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British Tea: Steeped in the Imperial Nation-State

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THESIS APPROVAL

The thesis of STEVEN HOAGLIN for the Bachelor of ARTS with Honors in History was presented June 6, 2018, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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Abstract

In some regards, drinking tea has always been considered a *British* pastime. But, where, when, and how did tea hold of the nation to such an extent that a once considered Aristocratic luxury import became part of the commoner's palate? Crucially, empire-building and nation-building have been mutually reinforcing for Britain, and tea is the lens through which one can understand the development of the imperial British nation-state. Tea became an entrenched symbol of British identity on both the national and imperial levels through a multiplicity of forces and actors. This thesis intends to prove that tea, through production and consumption methods, influenced conceptions of *Britishness*. In addition, this work will reveal the results of Britain imposing capitalism on the world, such as with its India colony, and explain that there are consequences largely unknown to the consumer when markets become separated from the rest of human activity (thus creating a broken 'Wallersteinian' commodity chain). This analysis presents a new approach to understanding the transformational seventeenth to nineteenth centuries which Britons deepened awareness of their roles in the global economy. Even though tea is not such an innocent commodity though at first it might appear, this commodity has forever fundamentally transformed Britain.

British Tea: Steeped in the Imperial Nation-State

by

STEVEN J. HOAGLIN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONORS
in
HISTORY

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4-7
Historiography of Economic Benefits of Empire	8-11
Understanding Consumption: Frank Trentmann	12-13
Major Highlights of Victorian Society	14-17
David Howes: <i>Interdependence</i> Through Consumption	18-19
James Walvin: Tea as Part of The <i>Fruits of Empire</i>	20-21
<i>British</i> Tea: A Brief History (Background)	22-25
Tea: Contentious Trade with China	26-30
Racialization: Its Influence Through Tea	31-33
Domesticating the Nation through Empire Projects	34-35
Consumer Reaction to Slave Labor	36-37
Womens' Role: Shopper of Empire's Commodities	38-40
East India Company: Vying for Legitimacy in the Midst of Free Trade	41-42
Conclusion	43
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Appendix A	44-45
Bibliography	46-53

INTRODUCTION:

Tea became one of those special commodities that stimulated the senses without igniting uncontrollable passions, and, even more importantly, enabled one to make rational decisions in the marketplace. It essentially made ‘liberal’ subjects, or the notion that a person was not governed by his or her passions but instead was at liberty to make free choices . . . consuming good things prevented the attraction to bad things. In this formulation, tea, like commerce itself, became a mild passion that literally sweetened the self and the nation.²

Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*

Tea to this day maintains an intimate connection to Britain, but the story of how tea became *British* has been largely untold. The broad availability and acceptance of tea drinking in Britain had taken centuries of investment, both financial and otherwise, and creating a population of faithful consumers from the goods of Britain’s empire. It was this investment which has become the primary focus of this analysis, and it is my intention to insert a new approach to the current scholarly discussions around tea to better appreciate the scale on which tea transformed the British nation through its empire. The concept of the *disrupted* commodity chain, a concept developed by historian Immanuel Wallerstein, becomes quite important to the trade and movement of tea for Britain. This chain necessary for sustaining a growing population of tea consumers required capitalistic expansion on a global scale, which paradoxically thus splintered the chain and restructured Britain’s political economy as production techniques became more isolated from the consumer. A multiplicity of actors each had taken part, either knowingly or unknowingly, in this new system including Parliament, doctors, unscrupulous businessmen, tea-capitalists, smugglers, production-side forces, consumption-side forces, intermediaries, and

² Erika Rappaport, “The Temperance Tea Party: Making a Sober Consumer Culture in the Nineteenth Century,” *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

many others, to which some categories may have changed depending on the time frame under analysis. For the most part, one can distinguish the consumption-side forces as including, but not limited to, the old Aristocracy, Parliamentary representatives, marketers and advertisers, doctors, smugglers (one of the most important intermediaries), tea-drinkers themselves, and the East India Company. Production-side forces would include the new “Aristocrats” (with big-business interests) such as plantation owners, indentured servants and slaves, and government representatives. It is without question that culture and consumer behavior were simultaneously shaped by forces including government, policies, and corporations, and bottom-up influencers such as those influencing culture and social life. Not only did marketers and advertisers attempt to marshal the population towards consuming particular goods, the state also controlled/directed the dynamics of global trade, both to keep its legitimacy and appease its growing nation of consumers. State policy became more and more inclined to impose free and open trade on the world to secure reliable sources of commodities to keep the population content. Britain’s commodity empire, as one prevalent argument of the time suggested, would simultaneously strengthen British identity and boost the government’s legitimacy in the eyes of its subjects. Empire-building was crucial to nation-building for Britain as conceptions of *Britishness* became symbolic of both an identity and culture deeply rooted in commodity consumption, especially that of tea.

British Empire studies continue to be debated and discussed among scholars in terms of its enduring impacts to British culture, especially for its lingering cultural significance and previous economic value. Scholars have sought to reintegrate the many pieces of the supply chain to understand and track the changes necessary for tea to become a *British* staple. Re-aligning the histories recorded as to England’s role in shaping the modern world through both the

Eurocentric (Europe shaped the world) trope and the Globalist lens that England's culture changed with a transculturation of culture and goods due to its interconnections with other parts of the world. Historically, as the British government flexed its imperial muscle to secure territory and resources, morphing into an empire, the transculturation of foreign goods onto British soil left a mark still visible to this day on the consumption habits of the average Briton. British consumers, and those of the colonies themselves, therefore, played a significant role in the development of the British Empire. Consumers' decisions to consume Empire-goods were based a growing collective consciousness of *Britishness*; paradoxically, the nation became further divided as different politically-minded forces strove to sell these products to the right consumer. This process of persuading the nation to make the switch to consuming tea undeniably involved undertaking aggressive production methods, marketing elitist attitudes of superiority and racialization through tea advertisements, targeted marketing, and a shift in government policy towards being willing to impose free trade markets on the world. A sizable portion of this analysis will investigate relevant scholarly discussions surrounding the British Empire and how consuming Empire goods constituted one's *Britishness*.

