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# **‘Mine’s a Pint of Bitter’: Performativity, Gender, Class and Representations of Authenticity in Real-Ale Tourism**

**Karl Spracklen, Jon Laurencic and Alex Kenyon**

## **Abstract**

Leisure choices are expressive of individual agency around the maintenance of taste, boundaries, identity and community. This research paper is part of a wider project designed to assess the social and cultural value of real ale to tourism in the north of England. This paper explores the performativity of real-ale tourism and debates about belonging in northern English real-ale communities. The research combines an ethnographic case study of a real-ale festival with semi-structured interviews with organisers and volunteers, northern English real-ale brewers and real-ale tourists visiting the festival. It is argued that real-ale tourism, despite its origins in the logic of capitalism, becomes a space where people can perform Habermasian, communicative leisure, and despite the contradictions of preferring some capitalist industries over others on the basis of their perceived smaller size and older age, real-ale fans demonstrate agency in their performativity.

## **Key words**

authenticity, class, gender, Habermas, leisure, performativity, real ale, spatiality, tourists

8997 words, including references

## **Introduction**

*Walking into this area was quite an impressive sight. The room was at least 150 feet long and 40 feet across. The right hand side of the venue was lined with 60 casks on industrial steel shelving. On the left was the ciders and perries bar (served mostly from small plastic barrels pretending to be old wooden kegs). Just past this area, at the end of the hall, was the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) recruiting desk, which doubled as the info hub for the festival. At the very end of the hall was cask bar #2. This area was a mirror image of the front entrance, but housed between 20 to 30 more beer casks. All the beers of the festivals were organized on racks in alphabetical order (by brewery). This came in handy as many festival goers were using the programme to find specific beers. The air in the hall was very still and smelled quite stale. When empty the room lacked any semblance of atmosphere. But as the night ran on and the room filled up with hundreds of festival goers I could feel the atmosphere thicken as the empty shell became more and more like a busy pub at the start of the weekend.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

‘Real ale’ is an alcoholic drink associated with England and Wales, and to a lesser extent, the rest of the United Kingdom. Real ale can be mild, or bitter, or old. It is ‘real’ because the beer is conditioned (‘finished’) in the barrel. The drink is part of British working-class, masculine popular culture, especially in Yorkshire and Lancashire in the north of England. This paper contributes to debates in tourist studies around festivals, belonging, leisure, the search for authenticity and the growth of food and drink tourism. Research has been undertaken examining the relationship between leisure choices, the search for authentic food and drink, and tourism; in addition work has also been built around the cultures of consumption and the shaping of identities and social order in tourism (see for example, Douglas, 1984; Spracklen, 2011a; Wilson, 2005). Leisure choices are expressive of individual agency around the maintenance of taste, boundaries, identity and community: what Spracklen identifies as a Habermasian struggle over the lifeworld between communicative rationalities and instrumental rationalities (Spracklen, 2011a). Taste is both a way of defining self and distancing others, creating distinctions of class, gender, ‘race’ and other markers such as local and regional identities (Edensor, 2002; Edensor and Richards, 2007). Drinking alcohol is both a marker of belonging associated with the construction of gendered identities and a strategic use of leisure space that excludes others (Jayne, Gibson, Waitt and Valentine, 2012; Leyshon, 2008; Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2011; Valentine, Jayne and Holloway, 2010; Waitt, Markwell and Gorman-Murray, 2008; Waitt, Jesop and

Gorman-Murray, 2011). This research paper is part of a wider project designed to assess the social and cultural value of real ale to tourism in the north of England. The wider, long-term project will be a way of demonstrating the importance of the real-ale industry in the revitalisation of tradition and particular identities in the face of a 'lagerized', commercialized world. This research paper aims to explore of the performativity and the cultural and social value of real-ale communities and real-ale tourism in the north of England, through new qualitative, empirical research.

There is little research into the overriding factors that keep real-ale drinkers loyal, however Brown (2011) reports that consumers consider it to be natural, fashionable, authentic, retro and flavoursome. The diversity and changing ale consumer is also reflected in the connoisseur 'beer ticker' or real-ale tourist that provides businesses with additional custom, and also regeneration opportunities for brewers and communities through the identification of areas as being real-ale destinations. In this context, real-ale is increasingly being packaged and promoted by the tourism sector across the United Kingdom and internationally (Caffyn, 2010). Tourism destination management and marketing organisations are typically charged with identifying, packaging and promoting local distinctiveness to prospective national and international tourist markets (Church and Coles, 2007; Howie, 2003; Spracklen, 2011a).

