L'ensemble des métadonnées est accessible en cliquant sur le lien suivant :
http://dx.doi.org/10.21412/leaves_1003

Drinking and Toasting in Georgian Britain:
Group Identities and Individual Agency

Rémy Duthille

The connection between food and identity in eighteenth-century England is well established with the avatars of John Bull, the well-fed Englishman so different from the starving, frog-eating French (B. Rogers). This patriotic self-identification was given ritual form in clubs, one of the archetypical forms of sociability in Britain in the period; it expressed itself in the arts, in painting and engraving. A famous example showing the interconnectedness of these developments is William Hogarth, who immortalized Roast Beef as an emblem of Old England in *The Gate of Calais* or *O, the Roast Beef of Old England* (painted in 1748, engraved the next year) and who was a founding member of the "Beefsteak Club." The "Sublime Society of Beefsteaks," to give the club its full name, consisted of artists, publicans and others, who met in Covent Garden from 1735 around theatrical impresario John Rich (Stephens). The club boasted an enormous gridiron in its room and used the gridiron as an emblem on badges and other club utensils. James Boswell, visiting the club in 1762, noted that "[t]he Presidents sits in a chair under a canopy above which you have in golden letters *Beef and Liberty"* a motto that makes the club's patriotic orientation clear. "We had nothing to eat but beefsteaks, & head wine & Punch in plenty & freedom. We had a number of songs" (Boswell, *London journal* 13). Despite the predominance of beef, it is arguable that drinking and especially the practice of toasting were also essential to the club's identity. Punch, with its central bowl from which drink was ladled out into men's individual glasses, served as a focus for the group (Harvey). Further down, a short discussion of the Beefsteak Club will serve to show that toasting contributed to bonding and group formation. A number of historians have established that toasting cemented group identity and helped solidify and transmit political ideologies, be they those of the Jacobites, or of the Whig or Tory parties. From the time of the American and especially the French Revolutions, splinter, dissident, "radical" and "ultra-radical" groups, in London and in the provinces, also used toasting and published long toasting lists to propagate their views (Foner; McCalman, "Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating-Clubs in London, 1795-1838"; Epstein; Hoock; Baer; Powell; Orme). Toasting has been shown to be a highly ritualized process that allowed high seriousness, and enabled parties to disseminate their values, publicize their actions and popularize their leaders and heroes. Historians have also shown that toasting encouraged fun, parody and inventiveness in both party and extra-parliamentary politics.

This article examines toasting outside the political lens applied by most commentators; it also looks at élite men sharing more or less mainstream political opinions, rather than political outsiders, Wilkesite patriots, "Jacobins" or "ultra-radicals." The examples are drawn primarily from gentlemen's clubs and from Tory or conservative Whig milieus to show that conflict, peer pressure and individual inventiveness were not limited to radical groupings, but were also attributes of the ruling classes. This article also differs from most approaches taken so far, in that it insists on individual self-fashioning and expression, and not just on the integrative function of toasting and the formation of loyalties and shared identities. This investigation of both aspects, the processes of group formation and the individual, idiosyncratic dimensions of drinking and toasting, has three facets: individual choices of alcoholic drinks; the constraints of gender; and possible individual strategies to avoid conflict during volatile political toasting. The framework used to investigate group formation derives from criticisms of Jürgen Habermas's influential paradigm of the "bourgeois public sphere" (Habermas). The practice of homosocial drinking, conducive to violence or disorder, does not tally with Habermas's account. Indeed the examination of non-bourgeois, plural, public spheres catering to people of varying social standing on very different occasions belies Habermas's interpretation: in some contexts a gentleman could "rough it" and divest himself of gentlemanly attributes (Eley). Against Habermas's "ideal public sphere," this paper envisions what Brian Cowan calls the "practical public sphere," which existed historically and "results from the lived experience of public life, and [...] has been subject to change: at various times, it may have been rowdy, vicious and even violent; at others, it may have been tranquil" (Cowan 47).

To examine the notions of taste and gentlemanliness underpinning individual choices and self-fashioning, I shall use two accounts of clubs and wine consumption respectively, both informed by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction (Capdeville, *L'âge d'or des clubs londoniens*; Ludington). Taste was central to the self-conscious strategies of social distinction adopted by the members of the gentry and nobility examined in this paper. Bourdieu described taste as "a class culture turned into nature, that is, embodied, [which] helps shape the class body. It is an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation" (*Distinction* 190) including eating and drinking. Choosing meals and beverages thus takes on socio-political relevance.

Social Distinction and Individual Taste in Choice of Alcoholic Drinks

Drinks served as social markers, as signs of distinction between the ranks of society. Only the middling ranks and their betters could afford wine (Ludington). The world of upscale claret

was an aristocratic preserve. The poor drank beer, or when they wanted cheap and quick intoxication, they reached for gin. However, the political struggles of the seventeenth century had also resulted in the political coding of beverages, claret being associated with royalism and beer with Cromwellian republicanism (Keblusek; McShane Jones). This division continued well into the eighteenth century, if not always in practice, at least in public discourse. The association of claret with toryism was maintained in the eighteenth century but the Whig oligarchy also drank French wine, which meant that, despite its political overtone, claret was a drink of the aristocracy rather than a Tory wine.