It is the intention of this analysis to insert itself into the ongoing debate of the importance of commodities to the British Empire. To achieve this goal, I will set out to create a working definition of *Britishness* by incorporating examples of scholarly material in which a stronger understanding how consumption, the consumer, consumer behavior, and consumer culture shaped British culture and political economy. A large section of this analysis will be devoted to the quintessentially British commodity of tea. My approach is to tease out the cultural significance of commodities of Empire as there is less historical consciousness of culture because of the artificial separation of markets from the rest of human activity. The shaping of

modern British consumption can be traced to several centuries of transitioning the nation-state to a greater reliance on global trade. *Britishness* became a distinct identity achieved through colonial commodity consumption. The specific process involving tea transition from a luxury to a staple was seeped in multiple converging elements to develop Britain's commodity culture. The development of the British Empire of commodities coincided with the rise of an expanding consumer society roughly from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Approaches which historians have undertaken research to understand these changes often reflect topics such as British imperialism and the expansion of Empire, the commodification process in which prestige goods become everyday occurrences, consuming 'otherness' – meaning a racialization of the world to define what is 'British', and among many others, the cultural and economic significance of Empire to the making of modern Britain.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF EMPIRE

To fully appreciate the scope of the topic of the British Empire and its commodity necessities, it should be recognized that those so-called nationalized ‘British’ commodities had global origins. Much historiography has been written as to the extent to which empire truly benefitted the country economically during the Free Trade Era of 1870-1914; the historical reasoning for the writing of this expansionary period was to chart the high-point of the British Empire as the country after this period began to decline in global dominance. From carefully selected secondary sources spanning the past three decades, one can gain much insight as to how different classes reaped well from their investments in imperialist ventures. Looking first to the important work provided through 1980s historians P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins and their article, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945,” their persuasive argument stands to reason that wealth investing abroad both opened new ground for an emerging middle – elite business class, the *gentlemanly capitalists*, who both disenfranchised the old aristocracy and became enriched as the new financial elite, who had the power to shape government policy overseas in empire markets.³ These scholars reference early twentieth-century British historian J. A. Hobson’s term, ‘moneyed class,’ as a key indication of the *gentlemanly capitalists*’ status; many of these elites participated in what Cain and Hopkins call *invisible imperialism*, that is, funding the development of Britain’s empire projects such as in the development and continued maintenance of tea fields in India in the nineteenth-century.⁴

³ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945,” *The Economic History Review* 40, no. 1 (Feb. 1987): 1-26, accessed 20 Jul., 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3698723>.

⁴ Cain and Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism,” 4-5.

Nearly a decade later, Anver Offer's article in *The Economic History Review* provided yet another example of the historical work being done to prove that Britain's empire did indeed benefit the nation's economy; his analysis pushes back against previous scholarship that Britain's empire had not been carefully managed and that the nation lost more money than worth it to maintain security over its *British* commodities such as tea.⁵ He responsibly utilizes records of British military expenditures to show that investment in defense of empire and the commodity chain were both rational and had unforeseen positive consequences for many actors in the commodity chain as he argues, "even if the empire did not benefit the economy as a whole, it still provided benefits to the interlocking elites of government, finance, landownership, commerce, and the professions in the south east of the country – in Cain and Hopkins's terms, to *gentlemanly capitalism*".⁶ Offer's addition to existing scholarship asserts that these capitalistic investors were *well-informed* and felt confident that their investments were kept safe under the protection of the British navy, although protecting investors' assets on a global scale, these two responsibly acknowledge, was beginning to show signs of strain on the nation.⁷

Turning from Offer's late twentieth-century analysis on the pros of Britain's international trade, one should consider the work done by historians Andrew Thompson and Gary Magee's article in *The Economic History Review* that empire itself created new markets in the colonies themselves for commodity consumption.⁸ In its quest for increased global dominance, however, Britain had encountered a challenge primarily in the sense that it had taken on an extremely high

⁵ Anver Offer, "The British Empire, 1870-1914: A Waste of Money?" *The Economic History Review* New Series 46, no. 2 (May 1933): 215-238, accessed 20 Jul., 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2598015>.

⁶ Offer, "The British Empire, 1870-1914," 215, 232.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 234-236.

⁸ Andrew Thompson and Gary Magee, "A Soft Touch? British Industry, Empire Markets, and the Self-Governing Dominions, c. 1870-1914," *The Economic History Review* 56, no. 4 (Nov. 2003): 689-717, accessed 19 Jul., 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3698723>.

risk to invest much of the nation's wealth on the success of colonial commodities. The prerequisite factors of both controlling as much as possible of the commodity chain and betting on ideal climate conditions became the leading focus for those involved with both investing and the production process, as Thompson and Magee indicate, "Most colonial economies were geared . . . towards primary production and were by nature highly dependent on volatile commodity prices and climactic conditions. Any significant fall in commodity prices inevitably signaled a loss of income to the colony, which curtailed its demand for British products."⁹ In addition, the *British* manufacturers who had originally marketed their products to a national audience had to also compete for colonial palates. The need for the colonies to purchase *British* became difficult as colonists began to seek out better prices in the international marketplace; it became essential to manufacturers of *British* commodities to maintain a greater attentiveness to 'cultural preference' of each colony to ensure a business' survival in the midst of global trade networks.¹⁰ British colonial manufacturers had been faced with the dilemma that his or her consumers may not always buy *British* because the emerging colonial consumer culture encouraged buying the best product at the cheapest price.¹¹

Historians have also investigated British consumption patterns from a variety of angles to show how the commodification of global goods involved a rationalization of an empire and daily reinforcing of 'Britishness'. It is possible to view the complex structural changes occurring in British society by analyzing the histories which seek to reconnect production and consumption, such as 1980s cultural anthropologist Sydney Mintz's brilliant analysis of sugar.¹² This

⁹ Thompson and Magee, "A Soft Touch?," 694.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 694, 708.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 712.

