hannah Bickerdike's will (Elizabeth Playter's grandmother) in George Playter's Loyalist petition, pp.115–116.

27 George Playter's Loyalist petition, p. 110. The household contents are inventoried on p. 117. Its comfort is evinced by good supplies of household, artisanal, and farming equipment, foodstuffs, curtained bedsteads, table linens, chintz furniture, glass and pewter.

28 George Playter's Loyalist petition, pp.122, 112.

29 Edith G. Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815: A Collection of Documents of Early Toronto* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), p. 17. The York land grants are published from Public Archives of Canada, Upper Canada Land Book C, Minutes of Executive Council, September 4, 1793.

30 Mary Quayle Innis, ed., *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary: With Illustrations from the Original Manuscript* (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1965), p. 180.

31 R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume 1: From the Beginning to 1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Plate 35, "The Great Lakes Basin, 1600–1653"; Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), p. 89.

32 John Bennett to John Neilson, York, Upper Canada, September 18, 1801, in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 242. Bennett was the King's Printer in Upper Canada.

Pennsylvania Quakers at Gwillimbury, at the mouth of the Holland River, 36 miles distant. The Dundas Road went west to the Head of the Lake (Hamilton), connecting with routes to Newark, Niagara, and Detroit. The Danforth Road enabled travel east to Kingston on the St. Lawrence River. In the town itself, settlement was densest in the ten compact blocks called the old town, at the harbour. It then straggled sparsely westward through the new town. The few public buildings and the residences of the governing and merchant elite claimed the waterfront, with the households of smaller merchants, artisans, and labourers located further back.[33]

When Playter was keeping his tavern, there were perhaps 75, perhaps 100 houses (contemporary counts vary).[34] Within the town lived 320 people, and another 429 inhabited the surrounding townships of Etobicoke, York, and Scarborough.[35] The garrison housed an additional 235 to 246 men and officers.[36] Being the capital, York had the Parliament, courts, and administrative offices. It was a commercial centre as well as a port and an important entryway to the colony. As such, York also had a constant, floating population of travellers and temporary sojourners, unaccounted for in population estimates. "The Town looks quite Throng," Playter noted in May, "a Number of strange Gentlemen walking the Street."[37] Because of the new colonial town's compound political, military, and commercial identity, men and families with high status and education had an unusually strong social presence.[38] York may have been more a raw walking village than a classic, preindustrial "walking city", but its settlers experienced a surprising heterogeneity in day-to-day, "face-to-face" encounters in public space. The govern-

33 Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. xxxiii–xlvi.

34 "Abstract of the Home District [the administrative district in which York was located] for the Year commencing 7th March 1802", in *[John Ross] Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto*, vol. 2 (1896; reprint Belleville, Ont.: Mika Publishing, 1987), p. 994; Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 242. The latter is John Bennett's estimate; see note 32 above.

35 Playter, as the elected Town Clerk, enumerated the population as part of the duties of his office. Written into the Minutes of Town Meetings and Lists of Inhabitants, his count remains the only census. Yet, judging by the description in his journal of how he actually collected the data, it should be regarded as imprecise at best. He spent a day on horseback going from house to house and confessed to being amused by the people who "could not conceive the use of it", casting doubt on the accuracy of their reporting. He seems not to have been entirely rigorous himself, mentioning having to call back "at some houses that I had pass'd on my way up" (EP, March 25 and 26, 1802). The counter argument, of course, is that York was a small place: he could not be out by too much without noticing the absences on his list. His count is tabulated in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, "Population of York, 1797–1814", p. lxxvii, and published in Christine Mosser, ed. *York, Upper Canada: Minutes of Town Meetings, Lists of Inhabitants, 1793–1823* (Toronto: Metropolitan Library Board, 1984), pp. 32–37.

36 "Report of the State of Public Works and Buildings at the Several Military Posts in Upper Canada, 12 Sept. 1802", in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1792–1815*, p. 71. The 41st Regiment replaced the Queen's Rangers in September 1802.

37 EP, May 29, 1802.

38 Histories of early York typically note that the "social life of the town was dominated by the handful of appointed, highly paid officials ... in positions of power." See, for example, Frederick H. Armstrong,

ing class was British and Loyalist, but the people were of various origins, including Loyalists and later American arrivals, English, Scots, Irish, French, and Germans. They practised, sometimes eclectically, a variety of religions. It was a multi-racial population that was mostly white, but included both free and enslaved blacks, as well as the Mississauga who maintained a presence in and about the town.[39]

To a large extent York was characterized by the absence of public spaces. There were two small brick buildings — called the Government Buildings — on the lakeshore where the House of Assembly and the Executive and Legislative Councils sat. The courts also sat there, as well as occasional religious congregations, as no church buildings existed. All government offices were in office-holders' homes; both schools were similarly housed. There was no market building until 1803, although a portable market existed. The streets were stump-laden, freezing cold several months of the year and muddy for many of the rest. There were no established public squares, like those studied so profitably in republican America,[40] but people made excursions along the banks of the lake and used the Government Park near the Don for exercise and shooting. There was a gaol and there were the garrison and other military buildings. But none of these publicly owned buildings and spaces offered generalized access to townspeople, and certainly not for the purposes of formal or informal association.[41]

The taverns did. All of York's, as in the rest of the colony, shared the same three basic characteristics: they were buildings that opened to the public;

Toronto: A Place of Meeting (Burlington Ont.: Ontario Historical Society and Windsor Publications, 1983), p. 38. Theirs was a different social sphere than Playter's: for its workings, see Katherine M. J. McKenna, *A Life of Propriety: Anne Murray Powell and Her Family, 1775–1849* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). Far more apparent in his journal and tavern were the men who worked as the support staff for these officials: lawyers, government clerks, lesser office-holders (the Clerk of the Peace, for instance, who recorded the transactions of the Quarter Sessions Court), as well as the tradespeople who provided the goods and services they consumed.

39 Sam Bass Warner Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968); Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784–1841* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1963), pp. 42–49. See Grant, *A Profusion of Spires*, for the religious traditions of the colony. Those practised were primarily the evangelical traditions of Methodism, American Presbyterianism, and Baptism, but included the Churches of England and Scotland, Roman Catholicism, and some plain folk, Quakers, Tunkers, and Mennonites. See also Daniel G. Hill, "Negroes in Toronto, 1793–1865", *Ontario History*, vol. 55, no. 2 (June 1963), pp. 73–91; on Mississauga, see Robert J. Surtees, "Land Sessions, 1763–1830", in Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith, eds., *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), pp. 101–104, 109–112.

40 Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

41 "General Statement of Public Property in this Province Commencing in the Year 1792 and Ending in 1799", in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 50–54; Patrick C. T. White, ed., *Lord Selkirk's Diary, 1803–1804: A Journal of his Travels in British North America and the Northeastern United States* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1958), pp. 143–147; George Heriot, *Travels Through the Canadas...* (1806; reprint Rutland, Vermont: Charles Tuttle, 1971), pp. 138–142.

they were licensed to sell fermented and spiritous liquor by small measure; and they offered meals, lodging, and hostling[42] for a charge. Playter's tavern was one of six in York in 1801 and one of nine in 1802.[43] In the latter year at least one of eleven private dwellings doubled as a tavern.[44] In terms of population, there was a tavern for every 110 inhabitants, including the soldiers. Both ratios are high in comparison to eighteenth-century Boston, Philadelphia, and European cites.[45] Both are high in comparison to older Canadian centres.[46] The difference is attributable to the newness of York, its low population density in comparison to these longer-settled places, and its pronounced absence of other publicly accessible buildings.

Playter's tavern stood on King Street at the corner of Caroline, in the old town, within sight and sound of Elisha Beman's tavern. When Playter sat at his writing table he could look out and see Sophia Beman "often at her window (which was in view from mine)". To each side along King stood the taverns of John MacDougall, William Cooper, and Joseph Hunt. George Purvis, a discharged sergeant, opened a tavern and store in October 1802 "near the Garrison".[47] Thomas Hamilton and Hugh McPhie were each somewhere in

42 Or ostling, the receipt of and care for patrons' horses.

43 Fraser, ed, *Twenty-First Report,* Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, pp. 16–17, 19, 32; for George Purvis, see *Upper Canada Gazette*, October 30, 1802.

44 As stated, the number of houses is uncertain.

45 In Boston in 1765, one of thirteen houses was licensed to sell liquor (Conroy, *In Public Houses*, pp. 142, 310–313); in Philadelphia's Middle Ward in 1774 there was one tavern per 18.7 houses (Warner, *The Private City*, pp. 15, 19). The ratio of tavern to population differed, but was everywhere lower than in York. Boston in 1765 was closest at 1:116 (Conroy, *In Public Houses*, p. 142). In Philadelphia the ratio was 1:140 in 1774 (Warner, *The Private City*, pp. 15, 19) and 1:158 in 1769 (Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, p. 27). For Paris and England, see Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture*, p. 76; Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 55–58, who each present ratios of taverns to population hovering about the 1:200 mark.

