

Inscription, the Embossed Surface and the Ceremonial Sip: The *Traubenpokal* of Bernkastel-Kues, 1661–2001*

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In 1661 the officials of Bernkastel, a town located on the Middle Moselle, had an inscription added to the rim of a large gilt-silver lidded cup (Fig. 1). It listed the men who had been newly elected to the major offices of administrator (*Amtman*), tax official (*Kellner*), judicial assessor (*Scheffen*) and mayor (*Schulteis*) in Bernkastel and in the smaller communities of Longkamp and Kues, a village best known as the birthplace of the fifteenth-century theologian Nicholas Cusanus.¹ The cup took the form now known as a *Traubenpokal* (grape cup) for its intricate lobate surface that was raised and shaped from a flat sheet of silver (Fig. 2). Such embossed, geometrically sophisticated lidded standing cups had become a specialty of South German goldsmiths in the late fifteenth century and remained a dominant form in secular collections of plate during the seventeenth century. At the time Bernkastel's cup was made in Nuremberg by Stephan Gressel, probably in the early 1630s, makers of lobed cups constituted an entire subspecialty of the market for precious metalwork. Because it remains the property of a fairly remote small town and has been described and exhibited only once in its long history, the Bernkastel *Traubenpokal* has not attracted particular attention, nor is it included in the most recent summary of Gressel's *oeuvre*.² A fine example of South German goldsmith's

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¹ DAS GERICHT DES BERNCSTELL. HOFFS: MACHT ANNO 1661 ±H. HOCHG. AMPTMAN J. W. VON KESSELSTATT KELNER UND ZUR ZEIT AUCH SCHEFFEN ZU BERNC. H. A. BLASIUS X SCHULTEIS JO. HETZRODT X 5 SCHEFFEN ZU BERNC. NICOL. GRAACHER. FRID. STEFFENS. RUP. KAUT. NICOL. HELLING. JAC. RAUP 3 SCHEFFEN VON COUSA—NICOL. JUNG. ARN. FUGER. WILH. UMBESCHIEDEN. JO. RAP. I VON LONCAMP P. PULCHER. *Scheffen* and *Schulteis* were members of the town council. The figures referred to include Johann Wolfgang von Kesselstatt, Johann Adam Blasius, Johann Hetzerath, Nikolaus Gracher, Friedrich Stephani, Ruprecht Kaut, Nikolaus Helling, Jakob Raup, Nikolaus Jung, Wilhelm Umbescheiden and Johannes Rapp. On Bernkastel's political structure in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see J. M. Braun (ed.), *Das Schöffebuch zu Bernkastel von 1526–1682* (Cologne, 2010), esp. pp. 753–63.

² On Gressel, see K. Tebbe, U. Timann and T. Eser (eds), *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst, 1541–1868*, vol. 1, part 1: *Meister, Werke, Marken* (Nuremberg, 2007), no. 294; H. Vogts, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kreises Bernkastel*, vol. 15, part 1, of *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Rheinprovinz*, ed. P. Clemen (Düsseldorf, 1935), p. 81; Verein für Mosel, Hochwald u. Hunsrück, *Ausstellung heimatlicher Kunst, 27. Bis 29. Juni 1920 in den Räumen d. Hospitals zu Cues* (Neumagen 1920), 7, nos 146–8. This pamphlet along with installation photography of the exhibition remain in the archive of the Cusanusstift.



Figure 1: Detail of the Inscription on the Bernkastel-Kues *Traubenpokal*.

Source: Photograph author's own.

work, in material, in form, in construction and in ornamental details it is not unique. Now residing in a civic collection outside Nuremberg, it remains overlooked in the extensive scholarship connecting extant objects there to the deep archives witnessing the work of the city's famed goldsmiths.³

³ H. Kohlhaussen, *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst des Mittelalters und der Dürerzeit 1240–1540* (Berlin, 1968); G. Bott (ed.), *Wenzel Jamnitzer und die Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst 1500–1700* (Munich, 1985); K. Tebbe (ed.), *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst 1541–1868*, vol. 2: *Goldglanz und Silberstrahl* (Nuremberg, 2007); Tebbe, Timann and Eser, *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst, 1541–1868*, vol. 1, part 1.



Figure 2: Stephan Gressel, *Traubepokal* of Bernkastel-Kues, 1630s. Gilt silver. 52 cm tall.
Source: Photograph by Jörg Braun.

It is the cup's inscription that renders it singular and makes it Bernkastel's, as the engraver's litany of honoured local names competes with and threatens to cover the *N* of Nuremberg's *Beschaumark*, the regulatory punch testifying to the purity of the silver, and the *SG* of the maker's own mark (Fig. 3). The study of early modern German silver has often focused on such marks and the context of production they evidence.⁴ Beyond their use in attribution and authentication, regulatory marks can be analysed as clues to the material regime that produced them, which determined the value and function of precious metalwork and the way in which it was crafted and consumed.⁵ Singular examples of gilt-silver vessels with highly specialized decorative and textual programmes have also been effectively contextualized within the social and political structures of the material communities that created them.⁶ The inscription on Bernkastel's grape cup layers on top of the existing records of its origins evidence of a new material community,

⁴ M. Rosenberg, *Die Goldschmiede-Merkzeichen*, 4 vols (Frankfurt/Main, 1922–1923).

⁵ P. Oakley, 'Containing Precious Metals: Hallmarking, Minting and the Materiality of Gold and Silver in Medieval and Modern England', in H. P. Hahn and H. Weiss (eds), *Mobility, Meaning and Transformation of Things: Shifting Contexts of Material Culture through Time and Space* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 63–77; B. De Munck, 'The Agency of Branding and the Location of Value: Hallmarks and Monograms in Early Modern Tableware Industries', *Business History*, 54, 7 (2012), pp. 1055–76.

⁶ S. Brisman, 'Christoph Jamnitzer's Speechless Defense of the Goldsmith's Strengths', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 83 (2020), pp. 385–408.

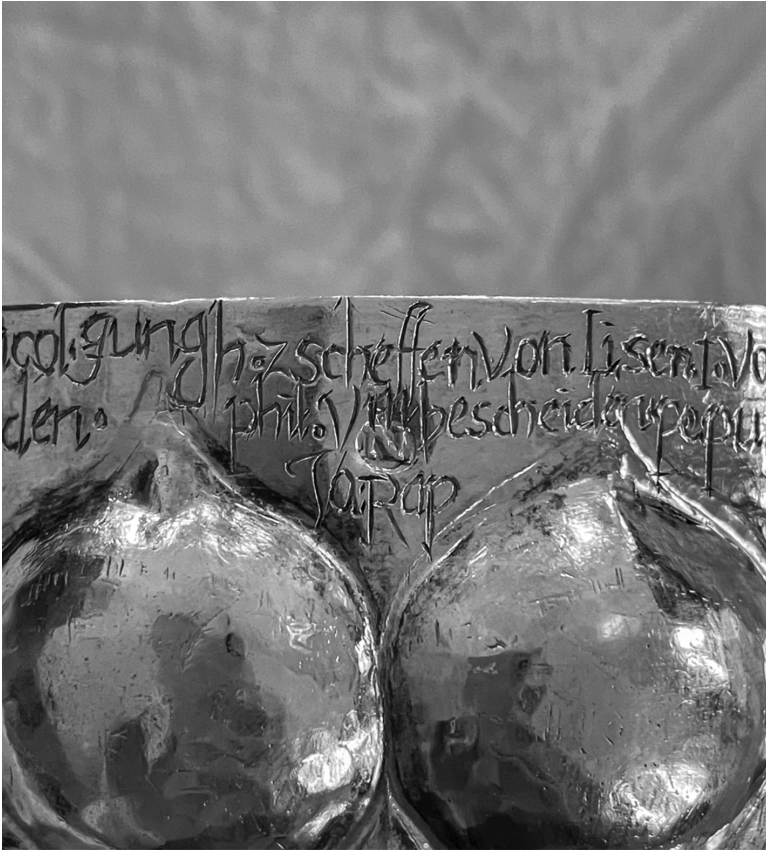


Figure 3: Detail of lip of Bernkastel *Traubenpokal* showing inscription covering the Nuremberg *Beschaumark*. Source: Photograph author's own.

one that was distinct from and yet culturally related to that in Nuremberg and in which this typical grape cup would come to have a local function and significance.