This paper will thus focus on representations of local identities and 'authenticity' as portrayed by real-ale campaigners and brewers, and also – and more importantly - from the perspective of the 'sub-cultural' real-ale tourist (Richards and Wilson, 2006; Robinson, Picard and Long, 2004). We use the term 'tourist' to identify the liminality of the real-ale spaces, the pubs and the festivals, and the practice of performing inside those spaces – it is not a term the drinkers in our research would identify with themselves. Analysis and discussion of our findings follows the literature and methodology: we will explore the data through analytical sections around the themes of localism and authenticity; performing tourism; and gender and performance. We will show that real-ale tourists shape the meaning of their real-ale consumption and their attendance at festivals through a number of spatial and cultural strategies, and their demand for the authentic experience is problematized by the brewers through a number of philosophical positions. Real ale for the brewers is being sold as a premium product reflecting authenticity and 'real food', something uniquely northern English in the case of the breweries included in our research. We will argue that there is an unresolved tension between the desire of brewers to 'brand' their products as authentic, the campaigning strategies of CAMRA, and the ambivalence of real-ale tourists.

## **Literature Review**

The theoretical framework in this research is the tension between a) the liquidity of leisure and identity at the end of modernity (cf. Bauman, 2000; Rojek, 2010; Spracklen, 2011b), which is related to the individuation of experience and intention; and b) the search for authenticity, community, belonging and rootedness (what might be the communicative turn in leisure, against the instrumentality and governmentality of capitalism: see Bourdieu, 1986; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Spracklen 2009, 2011a, 2011b) associated with the turn to ‘localism’ and ‘conviviality’ (Thurnell-Read, 2011). Real-ale tourists are performative agents (that is, they are agents embracing the carnivalesque [Bakhtin, 1941]; or the situationalism of Debord, 1995[1967]), using their communicative leisure to make sense of the festival (and other leisure) spaces through which they move (on festival places as spaces of performativity see Gibson and Connell, 2012; Picard and Robinson, 2006); however, performativity and spatiality are limited and mediated through the instrumentality of late modernity. That is, there are roles and choices and spaces, but ones that are defined and bounded by hegemonic interests of commerce: by capitalism, neo-liberalism and the unchecked promotion of the tourist and hospitality industries. In the following three sub-sections, we will focus on situating our research in the literature on localism and authenticity; performing tourism; and gender and performance. In doing this we are fully aware of the intersections between these concepts: this framework helps us capture the dynamic relationships between identity, belonging, space, and agency (Jayne, Gibson, Waitt and Valentine, 2012).

### Localism and Authenticity

Seeking out local products has become a significant trend within food tourism and food consumption in general. Pratt (2007) aligns the idea of local as a push to re-establish the practical and discursive links between production and consumption by connecting food to a sense of history. This history is often backed with romantic discourses of the local, traditional and authentic (Pratt, 2007; Zukin, 2010, 2011). Localism has become a significant asset to tourism development because of its symbolic ties to place and culture. It provides a moral ‘feel good’ factor associated with consumption and allows visitors to experience a sense of connection to their destination during and after the event (Sims, 2009: 328). Sims (2009) also found that localism appeals to demands for typical products that can be consumed as a symbol of place and appeal to a more authentic sense of self. Food tourism offers an alternative means of local and regional development with the potential to strengthen identity, enhance appreciation of the environment, and encourage the regeneration of local heritage

and economy (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Consuming the local heritage is an attractive way for tourists to be a part of the cultural traditions and experience local histories reproduced in food and drink (Van Westering, 1999). Through the act of consumption the tourist has the opportunity for culture to be 'internalized by embodying its intrinsic pleasures and savoured to become one with the locality if only for a brief period' (Van Westering, 1999: 80). Tourists also closely link the local to the authentic. The increased intimacy of production and consumption contributes to feelings that the food being consumed is somehow 'real' (Weiss, 2012: 617) and an honest representation of the local character. It should however be pointed out that authenticity is as much about meeting expectations as it is providing a true representation of the experience (Jayne, Gibson, Waite and Valentine, 2012). If the experience does not correspond to the tourist's preconception of what the product or food is supposed to be, then a sense of authenticity will be lost (Sims, 2009). For example Spracklen (2011a) discusses the fabrication of authenticity during whisky-distillery tours. For these tourists authenticity was not a reproduction of whisky heritage, rather it was a performance of 'invented traditions and imagined community' that had been experienced by millions of other people (Spracklen, 2011a: 112). The quest for authenticity in the tourist experience is the subject of many debates in tourist studies (see Spracklen, 2011a). Authenticity of place and space is for Zukin (2010, 2011) something that is in the agency of hipsters and other creative people to create: the authentic space for her is that which is constructed by its users, not something that is associated with any older ideas of belonging. This liquid notion of the authentic is of relevance to the debate in real-ale between the established drinkers and breweries, and the new generation of hipster consumers and producers.