46 I have been unable to find comparative statistics precisely for 1802. In Montreal in 1819, the ratio of tavern to population was 1:139. In the old settlements of Newark and Kingston in 1796, the tavern per household ratio was 1:18. For Montreal, see *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 2, Plate 10 (population); Thomas Doige, *An Alphabetical List of Merchants, Traders, and Housekeepers Resident in Montreal [1819]*, reprinted in Edwin C. Guillet, *Pioneer Inns and Taverns*, 5 vols. in 4 books, vol. 2, *The Province of Quebec, the Ottawa Valley and American Inns* (Toronto: The Author, 1954–1962), pp. 73–77 (taverns). The Newark and Kingston statistics are based, in part, on the observations of a traveller, Duc de François Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America, The Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London: R. Phillips 1800), who noted that the two centres each had 129 to 130 houses. The Quarter Sessions Records for Kingston, published in *Queen's Quarterly*, vol. 7 (1899–1900), pp. 243–245, indicate at least seven taverns in 1796. Numbers of Newark taverns are taken from Richard Merritt, "Early Inns and Taverns: Accommodation, Fellowship, and Good Cheer", in Richard Merritt, Nancy Butler, and Michael Power, eds., *Capital Years: Niagara-on-the-Lake, 1792–1796* (Toronto: Dundurn Press for the Niagara Historical Society, 1991), pp. 187–222.

47 Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library, Toronto Maps, 1800–1829, "Plan of the Town of York, 9th June, 1818"; "Original Land Owners" in *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York and the Townships of West Gwillimbury and Town of Bradford in the County of Simcoe, Ontario* (Toronto: Miles and Co., 1878), pp. 7–10; *Upper Canada Gazette*, October 30, 1802 (for Purvis's tavern).

the old town.[48] Hannah McBride's was perhaps at Yonge Street, perhaps also on King. Four, or possibly five, of the 107 tavern licences issued in the colony of Upper Canada in 1802 were held independently by women. In York, McBride was the only female licence-holder. She was a widow and, with her marriage in 1803 to Ebenezer Washburn, a merchant, farmer, and Member of the Legislative Assembly, she apparently left the trade.[49]

A range of service existed in York's several taverns, but none was as consciously fashionable as William Cooper's new Toronto Coffee House. Without restricting his customers, Cooper courted genteel patronage. Advertising himself to "gentlemen", he stressed the "conveniences" and "quality" of his house. He pledged to keep it "as nearly on the footing of an English Inn, as local circumstances" permitted.[50] Accounts in Playter's journal of genteel sociability at Beman's and at Playter's own tavern are reasons to doubt Cooper's claims to exclusivity. Clearly, though, he was emulating the English model and following in the footsteps of tavern-keepers such as William Bradford of the Old London Coffee House in Philadelphia in 1754 and Thomas Selby of the Crown in Boston in the 1710s. Generations earlier they had created establishments catering to a social elite.[51] Nothing is known of McPhie's or McBride's. At the low end of the scale, Hunt's tavern raised concerns among authorities. He, too, was a discharged sergeant, and the authorities

48 EP, August 16, 1802. The locations of Hamilton's and McPhie's are only educated guesses, based on records of previous or slightly later tavern locations.

49 See *Upper Canada Gazette*, January 29, 1803, for the marriage announcement. I have found no licence issued to a Washburn in either York or Ebenezer's home of Hallowell, in the Midland District. Hannah did retain independent management of her house in York. See AO, Baldwin Papers, Hannah Washburn to Mr [Quetton] St. George, Hallowell, January 28, 1815. The low number of female tavern-keepers is consistent with the decline noted by Conroy, *In Public Houses,* p. 318, by the 1790s in Boston. It differs sharply from the description given by Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, p. 41, who notes that in Philadelphia in 1767–1771, "At any given stage in the city's development women licensees could be found managing approximately a quarter of the city's public houses." Carole Shammas provides a figure of "about twenty per cent" for 1775 Philadelphia, cited by Thorpe, "Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier", p. 680. The difference could be attributable to the skewed sex ratio in the Home District, a classic characteristic of a frontier community. See David J. Wood, "Population Change on an Agricultural Frontier: Upper Canada, 1796 to 1841", in Roger Hall, William Westfall, and Laurel Sefton MacDowell, eds., *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario's History* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988), p. 61. The vast majority of female licence-holders in Upper Canada (1791–1841) were widows. In 1802 there were simply very few who did not have an opportunity to remarry. However, the Boston figures throw this explanation into doubt. Together the low percentages from about 1800 suggest a redefinition at work in official attitudes toward the appropriateness of women keeping tavern, in part impelled by new institutional alternatives. The numbers of female licence-holders are available in the annual reports of the Receiver General, usually published as appendices to the *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada*. But for 1801–1802, see "Tavern and Shop Licenses" in "Accounts of the Receiver-General of Upper Canada", in Alexander Fraser, ed., *Eleventh Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: A. T. Wilgress, 1915), pp. 749–758, 774–775. See also the discussions of female drink sellers in Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, pp. 40–41, 43–46, 64–66; Conroy, *In Public Houses*, pp. 131–139. In Boston most widows who remarried decided to stay in the trade.

50 *Upper Canada Gazette*, March 7, 1801; December 4, 1802.

51 Conroy, *In Public Houses*, pp. 89–95; Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, pp. 106–110.

refused his request for a front lot on the grounds that he kept a "Tip[p]ling House". This problematic tavern-keeper had instead to "go to the Rear of the old town".[52] The town had a range of taverns, then, from Cooper's emulation of fashionable British inns to those, like Hunt's, best kept out of sight.

The rest fell in between. Playter's, like Beman's, Hamilton's, and McDougall's, was at neither extreme. In these taverns, buyers and sellers negotiated deals and sealed them over drink. Disputants met to arbitrate and settle their claims on each other. The Assessor received tax payments. Coroners' juries convened. Locals left petitions to the Legislature to be signed. They organized dancing assemblies. And tavern-goers as respectable as Ely Playter called "and drank some Grog, see Mrs & Miss McDougall and had a Deal of talk".[53] These were each well-known, reputable places that supported formal and informal public life.

Unfortunately, a systematic discussion of Playter's tavern interior is not possible. He indicated, by referring to an upstairs, that his house had two storeys. He named seven rooms, but never revealed how each was situated relative to the rest. There was the barroom, which was always kept warm, with an enclosed, lockable bar and a place for "charging accounts". The parlour had another fireplace, a card table, and enough light for reading, writing, and needlework after dark. At least one upstairs room was open to customers who wanted to be separate from the rest of the company in the house. "Messrs. Shivers and Joshua Cozens", for example, "dined upstairs and drank plentifully of whisky." Ely's own room had a door that fastened, and it must have been on the ground floor, because late-night callers banged on the window to wake him up. There was a "south chamber" for lodgers, a kitchen where we glimpse a black woman named Elizabeth (Betty) Johnson, and a "Sellar" for "storing away my empty casks". In addition there was a public dining-table (though a dining-room is never mentioned) and beds enough for the numerous people who slept there each night.[54]

These interior architectural arrangements were typical in both private and public houses by this period.[55] Beman's nearby also had a bar, an upstairs

52 This statement refers to the granting of lots on land still owned by the Crown when the New Town extension of York was laid out in 1797. Hunt would, of course, have been free to purchase any lot available on the open market. P. Russell [the acting Lieutenant-Governor] to D. W. Smith [the Surveyor-General], July 20, 1797, in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 42.

53 EP, March 13, 16, 24, 1802; June 18, 1802; August 1, 18, 19, 1802; November 16, 1802 (McDougall women); *Upper Canada Gazette*, December 20, 1800 (petition).

54 EP, February 22 and 27, 1802 (bar and barroom); February 23, March 1 and 11, 1802 (parlour); April 2, June 30, 1802 (upstairs); September 15, 1802 (Ely's room); February 25, 1802 (south chamber); March 21, 1802 (kitchen); July 6, 1802 (cellar). About seven people, plus any guests, slept in the tavern most nights: Playter, Miss T., Abner Miles, Mercy and Bettsey Miles, Betty Johnson, and P. White (possibly a servant). See, for instance, EP, February 26, March 7, April 10 and 23, March 4 and 18, 1802.

55 Conroy, *In Public Houses*, pp. 89–94; Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, pp. 106–107; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), p. 87; Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture*, p. 116; Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 195–196.

withdrawing room, and a parlour. So did James Donaldson's substantial tavern in Amherstburg, open until 1801. Spatial divisions were the same in the new republic to the south, and more fully realized in Europe. In fact, almost all taverns, unless kept by and for the poor or located in the backwoods, combined rooms used primarily for public drinking and festive or associational gatherings with those allowing relative seclusion.[56]

Still, Playter's rooms were also flexible enough to be given over to drinking or loud sociability as desired. Conviviality sometimes spilled throughout the tavern, with the house "in the evening full of noisy company singing in two or three different rooms at once".[57] Liquor, both spirituous and fermented, flowed everywhere. Belonging integrally to the amusements of the bar, it was also employed in parlour gatherings. By offering flexible spaces that allowed relative seclusion or full public engagement, depending upon the wishes of the company in the house, Playter, like many other tavern-keepers, encouraged members of a diverse public to seek their particular entertainments at his tavern. His was a space, like many, designed to balance differing claims upon it.

Playter used the word "private" only once in his journal while he kept tavern. It had nothing to do with women, but related instead to his parlour and the selectivity of association that it enabled: "Mr. A. Macdonnell, A. Cameron and T. Ward were drinking some Grog in the parlour and upon some private business besides."[58] The parlour was where one went for privacy in a public house. In charting the parlour as a restricted zone, Playter emphasized its distance from the barroom, which was public space. The way he wrote suggests the point. He rarely identified his barroom patrons by name, but he identified the parlour's occupants almost daily. He shrouded the barroom in anonymity, and at the same time evoked its activity and congestion in a customary phrase, "the barroom full of People all the evening". We usually have no idea who these people actually were. In this way, the tavern-keeper suggested the gulf he saw between parlour and bar, between closed, potentially private space and open, public space.