The inscription materializes the cup's enmeshment within a set of social relations, naming specific historical actors and referencing the hierarchies of power reflected in the locality's structures of governance. But the cup does more than document a historically contained set of civic connections. Carefully protected over the centuries, it was not simply held in storage, but also continued to be used in celebratory events during the twentieth century and up to the present day. Tracing the object's existence and use, as well as the changing meaning of the lobed cup as an iconic form in German visual culture, over this historical *longue durée* makes visible the cup's ability to constitute new relationships around it, which include meaningful links between past and present. This capacity is rooted in part in the cup's function as a vessel that can facilitate rituals of drinking. But the cup's physical features also make possible different forms of interaction.

This article uses Bernkastel's *Traubenpokal* and its specific biography as an opportunity to examine two of these features in detail, the inscription and the convex 'grapes'

of its raised surface, which create multiplying reflections. In addition to situating these two features within early modern craft practice and its associated visual culture, I consider especially the differing temporal affordances of inscription and embossed lobe. An inscription's incised permanence and lobes' transient reflections generate distinct forms of social relation, with implications for who is seen and connected through the cup in the historical record.

I. The *Ehrentrunk*, Social Bonding and Civic Plate

Gold and silver cups were objects of enormous significance in medieval and early modern Germany, and in Europe more broadly. That they remain ubiquitous as the expected prize in sporting and other types of competitions speaks to the evocation of triumph, reward and honour that endures from previous centuries. In material and form they instantly call to mind high financial value and the act of drinking, with its various and morally ambiguous associations. Ann Tlusty has tracked the social function of ritual drinking in early modern Germany, from that undertaken in guilds and elite drinking societies to the more widespread tradition of the contract drink, which was a crucial aspect of sealing business deals as well as matrimonial unions.⁷ Drunk from pottery, stoneware, glass and baser metals, these quotidian ceremonial sips were in concept related to the more elaborate ritual events involving silver and gold vessels, which were some of the most culturally and financially valuable artisanal products available. In some patrician families, a commemorative draught was drunk from precious metal vessels designated for this purpose to mark the death of a relative.⁸

In civic contexts, welcoming esteemed guests often involved drinking to their honour (the *Ehrentrunk* or *Ehrenwein*) and, as Valentin Groebner has shown, the gift of wine, which for the most high-ranking guests could be accompanied by the further gift of gold and silver vessels, which were often filled with gold coins. This combination of precious metal vessel, currency and wine served to collapse the three into the shared category of 'liquid assets'.⁹ Perhaps a similar conflation was at work in the *Traubenpokal*, which explicitly referenced in its grape-cluster form the commodity of wine in the financially valuable materials of silver and gold, themselves capable of flow; in 1610 Nuremberg's town council ordered a number of grape cups for the purpose of future gifting.¹⁰ Gifts of precious-metal vessels were a way of signalling alliance and allegiance, so princes and city governments could build up substantial collections over time.¹¹ A town's council plate (*Ratssilber*), consisting of gifts, acquisitions and donations, created a store of objects that could be used on civic occasions and even regifted when

⁷ B. A. Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville and London, 2001).

⁸ M. Bachtler, *Goldschmiedekunst: westfälische Privatsammlung* (Bielefeld, 1986), p. 46.

⁹ V. Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. P. E. Selwyn (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 22–35.

¹⁰ C. Kitzlinger, 'Die Natur als Vorbild—Früchte, Pflanzen und Tiere als Formgeber in der Goldschmiedekunst', in M. Bachtler, D. Syndram and U. Weinhold (eds), *Faszination des Sammelns: Meisterwerke aus der Sammlung Rudolf-August Oetker* (Munich, 2011), pp. 199–208, here p. 201.

¹¹ I. Elsner, *Das Huldigungsilber der Welfen des Neuen Hauses Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1520–1706): Geschenkkultur und symbolische Interaktionen zwischen Fürst und Untertanen* (Regensburg, 2019).

an urgent need arose.¹² Made of precious metal, these collections served also as a repository of monetary value and could be liquidated to alleviate financial hardship. But they were also a store of materialized memory of the city's past and the social networks of its illustrious citizens, which helped protect them from alienation despite their high value and easy convertibility into currency.

Although they appear to be a unified form, standing cups were often constructed of different components screwed together, with these attachments hidden by the stem, in the foot or in the lid. To the complex and carefully worked raised foot and cup, the goldsmith added cast components or elements made by colleagues with another specialization, like the silver-flower makers who produced the ornaments (*Schmeck*) that crowned the lids of standing cups and festooned the junctures of the cup's components. The little bouquet that springs from the cast urn on the Bernkastel cup bears the mark *IR* for Jeremias or Johann Rauchwolff, father and son silver-flower makers in early seventeenth-century Nuremberg.¹³ As cups changed hands or were renewed, these crowning elements were easily replaced, allowing their association with a given city or family to shift. The Bernkastel cup has a cast stem that imitates a trunk with knotty bark, with a thick silver vine added to curve up around it and a small climbing cast figure. Clearly a generic component, he seems out of scale with the rest of the ensemble. Once described as a farmer hunting a bird, his identifying attribute is now missing.¹⁴ Other grape cups from roughly the same period have woodcutters incorporated into the stem in reference to the grape harvest; some even distinctly represent vintners in support of the oenological theme.¹⁵

The council plate of Bernkastel currently includes four silver vessels.¹⁶ Little is known about the circumstances in which they came to this small town on the Moselle River, though they all have inscriptions referring to events and figures in the seventeenth century. The Gressel cup may have been incorporated into the town's *Ratssilber* because its shape and contemporary association with wine-making corresponded nicely to Bernkastel's famed vineyards or simply because Nuremberg silver was a desirable commodity, but whether it was purchased or donated or was intended to mark a political alliance and when it was acquired by the council remain a mystery. An item in the town's account books does allude to the confiscation of the majority of Bernkastel's civic plate in 1636, when Bavarian forces wintered there; it is almost certain that the Nuremberg cup came into the town's possession after this event, perhaps as a replacement for some of the lost vessels.¹⁷

¹² O. Hupp, *Kunstschätze des Regensburger Rathauses* (Regensburg, 1912), pp. 20–6; S. Bursche, *Das Lüneburger Ratssilber* (Munich and Berlin, 2008).

¹³ This attribution is made here for the first time. Although Vogts identified Gressel as the possible maker of the cup, he did not note the Rauchwolffs' mark on the bouquet of silver flowers, see Vogts, *Die Kunstdenkmäler*, p. 81. On the Rauchwolffs, see Tebbe, Timann and Eser, *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst, 1541–1868*, vol. 1, part 1, pp. 327–8.

¹⁴ Vogts, *Die Kunstdenkmäler*, p. 81.

¹⁵ Bachtler, *Goldschmiedekunst*, pp. 64–9.

