
Reviewed by Nancy D. Campbell, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Fear that U.S. troops stationed in Vietnam would bring their drug habits home with them enabled Nixon’s expansion of the War on Drugs. Paradoxically, such anxieties laid groundwork for the scaling up of methadone maintenance clinics in the United States, and for today’s state and local drug treatment infrastructure. Central to seemingly disparate responses lay the folk-devil figure around which Jeremy Kuzmarov has structured his book – the “‘Nam junkie,” a figure that played a bewildering variety of symbolic roles. *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* is an engaging account of a little-known harmonic convergence between the conservative-right agenda and the left-liberal antiwar movement.

Like anyone involved in the creative destruction of a cultural myth, Kuzmarov must breathe life back into the “myth of the addicted army” to make a compelling case for the significance of his story. What kind of story is that? That the “War on Drugs” mounted by the Nixon administration was riddled with holes – historical inaccuracies, political misrecognitions, and symbolic politics conducted by rhetorical means. Rather than simply blaming the mainstream media for promulgating the “‘Nam junkie,” Kuzmarov chases the sources of the myth to earth, revealing the figure to be a nuanced composite, produced as much by the antiwar movement as by the “Old Guard” antidrug police forces.

The Old Guard consisted of the usual suspects – hardliners on drug law enforcement such as the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. For Old Guard actors, drugs were always maladaptive, their use spread within the military by insidious “enemies within” seeking to undermine morale and military might. Against them, Kuzmarov arrays a heterogeneous group dubbed “social environmentalists,” a revisionist camp according to whom drugs were being used adaptively in Vietnam by rational and realistic soldiers responding to an irrational, surreal, and unjust war. Kuzmarov explicitly aligns himself with these original nay-sayers, who consist of street ethnographers, “symbolic interactionist” sociologists, the “anti-psychiatry” movement, and a group of moral entrepreneurs set on revamping dominant interpretations of drug experiences and, ultimately, reforming drug policy. Although the revisionists were prone to sugarcoating the dangers of drugs, Kuzmarov demonstrates that their analysis that the moral panic around military drug use in Vietnam was disproportionate to the triviality of the problem was correct. In retrospect, Kuzmarov argues, the “social environmentalists” were right – drugs played an “entirely inconsequential role in shaping the outcome of the conflict” (p. 73).

Other political and social interests, however, abetted the issue becoming a full-blown moral panic. Antiwar protesters, including Beat poet Allan Ginsberg and Vi-
etnam Veterans Against the War, helped tip the response into a spectacular symbolic crusade by adopting antidrug positions in order to further their own agenda. They paradoxically fed the media frenzy and exaggerated the sense of crisis, and proved to be strange bedfellows for the contradictory cast of characters who inhabited the Nixon White House in 1972. Within this context, expanding the drug treatment infrastructure while expanding police powers and escalating punitive measures in the War on Drugs seemed to make sense. Thus did some of the chief architects of the Watergate break-ins also orchestrate the U.S. turn to community-based treatment and methadone maintenance. Kuzmarov carefully marshals evidence to support his claim that the liberal-left (and not just the conservative-right) helped create demand for the War on Drugs, and ultimately helped to engineer consensus among the very people who, it is implied, should have opposed it. Kuzmarov’s story brings to light a once-hidden history, but his more important contribution is to show how the conduct of the U.S. War on Drugs has concealed the human rights violations upon which it is predicated (p. 120). The book undercuts the triumphalism that pervades one of the most authoritative accounts of Nixon’s War on Drugs, Michael Massing’s *The Fix*, the cover of which proclaimed “Under the Nixon Administration, America Had an Effective Drug Policy. WE SHOULD RESTORE IT. (Nixon Was Right).”

Popular culture representations of the Vietnam war conceal more than they reveal of the war’s devastation and human rights abuses consequential to it. As a self-confessed Vietnam war movie junkie, this reviewer applauds the thoroughness of Kuzmarov’s survey of filmic and televisual vehicles that served to “absolve Americans of responsibility for the violence inflicted” (p. 149) and diminish or invalidate dissent by veterans. Drugs served as potent “symbolic poison[s], a metaphor for the cultural disease American contracted in Vietnam” (quoting anonymous reviewer, p. 155). “By the late 1980s… Americans had become saturated with the image of a country whose very survival was threatened by the curse of addiction” (p. 165). Maintaining that cultural myth continued to shape U.S. drug policy well into the post-Vietnam period, Kuzmarov skates on perhaps his thinnest ice when he seeks to persuade readers that Reagan’s symbolic crusade against narco-terrorism and his War on Drugs were impacted by the “enduring myth of the addicted army” (p. 167). Kuzmarov’s relentless focus on that Ur-myth is unshakeable; his belief that it exercises continuing power leads him into interpretations that are somewhat strained.