That there was an element of myth-making, or wishful thinking, in the division and use of space in the public house is evident. Playter sought a clear division between household space and fully public space and, to a certain extent, he attained it. But his journal is also riven by contradictions. The specialized use of the rooms did not always reflect the "privacy" Playter invoked when he referred to the parlour. Those who knew their behaviour would be

56 For Beman's, see, for example, EP, August 17 and September 9, 1802; May 6, 1803; *Upper Canada Gazette*, May 30, 1807 (Cooper's); AO, Surrogate Court Records, Essex Co., Wills, 1801 (no. 20), James Donaldson. His estate inventory shows a room set aside for the Masons, a barroom and a well-appointed dining-room, along with a less clearly defined parlour. Donaldson supplied his guests with the accoutrements of polite dining.

57 EP, July 6, 1802.

58 EP, March 16, 1802.

seen and heard might choose the public house deliberately to conduct exchanges that were meant to be witnessed by others. Status was thus reaffirmed or damaged, or the nature of a particular relationship reinforced.[59] For those desiring seclusion, the myth of "privacy" in the public house could be all too revealing. Walls without insulation, holes through the ceilings for heat circulation, echoing staircases, and doors that closed or not according to the weather meant that sound carried easily in the tavern. Playter lay awake one night and "heard some very disagreeable conversation between Mr. Moore and his wife after they had got to bed".[60] In the quiet of morning, in the presence of the household and overnight company, Abner Miles asserted his authority by vigorously criticizing Playter's management. Still in his own chamber, Playter "heard Mr. Miles' scolding before I was up"[61] and, while distinctly annoyed, seemed resigned to a public drubbing by one commanding his deference.

Furthermore, the public at Playter's, as in most taverns where drink-sellers welcomed the custom of all comers to make a good profit, was heterogeneous. He named "Mr Proctor and another man from the Quaker settlement" and "two American soldiers" specifically as barroom patrons. In the house generally, he depicted men trading furs, referred to lake schooner captains Kendrick and Sillich, and made clear that, along with the many settling and substantial farmers who predominated among his patrons, there were merchants and their clerks, government clerks, lawyers, physicians, the Sheriff of the Home District, and his brother, the Treasurer of the Law Society. Several of these men held local office and commissions in the militia.[62] A 1796 account book for the house indicates the barroom patronage of shoemakers, joiners, sawyers, blacksmiths, masons, millers, British military officers, and

59 Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture*, pp. 25–26 and his chapter "Honor and Public Violence". The theme of public behaviour publicly observed runs throughout Thompson's analysis of Philadelphians' reasons for going to taverns in *Rum Punch and Revolution*; see p. 203, for example. See also Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982), pp. 94–98.

60 EP, July 29, 1802.

61 EP, March 8, 1802.

62 EP, April 4 and February 27, 1802 (Quakers and soldiers); March 8 and 17, 1802 (fur trading); April 3 and 10, 1802 (schooner captains); February 26 and 27, April 9, 1802 (Archibald Cameron and Samuel Heron, merchants, and Erastus Dean, merchant clerk); see Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 68, 13, 245. Stephen Heward was a government clerk at Peter Russell's office (the Receiver-General and former acting Governor); see Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 81, 107, 265, 268; Fraser, ed, *Twenty-First Report*, Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, p. 172. Thomas Ward was a lawyer (Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 90); Thomas Stoyells was a physician (EP, March 19, 1802; Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 130). It is difficult to distinguish between Angus and Alexander McDonell in the journal. Angus was a lawyer, the treasurer of the Law Society, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and a Justice of the Peace. Alexander was Sheriff of the Home District, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and also a Justice. See Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 41; Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report*, Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, pp. 2, 3, 20, 33, 100; Mosser, ed., *York, Upper Canada*, p. 13.

soldiers from the garrison.[63] Seven of the more substantial men who charged their drinks in 1796 appear again, by name, as patrons in Playter's journal.[64] But we only know of the continuing patronage of blacksmith John Hunter through the intervening years because of the trouble he caused: "it [was] 12 oClock before I got to bed & just after J. Hunter knocked at the Door ... & plead some time for me to get up and let him have a pt. rum but I answered him very determined that I would not."[65] There is a pronounced bias in Playter's journal against such patrons and in favour of gentlemen like Ward and Heward, who preferred wine with their meals.

Apart from the Quakers, he identifies only Tunkers (or Dunkards) by their religion, but the clientele included the denominational range characteristic of the colony. For example, Ward and Heward each belonged to the Church of England; Stoyells was a prominent Methodist; the McDonell brothers were Roman Catholics. Patrons also included families and individuals identified by the tavern-keeper as Dutch, German, French, and American, as well as those known to be Irish, English, and Scottish. Overwhelmingly, the clientele was white, but Peter Long, enumerated as a black man in the town's "List[s] of Inhabitants", had frequented the house when it was under Miles's sole management, as did "Molat, Negro".[66] In Playter's time Betty Johnson, "the

63 Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library [hereafter MTCL], Baldwin Room, Abner Miles Account Book, September 1, 1795–December 15, 1796, Accounts of a General Store and Tavern, September 1, 3, 15, 16, and 23, 1795; June 28 and September 5, 1796; and passim. I have included only those with small-measure drink purchases on their accounts to ensure they were tavern, not store, customers.

64 These seven are William Bond, Archibald Cameron, Samuel Heron, John and Joseph Kendrick, Captain Sillich, and Benjamin Cozens. Bond was a freeholder on Yonge Street, a hatter, a Grand Juror, a financial contributor for a bridge in York, and the representative sent to England by the Agricultural and Commercial Society of York in 1806. See AO, RG 22–134, Court of Queen's Bench Assize Minute Books, 1792–1848 (1800, 1803); Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report,* Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, pp. 29, 33, 35; Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 41. Cameron was a small merchant in York, had land in Etobicoke, was elected collector, had been with the Queen's Rangers and was a Lieutenant in the York Militia, and was a Grand Juror. See Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 68, 70; Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report,* Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, pp. 5, 66, 68. Heron was a larger merchant who later ran a milling and distilling complex, also a Militia Lieutenant, a Grand Juror, and holder of various town offices. See Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 13; Mosser, ed., *York, Upper Canada*, pp. 3, 9, 31; Queen's Bench Assize Minute Books (1798–1800). There were four Kendrick brothers with adjoining Yonge Street lots. Joseph was the schooner captain and owner noted above and a Grand Juror. John was a house carpenter and High Constable, 1800–1803. See Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 42, 224; Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report,* Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, pp. 48, 65. Sillich does not appear in local records. Benjamin Cozens was the brother of Shivers and J. D., noted above. All held local office at different times, served as Grand Jurors, and speculated in land. Benjamin was a tailor. J. D. was listed as a "Gentleman" in the Court of Queen's Bench Assize Minute Books (1798). See also Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 11; Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report,* Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace for the Home District, pp. 21, 31.

65 MTCL, Baldwin Room, Abner Miles Account Book, September 23, 1796; Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report,* Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, pp. 32, 44, 84; EP, February 26, 1802.

66 MTCL, Baldwin Room, Abner Miles Account Book, September 1, 3, 15, 16, and 23, 1795; June 28 and September 5, 1796; and passim.

Blackwoman", worked within as a servant or slave, and Lester Stuard (who was black) played the fiddle for customers and annoyed the tavern-keeper with his long tales.[67] Though the journal reveals no patronage by the local Mississauga, once a (white) man came in "with his Indian", the possessive pronoun implying the hierarchical relationship between the two, at least from Playter's perspective.[68] The tavern was indeed full, as Playter wrote, with "all kinds of people".[69]

Where Playter stands apart from the common themes of the new tavern historiography is in his absolute disregard for political discourse. Certainly his approach to public life sharply separated him from those tavern-keepers and office-holders in Massachusetts, who joined in making tavern crowds active participants in the new United States during the Revolutionary era.[70] Playter surveyed patterns of association in his barroom at best with disinterest and at worst as laden with the potential for disorder. His cursory phrase, "spent the time tending Barr and charging Accounts", encompassed routine nights. The barroom was a workplace where he was disinclined to engage with members of the "throng".[71] He named names and described barroom events only in the context of trouble. Disorder erupted, for example, more than once in February. "We had a high caper with J. Thorn who being in Liquor and getting offended at Orton would Box him. Orton humouring the joke in great earnest made the company very merry and all subsided very well in a short time." Also, "we had some trouble with two American soldiers ... they had a great drunken bout & got Quarrelling in the Barroom — with some difficulty we got them parted and put to bed."[72] In the boxing match between Thorn and Orton — which actually amounted to little in the end — the tavern-keeper's anxiety that all might not, in fact, "subside well" is palpable. But also evident is Orton's co-operation in maintaining good order by "humouring" the inebriated Thorn. Similarly, there was active co-operation in quelling the disorder caused by the soldiers. With a barroom company demonstrably willing to share in the regulation of tavern space, Playter's suppression of his customers' conversation and orderly activity in his journal is puzzling. They were hardly an unruly bunch threatening his property and profit line.

It cannot be supposed that his tavern failed to act as a forum for politics, patronized as it was by government members and clerks, candidates in con-

67 EP, July 13, 1802. The only "Lester" on the List of Inhabitants in 1802 was Lester Stuard, whose name came under the heading "Blacks in York". Mosser, ed., *York, Upper Canada*, p. 36.

68 EP, February 25,1802. For a fuller discussion of racialized relations in tavern space, see Julia Roberts, " 'A Mixed Assemblage of Persons': Race and Tavern Space in Upper Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 83, no. 1 (March 2002), pp. 1–28.