### Performing Tourism

Drawing extensively from the work of Erving Goffman, Edensor (2001) uses the metaphor of a staged performance to open up unique perspectives on how people are engaged with the role of a tourist. Tourism, like a performance is staged and choreographed to varying degrees in order to shape the actors' experiences (Edensor, 2001). The stages on which tourism is performed - whether it is a festival, a museum, a national park or so on - are regulated by a set of boundaries that are both real and symbolically defined. Edensor argues that too often the tourist is removed from the unreflexive habitual performances of the everyday when in fact it is these enduring norms and habits that significantly impact how a person believes that they should act in their role as a tourist. Each tourist holds pre-existing dispositions of how to appropriately act in a given situation. These norms and values are

embodied through practices and meanings and are reproduced through their performances. Additionally, the actor must be aware of the 'disciplinary gaze' of other actors or observers who externally regulate their performance by reciprocating meanings that the actor is attempting to display (Edensor, 2001: 72). These actions can quickly display the level of performative competence (Edensor 2001; 2002) and clearly differentiate tourists based on prior experiences and knowledge (Light, 2009). The performance of tourism in this sense is dependent on the ability of an actor to employ a level of reflexivity; adjusting their performance based on their own interpretation of the role and also the appropriateness of their actions based on what is accepted and reciprocated by other actors (such as the drinking activities described in Jayne, Gibson, Waitt and Valentine, 2012). This is a highly interactive process and is a skill that takes time for the tourist to perfect in order to achieve their desired experiences. Performances can either be tightly regulated to control behaviour and experiences or highly unregulated where tourists are more free to develop their own personal meanings or 'escape from normative enactment' (Edensor, 2001: 75). Again, these theoretical ideas are applicable in the context of real-ale tourists 'performing' alongside 'locals' in beer places and spaces such as pubs, festivals, trails and breweries.

#### Gender, Drinking and Performance

The consumption of alcohol and development of masculine identities has been discussed extensively in literature since the latter half of the twentieth century (see Jayne, Gibson, Waitt and Valentine, 2012; Leyshon, 2008; Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2011; Peralta, 2007; Thurnell-Read, 2011; Valentine, Jayne and Holloway, 2010; Waitt, Markwell and Gorman-Murray, 2008; Waitt, Jesop and Gorman-Murray, 2011). Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant form of heterosexual practices and ideologies, which is constructed and normalised in the unequal power relationships of everyday social interactions and society (Connell, 1987, 1995): the Gender Order is made to appear unproblematic, and what Butler (2006) calls heteronormativity is the gender role performed and legitimated in many spaces of popular culture. Hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity are challenged throughout popular culture, but alcohol drinking remains a space where they are more often re-affirmed: alcohol drinking remains normal for white, Western men; and where women drink alcohol the problem of their gender becomes a 'scandal' (Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2011; Leyshon, 2008). Although the context and age of normative male drinkers varies in the research, the development of hegemonic masculine identities takes place through heavily gendered and thematically specific discourse and the ritualised performance of drinking. Gough and Edwards (1998) demonstrated the

dependence of hegemonic masculinities on the discursive subordination of 'others'. By creating distinctions between 'selves-as-men' (held in positive regard) and 'other' identities (mainly homosexual men, women and men of 'different' regions or ethnicities) males enhance their self-definitions while simultaneously reinforcing traditional hegemony of white males (Gough and Edwards, 1998: 430). Discourse around nostalgia and a return to traditional lives is also a common theme within the literature (Joseph, 2012).

Campbell (2000) coins the term 'disciplines of drinking' to describe the knowledge and skills, which distinguished core drinkers from outsiders. Masculine hegemonies were established through years of practice, which resulted in strict bodily control while consuming large amounts of alcohol. The learnt competencies of drinking are a rite of passage into manhood (Willott and Lyons, 2011) while additionally lending to the importance of competitive achievement necessary in establishing masculine dominance (Thompson and Holt, 2004). Males in western cultures have been faced with increased pressures counter to traditional hegemonic masculinities, which has become known as the 'crisis of masculinity' (Leyshon, 2008; Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2011; Thurnell-Read, 2011; Valentine, Jayne and Holloway, 2010; Waitt, Markwell and Gorman-Murray, 2008; Waitt, Jesop and Gorman-Murray, 2011). This phenomenon is the cultural product of industrialisation, bureaucratisation of work, the destabilising of traditional family structures and communal value systems, increased competition from women in the work force and the increased dependence on consumerism by males a means to define a masculine self (Thompson and Holt, 2004). The 'crisis of masculinity' also appears to be challenging how masculinities are developed through the ritual of alcohol consumption. The beer industry in particular is seeing significant demographic changes with an increasing number of women consuming beer as well as sharing traditionally masculine spaces such as sporting events and pubs (Willott and Lyons, 2011). To cope with these pressures males turn to othering or deprecating females or other non-masculine groups. For example certain beers are othered as 'girl beers' or by classifying female participation using masculine terms as a 'yardstick' (Willott and Lyons, 2011). Though markets and spaces for beer consumption are becoming increasingly more diverse yet more globalised there is still a push to ensure masculine identities are protected and reinforced by the nostalgic anchor of romanticised ideas of hegemonic masculinities: as we will show, real-ale drinking is still a marker of northern English masculinity, within a broader cultural norms in modern British society that make men's alcohol consumption banal and women's consumption of alcohol a 'problem'. In this



sense, attendance at real-ale festivals might be constructed as an everyday performative practice for men (LeFevbre, 1991[1947]), but an exceptional one for women.

