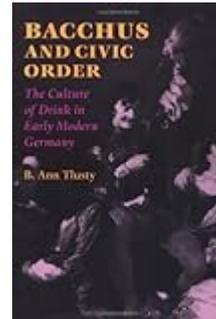**B. Ann Tlusty.** *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany.* Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001. xiv + 290 pp. $59.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8139-2045-0.

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Bring wine, drink up, there is joy in the cup,...

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Why did an early modern commoner go to a tavern? For the purpose of meeting his fellows, gambling, getting drunk and brawling? And what did the authorities do about the hedonistic life-style of their subjects? Was the primary response one of control and discipline through ordinances, fines, and imprisonment? Although this perspective on early modern taverns and society as a whole is rather widespread, several case studies on the culture of drink in early modern European and North American towns and countries have challenged and changed this view from above.[1] B. Ann Tlusty argues that drinking was done for more than sheer enjoyment of the taste of wine and beer, and that taverns had a set of social, commercial, and political functions within early modern society that went far beyond the provision of food, drink, and lodging. Additionally, Tlusty challenges existing theories that attempt to describe early modern society in a macro-historical way, in particular Norbert Elias's theory of the civilizing process as well as the social disciplining model of Gerhard Oestreich. Rather, she follows the interpretation of Peter Burke, trying to show that although

popular and elite classes lived in different social worlds, a united mental world nevertheless remained. Tlusty thus considers society to be a "complex collection of interest groups involved in a constant process of negotiation. The process included groups at every level of society, from beggars to city council members" (p. 211). Regarding the plentitude of negotiation processes in the context of the consumption of alcoholic beverages and the frequenting of taverns, Tlusty goes even further and interprets the tavern as a synecdoche of the city. She claims that the rules that governed the use of alcohol reflected the rules within the early modern city at large.

In order to examine the hypothesis of the tavern as a microcosm of early modern society we should first scrutinize the scope and the sources of the study and summarize some of the results. Tlusty analyzes tavern life during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Augsburg, a town well known for its bi-confessional status, but also for its splendor and wealth, far reaching banking ties and humanist culture. Furthermore, Augsburg was a vital merchant city. In this context the town had to provide food and lodging for travelers, most of them situated

in the Baker Lane, an important traffic lane between the town center and the town gate (fig. 1, p. 24). Altogether, Augsburg had about 100 licensed tavern keepers for a population of about 30,000 inhabitants (in 1500), ranging from poorly-lit rooms of back street wine sellers to elaborate marble halls. The privileged innkeepers were situated around the Wine Market, the social center of Augsburg's elites. The taverns' geographical distribution also reflected the demands of the brewing process: along Baker Lane, in the Lech Quarter and in the north quarter of town, tavern keepers who brewed their beer on the premises had a ready supply of clear water. By the mid-seventeenth century we notice a growth of beer taverns and a corresponding drop of wine taverns–beer came to be identified more and more with the common folk and wine with the wealthier classes. Unlike the English ale-houses, the Augsburg taverns were not run by the poor for the poor, as Peter Clark suggested, but the tavern keepers had a relatively high economic and social status, and the taverns served to underscore rather than to undermine the lines of social hierarchy and between the sexes. Generally, three types of establishments provided hospitality: elite drinking rooms (for the "lords" or merchants, closed to all commoners), public taverns (open to all "respectable members of society," i.e. not to beggars and alms takers, and licensed for seating customers, serving food and drinks, and putting up overnight guests), and tap landlords or *Zapfenwirte* (who sold beer and wine on a retail basis, but were not licensed to seat guests). Given the sheer number of these establishments and the fact that alcohol was sold at these places, taverns were a potential source of disorder and therefore required regulation.

The importance of taverns in the early modern city is further underscored by a multitude of functions beyond the lodging of a traveler or the provision of a refreshing drink to the passing laborer. Thus, taverns played a major role in spreading Reformation ideas (while confessional differences as such were not a dominant theme at tavern tables[2]), craftsmen had their meetings in separate rooms, wandering journeymen came to taverns that served as craft hostels, soldiers were quartered, commoners held their weddings in taverns (the wealthier classes rather in the Dance House), and artisans and merchants sealed their contracts by drinking together. In addition to these particular purposes, taverns served as real centers of information, having the function of bookshops, post offices, advertising agencies or galleries for the exposition of curiosities. Some tavern keepers were representatives of the city council's interests, and ordinances were read aloud and posted in taverns. On the other hand, however, printed pamphlets which circulated in taverns did not always reflect the interests of the authorities but reflected social and confessional discontent. Nevertheless, Augsburg taverns rarely provided a haven for popular resistance.[3] Ordinances regulated mealtimes, measures, prices, closing times, and signs, but also other aspects of tavern life concerning the behavior and communication of the guests like gambling, brawling or blaspheming. Questions of drunkenness, the establishment and maintenance of gender and group identities, and public order lie at the very center of Tlusty's argument and form the benchmarks of her hypothesis that early modern society is marked by negotiation processes between authorities (the city council and the theologians) and subjects. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the perception of drunkenness is varying. In the early modern era–and in this instance not very different from medieval constructs–moderate drunkenness was considered healthy. Although drunkenness was a subcategory of the cardinal sin of gluttony and Zwingli as well as other Reformers attacked the abuse of alcoholic drinks, a clear definition of drunkenness was lacking. So Tlusty concludes that mostly drunkenness was regarded as harmful only when it lead to complete loss of control over the physical self or when it interfered with the city council's expectations of respect towards their authority.