69 EP, June 4, 1802.

70 Conroy, *In Public Houses*, devotes two chapters to this theme.

71 For example, EP, August 24, 1802.

72 EP, February 19 and 27, 1802.

tested elections and their lawyers,[73] and the politically active freeholders who met, scant years later, to discuss issues and sign public statements.[74] Certainly nothing like an articulate movement opposing the colonial governing class had emerged at this date in Upper Canada. Not for another generation did the public sphere theorized by Jürgen Habermas, and supported by a free press, voluntary associations, and tavern discourse, bring the practices of deliberative democracy into legitimacy.[75] The earliest murmurs of dissent, however, might be heard in public rooms. For example, one of the first vocal critics of the governing regime was Court of King's Bench Judge Robert Thorpe. He was easily dismissed, but his public statements in 1807 included an "almost Treasonable allusion to The American Revolution". In taverns he organized supporters and met political cronies.[76] During the Treason Trials of 1814 (in the aftermath of the War of 1812), indictments were routinely proffered against men like Alfred Barrett, who was overheard at Michael Dye's tavern in Markham to "drink a toast, 'success to the American fleet' in company".[77] Given this context and the patronage of the politically active at Playter's, the absence of politics from his journal does not mean it was absent from his tavern. Nor was he necessarily apolitical by nature. He did seek elective office as Town Clerk for many years, and in 1824 won election to the Legislative Assembly. Rather, his silence on politics may indicate a personal aversion to the kind of politics tavern crowds had discussed and practised in the Thirteen Colonies during the American Revolution.[78] His family's refugee history meant he had reason to fear barroom politicians. What may be on display is a Loyalist political sensibility, allergic to the republican connotations of popular tavern association.

What Playter's journal does clearly acknowledge is that gender was a basic layer of power embedded in tavern customs and patterns of use. Simultaneously, it suggests that identifying tavern space as male space has limited usefulness. Within the context of a society that empowered men politically,

73 "An Impartial Bystander's Account of the Election", *Niagara Herald*, March 14, 1801, in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 163–165. Tavern-goers concerned included Samuel Heron, Angus McDonell, and George Playter, Ely's father.

74 For example, in the 1807 controversy surrounding Judge Thorpe's presence in the colony — especially his election to the Legislative Assembly and subsequent disallowance on the grounds that it impinged upon the separation of powers between legislative and judicial branches of government — 38 men signed a published petition denying attending a meeting in support of him. Playter, his father, and his brother John signed, as did 13 of the men who came to his tavern in 1802. *York Gazette*, August 29, 1807, also in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 185–187.

75 Jeffrey L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

76 [Lieutenant-Governor] Gore to [Secretary for War] William Windham, York, Upper Canada, March 13, 1807, in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 184–185. Original letter in AO, Colonial Office Papers [microfilm], CO 42, vol. 343, pp. 61–62.

77 National Archives of Canada, RG5 A1 [Upper Canada Sundries, Civil and Provincial Secretaries' Offices], vol. 16, Deposition of George Cuttler, August 16, 1815, p. 6548.

78 Conroy, *In Public Houses*; Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*.

legally, and economically at the expense of women, surely more can be said about these places than that they were also male dominated. The designation hides the women who were present.

Colonial public houses were never male in the sense that women were absent. Playter wrote of a "Lady guest" at his tavern — a Mrs. Carpenter. "Miss Rea" was there with her brother, as were the women implied in brief descriptions like "A Dutchman and his family staid all night", "two familys of Dunkards who staid in the Kitchin with their children", "a family by the name of Charles Hatters", and "my bed taken up by a man and his wife".[79] In the instance of the Dunkards, it seems religion — the teaching of their faith to stay away from worldly influences — further complicated the issue of gender and appropriate space.

Of the 43 different women named by Playter in the eight months he kept tavern and at least five other unnamed women, well over half (27) were placed in taverns. Fourteen lived there as members of tavern-keeping families or households. Fifteen count as tavern patrons, including six travellers. Five women, Playter's mother among them, called regularly at the taverns to visit family and friends within. The categories overlap. Bettsy Miles, for example, who was old enough to get married in December 1802, lived at Playter's tavern whenever her parents were in town, called for drink at Yonge Street taverns in male company, and regularly popped in and out of Beman's tavern to see Sophia.[80] Neither Playter's own house, nor Beman's, nor McDougall's, nor any at which Playter called while travelling was ever clear of women. Given his vague accounts of barroom patronage, though, and the absence of either his or comparative account books for the period,[81] it is not possible to compare women's numerical presence in the public houses to men's. Certainly, during the barroom's busy hours they were in a pronounced minority.[82] On the other hand, women frequently numerically dominated tavern parlours. They dictated the forms of sociability practised. The numbers of this discussion are all so small that percentages are misleading. It is clearer to state that, when Sophia Beman, Mary Thomson, Bettsy Miles, and the Robinson girls were joined by men in the parlour at Beman's tavern, either sex could be in the majority. Mixed gender tavern sociability could be female dominated.

79 Actually, Playter mentions 52 women by name in this period, but three lived along the route to Niagara and one was his sister in Pennsylvania. EP, March 21 and 23, 1802 (Carpenter); July 10, 1802 (Rea); April 10, 1802 (Dutch family); April 7, 1802 (Dunkards); April 21, 1802 (Hatters); June 27, 1802 (man and wife).

80 "Marriage Registers of St. James Church", December 6, 1802, in *Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto*, vol. 3, p. 396; EP, February 18, 1802 (Bettsy Miles in residence); July 25, 1802 (at Everson's); May 26, 1802 (at Beman's).

81 See, however, Daniel Thorpe's careful discussion of tavern account books in Rowan County, North Carolina, and the problems they present for determining levels of female patronage. Thorpe, "Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier", pp. 681–682.

82 This concurs with Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 126, 225. Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture*, estimates women made up 7% to 14% of customers in 1700–1751 (p. 147).

At the very least, then, statements about the gendered dimensions of tavern space need to take commonplace architectural arrangements like parlours and upstairs withdrawing rooms, not to mention kitchens and bedchambers, into account. If only for the sake of precision, we should be clear that the only resolutely male space in a tavern was barroom space, and even then not because women were necessarily absent, but because they moved within it in carefully controlled ways.

Women customarily went to taverns with men. Married women went with their husbands or grown sons. Sometimes these were quick calls for refreshment, as when Playter and Bettsey Miles "rode pretty fast" down Yonge Street, "called at Everson's Tavern & got something to drink after which we rode on more fast". Or when he, with one of his sisters as well as Bettsey Miles, her soon-to-be-husband John Arnold, her sister Lucy, and Stephen Heward, "all stopped at the Tavern and drank some Sling". At other times these were longer stops, often in the context of a day spent in town. At Playter's, "Mr & Mrs Stoyells ... came in and staid Dinner."[83]

At other times, the common pursuit of public house sociability in mixed company is most apparent. "[T]he Ladys and Mr. S[tephen] H[eward]" were waiting when Playter and several male friends "returned" to Gilbert's tavern from a charivari, and all "set some time talking" throughout the long summer evening.[84] Neither was it unusual to encounter female company in taverns. "There was Mr. Taylor, Miss Tid & Mr. Gilbert" at Wilson's, wrote Playter, "& after we drank some whiskey we all started on together.... Taylor & Miss Tid were to get married tonight."[85] In 1805 a party of men and women related by familial, marital, and household ties went on a sight-seeing excursion from York to Niagara Falls, staying away for several days and calling on and lodging at numerous taverns along the way.

> We had a pleasant ride, called at the sign of the Horse and got something to drink — had a pleasant and satisfying view of the falls, returned to the first tavern and fed our horses, drank some brandy and water. A Mr. Laughton fell in company with us he was on horseback but having to leave his horse desired to ride with us to Niagara. We called at a second tavern by request of the stranger and drank some wine — he being a young man I in a joke got him to set between Hannah and Miss S[wazey] which I was afterwards sorry for as he had drank too much his behaviour was some annoyance to them.

Playter's inclusive language strongly indicates the women's integration in the tavern-going of the pleasure-seeking group as everybody stopped three times for "something to drink", for "brandy and water", and for "wine". Despite the gender-specific joking, the presence of women posed no perceiv-

83 EP, July 25, September 7 and 24, 1802. See also EP, January 13 and 20, 1806.
84 EP, August 22, 1804.
85 EP, October 27, 1805.

able barrier to traditional drinking practices. Each woman was in the tavern where many were drinking; each expressed a readiness to share the sociability of the bar or another public room.[86] They all joined casually in drink and public sociability, but, whereas men frequently did so among themselves, women knew tavern-going only in the context of close male companionship.

When Playter "stopped" with a friend in 1805 at his old stand, now "Stoyell's [tavern] and drank 5 pints of Wine — Andrew Thompson & wife were there & rec'd money for land sold to J. Kennedy. E. Payson was also there and helped us drink wine &c."[87] The phrasing of this last quote in particular — "Andrew Thompson & wife" — embodies women's particular relationship to the public houses: their presence, while quite customary, was understood as parenthetical to, and dependant upon, male company. Women often made tavern calls early in the century, expressing by this presence a desire for public sociability over drink, and the evidence of married couples visiting taverns together is valuable because the image of women seated about tavern tables with their husbands competes effectively with the presumption of an exclusively male presence. Women, however, did not go to taverns alone.[88] Tavern companies might very well have welcomed women in this period, but there was a chill in the embrace. The cultural expectation that they frequented the public houses only in male company limited and contained their admission to these male-dominated spaces. Taverns tolerated only carefully controlled female presence in public rooms.

