

BOOK REVIEWS

**Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy**

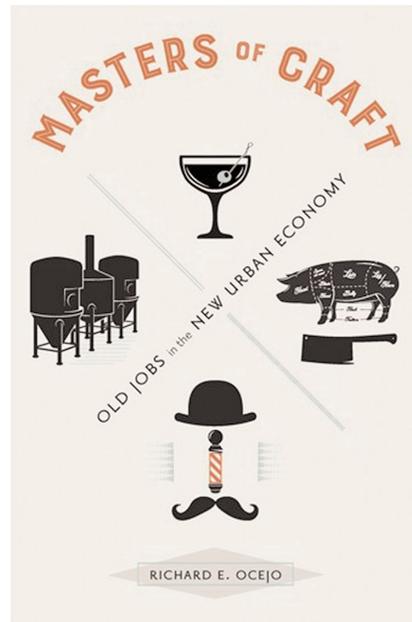
**By Ocejo, R.**  
**Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press**  
**2017, Pp.xxi + 344, £24.95**  
**ISBN 978 0 691 16549 3**

Let me state upfront that I am recommending a book in which the words beer, brewing, and brewery do not feature prominently (well, at all). The author, Richard Ocejo, is a Sociologist at the City University of New York, and he draws skillfully on his training for a deep dive into four occupations in New York that are currently experiencing a renaissance: distilling, cocktail bars, whole animal butchery, and upscale barbering. His central thesis is that while these (and similar) professions became increasingly deskilled over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, lately, segments of these four markets have been imbued with a ‘renewed sense of craft and craftsmanship’ that is transforming the nature and status of these jobs. Ocejo sets out to explain how and why this is occurring.

The book is divided into two sections. Part 1 consists of four chapters, each devoted to a specific industry: Chapter 1: *The Cocktail Renaissance*; Chapter 2: *Distilling Authenticity*; Chapter 3: *Working on Men*; Chapter 4: *Show the Animal*. Each chapter explores how parts of these fields are reconnecting with their artisanal roots.

Part 2 also has four chapters, but here the goal is to draw connections between these seemingly disparate areas. For example, Chapter 5 is titled *How Middle Class Kids Want Working Class Jobs* and it discusses how college educated workers have begun to move into, and help redefine, some of these occupations that over time had become viewed as commoditized, blue collar jobs. Yet, this process has created some tensions. In many fields,

the cumulative effect of decades of mass production was a systemic loss of knowledge regarding traditional methods and practices. If a new generation of consumers and workers is interested in razor shaves or traditional butchery, but few old-school practitioners remain, who can pass along the past wisdom and techniques? In most cases, traditional craftsmanship never died out entirely, but finding current practitioners willing and able to teach apprentices is not always easy. A particularly interesting case concerns whole animal butchery. While this profession had become increasingly deskilled in the USA, many butchers in Mexico still learned the traditional techniques, and the two most skilled butchers at Dickson’s Farmstand Meats, an artisanal meat shop in New York City’s Chelsea Market, were from Mexico. Ocejo documents how several



younger college-educated Americans, who were interested in learning about artisanal butchery, effectively apprenticed with their older, more traditionally trained colleagues. What is different in this instance of apprenticeship is that the newly trained, college-educated workers appear to have the more promising career prospects because they better understand their customers and how to interact with them. Technical skills matter, but only to a certain degree.

Chapter 7 ('Service Teaching') looks at the interplay between workers and consumers in these new fields: '... people who go to cocktail bars, upscale men's barber-shops, and whole animal butcher shops often want more out of their experience than the commonplace. With omnivorous tastes, they want a unique product and service. They want to learn more about what they are consuming ...' (p.192). In this new world, producers and consumers are both relearning some of what was (more) widely known decades earlier. Ocejo discusses the interplay between increasingly knowledgeable workers and differentially informed consumers. He classifies consumers into three types: experienced, curious, and lost, and argues that these new professionals must be able to assess what type of consumer is before them and to interact appropriately. For example, at a craft cocktail bar, the bartender (most don't prefer the term mixologist, the reader learns) has to quickly get a sense of what the customer wants and why they are at this particular venue: do they know what type of bar they are in, and if so, how deep is their knowledge about craft spirits and cocktails? These bartenders have to be able to talk intelligently with the experts, satisfy the curious, and put at ease the uninitiated.

I was trained in business history and economics, so for me, research involves archives and data sets. Ocejo is a sociologist and he provides a detailed appendix that explains how he gathered the primary material for this book. He spent several years developing relationships with key individuals in these four areas. He apprenticed himself (to varying degrees) to a distillery and a craft butchery, and he was a participant observer for several years at upscale barbers and cocktail bars, meaning that he spent lots of time visiting and talking with workers and customers in these barbershops and bars.

