Nieuwe Tijdingen

Over vroegmoderne geschiedenis

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Feestelijke cultuur in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden

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Nieuwe Tijdingen. Over vroegmoderne geschiedenis neemt de lezer mee naar het vervlogen verleden van de vijftiende tot en met de achttiende eeuw. Iedere uitgave richt zich op een recente ontwikkeling in het historisch onderzoek naar deze schakelperiode. Daardoor komen verrassende thema's aan bod: van sacrale ruimte tot publieksgeschiedenis, van handelsnetwerken tot lobbypraktijken, van festiviteiten tot onderwijsinstellingen. Geïnteresseerden in de vroegmoderne tijd worden zo geprikkeld door toegankelijk geschreven bijdragen, terwijl vakgenoten in deze artikelen de laatste stand van het onderzoek kunnen consulteren. Alle artikelen zijn beoordeeld door anonieme referenten.

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onder redactie van Joop W. Koopmans & Dries Raeymaekers

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How to Refuse the Goblet

Drinking Rituals, Sociability and Flow in *Nederlands Displegtigheden,* 1732–1735

Adriaan Duiveman

Sharing drinks was an important expression of social relations and community among men in early modern Europe. The Dutch antiquarians Cornelis van Alkemade and Pieter van der Schelling wrote a three-volume series on the history and morality of dining and drinking rituals, *Nederlands displegtigheden.* Based on an analysis of these books, this article questions the applicability of Norbert Elias' civilising process to early modern drinking culture. It argues that the actions and results of drinking rituals were negotiated at the drinking table. Extensive rituals did not necessarily lead to self-restraint and moderation but bore the potential for the opposite: excess.

Between 1732 and 1735, Cornelis van Alkemade and his son-in-law Pieter van der Schelling published a three-volume series on the history of *displegtigheden*, table ceremonies.[1] The series boasts about two thousand pages in total and traces back the history of dining and drinking rituals as far as the ancient Greeks.[2] The books combine two genres: antiquarian history and table philosophy. Even though Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling present themselves as neutral history writers who are merely describing historical facts, they often engage in a moral discussion about these facts.[3] Their confusing and often paradoxical moral remarks present a wider 'double vision'

1 I am grateful to Lilian Nijhuis for her comments.

2 K. van Alkemade and P. van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden: vertoonende de plegtige gebruiken aan den dis, in het houden van maaltyden, en het drinken der gezondheden, onder de oude Batavieren, en vorsten, graaven, edelen en andere ingezetenen der Nederlanden, weleer gebruikelyk*, 3 vols., Rotterdam 1732–1735.

3 See, e.g., their claim of neutrality in Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. III, p. 3.

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on alcohol consumption of early modern Europeans.[4] The authors portray alcohol as the facilitator of capital sins and disorder, while at the same time recognising the substance's enjoyable physiological effects. However, more than the substance itself, the authors struggle with the morality of the rituals surrounding the substance. In early modern Europe, sharing drinks was an important expression of social relations and community. In this contribution I will argue that *Nederlands displegtigheden* can shed light upon the social mechanisms of ritualised drinking in the Dutch Republic. On the basis of this analysis, I propose a nuance to a relatively old but still influential theory in the history of manners: Norbert Elias' civilising process.

Elias argues that rules and shame were the primary ingredients of an early modern transition of manners to increasing self-restraint and moderation. The main argument of this article is that rules and shame did not necessarily lead to self-restraint and moderation. By contrast, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling show how they could lead to exactly the opposite: excess. Furthermore, their accounts of table ceremonies invite historians to reassess the meaning and value of the concept of ritual in historical research. Building on the views of the medievalist Gervase Rosser, I argue that premodern drinking and dinner rituals were open-ended.[5] Instead of a totally scripted event with a specific, predetermined outcome, the drinking table in *Nederlands displegtigheden* is conceived as an arena in which the drinkers could have different goals. Without losing the flow of the drinking table, ritual scripts could be employed in various ways by the participants.

The rules of excess

Although the original German publication stems from 1939, Elias' *The Civilising Process* is still a seminal work in the history of manners. In this book, the sociologist posits the theory that the behaviour and expression of emotions of Europeans became more and more restrained during the early modern period. Through an elaborate analysis of humanist table philosophies, he traces a process of change in attitudes towards bodily functions, emotions and behaviour. According to Elias, the growing etiquette would

4 T. Nichols, 'Double Vision: The Ambivalent Imagery of Drunkenness in Early Modern Europe', in: *Past & Present* 222.suppl.9 (2014), pp. 146–167.

5 G. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', in: *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994), pp. 430–446, here pp. 432–433.

trickle down from the elites through all strata of early modern society. The new morality did not only introduce rules on how to behave, but also built shame thresholds for behaving otherwise. The result was increasing self-restraint.