Paradoxically then, women's occupation of public space in taverns also reveals the flexibility of a pre-industrial understanding of women's household status, as compared to later norms. Later, sexually respectable wives and daughters were ideologically and, in many ways, actually confined to a separate sphere called the home. We have known for a long time that the pre-industrial household contained many public elements, such as production for the market, the presence of non-family members in the form of boarders, apprentices, or servants, and a vulnerability to church, state, and community regulation of moral matters later considered private. More recently, the penetration of the pre-industrial public by households and the informal associations of their members, especially women, has become a complementary theme. Taverns — the most public of all households — offer a unique perspective upon this binary relationship, a setting where the two intersected by definition.

Embedded in household relationships, women, in Playter's journal, were certainly understood as domestic and dependent beings, subject to the author-

86 EP, September 5, 1805 (Niagara); November 14, 1805 (Thompson).

87 EP, September 24, 1802; November 14, 1805.

88 Women did use taverns alone when travelling, as the example of Mrs. Carpenter indicates. For a discussion of this exception to the rule, see H. Julia Roberts, "Taverns and Tavern-goers in Upper Canada, the 1790s to the 1850s" (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto 1999), [microform] Canadian Theses (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 2000), pp. 273–280; Hanawalt, *"Of Good and Ill Repute"*, p. 73.

ity of men. Female access to public drinking and the networks of relations it underpinned depended upon male gatekeepers. Yet no one challenged a properly accompanied woman's presence within taverns' public rooms. Nothing like the sexual insults hurled at Parisian women in pre-Revolutionary wineshops have been found in Upper Canada, nor the assumption that women in public houses were public women.[89] As in England, where alehouses became respectable places, increasingly patronized by sexually and economically respectable women in the late eighteenth century, and in Hallowell, Maine, of the same period, where "no taboo" restricted female access to mixed public house gatherings, so women's presence in Canadian taverns was easily reconciled within existing patterns of daily life.[90] In the company of men they remained safely contained. Understanding women's domains in ways akin to early modern Britons and Americans, early settlers in Upper Canada regarded drinking houses as complex, sometimes troubling parts of women's space and regulated them accordingly.[91]

Coinciding with the rest of the North Atlantic world, York at the turn of the century was in transition from accustomed patterns of social relations premised upon inherited hierarchy, social homogeneity, and oral culture to those of the nineteenth century, based on achieved status, heterogeneity, and literate culture. In tandem, the trope of separate spheres emerged to articulate an ideal of social relations that divided and privileged a male public from a female private sphere.[92] Its effects registered early among York's governing elite.[93] It made no impact upon the way Playter described gendered interaction amidst his circle of acquaintance or his depictions of female comportment. As we have seen, the tavern's public rooms were not male in the simple sense that women were absent; rather, male entitlement structured gender relations within them.

We must add taverns to the list of spaces that men and women shared, not the least because women were literally at home in them. Except for the sign above the door "licensed to sell wine and other spirituous liquors", little distinguished a public from a private house.[94] Inside, family and household life

89 Hanawalt, *"Of Good and Ill Repute"*, p. 108.

90 Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture*, pp. 147–150; Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 225; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 144–145, 147.

91 On the geography of women's space in early modern Europe, see Martine Segalen, *Historical Anthropology of the Family*, trans. J. C. Whitehouse and Sarah Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Hanawalt, *"Of Good and Ill Repute"*.

92 The classic statement is Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

93 On the gendered patterns of work and sociability among York's governing class, see McKenna, *A Life of Propriety.* Powell, the wife of the Chief Justice, apparently never set foot in a tavern.

94 In York, for example, a house measuring 46 feet by 35 feet on an acre of land with a good view of the lake and the town was advertised for sale as "fit for the residence of a gentleman, merchant, or tavern-keeper" (*Upper Canada Gazette*, May 9, 1801). Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, make the same point, citing Mark Girouard, *Victorian Pubs* (London: Studio Vista, 1975), p. 8 (p. 300).

affected the ambience and the conduct of public life. When Playter and a companion called by mistake at "Miller's" out in the countryside, "thinking they kept Tavern, we staid all night. Lucy told Mr. Mercer they did not keep Tavern & he apologised for the liberty we took."[95] Expecting to encounter a familial tavern environment, they found nothing about it to signal their entry into a domestic rather than a public place. The two were often, if not interchangeable, then indistinguishable. Tavern-keeper's wives and daughters naturally joined companies of callers: "called at Mr Post's [tavern] had a game of whist with Mr P and Mr Hunt, the latter left us & Miss Post took his seat, we sung some songs, staid til 9." At Captain Wilson's tavern, outside York, "[T]he Old Lady amused me with her observations on our York Young Ladys."[96] Historians who have remarked upon the homelike atmosphere of pre-industrial taverns, as compared to their industrial successors, with the exception of medievalist Barbara Hanawalt, have done so from the perspective of the later epoch. Hanawalt's critical insight that in medieval taverns members of the London public shared "domestic and primarily female space"[97] translates surprisingly well into the context of Playter's colonial York.[98] Implicit in the mistake at Millers', and throughout his journal, is a parallel understanding that household life intersected with public life in taverns.

Almost all taverns were run by a married couple who lived there with their children. Playter's single status is an anomaly, but Mercy and Bettsey Miles were often at the house and, after Playter's and Miles's tenure, first "Moore ... with his family" took over, then "Mr Clark & his Wife".[99] Mary Thomson — Playter's journal's "Miss T"— also lived at his house. She was the daughter of a substantial farm family from Scarborough Township. Her father, Archibald, was a master stonemason and a justice of the peace from 1806. Nothing about her presentation in the journal suggests less than respectable young womanhood. It is difficult to account for her presence in the tavern rather than on her family's farm. Certainly not a servant in the house, she socialized within the same circles as the tavern-keeper and came and went as she pleased.[100] Playter mentioned her almost exclusively in the parlour and

95 EP, January 11, 1806.

96 EP, December 24, 1805; January 15, 1804. See also November 19, 1802. George Washington Post kept tavern in Scarborough. Earlier he had worked as a barkeeper in Playter's. See EP, August 3, 1802.

97 Hanawalt, *"Of Good and Ill Repute"*, p. 105.

98 Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, for example, pp. 4, 16; less explicitly, Conroy, *In Public Houses*, observes that taverns were not wholly public because they were simultaneously family homes and privately owned. Yet, in each, the weight of the analysis is upon the publicness of the public houses — the attractions and conflicts of public sociability and the political implications of tavern association. The tavern as a household, as a place where women lived and as a site where the household might have an impact upon the course of informal public life, becomes lost. See also Marcia S. Blaine, "When Private is Public: The Work of Female Tavern-keepers" (paper presented to the Sixth Annual Conference of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, University of Toronto, June 9–11, 2000).

99 EP, May 2 and September 29, 1802.

100 There is an entry in Elizabeth Russell's diary (Elizabeth was Peter Russell's sister) about Thomson ironing at the Russell house. See "Extracts from Elizabeth Russell's Diary" in Firth, ed., *The Town of*

usually in the context of polite sociability, but once he noted, "I seated myself by the Parlour fire & finished my letters to Mr & Mrs Rogers, it was one o'clock in the morning before I retired to bed. Miss T sat at her work till I had finished writing." His brief reference to what was probably needlework combines with other, equally cursory sources to suggest that she may have pursued a textile trade in York, working for the families of the governing elite.[101]

Household life, with its attendant hubbub, spilled into putatively public space. At Playter's, the sound of "Miss Bettsey and Mary ... romping & making a great noise" pervaded the tavern after "the company retired to bed". The "Black woman made some disturbance as she usually did when she got too much to drink."[102] In fact, the only time the inmates of the house came to the attention of the authorities was because of an incident in household space and household life — not public space and public life. It involved male violence against a woman. What was described in Playter's journal as "a great Disturbance [that] took place between Betty & Sagar in the Kitchin — as he had struck her down with a pair of Shoes and she got a summons from Mr Willcocks to Prosecute him but the boat was of[f] with him before she got him apprehended" recurred in the Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions as follows: "Elizabeth Johnson, a Black woman called upon her recognisance, to prosecute a certain Jacob Segar, for an Assault & Battery. She does not appear."[103] At no other time did a disorderly incident in the house erupt into the public domain. None of those in any of Playter's seven rooms that day, or while Bettsey and Mary romped, could have overlooked the presence of the tavern household or its noisy female members. Household life in these moments overwhelmed public life. Each was the permanent context of the other.

Women, of course, worked in taverns. Glimpses are few, and it is disappointing that Playter glossed over women's labour in his journal. But it was Mercy Miles who came to tell him that the servant woman was ill, and then she, her daughter, Miss T, and Playter "whatched her" several nights.[104] Miss T "doctor[ed]" Playter's "sore thumb".[105] It is clear in the way meals materialized at appropriate hours, in the fact that Playter "had my room emptyd

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York, 1793–1815, p. 262. There is later personal correspondence between Mary's husband, John Scarlett, and Elizabeth Russell referring to Mary being "chagrined that she has not been able to complete her job for you" (AO, Baldwin Papers, J. Scarlett to E. Russell, Humber, December 19, 1810). There is also a letter from Mary's uncle David regarding his wife's work dyeing some worsted cloth for Russell (AO, Baldwin Papers, David Thomson to E. Russell, Scarborough, February 17, 1811). Together these hint that Mary Thomson may have stayed at Playter's tavern to pursue her trade, perhaps one shared by the women of her family.