This approach, while yielding in-depth understandings of a few places, has some limitations. First, the exam-

ples here are all from New York City and New York: while it is clear that there are some interesting parallels with other cities in the US (and abroad), the author doesn't draw them. Second, Ocejo is much more focused on explaining what is happening than why. In a rich discussion on consumer types he writes, 'Service work at these unique businesses is more than just providing something for consumers. It is how omnivorous tastes get inculcated, and forms a key foundation for the professional identities of these new elite service workers' (p 193). Unfortunately, Ocejo raises but does not fully address the issue of how and why omnivorous tastes have begun to emerge.

Overall, though, this is an excellent book, and Ocejo's approach is ripe for extension to many fields, perhaps none more so than craft beer.

MARTIN STACK

### **20th Century Pub: From Beer House to Booze Bunker**

**By Boak, J. and Bailey, R.**

**St. Albans: The Homewood Press**

**2017, Pp.250, £16.99**

**ISBN 978 0 9572787 2 1**

This is a study of the pub in the 20<sup>th</sup>, now last, century by two award-winning writers for magazines and websites, including CAMRA, the Brewery History Society and *The Guardian* and authors of *Brew Britannia*, which traced the story of beer from the 1960s to the present day (reviewed in *Brewery History* (2014) number 157). Having asserted in an Introduction the importance and interest of their subject, both as a key English institution and a contested one, the book's chapters are organised around a particular theme or development in the twentieth-century story of the pub. These constitute, in effect, essays on their subject, each more or less self-contained.

A short Prologue summarises the pre-history of the pub and shows clearly enough how 'the idea of the pub had coagulated from a soup of different types of establishment' (p.18), including inns, alehouses, taverns, gin shops and beer houses. Perhaps curiously, whilst the point at which the term public house came into general use is identified, towards the end of the seventeenth

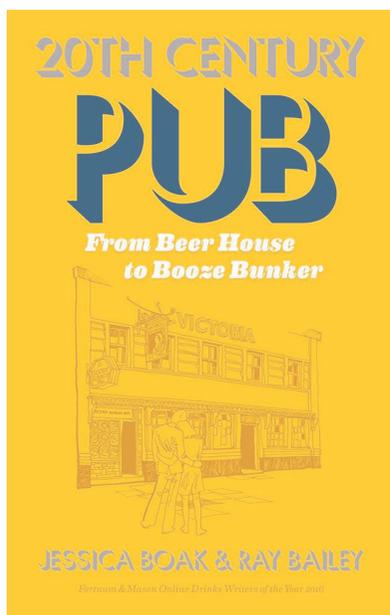
century, that of pub is not; in fact not until the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Nor is that of the adoption of the 'local' towards the end of the 1930s, but more particularly during the Second World War, although the propaganda film *Down at the Local* is mentioned. The chapter also examines briefly opposition to the pub in a temperance movement whose legacy persisted long after its late-Victorian heyday. Only within the chapter's brief compass might a bit more usefully have been said about the development of the brewing industry to this point and in particular the growth of the tied-house system.

There follows a chapter on the early twentieth-century pub, beginning with the well-known study by Mass Observation of the pub in Worktown (actually Bolton, Lancashire), published in 1943, before shifting the focus to the 'activists and innovators' (p.31) who sought in various ways to deal with the problems, as they saw them, associated with pubs. These included the simple fact that there were too many of them, or that they were disorderly drinking dens in which men spent the money that should have helped to give their families a decent life. The activities of magistrates, legislators, and a variety of reformers promoting schemes of so called disinterested management, which sought to remove from publicans the incentive to sell too much drink, are

detailed. Following on from this, the next chapter looks at the important changes resulting from the First World War, including moves to 'improve' the pub towards a more sober, food-oriented and family-friendly institution. Interesting here, as indeed elsewhere in the book, is first-hand comment on surviving examples of the type. The Second World War then receives attention, both the physical damage done to pubs and their role in sustaining morale, and there is interesting comment on issues of class and race which found expression in them, with attempts to segregate officers and men and the arrival of black GIs with the US forces. Finally, another interesting section looks at the prefab pubs which were erected.

