

little choice but to hew to the reformist party line. Warner shows how overwhelmingly consistent women writers were in taking “a rigidly protemperance perspective, in which almost any use of intoxicants was defined as addictive and in which teetotalism and prohibitionism edged out other approaches to intoxicant use and abuse.”

An informed reader of *Spirits of America* might conclude that, after all, Warner tells us nothing really surprising. What he finds in the key writers of the period is what we might have supposed he would find: a variety of conflicting attitudes among male writers, versus unanimity of opinion among women writers bound by Victorian gender codes. I think, however, that the usefulness of this modest, rigorous, and well-written book - one that eschews the theoretical flashiness of what often passes these days for literary “scholarship” - consists precisely in the unremarkability of its claims. That they square so completely with what we already know from the work of temperance historians serves to strengthen a scholarly consensus that has not heretofore taken into such exhaustive account the literary historical record of writers who lived amid the swirl of nineteenth-century temperance activism.

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Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs*.
Cambridge University Press, 1997.

“First and foremost,” as Diane Kirkby writes, this book is “a history of work.” It situates barmaids and over a century of their waged labor in Australian pubs within a feminist historiography of work. Like secretaries and actresses, barmaids have been ill served by historians and by a “male misreading of female culture” that represents them not as workers, but as sexualized “attractions to trade.” Meditating on how this came to be so, Kirby’s book is also about ideas and their power to shape women’s working

lives. Shifting concepts of sexuality, femininity, citizenship, and, of course, drink, operated together to construct a cultural image of “the barmaid” that affected the terms, conditions, and social meanings of her work.

The study draws upon a variety of sources, ranging from the traditional royal commission reports, legal and legislative texts, and union publications, to a theoretically informed use of photographs. Barmaids’ autobiographies figure prominently. Though Australia based and dealing with the particularities of Australian pub culture and the women who worked within it, *Barmaids* speaks to broad themes in labor and gender history.

Women’s work behind the bar began with the first convict colonies. It was Sarah Bird who first obtained her license to keep a public house, in 1797. From then on women comprised a “small but significant minority,” holding, for example, one of every eight pub licenses in the Sydney area in 1815. Though this proportion declined with increased settlement, women, as wives and daughters remained the actual keepers of many pubs nominally licensed to husbands and fathers. Several (and a handful of ex-convict women among them) enjoyed success in the trade, gaining economic independence and enhanced personal autonomy.

Most women kept public house within the context of family life and pubs, in the colonial era, were also family homes. The work utilized commonly possessed “womanly skills” and paired well with childcare and household responsibilities. Yet, despite the domestic surroundings, “respectability and unrespectability” together defined pubs in public perceptions. For women, this meant the need to negotiate the boundary, which separated, their work in public from that of those other public women—prostitutes. This was a job specific skill that male bar workers did not need to hone. The evidence of women’s early work in pubs is notable for the challenge it mounts to the “masculinist narrative” of colonization. These buildings, the culture they supported, and the white women who kept them, stood at the forefront of the colonial project. Aboriginals worked in pubs too but by 1838 were

barred as customers. White women, therefore, as pub keepers, participated in the “dynamics of exclusion.” Colonial history is crucial in defining the nature of pubs and women’s work within them. It is not clear, though, that these women were actually “barmaids” as Kirkby defines them. A comparative consideration of the differences between a female pub keeper (in control of her house, capital and profit) and a wage-earning barmaid with a boss is absent. As an occupational category, the barmaid as a product of economic development, particularly the growth of towns, the emergence of a middle class, and the increasing material sophistication of pubs themselves. As pub keepers turned to wage labor to meet the demands of a new, commercialized leisure, so the barmaid was created. In England the term had been in use since 1830; in Australia (Queensland) it first appeared on the census form in 1871. Women liked the work. Barmaids’ pay packets were higher than most women’s. Their hours were better regulated than domestic servants. They deployed female skills in domestic management and interpersonal relations. They developed others specific to the job, particularly that of pulling beer with the right head. Customers called barmaids “Miss,” a mark of respect. Unions and industrial tribunals improved working conditions and wage rates after 1900. And, they worked in public space.

Indeed, Kirkby suggests that barmaids’ work gave them the freedom and independence to “behave like men”—to look outside the home for sociability, intellectual stimulation and occupational fulfillment. This is an attractive argument, but one, unfortunately, without evidentiary support. The cited primary sources reveal nothing about barmaids’ lives outside working hours (invariably split shifts six days a week). Surely too, many barmaids, especially married women, looked to their families and their homes for succor in time off.