101 EP, March 6, 1802.

102 EP, March 10 and February 28, 1802.

103 EP, April 8, 1802; Fraser, ed., *Twenty-First Report*, Minutes of the Court of General Quarter Sessions, pp. 30, 34.

104 EP, March 4 and 19, April 1, 1802.

105 EP, March 20, 22, and 24, 1802.

and cleaned", and in his sudden note that "John Playter call'd for my foul Linnens to wash" after Mrs. Miles had left the premises that she, Bettsey, and Betty Johnson performed a multitude of domestic tasks.[106]

Upper Canadians knew that women were often *de facto* tavern-keepers (despite the very low proportion of licences in female hands) who ran taverns formally licensed to their husbands. For example, traveller Isaac Weld acknowledged in 1797 that "the wife is generally the active person in managing the tavern, and the husband attends to his farm or has some other independent occupation". In 1817 Charles Fothergill, the King's Printer, remarked in a private journal that his landlord "had a clever, managing wife, who makes excellent cheese and butter amongst other things".[107] There was a straightforward link between women's tavern-keeping work and the domestic labour, housekeeping, and household management skills involved.[108]

Historians have observed that, in their proximity to public life and in the responsibility they held for keeping order over men, the women of tavern-keeping families, and more specifically female tavern-keepers, represented potential challenges to patriarchal authority. If some barely subsisted, others created reputations as unusually public figures through their success in the trade.[109] Without contradicting these analyses, Playter's journal suggests that a conventional role was more often their lot. Through their domestic labour, the women of tavern households supported and enabled the public world of political discourse, economic exchange, and community building as it cohered in their public rooms.

As the products of women's labour were a normal part of tavern business, so were children present and cared for. At Bate's tavern (on a trip east of York) Playter and his mother "took breakfast with Mrs Bates & her two daughters very fine young girls".[110] At Beman's, perhaps because Elisha was a recent widower, the need to care for baby Eli was highly visible. Playter enjoyed "tending my favourite little boy" there. With "Mrs Clinger appearing with the little Boy" and giving him to Playter comes the merest glimpse into local networks of childcare, needed as much in tavern households as elsewhere.[111] We

106 EP, September 9 and 22, 1802. Sophia Beman worked in the store attached to the family's tavern. Playter fails to note her work in the tavern itself. EP, October 30, 1802.

107 Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Lower and Upper Canada*, quoted in Jane Elizabeth Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790–1840* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), pp. 193, 196; University of Toronto, Thomas Fischer Rare Book Room, Charles Fothergill Collection, Fothergill, "A Few Notes Made on a Journey from Montreal through the Province of Upper Canada in 1817", p. 56.

108 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 299–301.

109 Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, p. 25; Conroy, *In Public Houses*, p. 109; Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, p. 44.

110 EP, December 30, 1802. Playter was accompanying his mother to her daughter's first lying-in, 60 miles from York. They paid "Capt. Bates 2[s] 6[d] for our entertainment".

111 EP, April 12 and 27, May 28, July 6 and 31, 1802.

have already noted the Dunkards, who stayed in Playter's kitchen with their children, and various other families of lodgers. They all used tavern facilities to feed and care for the little ones and put them to bed. The presence of children among the company and households of colonial taverns, like the presence of women, reveals the limitations of emphasizing the masculinity of public houses.

Many early-nineteenth-century women would have been surprised at historians' characterization of public houses as settings which, by definition, discouraged female access.[112] The very casualness with which Playter's female acquaintances entered tavern space stands in contrast. His Quaker mother called at his tavern for a visit whenever she was down from the farm: "Mother was in town, call'd on me a short time, went to Beman's to Tea."[113] His sisters did the same.[114] Mary Thomson entertained her father Archibald in the parlour.[115] Mary and Sophia visited back and forth continually between their two tavern homes: "Miss T ... had been at high romps with Sophia."[116]

Nor did anything about the emphatically public nature of their homes work to exclude the women of tavern-keeping households from local networks of female friendship and association: "see Miss Beman, the Miss Jarvises, and Miss Robinson on their way home as they had been visiting."[117] Similarly, when Playter saw "Mrs Beman as I Pass'd the Door", he "gave my Sister's Compliments to her as they had requested in their letter", here facilitating female networks through customary politeness.[118] In their taverns these women crafted a female space for sociability, into which they also welcomed men.[119] "Miss T, Miss B, and Miss S[wazy] just returned from a walk" and spent the afternoon together in Beman's before Playter "went over to see the Ladys ... staid some time".[120] "Miss N. McDougall call'd" there several days later "and sat some time with us".[121] In August Playter "[h]eard Miss Robin-

112 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 428; Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture*, pp. 147–149, makes the same argument regarding eighteenth-century Parisian wine-shops.

113 EP, September 22, 1802. See also August 4, September 1, 1802.

114 EP, August 27, 1802.

115 EP, April 25, 1802.

116 EP, April 27, 1802.

117 EP, October 7, 1802.

118 EP, June 6, July 21 and 22, August 29, September 28, 1802. Mrs. Beman was the former Esther Sayre Robinson, the widow of Christopher Robinson, member of the governing elite. She married Elisha Beman on September 5, 1802 (EP, September 9, 1802). The first Mrs. Beman's death notice was published precisely a year earlier in the *Upper Canada Gazette*, September 5, 1801.

119 Scott Haine, in his *World of the Paris Café*, argues that the presence of women tavern-keepers helped to create female space "at the bar" and that, ultimately, "the café provided for working-class women what the salon provided for upper-class women: an informal institution of political discussion and debate" (pp. 181, 200, 185). The women in Playter's journal were not working class, nor did they as a rule gather at the bar, but Haine's work is useful in envisioning the power of a female presence to make other women feel at home in a public drinking house.

120 EP, June 6, 1802.

121 EP, June 10, 1802.

son & Miss Beman Singing Psalm Tunes in the evening" from the tavern across the road.

For once, the fact that the contours of this female world of sociability come to our attention through male eyes, ears, and words is not an interpretative stumbling block. That it was visible and audible to Playter affirms its publicness. English historians have dated the emergence of household withdrawing rooms in public houses to the 1830s, presenting it as evidence of the shared middle-class need to remove the private sphere of familial relations from the intrusions of a wider, coarser world.[122] In Playter's and Beman's taverns, the parlours adopted by women as feminine zones of social interaction predate this process by decades, suggesting that a different dynamic was at work in the creation of female space. Far from hiding themselves away in private, the women of tavern-keeping households created an alternative public space, one that enabled the pursuit of alternative forms of public sociability.[123] It is true that women were not slamming around Upper Canadian barrooms, drams in hand.[124] Far from figuratively banging on the barroom door because they were denied the right of free access, these women valued a separate, female, public life of mutual association. It was enabled by the common architectural arrangements of colonial taverns, always built with rooms at a distance from the rhythms and practices of the bar in mind. The women of tavern-keeping households embraced their specific experience. They enjoyed each other's company in their tavern homes. In coming and going as they pleased, in congregating in tavern parlours, and in disturbing the house when they drank or romped, they resist attempts to construct the public house as masculine space.[125]

Yet the realties of gendered power in pre-industrial society, as well as the fact that female sociability took place in a very public location, worked against female authority over the space. The best example is Sophia's courtship story. She and Ely conducted their romantic exchanges largely in what, as it turned out, was not her parlour but her father's. They began seeing each other regularly in the middle of March. By July 20, "[S]ome occurrences that had taken place in the afternoon while I was with Miss B appeared to me

122 Hall and Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, p. 367.

123 EP, April 15, 1802: "Mrs Clinger being in Miss B's bedroom called me in and detained me some time. I took the opportunity of recommending to Miss B to go down the lake with my Sister & me about a fortnight hence."

124 One always has to be careful about generalizations. A joke published in the *Upper Canada Gazette* of November 3, 1798, is suggestive of women's free access to and use of the bar. It is difficult to know how seriously to take it. While probably funnier because the tavern-goer was a woman, it is unlikely that a joke would be structured about a very unfamiliar act. "A woman, very early one morning went into a tavern, called for a gill of New England rum and drank it. — Upon which the lady who tended the bar expressed her wonder that she should drink so much rum on an empty stomach? Why la, says she my stomach is not empty, for I have drank a pint before this morning."

125 For a philosophical discussion of the ways in which behaviour can indicate implied resistance to oppressive norms, see Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 171–173.

again in my dreams in the night with a portended Lecture that I expected from Mr Beman." It took nearly a month but, indeed, "I received a letter from Mr Beman concerning my [illegible word] conduct to his daughter." Playter "immediately concluded" that, within the confines of the well-patronized tavern, "some busy person had been meddling and infused those thoughts in his head". Before the end of August, he "had made Mr Beman a promise not to give him further room for his Jealousy". He acknowledged and accepted the authority Elisha Beman wielded over his house and his daughter's doings. Were it not for the fact that Sophia continued to receive Playter in her father's absence — though Playter was careful that as Beman "entered one door I came out at the other" — it would have seemed plausible that she, age 15 at most,[126] had asked her father to intervene with this man, eleven years her senior. As Playter presents the evidence, though, and because they married in 1806, it appears that prying eyes in a public location and paternal authority sharply contained Sophia's autonomous control of her space in her family's tavern.[127]

Nevertheless, Mary Thomson, Sophia Beman, and their circle of friends and relatives used their parlours as members of the provincial respectable class customarily did, as sites for genteel exchanges amongst a select company of women, or men and women both. Echoing the glittering assemblies of the gentlefolk of Georgian England and republican America, who flocked to specialized rooms in public buildings to dance, sup, play cards, and converse among themselves, parlour gatherings at Playter's and Beman's taverns sustained a sense of exclusive identity.[128] The presumption that self-selected groups would seek space apart from the barroom throng was incorporated into tavern design.[129] While the ability to do so never went uncontested, the opportunity to withdraw belonged to the relatively privileged members of

126 Sophia was definitely under 16. The only female (unnamed) listed as a member of Elisha Beman's household in 1802 was listed under "children", which meant under 16. See Mosser, ed., *York, Upper Canada*," p. 32. Unable to find a conventional record of her age and sensing her extreme youth, I turned to Ancestry.com, which shows January 15, 1788, as her birth date, in Massachusetts. This seems right. It would make her 18 the year she married Playter. See "Marriage Registers of St. James Church", November 27, 1806, in *Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto*, vol. 3, p. 399. As indicated above, the journal is not extant for this period.