Elias' analysis of table manners focuses on the act of eating. Drinking is left out of his narrative of change. Despite that, his thesis has been extrapolated to alcohol consumption as well.[6] Excessive drinking would lead to drunkenness, the exact opposite of self-restraint. Just like rules and shame thresholds would moderate one's appetite for food, they also would restrain the thirst for alcohol. However, various historians have convincingly shown that early modern men — not women — were frequently engaging in binge drinking sessions.[7] Moreover, excessive drinking was essential in the formation and performance of male identities. Men from all social strata, but especially those from the highest echelons of early modern society, were encouraged and expected to drink large quantities of alcoholic beverages. These findings led various historians to question the applicability of the civilising process theory to early modern alcohol consumption.[8]

One of the main arguments of early modern moralist writers against drinking bouts was their claim that drinking bouts were disorderly events. This anxiety for disorder was twofold. Firstly, the moralists saw moral disorder at the drinking table: drinking men engaged in transgressive behaviour, such as dancing and fighting. Secondly, they claimed that communal drinking would lead to social disorder. Drinking bouts would

6 J.C. van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap. Vijf eeuwen drankbestrijding en alcoholhulpverlening in Nederland*, Hilversum 1995.

7 Among others: Ph. Withington, 'Company and Sociability in Early Modern England', in: *Social History* 32.3 (2007), pp. 291–307; idem, 'Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England', in: *The Historical Journal* (2011), pp. 631–657, here pp. 634–635; B.A. Tlustly, 'Gender and Alcohol Use in Early Modern Augsburg', *Histoire sociale/Social History* 27.54 (1994), pp. 243–259; K. Harvey, 'Ritual Encounters: Punch Parties and Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century', in: *Past & Present* 214.1 (2012), pp. 165–203.

8 Withington, 'Intoxicants and Society', here pp. 633–635; J. Richards, 'Health, Intoxication, and Civil Conversation in Renaissance England', in: *Past & Present* 222.suppl.9 (2014), pp. 168–186, here p. 170; A. Legnaro, 'Alkoholkonsum und Verhaltenskontrolle. Bedeutungswandlungen zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit in Europa', in: G. Völger, K. von Welck and A. Legnaro (eds.), *Rausch und Realität. Drogen im Kulturvergleich,* vol. 1, Cologne 1981, pp. 86–98, here pp. 90–94; H. Morrison, '"Making Degenerates into Men" by Doing Shots, Breaking Plates, and Embracing Brothers in Eighteenth-Century Freemasonry', in: *Journal of Social History* 46.1 (2012), pp. 48–65, here pp. 50–51.

have been events at which men from various ranks mingled.[9] While flipping cups and sharing beverages, the binge drinkers established fraternal equality among themselves. Adam Smyth and Gina Bloom argue that drinking companies developed elaborate systems of rules which had to counter the fear for potential disorder at the drinking table.[10] Rituals regulated the behaviour of the drinkers and rationalised and contextualised the alcohol consumption. The worries about the loss of social order were solved by installing an alternative hierarchy. The quantity of consumed beverages functioned as proofs of perseverance and male bravura and hence enabled a masculine pecking order.

Obviously, this alternative moral and social order created by drinking rituals did not necessarily lead to moderation. It potentially led to the exact opposite: excess. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling's texts suggest exactly this. The authors strictly distinguish between use and abuse of drinking rituals. In their *Nederlands displegtigheden*, rules and shame are not only regarded as the solution for excess, but also as the potential source for it.

Historicising drinking

In 1732, two volumes of *Nederlands displegtigheden* [Dutch table ceremonies] were published by the Rotterdam-based publisher Philippus Losel. Three years later, a third volume appeared. The various books focus on different aspects of table ceremonies. Volume one focuses on the history of dining ceremonies, volume two describes historical and contemporary drinking rituals and the final volume treats the 'abuse' of ceremonies. Although the first book focuses on the ceremonies of eating, it also regularly touches upon drinking rituals. This is not surprising, since drinking was part of dining. The third book addresses the issue of excessive eating, but most attention goes to excessive drinking. The title page of the first volume prominently features two men in an-

9 A. Shepard, '"Swil-bols and Tos-pots": Drink Culture and Male Bonding in England, c.1560–1640', in: L. Gowing, M. Hunter and M. Rubin (eds.), *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300–1800*, London 2005, pp. 110–130, here p. 122.

10 A. Smyth, '"It were Far Better to be a Toad or a Serpant, then a Drunkard": Writing about Drunkenness', in: A. Smyth (ed.), *A Pleasing Sinne. Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 193–210, here pp. 205–209; G. Bloom, 'Manly Drunkenness: Binge Drinking as Disciplined Play', in: A. Bailey and R. Hentschell (eds.), *Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice, 1550–1650*, New York 2010, pp. 21–44.

cient togas shaking hands and sharing a drink (Fig. 1). A dinner table is only visible in the background. This image illustrates the relation between dining and drinking in the books.

The first two volumes of *Nederlands displegtigheden* clearly follow the rules of antiquarian historiography. Antiquarian historiography was a genre of historical writing that emerged in northern Europe in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[11] Contrary to traditional history writers, antiquarians did not solely investigate politics of the past but instead focused on cultural history. Because of that, their publications are structured by themes instead of chronology. The focus on cultural practices led the antiquarians to sources which were not used in historiography: material culture and documentary texts. The latter were often quoted in full or referred to in the footnotes.

1. Title page of the first volume of *Nederlands displegtigheden,* by François van Bleyswijck. Special Collections University Library of the Radboud University, Nijmegen, sign. OD 289 c 46.