We are left with the question of whether it is possible to call for the expansion of resources devoted to treatment in absence of such mythologizing. In a tantalizing conclusion designed to speculate on the relevance of his case for current and future wars, Kuzmarov considers disingenuous attempts to link anti-terrorism with anti-drug policy during the George W. Bush administration. There are also moves within the treatment infrastructure to associate substance abuse with the aftermath of trauma and war. How strong or enduring these associations will prove to be remains to be seen. *The Myth of the Addicted Army* may yet serve as a cautionary tale for a nation bent on diffusing cultural mythologies that excuse American aggression and blame other nations for the consequences of American corruption and violations of human rights. Is it possible to learn the particular set of lessons from Vietnam that Jeremy Kuzmarov sets before us? Will the American polity be capable of doing something different next time around, or are we doomed to repeat this cycle of myth-making, aggrandizement, and obfuscation?

Reviewed by Joyce A. Madancy, Union College, Schenectady, NY

Xiaoxiong Li has filled a gap in recent scholarship on the political, cultural, and economic impact of opium consumption and prohibition with his monograph on the largest poppy-growing province in China. *Poppies and Politics in China: Sichuan Province, 1840s to 1940s* takes the reader deep into the complexities of Sichuan’s dynamic opium economy. Li divides the province in two for the purposes of his analysis, arguing convincingly that the frontier regions to the west, with more inhospitable terrain and restive minority populations, should be treated separately than Sichuan proper. The title is somewhat misleading, since only a fraction of the book is concerned with the period prior to the first nationwide campaign against opium in 1906, and just a few pages touch on the period beyond 1942. However, the book explores in great detail the pivotal role of opium in the province during the tumultuous decades that saw China battered by imperialist aggression and internal conflict.

The first chapter establishes the growing importance of opium, particularly the revenue that it generated in taxes, on the economic and political landscape of the province. The author notes that although opium was considered a problem by the Qing state very early on, provincial authorities in Sichuan actually encouraged poppy cultivation by imposing opium tax quotas. Steadily increasing demand for the drug also contributed to the decision of many farmers to engage in poppy cultivation during the second half of the nineteenth century, which ultimately stimulated a market economy and considerable economic development in Sichuan. Li also discusses the unexpected success of the first part of the 1906 campaign against opium (it continued after the 1911 Revolution, but in a much-altered form that made it less effective in the long run).

The next two chapters focus on opium during the tumultuous warlord era, when poppy cultivation was most extensive and when opium dominated the provincial economy. Li divides his analysis of this period, first detailing the political and economic links between opium and the warlord regimes that ravaged Sichuan from 1912 to 1935, then devoting a separate chapter to the social impacts of the drug. The province continued the campaign against the drug, but when China’s central state effectively dissolved after 1916, Sichuan entered the “Era of Garrison Areas,” a euphemism for the warlord regimes that plagued the province until Chiang Kaishek imposed Nationalist control in 1935. Opium-related revenues were crucial in meeting the enormous costs of these competing military governments, and since the prohibition of the drug had been linked to Chinese nationalism by the late Qing, even warlords attempted to maintain the façade that the oppressive taxation was actually a strategy for suppression. Li outlines the myriad ways in which the drug was taxed, from the planting of poppies to the transporting of the drug to its consumption. He also explores the lively smuggling trade that emerged to avoid the heavy taxes.

The chapter entitled “Opium and Sichuan Society” addresses popular attitudes toward the drug, and explores the motivations and possible identity of Sichuan’s many opium smokers. Li also looks at the wide range of establishments that could be labeled opium dens, and touches on their social functions. Those with no background in the subject should find the chapter intriguing, but unlike the previous chapters, there is nothing new for anyone who has already begun to explore the history of opium in China.

In Chapter Four, Li does a fine job of examining the ways in which Chiang Kai-
Shek's Six Year Plan allowed his government to impose a considerable degree of control over opium trafficking and consumption in Sichuan, and in doing so enabled the Nationalist regime to establish a foothold that powerful warlords had previously been able to prevent. He analyzes Chiang's many strategies, and appraises the mixed success of the Plan in eliminating poppy cultivation, opium smoking, and drug trafficking. The powerful monetary appeal of the drug trade, the growing threat of Japanese aggression, and the impact of Nationalist corruption and inefficiency were overwhelming challenges to the Six Year Plan, but until the outbreak of war, it attained some degree of success.

Finally, the last chapter explores the ways in which the opium suppression campaign in China proper resulted in a dramatic increase in poppy cultivation and opium trafficking in Sichuan's frontier regions. Prior to the 1930s, poppy production was dominated by Sichuan proper because of its more developed farming methods and transportation networks. The virtual autonomy of minority peoples in the frontier regions, particularly when the provincial government was in disarray, along with the presence of warlords and secret society members avoiding increasing Nationalist control resulted in a volatile combination poised to fill the vacuum when the Six Year Plan reduced opium trafficking and cultivation in Sichuan proper. The growing importance of opium had negative and positive effects on the local populations, prompting economic development but also encouraging opium smoking and opium-related violence.

