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Mark Hailwood. *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England.* Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History Series. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014. 266 pp. $99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84383-942-2.

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Historians' sense of the significance of the early modern alehouse has shifted over time. Sidney and Beatrice Webb saw the alehouse as an important object of state regulation. Peter Clark clearly demonstrated the central place of the alehouse in the economic and social life of early modern communities, while Keith Wrightson recognized it as a site of social conflict. More recent work by Thomas Edward Brennan, B. Ann Tlusty, Beat Kümin, Phil Withington, and James Brown have read the practices and sociability of early modern drinking places as illuminating wider attitudes, values, and beliefs among the middling and upper ranks.[1] Mark Hailwood's *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* seeks to integrate social and cultural history perspectives to establish the significance of the alehouse among the plebeian members of rural communities in seventeenth-century England.

Hailwood challenges what he takes to be a shibboleth of social historians that there was a "battle of the alehouse" in the seventeenth century in which the authorities, fearful of insubordination, sedition, and disorderliness, sought to suppress the sociability and "recreational drinking" of the lower social ranks. Hailwood shows that the spirit of the legislative and regulatory framework of the alehouse cannot be taken as its social reality. Alehouse licensees and their patrons used the law and custom to resist local authorities who sought to suppress sociable drinking. Moreover, whether animated by paternalistic sentiment or the use of patronage to cement their authority, justices of the peace could be supportive of a local alehouse keeper. Finally, those of the middling sorts, upon whom the duties of surveillance and regulatory enforcement fell, were often enthusiastic patrons of the alehouse. Thus, Hailwood asserts that the degree of contention over the seventeenth-century alehouse varied depending on local factors.

Various forms of evidence suggest the alehouse was a significant site for wide-ranging, sometimes contentious, popular discussion of controversial political, religious, and social issues. On the one hand, Hailwood argues that this casts "se-

rious doubt" on Clark's view that the "political culture of the alehouse" posed no threat to the community's "established order" (pp. 73-74). On the other hand, Hailwood wholly accepts neither James C. Scott's view in ***Domination and the Arts of Resistance*** (1990), which casts alehouses as "sequestered social sites" where the "hidden transcripts" of radical worldviews were articulated "backstage," nor Wrightson's model in which determined elite control of plebiean drinking spaces eventually diminished their significance (p. 65). Hailwood's alternative to these accounts holds that an ethos and practice of "good fellowship" at the alehouse entrenched it as a key local institution.

Hailwood contends that, after the Reformation-era suppression of church ales and other festivities involving the popular consumption of alcohol, alehouses became key, new sites for communal recreation and the fostering of social bonds. He uses broadside ballads concerned with recreational drinking, together with a variety of judicial or regulatory records and diaries, to illuminate the values, attitudes, and practices of the good fellowship that made the alehouse so important in the construction of social bonds. A "good fellow" in company relished the convivial rituals of toasting, was proud of his capacity for heavy drinking, and demonstrated self-sufficiency and generosity by willingly shouting his fair share of rounds, all this while maintaining physical and behavioral self-control so as to avoid the excessive drunkenness that was mocked as ignominious and antisocial.

Hailwood's nuanced reading of various broadside ballads yields complex constructions of gender identity and relations within the context of good fellowship. The alehouse was not an exclusively male space, yet the fellowship of women and the manner of their keeping company was clearly distinguishable from that of men. The themes of drinking ballads suggest that the most significant divide was not "between men and women, but between the upholders of patriarchal values on the one hand and participants in a counter-code of prodigal masculinity on the other —with some men and some women standing on either side of the battle lines" (p. 165). The practices of alehouse fellowship, such as toasting, gaming, talking politics, pursuing sexual encounters, etc., were taken up in various ways by those of different social identities. Thus, patriarchy was defied and mocked by those who were typically young, single men of limited property for whom the role of patriarch was unattainable and its putative virtues were largely unattractive. Hailwood argues that, regardless of their social identity, those who cultivated alehouse good fellowship should be seen as creating "meaningful and enduring bonds of 'friendship'" that were "both instrumental and affectionate" (p. 221). Although diverse kinds of people came to the early modern alehouse and fostered such friendships, Hailwood says that it was not a place where all patrons drank together as a group. All alehouse patrons did not bond as a community in the manner thought characteristic of the pre-Reformation church ale. By the seventeenth century, company was kept in distinct groupings defined by kinship, similar social status, common employment, or neighborhood connections. Still, Hailwood cautions us against slotting this picture of alehouse sociability into a narrative of the decline of a common popular culture in the face of modernity's advancing forces of social fragmentation. Rather, we are urged to recognize that, for alehouse patrons, the bonds of its good fellowship were "every bit as important to them as their membership of wider forms of community—whether that was the village, the parish, or of overarching classes or sorts—that historians tend to privilege" (p. 222).