¹⁶ Vogts, *Die Kunstdenkmäler*, pp. 79–82. The fourth cup, an apparent copy of the town's Cologne cup from the early seventeenth century, was purchased in the last few decades, according to Bernkastel's current mayor, Wolfgang Port. Research on this acquisition is ongoing.

¹⁷ Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz, Bernkastel Rechnungsbuch, 1636. I thank Jörg Braun for locating and alerting me to this source.

Bernkastel had erected a town hall in elaborate Renaissance style in 1608, and it was here, with a view onto the market square, that the civic plate was probably kept and used. Steps from this building, on an extreme incline, was a fountain topped by a sculpture of Saint Michael, in reference to the town's affiliation with the archbishopric of Trier.¹⁸ Along with the town hall, this stonework testified to Bernkastel's prosperity at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The buildings surrounding this square belonged to elite citizens, many of whom participated in running the town's governing structures. While no documentation of the use of Bernkastel's civic plate survives, based on contemporaneous cases it is fair to surmise that the vessels were used when the town council met in the town hall and shared meals and perhaps particularly on the election of new members.¹⁹

II. Practices of Inscription

Drinking was a serious business—it was the means by which masculine honour was constructed and social relations were formed and reaffirmed.²⁰ Investment in a finely crafted silver vessel certainly signalled the importance of ritual drinking and raised the status of the institution that could afford it. But such cups could also be fairly generic, making them vulnerable to alienation through gifting, theft, sale or being melted down and, more simply, to having their significance remain unspecified. The precious metal surface was very receptive to engraved elaboration in word and image. Many early modern inscriptions on precious metalwork mention the word *Gedächtnis* (remembrance), and commemoration of individuals and events was a major impetus for modifying the metal surface in order to stabilize or give new meaning to an important object. In Bernkastel in 1661, the inscription made on the existing grape cup, by then about thirty years old, related to that year's election of new officials. It is not clear what prompted this record to be made—there is no evidence of this having been a regular practice in Bernkastel, which was hardly wealthy enough to boast a groaning credenza of civic plate—and why this election and these particular men's names appear on the Nuremberg cup. But the inscription stabilizes the cup's meaning around these figures and gives them an enduring presence on what remains one of the town's great treasures. Although the hand responsible for the inscription is not known, it would be unsurprising if a local craftsman had been commissioned to take on this alteration. Bernkastel was far too small to sustain a sizable community of goldsmiths, but a few were recorded there in the course of the seventeenth century. Nikolaus Feger lived in Bernkastel until around 1661. His listed occupation of goldsmith and copperplate engraver (*aurifaber et calcographus*) makes him a tantalizing candidate for the inscription's author, because it shows he had precisely the necessary skills to incise the grape cup's lip with the list of local names.²¹

We might distinguish between two types of inscription, those designed and executed at the same time as the vessel and those added later by another hand. Contracts for

¹⁸ On the town hall and market fountain, see Vogts, *Die Kunstdenkmäler*, pp. 78–80, 82–4.

¹⁹ On wine served around the occasion of elections, see Groebner, *Liquid Assets*, pp. 23–4.

²⁰ Tlusty, *Bacchus*, pp. 103–14.

²¹ Braun, *Das Schöffnenbuch zu Bernkastel*, pp. 623–4, 694, 836.

elaborate vessels could stipulate text that was to appear on the surface, and some preparatory drawings communicating a design between client and smith indicate precisely where text was to be included.²² In such cases the text more deliberately fits the intended location. Other inscriptions must work within the parameters of the existing object or add an additional engravable surface where one did not exist before—this could be a circular ring soldered to a cup's lid or a curved boss attached beneath the foot or on the underside of the lid. On the Bernkastel cup, the only flat, undecorated surface on the entire object was the cup's lip. Whoever engraved the text had to accommodate it to the petal shapes between the cup's protruding lobes and negotiate the existing marks that already claimed the flat surface, including the guild and master's marks and the *Tremolierstrich*, the zigzag 'bite' that took a small quantity of the metal to be assayed (see Fig. 1). The result is lines that cannot be read like text that runs horizontally across a handwritten or printed page, but must instead be read in fits and starts, guided by the punctuation of colons and full stops and tiny inscribed stars and attuned to the spaces where words threaten to run together. This three-dimensional reading, requiring the investment of time and interpretation on the part of the reader, cannot be accomplished without moving with the object in the round, whether by turning it or circumambulating it. This is also the challenge that inscribed metalwork presents to modern photographic illustration, which traditionally can capture only a short excerpt of text in two dimensions.

Abbreviation was one strategy for allowing the text to fit the available surface, with implications for legibility and the audience of possible readers. The inscription on the Bernkastel cup is heavily condensed, particularly when it comes to the names of the officials. With family histories embedded deep into the town and its surviving archives, these names are easily recoverable, but when an inscribed object travels from its original location, its text may prove impossible to parse.²³ A cup associated with Bernkastel now in Los Angeles remained unidentified for decades because its inscriptions were so opaque and, unlike the *Traubenpokal*, it did not explicitly offer the name *Bernkastel*.²⁴ Despite the desire for permanence, then, the inscription constructs an audience of future readers on the assumption such abbreviations will remain legible.

In other cases inscriptions record enough information to narrate complex stories of mobility and reappropriation. A *Buckelpokal* made in Nuremberg by Hans Petzolt around 1600 and now in the British Museum bears on its lip an inscription in Hebrew from 1740, asserting its ownership by the Chevra Kadisha, or burial society, of Pressburg, modern-day Bratislava.²⁵ A charitable organization tasked with tending to the dying, the dead and the grieving according to Jewish law, the burial society held a yearly dinner to commemorate the death of Moses, at which sips were taken communally from the large cup, a practice reflected in the corporate festivities of many Christian

²² For example, see the contract and design drawings for the Hermersberger Willkomm of 1581: *Die Renaissance im deutschen Südwesten*, vol. 2 (Karlsruhe, 1986), pp. 630–1.

²³ J. M. Braun, *Die Einwohner der Stadt Bernkastel von 1500 bis 1900*, 4 vols (Cologne, 2021).

²⁴ This cup and what appear to be three replicas of uncertain date are the subject of my ongoing research. See the entry by T. Schroder in N. Thomas and T. Oldknow (eds), *By Judgment of the Eye: The Varya and Hans Cohn Collection* (Los Angeles, 1991), p. 262.

²⁵ D. Thornton, *A Rothschild Renaissance* (London, 2015), pp. 285–9.

guilds and brotherhoods.²⁶ The exact origins of the cup are not known, but the inscription signals a shift in ownership and function, just like the vessels donated to civic and sacred purposes from private ownership. It provides a trace of the social relations that formed and re-formed around the vessel through time. In this case the Hebrew text and the ritual context it alludes to made the cup particularly desirable for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, who could assert through its acquisition not only his connoisseurship of historical German silver but his Jewish identity as well.

III. The *Buckel*

The part of the Bernkastel cup that proved physically resistant to inscription was a design feature that had intense appeal beginning in the later fifteenth century: the *Buckel*, or lobe, created through repoussé (*Treibarbeit*).²⁷ Repoussé was an ancient technique that had been used, for example, by the Greeks to create gold libation bowls whose ornate depressions held wine in concentric, glimmering pools.²⁸ In early modern Germany it was a skill central to the masterpiece—often a large standing cup—that goldsmiths were required to produce for official entry to the guild. Portrayals of smiths in this period most often represented the process of raising a vessel from a flat sheet of silver, because this skill was among the most demanding and sought-after proficiencies and required for the most prominent sacred and secular vessels.²⁹ It involved shaping the metal using a hammer and then refining this shape by carefully pushing the metal from inside and out using a series of increasingly precise tools. The hump of the *Buckel* needed to be defined in the vessel wall against the other lobes, a complex push and pull of the malleable metal that resulted in an arrangement of netted forms recalling the fish-bladder tracery and ribbed vaulting of Gothic architecture.³⁰ The lid transformed the open vessel into a closed, complete entity whose sculptural surface hid its interior contents.

