

Drinking Matters

Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe

Drinking Matters offers the first comparative survey of early modern public houses. A combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis weaves written, visual and material evidence into a reconstruction of their unique contribution to European culture. Extrapolating from the heterogeneous case studies of Bern and Bavaria, the argument stresses the bewildering versatility of drinking establishments. Public houses emerge as communication spaces in a state of continuous renegotiation. As facilitators of infinite forms of human exchange, they supported rulers as easily as rebels. 'Innovative' principles like consumer choice did not need to be invented by the modern restaurant, they characterized the trade from its medieval origins. Local cultural life depended on inns just as much as the early modern communication revolution. Within a communal infrastructure featuring town halls, market squares and parish churches, public houses became the principal social sites in preindustrial Europe. After about 1800, processes of fragmentation and diversification ended their golden age.

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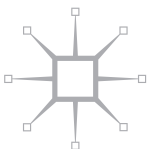
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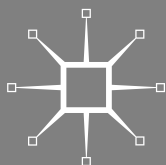
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