That is a big claim to make, and it relies upon a positive finding to the book's key question: "Did participation in the sociable rituals of good fellowship contribute to the formation of meaningful social bonds that endured beyond the context of a given instance of 'keeping company,' or was

involvement in a drinking company an opportunity to briefly escape from the bonds and obligations of wider society, and to simply enjoy a moment of fleeting liberation in company with individuals to whom connections were ephemeral and unobligating?" (p. 214). The book marshals much evidence in support of the former proposition. This argument does not require that every alehouse gathering involved "the formation of meaningful social bonds"—after all, there must have been the occasional patron who sought "unobligating" escape in "drunken oblivion." Yet readers might wonder just how did the alehouse fit into the wider process of constructing meaningful social bonds. Hailwood establishes that the range of social ranks present in the alehouse was quite broad; yet we might ask how closely its patrons mirrored the social composition and cultural orientations within the wider local community? How closely did the weighting of the various alehouse voices expressed in ballads, diaries, and administrative records correspond to either the range or relative significance of the values and attitudes in the wider community? This does not diminish the central point of the book that the alehouse is an important and generally historiographically overlooked site in the formation of social relations, but it does raise the question of how the alehouse was different as a venue for sociability? Hailwood notes that alehouse company was formed on the basis of factors exogenous to the alehouse, such as kinship, employment, and neighborly proximity. It is unclear how either the voluntary nature of alehouse sociability or some other unique conditions of its good fellowship imbued its social bonds with particularly potent or importantly distinctive qualities. Is there anything in the bonds of good fellowship that might require us to significantly alter our understanding of the wider character and dynamics of local social relations?

Certainly, a key distinguishing feature of the alehouse was its more or less monopolistic provision of alcohol across the social spectrum. Intoxication, however, does not loom large in this account of alehouse sociability. Hailwood rejects views ascribed to Keith Thomas's ***Religion and the Decline of Magic*** (1971) and Clark's work that alehouse patrons sought "narcotic release" or "drunken oblivion" in face of hardship and powerlessness (p. 116). He notes that recreational drinking and alehouse fellowship reflected in broadside ballads is shown to have been "a joyous and defiant response to difficult material realities, rather than as a means of simply blotting them out" (p. 147). But we might expect a jocular entertainment form such as drinking ballads to assume such a tone. That they do does not preclude other emotional qualities and psychological temperaments among alehouse patrons. While it is unlikely that good fellows were always seeking "narcotic release," their resort to the alehouse was surely driven by more than the need for a place to socialize. The altering of consciousness achieved through drinking need not have extended as far as "drunken oblivion" to be a key factor conditioning alehouse sociability and its subsequent impact in the community. The nature of the importance attached to the alehouse as a venue of intoxication, and the significance of intoxicated, altered states of mind in the formation of alehouse sociability, are subjects meriting further exploration. Admittedly, that is a very challenging matter for historical investigation, but some modern studies on drunken comportment and intoxicated socialization suggest possible models for, or ways of framing, such historical study.[2]

This book is rich in detail and perceptive engagement with the wider historiography of seventeenth-century English social history. It is important reading not only for the history of drinking places but also for wider character of sociability in early modern England.

Notes

[1]. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, ***The History of Liquor Licensing: Principally from 1700 to 1830*** (London: Longmans Green, 1903); Peter Clark, ***The***

English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830 (London: Longman, 1983); Keith Wrightson, "Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England," in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure*, ed. Eileen and Stephen Yeo (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), 1-27; Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (London: Academic Press, 1979); Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 167-170; Thomas Edward Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty, *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2002); Phil Withington, "Company and Sociability in Early Modern England," *Social History* 32, no. 3 (2007): 291-307; Phil Withington, "Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 3 (2011): 631-657; Phil Withington, "Introduction: Cultures of Intoxication," *Past & Present* 222, supplement 9 (2014): 9-33; and James Brown, "Alehouse Licensing and State Formation in Early Modern England," in *Intoxication and Society: Problematic Pleasures of Drugs and Alcohol*, ed. Jonathan Herring, Ciaran Regan, Darin Weinberg, and Phil Withington (London: Palgrave, 2013), 110-132.

[2]. For examples, see Rachel P. Winograd, Andrew K. Littlefield, Julia Martinez, and Kenneth J. Sher, "The Drunken Self: The Five-Factor Model as an Organizational Framework for Characterizing Perceptions of One's Own Drunkenness," *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 36, no. 10 (2012): 1787-1793; and Thomas M. Wilson, "Drinking Cultures: Sites and Practices in the Production and Expression of Identity," in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 1-24.

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