

Walking in the Canterbury night-time economy: Drinking destination or Destination drinking?

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“space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers” (de Certeau, 1984: 117)

DRINKING DESTINATION (fly-bys):

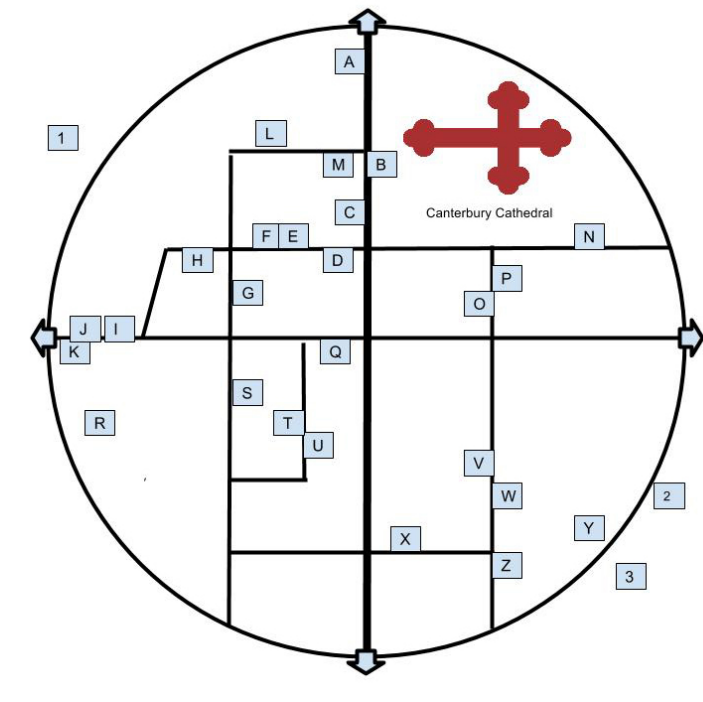
- Urban → inside the city walls
- Extreme drinking practices → volume of consumption vs speed of consumption → ‘shots’ of spirits/liqueur → ‘downing’
- Vertical drinking → standing drinking → ‘quick’
- Transient clientele
- Hard management



DESTINATION DRINKING (habitués):

- Suburban → outside the city walls
- Connoisseurship → savouring → taste → refinement → high strength ales
- Horizontal drinking → seated drinking → ‘steady’
- Porous community
- Soft management

At around two p.m. on a Saturday afternoon, ten men of mixed ages descend upon ‘The Mitre’, approaching the main front bar room upon entry to the pub. The pub is empty except for me and this group. These men have already been drinking in other pubs around the city and they tell me that they are ready for some more: “Five rum and cokes for the lads, and three pints of Stella. Two of the ale,” requests the notional leader of the group, pointing to the Tribute ale pump. I begin to work on the pints, and ask whether ice and citrus is required in the rum and cokes: “no, don’t worry with that, they’ll drink these and we’ll be off for more elsewhere – this is just a fly-by”. I produce the drinks and the older men stand at the bar, discussing the pub with me and other places that they plan to go to through the afternoon. The younger men stand near to the window and the juke box, putting money in the machine and playing up-to-date chart music. They drink their rum and cokes quickly, before going outside for a cigarette, whilst the older men continue to stand drinking their pints more steadily. After around ten minutes, and as the older men finish their drinks, the younger men reappear in the pub and order five shots of Sambuca “for the road”. I serve these, and the young men encourage each other to ‘down’ them quickly in one gulp whilst the older men laugh acceptingly at their youthful exuberance. The group finish their drinks, say goodbye to me, and leave the pub to walk up the street to their next “fly-by” destination.



“Among the types it would be interesting to study are: the shopgirl, the policeman, the peddler, the cab-man, the nightwatchman, the clairvoyant, the vaudeville performer, the quack doctor, the bartender, the ward boss, the strike-breaker, the labour agitator, the school teacher, the reporter, the stockbroker, the pawnbroker; all of these are the characteristic products of the conditions of city life; each, with its special experience, insight and point of view determines for each vocational group and for the city as a whole its individuality”
(Park, 1915: 586)

At around ten p.m. on a Thursday evening, eight regulars are sat around the main front bar room of ‘The Vines’; the publican is sat in their habitual spot opposite the entrance. A sixty-something delivery driver suggests that the “Reprobates” – two white, professional forty-something males with young families – are due in. At 10.15 one of these two “Reprobates” arrives carrying some paper work and his diary and surveys the ale pumps. We discuss the merits of the various real ales on the pumps, one of which has been judged a bit insipid. The “Reprobate” selects a pint of Dark Star beer at over 5%, as well as putting one in the wood for the other “Reprobate”. He sits at the spare stool between Paul the Punk, his dog and me at the bar and talks about the work he has had to do that evening. His friend arrives at Last Orders and greets everyone warmly. He engages in banter as he waits for his pint; he has made an excuse to slip out the house for a late drink, whilst his companion has been vague about what time he finished work. The “Reprobates” retire to the table nearest the bar and the newcomer ‘necks’ the pint, trying to catch up with his colleague. Before eleven he is back at the bar and orders two pints and, having checked whether the bartender is in a hurry to get off, puts a third round in the wood, whilst sharing in the conversation between the half dozen regulars still at the bar. Everyone finishes their drinks by 11.20 and leaves as the barman tidies up. Cheerful farewells are said as we walk home our separate ways.

- “[Ethnography is] grounded in a commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation” (Atkinson *et al.*, 2001: 4)
- “Ethnography is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given ‘field’ or setting, and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting” (Brewer, 2000: 11)

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