The legislation maintained these social hierarchies by ensuring some wines were out of reach for some customers. In the history of wine, the date of 1703 is more important than George I's accession in 1714. The Methuen Treaty guaranteed that the tariffs on Portuguese wine would always be lower than those on other wines (especially French). This had consequences on consumption but also on symbolism and perceptions of England's identity. In the realm of the history of ideas, Adam Smith, and later David Ricardo, discussed England exchanging cloth for wine with Portugal; this example illustrating the economic law of comparative advantage is to be found in any economics textbook to this day, thus enshrining the image of Britain as a manufacturing, wine-importing country (Ricardo 131–149). More immediately, the Methuen treaty encouraged social differentiation, with the middling orders (the bulk of consumers) drinking Portuguese wine instead of French claret. Charles Ludington has shown how, due to the incessant wars and the alliance with Portugal port appealed to the middling orders as a patriotic wine—in England at least. As for claret, the élites always preferred it to port and drank it freely. Whig grandees saw no contradiction between their public condemnation of trade with France and their professed tastes for claret (Ludington 3). To put it bluntly, drinking cheap claret was treason; drinking expensive claret was polite. The Scots, on the other hand, still kept to claret thanks to massive, quasi-institutional smuggling; this can be interpreted as a form of resistance to Anglicization.

Politicians became experts at playing with differences in taste. Sir Robert Walpole, master wirepuller and prime minister for more than a decade, expertly served his clients wine appropriate to their social status, from premium claret to Lords to middling port to lower middle-class hangers-on. However, even a shrewd politician like Walpole could not altogether master the cultural politics of drink. His proposal to subject wine and tobacco to excise caused a major crisis that nearly ousted him from power. In 1736 the Gin Act, a crackdown on gin sellers, was extremely unpopular and provoked riots (Clark 81). The "gin craze" ended because of changes in fashion, and new beverages, not because of legislation or the work of philanthropists. Hogarth's well-known twin prints contrasting horrendous "Gin Lane" and orderly "Beer Street" (*Beer Lane* and *Gin Street*, 1751), are an enduring testimony,

but the point of view defended did not prevail. Perhaps even more telling of the sensitiveness of the politics of drink was the Excise Crisis, which nearly brought down the government in 1733. Walpole's scheme for extending excise duties to alcoholic beverages and tobacco raised more fundamental issues of liberty and corruption. The powers of search given to revenue officers (who could for instance search houses and gouge beer vats) came to epitomize government intrusion into people's private lives. The longstanding hatred of excisemen, combined with sensibility about alcoholic beverages and tobacco, united Country gentlemen and the urban middling sorts and for the first time, trade was firmly linked with patriotism in opposition to the government (Wilson 124–136).

As the century wore on different classes continued to drink different beverages; but there was some levelling as the élites started to adopt wines dear to the middle ranks. Around mid-century, punch emerged as a middle-class drink. Both the exotic, imported, ingredients and the punchbowls (manufactured in China and often decorated with exotic or patriotic patterns) contributed to turn punch into a symbol Britain's imperial dominance, and punch parties into homosocial celebrations of the empire, by urban merchants who benefited by imperial expansion (Harvey). From the 1760s on, the élites started to drink port, imitating the middling classes in an interesting example of taste trickling up rather than down the social scale. According to Charles Ludington, the beleaguered élites were submitted to so much criticism after military losses (especially after the losses of the American colonies) that they adopted the drinking patterns of the middling ranks to re-establish their claims to power (Ludington 144–162).

By the time of the French Revolution, then, beverages had lost their political import. They were markers of social status rather than of partisan allegiance. In 1795, when Parliament considered a ban on distilling to fight against impending famine, Edmund Burke wrote, in *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity* (1795), that it was an act of mercy to go on distilling and keep gin available because the poor could not drink wine and could not get drunk rapidly on beer:

> if not food, [ardent spirit] greatly alleviates the want of it. It invigorates the stomach for the digestion of poor meagre diet, not easily alliable to the human constitution. Wine the poor cannot touch. Beer, as applied to many occasions, (as among seamen and fishermen for instance) will by no means do the business. Let me add, what wits inspired with champaign and claret, will turn into ridicule—it is a medicine for the mind. Under the pressure of the cares and sorrows of our mortal condition, men have at all times, and in all countries, called in some physical aid to their moral consolations—wine, beer, opium, brandy, or tobacco. (Burke 142)

During the scarcity of 1795 and the following years—the context that inspired Malthus's ideas on population—the hierarchy of beverages was thus clearly established, and Burke

interestingly dismissed the views of some pampered rich "inspired with champaign [sic] and claret" and asked for empathy for the predicament of the poor.

During the Revolution and Waterloo, the élites continued to drink French wine while supporting the war (for the most part). James Boswell is a case in point. In late 1792 and later, he recorded his rather gloomy mood in his journal. He brooded over "the horrible murder of the Queen of France," and drew portentous parallels between the French Revolution and the Great Rebellion that destroyed Charles I and his monarchy, remarking on 4 November 1792 (the day of the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution): "I felt as in the reign of Charles I."[1] On 29 November he celebrated the publication of his *Life of Samuel Johnson* with friends; they drank to the Tory classic "Church and King," the "Health and long life to the *Life of Dr. Johnson,*" the "the pious memory of Dr. Johnson," etc. etc. (*Boswell, the Great Biographer* 202). On the next day, he dined at the home of Dr William Langford, canon of Windsor: "Today we had madeira (pretty well), hock (good), burgundy and claret (both rather poor), champagne and port (excellent). The glasses are uncommonly large. I was *gravely heated*, and though the night was very cold, wandered in St James's Park unwisely" (*Boswell, the Great Biographer* 203). Getting intoxicated on luxury French wine was acceptable for a supporter of Pitt and opponent of the Revolution. The war did have an impact, though, on Boswell's drinking: on 16 December, at Langford's again, he noted: "The war with France having obstructed the importation of champagne, that exquisite wine was cut off. But we had madeira, sherry, hock, port, and claret, and good malt liquor; and I took enough to warm me rather too much" (*Boswell, the Great Biographer* 265). Boswell, of course, may not have drunk all the liquors he listed,[2] but the telling point is that he only judges the wines' taste, not their moral or political conformity.