Nederlands displegtigheden ticks all the boxes of a typical antiquarian history. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling order their subjects thematically, focus on cultural history, compare cultural practices from various cultures and they use documentary texts and material culture to support their analysis. The historical texts are often quoted in full and drinking vessels — material objects — are analysed as sources. However, it would be wrong to say that the series is just an antiquarian history. The author's difficulties with the moral philosophy of table manners linger through the historiography.

Van Alkemade's and Van der Schellings moral engagement is expressed in two ways. Firstly, it is reflected in the selection of described rituals and the cited sources. The

11 L. Janssen, 'Antiquarianism and National History. The Emergence of a New Scholarly Paradigm in Early Modern Historical Studies', in: *History of European Ideas* 43.8 (2016), pp. 843–856.

authors even state that — in contrast to other historians — they do not want to describe sinful drinking rituals from the past.[12] At the same time, authorative figures whose writings are in line with the author's moral opinions are elaborately cited. Secondly, in their analysis of the presented facts and sources, the authors often clearly praise or condemn the rituals they describe, for instance by the use of morally charged adjectives. While this happens in all three volumes, especially in the third volume the emphasis shifts from history to morality.

Smyth noted that moralist writers had to create a 'critical distance' between the writer and the subject matter. He contends that 'while describing drunkenness, the narrator is at pains to stress his disengagement from a world that variously described as disordered, bestial, demonic [and] murderous'.[13] The fact that the moralist writers had to convince their readers of the seductive powers of alcohol made it especially difficult to create this critical distance. Hence, 'anti-drinking texts exhibit a complicating reverence for their subject'.[14] I think that historicising drinking offered Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling the critical distance they needed. Furthermore, by historicising drinking they also showed the pervasiveness of drinking in human culture. As I will show later, they even claim that drinking and dining rituals are essential parts of human nature. Age and tradition were held in high regard by early modern Europeans.[15] Because of that, tracing back drinking rituals to the highly respected ancient civilisations meant that the ceremonies — both the right and the wrong — gained importance.[16]

It could be argued that the series aimed at an audience from the higher echelons of Dutch society for two reasons. Firstly, the content of the books would mainly attract readers with a learned background. In the series, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling quote Latin, Greek, French and English sources. Although some Latin and Greek quotes are translated by the authors, many are not. This suggests that the series was meant for an audience that had a similar intellectual background as Van der Schelling

12 They call these sinful rituals *doolingen*, deviations. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. II, pp. 185.
13 Smyth, 'It were', p. 203.
14 Ibidem.
15 K. Enenkle and K. Ottenheym, *Oudheid als ambitie. De zoektocht naar een passend verleden, 1400–1700*, Nijmegen 2017, pp. 11–12.
16 See also A. McShane, 'Material Culture and 'Political Drinking' in Seventeenth-Century England', in: *Past & Present* 222.suppl.9 (2014), pp. 247–276, here pp. 265–266.

and Van Alkemade.[17] A second element that indicates the elite audience of the books is the subject matter itself: manners. Social historian Pieter Spierenburg noticed a rising popularity in manner books in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Dutch Republic.[18] He attributed this increasing interest in manners to the integration of the Dutch bourgeois elite into an international network of elites — the *grand monde*. Even though the Dutch Republic lacked a court culture, the manners of French aristocracy were introduced to the Dutch social elites via these international networks. The French manners led to a refinement among the Dutch social elites, but also stirred a more general debate on the value of these manners and the authenticity of ritualised behaviour. The introduction of foreign manners made people more aware of the scripts of social interactions, habits and rituals. The historiographical and moralistic investigations of table ceremonies in *Nederlands displegtigheden* should be read in this wider context.

Society at the table

At the centre of Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling's morality of drinking rituals is the distinction between *nut* and *misbruik*, use and abuse. In order to understand this dichotomy, it is necessary to first grasp the ideal social gathering the authors envision. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling place the dining and drinking table at the centre of human nature and human society. Essential in the authors' ideal social gathering is the idea of sociability. Enlightenment thinkers debated the question whether the human tendency to engage in social interactions was an inborn characteristic of human beings or that it was created by society to contain human's sinful inclinations.[19] In the preface to the first volume, Van der Schelling takes a clear position in this debate:

17 Van Alkemade studied Law at the University of Leiden, Van der Schelling studied Law and Theology at the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam. See E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier and G.A.C. van der Lem, *Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers in Nederland 1500–1800*, Den Haag 1990, pp. 7, 366.

18 P. Spierenburg, *Elites and Etiquette. Mentality and Social Structure in the Early Modern Northern Netherlands*, Rotterdam 1981.

19 For an overview of the debate, see E. Piirimäe and A. Schmidt, 'Introduction: Between Morality and Anthropology — Sociability in Enlightenment Thought', in: *History of European Ideas* 41.5 (2015), pp. 571–588.