127 EP, July 20, 1802; August 28 and 30, 1802. This was definitely in the parlour. There is an immediately preceding reference to company upstairs. Peter Ward, "Courtship and Social Space in Nineteenth-Century English Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 68, no. 1 (1987), pp. 35–62, discusses the Beman-Playter courtship, without noting its tavern location. Useful for its attention to the different ways men and women used social space, it downplays the gendered nature of male authority over female space.

128 Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 241–242; see also Bushman, *Refinement of America*, pp. 87–90.

129 Urban architects and planners today similarly incorporate elements into their design of public space that allow people to make "temporary claims" upon it and argue that "good public space" is open and flexible to the needs of diverse user groups. See Stephan Carr, Mark Francis, Leanne G. Rivlin, and Andrew M. Stone, *Public Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

York society.[130] In these claimed domains of the taverns' public space, they "inscribed class and cultural hierarchy across the common landscape".[131] They used parlour space and sociability to sustain a cultural identity based on polite conversation, mannerly deportment, musicality, and practised literacy. Each found its fullest meaning when enacted by men and women together. Expressions of civilized masculinity and femininity benefitted from each other's presence as foils.[132] By articulating the rituals of gentility, women shared in the creation of a "genteel public culture", a style of public life that emphasized social distance and the possession of social authority.[133] They used their parlours as privileged women did everywhere — as sites for female public life that fashioned and displayed an elite cultural identity.

Playter's detailed reconstruction of an extended evening in the parlour at Beman's tavern brings the themes of this discussion to life:

> ... went over to Mr Beman's where Mother and Mrs. Ward went to spend the night. As we [Playter and Ward] entered the parlour we perceived the Ladys. Mrs and Miss B[eman], Miss R[obinson], and the above, Mr C. Willcocks, Mr Ridout, Mr J. Small Jnr., and Mr Pudney. Mr Willcocks was amusing the Ladys with the flute, Mr Small soon left us, Mr W[illcocks] soon after. Mrs Beman called on Mr W[ard] for a song to which he complied. I sung the 2nd Mr Pudney the 3rd and Miss Sally Robinson the last. Mr Ridout then left us. The young Ladys went to writing. Mr Dean, Mr Pudney and me went upstairs, Mr W[ard] soon joined us, and we sat a long time. A Mr Eaton came in a law[y]er from the States, called for more Brandy as we had been drinking and made a great deal of Mirth till past 12 o'c.[134]

The company in Beman's parlour defined itself through select membership — they shared position and prosperity. Elisha Beman, who was an established merchant as well as a tavern-keeper, owned at least 2,000 acres of land, filled several local offices, and held a commission as a justice of the peace for the Home District. Nine months earlier he had married Esther Sayre Robinson, the widow of a Loyalist member of the governing elite. (The name of her then eleven-year-old son, John Beverley Robinson, who became Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, and Chief Justice, still reigns in Canadian historiography as a symbol of pre-Reform, hierarchical Upper Canada.) The Bemans belonged securely among the locally prominent, and the company in

130 EP, June 4, 1802. Masonic Lodges and later Orange Lodges also made exclusive claims upon tavern space. Typically they rented out tavern meeting rooms on a long-term basis and decorated them in institutional regalia.

131 David Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-century New York", *Social History*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1992), p. 221.

132 Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 213.

133 Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, pp. 1, 37– 44.

134 EP, May 6, 1803.

their parlour shared their social position. Ridout and Willcocks each enjoyed family ties to the economic and political elite. So did John Robert Small, who, like Ward, was a practising lawyer. Much less is known of Joseph Pudney, but both he and Erastus Dean lived at Beman's in 1802, the latter as clerk to the merchant and tavern-keeper. The "Ladys" included Ely's mother, his sister Mary, who had wed Thomas Ward in January 1803, Esther Beman, her daughter Sally Robinson, and her new step-daughter Sophia Beman, Ely Playter's love.[135] Gathered together under Sophia and her stepmother's patronage in the parlour, the members of York's professional, merchant, and office-holding families distinguished themselves through their shared social affinities.

The significance with which Playter invested leave-taking in the passage cited and a similar importance granted to invitations in other portions of the journal reveal the intense focus he directed at social composition. (An invitation also implied that one was the guest of others. Playter's careful notations of the times when he was invited upstairs or into the parlour may be coded indications that he did not have to pay.[136]) Yet, even while selective association and distance from the barroom throng were important to the parlour's habitués, there is no indication that Playter (or Beman) ever turned patrons away from the parlour. Each knew too well that the house had to be given over to rowdy company on a busy night.

When the "young Ladys went to writing", they demonstrated another level of the group's discriminating membership — its common possession and mutual enjoyment of literacy. Although the literacy rate, as measured by the ability to sign one's name, stood very high in York, as in North America as a whole in 1800, approaching 90 per cent among men and probably 80 per cent among women, only a "small minority" participated "fully" in written culture in the sense that it seemed as natural a form of communication as speech. Members of this minority could be found daily in Playter's and Beman's parlours, impelled together partly by their desire to share literate

135 Robert E. Saunders, "Elisha Beman", *DCB*, vol. 6 (1987), pp. 51–52; Mosser, ed., *York, Upper Canada*, pp. 56, 8, 146. Ridout is almost certainly Samuel Street Ridout (son of the Surveyor-General from 1810, who was employed in his father's office as a clerk and appointed Sheriff of the Home District in 1815). See, for instance, EP, March 19 and 22, 1804; Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 17, and *Town of York, 1815–1834: A Further Collection of Documents of Early Toronto* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1966), p. 6. Charles Willcocks was the only son of William, himself a cousin to former president of the Executive Council Peter Russell and an extensive land speculator; see Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, p. 14. On Small, see EP, February 13, 1804; for work as a lawyer and link to the Ridout family, see AO, Ridout Papers, letters from J. R. S. Small to Samuel Ridout, June 12, 1805; June 28, September 12, October 12, and December 2, 1808; May 28 and August 4, 1809. For Pudney, Dean, and "the Ladys", see EP, November 21 and December 3, 1802; Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 90, 99, 245.

136 The journal offers no avenue to test this hypothesis. One would need Playter's or Beman's accounts. For invitations, see EP, August 27, September 3 and 9, 1802; August 30, 1805. On June 7, 1802, at Beman's Ely "met Messrs. Sweeney, Laws, Colin, McNab and T. Simmons at the door. Mr. S. asked us up", despite the fact that they stood on the threshold of a public house.

culture and its expression among themselves. Those townspeople still bound by an oral culture knew enough to seek them out there: "Wrote a letter for A. Davison to go to his former Lover in Ireland. Shew[ed] it to Miss T in the evening." Playter studded his journal with accounts of reading aloud in company, writing, exchanging letters, drawing up notes, taking pleasure in shared composition, or in bandying silly "jests" — "Chloe's now married & looks on men no more/ Why then 'tis Plane for what she looked before." In his own parlour, he "spent the evening writing for the amusement of J[ames] Miles [his brother-in-law] and Miss T. I gave them the perusal of some scraps on various subjects, some extracts, and some of my own composition." His entry references a wide range of reading material and significant time spent in reflecting upon and preserving it. Though it is likely true that little "serious reading" took place in barrooms given the "good deal of conviviality" within, polite conviviality and literary expression, assuredly not always "serious", entwined quite naturally in tavern parlours. Akin to the American gentlemen (sometimes in tavern settings) who modelled their sociability on forms derived from literature, the emphasis upon shared literacy as a tool of mutual pleasure within Playter's circle highlights its power in formation of a cultural elite.[137]

When Playter and Ward "entered the parlour", they entered a space defined in private homes as a "third social sphere", distinct from both the public of the street and the private, inner rooms of a house. It supported the "refinement" of Euro-American society in the second half of the eighteenth century, when many middling-rank consumers gentrified their homes and their habits of sociability. In Beman's tavern and Playter's, the parlour mediated similarly; it provided the exclusive stage upon which genteel tavern-goers and female household members enacted the rituals of genteel public life. Its material culture fixed it as a space of polite social intercourse. Both tavern-keepers placed tea tables in their parlours, which may have doubled as the requisite card tables. Companions gathered about the parlour to take tea, sometimes further ritualizing the act by extending invitations. Sophia "asked me into the Parlour for tea", wrote Ely in August. Though commoner