The second half of the book continues the approach of taking a particular theme or development and again usefully includes the authors' personal observations. There is the theme pub, which begins with discussion of an early exemplar of the type - the Admiral Benbow in Penzance - used as a showcase by Roland Morris for his collection of nautical treasures and featuring him dressing up as a pirate, and provides further examples of the type, like Watney's Sir Christopher Wren done out in the style of a London coffee-house or the Chelsea Drugstore's attempt to recreate the Parisian original. Next is the CAMRA pub, which traces the real ale movement and associated pubs like the Firkin chain and looks at the activities *inter alia* of CAMRA itself, the Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood, the publication of Christopher Hutt's *The Death of the English Pub* and campaigns to preserve surviving Victorian pubs. We then have the Irish pub, like Bass's O'Neill's or Allied-Domecq's Scruffy Murphy's chain. If the reviewer may declare an interest here, the authors mention the Mannville Arms in Bradford, an old-fashioned, multi-roomed city-centre pub once much used by students and staff at the adjoining Art College, as well as working men and occasionally acts from the nearby Alhambra Theatre, which fell victim to the Scruffy treatment and, to complete the historical trajectory, later became a convenience store.

A chapter on the gastro pub in fact looks much more broadly at the subject of food in pubs, followed by one on the superpub and inevitably focusing in particular on Wetherspoon's, which has 'realised the dream of the improved pub' in its attention to food and to women and families (p.190). The whole issue of pub closures, about



which of course so much has been written, includes discussion of *inter alia* the role of the pub companies, community-owned pubs and the National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors. Once again, the authors nicely use examples and again, the argument is balanced, as here in a discussion on the 2011 Localism Act which introduced the 'assets of community value' designation. We end with the micropub and an 'unfashionably optimistic' (p.228) Epilogue, embracing the present diversity of the pub and its ever-changing nature and celebrating its unique and enduring pleasures of welcome and atmosphere.

The above is necessarily only a brief summary on the book's contents, intended to convey something of its coverage. Judging the book then in relation to its blurb, it indeed 'delves into the various guises of the English pub throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century' in essays which are informative, readable and entertaining, as one might expect from the authors, although efforts towards the latter qualities did occasionally make this reviewer at least wince a little, as when, to take just one example, late Victorian Liverpool magistrates 'removed their top hats' (p.33). As is not always the case with books of this nature about the pub, it does provide references, although their format is rather inconsistent. There is too a select bibliography and an index (but no Mannville). It is illustrated with historical and contemporary photographs and plans of pub interiors and even a cartoon from *Viz* on a so called Flat Roof Pub - The Bloodied Fist.

Judging it more broadly as a contribution to the history of the pub, however, it does have many limitations. Its approach means that large areas of its subject receive only brief or no mention. These include the people who ran pubs and what was involved in the job itself. Reference is made to the many books by former publicans on their life in the trade but these tend to be of only limited use to an understanding of the business. From whence were the thousands of publicans recruited into the trade, what did the job involve, what about their employment of staff and their relations with them, what were the respective experiences of tenants and managers, what were the rewards, financial or otherwise? In the end, too, there is little detailed discussion of the pub's customers, more particularly how they changed over the century, in relation to class, age and sex. Surprisingly too, there is little analysis of changes in the

ways in which people use pub spaces. The basics of talk, music and games may be enduring but the content and nature of all three changed enormously over the century. Or of the pub as a meeting place, for example of organisations such as friendly societies or trade unions, both of which used pubs widely in 1900 but ceased to do so. Or of such as canary breeders' clubs or the 100 fishing clubs that used the pubs of Edwardian Norwich. The importance of the wider context is stated but, perhaps inevitably given the book's approach, lacks depth.

All of this is reflected in the many works which do not feature in the references or the select bibliography and which it would take too long to itemise. One might mention though just on the customers, David Gutzke's book on *Women Drinking Out in Britain since the Early Twentieth Century* (2014), or Leslie Gofton and Michael Smith's sociological work. Or on the business aspects, the work, for example of Alistair Mutch, David Preece or J.D. Pratten.

Turning again to the blurb on the book's back cover, whilst it can certainly be recommended, as I have said, as informative, engaging and indeed entertaining, it is certainly not 'a definitive social history of a particularly English phenomenon'. That we await.