¹² Sydney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985): xvi-xxix, 19-150. Pdf.

reintegration of stories with both facets of the commodity chain supports a more-rounded analysis of traditional periods for global goods to become commodities. In addition, due consideration to separate analyses of consumption-only and production-only histories should additionally be given as it exemplifies the historical actors and the influencing forces driving supply and demand. For example, Stefan Schwarzkoph's "Consumer Communication as Commodity: British Advertising Agencies and the Global Market for Advertising," and British literature expert Julie Fromer's "'Deeply Indebted to the Tea-Plant': Representations of English National Identity in Victorian Histories of Tea," explore the ways in which production-side funded, mass-marketing and advertising drove consumption.¹³ It is also evident in the historiography that changes occurred in British society at or around the Industrial Revolution in terms of a culturing of desires to consume.

¹³ Stefan Schwarzkoph, "Consumer Communication as Commodity: British Advertising Agencies and the Global Market for Advertising, 1780-1980," *Consuming Behaviors: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 121-138. Julie E. Fromer, "'Deeply Indebted to the Tea-Plant': Representations of English National Identity in Victorian Histories of Tea," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36, no. 2 (2008): 531-547. Accessed 3 Apr., 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40347203>.

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMPTION: FRANK TRENTMANN

In order to best understand consumerism from a scholarly standpoint, it is first necessary to establish some of the leading voices influencing modern writing about consumption. British historian Frank Trentmann's work on consumption enlightens the modern reader to the significance and origins of consumerism.¹⁴ His definition of consumption is particularly useful as it causes one to pause to realize that consumption is active and evolving and not a passive process: "To be precise, [consumption] concerns the interplay between two processes: one is how institutions and ideas shaped consumption over time; the other is how consumption, in turn, transformed power, social relations and value systems."¹⁵ Trentmann makes a compelling argument that *Britishness* is a distinct identity enhanced by consumption, and explains that a consumption identity touches "states, societies, and daily life."¹⁶

Two approaches are, according to Trentmann, available to investigate these trends: these trends can be viewed through macro and micro-lenses. A macro-analysis of consumption examines a broader perspective and arguably is somewhat easier to make conclusions as to the changes occurring at the larger societal and state-levels.¹⁷ The micro-analysis highlights crucial features of understanding consumer behavior, and is observable through "habits and routines" and also the consumer's personal "motivations and desire[s]."¹⁸ Trentmann eloquently proposes that (British) commodity consumption itself developed its own culture and *habit[s]*, which had significantly more influence over consumer behavior as compared to the addictive stimulants in

¹⁴ Frank Trentmann, "Introduction," *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, From the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: Harper Collins, 2016).

¹⁵ Trentmann, "Introduction," 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-17.

commodities such as tea, coffee, and chocolate.¹⁹ Trentmann pinpoints the ability for commodities to resonate with Britishness through a change in cultural meaning across different boundaries. Commodities, he explains, have their own *social life*.²⁰ For example, coffee consumption rooted itself for a time in British upper-class life, particularly the business and scholar-class, as its *sobering* qualities appealed to elite attitudes.²¹ In sum, Trentmann contributes much to current historiography of commodity consumption and recognizes that culture needs to be reintroduced into the telling of commodity histories like that of *British* tea.

¹⁹ Trentmann, "The Enlightenment of Consumption," *Empire of Things*, 81.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS OF VICTORIAN SOCIETY

Recent work has also been provided through historian Walter Arnstein's textbook *Britain Yesterday and Today: 1830 to the Present*; he too would agree with Trentmann that ideals, especially as Arnstein pinpoints as being *Victorian* in nature, assist in explaining the shift to the increase in colonial commodity consumption.²² According to Arnstein, *Britishness* was not a "universally practiced moral and social code," but rather "ideals about efficiency and thrift, seriousness of character, respectability, and self-help."²³ These Victorian principles reinforced the crucial role of what the early twentieth-century economic historian J. A. Hobson idealized as the perfect *citizen-consumer*, a form of political representation which exemplified the virtuousness of selective consumption to, in the end, eliminate the "selfish market-oriented interests . . . [to] become a cultural agency for uplifting the social, political, and economic ethics of the individual."²⁴ Arnstein compares this type of role with the example of an increase in consumption with the growing use of the printing press and 'daily papers' to encourage the population to support imperial efforts.²⁵ It was crucially the mid-Victorian years 1851-1873 in which Britons experienced high levels of drive for "individualism, . . . free trade abroad, and progress in human affairs[. These characteristics of Britishness were] accepted by most with uncritical, almost religious conviction."²⁶ Historian Stefan Schwarzkoph would agree with Arnstein that production-funded marketers and advertisers utilized the popular press to their advantage to marshal consumer activity by romanticizing and *civilizing* the imperialist actions of

²² Walter L. Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today: 1830 to the Present*, (8th ed, Boston: Wadsworth, 2001).

²³ Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today*, 86.

²⁴ Frank Trentmann, "Political Culture and Political Economy: Interest, Ideology, and Free Trade," *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998): 217-251, accessed 8 Feb., 2012.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4177265>.

²⁵ Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today*, 177. These forces "often made imperialism a romantic subject."

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the state, and as Schwarzkoph further explains, to brand products of empire as *pure* – that is, defending the health of the consumer.²⁷ British literature expert Julie Fromer would find agreement also with the two above perspectives that effective marketing was the key to the imperial project supporting mass consumption.²⁸ Marketing had big business (production) interests through tea-capitalists and capital to fund large advertisements such as ‘book-length tea histories written by G. G. Sigmond in 1839 and Samuel Day in 1878.’²⁹ Britishness thus nestled itself in Victorian ideals about consumption, and a multiplicity of historical actors came together to direct consumer activity.

Erika Rappaport’s recent work, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*, provides critical insight for the emerging historian to understand tea’s role in strengthening concepts such the relationship between tea, thirst, and temperance to the *British* nation and its empire.³⁰ Consideration for the concept of ‘thirst’ proves to be quite important in Rappaport’s groundwork for her argument that creating and maintaining a ‘thirst’ for tea linked the nation and empire in a multiplicity of ways. Rappaport effectively defines the scope of how ‘thirst’ influenced British life as she explains that thirst is a:

metaphor for desire that is inherent in imperialism and mass marketing, two forces in world history that share an unquenchable desire for people and resources. It is also a sensual experience . . . [to which one] can trace the forces that produce thirst and its satisfaction and examine why people acquire and lose tastes for foods and drinks . . . food and drink habits tend to change slowly and are highly influenced by habit, tradition, and environment.³¹

It can be reasonably asserted, then, that the thirst for tea had been a manufactured one; Rappaport explains that this process incorporated many actors together into what she refers to as “political

²⁷ Ibid. See also Stefan Schwarzkoph, “Consumer Communication as Commodity,” 128.