Associated iconically with visual and material culture of the later fifteenth century, including designs by Albrecht Dürer, *Buckelpokale* remained aesthetically and culturally dominant for more than a century.³¹ The *Traubenpokal* itself appears to have been invented by the Nuremberg smith Hans Petzolt in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and was imitated until it had become an established form.³² The most arresting examples of lobed cups have the effect of barely contained soap bubbles, highlighting the reflective nature of the material and, belying its true weightiness, appearing almost

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 288.

²⁷ E. Brepohl, *Theorie und Praxis des Goldschmieds* (8th edn, Leipzig, 1987), pp. 221–34.

²⁸ See the gold phiale discussed in M. Gaifman, *The Art of Libation in Classical Athens* (New Haven, 2018), p. 47.

²⁹ The hammer used in raising and punching was also a common attribute of goldsmiths in portraits. For a full overview of images of goldsmiths, see T. Andratschke, 'Die Geschichte des Goldschmieds: Künstler und Kunstgattung in Wort und Bild' (PhD Dissertation Technische Universität Braunschweig, 2010).

³⁰ T. Eser, "'Weit berühmt vor andern Städten": kunsthistorische Relevanz, städtische Konkurrenz und jüngere Wertschätzungsgeschichte der Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst', in Tebbe, *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst 1541–1868*, vol. 2, pp. 9–32, here pp. 10–11.

³¹ C. Kitzlinger, 'Die Natur als Vorbild', p. 202. Hildegard Hoos contested the oft-cited 'Gothic Revival' of Nuremberg goldsmithwork around 1600; H. Hoos, "'Neugotik" in der Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst um 1600?', *Städte-Jahrbuch*, 9 (1983), pp. 115–30.

³² Kitzlinger, 'Die Natur als Vorbild', p. 201.

to defy gravity.³³ They have often been described in organic terms. The period word for *Buckel* was *Knorre*, as in node, tuber or the gnarl of a tree.³⁴ References to fruity, botanical forms are made explicit in the names given to specific types in the broad typology of the *Buckel*: *Traubenpokal* (also known as *Ananaspokal*), *Erdbeerpokal*, *Herzpokal*, *Akeleipokal*—grape, pineapple, strawberry, heart and columbine respectively.

Modern scholarship maintains a distinction between varieties of the *Buckelpokal* and contemporaneous vessels with flat surfaces, a distinction already meaningful in the sixteenth century.³⁵ Although both were raised into three dimensions from flat sheets, lobate forms required a much greater investment of time and skill. They also offered far less surface for engraved ornament and lettering. The contrast is made explicit in Albrecht Altdorfer's etching of around 1520 where a double cup with regimented lobes and ornamental acanthus leaves is set against the unmarked surface of a covered beaker (Fig. 4). The artist's monogram is fitted into the thin seam of metal separating the cup's two halves, a fictive inscription that recalls the origins of the new media of engraving and etching in the craft of metalworking, including the punched marks identifying the

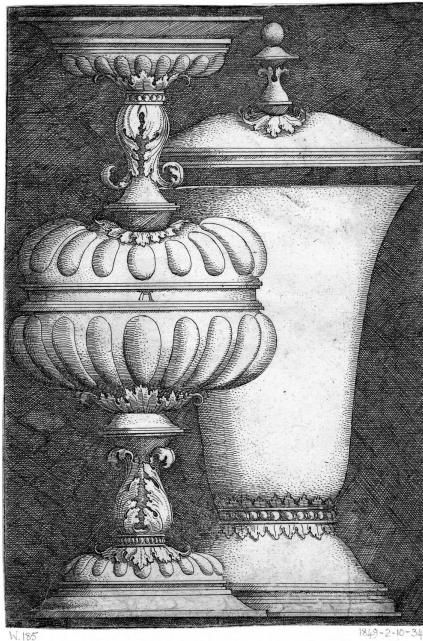


Figure 4: Albrecht Altdorfer, Double *Buckelpokal* and Covered Beaker, c.1520–1525. Etching. 21.3 x 14.4 cm. Source: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

³³ W. Koeppel, 'Im Spiegel fürstlicher Repräsentation—das Patriziat als Auftraggeber', in Bachtler, Syndram and Weinhold, *Faszination des Sammelns*, pp. 21–40, here p. 37.

³⁴ Hoos, "'Neugotik'", p. 117. See *knorre* (noun) and *knorren* (verb) in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, <https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB#3> (accessed 1 July 2022).

³⁵ In his foundational text on Nuremberg silver (Kohlhaussen, *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst*), Heinrich Kohlhaussen devoted separate chapters to 'Glattwandige Gefäße' and 'Das gebuckelte Gefäß'.

maker.³⁶ The white expanse of the covered beaker in the etching is meant to signify as raised, but uninscribed, silver; it is itself the product of the unmarked area of the etching plate.

IV. (Bad) Women Bearing Cups

In addition to the prominent part it played in the training, recognition and output of goldsmiths and in collections of secular plate with their myriad functions, the *Buckelpokal* was often referred to in contemporary visual culture. Although men dominated public rituals of drinking, it is more often women who hold elaborate raised lobed cups in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century representation. The figure of the female cup-bearer was ambiguous. It could represent wealth and welcome gifts, like the Queen of Sheba holding out a double lobed cup to Solomon in the Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493.³⁷ But very often the seductive woman holding a cup represented sensual temptation by conveying a heady mixture of luxury, nudity (connoting sexual licentiousness) and alcoholic excess.³⁸ The devilish figures disguised as beautiful women who tempt Saint Anthony often bear lidded cups. More reliably it was the Whore of Babylon in biblical illustration who epitomized this dangerous combination of luxurious sensuality. Her golden ‘cup of filth and fornication’ usually took on the stylistic features of contemporary metalwork. Thus woodcuts accompanying Martin Luther’s translations of the New Testament in the early sixteenth century give her a double or covered *Buckelpokal*.³⁹ Beyond the context of Christian subject matter, the figure of Fortune often bears an elaborate cup of reward, an iconography routed through Albrecht Dürer’s *Nemesis*, the formidable goddess pinching between two fingers a precious metal vessel in a recognizably contemporary form entwined with silver *Schmeck* (Fig. 5).⁴⁰ This image inspired dozens of later portrayals of Fortune that preserved the iconographical formula of nude woman with cup.⁴¹

The gendered dynamic of the *Ehrentrunk* is at play in these representations of female cup-bearers, who are usually either dangerous temptresses or divine arbiters, both tropes growing out of a misogynistic fear of women’s power. Tlusty outlines the many ways women’s drinking was differentiated from men’s in early modern Germany, including the idea that a woman’s participation in the social bonding secured by drinking usually consisted of taking a sip from her husband’s cup.⁴² Women were rarely on the receiving end of the wine gift or the ceremonial toast.⁴³ Outside of familial keepsakes like wedding and baptismal silver, which were

³⁶ A. Stielau, ‘Intent and Independence: Late Fifteenth-Century Object Engravings’, in J. C. Smith (ed.), *Visual Acuity and the Arts of Communication in Early Modern Germany* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 21–42, here p. 23.

³⁷ Hartmann Schedel, *Weltchronik* (Nuremberg, 1493), The Fourth Age, folio XLVI.

³⁸ Tlusty, *Bacchus*, p. 116.