Boswell's daily records of his degrees of inebriation are also indicative of a personal relationship to wine and spirits, consumption and its medical and psychological effects. While élite men took to port as a group and a sociological logic of distinction was at play as Ludington showed, this same logic also implied that these men prided themselves on their *personal* taste and their own ways of drinking and appreciating wine. Connoisseurship, which developed in the eighteenth century, was one such sign of taste. The diary of Joseph Farington (1747–1821) teems with notations on élite men's drinking practices and discourses on drink. The Duke of Clarence ate "only fish, & salad & a little pudding & drank no wine"; he abstained from meat and wine because he found them "nauseating" not because his doctor

---

[1] Boswell 245, 193. In 1794 he read Clarendon's history of the reign of Charles I, fuming about "the abominable conduct of the rebellious rascals in the beginning of Charles the First's reign. I shall see it grow worse and worse as I proceed" (302).

[2] Ludington traced a shift in Boswell's taste from claret to port from the 1760s; this "changing taste represented a broad trend among elite Scottish wine consumers" (170). Boswell may have tasted a variety of wines when dining out.

forbade it (Farington 131). "Dr Smith scarcely drinks any wine, but only green tea. [...] Sir Joseph Banks never eats flesh meat or drinks wine or spirits. He lives upon Pudding & Vegetables only, — and his fits of the gout have since been more moderate" (159, 163). Freedom to abstain was relative, however, because these men lived under the gaze of their heavily drinking peers and were expected to perform toasting rituals. They discussed one another's drinking practices and their occasional subterfuges. On 6 June 1807, Farington's party discussed wine while drinking "Port, Madeira, & red champaigne [sic]." Sir Nathaniel Holland, it was said, "has a strong prejudice against wine & thinks it a kind of poison," but though he never drinks any alone "in company [he] passes the bottle so as to keep up an appearance of drinking some wine" (148). Ultimately, a man's diet was part of his identity. After the death of painter John Opie in April 1807, Opie's mode of living was spoken of. He was very abstemious in respect of wine, but Dr Alderson observed that "He was a gross feeder; eating of made dishes in preference to plain meat" (119). "A gross feeder": what an obituary! Drinking and toasting were linked to "identity" in many ways: not just because one's partisan or social identity prescribed a choice of beverage, but also because an idiosyncratic handling of alcohol was an expression of identity. This can mean abstaining from alcohol and escaping the universal injunction to drink. In that sense drinking and toasting conveyed identity (involving a degree of creativity and personal choice) not just allegiance to a pre-existing cause or group. It was however a sign of distinction. Only the aristocracy and the most affluent of the middling orders could really choose their wine and food. In return for gorging themselves selectively and fashionably they acquired bodily signs of such privileges status such as stoutness, and especially gout (Porter).

Toasting, Polite Masculinity and Women's Drinking

The choice of wine, however, went beyond individual preferences. The shift from claret to port signalled a conversion from a polite ideal to a more aggressive, martial masculinity in the wake of criticism of the élites following the disasters of the Seven Years' War and the War of American Independence (Ludington). Historians have used the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" to refer to a model of male behaviour that the ruling classes find desirable and adopt (Cohen; Capdeville, "Gender at Stake"; Ludington). Such dominant models of masculinity justify the subordination of women but also of most men. Changes in hegemonic masculinity are reflected in behaviour, including fashion and drinking patterns. Through their rituals, including their toasting rituals, gentlemen's clubs were the crucible of a "polite" masculinity (Capdeville "Gender at Stake").

In eighteenth-century Britain, toasting was a highly ritualized process with predefined roles for the toast-master, the men who gave the toast in turns and the audience. In formal dinners toast lists were negotiated and drafted in advance. Clubs and societies, and later political parties, adopted standing toasts that reflected their identity. Such ceremonies excluded women but also paid homage to them as objects of toasting. The ritual of toasting may be introduced with the example of a famous club, the aforementioned Beefsteak Club. The club had evolved elaborate toasting rituals that baffled newcomers. A Victorian historian of the club wrote:

> From time immemorial, it had been the custom for the President to propose the visitors' health separately. That done – and as all speeches were prohibited – they were expected to rise simultaneously to return thanks as best they might. It was a great source of amusement to see the doubt and anxiety of the uninitiated as to who should take precedence in acknowledging the toast. (Arnold 17–18)

What was unnerving was that the club flouted the rules, which in all other clubs prescribed that one person only returned thanks. Another surprising request for the visitor was that he give a toast. "If he hesitated too long he was, perhaps abruptly, told he might give anything the world produced; man, woman or child, or any sentiment, social or otherwise."[3] "Sentiments" could be serious or vain, concern most aspects of life as the quotation suggests, but they were expected to be witty. As most gentlemen could not invent a witticism off the cuff, "the confused guest would nine times out of ten propose the only toast he was prohibited from giving, 'The prosperity of the Sublime Society of Beef Steaks'" (Arnold 18).

Toasts clearly contributed to the club's identity, partly because they kept up the jolly humour and mirth that was their raison d'être. As a custom followed "from time immemorial" according to our Victorian commentator (though the club's birth is duly dated from 1735 and he was writing in 1869), the toast contributed to the club's history (shrouded as it was in the mists of antiquity, like the English constitution). The ritual of toasting visitors also defined the club's limits, and bolstered the members' sense of comradeship because it separated club members from the "uninitiated," who were the butt of gentle jokes. The ritual includes some men while it excludes others. The Beefsteak Club is exemplary of the way in which the ritual fulfils a function of male bonding around common goals, ideals, pastimes or pleasures. It is a "rite of institution" in Pierre Bourdieu's sense: what matters about rites of passage is not the "passage" from one status to the other, but the "line" that separates the participants and non-participants, the initiated and the uninitiated (Bourdieu, "Rites of Institution" 118). The ritual of toasting changes or confirms the status of the men who take part in it (guests are included;

[3] Sentiment is defined in the *OED* as: "An epigrammatical expression of some striking or agreeable thought or wish, often of the nature of a proverb or in proverbial language, announced in the manner of a toast by a person proposing to drink with others in company." ("Sentiment, n.")

members are confirmed) but above all it excludes women (by nature non-participants) and most men (as socially or culturally inferior).