²⁸ Fromer, “‘Deeply Indebted to the Tea Plant’”.

²⁹ Ibid., 531, 533-534.

³⁰ Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*.

³¹ Rappaport, “Introduction,” *A Thirst for Empire*, 16.

and cultural economies.”³² To be more specific, the joining together (through tea’s complex commodity chain) of agricultural owners, merchants, businessmen, and women, among many others, are the actors to which Rappaport calls the “Planter Raj;” these Raj created effective global marketing techniques to sway consumer behavior towards drinking tea. They utilized the latest trends and modes of technology to promote new “retail and consumer practices, design new drinking habits, and transform bodily experiences.”³³ The thirst for tea had a particular synergy with the emerging Victorian ideal of temperance.

Temperance became part of a movement to which drinking tea became intertwined with a calm and collected Victorian society, both on the national and imperial scales. Much as Arnstein interrogates that *Britishness* emerged from Victorian values, Rappaport furthers this idea that the Victorian temperance movement required factors such as “Protestant ideals of food and the body, working-class notions of community as socially and spiritually elevating, and a liberal faith in the civilizing power of commerce” which could act simultaneously to sway consumer behavior and increase the favorability of drinking tea over other beverages such as beer.³⁴ Pro-temperance communities argued that informed consumers would choose tea because consumption could be seen as “productive and moral rather than wasteful and sinful,” and would support liberal policies for the sake of “low taxes” and promoting their cause as purporting the “morality of global commerce.”³⁵ While Rappaport’s analysis confidently confirms that thirst and temperance could be exercised on both the national and imperial level, one might look to Anthropologist David Howes’ globalist perspective to deepen awareness as to how to examine

³² Ibid., 9.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Rappaport, “The Temperance Tea Party: Making a Sober Consumer Culture in the Nineteenth Century,” *A Thirst for Empire*, 59.

³⁵ Ibid., 62, 67.

tea on both the national and imperial scales. Howes argues that the result of the British extension of capitalism on the globe resulted in a changed local reality due to the introduction of foreign influences, such as commodities and culture.³⁶

³⁶ David Howes, ed., "Introduction: Commodities and Cultural Borders," *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities* (New York: Routledge, 1996): 1-16.

DAVID HOWES: *INTERDEPENDENCE* THROUGH CONSUMPTION

His remarkable analysis of cross-cultural consumption teases out the interplay of the capitalist country, in this case Britain, being shaped by an increasing *interdependence* with a non-capitalist country; this interdependence in the commodity chain became crucial to both empire and nation-building.³⁷ He effectively demonstrates his understanding of the capitalist system as he understands that goods (commodities and others) change meaning and utility when introduced into other cultures as a result of the separation of the *culture* of production from the *culture* of consumption.³⁸ Commodity consumption, through Howes' eyes, would be analyzed through a lens of something of a *language*, that being the interplay of goods between two cultures, to shape British realities.³⁹ Paradigms are introduced to help explain the successful integration of a commodity into culture. His concept of *global homogenization* is particularly useful to understand the eighteenth to nineteenth-century British tea transition from a status-symbol to a commodity. In global homogenization of tea in British culture, to which Howes explains the process as the 'coca-colonization' of commodity consumption, tea itself can, like Coca-Cola, *transcend barriers*.⁴⁰ This process reveals the counter-example to Eurocentric-written history as it shows how the globe shaped Europe as it is today. Another one of Howes' reinforces the definition of Britishness through consumption is his example of "Consuming the 'Other.'"⁴¹ In this process, 'exoticized' luxuries become symbolic of 'authentic' British diets and identity; the system itself is framed as 'capitalistic' and is meant to appease to consumer's inner 'conscience' that would desire to support the plight of foreign 'indigenous peoples'.⁴²

³⁷ Howes, "Introduction," 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Drawing from Howes' example, tea, in this case, would have the ability to transform Britain from within through a gradual development of the culture, benefits, and ramifications of consuming this particular commodity, and change Britain abroad in its imperial reach as to how the nation would act through various actors to maintain a sufficient supply of product available for sale.

JAMES WALVIN: TEA AS PART OF THE *FRUITS OF EMPIRE*

Another approach to unveiling the connections between empire and nation building has been accomplished via Professor James Walvin's analysis of tea as it pertains to Britain's *fruits of empire*. According to Professor Walvin, British identities became solidified through global interconnections and distinguishable characteristics in the process of consuming the 'fruits of empire'.⁴³ Walvin's work inserts itself into the modern-day debate on the origins of the consumer society in Britain; the *fruits of empire* were not acquired by a simple accident. This was a powerful move by a nation expanding aggressively to secure stability over the commodity chain to support business interests: "here was a form of profitable trade and dominion – a source of lucrative business whose ramifications reached deep into every corner of British life."⁴⁴ The development of Britishness involved a *ritualization* of consumer behavior through *emulation* of the aspiring lower classes; this trend centered around what Walvin defines as the ability for goods to be ritualized around class-oriented and gendered *social usage*.⁴⁵ With the separation of production from consumption involved in the capitalist system, Walvin follows correctly that most Britons could both have a general awareness of Empire and also did not necessarily have to be emotionally invested in the ramifications. As colonial commodities such as tea, sugar, and coffee became everyday occurrences, he argued, it became easy to lose sight of harsh production practices. Walvin continued that the consumption of the 'fruits of empire' became tightly engrained in the culture of being *British*; most consumers did not realize simply how 'unusual' these products were in terms of their imperial origins.⁴⁶ Emphasizing the changes in consumer

⁴³ James Walvin. *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1600-1800* (New York: New York University Press, 1987): x. Print.