## **Methodology**

For this research paper, we identified the north of England as the geographical focus because the region has a strong working-class, white British identity and history: what Williams (1977) would call a residual, working-class culture. Real ale is beer that has not been treated to kill the process of fermentation: real-ale has to be handled carefully in cellars by landlords (pub owners), and only has a number of days in which it is able to be enjoyed (too fresh out of the barrel it does not taste too nice; too late out of the barrel it is positively nasty). In England, real-ale became a modern commodity with the growth of cities, railway networks, the application of scientific production techniques and the invention of the hand-pump in the nineteenth century (Jennings, 2011). Historically, real-ale breweries served beer in their own pubs to predominantly working-class, male consumers. In the north of England the tradition of working-class men drinking real ale survived the turn to lager of the 1980s, and there are a number of independent ‘family’ town breweries that survived the rationalisation (the rise of national brewers then multinationals, takeovers, closures and the shift to dead beers on keg) of the later twentieth century. CAMRA has had active campaign groups in the north of England since the 1970s, campaigning locally against the closure of breweries and pubs, and supporting the growth of new real-ale breweries. There are big real-ale breweries founded in the nineteenth century at the height of industrialisation, survivors from the late 1980s revival of real-ale brewing, and hundreds of small breweries that have been launched in the last ten years in the wake of favourable changes in taxation and duty enacted by the previous Government. The north of England specialises in beer poured through a sparkler to achieve a ‘proper’ head of foam, so even the style of real-ale is the source of debates about locality and authenticity.

The data used in this research is drawn from interviews and field notes. Field-notes were written by one of the authors of this paper, who volunteered to work at a real-ale festival in a city in the north-west of England (given the pseudonym of Bordley): this was an ethnographic case study of real-ale tourism, in which full participation and observation took place. The festival was chosen as it had actively advertised for volunteers through the CAMRA newsletter, and it was in our locality. We chose to research a festival because these are controlled by CAMRA and are the flagship campaigning spaces for the organisation: attendance at festivals allows real-ale tourists to sample an eclectic range of real ale styles

and to visit new places; it also allows CAMRA to promote real-ale to other audiences. We had permission from CAMRA's headquarters to undertake the research, and we were all members of CAMRA (one of us is a longstanding member, two of us joined partly for the purpose of this research). At the festival eight people (seven men, one woman, to reflect the demographic of the staff and visitors) were formally interviewed, recorded to a dictaphone, using a semi-structured interview technique, and others were engaged in informal conversations recorded through the field notes. In addition, photographs were taken of the spaces and the people attending, and descriptions and reflections on the images were written up in the field notes. Permissions were given by the local CAMRA branch operating the festival and by all the respondents and participants where necessary. The research is triangulated by the experiences of one of us as a longstanding CAMRA member, with some years of attending festivals. We also interviewed senior individuals at a representative sample of three breweries in the north: an established, traditional family brewer; a survivor from the 1980s revival; and a new brewer established this century. We used Discourse Tracing (LeGreco and Tracy, 2009) to analyse the data. All data and analysis has been anonymised through the use of appropriate pseudonyms for the festival, individual respondents and the three breweries in the sample, though we have kept the names of real beers and breweries referred to by sources and in the field notes.

### **Localism and Authenticity**

*All staff got given a purple Bordley Beer and Cider Festival T-shirt, nametag and a 'staff glass' which we were allowed to use to try the variety of Real Ale available at the festival. At the beginning of each shift the staff had to check in at the front door where we would receive six free half-pint vouchers and a voucher for a meal. A coloured sticker was put on each nametag indicating that staff member was given the vouchers for the shift. There were only a few volunteers who had the full range of stickers indicating that they had worked every shift. Most volunteers only worked one or two shifts (midday or night).*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

The staff-members at the festival were all CAMRA members and real-ale enthusiasts. Getting to work at a festival demonstrates ones status as an authentic real-ale fan and campaigner. There are special rituals that initiate volunteers into the inside of the symbolic community. Volunteers have to know what beers they are serving and to express opinions about taste and variety; they also have to be understand the rules of volunteering – as the lead author noted on his own involvement with volunteering at CAMRA festivals, there are formal

notices about not getting drunk as a volunteer, but many opportunities to ignore the notice in practice. But one must not get too drunk to be incapable of describing different beers to visitors and talking about the specific breweries: and one has to have the knowledge of an insider and a local to be able to pass effectively. Our researcher had knowledge of real ale and different types of beers, but was Canadian. This made him stand out as an exotic outsider, albeit one that could ‘talk the talk’ about real ale:

*My position as a bartender allowed me to chat with a fair number of individuals throughout the evening. Though the hall was quite loud, I was able to make out that most accents were [northern]. Because of my obviously non-local accent patrons were more than happy to chat with me about Canada (where I was from). Occasionally I noticed that some simplified their explanation of where they were from with the assumption that I wouldn't know any better. Several of the festival goers seemed puzzled to how and why a Canadian ended up at the Bordley. I got the feeling from some people that they were proud that a non-local was at the festival.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