Another club, the Society of the Dilettanti, can serve to illustrate this socio-cultural, *polite* dimension of masculinity that was constructed through toasting (Klein; Carter 2). The club was founded in 1732 by a group of gentlemen who met on the Grand Tour in Italy. Horace Walpole wrote that it was "a club, for which the nominal qualification is having been in Italy, and the real one being drunk; the two chiefs are Lord Middlesex and Sir Francis Dashwood, who were seldom sober the whole time they were in Italy" (Kelly, *Society of Dilettanti* 2006). The club's toasts were Latin and Italian: *Viva la virtù*, *Esto praeclara, esto perpetua*, *Grecian taste and Roman spirit*, and *Seria ludo*. They bolstered the clubmen's claims to mastery of the classics, refinement and polite learning. The toasts had complex meanings: *Esto praeclara* were words pronounced by a Republican hero on his deathbed, and thus made sense in the context of a republican culture steeped in the values of the Venetian Republic and sixteenth-century Italy (Kelly, 2009 12). The toast to *virtù* reveals that the definition of a polite, yet manly (non effeminate) masculinity was at stake. The Italian language, which referred of course to the Grand Tour as the nominal condition for membership, could also signal the seriousness of the club's undertakings (with the stern Roman, republican meaning of virtue) and its funny, pleasurable side linked to modern Italy and the Grand Tour. The polysemous *virtù*—sophisticated, cosmopolitan, Italianate, manly, possibly libertine, but also sternly republican—was thus ideal for a toast, the vehicle for complex élite cultural values and a ritual that could accommodate both seriousness and light-heartedness, or temper the one by the other. The sentiments expressed in these toasts were statements of social status and moral worth—a reminder to a generation of elite Britons that they were somehow distinct from the rabble" (Kelly, 2009 18–19). The *apparent* simplicity of the toast made it an ideal means to distinguish between those in the know from the hoi polloi.

Nowhere more magnificently is the club's ethos captured than in the pair of group portraits painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds between 1777 and 1779 (reproduced in Simon 70–71). The so-called "vase" picture, representing a meeting of the club in 1777, is a scene of male sociability, with a conspicuous absence of women, featuring a toast reproduced at the top of the painting. The gracious gesture reflects the ritual nature of toasting, which celebrates the accomplishments of the Dilettanti, whose erudite love of vases and archaeology is signalled in the books and plates at the bottom of the picture. Translucent wines and decanters participate in the atmosphere of polite refinement. On the face of it the painting celebrates the Dilettanti's love for classical learning, but the picture contains elements that the initiated could interpret (one of the men is holding a woman's garter) suggesting an undercurrent of a more obscene, sexual masculinity running alongside the more polished classical manhood

(Simon). Another pair of pendant portraits, by George Knapton, represents *Thomas Villiers, Later Baron Hyde of Hindon and 2d Earl of Clarendon* (1741), and *Sewallis Shirley* (1743), again in ritual toasting, one holding a glass bearing the inscription "RES PUBLICA" the other a glass cover bearing "ET VIVAT." These portraits have confused critics, some of whom surmised that the two men were republicans, anti-monarchists wishing the perpetuity of the republic, while Venice symbolised the Jacobite cause. The toasts encoded social meanings (the Grand Tour) and "individual political sympathies" (Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti* 49). Such paintings are expressive of the opacity of toasting, which functioned as a code known to the initiated: this went on not only in secret societies like masonic lodges and illegal Jacobite meetings, but also in the heart of London's choicest clubs.

Knapton's, and especially Reynold's, paintings combine key elements of refined toasting—beverages, body language, and glassware—which are absent from most written accounts of toasting focusing on the words uttered. The custom of toasting resulted in the creation of new glassware, in particular "toastmaster glasses" which have a thick bottom giving the illusion that the glass holds more wine than it actually does. This was a necessity as the toastmaster had to down a glass at one go after every toast (refusing to do so was a breach of etiquette) and at some formal dinners more than a hundred toasts could be given. Some clubs used custom-made glassware, crockery and utensils that bore the clubs' emblems. The "Beggar's Benison" was an upper-class sex club that operated in Fife from the 1730s to the 1830s. Its concern with sex, obscene songs and stories, and anatomy was reflected in its "prick glasses" that were used to toast members in good standing (Stevenson).

Toasting was a male ritual, at least in all-male clubs, on public occasions and on public premises. Men toasted women in their absence: in a libertine club like the Beggar's Benison, "the main advantages taken of male exclusivity were to get drunk and talk dirty" (Stevenson 21); in more polite clubs there could be profanity and bawdy talk at the expense of women, and endless discussions about which women were toastable and which were not. The Kit-Kat Club and other clubs of the early decades of the century popularized the expression "toasts of the town." Verse epistles were written for the glasses of the Kit-Cat Club. However, as Judith Hawley writes, "[f]or a woman to be a toast was a dubious honour" (313). Women found themselves at the bottom of toast lists, well below the King and other respected authorities.