⁴⁴ Walvin, *Fruits of Empire*, 197.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

preferences, especially towards consuming sweetness, it can be argued through Walvin's analysis that it was indeed a mark of Britishness to consume bitter foreign goods sweetened with *British* sugar. One example of this nationalizing effect of consumption can be seen in Walvin's linking of sugar and the development of British tastes: "Like tea and coffee, chocolate has a naturally bitter taste, but once sugar was added, all of them became acceptable, indeed attractive, to Europeans."⁴⁷ Chocolate itself, as Walvin continues, "failed to 'take off' until the 1830s in any way comparable to tea or coffee, although it was in place - . . . with a niche in social usage."⁴⁸ From Walvin's explanations as to the successful integration of commodities into British diets, meeting the needs of the average British consumer involved simplifying and Britishizing consumption. As a *fruit* of the empire, tea became one of the essential links between the consumer's nationalistic sense of *Britishness* far removed from the reprehensible practices of forced labor on tea plantations.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 101.

BRITISH TEA: A BRIEF HISTORY (BACKGROUND)

Tea drinking itself remained an aristocratic luxury until a multiplicity of influences occurring between the mid-eighteenth to later nineteenth century came together to commodify the beverage. Forces including government, policies, corporations, and bottom-up forces shaping culture and social life all had a specific role in the era of tea's transformation. Tea, a supposedly quintessentially British good, never actually had physical roots in England; the story of tea begins in China centuries before the British became interested in such a commodity. The process with which Britain undertook to acquire this luxury good extending more-or-less difficult relations with Chinese merchants, with the Qing government's approval, for the British East India Company to trade at the port city of Guangzhou (Europeanized as 'Canton'). Tea became imported as one fascinating item of interest to the elite Aristocracy in the eighteenth-century. To understand the shift in the consumption patterns of tea from the eighteenth to nineteenth century, it is important to return to the relevance of global-capitalism and commodity chains. The separation of production forces from consumption forces had been realized through the process of global capitalism during the British Industrial Revolution. The British East India Company (EIC) had a specified charter with Parliament to conduct trade at Canton, China; heavy import taxes paid to the government were passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Elites who could afford this luxury item fetishized their tea-drinking and sought to emulate the British crown according to the trend established by seventeenth-century Queen Catherine of Braganza (1638-1705; r. 1662-1685), wife to King Charles II (1630-1685; r. 1660-1685). As the Wallersteinian 'commodity chain' became more complex, government policy, which had once prized the EIC, a transnational business organization with quasi-government powers, changed course to lower tariffs on Chinese teas, making tea within reach of commoners, in an

effort to maintain its own legitimacy and grow a nation of complicit consumers of empire. It became apparent that as more consumers began to drink tea, there had been an observable increase in production-oriented advertisements and visible government interventions to lessen the tensions with China in support of a more secure commodity chain, involving a shift to invest in ‘British’ tea, cultivated in India. Chinese people were ostracized as *Others* in production-funded tea-histories and advertisements, which both sought to legitimize the British colonial administration in India and encourage consumer investment in Empire; these advertisements purposely excluded the uncomfortable conversations of abusive practices involved with plantation-style labor in India. The Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60) fought against China to secure better access to markets for Chinese goods such as tea and porcelain, reveal how far England would stretch itself to fight for commodity chain dominance. Consumer behavior, especially in deciding to consume Empire-goods, was marshalled according to a growing collective consciousness of *Britishness*. According to production-sided interests including the government, businessmen, and pro-empire marketers, British consumers would drink tea to expand a commodity empire to supply everyday goods and simultaneously make the individual more *British*.

SMUGGLING: FUNDAMENTAL TO COMMODIFY TEA

Tea smuggling was very much part of the process to commodify the nation. Many individuals who disliked Parliament's high import duties on tea had undertaken risky ventures through (illegal) smuggling, such as indicated through Roy Moxham's history of tea.⁴⁹ Moxham, an Assistant Manager to a British tea estate in Malawi, Africa, reveals how smuggling disrupted the commodity chain; his analysis has strong elements of reliability and should be included in any historiography of the tea transition. His use of precise import accounts is structured into knowledge that particular gangs trafficked luxury goods like tea, which significantly contributed to its widespread availability. Eighteenth-century tea smuggling created a broader market for this luxury and had the impact of gradually lowering the price – this drew profits away from both the EIC and the government which later forced the government to react with a swift drop in taxes.⁵⁰ Customs house statistics confirm Moxham's assessment of the dramatic results of a half-century of smuggling tea into Britain; this group had much to do with transitioning tea into a commodity. Gang violence and intimidation tactics, such as associated intimately with the Hawkhurst Gang, were implemented to bypass or murder custom officials to get their product to market and generate legitimacy from consumers who wanted tea at lower prices than what the EIC demanded.⁵¹ The East India Company's big-business interests aligned with the government to keep tea as an aristocratic privilege for several generations due to its expense. Moxham accurately contends that consumers of tea, whether they came to the realization or not, had

⁴⁹ Roy Moxham, *Tea: Addiction, Exploitation, and Empire* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2003).

⁵⁰ Moxham, "Addiction and Taxation: Smuggling and Revolution," 24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 24-25. The reader can assume that Moxham has access to customs records, although Moxham does not cite where he found his information. Moxham is not a historian, and the stylistic tendencies are evidence as he does not footnote.

participated in supporting the smugglers' enterprise. The numbers prove Moxham's point that tea had gradually become an entrenched element of the British palette as a result of smuggling:

Recorded imports into Britain rose from 13,028lbs in 1699 to 12,241,629lbs in 1721. By 1750 the total was 4,727,992lbs. These figures, however, only told part of the story, for much tea did not pass through customs. Many of the British wanted to drink tea, but the price was too high. The combination of a monopoly by the East India Company with the extremely high duties levied by the government made tea too expensive. The population's spending power could only be matched by large-scale smuggling and by adulteration...In the main, however, the smugglers had the support of a population who wanted tea and other goods without paying what they regarded as an exorbitant tax. Millions of Britons connived with an illegal trade, and usually kept quiet about what they knew.⁵²

Smuggling became an integral piece of the commodification process during the eighteenth-century (early empire) as it both mobilized lower-class consumer activity and created greater cause for concern for Parliamentary legitimacy as it would have to bend to the will of the nation and consumers themselves.

⁵² Ibid., 24-25.