> Just as useful, necessary, and inevitable the pleasure is which our wise Creator has attributed to the consumption of food in order for living creatures to not neglect their sustenance, and so useful, necessary, and inevitable companies are to humans — the creatures for whom sociability [orig.: *gezelligheid*] is especially innate — so it is useful, necessary, and inevitable to hold certain dinners and banquets.'[20]

By equating food with pleasant social interaction, the latter is exalted to a natural need. Derived from this, dinners and banquets are presented as the even more natural combination of two natural needs. Van der Schelling alludes here to the dichotomy between man and beast. Although food consumption is a natural need for all creatures, sociability is exclusively human. Therefore, dinners and banquets are manifestations of humanity. The contrary — eating alone — can be regarded as bestial. The authors introduce the readers to the Roman emperor Clodius Albinus, a man who never organised banquets because of his lust for wine and his crudeness.[21] Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling contend that this life — a life in which one dines in solitude — 'should be regarded as lion- or wolf-like'.[22]

Dinners are not only presented as an essential part of being human. The authors place the table at the core of human society at large. They make it the epicentre of all kinds of human relationships. Families and friendships are maintained at the table and in marriage the table is just as important as the bed.[23] According to Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, meals create 'bonds' and they are 'signs of mutual friendship'.[24] Communal meals are meant 'to feed, or to confirm, or to finally repair, and to satisfy'

20 Orig.: 'Zoo nut, noodig, en onvermydelyk als het vermaak is, dat de alwyze Schepper gehegt heeft aan het nemen van voedsel, op dat de levendige schepsels niet zouden nalaten voor hun onderhoud te zorgen: en zoo nut, noodig, en onvermydelyk als zekere gezelschappen zyn voor een mens, dien onder alle de schepsels vooral de gezelligheid eigen is: zoo nut, noodig, en onvermydelyk wierden altoos gehouden zekere maaltyden, en gastmaalen'. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. I, 'Voorreden'. There is no page numbering in the preface. A similar argument can be found in ibidem, vol. I, p. 110.

21 Ibidem, vol. I, p. 121.

22 Ibidem. Orig.: '... dat men [...] de gewoonte van zonder vrind te eten, voor een leeuws, of wolfs leven houden moest.'

23 Ibidem, vol. I, p. 108.

24 Ibidem, vol. I, p. 115.

human society.[25] Note the double meaning of 'to feed' here. Just as the natural body needs food, so does the social body.[26]

Important in the authors' connection between human sociability and the society at large is the idea of order. According to Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, meals are manifestations of the order in God's creation.[27] Table rituals create the order of the meal: they contain a script of acts and attribute various roles to the various participants. In the first volume of *Nederlands displegtigheden*, there are three ways mentioned in which meals bring structure to human behaviour and society. Dinners and banquets order time, social hierarchy and communities.

Firstly, dinners order time. In typical antiquarian fashion, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling trace back the etymological meaning of the Dutch word *maal*. The word has various meanings in Dutch: it is a verb for grinding, but it is also a noun for a demarcated moment in time and a word for dinner. According to the authors, those meanings relate to each other: the meal is a time at which people grind food.[28] People need meals regularly, so there are regular moments in time when people gather for food. To organise a dinner means that people have to come together at a certain place — the table — and at a certain time. Hence, the order of the household is manifested by the family dinner: the moment in time when the family comes together to eat.[29]

Secondly, dinners order social hierarchy. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling pay much attention to the social order in drinking and dining rituals of the past. This hierarchy manifests itself spatially — through the placement of the guests — and through ritualised actions.[30] Participants of the drinking and dining rituals drank to the health of the most honourable guests who sat at the most prominent places of the table. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling argue that this hierarchical order is a sign of civility. According to them, hierarchy and seating arrangements were absent during

25 Ibidem, vol. I, pp. 113–114. Orig.: '...te voeden, of te bevestigen, of eindelijk te herstellen, en te bevredigen...'

26 For the humanist interpretations of the meal as the juncture of body, mind and community, see M. Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words. Banquet and Table Talk in the Renaissance*, trans. J. Whitely and E. Hughes, Cambridge 1991.

27 Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. I, p. 109.

28 Ibidem, vol. I, pp. 93–98.

29 Ibidem, vol. I, pp. 109–110.

30 Ibidem, vol. II, p. 283.

the meetings of the ancient Batavians.[31] Every participant could just lay down their sheepskin somewhere and sit down on it. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling contend that the medieval Dutchmen abolished this 'pagan and uncivilised habit'. It was replaced by a 'contrary custom [that] brought a more appropriate situation of rank and order'.[32] These lines clearly show how the authors use the past as a mirror for moral reflection. They analyse a "historical fact" — the imagined development from Batavian equality to medieval hierarchy — but they use morally charged words in describing it. In their phrasing they imply that an ideal dining and drinking ritual should respect and reproduce social order.