Unsurprisingly, all our interview respondents mentioned the taste of real-ale as one of the most important reasons they were at the festival, and why they were real-ale fans: Hamish admitted ‘I love beers... can try lots of different beers’. For two of our respondents, it was important for them to distinguish real ale from lager: Andy said that real ale ‘tastes different to lager’, while Clint was more forthright in his claim that ‘lager tastes like piss’. Gibson said for real ale the ‘range of taste far exceeds wine... beer’s much more interesting’. It was interesting that for Andy and Clint, two white, working-class northerners, the drink they perceived as the challenger to real ale was lager, favoured by young, working-class men across the country. Gibson, on the other hand, compared real-ale to the more aspirational, bourgeois wine, suggesting he was a middle-class wine drinker who had moved across to real-ale because of its status as a fashionable, ‘real’ drink. The ‘real’ quality of real ale was noted by all our interview respondents, including our informants from the breweries. Hamish, for example, spoke of ‘quality, natural ingredients’, and a couple of people suggested that there were ‘no chemicals’ in real-ale. Of course, all the ingredients of real ale are chemicals, and real ale is a product of modern science and technology – but there is an attempt by real-ale breweries to look to preserve traditional practices, working at a smaller scale than the big factories and using only basic ingredients where possible (Brown, 2011). The shift in emphasis to small production breweries is partly a product of the economics of the industry, but also an indication of the rise in interest in local products and real food and drink, which is

exemplified by the rise of craft brewing in North America. This is evidence of a new type of real-tourist: the younger, middle-class hipster. As the informant from the microbrewer Small North put it:

Some people might look at Black Sheep and say ‘you’re not craft because you’re too big’ and I look at it and think ‘where is the difference?’ They have just got a bigger output. But that term craft seems to be enticing a lot more people into trying beer rather than real ale/CAMRA sort of stuff which is associated with the bearded middle aged old boy having a pint in a groggy little old pub somewhere. The term craft, I don’t particularly like it because it’s not defined properly and there is infighting in the industry with finger pointing and saying ‘you can possibly be craft’ and I think that’s not really for you to say, but the good thing about that term is that it’s a little bit more contemporary, a little bit more interesting word and there is younger drinkers getting on board.

(Small North Brewery)

Another issue of authenticity, then, is size and locality. There was a suspicion among our respondents about multinational corporations and big national companies. This suspicion is reflected in the history of CAMRA, with its long campaigns against takeovers and closures and the emergence of the new nationals (Brown, 2011; Pepper, 1990). For Aaron, the boom in microbreweries is a good thing because ‘so many independent breweries... better than mass-produced... [I] try to get smaller local breweries, support local industry, local people. For Clint, the big companies that used to produce real-ale have failed to keep the beers authentic: ‘used to drink Boddington’s until it started to taste like water’.

*Most of the men that I chatted with were from Bordley or within a short train ride. Quite a few among this group had been before and of these many had been coming since it was run in the town hall (I asked this question to approximately 40 people). I did not receive any negative feedback about how the festival has progressed and grown over the years, the men who I talked with were quite pleased with the current location and selection of beers.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

Our respondents were all locals, apart from Andy, who had moved up north from down south – authenticity was still associated with ties to geographical space, to imagined community, and was not something liquid in Zukin’s (2010, 2011) sense of the word, and not something that can be ignored or deconstructed. The locals were proud of their local identity, identifying with the nearby big city of Manchester, with Bordley, with the town of their birth,

or the wider spatiality of Lancashire and the north of England. Hamish explained that he had ‘lived in other places – Blackpool, Preston... but consider myself local’. Our brewing informants were equally proud of their northern roots, and saw their beers representing the north of England and the smaller region of Lancashire or Yorkshire. Pride in locality did not mean they failed to recognise the negative side of the places in which they lived, but they believed their interest in real-ale allowed them to see these localities in a more positive light, and allowed them to be able to travel to these locations as real-ale tourists. Gibson commented that ‘Bordley has no attractions... apart from this [festival], and pubs’.

*The doors for the first session opened about ten minutes later than expected. From 2pm to 5:30pm was the industry session where brewers and pub owners were allowed to enjoy some beers without the large crowd. The group was no more than 200 people, and was a fairly relaxed group. The majority of the industry crowd was male, with only a hand full of women peppered amongst them. These men were between 40–60 years of age and could be generally classified as working-class. Their grooming was more casual than put together, supporting infrequent haircuts and a presence that suggested they had finished a long day at work (what I referred to as ‘Joe’).*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

[Real ale] seen as a working-man’s drink, once upon a time... now it’s considered a posh drink, cos of the price.

(Rosemary)

Finally, authenticity and locality at the real-ale festival in Bordley was interconnected with working-class identity and working-class cultural traditions. The majority of the people at the festival, volunteering and visiting, were loosely identified as (white) working class through their accents and outward appearances, especially those who were local brewers and local pub landlords at the industry session. The organiser of the festival was working class, as were most of our respondents. However, there were younger, middle-class hipster types present, and Gibson and Rosemary might be considered to be middle class because of their education, professions and cultural tastes (Gibson, Rosemary and Ecks wore more middle-class clothing, for example and all of them were keen to distinguish themselves from the more working-class ‘tickers’). Rosemary’s comment about real ale being a posh drink because of the price is an ironic complaint about the cost of beer in pubs, but does reflect a middle-class concern that an authentic working-class tradition is being gentrified and priced out of reach of its ‘authentic’ working-class roots.