TEA: CONTENTIOUS TRADE WITH CHINA

Canton, China became a crucial choke point to regulate on Britain's commodity chain, for the sake of tea and its other commodity imports, as it provided the only location for the interconnection between EIC businessmen and Chinese merchants. Understanding the increasingly contentious interactions between China and Britain becomes apparent especially as seen in concerns over quality and commodity chain control in the government records contained in the *Minutes of Parliament*. Minutes taken from the Select Committee on Tea Duties in 1834 in the House of Commons provide evidence to support that the East India Company gradually had been losing control of the quality of product they were receiving, and the continued ability to trade safely was becoming more difficult.

One goal of the tea shift for the British state had been to fully monitor its *own* commodity chain and to preserve 'choice' teas. China required payment in silver from the EIC to purchase tea and other commodities – but it was increasingly difficult for the EIC to gauge the 'purity' of the Chinese tea leaves. House of Commons Baronet Sir Matthew White Ridley's 1834 interview of Mr. John Reeves, Tea Inspector in China from 1826-1831, who (Reeves) had the charge to monitor import quality control for the East India Company's (EIC) tea leaves, reveals a growing worry that Parliament fears that the East India Company's inspectors are unable to effectively monitor the quality of tea leaves in the Chinese markets at Canton.⁵³ His testimony was one of over two-dozen interviews before the Select Committee on Tea Duties – the committee intended to determine if adulterated green teas were indeed entering the British market in England, and to question as to how did the company know exactly what the Chinese were selling them.⁵⁴ The

⁵³ House of Commons, Minutes of Parliament, Select Committee on Tea Duties, *Report from the Select Committee on tea duties; with minutes of evidence Ordered, by the House of Commons, to be printed, 25 July 1834*, 1-8 (London: Great Britain, 1834).

⁵⁴ House of Commons, *Report from the Select Committee*, 1-8.

legitimacy of Reeves' account to Parliament can be considered extremely valuable as he had over thirty-year's experience with the company, gaining awareness of trade dynamics and the extent to which China allowed out certain knowledge of tea production.⁵⁵ He seeks to prove his legitimacy before the Select Committee as a capable administrator of the East India Company by testifying as to his knowledge as to whether Chinese merchants were playing fair in terms of the exchange of silver for tea, packaging information, and the impact of China's appeal to US merchants.⁵⁶

Reeves selects his words carefully in-front of the committee as both his integrity and legitimacy as a faithful EIC inspector are under review; his dialogue with Baronet Ridley gives the impression that Reeves has attempted to couch his argument in terms of appealing to the sense of the moral high ground of protecting the health and safety of the British people. He provides this primary argument to Ridley so as to prove that having quality inspectors like himself preserve the purity and health of the nation as they, the inspectors, are the only ones with sufficient knowledge to be able to properly distinguish 'good' tea from 'bad': this was probably to 'save-face' with the government as the document reveals,

[(Ridley asks of Reeves)] As a practical question, do you suppose that, now that the trade in China is thrown open, and the Company's trade will not be carried on as it has been with the Chinese, there will be a general admixture of the various qualities of black tea in the same chest?—[(Reeves responds)] I think the quality of the better kinds will be deteriorated. [(Ridley continues)] Will there be the same inducement to keep up the distinctness that there is now, or will not they be brought into the market in a greater degree of admixture?—[(Reeves replies)] I think that the low-priced teas will rise in price in China; and if there is a high duty upon the better kinds, so that the importer cannot afford to give the Chinaman a higher price than he does now, I think they will deteriorate the quality of better teas. (7)

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1-8.

The switch to free trade rather than EIC monopoly control over this choke point meant less control over quality. The EIC sought to maintain its grip on the Chinese commodity market by influencing policymakers with a proven track record of quality control to act on company interests. This brief scenario indicates that Reeves has analyzed that EIC inspectors can leverage government policy, and fears that if the power of inspectors is diminished that Chinese merchants at Canton would continue to abuse the East India Company to make greater profits on low-quality tea leaves and arguably take advantage of the consumer.⁵⁷ Additionally, the entry of new British trade partners apart from the EIC will lead to potentially hazardous tea entering British markets. As he replied to Ridley as to the quality of training an inspector receives and if they can examine all tea crates, Reeves' no answer implies to Ridley that the EIC needs a massive increase in inspectors; this account potentially added to other testimonies before Parliament, which contribute to the imagery of empire, of a growing need to directly intervene in China to secure control over consumers' favorite staples found in China.⁵⁸

The EIC became more entrenched in the dilemma of addressing adulterated green tea; it recommended a shift away from these teas, citing their unhealthy additives. Ridley probes Reeves further, seeking more detail of the expanding American-Chinese trade interactions, to which Reeves responds with an explanation of why the Chinese increased production of green tea. Green teas appealed to American merchants, which had been the case for China focusing more energies on increased supply of this particular type:

[(Ridley)] You have stated that the American trade consists chiefly of green teas ; did you not state that a quantity of black tea is for the purposes of that trade sometimes converted into green ?—[(Reeves)] Tea that would otherwise come as black is turned into green tea, but that is only when there is a great demand. The American trade consists of two classes of persons ; some who regularly import teas for America yearly, and others who go to take the chance of the market. Those that have a regular establishment keep the Chinese

⁵⁷ Ibid., 7-8.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8.

up as nearly to the standard of purity as they can, and others must take the chance of the tea they may find in the market. [(Ridley)] In case of that fabrication of black tea into green, is it with the knowledge of the American merchants?—[(Reeves)] I have no doubt of it, as the thing is done openly. [(Ridley)] Has it any effect upon the flavor of the tea?—[(Reeves)] I do not know that the coloring alone has, but the people in England would not be contented to drink it. If the process is carried too high, it will give a burnt flavor ; but the quantity of colouring matter put in is very trifling. (8)

Reeves' testimony reveals the extent to which fears of adulteration of Chinese teas had been propagandized by production-side funded advertisements most likely to promote greater consumer investment in *British* Indian tea. It is with this knowledge presented in Reeves' account the argument stands that tea itself can and did make a significant impact for Britain in empire and nation-building.