Women, of course, did patronize pubs as customers. Kirkby makes the insightful observation that barmaids, for all that reformist literature emphasized their role in “luring” men in

to drink, may well have encouraged female patronage. These allusions to what Scott Haine has called “female space along the bar” are all too brief. Similarly, Kirkby’s recurring observation that pub history remains silent about homoeroticism is startling in its originality. The focus on barmaids’ ability to entice male customers has never been complemented by discussions of sexualized interactions between *barmen* and male patrons.

Barmaids had enemies. From the 1880s, campaigns to legislate them out of work went hand in hand with the emerging temperance movement and the reformation of factories and shop employment. Between 1902 and 1908 all Australian states restricted barmaids’ employment. Two states and New Zealand prohibited barmaids by 1916. Kirkby devotes three chapters to elucidating the arguments made against barmaids by the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, Royal Commissioners, and early twentieth-century nationalists. She explores, for example, the considerable complexity of the WCTU’s feminist, but anti-barmaid, position. Throughout, fascinating sections depict the barmaids’ defenders, none of whom were feminists. Members of Parliament championed her liberal right to work. Brewers emphasized the better “tone” of the pubs that had barmaids. A radical newspaper, the *Bulletin*, surveyed lying-in hospitals and found that hardly any barmaids had babies out of wedlock! Kirkby points to the resolute sexualization of barmaids by reformers, and the ways in which this rendered them invisible as workers. In the end, though, it was new, twentieth century, ideas about “appropriate womanhood” that “enabled” the laws against barmaids. Barmaids lost their “economic citizenship” because their deep association with masculine culture and public space rendered them “the antithesis of the desirable women citizen.” The only exception to the barmaid ban were wives and daughters of license-holders, now classified as “relatives assisting” their male head. Independent wage-earning women, in other words, lost their right to the work. As Kirkby concludes these laws “created the knowledge . . . that pubs were the domain of men.”

We lose the barmaid herself, somewhat, in the final chapters. The focus shifts to changes in pub hours, architecture, and clientele. Early closing laws (from circa 1910 to 1955) created the “six o’clock swill,” as men, leaving work crammed, vertically, into public bars to fit in an hour of drinking. This shaped the pace and nature of bar work. It also affected the design of pubs as the public bar took over square footage. Women drinkers were relegated to tawdry “Ladies’ Lounges.” With World War II women returned not only as barmaids but also as customers in the lounge bar. What resulted was a further reshaping of pub space to accommodate the desire for mixed gender sociability and a redefinition of drinking itself as a mixed gender activity. By the 1960s the masculinity of pub culture was “under siege” by these developments and by feminists who staged pub sit-ins. States also liberalized the old colonial laws banning Aboriginals from pub space between 1957-1972. For both women and Aboriginals access to public drinking represented access to equal citizenship with white men.

To some, pub culture seemed lost and they responded with a resurgent brand of “ocker” nationalism that celebrated masculinity and drinking. Publications in this vein re-visited the barmaid as a sexualized object of male fantasy. A spate of books extolled the “buxom genial barmaid” and the role of her “tits” in pub culture. Again, this male reading of female work masked the “actuality” of the barmaid’s “daily grind.” Simultaneously increasing numbers of young women re-entered bar work, not as barmaids, but as fellow “bar attendants” working their way up through the rungs of Australia’s blossoming hospitality and tourist industry.

Essentially, Kirby’s book is a wonderfully readable account that recasts the previously “unproblematic” history of Australian pubs along new historiographical lines. It is gender history at its best. It disrupts a (white) masculinist narrative of colonization and labor. It is attentive to racialized issues. It successfully probes the chasm between barmaids’ work as barmaids experienced it, and

the ways in which contemporary Australians and subsequent, male, historians represented it. In so doing, Kirkby contributes to a wider history on the complex meanings of work for women, and changing constructions of femininity, masculinity, public space, and drink.

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John F. Quinn, *Father Mathew's Crusade: Temperance in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Irish America*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002.

Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, Dublin and Portland: Irish Academic Press, 2002.

These two books have much in common. Most obviously, they deal with the same topic: Fr. Theobald Mathew (1790-1856) and his major Irish temperance crusade of the 1840s. Both books are based on Ph.D. theses completed at American universities during the 1990s: Quinn's at Notre Dame and Townend's at Chicago. They are extensively researched and lucidly written. Neither book is strictly speaking a biography, as both concentrate on Mathew's temperance work during the 1840s and treat the rest of his life in fairly cursory fashion.

These books also share the same publication date, 2002. Leaving aside several nineteenth-century mainly popular works, twentieth-century studies of Mathew's crusade were few. Two hagiographical accounts appeared in the 1940s (Rogers and Augustine), an American thesis in 1978 (Bretherton), academic chapters in 1979 (Kearney) and 1986 (Malcolm) and in 1992 a short monograph (Kerrigan). Probably partly due to the limited amount of research done, during the latter part of the twentieth century Irish historians as a whole demonstrated little interest in the temperance movement. Current standard histories of modern