## **Performing Tourism**

*Between 8pm and 9pm the older men slowly trickled out of the venue and by 9:30pm there was a noticeable lull. The attendance started to pick up again shortly after 9:30 with the majority of the crowd looking to be working class. There was also a stronger presence of the under-30 crowd interested in the trendiness of real ale. Most seemed to be fairly new at drinking real ale and would smell and swish the beers around their mouths before swallowing. They didn't appear to know what they were doing even though it appeared like they thought they did. The comment of choice of these 'beer hipsters' would not stray too far from a comment such as 'that's nice' when describing the beer. Among this younger crowd was a noticeable number of people with black hair and heavy metal t-shirts, I did not serve any of them, but could see them walking around the crowd. Two individuals in particular stuck out to me. The first gentleman in his early 40s looked significantly more manicured and well-dressed than many of the others. He simply cruised around the festival slowly taking in the event. He was alone and did not interact with a single person while he was in my line of sight. The second individual, also male, was also more manicured than the rest of the crowd; however his dress and demeanour seemed much more extravagant. He wore all black, head to toe. His long thinning hair was dyed black and pulled back into a pony tail. This gentleman was in the company of a few other more affluently dressed individuals including one female. I only saw him purchase two beers before leaving or moving to another area of the festival. There were approximately 1700 people through the doors on Friday evening and the atmosphere felt much more lively than Saturday. It was quite difficult to walk through the main hall with both the cider and real ale bars one to two people deep.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

In the festival hall, real-ale tourism is performed in a number of distinctive ways. There are the older, white working-class men who are serious about their real ale, demonstrating their knowledge and belonging in the imaginary and symbolic community of CAMRA. These come in to the festival and leave at certain times: in particular, they get in early so they can sample the rare beers before they are sold out, and they leave before they are too drunk to struggle home.

*The night session opened up to the public at 5:30 and the room filled up quite quickly. I was serving from about 6 different casks and the two most popular beers were a chocolate and cherry port and the Buxton Blonde (Sold out quite early on in the night).*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

The lead author of this paper saw similar behaviour in the festivals where he volunteered: older, working-class real-ale tourists want to savour the best beers, and know they have to get to the festival early. Younger, less dedicated real-ale drinkers, the hipsters and the tourist out to get drunk with their friends, are less concerned about trying particular beers – but they do feel the need to practice their ability to be discerning real-ale consumers. Apart from the trendy hipsters and the older working-class CAMRA members there are some real-ale tourists performing different roles. Real ale has become fashionable in the alternative heavy metal subculture in the last five years as elements of that scene have become concerned with folk traditions and Vikings (Von Helden, 2010), so it is not surprising to see metal fans at a real-ale festival. There are also a handful people performing more overtly voyeuristic and narcissistic roles: the man who watches the crowd, and the man who is dressed to show off his wealth and taste. These are exceptions, and are not unique to performing real-ale tourism. The real fault-lines in the festival run between those who want to play at being real-ale fans (the hipsters and the drinkers) – those who want to drink real ale because of its coolness and its realness and its alcohol content – and the ‘tickers’ who need to collect certain beers (on the fault-lines in tourists at festivals see Gibson and Connell, 2012; Picard and Robinson, 2006).

*Later in the afternoon I bumped into Ecks when I was heading down for lunch. He stopped me and asked if I knew what a ticker was. He said that he had been talking with a couple of tickers and mentioned that they should come talk to me, however they did not do this. He mentioned several characteristics about tickers. If tickers walk into a festival and do not see any untried beers they will just move on (Ecks said that unlike a ticker if he tried and enjoyed a beer then he would not have a problem going back to have that beer again while tickers would not). He mentioned that the tickers he spoke with were much too busy to take the time to chat with me.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

All of our respondents spoke of the importance of finding beers they liked, whether it was real ale in a particular style or beer from brewery they knew to be good. For Clint, his passion for real ale was made material through his book of real ale, which he carried around everywhere with him, recording what he drank and adding his own tasting notes: ‘It’s my Bible for making notes... started it for a year and half ago’. Hamish liked to travel to festivals and was proud of the fact he had ‘been down to London, been to loads of festivals... if I can get there, I’ll go’. They spoke as well of the excitement of finding a new beer, from a new brewery. Aaron explained that through regular trips to festivals and real-ale pubs, he got ‘to

know brewers' names at different festivals, and try out their new beers'. CAMRA festivals are held throughout the year and in all parts of the country and are well-publicised on the CAMRA web-site and in its newspaper *What's Brewing*: as Gibson told us, 'the [CAMRA] newsletter tells us where and when festivals are on'.