³⁹ For example, *Das Neue Testament Deutzsch*, trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1522).

⁴⁰ J. Spinks, ‘Objects in Motion: Albrecht Dürer’s *Nemesis*’, in E. H. Wouk and J. Spinks (eds), *Albrecht Dürer’s Material World* (Manchester, 2023), pp. 35–48.

⁴¹ J. L. Koerner, ‘The Fortune of Dürer’s “Nemesis”’, in W. Haug and B. Wachinger (eds), *Fortuna* (Tübingen, 1995), pp. 239–94, here pp. 274–6.

⁴² Tlusty, *Bacchus*, p. 134.

⁴³ Groebner, *Liquid Assets*, p. 25.

sometimes engraved with the names and arms of brides, godmothers and baptized girls, secular plate primarily bore inscriptions related to spheres of male political and professional engagement, from council plate to the elaborate cups used in the drinking rituals of guilds and other male societies. Gressel's grape cup offers just one example, with its list of Bernkastel's patriarchs filling the single free space unpopulated by its swelling lobes.



Figure 5: Albrecht Dürer, *Nemesis (The Great Fortune)*, 1501/2. Engraving. 33.3 x 23.1 cm. Source: New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 19.73.89.

V. The Temporality of the Lobe's Reflective Surface

Modern museum photography works hard to eliminate reflections from highly reflective objects by using light tents and other tools. The goal is to concentrate the viewer's attention on the object's form, rather than on the blinding shine that might obscure it or the invasive appearance of the photographer's apparatus, which would puncture the art-historical framing designed to convey the object's originating moment. But, as Wolfram Koeppel has noted, this practice prevents us from seeing a lobed cup as historical viewers would have experienced it and thus from understanding that the reflective potential of the embossed surface was not something to be mitigated but instead a feature with intense appeal.⁴⁴ Lobed standing cups appear in many seventeenth-century still-life paintings, where they are often interpreted as symbols of ostentatious wealth and sensuous materiality, thus fitting the genre's expected commentary on transience.⁴⁵ Beyond this symbolism, however, the *Buckelpokal* offered the opportunity for the artist to explore reflective effects.⁴⁶ While play with the artist's own reflection was a long-standing trope, the first artist to reflect themselves multiply in the convex lobes of a gilt-silver vessel was the Flemish painter Clara Peeters (Fig. 6). Celeste Brusati has probed the complexity of this self-portrait, which touts the painter's mimetic skill while also appearing 'remarkably self-effacing'.⁴⁷ The illusionistic talent Peeters put on display in this painting is precisely what allows it to testify to the *Buckelpokal*'s operation as an image-making device. The lobed vessel may return Peeters in miniature, 'just as she is' in her painting attire, but it does so eight times over, as though reproducing her in the way lovers' eyes were said through mutual gazing to 'make babies' in contemporary English parlance.⁴⁸ Peeters' conscious comment here makes clear that its image-generating capacity was an observed and appreciated effect of the lobed cup.

The reflective convex surface had been a particular site of investigation in Northern European painting of the previous two centuries. The primary object in art-historical narratives of these investigations is Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait, where the convex mirror on the wall behind the depicted couple captures two further figures, who stand in the position in the fictive room that is coterminous with that held by the artist while painting and, later, by the panel's viewer. Famously painted in elaborate script on the wall above that mirror and its reflection is the surprising legend 'Jan van Eyck was here, 1434' (Fig. 7).⁴⁹ The inscription has prompted much debate about its implications for

⁴⁴ Koeppel, 'Im Spiegel fürstlicher Repräsentation', p. 37.

⁴⁵ For example, Sebastian Stoskopff's *Große Vanitas*, Strasbourg, Musée de l'Œuvre Notre Dame. On the *vanitas* themes of so-called *Prunkstillleben*, see G. Bott, 'Gemalte Schätze: Erinnerung an die Vergänglichkeit alles irdischen wie Mittel zur Repräsentation', in G. Langemeyer (ed.), *Stilleben in Europa* (Münster, 1979), pp. 432–46.

⁴⁶ C. Brusati, 'Willem Kalf on *Reflexykonst*: The Aesthetics of Transformation in Still Life', in M. Baker and A. Hemingway (eds), *Art as Worldmaking: Critical Essays on Realism and Naturalism* (Manchester, 2018), pp. 147–64, here pp. 151–2.

⁴⁷ C. Brusati, 'Self-Portraiture and Self-Reflection in Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Still-Life Painting', *Simiolus*, 20, 2/3 (1990/91), pp. 168–82, here p. 173.

⁴⁸ W. Kerrigan, 'The Fearful Accommodations of John Donne', *English Literary Renaissance*, 4, 3 (1974), pp. 337–63, here p. 357.

⁴⁹ For an overview of interpretations of this painting, see B. Ridderbos, 'Objects and Questions', in B. Ridderbos, A. van Buren and H. van Veen (eds), *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception, and Research* (Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 4–172, here pp. 59–77.



Figure 6: Clara Peeters, Still Life, 1612. Oil on panel. 59.5 x 49 cm. Detail.
Source: Karlsruhe: Staatliche Kunsthalle, used under Creative Commons License CC0.

this unusual portrait's function, but it has also been read as testament to the painter's mimetic skill and conceptual imagination, as Van Eyck reminds the viewer he, not a mirror, is the author of this seemingly reflected slice of reality. The wall text could also be understood, however, as a hedge against the mirror reflection below it, acknowledging that image's fleetingness in the hypothetical world of the painting. Van Eyck's phrase, reiterated in spontaneous graffiti the world over, condenses the essential meaning of all inscriptions into its most brusque expression: *I was here*. Peeters's still-life

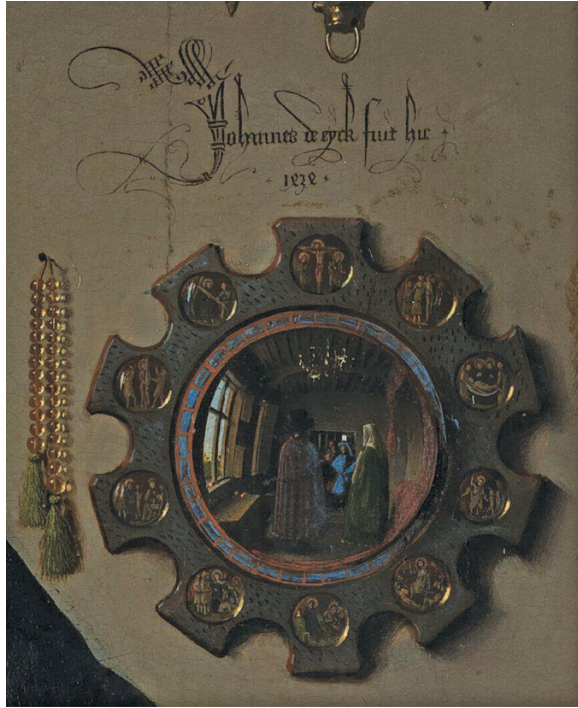


Figure 7: Jan van Eyck, Arnolfini Portrait, 1434. Oil on panel. 82.2 x 60 cm. Detail.
Source: London: National Gallery.

painting asserted the same but employed a wordless and much more precarious (fictive) medium: the *Buckelpokal* capturing her visage.

In other still lifes Peeters acknowledged the commemorative utility of text when she placed in the foreground an elaborately ornamented silver-handled knife bearing her name.⁵⁰ A subtler, more ‘motivated’ conceit, perhaps, than Van Eyck’s writing on the wall, the knife adhered to the contemporary practice of inscribing the very personal, portable forms of eating utensils with individual and familial identifiers.⁵¹ But while many early modern spoons and knives bore initials, monograms and coats of arms, which often keep their original owners unidentified today, Peeters did not leave the recognition of her authorship to chance and painted into the silver handle each distinct letter of her full name.