In fact, some men toasted women to take revenge or to insult them. The conversation and toast could take on a sexual character, whatever the lady's fault. A famous case is Samuel Johnson's punishment of historian Catharine Macaulay for her allegedly "levelling" political opinions. Johnson was a stickler for hierarchy and hated republicans. Catharine Macaulay, known as "our celebrated female historian" for her republican *History of England*, bore the brunt of Johnson's disapproval when he visited her at some point before 1763. He offered to

let her “very sensible, civil, well-behaved citizen, [her] footman” sit down and dine with them. This was, Johnson told Boswell, a “lesson in the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since” (317). “Levelling” was not a mere metaphor. Macaulay had some sympathy for the Levellers of the Civil War like John Lilburne, and she sided with the opponents of Charles I (Hill). There was no love lost between Johnson and Macaulay. In 1765, in a company of twelve men (probably Oxford Tories), he “stripped poor Mrs. Macaulay to the very skin, then gave her for his toast, and drank her in two bumpers” (Boswell, *Life of Johnson* 344). The stripping, read in conjunction with the earlier discussion on “levelling,” suggests the toast was an act of humiliation of one he had levelled to the degree of a prostitute or a promiscuous, common woman.[4]

Women were toasts rather than toasters (still less toastmasters). Respectable women would not take part in public drinking, though they could raise their glasses in their own homes or when invited to private parties. Toasting, then, seems to respect the division of public and domestic spheres closely. However, the line was sometimes blurred. There is evidence of women drinking toasts publicly during the French Revolution–but they were British women supporting the French Revolution at dinners in Paris, not London. On 18 November 1792, a group of Britons held a dinner in Paris to celebrate French victories; the guests were radical sympathisers of revolutionary France like John Hurford Stone and Helen Maria Williams. Toasts included “[t]he lady defenders of the Revolution, particularly Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Miss Williams, and Mrs. Barbauld” (Alger 98). In London, however, all-male parties were still the norm. Some radical reformers attempted to smooth the rougher, masculine edges of traditional artisan culture (in the London Corresponding Society) but at the same time groups of “ultra-radicals” in cheap taverns of the East End of London perpetuated a culture of bawdy jokes, songs and toasts with toasting competitions on sexual/political topics. This culture was partly indebted to the libertine tradition mediated from the Earl of Rochester and Restoration rakes down the social scale through Grub Street literature and then on to the period of the French Revolution (McCalman, “Ultra-Radicalism”; *Radical Underworld* 121–123). Toasting may thus have maintained, rather than challenged, misogynistic attitudes, whatever other political and religious norms it fought against.

After Waterloo, and especially after Peterloo (1819) women drinkers became more numerous—at least more visible in reforming and radical circles. A rare 1822 print of a “Female radical society” (reproduced in Navickas 76) shows a group of women drinking gin. In addition to meddling in politics, they are guilty of two gross forms of indecency in the print: several can be seen drinking gin in small glasses and in the doorframe, one of the

[4] Boswell’s is one of several competing versions of the story in circulation. The anecdote raises the issue of the reporting of toasts through gossip and rumour, which is outside the scope of this article. On this anecdote, see Greentree.

women lallows herself to be embraced very closely by a well-dressed man. Gin had long had connotations of working-class drinking; it was also a feminine drink, in popular representations if not in reality: "Mother Gin" was an icon by the time of the 1730s "Gin Craze" (Warner and Ivis). This negative view of working-class women reformers reflects both female intrusion into the masculine world of politics and the strong Tory and probably middle-class disapproval of that intrusion.

Political Toasting: Peer Pressure and Individual Strategy

Despite the encroachment of a number of women pamphleteers and activists, and however those women might be toasted and fêted in some Whig and radical circles, politics was still a key arena of contention and competitive masculinity. Politicians were notoriously heavy drinkers, especially Pitt and Fox at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Whig and the Tory parties each had their toasts. Public toasting was a highlight of election dinners. It was also central to commemorative dinners, especially the Fox dinners (for the Whigs) and the Pitt dinners (for the Tories) that developped around 1800 (Orme; Masaki).

Toasts were serious business. They expressed a man's deeply felt principles, and his deeply-felt denominational, national, and/or local identity. It was a truth universally acknowledged, that no man must drink a toast if it went against his principles. Refusing a toast was a mark of manliness and independence of mind. Here it should be noted that the conservatives, not just the conspiratorial or radical fringes of Georgian Britain, had their disagreements and splinter groups. A significant toasting-related quarrel took place when Prime Minister George Canning objected to the Pitt Clubs' drinking "Protestant Ascendancy." For Canning the toast was a betrayal of William Pitt's principles since he had been in favour of Catholic Emancipation. In a classic strategy of avoidance, Canning and Castlereagh kept away from club meetings to avoid drinking the toast. After a series of open letters, the rift could not be breached and several members left the club (Masaki 401). In periods of high political tension, toasts were used as tests of loyalty. If a man refused to drink a toast or equivocated, he was considered unsafe and risked punishment. The following paragraphs illustrate ways in which toasting expressed a "sense of place" while their meaning and degree of commitment remains somewhat opaque and elusive to historians today. The end of the section also examines cases of individual accommodations with a standing toast, through the example of the Tory classic "Church and King."

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689, Jacobitism was rife and supporters of the ousted James II would not drink to the new king and developed a complex semiotic system. They held court in exile until their final defeat in 1746. Their choices of wine were very deliberate

and always French. In 1718, they tried Provence (and rejected it for it was not good enough, then Côte Rotie (which they found good) and finally settled for château Margaux (Corp 50). Jacobites in Britain and in exile performed the ritual of “toasting the king over the water”, passing the glass over a bowl of water. The toast was so famous it became proverbial and it appears as shorthand characterization in a novel like *Tom Jones*, published in 1749, three years after Culloden. Nevertheless, many other Jacobite toasts were often undecipherable to the uninitiated. They went along with a rich material culture which historian Murray Pittock considers to have resisted the dominant “commercial” model of Hanoverian Britain. A glass could be “occasionally or ritually smashed as a Jacobite toast was given,” Pittock contends, so that the glass could not be reused “for a less glorious toast” as the formula went (Pittock 51). Whether Jacobite glasses were smashed or not, the coded nature and elusiveness of toasting meant that it could serve as a secret signal and a test of loyalty. This begged the question of the significance of such toasting. While specialists of Jacobitism like Eveline Cruickshanks tend to stress the prevalence of Jacobite sentiment, others read toasts as evidence of a much more diffuse anti-Hanoverian sense of grievance and frustration, or as Nicholas Rogers put it, “a sense of place, a defence of local traditions, a heritage of anti-Whiggery in a palpably Whig age” (N. Rogers 47–48).