As well as finding beers for their list and choosing small, local, more authentic breweries, most of our respondents recognised the social value of being a member of CAMRA and actively attending real-ale festivals. Clint liked attending festivals around the north-west where it was 'easy to get here, easy to get home'. But the others saw a benefit in linking their real-ale drinking with leisure and tourism activities, and leisure and tourism spaces. Rosemary said that visiting real-ale festivals 'is a very social activity... we've met up with friends from Chesterfield [CAMRA] branch'. Ecks explained his enjoyment of real-ale tourism by highlighting the imaginary community of real ale and CAMRA, the sense of belonging that bound together spatially disparate people in one symbolic space, and which brought together close neighbours in faraway places:

The act of travelling is good. Festivals in interesting places. Worth travelling a long way... I tend to meet the same people, you can travel a hundred miles and meet someone you know who lives near you.

(Ecks)

There were other ways in which real-tourism was performed by the respondents. Rosemary mentioned the prevalence of pub walks, organised informally or through CAMRA branches, where small groups of real-ale fans would walk across a nice area of countryside to an old-fashioned pub that served real ale. She even suggested people occasionally walk to real-ale festivals. Ecks joined her in telling us about the number of real-ale pubs that served as destinations for real-ale drinkers on trips out: 'it's mainly local people in pubs, but all [real ale] pubs people travel to... CAMRA does organised coach trips'. The informants from the real-ale breweries were aware of the growing interest in real-ale tourism (as seen in the growing marketing interest in real-ale tourism in the north: see the official ale guide at [Welcome to Yorkshire - yorkshire.com/pub](http://Welcome to Yorkshire - yorkshire.com/pub), and also Whitwam, 2012), and had reacted to it in a number of distinct ways: organising brewery visits, having tastings in local pubs themed with food, even having shops and visitor centres. However, they were cautious about the extent to which tourists would come to breweries in less glamorous spatial formations:

Nobody ever came to Bordley on holiday so we are not kidding ourselves that this is going to become a tourist attraction. We are in danger of turning into a white elephant tourist attraction. Black Sheep have got half a chance because you're up in Yorkshire



on a walking holiday and that's a lovely thing to do for a day, but you are not walking around Bordley, unless you are lost.

(Bordley Brewery)

### **Gender and Performance**

*The beer was priced by full pints, half pints and thirds. Each of these measurements was indicated on the glasses that were hired by festival goers and made serving a very simple task. The large majority of people purchased half pints, which was just enough for the drinker to be able to taste a wide variety of drinks without becoming too intoxicated. Occasionally a person would ask for a full pint. One man in particular would ask for a fill up of the same beer each time I served him. About three in total.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

Masculinity is performed in the way real-ale tourists consume alcohol at CAMRA festivals. All festivals sell beer in pints and half-pints, and most offer drinkers the smaller measure of a third of a pint. At Bordley, most of the male drinkers chose to order half-pint measures, but in pint glasses. A minority of the men ordered full pints, including a couple of our interview respondents. In the lead author's experience at working at other real-ale festivals, this is typical, though in his experience there are more younger men ordering full pints, especially on the final nights of the festivals when they attract more of a passing 'out-in-town' crowd of young male drinkers. Men, especially working-class men, still face social and psychological pressure to drink pints, not halves – halves are seen as effeminate, weak, and unbecoming of heterosexual, hegemonic masculinity (Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2011; Thurnell-Read, 2011). The real-ale tourists however, need to balance their displays of Butlerian heteronormativity (Butler, 2006) with the need to sample as diverse a range of beers as possible, while being sober enough to stand up (to prove one's ability to take one's drink): as Hamish explained, trying to prove his own masculinity to the second author of this paper, the aim is 'tasting new beers not tasted before... do try to keep track, but by end of night to be honest I've lost count'. Hence the drinking of half-pints, but in pint glasses – size matters, and everybody at the festival understands the performativity of masculinity. In the logic of the real-ale tourist, the third should be the most popular measure, if the purpose of attending the festival is to sample a wide range of beers. But the logic of the real-ale fan and serious seeker of the authentic is skewed by the performance of heteronormativity. The people at Bordley were mainly white, working-class men.

*The crowd during the first half of the evening session (between 5:30 and 8:00) was by my judgement 60+. As I looked out into the crowd I noticed quite a bit of grey hair amongst the crowd of men. The crowd however still retained the 'Joe' look. I barely noticed many women among this group and served no more than 20 throughout the night.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

There are women at real-ale festivals, but they are of course in a minority. Rosemary adopted a more measured approach to her drinking that did not compromise her performance of a middle-class, respectable white woman. She explained that she 'drinks cos it's nice, not to get drunk'. Women performing traditional heteronormative roles are acceptable in the festival space. On one occasion, Gibson played the dominant husband by saying 'she [Rosemary] likes proper cider, not Magner's'. The pride he showed in his wife's good taste and commitment to the authentic was spoiled by the fact he was speaking for her, while they were being jointly interviewed. Northern English masculinity is residually conservative in its attitudes to sexuality and gender. Gibson is playing the role of the traditional husband. In his own local CAMRA branch, the lead author of this paper knows one lesbian couple who are active campaigners, and there is a section of CAMRA for gay real-ale drinkers to socialise and organise (<http://www.camra.org.uk/lagrad>) – but Bordley is more resolutely working-class, more resolutely heteronormative: men are meant to be tough men holding their ale, women are meant to sit by their men. On the more cosmopolitan evening at Bordley, there were more women, but they tended to be partners of men in big social groups:

*The crowd was much younger than Thursday evening and there were more females than the night before. This group was generally in their Friday best social dress – well-dressed casual. The females within the crowd were generally among the younger cohort, and in the company of male companions. Noticeably absent from this night was the beer tourist type, this is likely due to how busy the evening was and the change into more of a party atmosphere. There were no altercations or crowd control issues throughout the evening, with most people being 'happy drunks' and quite friendly.*

(Unpublished field notes, summer 2012)

Despite the enormous amount of alcohol consumed by real-ale tourists, and the pressure of heteronormativity to drink to excess, all the respondents in this research told us that real-ale drinkers were safe and friendly. Gibson said that he had 'never seen any trouble at real ale festivals'. Clint wondered whether the friendliness of real-festivals might be

something to do with the real, traditional nature of the drink: as he put, there's 'no chemicals, friendly atmosphere, no trouble'. The respondents distinguished themselves and others at real-ale festivals (and in real-ale pubs) from young men, 'townies', chavs, 'teenagers who drink lager... and pick a fight' (Gibson). Real-ale men did not feel the need to prove their heterosexuality by punching someone, and were comfortable in their older heteronormative performance of drinking and 'holding their drink' (Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2011). For Ecks, this made real-ale festivals an ideal safe environment for women who wanted to avoid the abuse they faced from drunken men on a night in the town centre:

From a woman's perspective, this [no trouble] is a good thing. Still mainly older persons [here], young men who come here not trouble-makers anyway.

(Ecks)

## **Conclusions**

Real-ale tourism is an example of a leisure practice and spatial performance that – to use Habermas' (1981, 1987) framework - is both communicative and instrumental. Those who become real-ale tourists in our research do so because they see real-ale as an expression of authenticity, real food, small capitalism, locality, working-class community and regionality (northernness, Yorkshireness or Lancashireness). In Bourdieusian (1986) terms, real-ale is seen as a marker of good taste and distinction. In choosing to drink real-ale one chooses to reject the lagerization of the mainstream, the instrumentality of commodification and modernity. On one level, the simple conviviality and sociality of real-ale tourism is obvious: like many leisure activities and spaces, it offers like-minded people to bond and feel a sense of belonging in an uncertain world – and the nice feeling alcohol gives is a happy bonus (Jayne, Gibson, Waitt and Valentine, 2012). One becomes a learned cultural traveller, demonstrating one's competence through the performativity of sampling, appreciating and not getting so drunk one gets into a fight. Being a real-ale tourist is to revel in the carnivalesque, to get drunk but not too much, to demonstrate self-control and good choice. For the committed members of CAMRA, real-ale tourism becomes a way of resisting global capitalism, performing non-conformity and provoking political change through situationalist action (<http://www.camra.org.uk/page.php?id=139>).

However, as Spracklen (2009, 2011a, 2011b) has shown, leisure in late modernity is increasingly the product of a Habermasian instrumentality, the logic and practice of global capitalism, neo-liberalism and Western hegemony. The idea that individual agents make unbound leisure choices does not hold up to scrutiny, and leisure choices in the modern world

are constrained by social, cultural, spatial, economic and political factors. Real ale itself is a product of modernity, a drink invented by Victorian engineers and scientists, and marketed by Victorian capitalists (Spracklen, 2011b). It was a drink produced in large quantities to be consumed by working-class men, who were encouraged to see the new urban pub as an (almost) exclusively male space (Jennings, 2011). The leisure habit of beer drinking, then as now, was a product of capitalism and a tool of hegemony: producing heteronormativity and spatial conformity, offering fake choices, keeping the oppressed and exploited in their place (Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2010, 2011). The tradition and authenticity of real ale in the lives of the British working classes is a brief moment of historical time, a period that charts the industrialisation and urbanisation of leisure and tourism in the West. In our research, most of the respondents were men from working-class backgrounds who saw real ale as something *they had always* enjoyed, something that was a natural part of their own upbringing and memory. The drink has become popular in post-industrial Britain among more urban, bourgeois classes as a marker of an imagined rural past, linked with the search for authenticity in the real food movement (Zukin, 2010). This rise of the hipster or the foodie might be linked to the loss of certainty and identity linked with the liquid modern, as described by Bauman (2000) – with the shift in economic and political power away from nation-states and the old bourgeoisie to new global elites and trans-national corporations, the English middle classes retrench in nostalgia and make-believe performativity. And this brings us full circle, because real-ale tourism, despite its origins in the logic of capitalism, becomes a space where people can perform communicative leisure, and despite the contradictions of preferring some capitalist industries over others on the basis of their perceived smaller size and older age, real-ale fans do demonstrate agency.

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