The book is carefully detailed and well written, with a wide range of source material, but Li breaks no new theoretical ground with his work. In fact, he presents no real argument beyond a vague notion that opium allows a unique lens through which to view the workings of Sichuan's economy, society, and various political regimes in the first half of the twentieth century. Aside from this fairly major omission, the book contains only minor flaws – a few glaring typos and the more frustrating lack of a Chinese language glossary. However, the story of opium in China would be incomplete without examining "the largest opium-producing region in the world's largest opium-producing country" (p. 16) at that time, and thus, Poppies and Politics provides an important addition to the existing literature.


Reviewed by Brigid Pike, Alcohol and Drug Research Unit, Health Research Board, Dublin

Paul O'Mahony has written a case study of the policy response to illicit drugs and their use in Ireland over the last 30-odd years, from the first opiate epidemic to strike Ireland in the 1980s, to the recent past. This study will be of interest not only to Irish readers: before tracing the way in which a prohibitionist policy has been implemented in a single jurisdiction, the author unpicks the analytic categories that underpin the prohibitionist perspective.

Chapter Two explores the three categories of "grounding philosophy," each of which may shape rhetoric, drive policy and decision-making, and influence the transition from policy to practice. The categories will be familiar to readers of this journal – prohibitionism; the right of the individual to choose to use mood-altering substances as long as the use causes no harm to others; and between these two positions, a third category – harm reductionism. Giving unqualified definitions of prohibitionism and
the human rights-based approach, O’Mahony points out that individuals may use utility-based arguments to offer only partial support to one or other of these two perspectives. With regard to harm reductionism, O’Mahony identifies five variants, which derive from distinct rationales and lead to preferences for different interventions – a strict medical rationale; an expanded socially-oriented approach that embraces drug substitution treatment; a public health approach; a social justice-inspired approach; and a theory- and evidence-based anti-prohibitionism approach. O’Mahony argues that all but the last variant are compatible with the prohibitionist perspective on drug use.

O’Mahony points out that the prohibitionist approach almost inevitably depends on statutory controls to prohibit the substances in question. In Chapters Three and Four he outlines the different categories of drug-related criminal offences obtaining in Ireland, where the prohibitionist approach is enshrined in the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 and 1984 (MDA). Within this legislative framework there are a series of “inherent” drug-related crimes, including the importation, manufacture, distribution, selling and possession, other than with a legitimate prescription, of most psychoactive substances. A further distinction is made between offences for possession and for possession and supply, the latter being subject to more severe penalties.

Over and above the inherent drug-related criminal offences under the MDA, O’Mahony points to a raft of “non-inherent” drug-related offences. He uses a three-part categorisation, devised by US researchers in the 1980s, to understand these “non-inherent” drug-related crimes. The three categories are economic compulsive-acquisitive crimes, motivated by the need to pay for illicit drugs; pharmacological, including crimes driven by the psychological and behavioural effects of drugs, or crimes of abuse and neglect of dependants associated with states of indifference and irresponsibility caused by prolonged drug use; and systemic crimes, including crimes of intimidation and violence to protect criminal drug-related projects, or financial crimes such as tax evasion, money laundering or smuggling.

With the analytic categories mapped out, O’Mahony tracks the implementation of drug-related laws as an indicator of the extent to which Ireland’s drugs policy has followed a prohibitionist agenda. Despite the introduction of harm-reduction measures from the late 1980s, and measures to alleviate social deprivation in areas with a high prevalence of problem drug use from the mid 1990s, O’Mahony argues that Ireland’s drug policy remained firmly embedded in the prohibitionist camp. Thus, the provisions for alternative sanctions to imprisonment included in the MDA (1977) were never fully implemented, and the MDA (1984) rowed back on these provisions and strengthened the law enforcement provisions. From this time on, O’Mahony argues, there was a bifurcation in Ireland’s drugs policy – emphasising both demand reduction, including “constructive and supportive treatment and preventative approaches,” and supply reduction, including “punitive, deterrent and condemnatory approaches” (p. 104).

From the start O’Mahony declares his underlying purpose is to highlight the failures of Ireland’s prohibitionist drug policy – either to reduce the availability and use of illicit drugs or to contain the associated costs in terms of health, productivity and the criminal justice system. He calls for the abolition of drug prohibition, arguing that the use of drugs is a human right. He suggests that recognition of this right would bring two sets of gains – “negative” gains by eliminating or diminishing the ills associated with prohibition, and “positive” gains by changing the relationship between citizens and the state, and thereby strengthening the impact of drug education, treatment and social relations.

While O’Mahony’s approach and forensic analysis of the content of Ireland’s illicit
drug policy is new and fascinating, it is regrettable that he does not apply the same incisiveness to his consideration of the policy process. He believes that the prevailing prohibitionist perspective is firmly entrenched; the only means of moving away from it is to deliver a “knock-out blow.” He draws on Kuhn’s theory of scientific revolutions to anticipate the day when a “tipping point” will be reached: the old paradigm will be thrown out, replaced by a new paradigm which better fits the available facts.