Although Reeves may have not been particularly fond of unscrupulous Chinese merchants, he appears to limit his racialization of the Chinese to provide a factual account of the situation on the ground in Canton. British advertisements alleged that the Chinese had purposely added chemicals to their tea to convince consumers to change their beverage selection, but from Reeve's language the argument can be made that the Chinese simply increased production to increase competition for their market between British and American trading partners. More importantly than the competitive increase, however, was that tea inspectors such as Reeves recognized the difficult and potentially deceptive nature of trade with a largely unknown country. Thus, prior to the 1830s, the combined effort of the Company, the government and the marketing arm of business sought approval from the British population use any means required to secure valuable commodity resources, most especially tea. Racializing the Chinese as Others and their tea as tainted were methods employed to drastically shift the population towards a more *secure* source of *British* tea grown and imported from India. Security over trade became prime territory for policy change in the years to come, as the Opium War opened at the end of the 1830s with

China, the deepening investment in India for tea consumption was presented as the best solution available to both grow profits and keep the nation content with both the current administration's policies by continuing to provide tea, a favorite commodity to many a Briton. Despite the potential nature of Reeves knowing of his countrymen's racist comments about the Chinese, he does not rest his argument in racism; rather, he utilizes his position to appeal to Parliament for both his own legitimacy and for the legitimacy of his co-inspectors.

RACIALIZATION: ITS INFLUENCE THROUGH TEA

Racialization made an impact in both Britain's empire and nation-building. Reeves' firsthand awareness of the British-Chinese trade relationship directly addresses the easy racialization by those not directly involved like Reeves but still seeking government approval (legitimacy) such as present in Christian physician and scholar G. G. (George Gabriel) Sigmond's 1839 book, *Tea: Its Effects, Medicinal and Moral*. His medical title gives him credence to argue for expanding the commodity empire much like he can write redeemable prescriptions: this work provides a doctor's approval for government to do whatever is necessary to secure the commodity chain. Sigmond may have gathered his information from *The Times* and over conversation in the tea-house as he did not have a direct role with the EIC to gather this information. The government had to convince Britons that empire was a legitimate venture, and Sigmond's seal of approval as a medical professional certainly could have been used as a moralistic argument boosting both the credibility of Sigmond and the government.

Sigmond intended that his pro-empire appeal would further stimulate British tea plantation efforts in India and ideally result with the country's withdrawal from China; as a doctor, he could establish his own legitimacy in the growing conversation of trade dynamics. In doing so, Sigmond's scientific and medicinal analysis highlighted the period in which strategic British marketing focused its energies to convince the consumer that drinking tea both built the culture of *Britishness* and legitimated production-practices in order to support the consumption of *necessary-luxury* of *British* tea.⁵⁹ His work would appeal to Parliamentary economic foreign-policy officials to convince them to significantly decrease trade with China, racializing the Chinese as *the Others* and claiming they adulterated the tea. In addition, his work offered the

⁵⁹ Fromer, "Deeply Indebted to the Tea Plant," 2008.

prime prescription authorizing colonial administrators full access to use exploitative methods of imperial expansion in India.⁶⁰ With the British transition to India for tea, however, Indians themselves and their particular tea also became racialized. Julie Fromer, an expert in British literature demonstrates that Sigmond's work had been coincidentally published the same year, 1839, as the free trade Opium War (1839-1842) had been declared on China.⁶¹ As Britain flexed its economic and military might on China, many actors saw the war as an opportunity to push for increased regulation and purity of *British-Indian* tea.⁶² Sigmond's full-length tea advertisement was actually part of a growing list of what Julie Fromer describes as *tea-histories*, advertisements stimulating consumers to both rationalize and legitimize empire's work.⁶³ Tea histories had the ability to thereby link the individual with both the nation and the empire, thus incorporating all Britons into the effort of a 'domestic family'.⁶⁴ These tea-histories were molded into empire's imagery to convince policymakers and businessmen alike of the opportunities for profit and security in India. Parliament may have utilized works such as Sigmond's tea history in its free trade debates as to examine if the population would potentially support a change in trade dynamics leaning more towards India than a belligerent China.

It should be noted that Sigmond wrote his tea-history with two particulars in mind: one goal being seen as a strong imperialist while also soothing national fears about consuming

⁶⁰ G. G. Sigmond, *Tea: Its Effects, Medicinal and Moral*. London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839. In Julie E. Fromer, "'Deeply Indebted to the Tea-Plant': Representations of English National Identity in Victorian Histories of Tea," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36, no. 2 (2008): 531-547, accessed 3 Apr., 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40347203>. See also John Venn, *1713-1897: Volume 2 of Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College, 1349-1897: Containing a List of all Known Members of the College from the Foundation to the Present Time, with Biographical Notes*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1898. 167. Digitized by Google 10 Apr., 2007. Web. 30 Apr., 2017.

⁶¹Ibid., 535.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 533, 534.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 533, 534.

foreign teas.⁶⁵ Through his work, one can appreciate his urging for both the consumer and the government to invest in Indian tea plantations to adhere to a doctor's advice; those who listened could have treatment for the worries associated with many unknown in trading with *mysterious* and *other* China. This trade shift would bring, he hoped, a boon to the economy and a more secure commodity chain.⁶⁶ Sigmond's *Tea* advertisement places him in the category of anti-China, pro-imperial individuals, as he assesses that it would be better to acquire the commodity in a region controlled directly by British colonial administrators.⁶⁷ Finally, his account serves as a method of projecting *British* qualities on the world by 'pur'[ifying] tea and to join the racialization of the Chinese.⁶⁸ In the imagery of the Empire, Sigmond's racialization of India can be considered a clash-of-cultures especially as it frames white-Anglo society as superior as compared to other inferior subordinates like the Chinese. To further contextualize how tea became instrumental in developing both the nation and empire, one might examine the work of Susan Daly to better understand the Victorian definition of *Britishness*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 535-536.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 535-537.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 537.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 534-537.