Official ceremonies usually comprised a round of toasts, starting with the monarch and royal family, and then paying homage to the city or county and to local worthies. Toasting also enabled partisan clubs (the Pitt Clubs after 1808 for instance) to link local partisan meetings with the network of clubs, the mother club in London and national issues: local civic pride mingled with national allegiances (Masaki 398). That toasting both reaffirmed loyalty to king and country, elicited a sense of place, and could even summon it into being, is perhaps best exemplified by colonial settings. Inga Clendinnen tells the story of the first encounter between a party of British explorers and Australian aborigines. On the King’s birthday in 1789, the first in a penal colony that dated from the previous year, Governor Philipp plied the convicts and the soldiers with rum and porter so that they could drink the King’s health. As for himself and his guests, they partook of “mutton, port, ducks, fowls, fish, kanguroo, sallads, [sic] pies and preserved fruit.” After the compulsory toasts to the King and the royal family, the governor drank to “Cumberland County, the first British-style county in the new world, existing as yet only in the mind, but, as Phillip proudly declared, ‘the largest in the world.’ Its name, he said, would be ‘Albion’” (Clendinnen 72). Toasting retained something of the religious aura it had in the early-modern period, which made it a fitting context for this act of performative naming. The synchronous nature of ceremony (performed everywhere on the 4 June, George III’s birthday) helped knit the empire together and overcome the tyranny of distance that separated Australia from the metropolis; at the same time the ceremony of toasting was an affirmation of local particularity and pride of place. The same can be said of

toasting in other British colonies, where toasting also diffracted British identity into its component parts. St Andrew's Day and Burns Day were celebrated in Canada, Australia, and later New Zealand, and such occasions gave rise to toasting Britain, "the Land of Cakes" (Scotland) and local, colonial institutions and individuals (Tyrrell 1845-59; Bueltmann).

Such ritual toasting served to cement group identities; it helped form multi-layered identities (Scottish, British and colonial) but it could also be divisive and force individuals to take a stand or negotiate. The Tory toast to "Church and King," that was routinely drunk everywhere in England, is a case in point. It is unlikely that "Church and King" mobs expressed unanimous, unwavering Tory sentiment when they drank it; Edward Thompson, in particular, otherwise keen to emphasize the agency of the masses, noted the permissiveness of the local establishment that tolerated, if not actively encouraged riots, as in Birmingham on 14 July 1791 (Thompson 79–80). During the French Revolution, a suspicion of political manipulation from above hangs over episodes like the spate of ritual burnings of Thomas Paine in effigy that erupted throughout England from November 1792 to March 1793. Frank O'Gorman showed that that the ritual, that included crying "Church and King" and toasting, had deep roots in popular culture and thus constituted public performances confirming people's local and national identities (O'Gorman). Toasts seem to be clear indexes of popular sentiment; but when read in context, the meaning of the disturbances becomes less clear than that of the sentiments. In 1792, a mob in Shrewsbury received money and drink from the aldermen and mayor to shout "Church and King" but a loyalist reported that once drunk a few cried "Tom Paine for ever" (Claeys 145). *In vino veritas?* What level of drunkenness made the poor drink to the King or to Tom Paine?

If "Church and King" could be drunk by a mob whose motivations are complex and partly unclear, there is also evidence of clash or accomodation in private settings by gentlemen and members of the middling orders. Staunch whigs would not drink the toast; Dissenters could not drink it in conscience because of the "Church" of England that they objected to. The simplest option was for men of different persuasions to avoid drinking together, but this could happen as shown in a letter from James Boswell to Andrew Kippis. Boswell had conservative, Tory leanings and Kippis was a prominent Dissenting clergyman and a Whig reformer (a close friend of Dr Richard Price, who had enraged Burke into writing *Reflections on the Revolution in France*). Boswell wanted to dissuade Kippis from attending a Bastille day dinner on 14 July 1791: "Oblige me then dear Dr Kippis by abstaining from celebrating the Anniversary of the French Revolution at least till it is certain that it is a Revolution upon the whole beneficial to mankind." Boswell invited Kippis to dine at his home instead: "I am too liberal indeed a toastmaster to load *your* bumper with *church*. But I am sure you will

cordially join in drinking the health of our most excellent *King* who shows himself the *Father* of his Subjects of all denominations" (*James Boswell to Andrew Kippis*).

By negotiating the toast, Boswell wants to avoid the embarrassment of having Kippis refuse to drink to the Church of England. Boswell's seemingly generous offer might also be an underhand way of sounding out Kippis's possible republicanism, because Kippis might refuse to drink the King's health and thus reveal his political identity. This example, in the polarized situation of 1791, shows how toasting or not toasting can function as a test of loyalty and respectability. The French Revolution was still in a relatively early phase, and when France declared war on Britain in February 1793 pressure against republican, anti-monarchical, or "Jacobin" toasting intensified as it was indictable as "seditious" talk.[5] Boswell's letter—I was unable to find any answer from Kippis—illustrates the way individuals had to steer their way to avoid conflicts or loss of face. Around the same time, the toast to the King had clearly become a test of loyalty, and those who failed it were beyond the pale for loyalists.