While Kuhn sought to describe how the transition between paradigms might occur within the “scientific community,” O’Mahony offers no such discussion of how the tipping point might be reached in the political community. It is questionable how useful Kuhn’s theory, devised to explain scientific progress, can be in explaining the process of changing what is essentially a political choice rather than a scientific theory. While the aspiration is widely expressed that policy should be “evidence-based,” it is also recognised that policy decisions are based on consideration of a host of non-scientific considerations such as economic, social and cultural factors.

There is a growing body of research and modelling of the policy change process that O’Mahony might have drawn on. Moreover, researchers have used these models to explain drug policy preferences and processes of change in drug policy, for example in the European Union (Elvins 2003), Switzerland (Kübler 2001) and western Australia (Lenton 2007). It would be fascinating to see O’Mahony apply the same degree of detailed analysis and innovative thinking that he has devoted to the content of Ireland’s drug policy over the past three decades to the process of policy change over the same period and on into the twenty-first century.

REFERENCES


Reviewed by Thomas R. Pegram, Loyola University Maryland

Garrett Peck is a journalist of libertarian tendencies who writes in the alcohol trade press. His first book, The Prohibition Hangover: Alcohol in America from Demon Rum to Cult Cabernet, reflects the insights and the limitations of that perspective. He offers helpful observations on the organizational structure of the beer, wine, and spirits industries; discourses knowledgeably (although sometimes superficially) on alcohol marketing and advertising; presents a nice primer on whiskey in all its variations; discusses the rise of craft beer and wine culture as a counterforce to business consolidation and bland taste in the alcohol industry; and covers with an insider’s grasp the legal barriers that in many states prevent the direct shipment of wine from vintners to consumers. Firmly on the side of moderate drinkers, consumers, and the unrestrained market, Peck also deplores the regulation of alcohol that he sees as the sour consequence of Prohibi-
tion. The “prohibition hangover” of the title is the contradictory status of beverage alcohol as both a “dangerous controlled substance” and “an everyday consumer product that two-thirds of American adults enjoy” (p. 257).

According to Peck, the legacy of the temperance movement has been, first, a cumbersome and ineffective government regulatory mechanism that inhibits the alcohol industry and obstructs the reasonable enjoyment of alcoholic beverages by moderate drinkers. From his survey of the uneven regulation of interstate wine shipment, federal taxes, local option laws, Sunday sale restrictions, and state control of retail liquor sales, Peck assembles an indictment of what he considers the rickety, nonsensical impairment of free commerce in alcoholic beverages, commodities that are culturally accepted and safely used by most Americans. Additionally, Peck argues that the demonization of alcohol embodied by prohibition and its regulatory aftermath has created an unhealthy attitude toward alcohol use that downplays the health benefits of moderate drinking and contributes to the American practice of binge drinking among teenagers and young adults. Rather than introducing young people to moderate use of alcohol as a valued component of family life, the artificially high American minimum drinking age of twenty-one years introduces an air of mystery, adventure, and rebellion among young drinkers that encourages unhealthy and excessive drinking. Public health advocates including Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, and the Center for Science and the Public Interest also come in for criticism. Peck acknowledges the contributions to highway safety and public health of these advocacy groups, but argues that their neo-prohibitionist inclinations have led them to seek unnecessary state controls over the majority of moderate drinkers rather than focusing on the one in eight problem drinkers who misuse alcohol. Peck advocates, instead, lowering the minimum drinking age to eighteen to normalize drinking as a cultural practice, scaling back federal and state regulations to allow free commerce in alcohol, and enlisting alcohol producers, in a model based on the spirits industry, to educate children from an early age in the responsible and sociable use of alcohol.

_The Prohibition Hangover_ is an informed account of the business of drink, a survey of current American drinking practices, and a public-policy manifesto. It is not a work of history, although Peck constructs his argument upon a foundation of historical assertions about prohibition, government regulation of alcohol, and historical patterns of drinking. To a degree, it is not even fair to criticize the book from a historical perspective. The character of Peck’s argument and the style of his prose are popular rather than scholarly. Peck writes informally, sprinkling the text with personal anecdotes, references to films and movies (although there are no systematic analyses of either), jokes and asides. Some of the early chapters (for instance, his account of his experience on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail) read like short magazine pieces. Indeed, the approach of the book has more in common with such gonzo journalistic explorations of popular historical themes as Tony Horwitz’s entertaining and insightful _Confederates in the Attic_ (Vintage, 1998) than it does with conventional historical or public policy studies, although even in this regard _The Prohibition Hangover_ is looser in construction and less probing than Horwitz’s volume.