In addition to printed pamphlets and broad sheets, Tlusty uses a series of unpublished sources from Augsburg's city archives, such as minutes of the assemblies of the city council, decrees and ordinances, tax books, and a sample of court documents. Not surprisingly, only a small number of accounts of drinking habits or communication situations of the taverngoers survive. However, due to Augsburg's importance on different levels, a considerable number of strangers passed through who left travel accounts that offer insight into the taverns at least from an external, sometimes even ethnographical view. Tlusty also made the effort to read some of the unpublished town chronicles, which can be a real treasure trove of "remarkable" events in an early modern city that are not unlikely to occur in taverns. However, for the examination of the drinking habits of the commoners in a systematic manner, the best sources are court documents (i.e. *Strafbuecher*, *Zuchtbuecher*, *Urgichten*). Tlusty's selection of three five-year periods (1540-44, 1590-1594, and 1640-44) means that the sample is unfortunately too restricted to describe every stage of the development of interests and customs. On the other hand, the sample is "thick" enough to allow a deeper look at three impor-

tant periods in Augsburg's history (2,230 interrogations, of which about 400 included material relevant to taverns and drinking).

The relevance of alcohol, drinking, and drunkenness, the vital role of taverns as centers of social interaction in dweller's everyday life, and the considerable contribution of indirect taxes on all alcoholic sales to the city budget (esp. pp. 176-181) make comprehensible the fact that the council was not interested in forbidding the consumption of alcohol, why the theologians' attacks had little impact and why taverngoing was a subject of negotiation rather than a primal aim of regulation and control. What do such conclusions contribute to our more general picture of urban identity and power? As the tavern was inevitably a potential source of disorder it is understandable that early modern authorities–in order to maintain urban stability and order–attempted to control public spaces that they regarded as belonging to their sphere of influence. On the other hand, the taverns represented their own sphere of agency, a "public theater for social exchange" (p. 122) where group identities were established and maintained, contracts were sealed, masculinity was performed and where the boundaries between the sexes–especially in the question of household responsibility–could be delineated. All these aspects followed their own rules of behavior and therefore created an efficient system of order which did not exclude elements of competition and violence. In opposition to Elias and Oestreich, Tlusty emphasizes, concomitantly with Peter Burke, that popular and elite classes lived in different social worlds, but that the mental world of the inhabitants of a city remained united around the common vision of order and community. However, in her analysis, Tlusty does not go as far as Peter Thompson, who perceived a distinct frontier between popular and high culture for the tavern world of eighteenth-century Philadelphia. The relatively less severe conflicts between tavern-keepers and taverngoers on the one hand, and the authorities on the other, allow us to suppose that the society at large "functioned" on the basis of an idea of order, which was a result of different kinds of "negotiations" between a variety of interest groups in the city. However, the question of whether an awareness of a common idea of order was consciously known to urban inhabitants remains unanswered, and it is doubtful whether an answer can ever be found.

Indeed, the study of the culture of drink is a field of research that offers a viable perspective on the mechanisms of power and, vice versa, on the power of culture in an early modern town. Tlusty presents her main argument–that the rules that governed the use of alcohol reflect the rules within a city at large–very stringently and convincingly. With regard to other publications on the subject, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in early Modern Germany* fills a gap in providing a study on the first half of the early modern period. Beyond that, it is evident that differences can be found between the German and the French or American culture of drink, which certainly deserve further examination. The title of the book–for which the publisher is perhaps more responsible than its author–is unfortunately misleading or at least rather exaggerated as the book essentially deals with Augsburg and not "early modern Germany" on the whole. In this instance it must be kept in mind that overwhelming evidence suggests that the culture of drink was different in uni-confessional town, as well as in real wine regions or in towns east of the Elbe.[4] Also, a temporal extension of the study to the eighteenth century would have allowed Tlusty to answer the question of the specificity of the tavern in opposition to other, newly emerging public spaces, such as coffeehouses. Even for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it may prove helpful to examine other spaces that contemporaries classified as "public": squares, market-places, churches, mills, fountains. Among the different functions of the taverns the reader misses more detailed information on the provision of food (and on the question of whether victuals were stratified in the same manner as the beverages). But these traces might well be followed in further studies. It can only be hoped that the results of Tlusty's interesting perspective and impressively extensive research will alert those interested in early modern social and cultural history; as this book proves, the study of drinking culture is far from being anecdotal, but rather gives insights into the mechanisms of how society works.

Notes:

[1]. Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History* (London: Longman, 1983); Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1988); David W. Conroy, *Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); and recently Gunther Hirschfelder, *Alkoholkonsum am Beginn des Industriezeitalters (1700-1850): Vergleichende Studien zum gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Wandel*, vol. 1: *Die Region Manchester* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2003).

[2]. The existence of confessional disputes at tavern tables is highlighted by Arno Herzig, *Konfession und Heilsgewissheit. Schlesien und die Grafschaft Glatz in der Fruehen Neuzeit* (Bielefeld, 2002), pp. 164-173, where an interrogation of the year 1687, who cites an interrogation of 1687 into the particulars of a tavern dispute on why Jews will not go to heaven.

[3]. In France, on the contrary, taverns were often a center where people gathered to fight against the inflation of taxes, see Jean Nicolas, *La rebellion francaise* (Paris, 2002).

[4]. For a broader European context see now: Beat Kuemin and B. Ann Tlusty, eds., *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002).

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