The Arnolfini portrait’s juxtaposition of convex, reflective surface and stabilizing, enduring inscription is shared with the Bernkastel *Traubenpokal*, where the list of local officials nestles around the cup’s polished lobes. When the cup was inscribed and as it was used in ritual drinking in the seventeenth century, the faces of the men identified, their colleagues and friends and, later, their sons and other descendants appeared in the surface that held their names. They were also ‘here’ and participated in a complex

⁵⁰ See, for example, the still life of c.1611 now in the Museo del Prado, Madrid, inv. No. P001622.

⁵¹ On disguised and ‘motivated’ objects in early Netherlandish painting, see C. S. Wood, Review of books by Craig Harbison, Joel M. Upton, Jan Baptist Bedaux, *The Art Bulletin*, 75, 1 (1993), pp. 174–80, here p. 178.

temporal convergence specific to this vessel and the act of drinking from it, where the drinker's lips met the seventeenth-century surface—made and assayed in the 1630s, inscribed in 1661—and momentarily remade that surface through their reflection. The temporality of this object is always multiple, as it is for all historical artifacts, linking its moment of creation to later uses, including the inscription, up to and including its present existence. But highly reflective objects have the unusual capacity to exhibit the visual features of both their historical context of origin and the present, for the time of the reflected image is always *now*. The grape cup's reflective surface thus made possible the fleeting connection of its handlers and viewers—yet another set of social relations networked out of it—while also linking them to a deeper past through the cup's form, ornament and inscription.

VI. The Bernkastel *Traubenpokal*, 1891–1933

The convergence of historical figures (by means of inscription) with contemporary drinkers (by means of reflection) enacted physically through the cup's form is echoed by the symbolic function of ceremonial vessels in the *Ehrentrunk*. Those who handled and drank from the cup were linked in a transhistorical chain that reinforced the honour this ritual bestowed upon individuals while cumulatively adding to the larger community's pride in its civic history. As Tlusty explains, beliefs about ritual drinking could be strongly held but remain implicit.⁵² In the case of Bernkastel's civic vessels, however, beginning in the nineteenth century, this understanding of the cup's transhistoricity was explicitly articulated in events of ritual toasting. So while the precise use and function of the town's *Traubenpokal* is not richly documented for the early modern period, the archive of reportage and photography chronicling its more recent use reveals its centrality to Bernkastel's civic occasions in this later period.

If it had not already been before, Bernkastel's market fountain became the site for ceremonial toasts, serving as a stage for the performance of civic unity, with the town hall as the backdrop and the historic timber-framed buildings of the marketplace tightly enclosing a gathering of people in the round. The fountain, always dressed for such occasions in cut flowers and greenery and sometimes in small flags, even had steps that created a natural dais for the *Ehrentrunk*, where speeches and toasts were made before wine was offered and received in the elaborate vessels belonging to the town or those of the society being honoured.⁵³ Surviving photographs show the means by which wine was then dispensed to the gathered crowd, in small glasses passed over narrow temporary barriers. A gendered distinction can often be identified between those participating in the ceremonial toast, who are usually older men, and those serving the wine, who are always younger women dressed in *Tracht*, or traditional costume. These events created and reinforced over time a mutually identifying nexus between the historic silver vessels, the market fountain and the town hall, so that they would have been out of place elsewhere in

⁵² Tlusty, *Bacchus*, p. 107.

⁵³ Photographs document the ceremonial toasts made during anniversary celebrations of Bernkastel's male singing groups, for example, which also gathered around the fountain. See Bernkastel-Kues/Mosel—alte Ansichten, <https://www.roland-klinger.de/BKS/tz-markt-alt.htm> (accessed 1 July 2022).

Bernkastel. Part of this nexus involved a slippage between the fountain, which was naturally filled with water, and the Moselle wine that was doled out from counters set up around it. This slippage created the sense that wine was flowing directly out of the fountain, which reinforced Bernkastel's historic identification with wine production.

An intensely documented *Ehrentrunk* that illustrates the role that fountain and vessels played in linking Bernkastel to its history occurred in 1891, when the town celebrated its 600th anniversary with two days of masses, parades, performances, dancing, historical re-enactment and speeches. The culmination was a reading of the town's founding documents followed by a 'ceremonial toast offered from the civic cups' (*Credenzen des Ehrentrunkes aus den städtischen Bechern*) and festival wine served 'through the market fountain'.⁵⁴ Bernkastel's mayor gave a speech in which he honoured visiting dignitaries and urged the audience to think on emperor, king and fatherland. He then introduced the *Ehrentrunk* in terms that cast it as specifically German and asserted the bond created by the historical chain of those who had drunk from the town's seventeenth-century vessels:

To strengthen this sentiment, gentlemen, in accordance with the old German custom, let us empty these time-honoured cups from which three powerful rulers of the House of Hohenzollern have already drunk, filled with the noblest and best product of our local vineyards.⁵⁵

The local newspaper reported that after reading aloud the town's founding documents, the district president raised a toast to Bernkastel and drank out of one of the three civic wine cups, which were afterwards passed around the crowd. The journalist himself seemed to have handled the three cups, for he noted physical details, including measurements of height and volume, and recorded—with several errors—two of the inscriptions. Testifying to the challenge of reading the text on the Nuremberg cup was its vague description as 'a series of names of *Schultheisen* and *Scheffen*' from the local area, which shows how the memorializing potency of the inscription could be easily diluted.

This report refers to the cups as 'precious and, because of their age, unusual', a phrase that gains greater meaning when read against the shifting status, location and function of German civic plate in the second half of the nineteenth century. In this period, many ceremonial cups were alienated from their original contexts and bought up by private collectors or acquired by museums. Ceremonial drinking vessels left the sites in which they had long been housed either because the institution they had served was defunct or because their intended function was no longer required.⁵⁶ The skyrocketing market value of historical silver was also a powerful driver of alienation, which the city of Lüneburg recognized when it sold its council plate to the Prussian state in 1874, replacing it with electrotype copies.⁵⁷ The loss of cultural patrimony on

⁵⁴ This claimed to be 600-year-old wine, hidden in the *Ratskeller*, that was to be served 'durch den Marktbrunnen' (through the market fountain). *Festschrift zur Erinnerung an die Feier des 600jährigen Bestehens der Stadt Bernkastel am 26. und 27. Juli 1891* (Bernkastel: F. C. Fuchs, 1891), p. 48. The word *Credenzen* literally recalls the furniture on which plate was displayed in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the credenza, and the connected practice of taste-testing the prince's food and drink to avoid poisoning.

⁵⁵ *Bernkasteler Zeitung*, 29 July 1891.

⁵⁶ For example, see the Regensburg cup sold with all of its documentation in 1869: Christie's, *The Collection of Barons Nathaniel and Albert von Rothschild* (London, 8 July 1999), lot 129.

⁵⁷ Bursche, *Das Lüneburger Ratssilber*, pp. 23–4.

such occasions could be palpable, particularly for preservationists and local historians.⁵⁸ That the small town of Bernkastel had held on to its silver cups and was able to employ them to celebrate the momentous occasion of its anniversary was indeed noteworthy.