Thirdly, dinners order communities and relations. As noted before, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling believed that dinners were an expression of the inborn human quality of sociability. As evidence for this claim, they offer their readers a long list of occasions at which people ate and drank together. Communal dinners marked life cycle events like baptism, marriage, rehousing and death, but also expressed the community of families, neighbourhoods, churches and guilds. Eating together signified inclusion and fostered social cohesion. The so-called pacification dinner [orig: *verzoeningsmaal*] was even meant to solve conflicts between people and restore normal relations.[33]

As argued before, drinking was an important aspect of all these types of dinners. Van Alkemade and Van der Schilling differentiate between the rituals of eating and the rituals of drinking, but the social function they attribute to dining and drinking is the same. Just like dinners, drinking rituals are presented as signifiers of social

31 Ibidem, vol. II, p. 199. Equality and simplicity were part of the wider Batavian myth, see A. van der Woud, *De Bataafse hut. Denken over het oudste Nederland (1750–1850)*, Amsterdam; Antwerp 1998; I. Schöffer, 'The Batavian myth during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in: J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands vol. 5: Some Political Mythologies*, The Hague 1975, pp. 78–119.

32 Orig.: 'Zoo in laater tyden, onder de Graavelyke Regering deze oude Heidense, en ongeschaafde gewoonte afgeschaft, en door een tegenstrijdig gebruik verwisseld, en in een geschikter, en welvoegelyker staat van rang, en orde, gebragt.' Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden,* vol. III, p. 301.

33 Ibidem, vol. I, pp. 362–377.

relations.[34] The authors offer an extensive list of ceremonies which signified specific relations between individuals. The *lijfkoop* — a contract drink — for instance sealed a deal between two men.[35] Contrary to this commercial relation, the ritual of *Sint Geerte Minne* (the love of Saint Gertrude) signified 'a love, affection, friendship, which was as unfeigned, sincere, loyal, virtuous and firm as that of the honoured Saint Gertrude'.[36] While these two ritual emphasised the relations between individuals, the ritual of *verhansen* created a relation between an individual and a group.[37] The term *hans* in this context is interpreted as 'companion' and *verhansen* means 'to become a companion'. *Verhansen* was a ritual in which a new member of a guild or other corporation was initiated by drinking from a special cup which was designated for this ritual.

There is one drinking ritual which receives special attention from Van Alkemade and Van der Schilling: health drinking. Health drinking could be regarded as the typical drinking ritual. It combines a speech act — the announcement of a toast to someone's health and well-being — with a confirming communal physical action — standing up, raising a glass and drinking. The health ritual plays with the religious and mystical connotations that alcoholic drinks had throughout history.[38] Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling trace the practice back to pagan sacrifice rituals, but emphasise that the practice is now stripped of these superstitions.[39]

Health drinking is the drinking ritual which is most praised and, at the same time, most criticised by Van Alkemade and Van der Schilling. On the one hand, they argue that it is an 'outward expression of internal, sincere kindness [orig.: *welgemeendheid*]'.[40] As such, the health is placed in line with other gestures of respect, friendship and love: kissing, shaking hands, bowing and taking off one's hat.[41] Drinking healths was an act

34 For more on the social significance of drink sharing, see Th.E. Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Princeton 2014, pp. 223–227; B.A. Tlustly, *Bacchus and the Civic Order. The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany*, Charlottesville 2001, pp. 103–114; B. Deseure, *'Ten respecte van de eerlijcke compagnie': Maatschappelijke plaatsbepaling van de herberg te 's-Hertogenbosch in een periode van sociale transformatie (1650–1800)*, MA thesis University of Antwerp, 2007, pp. 87–88.

35 Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden,* vol. II, p. 25.

36 Orig.: 'een liefde, en genegenheid, vrindschap, en dat wel zoo ongeveinst, opregt, getrouw, deugdzaam, en standvastig, als die van de vermaarde Heilige Geertrui'. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. II, pp. 204.

37 Ibidem, vol. II, pp. 225–237.

38 Tlustly, *Bacchus*, pp. 104–107.

39 Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. II, p. 59.

40 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 543.

41 Ibidem, vol. III, pp. 543–544.

of order: it confirmed loyalty, community and hierarchy. On the other hand, health drinking was the main source of concern for the authors because it was prone to abuse. The repetition of the physical action of the health ritual — drinking alcohol — had a strong effect on someone's mood, behaviour and experience. Because of that, health drinking could seriously harm the drinkers' reputation and — ironically — their health.

The dangers of sociability

Although dining and drinking rituals constitute order, Van Alkemade and Van der Schilling contend that there is always the potential of disorder in these events. They show that in many cultures a master of ceremony [orig.: *gastmeester*] was installed at the start of a banquet.[42] This master had to keep into account the virtues and had to correct guests who were falling into immoral behaviour. In some cultures, this master of ceremony was appointed by the drawing of lots.[43] However, the introduction of the master of ceremony is not the only acknowledgement of potential derailment. The rituals themselves are the most important acknowledgement. As instruments of order, the rules inherently presume the situation of their absence: disorder.[44]

Dutchmen were widely regarded as excessive drinkers.[45] This idea was traced back to the writings of Tacitus on the Batavians. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling criticise the idea that Dutchmen drank more than other nations.[46] The authors contend that all cultures have different customs with regard to drinking and dining which are determined by their *landaart*, a concept which entailed the idea that soil, climate and other natural elements shaped the character of a nation.[47] Although there were differences between nations, the potential for disorder was just as big in every culture. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling argue that gluttony and drunkenness were part of all

42 Ibidem, vol. I, pp. 509–510.
43 Ibidem, vol. I, p. 129.
44 Smyth, 'It were', p. 209.
45 D. Verbeke, 'Swag-Bellied Hollanders and Dead-Drunk Almaines: Reputation and Pseudo-Translations in Early Modern England', in: *Dutch Crossing*, 34.2 (2010), pp. 182–191; G. Evans Light, 'All Hopped Up: Beer, Cultivated National Identity, and Anglo-Dutch Relations, 1524–1625', *Journal X* 2.2 (1998), pp. 159–178.
46 Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. III, p. 370.
47 See for instance Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. I, p. 125.

cultures.[48] Moreover, the abuse of the ritual scripts that had to prevent disorder was just as widespread.

Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling posit that it is important to know the customs of drinking and dining. However, they contend that it is even more important 'to learn to distinguish between the good and the bad manners, customs, habits and ceremonies' (free translation).[49] The authors try to understand why good drinking rituals could turn into excessive drinking and sinful behaviour. In the last volume of *Nederlands displegtigheden*, they list many potential reasons for this corruption, ranging from bad company to the intervention of Satan himself. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling point out the competitive element in many drinking rituals as one of the most serious issues. This element of competition can be found in all cultures. For ancient Germans and Dutchmen, the authors assert, it was 'a form of entertainment to make other people drunk, and to celebrate this as a big triumph'.[50] To many drinkers, drinking was a game of strength.[51] Those participants who could not handle the pace of the ritual could become the victims of drink coercion (orig.: *drinkdwang*), defined by the Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling as 'tricks to make someone drink against his will'.[52] These widespread practices include the custom of *wapeldrenken* — force feeding someone wine or another alcoholic beverage by throwing it in and over someone's face — and punishments like pouring wine over someone's head and clothes.[53]

However, of all the reasons for derailment they list, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling pay the most attention to a far more subtle one: *compliance*. The authors described compliance as the 'habit to comply to the greatest number in the company in order to be acceptable'.[54] The authors argue that *compliance* is to a certain level virtuous. It is good that people try to please others. However, the desire for not being

48 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 33.
49 Ibidem, vol. III, 'Voorreden'. No page numeration in the preface. Orig.: 'Zoo is het niet minder nut, en noodig, de goede van de kwaade manieren, gebruiken, gewoontens, en plegtigheden te leeren onderscheiden. Jaa deeze pligt is zoo veel nutter, noodiger …'.
50 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 55: 'Onder de Duitsen en Nederlanders was't ook (…) een vermaak anderen dronken te maaken, en dan over dezelve als te zegepralen, en te roemen, als op eene groote overwinning'
51 Ibidem, vol. III, pp. 380–383.
52 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 51: 'Kunsjes, om iemand tegen heug en meug te doen drinken…'
53 Ibidem, vol. III, pp. 74–75, 81–85.
54 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 390: 'Deze gewoonte van zig naar 't grootste getal van 't gezelschap te voegen, om welhaagelyk te zyn…'

a spoilsport could lead to the surrender of one's own will and rationality to the ritual.[55] According to Van Alkemade and Van der Schellling, *compliance* could easily shift into slavery: it deprived the participant of a dinner or a drinking ritual of his freedom. Two related elements of *compliance* created the slavery: shame and hierarchy.

Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling borrow an anecdote from the English writer Joseph Addison — one of the authors of *The Spectator* — to illustrate how shame could lead to shamelessness. During a drinking bout, a young man did not dare to refuse the drinks which were offered to him. He became intoxicated to such a degree that he 'led the conversation, (...) yelled and screamed, taunted everyone in the company and threw a bottle to the head of the sir who invited him'.[56] With his bad behaviour and lack of respect for hierarchy, he transgressed both the moral and social order. Ironically, the young man was pushed towards this shamelessness because of 'false shame', according to Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling. The authors refer to this notion of false shame regularly. According to them, it is 'a source of corruption among Christians'.[57] To understand this notion of false shame, it is important to return to the debate on manners in which Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling participate.

Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling distinguish between *goede zeden* — which could be translated as decency or morals — and *manieren* — manners.[58] The difference between the two is that *goede zeden* are universal while manners are 'habits which are fashionable in civil intercourse' [orig.: *in zwang*].[59] As such, the authors contend that manners are neither necessarily bad nor good. By contrast, morals and decency are defined by Christian virtues and laws and are universally good. The word *compliance* was (and is) not a Dutch word, but a French term which Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling introduce in the third volume of *Nederlands displegtigheden*. Its foreign origin is emphasised by the fact that the word is consistently printed in a cursive type. The fashionable manners led to false shame: it made people think that they

55 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 379.
56 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 391. Orig.: '... dat hy zig meester maakte van het gesprek, het hoogste woord voerde, vervaarlyk schreeuwde en tierde, yder van het gezelschap hoonde, en den Heer, die hem onthaalde, met een fles na het hoofd, gooide...'.
57 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 393. Orig.: '... een bron van de verdorvenheid onder de Christenen'.
58 Ibidem, vol. III, 'Voorreden'. No page numbering in the preface.
59 Orig.: 'Manieren zyn gebruiken in den burgerlyken ommegang in zwang gaande...'

should follow the directions of the drinking ritual and that opting out — i.e. following rationality — would be shameful.