Even though historians may find merit in Peck’s criticisms of interstate commerce in wine, the minimum drinking age, and other matters, key elements of _The Prohibition Hangover_ rest on historical foundations and, unfortunately, most scholars will find the historical material in the book fairly unsubstantial. Peck is aware of the basic outlines of historical drinking patterns in the United States, temperance reform, Prohibition and its aftermath, but, possibly because he is more interested in present concerns, he is
casual to the point of error in his treatment of the historical record. Thus, in his discussion of the Southern Baptist Convention’s abstemious stance on alcohol, Peck asserts that “there was no temperance movement in [the South] until the turn of the twentieth century.” (p. 186) Too little attention is given in Peck’s account of the alcohol industry to the divisions and animosities that historically hampered joint action from brewers, winemakers, and distillers. The complex forces that influenced excessive American drinking in earlier historical periods are mostly missing from Peck’s examination of current youthful binging. Furthermore, scholars may find Peck too representative of current alcohol trade thinking. His willingness to express as fact such marketing generalities as the assertion that “around 1980… taste became more important to American consumers than price,” which was buoyed by “a trend toward individualism” (pp. 67-68) will unsettle some skeptical scholars. Similarly, Peck’s argument that teen drinkers binge in natural rebellion to parental proscriptions against drinking yet conform to their parents’ drinking patterns seems logically incompatible. Still, Peck has assembled an array of interesting observations, experiences, and information that reveal the current landscape of American drinking practices and regulations. Although the book benefits from many interviews with producers and critics of alcohol, it is regrettable that Peck did not discuss his views with John C. Burnham or engage the latter’s challenging arguments in *Bad Habits* (NYU Press, 1993). As with fortified wine, that addition would bring punch and an extended shelf life.


Following on from his 2001 monograph on the relationship between *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, which argued for close links between drinking and sexual activity, Lynn Martin turns to a comparable study of alcohol consumption and acts of violence. The conceptual points of reference are modern scientific studies suggesting strong correlations and anthropological findings on cultural variations of the effects of drinking. After a survey of several European regions, Martin comes to the intriguing conclusion that drinking may have served mainly as a social lubricator and inhibitor of aggression; in other words, that the grave concerns over alcohol consumption voiced by early modern moralists, clergymen and governments should not be taken at face value.

The book, based on printed primary sources and an extensive range of secondary literature on England, France and Italy, is structured in nice chapters: (1) the field of research, (2) condemnations of alcohol abuse by contemporary authors, (3) levels of alcohol consumption, (4) recreational drinking, (5-6) disorder associated with certain places and individuals, (7) patterns of violence, (8) forms of regulation and (9) concluding remarks. Many readers will find the tables on consumption levels presented in chapter 3 – differentiated by information deriving from excise records, household accounts and agreed rations – particularly helpful (although the results are unnecessarily obscured by the use of different measures for wine and beer). While per-capita figures for present-day Italy, for example, hover around 60 litres, they could easily have exceeded 300 litres in the Age of the Renaissance (43). Even peasants drank alcohol regularly, albeit often in the form of weaker beverages like small beer or *mezzo vino*. Given such quantities and the presumed link between alcohol and aggression,
early modern societies should have been swamped by violence, but the sources paint a
different, more ambivalent picture: some areas (like Essex) recorded high proportions
of drink-related brawls and prosecutions for keeping disorderly alehouses, others show
very modest levels indeed (Martin finds a mere 1-2 cases per year in seventeenth-
century Warwickshire).

The comparative perspective produces interesting results. English drinkers, faced
with the loudest Puritan denouncements and a criminalization of drunkenness by the
Tudor state, may have consumed less than their French and (particularly) Italian coun-
terparts, where public attitudes appear to have been more relaxed. Early modern moral
panics about the problem, furthermore, seem to have coincided with a gradual decline
in absolute intakes and surprisingly low levels of violence directly attributable to drink.
Does this, Martin asks, constitute early evidence for the relative harmlessness of “wet”
drinking cultures (where alcoholic beverages accompany each meal and social transac-
tion) compared to “dry” regimes (where people binge-drink on selected occasions)?

The public house – identified by anthropologists as a safe “third place” of sociability
alongside home and work – plays the most conspicuous part in Martin’s discussions of
recreational drinking, disorderly places/persons and sites of violence. In line with re-
cent research on these hubs of social exchange in pre-modern England, France and the
Holy Roman Empire (the latter only selectively noted in the bibliography), the book
rightly stresses their “positive” contribution to people’s “jollification, celebration, and
socialization” (p. 220). What sparked the countless tavern brawls documented in court
records was the perceived need to defend personal and collective reputations rather
than the consumption of alcohol as such. To modern eyes, many of these conflicts
“might seem foolish, senseless acts, but the healing of wounded pride, the prevention
of public humiliation, the preservation of rights, and the defense of space were integral
to everyone’s sense of honor” (p. 174). Alongside, readers find countless colourful
examples of debauchery, as when Sir Charles Sedley and friends caused a London riot
in 1663, when “putting down their breeches they excrementized into the street; which
being done, Sedley stripped himself naked, and with eloquence preached blasphemy
to the people” (pp. 147-8).