The popularity of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century German silver at this time alongside the limited availability of authentic specimens created an industry of replicas, forgeries, heavily restored originals and modern historicist interpretations of iconic vessel forms, including the *Buckelpokal*.⁵⁹ In the wake of industrialization, its raised lobes hearkened back to the ascendant craft traditions of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It became an easy metonym for goldsmiths' work and for the ideals of handcrafted decorative art more generally.⁶⁰ In the visual program for the 1908 exhibition of art and industry in Munich, a small nude boy—a kind of *Jugendstil* putto set against a cloud-filled sky in a meadow—was used to represent applied art. On surviving postcards he awkwardly, but with evident pride, holds a grape cup the size of his toddler's torso (Fig. 8). Rather than a generic symbol, this was a highly specific reference to German craft



Figure 8: Wilhelm Müller-Hofmann, 'Kunstgewerbe' postcard from Munich Art and Industry Exhibition, 1908. 9 x 14 cm.

Source: Author's collection.

⁵⁸ *Verhandlungen des Historischen Vereins für Oberpfalz und Regensburg* (1872), p. 290.

⁵⁹ E.-L. Richter, *Altes Silber: imitiert—kopiert—gefälscht* (Munich, 1983); B.-W. Thiele, *Tafel- und Schausilber des Historismus aus Hanau* (Tübingen, 1992).

⁶⁰ It appeared, for example, on the neo-medieval coat of arms promoted by the *Deutsche Goldschmiedezeitung* (Leipzig, 1900–1943; Stuttgart, 1943–1965), a trade publication that advocated for goldsmiths in the absence of traditional craft guilds, for incorporation into shop signs and business cards.

of the late Renaissance, perhaps as a gesture to the importance and longevity to which modern German applied art aspired. The humour of this image rests not only in the typical theme of cherubic ornament—a gentle poking of fun at babies attempting adult endeavours—but also in the mock-heroic reimagining of the tradition of honouring and being honoured by the ceremonial toast and the gift of a precious cup.⁶¹

In Bernkastel, as in many other German towns, the *Ehrentrunk* continued to be a focal point of civic ceremony in the twentieth century and where possible employed historical vessels capable of connecting past and present in this ritual imbibing. Under National Socialism, the established tradition was deployed for new purposes. As Christof Krieger has shown, propaganda on behalf of German wine spurred the creation or elaboration of local wine festivals in the Moselle Valley, many of which took place in Bernkastel (Fig. 9).⁶² Photographs from the 1930s and 1940s record the town's *Traubenpokal* being offered to esteemed guests, who were often high-ranking politicians and members of the military, at these and other civic events.⁶³ The choice of this cup over the others may have been because it was the largest—holding half a litre—and most spectacular or because of its instantly recognizable shape, which effectively conveyed both a gesture to a German Golden Age and a reference, through its grape-cluster form, to Bernkastel's association with wine. Around 1942, Johann Port, a soldier from Kues, was given a parade honouring a recent commendation. It culminated at the market fountain, where Port, a proud grin on his face, held up Bernkastel's cup to a higher-ranking official; another figure in the background holds the lid (Fig. 10).



Figure 9: Unknown Photographer, *Ehrentrunk*, Wine Festival on the Marktplatz, Bernkastel-Kues, 1930. Source: photograph courtesy of Roland Klinger.

⁶¹ Intentionally or not, the image's relation to the premodern German craft tradition also suggests that the modern equivalent may still be in its infancy.

⁶² C. Krieger, *Wein ist Volksgetränk: Weinpropaganda im Dritten Reich* (Zell, 2018), pp. 71–2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 359.



Figure 10: Ehrentunk on the Steps of the Market Fountain, Parade for Johann Port, c.1942.
Source: photograph courtesy of Roland Klinger.

A much larger and more significant occasion took place in December 1933, when a new bridge between Bernkastel and Kues was named for Hermann Göring, then prime minister of Prussia and president of the Reichstag. Standing in an open-topped car parked on the market square, Göring lifted the *Traubenpokal* to toast the teeming



Figure 11: Unknown Photographer, Hermann Göring holding the *Traubenpokal* in Bernkastel-Kues, December 1933.

Source: photograph courtesy of Roland Klinger.

crowds (Fig. 11).⁶⁴ In Bernkastel in 1933, the grape cup, through its incorporation into Göring's triumphant gesture, was being utilized, as indeed it had been in 1891, to claim continuity between a particular narrative of the German past—recognizable in its emblematic forms and traditions—and the present political moment, which pointed the way forward to a glorious future. The reality that only certain historically sanctioned forms of civic plate would be tolerated under National Socialism became clear also in 1933, when several recent modernist additions to Cologne's *Ratssilber* were denounced as dissolute and 'Bolshevik'. Although these pieces, which creatively restaged momentous events in Cologne's history, had been praised when completed in the 1920s, their donation by a Jewish citizen and their spiky, attenuated forms made them unacceptable—the decorative arts form of 'degenerate art' (*Entartete Kunst*)—and after 1936, under the direction of the city's mayor and the director of the Schools of Art and Craft, they were melted down.⁶⁵ The revivalist vessel forms in the city's collection, including a grape cup of 1905, survived to grace civic events in the postwar period.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Although Krieger locates this photograph, and another of the cup offered to Gauleiter Gustav Simon in 1937, in the Kreisarchiv Wittlich, as of March 2022 there is no record of it there, according to the archivist Hermann Gerhardt. C. Krieger, 'Winzernot und "nationale Revolution": die Machtergreifung der NSDAP an Mosel, Saar und Ruwer 1933', *Jahrbuch für westdeutsche Landesgeschichte*, 44 (2018), pp. 403–37, here p. 414; Krieger, *Wein ist Volksgetränk*, p. 359. The photograph of Göring is available in the online archive of Roland Klinger, <https://roland-klinger.de/BKS/bruecke33.htm> (accessed 1 Apr. 2022). I thank Mr Klinger for generously providing me with high resolution images from his collection.

⁶⁵ W. Schäfke, *Das Ratssilber der Stadt Köln* (Cologne, 1980), pp. 52–8, 114–15. On *Entartete Kunst*, see J. Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, 1996), pp. 51–74.

⁶⁶ Schäfke, *Das Ratssilber*, pp. 61, 82–3.

The *Ehrentrunk* honouring Göring in Bernkastel in 1933 took place against the unfolding tragedy of the town's Jewish community, which had fifty-nine members that year. In 1927 Bernkastel's Jews had celebrated with great fanfare the seventy-fifth anniversary of their synagogue, as well as a local history going back to the thirteenth century.⁶⁷ By 1941, having fled or been forcibly removed, some to concentration camps where they were murdered, none were left, and their fellow citizens had desecrated their picturesque cemetery overlooking the river in the hills above the town.⁶⁸ Following the shameful eradication of the local Jewish population, the war ended in catastrophe for Bernkastel. In March 1945 American warplanes flew over the Moselle Valley and bombed the town centre, destroying several buildings, including the town hall and the market fountain, precisely where Göring had triumphantly raised the cup at the bridge's dedication twelve years before. To prevent Allied troops from crossing the Moselle, the Wehrmacht blew up that bridge on 11 March 1945, effectively splitting the now-unified municipality of Bernkastel-Kues back into two communities facing each other across the river.⁶⁹

Primed by the long visual tradition of figures hoisting *Buckelpokale* into the air, it is possible to see Göring in the photograph of 1933 as a more corpulent, goggle-wearing version of the Whore of Babylon of sixteenth-century Bible illustration, or even as the 1908 Munich putto now grown up and wielding his cup in a single hand. The image of Göring grasping this spectacular gilt-silver vessel resonates with his documented predilection for the shiny and ostentatious and the part he played in separating German and other European Jews from their property.⁷⁰ A particular admirer of Gothic art, Göring even acquired some Nuremberg *Buckelpokale* himself.⁷¹ In 1940 his agents confiscated through a forced sale a pair of wedding cups by Hans Petzolt from the silver collection of a German Jewish banker.⁷² Nor was the image of the powerful cup-bearer far from his personal visual archive. His collection also eventually incorporated a nineteenth-century copy of Dürer's *Nemesis*, whose minute depiction of a Tyrolean landscape shares many affinities with the community of Bernkastel-Kues, spread across the Moselle River and girded by steeply rising hills.⁷³ Of this landscape Joseph Leo Koerner has written,

The scene of town, rivers, roads, and mountains, which we experience in its specificity whether or not we know its locale, does endow the whole sheet with a sense of the always particular character of doom. [...] as if this town has, here and now, become a fulcrum of history.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ H. Friedmann, *Festschrift zur Feier des 75jährigen Bestehens der Synagoge in Bernkastel-Kues* (Bernkastel-Kues, 1927).