The second element of *compliance* was hierarchy. It is noted before that a dinner or drinking ritual without hierarchy is condemned by the authors. Moreover, they argue that rituals should always recognize and express the differences of status in a group. At the same time, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling point out that hierarchy could very well be a source of abuse.[60] The authors show that those highest in status were not always a good moral example. This moral criticism of the elites fits in a wider eighteenth-century discourse in which the elites were blamed for a perceived moral decline within the Dutch Republic. At the drinking table, the participants would be tempted to follow the example of the others with the highest social status in order to show them respect. However, these respectable people could abuse this power and lead the others into sin.

Shame and hierarchy constituted *compliance*, and *compliance* led to slavery. The result was an overconsumption of alcohol and a complete loss of morality and rationality. While Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling contend that dining and drinking without others should be regarded as a degeneration to beastliness, the dynamics of a group of drinkers could lead to the exact same result.[61] The gluttony and wildness of excessive drinkers is similar to the wildness of animals. This remark is striking, since Elias and his followers argue that table rituals were used to emphasise the difference between humans and the animals they ate.[62] From the perspective of Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, rituals could actually obscure the boundaries between man and beast.[63]

Historian and social theorist Michel de Certeau argued that people in any given circumstance can make a selection from the repository of social practices and 're-use' or 're-employ' these practices in a tactical way.[64] In a similar fashion, I argue that early modern drinkers could also tap into a repository of rituals and could use

60 Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. III, pp., 392, 417–418.

61 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 411.

62 N. Elias, *The Civilising Process*, Oxford 1978, p. 120; E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1997, p. 127.

63 Smyth found similar arguments in English commentaries. See Smyth, 'It were', pp. 199–200.

64 M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Randall, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1984.

and re-use these rituals in a tactical way. The outcomes of an early modern drinking ritual were negotiated in the process among its participants.[65] Drinking rituals were not fixed but fluid.[66]

This claim seems at odds with a popular interpretation of ritual in (historical) anthropology as a series of events in which the actors lose their agency. Anthropologist Victor Turner argues that rituals create a sense of 'flow'. By this he means that (some types of) rituals require 'total involvement' and the merge of action and awareness during these events.[67] In line with Turner, the historians Douglas Ezzy, Gary Easthope and Victor Morgan assert that the flow in early modern rituals should be regarded as 'a social process through which an event is experienced as taking on a life of its own for which the actors are merely channels'.[68] Interferences with this flow were not accepted by the participants. However, in the final section of this article I argue that Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling demonstrate that flow and individual agency did not necessarily have to exclude each other in a drinking ritual. The authors show their readers that there are ways to escape *compliance* and slavery at the drinking table.

Refusing the goblet

In the third volume of *Nederlands displegtigheden*, the readers are introduced to a hero of moderation: vicar Esaias du Pré. Du Pré was the minister of the Reformed Church of Wesel. After the town was conquered in 1614 by the Spanish commander Ambrogio Spinola, the commander organised an 'open table' for a select group of prominent citizens which included Du Pré.[69] The open table escalated quickly in an excessive drinking bout. A wager cup in the shape of a Turkish warrior was shared by the participants of the drinking bout and the commander invited his guests to drink in honour of the King of Spain (Fig. 2). When it was Du Pré's turn, he stated that he respected the

65 Rosser makes a similar argument about the formal dinners of medieval English fraternities. See Rosser, 'Going', pp. 432–433.

66 For the notion of fluidity in performances, see P. Burke, 'Performing History: The Importance of Occasions', in: *Rethinking History* 9.1 (2005), pp. 35–52, here pp. 41–42.

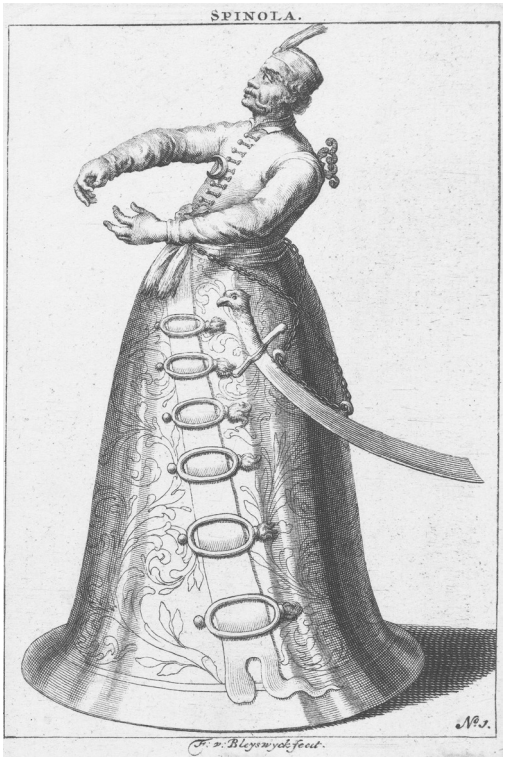
67 V. Turner, 'Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology', in: *Rice Institute Pamphlet* 60.3 (1974), pp 53–92, here pp. 87–89; V. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, New York 1988, pp. 54–55.