137 EP, February 24, 25, and 27, April 26, August 19, 1802. On barroom reading, see, for example, Robert M. Weir, "The Role of the Newspaper Press in the Southern Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution: An Interpretation," in Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), pp. 99–150. On the American gentlemen in taverns, see David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1997), pp. 65–88. On literacy rates, see Harvey J. Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 249, and "Literacy and Social Structure in Elgin County, Canada West: 1861", *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 6, no. 11 (April 1973), pp. 25–48; Leo A. Johnson, *History of the County of Ontario, 1615–1875* (Whitby: Corporation of the County of Ontario, 1973), p. 63; Linda K. Kerber, *Towards an Intellectual History of Women: Essays, Gender and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 236–237.

drinks such as grog were also consumed within, both tavern-keepers stocked the brandies, wines, and punches preferred by genteel companions: "call'd for a glass of Punch & walked into the Parlour with Sophia, sat till we drank our Punch."[138]

Musical instruments and sheet music provided a means of practised diversion, inviting performance and informed appreciation. Playter owned and played a flute. He also annotated his music and wrote songs. Mr. Willcocks's ability to "amus[e] the Ladys" with his flute, "universally considered as an elegant accomplishment", and the company's customary use of sheet music — "I called on Miss Beman, lent her another Musick Book" — links polite amusement to preparation and practice. "I set singing with Miss Beman till bedtime; she had borrowed a Musick book of me & I was teaching her till Late." In identifying their secular music as "parlour tunes", the polite explicitly fused it to the pursuit of genteel ritual within the crafted space of the parlour.[139]

A mannerly code of conduct patterned parlour sociability in the tavern as much as the private house. The very form of Playter's journal entries signifies adherence to unstated rules of deportment. He emphasized the same rituals of invitation, conversation, song, and tea-table etiquette that structured parlour gatherings in private homes. For Playter, as for parlour denizens everywhere, such conventions served to separate the genteel from the common. Within York itself, for example, Anne Murray Powell, the wife of the Chief Justice, wielded a rigid standard of etiquette as a weapon in ongoing battles for social position within the small circle of York's governing elite. Parlours, no less than ballrooms and dining rooms, were sites for determining just who belonged and who did not. Her "sense of propriety" valued proper behaviour both as a means of identifying the select and as an index to moral worth. Similarly, when local lawyer and physician William Warren Baldwin wrote to his friend the Attorney-General to decry the table manners of an associate, he too affirmed the social value of proper conduct. To put aside one's knife in favour of a piece of bread was "outlandish" and "coxcombical". It was an "impudence" that filled him with "disgust". Moreover, it was probably "some damned French ... fashion". Alexander McDonnell, the Sheriff of the Home District, kept a diary in which he chronicled tea-drinking, dining, and conversation. He could be an acidic judge of others' poor conduct or appreciative of

138 Karen Haltunnen, cited in Cecilia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791–1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 204; Bushman, *Refinement of America*, p. 121; EP, August 17,1802. For tea drinking, see also EP, June 29, July 31, and August 27, 1802. For card tables, see EP, March 11 and September 15, 1802; December 24, 1805. For wine at Beman's, see EP, March 1, April 5, and June 7, 1802; EP, July 13, 1802 (punch).

139 EP, December 18, 1802 ("Spent the evening marking some Music and writing some Songs"); April 8, 1802 (flute); July 1 and August 30, 1802 (music books). Joseph B. Abbot, music master at York, noted the elegance of flute-playing in the *York Gazette*, February 14, 1810, in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 208–209.

their polish.[140] Playter and his friends were far from alone, then, in adhering to a code of conduct in their parlour exchanges. As for others, such rules served to affirm a sense of being among the select.

Playter's use of titles and surnames for people with whom he enjoyed daily contact implies more than a customary formality of address. It was also a defence against the heterogeneity that surrounded him. His construction of the exchange between Mrs. Beman and Mr. Ward as a formal "call" for song and the gentleman's complaisant response, indeed the assumption that gentlemen stood willing to amuse ladies at social gatherings, highlights the prominent role granted to women, on the basis of their sensibility, within polite sociability. The implied structure of this evening's entertainment, in Playter's numbering of the songs, suggests that parlour culture manifested a predictable rhythm. Deploying tea and music books, instead of grog and a willingness to box with a companion, the women of tavern-keeping households participated in a culture no less ritualized and no less public. While, from the perspective of Playter's journal, they disavowed close association with the throng who filled their houses daily, women enacted an alternative vision of public life and association. They marked out feminine zones in their taverns in which they, and the genteel culture that respected their presence, belonged.

The distinction drawn, in Playter's reconstruction of his evening at Beman's, between the mixed gender companionship of the parlour and the exclusively male sociability of brandy and mirth "upstairs" points to a similar disjunction in behaviour. In revealing the gendered freedom men enjoyed to move between parlour culture and drinking culture, though the latter in this case was still defined by select company, it suggests women's limited ability to control their domain. At Playter's, for example, after a long, male evening of excess, Ward and Heward breached the parlour where Mary Thomson sat and "exposed the effects the wine had on them". She made light of it and "laughed much at me this Morning on our high bout", but the threat of incursion was a perennial one for these women who conducted gentility within earshot of a busy barroom.[141]

Tavern interiors gave spatial expression and support to desires for social distance and cultural difference, and in the process supported women's (and men's) desire to map a genteel social sphere within the publicness that surrounded them. An alternative public space that was initiated and mediated

140 Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*; Bushman, *Refinement of America*, pp. 262–280; McKenna, *A Life of Propriety*, pp. 61–90, Baldwin quoted on p. 75; "Extract from Alexander McDonnell's Diary", in Firth, ed., *The Town of York, 1793–1815*, pp. 226–269.

141 EP, March 2, 1802. Likewise, Elizabeth Shackleton, a gentlewoman living in a manor house in 1770s England, felt the ever-present possibility that the incursions of impolite visitors and her boorish husband and nephew could make her house "just like a publick one". As her historian Amanda Vickery concludes, "the dichotomy implied here is that between vulgar publicity and polite selection, not between the archetypal male public sphere and a female cloister" (*The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 212–213, 223).

by women, the parlour contrasted in its select companionship and its mutual enactment of specialized cultural rituals with the openness and potential disorder of barroom association. There are parallels to this claim upon public space in the bourgeois ritual of public promenading on the "promiscuous" streets of nineteenth-century New York City, by which participants and onlookers "together ... mapped an elite public-within-the-public".[142]

Though the same thing was emphatically underway in tavern parlours and upstairs withdrawing rooms, the balance of power could be rather different. The devotees of politeness in York were, at times, scuttling for cover as much as they were exercising the prerogatives of social prominence in their claims upon public space. "The House", wrote Playter, of Beman's on Militia Day in June, "was full of all kinds of People, and we shut ourselves up in the up[p]er room." Sophia, Mary, Ely, and a "Mr Canby from Queenston", who "sung us" two songs, found a space for themselves behind closed doors despite the full house. But it is by no means clear that their ability to occupy the upper room as a private zone actually expressed a significant degree of social or cultural authority. That belonged to the people downstairs. When the desire for selectivity collided with publicness, as it did on Militia Day in York, plainly, the public of "all kinds of people" dominated tavern space.

"Sophia was complaining about the manner of Living in a Public House," Playter wrote that night, and could only sympathize that "it was certainly very Disagreeable for her".[143] She spoke from a position of cultural privilege that valued polite discourse and practised diversions above the rituals of drinking culture. She spoke as a (very) young woman whose claim to a feminine domain ultimately depended upon the acquiescence of men, both the gentlemen with whom she associated and the throng who filled her father's bar. Women made a space in taverns and influenced public culture, but, as Sophia complained, the setting exaggerated the already strict limits on their authority.

Ely Playter's journal was the creation of a particular individual who wrote women into the history of taverns for idiosyncratic reasons of his own. He depicted his public house and those he frequented as places in which women were as visible as men. Yet gender worked powerfully in taverns to determine who enjoyed free access to the public life of the barroom and the customs that gave it meaning. Only within the context of close male companionship did women find room there, and then they did express a willingness and a desire to join in public sociability around tavern tables. Taverns were also sites in which this public life mixed inescapably with household life. Women were literally at home in taverns. They washed, cooked, nursed, did laundry, supervised servants, raised children, and attended to the myriad details of household management that women did everywhere. They also disturbed the

142 Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade", p. 221.
143 EP, June 4, 1802.

company by drinking too much and by romping loudly when others were trying to sleep. They joined companions "at the Card table till bed time ... & setting by the fire and telling storeys till Past two o'Clock in the morning".[144] Female members of tavern-keeping households participated in local networks of female association and welcomed these friends into their tavern homes. In turn, neighbourhood women displayed no reluctance to call there. In tavern parlours they entertained each other and gentlemen about tea tables, in mutual song, or in reading and writing together. In so doing, they crafted a separate space for public sociability, premised upon social exclusiveness and carefully cultivated diversions, and the presence of "Ladys". They created an alternative public culture based in gentility that co-existed with and contested the culture of the bar. Though taverns were designed to balance these differing claims for space, neither women nor the mixed-gender gatherings of polite company finally controlled the space that they appropriated as their own. Sophia's father decided what would go on in the parlour with his daughter; Ward and Heward exposed their drunkenness by entering Miss T's parlour uninvited. The barroom company decided what rooms were needed on a busy night. The sometimes uneasy mixture of women and men, household space and public space, defined the late pre-industrial colonial taverns of Playter's York. If we construct tavern space as male space, we hide the complex experiences of the women who frequented them in male company and the women who lived there. Without challenging male privilege, Playter's journal places taverns firmly within the rest of the pre-industrial social landscape. Like the streets, churches, squares, markets, and commons, taverns were spaces used by both women and men.

144 EP, March 11, 1802.