There is thus much to praise in *Alcohol, Violence, and Disorder*: the long-term per-
spective, the comparative approach, the perusal of French and Italian research, the
engagement with anthropological / scientific insights and the formulation of stimulat-
ing conclusions. On the other hand, the book raises two methodological issues. First,
can scholars simply juxtapose figures, incidents and results from so many heterogene-
ous contexts, given the acknowledged problems of early modern statistics and source
survival? Martin dispenses with in-depth case studies of his own, choosing to rely
on strings of isolated examples, sometimes relating to fourteenth-century Italian cit-
cies, sometimes to seventeenth-century English tracts, while the consumption tables in
chapter three extract information from works with wildly differing topics, empirical
bases and analytical tools. Second, how reliable (and original) can a survey be when
it explicitly discards archival sources (p. 5)? Given the wealth of unexplored evidence
in Europe’s repositories, such a categorical exclusion calls for at least greater justifica-
tion. Minor concerns include the unreflected use of the phrase “traditional Europe” and
the blurred analytical boundary between disorderly places and persons.

In spite of these reservations, the book forms an important and timely contribution
to the emerging field of early modern drinking cultures. Martin’s work alerts us to
difficulties in the cross-cultural definition of “drunkenness,” the questionable nature
of common assumptions about the effects of alcohol consumption and the need to

Reviewed by W. J. Rorabaugh, University of Washington, Seattle.

This excellent book shrewdly and admirably serves two distinct purposes. First, it narrowly chronicles the history of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland from its founding in 1946 to the present. Second, it broadly explores how and why AA has functioned and continues to function as a highly successful mutual help organization amid shifting attitudes and practices concerning alcohol and alcohol abuse. While Shane Butler focuses on Ireland, the author offers numerous comparisons about what was happening with AA and alcohol treatment in the United States during the same years.

In 1935, Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, two men whose lives had been ruined by alcohol, founded AA in Akron, Ohio as a voluntary association where alcoholics could talk about their problems as they worked to become sober. Wilson embraced sobriety after a spiritual vision while drying out in a hospital. This personal conversion experience, as well as Wilson’s rural New England Protestant roots, led Wilson to put spirituality at AA’s center. AA worked hard to use spiritual language that could be accepted by people of all faiths or of no faith. Wilson had the AA “Big Book” (1939) vetted by the Catholic archdiocese of New York. The book, the Twelve Steps, and the Twelve Traditions provided an institutional structure for AA. The Twelve Traditions stressed anonymity, lack of hierarchy, and the autonomy of each AA group. Known only as Bill W. in his lifetime, Wilson was determined that AA would not become a cult.

AA arrived in Ireland in 1946 by chance. After Conor Flynn, an Irish-American Catholic member of AA who was visiting relatives in Ireland, read a newspaper article that mentioned AA, he decided to bring AA to Dublin. This AA group became the first in Europe. He recruited Richard Perceval, a Protestant who had been drying out at a Dublin mental hospital. From the beginning, the AA in Ireland included Catholics and Protestants.

In 1947, Sackville O’Conor-Mallins, a retired British army officer and a devout Catholic, joined the Dublin AA group. Realizing that AA needed Catholic Church support, he avoided Dublin’s conservative archbishop, who disliked non-Church sponsored groups, and instead cultivated academics and young priests, especially those in training at Maynooth College. O’Conor-Mallins also worked with the Catholic Pioneer Total Abstinence Association. In 1972 this tireless AA promoter had an audience with Paul VI in Rome in which the pope endorsed AA’s work.

At the time AA was founded, the disease concept of alcoholism had gained prominence in the United States. Prohibitionists had called drinking a sin, and repeal advocates neutralized this argument by declaring moderate drinking to be normal. The unfortunate minority of chronic drunks were said to have succumbed to the disease of alcoholism. After 1933, the disease concept dominated public policy in the United States. Although many early AA members personally subscribed to the disease concept, AA neither accepted nor rejected the idea. In 1946, AA in the United States spurned working with Marty Mann’s National Council on Alcoholism, because it ag-
gressively promoted the disease concept.

In conservative Ireland, moral views about alcohol lasted much longer, and the disease concept did not gain wide currency until the 1940s through the 1960s. While AA took no position, AA members helped spread the disease concept. Sackville O’Conor-Mallins enthusiastically backed creating the Irish National Council on Alcoholism, a group based on the disease concept, in 1966. However, he and other AA members in Ireland gradually became disillusioned with INCA, which folded in 1988. AA in Ireland also had to work with the mental hospitals that cared for large numbers of alcohol abusers in Ireland during most of the twentieth century. Ireland had a high percentage of its population in such facilities. As the disease concept replaced moral views, the number of persons in treatment in hospitals soared.