68 D. Ezzy, G. Easthope and V. Morgan, 'Ritual Dynamics: Mayor Making in Early Modern Norwich', in: *Journal of Historical Sociology* 22.3 (2009), pp. 396–419, here p. 399.

69 Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. III, pp. 481–482.

new royal authority, but that he was not able to drink so much in his honour. Furthermore, he had never been drunk in his life. The commander respected the minister's courage and honesty. He gave him the wager cup as a gift.

Du Pré is presented by Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling as an example of someone who circumvented the slavery of the drinking table. The minister proves that it is honourable, respectable and — most of all — possible to withdraw from a drinking bout. However, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling admit this is not easy. They explore a couple of options for the reluctant drinker.[70] Firstly, he could try to reason with the others at the drinking table. However, it would prove unsuccessful, since the drinkers have long lost reason. Secondly, he could engage in a fight with his fellow drinkers. However, violence would not only lead to injuries, but would also be inappropriate when being a guest at someone else's place. The authors conclude that someone could do two things. He should either accept the drink coercion of his fellow drinkers, or he should liberate himself by the use of 'quips' (orig.: *kwinkslagen*).



2. François van Bleyswijck, 'Wager cup in the shape of a Turkish warrior', print, 1735, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, sign. RP-P-OB-82.957. The print can be found in K. van Alkemade and P. van der Schelling, *Nederlands displegtigheden*, vol. I, Rotterdam 1732, p. 480.

By wordplay and wit, a drinker could circumvent the judgement of his fellow drinkers when refusing the goblet. The authors offer their readers a couple of examples. A drinker in distress could for instance ask his fellow drinkers why they would not force someone to eat more than he could, while they did push someone to drink more than he was able to.[71] While this quip may not seem particularly witty to us, modern readers, another one that is mentioned may seem more effective. The authors show that a reluctant drinker could ask for a smaller cup of wine by claiming that his body was

70 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 88.
71 Ibidem, vol. III, pp. 97–99.

smaller than the larger others.[72] This quip is actually an acknowledgement of others' dominance in drinking. Hence, while pulling out of the competition at the drinking table, the quitter is actually acknowledging the competitive element of a drinking bout. It was a way to circumvent the slavery of the drinking ritual, while still remaining part of the ritual.

The drinking rituals as described by Van Alkemade and Van der Schilling had some kind of 'flow'. Singing, games and drinking healths structured the drinking bout and the actions of its participants. The participants did not accept interferences with the flow. People who refused to drink were shamed or even attacked. The flow of the ritual was strengthened by the physiological effects of alcohol, since the substance brings people in an altered state of mind in which the immediate social and physical environment has an enhanced effect on their emotions and thoughts.[73] Because of that, the involvement of participants would have grown with their blood alcohol content over the course of the ritual.

However, this does not immediately imply that participants of a drinking bout were 'merely channels' of the ritual. The concept of flow should be employed with care in this context. As argued before, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling show that the ritual of health drinking could be 'used' to achieve various goals. On the one hand, it could be an expression of respect to a companion. On the other, it could be a task in an excessive drinking game. Or, to put it in the authors' terms, health drinking could be used and abused. This means that drinking rituals had no inherent direction or conclusion. Moreover, Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling's argument that quips could save a participant from excess underlines that there was some space for negotiation in the flow of the drinking table. In the end, there were even ways to refuse the goblet.

72 Ibidem, vol. III, p. 91.

73 The psychologists Claude M. Steele and Robert A. Josephs called this effect 'alcohol myopia'. See Steele and Josephs, 'Alcohol Myopia. Its Prized and Dangerous Effects', in: *American Psychologist* 45.8 (1990), pp. 921–933.

Conclusion

Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling's analysis of drinking rituals indicates that historians should nuance Elias' civilising theory when applying it to Dutch early modern drinking culture. In this article, I presented two overarching arguments for this conclusion. Firstly, the main driver of Elias' civilisation — shame — is presented by the authors as a main driver for *compliance*. Although *compliance* was not necessarily wrong, it could lead to a loss of one's own will and rationality to the ritual. *Compliance* could lead to excess, immoderation and beastly behaviour. This result is striking, since Elias emphasises that rituals and manners were meant to distinguish between man and beast.

The second element of Elias' civilisation process — rules for behaviour — is no less problematic in the context of early modern drinking practices. Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling show that drinking rituals — events which were regulated by scripts — had no inherent, logical result or meaning, but that they could be used and abused by its participants. The rituals could be an expression of order and sociability, but could be just as easily twisted into something dark and sinful. Furthermore, the authors also show that drinking rituals had some negotiation space within the flow of events. By being witty and sharp, a drinker could escape a derailing drinking ritual. Although this was not easy, it was still possible.

The writings of Van Alkemade and Van der Schelling indicate that the early modern drinking table should be understood as an arena in which the various participants negotiated the actions and their outcomes. It is very likely that those men with the highest social status had a better negotiation position, but this does not imply that other men in the arena had no influence at all. For everyone there, drinking rituals were a repository which they could tap into and from which they could employ certain scripts in a tactical way. The drinking ritual could confirm and express community, but could also derail in a destructive drinking bout. In these intoxicating negotiations at the drinking table, there were even ways to honourably refuse the goblet.

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