Conclusion

Toasting was ubiquitous in Georgian England. It was performed in a wide variety of settings, from official gatherings and public meetings like county meetings, election dinners, outdoor chairing of members at the end of elections, to taverns and alehouses, private homes and masonic lodges. Given the variety of venues and contexts, and the growing social differentiation of British society, especially in London, all food and drink had socio-political meaning. Alcoholic drinks, in particular, were the subject of legislation and discussion. Drinks, as well as tableware and gestures, were means of social distinction, but also sources of inspiration for artists who, like Sir Joshua Reynolds, painted scenes of polite toasting to immortalize club life. Travellers like Abbé Le Blanc described toasting as a "ceremony" that must be performed by men and that could not be eschewed (Le Blanc 326–329). Perhaps the only permanent feature throughout the century was the exclusion of women from public dinners (with some exceptions the early nineteenth century), and from after-dinner toasting at home as well. If women could give toasts at home or as guests in friends' homes, they were expected to be objects of toasting, rather than to initiate it themselves.

Toasts could express an infinite variety of ideas, serious or farcical, provided the drinkers concurred. They offered individuals an opportunity to display wit and brilliance as well as ways to show goodwill and a desire to become members of a group. Toast lists were usually negotiated in advance because the process was fraught with tension, for instance when an

[5] On the extension of the field of treason and sedition law, and the political trials that ensued, see (Barrell).

individual dissented or when a group failed to agree on shared values. Peer pressure could be intense and resulted in what, in an article on seventeenth-century criticism of health-drinking, Rebecca Lemon called "compulsory conviviality" (Lemon). The phrase captures the binding obligation imposed on men by communal homosocial drinking. In the end, the "compulsory" character of toasting, the group effect, led to clashes in public or strategies of accommodation (avoidance, pre-dinner negotiation).

Toasting provides a rich source of material on allegiances and identities. Historians of both high politics and popular politics have used it as an index of ideology, commitment and organizational structure, but this article contends that it also shows how people, élite and middle-class men especially, played around loyalties and performed more original, idiosyncratic identities. Looking at toasts across the century and a half separating the Glorious Revolution to the First Reform Act, one has a sense that around 1700 toasting signalled allegiances. Allegiances to the monarch (but the Jacobite and Hanoverian lines were in competition), to aristocratic houses, to the Whig and Tory parties locked in strife and struggle, and to religious denominations—all those varied allegiances explained why toasts were formulaic and binary: "Church and King," "The Rump." Allegiances persisted. For some authors, like J. C. D. Clark, denominational allegiances remained central throughout the "long eighteenth century," until 1832. From the mid-eighteenth century, perhaps the 1760s, there was greater freedom in adapting and parodying toasts. Toasts could even express idiosyncrasies, among élite males at least. This may suggest more leeway in the way individuals identified and fashioned themselves, and not just as heirs to religious and political allegiances. Identities ranged from the local (city, country), to the national (royal family, national politics) and the imperial, as was shown with the example of Australia. In parallel to the hardening of some patriotic norms—drinking the loyal toast became *de* rigueur during the French Wars—toasting also pointed to hedonism, pastimes learned or trivial, artistic or bibulous. At the same time, oppositional, "radical" groups, unlike the mainstream conservatives examined in this article, took to toasting foreign freedom fighters, in support of the American Insurgents and the French Jacobins, and, in the 1820s, to Bolivar and the new South American republics. All these developments, affecting even seemingly dyed-in-the-wool conservatives, suggest that the study of drinking and toasting may help to trace the emergence of trends—individualization of lifestyle and hobbies, political identities and negotiations, ideals of world citizenship–that are recognizably modern and still with us.

Works cited

Alger, John Goldworth. *Englishmen in the French Revolution*. 1889. Forgotten Books, 2017.

Arnold, Walter. *The Life and Death of the Sublime Society of Beef Steaks*. 1871. Kessinger Publishing, 2007.

Baer, Marc. "Political Dinners in Whig, Radical and Tory Westminster, 1780-1880." *Parliamentary History, n°* 24, 2005, pp. 183-206.

Barrell, John. *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793-1796*. Oxford UP, 2000.

Boswell, James. *Boswell, the Great Biographer, 1789-1795*. Ed. Marlies K. Danziger. McGraw-Hill, 1989.

---. *Life of Johnson*. Ed. Robert William Chapman. Oxford UP, 1998.

---. *London Journal: 1762-1763*. Ed. Gordon Turnbull. Penguin, 2010.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. Harvard University Press, 1984.

---. "Rites of Institution." *Language and Symbolic Power*. Ed. John B Thompson. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Harvard UP, 1991, pp. 117–126.

Bueltmann, Tanja. "'The Image of Scotland Which We Cherish in Our Hearts': Burns Anniversary Celebrations in Colonial Otago." *Immigrants & Minorities,* vol. 30, n°1, 2012, pp. 78-97.

Burke, Edmund. *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol. 9: I: The Revolutionary War, 1794-1797; II: Ireland*. Ed. R. B. Mcdowell and William B. Todd. Vol. 9. Clarendon Press, 1991.

Capdeville, Valérie. "Gender at Stake: The Role of Eighteenth-Century London Clubs in Shaping a New Model of English Masculinity." *Culture, Society & Masculinities,* Vol. 4, n°1, 2012, pp. 13–32.

---. *L'Âge d'or des clubs londoniens : 1730-1784*. Honoré Champion, 2008.

Carter, Philip. *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800*. Pearson Education, 2001.

Claeys, Gregory. *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought*. Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Clark, J.C.D. *English society: 1688-1832*. Cambridge UP, 1985.

Clark, Peter. "The 'Mother Gin' Controversy in the Early Eighteenth Century." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* vol. 38, 1988, pp. 63–84.