PAUL JENNINGS

### **Drunks: An American History**

**By Finan, C.M.**

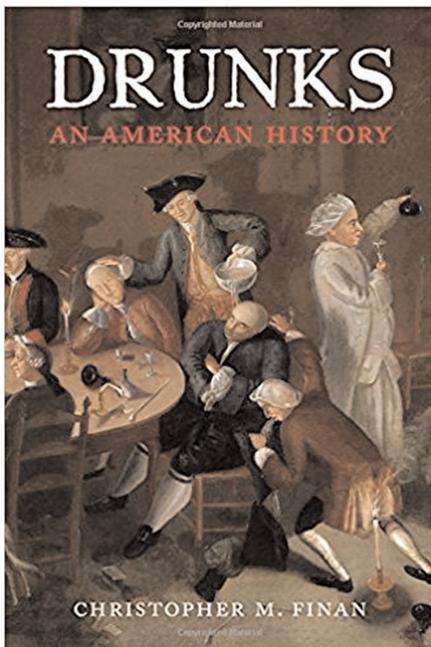
**Boston, MA: Beacon Press**

**2017, Pp.344, \$20.00**

**ISBN: 978-080701993-1**

Although the title of *Drunks: An American History* may conjure up a story of the raucous, celebratory, and painful experience of drunkenness, reinforced by the cover image of vomiting, passed out, and chaotic Revolution-era American elites, this book is not a light romp. It is a stern consideration of drunkenness as a problem, written by a self-described recovering alcoholic. As a consequence, readers should approach *Drunks*, if at all, knowing they will get a biased lecture on inebriety and attempts by individuals and organizations across American history, to curtail it. If you choose to read it in the pub, you will experience severe cognitive dissonance.

The book is accessibly written, and thus easy to read. It is light in serious academic language and scholarly concepts. As with many books steeped in American individualism, the book is focused on self-help, how drunks strove to get sober. The author, Christopher Finan, recounts first hand stories of drunkenness, all of which are written from the point of view of people who were problem drinkers and sought to get sober. We get the story of Handsome Lake, an indigenous (native American) man who sought to drag his people out of the drunkenness introduced by Europeans. He tells of the development of the Washingtonians, a self-help group of drunkards who sought to pull their mostly working class brethren out of drunkenness. The establishment of inebriety homes, new disease concepts, medical (or pseudo-medical) approaches such as the Keeley Gold Cure, and various missions to help drunks get sober also make their appearance before an extended look at what appears to be the main focus of the book, the development and expansion of American self-help *par excellence*: Alcoholics Anonymous. He finishes with a brief reflection of the academic debates about what alcoholism is, what causes it, how important neurochemistry is to treatment, and whether abstinence and self help is the best approach to what the author anachronistically labelled a 'disease' well before scientific literature did.



The book is a straightforward set of narratives of drunks trying to get sober. It draws uncritically upon many of the same literary tropes that drove the temperance stories of *Twelve Nights in the Barroom* and any number of self-immolating tracts and speeches at temperance rallies. Nolan extracts at length from several pivotal stories of drunks, especially from the 'Big Book' of Alcoholics Anonymous and hagiographic biographies of historic figures such as Francis Keeley and noted celebrity addicts like Betty Ford and the founders of A.A.

Yet at the same time it must be approached with caution. The selection seems based upon what social scientists call a convenience sample, that is, use what is available. So he extracts and summarizes those heroic first-hand accounts, with little attempt to contextualize or critically assess the details. The bias is clear. The many cases of people dragging themselves from the gutter, of intense opposition by the drinks industry, of families torn asunder, which are so familiar if you've read temperance literature, are reproduced without asking if they are actually true or exaggerated for effect. Any story of heroic conquest of adversity is based upon these sorts of tropes, yet just reproducing them does not mean they are accurate. The politics of temperance drove a distorted view of the intensity of drunkenness. Unlike much of the excellent literature on drinking in America, this book does not stop to ask if there might be some exaggeration for effect. As a result there are amazing stories of self help, some backsliding that is necessary for any story of overcoming adversity (internalized and externalized) and then ultimate, if temporary, success. It is a triumphalist analysis a perspective which risks distortion. Even when the final chapter, 'waves of drunkenness' looks at how the self help movement seems to be waning under the pressure of clinical scientific advancements, Finan's not original thought that such movements ebb and flow, merely reproduces the idea that Jack Blocker explored in a more sophisticated critical way in his 1989 *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform* (which was not, by the way, cited by the author).

This, really is the main problem with the book. It is written as if few other histories have gone before it. When Finan does reference other historical analyses, he uses them for details in the story, not for critical perspective. Most of the stories lack context. Add to that the very anachronistic approach by an author who labels an indi-

vidual an 'alcoholic' centuries before the term was coined, seems to think every incident of drunkenness is a case of alcoholism, and slips up when discussing the difference between 'disease' and 'illness' and you have an uneven and unsatisfying series of stories. Readers

will learn quite a bit about drunks in America, but they need to understand that any biased and poorly-analyzed account distorts the past for subtle political purposes.

DAN MALLECK