Professional attitudes, however, varied. Psychiatrists in overburdened public hospitals expressed skepticism about the disease concept. Not so the private mental hospitals. In 1957, the Irish government adopted voluntary health insurance for the middle class, and psychiatrists who ran the two largest private mental hospitals in Dublin, St. Patrick’s (Protestant) and St. John of God’s (Catholic), persuaded the government to pay for unlimited hospital stays for alcohol abusers. This was good business for these hospitals, because patients cost little to maintain. By 1984, 25 percent of all admissions were alcohol-related. In 1958, the number had been under six percent. As Butler notes, belief in the disease concept and the curative power of inpatient treatment rose directly with the availability of government funds.

By the 1970s, the World Health Organization denounced the disease concept. Global data showed that alcohol problems correlated with per capita alcohol consumption. In other words, all drinkers were potentially at risk for developing severe problems. Therefore, the best way to reduce alcohol abuse was to adopt a public health approach and reduce alcohol intake with higher taxes, fewer outlets, and other restrictions. Advocates of a public health approach also recommended cutting expenditures on abusers, whose condition could not be helped much by medical treatment. In 1984, the Irish government limited the number of days for inpatient treatment that insurance would pay.

AA successfully negotiated among these shifting views and policies. AA in Ireland grew from one group of fifteen members in Dublin in 1946 to 13,000 members in 750 groups by 2007. Perceval and O’Conor-Mallins founded a group in Belfast in 1948 that included both Protestants and Catholics, and AA held its first All-Ireland convention in 1958. Even during the Troubles, AA in Ireland crossed religious and political barriers. Although AA in Ireland did eventually employ paid staff, it avoided top-down management of any local AA group. In the last twenty years, both per capita income and per capita alcohol consumption in Ireland have increased rapidly. Alcohol policy remains torn between the public health model that urges lower overall consumption and increasing emphasis on biomedical treatment of individuals who abuse alcohol. Amid this ambiguity, AA offers another kind of refuge to persons in Ireland who have alcohol problems.


Arthur R. Taylor’s initial excursion into publishing his extensive knowledge of pub
games appeared in 1976. Only one other author, Timothy Finn, had previously trodden this path although a publication had appeared in the popular series “Know the Game” two decades earlier. Finn did not publish any further research and thus it was Taylor who was left to more or less single-handedly strive to preserve for posterity the history and development of individual classes of British pub games and their variants and how and where they are (or were) played. Sixteen years later Taylor’s second foray into his subject, The Guinness Book of Traditional Pub Games, was published. This was a significantly revised and updated version of his earlier work and featured many contemporary illustrations and images.

One of the first scholars to examine the role of the public house as a place of recreation was Robert W. Malcolmson but it was Peter Clark’s research relating to the English alehouse that expanded our knowledge not only with regards to the social history of the English inn but also of the games played within and without the inn walls up to 1830. Subsequent scholars including David W. Gutzke and Paul Jennings have revealed more about pubs and pub culture in Britain; their work including important references to both indoor and outdoor pub recreations. However, Taylor is the only researcher currently rigorously tracking down both surviving pub games in situ (and participating in each one) whilst also maintaining his schedule of archival work.

Taylor is very clear what his book is not about. Initially it came as a surprise that blood sports, such as cock fighting, bull and bear baiting and throwing at cocks which were generally centred round the public house for many years did not qualify; nor do boxing, football and cricket. But as Taylor explains, these were activities that often took place at or near pubs, but were not pub games as such. However, he does acknowledge that many of these activities were frequently organised and promoted by publicans and does therefore pays them more than lip service within the general overview of pub games in Chapter One.

Despite the Royal Commission on Licensing reporting in 1931 that games had a definite value in as much as they distracted customers from the “mere business of drinking” some pubs games were banned by licensing benches during the interwar period because, in the justices’ minds, games did exactly the opposite (darts being banned in Liverpool at that time for that very reason). Taylor cites numerous examples of publicans being in trouble with the law primarily for allowing a whole range of games to be played for money or ‘money’s worth’ which constituted gaming.

The pleasure in reading Taylor’s book is his attention to detail. His subjects range from the immensely popular pandemic game of darts through skittles and quoits, ring games, bowling games, games where you shove something, games where you push something else, games involving throwing, spinning and twisting. These all constitute “traditional” games but Taylor does not overlook the now ubiquitous pub quiz and more recent arrivals including dwile flonking (in which a “flonker” wets his “dwile” and hurls it at an opponent whose task it is to avoid the projectile) and bog snorkelling (which one hopes is self-explanatory).

Chapter Twenty Four titled “Lost games” is particularly poignant. Arthur bemoans the loss of once popular pub pastimes including “Knur and Spell,” “Nipsy,” “Peggy” and “Lawn Billiards.” In 1976, when Taylor’s first book was published, the Knur and Spell World Championship was held in a field at the Spring Rock Tavern, Greetland, near Halifax. Despite this, in the intervening years, the game has joined the league of the “lost.” Taylor is ever hopeful that these games are still being played in some hidden corner of the nation which he has yet to visit and that further research will reveal that rumours of their demise were unfounded.
In *Played at the Pub* Taylor has preserved for posterity details of numerous games that have now disappeared from pub bars and back yards and rigorously researched many others (still played) so that their true origins (and how to play them) are permanently recorded. It is also significant contribution to the study of both pub culture and the social history of the working class and their relationship to pubs and alcohol.

