

Intoxicants in Early Modern Europe

James Brown

New Intoxicants and Outdoor Consumption Spaces in Early Modern London

Inspired by the attempts of present-day eating and drinking establishments to create or adapt outdoor consumption spaces in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper explores the al fresco consumption of ‘new’ intoxicants – especially tea, coffee, and tobacco – in early modern London. Drawing on the evidence of diaries, travel accounts, legal records, trade cards, and visual culture, it argues that open air spaces such as streets, parks, tea gardens, and pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh (many of them in the capital’s semi-rural hinterlands) were just as significant for the assimilation of these novel substances into metropolitan lifestyles and habits as better-studied built environments such as coffeehouses, tearooms, and taverns. Moreover, it suggests that the botanical character of gardens and green spaces in particular – many of which presented a highly commodified and orientalised version of the exotic to early modern Londoners – were seen as especially appropriate for the consumption of intoxicating tropical plants from far-flung places. The paper draws on research undertaken for the HERA-funded research project *Intoxicating Spaces: The Impact of New Intoxicants on Urban Spaces in Europe, 1600–1850* (<https://www.intoxicatingspaces.org/>).

Jenni Lares

Making Friends with Ale: Drinking, Friendship, and Sociability in Seventeenth-Century Rural Finland

Sociability has always been an important part of drinking, and it continues to be so. People have met and still meet their friends, relatives, and co-workers for a drink. Alcohol binds the drinkers together as they share a cup – in premodern cultures, a very concrete one.

In this paper, I argue that in premodern Finland friendship and sociability were one of the main social meanings of drinking. In early modern rural Finland, as in many other cultures, drinking was a social act aimed to form and strengthen friendship between drinkers. Drinking parties usually consisted of people with approximately same social status, so friendship was mainly formed between equal drinkers. In the local court records, mentions of drinking and drunkenness can carry meanings of friendship and benevolence even in the context of violence or other criminal activity. Social drinking is usually depicted as male activity, but I also consider the possibility of female or mixed drinking parties in Finnish early modern sources.

Anistatia Miller

The Distiller of London: A Window to the Commercialisation of Early Modern English Distilling

Written by royal physician Theodore de Mayerne, in 1639, *The Distiller of London* was the official manual of the newly formed Worshipful Company of Distillers, the regulating body responsible for licensing and monitoring the city’s growing number of commercial distillers. Besides providing a glimpse into the standards of practice and the oath distillers were compelled to take,

the book provides recipes and variations which were written in code to ‘protect their mysteries’.

The book provides the first significant piece of evidence of the commercialisation of early modern English distilling. This was a turning point when the trade segregated itself not only from its pharmaceutical ties with the Royal College of Physicians but from its medieval alchemical and vernacular medical origins.

This presentation briefly examines the state of the industry in and outside London and the timely need for regulation. It then unveils the recipes which I have decoded and compared with an earlier anonymously written translation that was published as a supplement to Dr John French’s 1667 book *The Art of Distillation*. The presentation then guides us through the levels of sophistication achieved by these ‘professional’ distillers while it also affords a view of the early modern English palate for alcoholic beverages 50 years before Dutch sovereign prince William of Orange ascended the English throne, encouraged large-scale commercial distillation as a means for saving grain prices, and inadvertently launched the ‘Gin Craze’.