Clendinnen, Inga. *Dancing with Strangers: The True History of the Meeting of the British First Fleet and the Aboriginal Australians, 1788*. Cambridge UP, 2005.

Cohen, Michèle. *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century*. Routledge, 1996.

Corp, Edward. *The Jacobites at Urbino: An Exiled Court in Transition*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Cowan, Brian. "English Coffeehouses and French Salons: Rethinking Habermas, Gender and Sociability in Early Modern French and British Historiography." *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe: Performance, Geography, Privacy*. Ed. Angela Vanhaelen and Joseph P. Ward. Routledge, 2013. 41–53. Print.

Eley, Geoff. "Nations, Publics, and Political Culture: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century." *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig J. Calhoun. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993, pp. 289-339.

Epstein, James. "Radical Dining, Toasting and Symbolic Expression in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire: Rituals of Solidarity." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies,* vol. 20, n°2, 1988, pp. 271-291.

Farington, Joseph. *The Farington Diary by Joseph Farington, R.A.* Ed. James Greig. Vol. 4. George H. Doran, 1924.

Foner, Philip Sheldon, ed. *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts*. Greenwood Press, 1976.

Greentree, Shane. "Mrs. Macaulay's Footman: The Life and Afterlife of an Anecdote." *Clio*, vol. 44, n°3, 2015, pp. 317-339.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. MIT Press, 1999.

Harvey, Karen. "Ritual Encounters: Punch Parties and Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century." *Past & Present,* vol. 214, n°1, 2012, pp. 165-203.

Hawley, Judith. "Taste and Toasts in Early Eighteenth-Century Club Culture." *Taste and the Senses in the Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Hans-Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée. Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011, pp. 299-318.

Hill, Bridget. *The Republican Virago: The Life and Times of Catharine Macaulay, Historian*. Oxford UP, 1992.

Hoock, Holger. "From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists' Dinner Culture in Eighteenth-Century London." *Huntington Library Quarterly: Studies in English and American History and Literature,* vol. 66, n°1-2, 2003, pp. 27-54.

James Boswell to Andrew Kippis. 1791. Beinecke Boswell Collection GEN MSS 89, Box 26, folder 622.

Keblusek, Marika. "Wine for Comfort: Drinking and the Royalist Exile Experience, 1642-1660." *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*. Ed. Adam Smyth. D. S. Brewer, 2004, pp. 55-68.

Kelly, Jason M. *Society of Dilettanti (Act. 1732–2003)*. Oxford UP, 2006.

---. *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment*. Yale UP, 2009.

Klein, Lawrence E. *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England*. Cambridge UP, 1994.

Le Blanc, Jean-Bernard. *Letters on the English and French Nations; Containing Curious and Useful Observations on Their Constitutions Natural and Political*. 1747. Gale Ecco, 2018.

Lemon, Rebecca. "Compulsory Conviviality in Early Modern England." *English Literary Renaissance,* vol. 43, n°3, 2013, pp. 381-414.

Ludington, Charles. *The Politics of Wine in Britain: A New Cultural History*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Masaki, Keisuke. "Within the Bounds of Acceptability: Tory Associational Culture in Early 19th Century Britain." *Parliamentary History,* vol. 37, n°3, 2018, pp. 389-414.

McCalman, Iain. *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795 - 1840*. Clarendon Press, 1998.

---. "Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating-Clubs in London, 1795-1838." *English Historical Review,* vol. 102, 1987, pp. 309-33.

McShane Jones, Angela. "Roaring Royalists and Ranting Brewers: The Politicisation of Drink and Drunkenness in Political Broadside Ballads from 1640 to 1689." *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*. Ed. Adam Smyth. D. S. Brewer, 2004, pp. 69-87.

Navickas, Katrina. *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789-1848*. Manchester UP, 2016.

O'Gorman, Frank. "The Paine Burnings of 1792-1793." *Past & Present,* vol. 193, n°1, 2006, pp. 111-155.

Orme, T. E. "Toasting Fox: The Fox Dinners in Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1801-1825." *History*, vol. 99, n° 337, 2014, pp. 588-606.

Pittock, Murray. "Treacherous Objects: Towards a Theory of Jacobite Material Culture." *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* vol. 34, n°1, 2011, pp. 39-63.

Porter, Roy. *Gout: The Patrician Malady*. Yale UP, 1998.

Powell, Martyn J. "Political Toasting in Eighteenth-Century Ireland." *History,* vol. 91, n° 304, 2006, pp. 508-529.

Ricardo, David. *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. 1821. Dover Publications, 2004.

Rogers, Ben. *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation*. Chatto and Windus, 2003.

Rogers, Nicholas. *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain*. Oxford UP, 1998.

“Sentiment, n.” *OED Online*. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Accessed 5 Oct. 2018. www.oed.com/view/Entry/176056

Simon, Robin. “Reynolds and the Double-Entendre: The Society of Dilettanti Portraits.” *The British Art Journal,* vol.3, n°1, 2001, pp. 69-77.

Stephens, Richard. *Sublime Society of Beefsteaks [Beefsteak Club] (Act. 1735–1768).* Oxford UP, 2011.

Stevenson, David. *The Beggar’s Benison: Sex Clubs of Enlightenment Scotland and Their Rituals*. Tuckwell Press, 2001.

Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Penguin, 1980.

Tyrrell, Alex. “‘No Common Corrobery’: The Robert Burns Festivals and Identity Politics in Melbourne, 1845-59.” *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society,* vol. 97, n°2, 2011, pp. 161-180.

Warner, Jessica, and Frank Ivis. “Gin and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century London.” *Eighteenth-century Life,* vol. 24, n°2, 2000, pp. 85-105.

Wilson, Kathleen. *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*. Cambridge UP, 1995.