⁶⁸ H. H. Grundhöfer, 'Zur Geschichte der Bernkasteler Judengemeinde', in *Bernkastel-Kues in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Bernkastel-Kues, 1991), pp. 216–40. See also M. Bühler, *Letzte Jahre: das Schicksal der deportierten Juden aus dem Kreis Bernkastel-Wittlich in der Zeit von 1933–1945* (Trier, 2016).

⁶⁹ P. Neu and H. Orth, *Am Ende das Chaos: die letzten Tage des 2. Weltkrieges im Raum Bernkastel-Wittlich* (Monschau-Imgenbroich, 1982), pp. 173–4.

⁷⁰ R. M. Edsel, 'Introduction', in N. H. Yeide, *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: The Hermann Göring Collection* (Dallas, 2009), pp. 1–6, here p. 3.

⁷¹ L. Goldensohn, *The Nuremberg Interviews: Conversations with the Defendants and Witnesses*, ed. R. Gellately (London, 2007), p. 106.

⁷² Göring and his agents were also involved in the sham-sale and confiscation of the rest of the Eugen Gutmann silver collection, as traced in S. Goodman, *The Orpheus Clock: The Search for My Family's Art Treasures Stolen by the Nazis* (Melbourne and London, 2015), p. 117 and *passim*.

⁷³ Goldensohn, *Nuremberg Interviews*, p. 106. A nineteenth-century reproduction of *Nemesis* by Charles Amand-Durand was found in Göring's collection in Berchtesgaden in May 1945.

⁷⁴ Koerner, 'The Fortune of Dürer's "Nemesis"', p. 261.

To bring Dürer's sixteenth-century goddess of divine retribution to the scene of Göring's *Ehrentrunck* in 1933 and to the destruction of the Göring Bridge in 1945 would be an anachronistic gesture of dubious value. Still, Nemesis's proffered cup provides a reminder of Bernkastel's overlooked female cup-bearers. In a photograph taken on the day of the bridge dedication in 1933, a group of fresh-faced teenage girls, those tasked with dispensing wine from the market fountain, crowd smilingly into the frame (Fig. 12). The artificial grapes tacked to their shawls and hung in their hair echo the shiny *Buckel* of Gressel's cup that one girl holds by the stem, firmly in her grip. The Rauchwolffs' silver flowers rise up, fading into overdeveloped white as they cover the mouth of another girl standing behind.

It was common for a teenage girl dressed in some version of folk costume to offer the cup to the senior male figure in modern rituals of the *Ehrentrunck*, and this image must



Figure 12: Unknown Photographer, Wine Servers at the Göring Bridge Dedication, December 1933. Source: photograph courtesy of Roland Klingner.

relate to the preparation of a similar moment for Göring. Virginal young women make acceptable cup-bearers because they are sexually untainted and, unlike the threatening female figures of divine judgment and fate, almost entirely disempowered. With the cup's lid firmly on, the seventeenth-century inscription populated with the names of Bernkastel's town patriarchs is hidden and the cup's surface reflects only, and in multiple, this crowd of expectant female faces. The excitement they feel at having been chosen to play this part in the civic drama is as visible here as it is devastating to reflect on and draws out their simultaneous complicity in and co-option into this event honouring Göring. Like Clara Peeters in her invented cup, they appear, for good and ill, just as they were. And though the *Traubenpokal* bears no permanent trace of the girls, in contrast to the engraved presence of the officials of 1661, both groups are bound up in its history.

VII. Conclusion: 2001

The photographs taken of Bernkastel's grape cup in the twentieth century capture the new sets and types of social relations that formed around it as the *Ehrentrunk* was performed during the town's celebratory occasions. They provide a view of the vessel that is radically different from that chronicled by its seventeenth-century marks and inscription, revealing how the cup was physically handled as well as the centripetal force it exerted in civic events, drawing Bernkastel's townspeople into and around the market fountain. Whereas the cup's reflective surface produced only fleeting images of these interactions, the photograph provides an auxiliary site of inscription that preserves a visual record of the cup's experience and its role in staging the town's history and self-identity through moments of human connection. Unlike the 1661 inscription and the reflected images on the cup's *Buckel*, though, the photograph exists independently, making it vulnerable to separation and loss. Its evidence must be sutured back into the cup's biography to provide the fullest accounting of the *Traubenpokal's* social agency.

In May 2001, when Bernkastel-Kues celebrated the 600th anniversary of Nicholas Cusanus's birth, a local newspaper published a brief profile of the town's civic plate in anticipation of the planned festivities.⁷⁵ Under the title 'Expression of Civic Pride', it connected the town's surviving vessels to the erection of the town hall in the seventeenth century and the town's history of self-governance. Discussed as well was the vessels' role in welcoming esteemed guests, including King Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1848. Hermann Göring went unmentioned, suggesting that his interaction with the grape cup had been forgotten or suppressed. But when the German Federal President Johannes Rau visited later that month to mark the Cusanus anniversary, he was given the *Traubenpokal* to drink from in a ceremonial toast and was reminded, while sipping, that Göring too had shared this honour. An oral tradition about the cup's more recent history, including the event documented in the photographs from 1933, had been kept alive in Bernkastel and apparently accompanied the cup on its rare appearances in public. Rau's response—blanching or spitting the liquid out, according to differing

⁷⁵ E.-M. Reuther, 'Ausdruck des Bürgerstolzes: Drei prächtige Deckelpokale sind vom Ratssilber der Stadt Bernkastel übrig geblieben', *Trierischer Volksfreund Wochenende Journal*, 116 (19/20 May 2001), A3.

versions of the anecdote—is revealing.⁷⁶ It shows that the *Ehrentrunk*'s ability to provide a moment of transhistorical connection could also result in social rupture, generating the very opposite of the toast's intended purpose and thus leaving Rau momentarily, and though in jest, dishonoured.⁷⁷

Abstract

This article relates the biography of a seventeenth-century gilt-silver cup from its origins in Nuremberg in the 1630s to its use in civic drinking rituals in the small town of Bernkastel-Kues on the Moselle River during the twentieth century. It investigates in particular two of the cup's physical features, its 1661 inscription and the lobate forms populating its surface, which facilitate different modes of social relation and offer distinct orientations to permanence and the historical past. Recounting the cup's history over centuries occasions discussion of the shifting significance of ceremonial drinking (*Ehrentrunk*) and council plate or civic plate (*Ratssilber*) in German cities and towns.

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⁷⁶ Recounted in personal communication with Wolfgang Port and Jörg Braun, March 2022.

⁷⁷ On the mock violence that symbolically attends many ceremonies intended to honour, see C. S. Wood, 'Panofsky in Munich, 1967', *MLN*, 131, 5 (2016), pp. 1236–57.