Pub games constituted part of what Richard Holt has described as the “submerged tradition” at the other end of the social scale. They were games played by people who did not write or occupy positions of power and therefore they failed to leave any imprint on history. Thus Taylor’s initial research back in the 1960s and 1970s was based on fragments and enthusiasm, an enthusiasm which has developed into *Played at the Pub*, the most definitive work so far written on British pub games. Certainly, without Taylor’s research much of the knowledge imparted in his book would undoubtedly (like some of the games described) have been lost. Even so, after four decades of research, Taylor describes *Played at the Pub* as “an interim report.” It is hoped that interest in Taylor’s work will stimulate further scholarly research into the nature and purpose of pub games and their influence on issues surrounding working-class leisure and British pub culture.

**Endnotes**


Reviewed by Paul Jennings, University of Bradford, UK.

Andrew White’s book is another addition to what is a now very large number of local historical studies of drinking places. The vast majority of such studies are aimed principally at their local markets and have limited appeal to a wider audience interested in the subject matter. This study of Lancaster’s historic inns is one such. As do many similar works, it takes the form principally (almost two thirds of the book) of a gazetteer of all the drinking places recorded in the town over several centuries, preceded by supporting chapters. These chapters and the gazetteer are based on considerable research in primary sources, which are appropriately referenced. These include diaries, census returns, trade directories, newspapers and records of the borough of Lancas-
ter. Unfortunately, as White points out, the latter do not include records of licensing. Licensing matters, and in particular the annual licensing (or brewster) sessions were, however, generally reported in some detail in local newspapers, particularly in the nineteenth century, and one wonders why White did not make more systematic use of them. He also appears to have overlooked records relating to the administration of the 1904 Licensing Act, which created a mechanism for closing pubs deemed to be redundant through the payment of financial compensation to their owners and the publican. These form part of the records of the Lancashire quarter sessions and provide detail on Lancaster pubs affected. Neither the records nor that legislation are mentioned. Nevertheless, the book overall is grounded in primary research.

Turning to the introductory chapters, one is in fact devoted to sources – “how do we know?” – although it is placed rather oddly between chapters on innkeepers and inns respectively, but useful nonetheless and the illustrations of primary sources are helpful. The other chapter, which begins the book, is on the services provided by inns and looks at a range of these from provision for travellers, of food and of other commercial functions such as for markets, carriers, or as sites for auctions. It looks too at their important role at election time in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, using an interesting list from 1772 of the town’s inns used for “treating” voters and nineteenth century enquiries into electoral corruption. Such evidence certainly adds to our knowledge of the history of the inn, but taken together these chapters have a number of weaknesses, even making allowance for limitations of space. Perhaps strangely, given that the author has published on the history of Lancaster, there is no adequate context provided of the town’s development in which to situate the history of its drinking places. The only map is a reconstruction from plans of the late seventeenth century. The chapters treat their subjects thematically, covering the whole period surveyed to the present day but with sometimes uncertain treatment of the chronology as we pass over the centuries in sentences. The twentieth century is particularly neglected. There is nothing, for example, on efforts to “improve” the pub and whether they took place in Lancaster. Although the different names of establishments are identified – inn, beerhouse, hotel, pub and so on, there is no clear sense conveyed of how the institution has evolved over time. There are errors. To give one example: the 1552 Act which introduced licensing by magistrates was directed at alehouses not inns, only later did the latter become subject to its provisions. As Peter Clark’s study of the alehouse is listed in the bibliography, both the evolution of the public house and this particular error could have been addressed. To give another example: the Licensing Act of 1872 is cited as giving magistrates a power to refuse a licence to delinquent publicans, a power which they had in fact possessed for more than three centuries.

Points like this, and indeed much of the commentary, could have been given more authority by a wider reading of the literature, such as Brian Harrison on drink and the temperance movement in the nineteenth century, which is not listed in the bibliography, but is surely essential for anyone looking at this subject. And although this book is clearly aimed at a popular market, in his acknowledgements White himself notes the need for academic rigour. There are also presentational infelicities. The section on travellers, for example, consists largely of quotations from some of them, whereas a discussion of the inn and the traveller which incorporated their observations would have been more effective. Similarly the basic question of numbers of public houses is addressed only by a box containing some examples, again with no real supporting discussion.

In the end then, as I said at the outset, White’s study falls into that group of local
studies of drinking places which are really only of interest to a local market. For that market it has the merits of being relatively inexpensive, nicely illustrated, offering a range of interesting pieces of evidence based on original research and providing a listing of all the recorded pubs. But even that market would have benefited particularly from a clearer sense both of the history of Lancaster and the history of the pub. For a general readership beyond Lancaster, and certainly for the likely readers of this review with a more specialist interest, it has little to offer.