DOMESTICATING THE NATION THROUGH EMPIRE PROJECTS

Susan Daly argues that many Victorian domestic novels both rationalized empire-building efforts, especially in India, and constructed the ideal image of British national identity in the context of Empire.⁶⁹ Consuming literature of this type arguably rationalized the end goals of Empire-building and shaped the imperialist mindset to most likely create an audience of complicit consumers. Her work lies in the field of British cultural history, and she carefully locates British writers of the era such as Charles Dickens (1812-1870) as highly invested in the simultaneous process of imperial commodity development and direction of consumer behavior.⁷⁰ In these novels, the average British woman had been represented with a more domesticized role; however, these women were seen to be the economic powerhouse of British consumer-activity as shoppers of the empire.⁷¹ Her work most importantly gives *life* to commodities, much like Trentmann, Walvin, and Mintz have done, where the role of commodity culture has tended to be underappreciated by past historiography.⁷² In her section regarding the modern British affinity for tea, Daly contends brilliantly that the association between tea drinking and *Britishness* has specific historical roots traceable to the late-eighteenth century.⁷³ According to Daly, Britain entered a massive shift after the 1760s in which a marshalling of consumer activity directed Britons towards being more inclined toward consuming products of empire. She draws research from the work of British cultural historian Julie Fromer's concept of tea being a *necessary luxury* for the growing base of consumers.⁷⁴ Making tea more British meant to transition consumers off

⁶⁹ Susan Daly, "Introduction: Colonial Commodities and the Naturalization of Empire," *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels*. (Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

⁷⁰ Daly, "Introduction," 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁷³ Daly, "Tea and the Mode of (Literary) Production," *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels*, 87.

⁷⁴ Daly, "Tea," 87.

the ‘other’ Chinese teas to consume one’s *own* ‘British’ produced, shipped, and delivered tea from India.⁷⁵ Daly’s intent with her section on tea has been to reveal how novels had politically-minded goals to direct the state to eliminate the *harmful* effects of unfair trade with China, and to consumers themselves to change their taste to Indian tea. Ultimately, British consumers would choose the safer, purer British brand over supposedly tainted ‘foreign and malevolent’ Chinese green teas, to reinforce tea drinking with British civilized activity.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 87, 89.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 92, 102-105.

CONSUMER REACTION TO SLAVE LABOR

A fascinating historiographical controversy and counter-example to the current analysis' argument that Britishness was developed through colonial commodity consumption emerges in through commodity scholar Charlotte Sussman's *Consuming Anxieties*.⁷⁷ Sussman's work speaks to a paradox involved with commodity accumulation: commodity consumption increased both the individual's sense of *Britishness* and their potential to have a stressed conscience as they became more aware of production-side practices including slavery.⁷⁸ Arguing that even recent historiography has neglected the anti-slavery movement, she puts forward a *social critique* of consumption and develops how *abstention movements* provided room for the politically voiceless classes and women to experience agency and consumption choice.⁷⁹ While she does not specifically mention who paid for this counter-protest, it remained clear that as a result of the commodification process, gruesome analogies attacking the system of slavery correlated consumption with cannibalism.⁸⁰ Writers of the anti-slavery movement more than likely sought to counter novels such as reviewed by Susan Daly, which encouraged increased emotional and financial investment in Empire. Sussman reveals the difficult choice the consumer would have to make for themselves, whether to be *British* and support the empire or to represent morally-conscious Victorians:

The discomfort was both an anxiety about consumption and a consuming anxiety, since the rhetoric surrounding it tended to warn that in taking colonial subjects, consumers were destroying something within themselves. To combat such self-destruction, consumers were urged to exercise extreme discrimination in choosing commodities, or even to refuse the most suspicious items.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713-1833* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁷⁸ Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*, 13-14.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, 48.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

To forcefully react against the inhumanity of production, the *negative* development of *consumer rights*, meaning the “deployment of the individual’s right to abstain from immoral products,” became the charge of the anti-slavery movement.⁸² Writers’ arguments against slavery were steeped in explicit arguments for emancipation alongside implicit racism, most likely with the intent to *insulate* the culture of Britishness.⁸³ Overall, Sussman contributes much to the ongoing discussion of how scholars should define how the nationalized ‘British’ consumer operated in the context of empire.

⁸² Ibid., 18, 23-24.

⁸³ Ibid., 46, 48.

WOMENS' ROLE: SHOPPER OF EMPIRE'S COMMODITIES

Although tea had the ability to influence both gender spheres alike during the transitional century on the home-front, womens' roles in shaping the expansion of empire have largely been underappreciated. Especially during the nineteenth century, womens' roles in regards to empire support had been domesticated through advertisements and social norms to be the 'shoppers of empire'. Graduate student C. M. Becker and prominent cultural historian Erika Rappaport at the University of California reviewed multiple editions of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrapbook*, a nineteenth-century literary annual which incorporated elements of the difficult trade dynamics with China; the British consumer reading this scrapbook had to use discretion to interpret fact from fiction of the British-Chinese trade.⁸⁴

Becker's reading of the *Scrapbook's* engravings reveals complexity in how the world significantly shaped British culture, such as the interplay of Chinese tea itself shaping British culture. The *Scrapbook* utilized the Greek *ekphrasis* (poetical illustrations) in its engravings to highlight a unique cross-cultural connection between British and Chinese women, distinct from the male-dominated world of trade. Her skilled training in the assessment of the interplay of text and image through emblem are indicated through her analysis of the *Scrapbook* engravings. *The Scrapbook's* approach to the British-Chinese trade relationship had been highly racialized, *Scrapbook* included descriptions of the Chinese as *The Others*, much as G. G. Sigmond included in his *Tea History*.⁸⁵ The popularity of the *Scrapbook*, which would appeal most likely to the female British reader, cast the Qing Chinese culture and people in a racialized framework, purporting implied images of what the British reader should imagine the Chinese, truly as

⁸⁴ C. M. Becker, "Poetical Illustrations: Image, Text, Empire and History in British Literary Annuals," (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, Santa Barbara: University of California, 2014): 339-373. Pdf.

⁸⁵ Becker, "Abstract: Poetical Illustrations," 2014. Html.

different and *the others*, potentially reflecting the widespread sentiment that England distance itself from the Chinese.⁸⁶ Women in the nineteenth century had been portrayed as active *consumers* of empire, and the *Scrapbook* had been one of many advertisements reminding women of their equally valuable role in England's commodity empire.

Imagined cultural interplay between the British and Chinese during the tea transition could be emphasized simply with the assistance of a drawing of a commercial transaction. Editor to *The Scrapbook* in the mid-1840s, Sarah Strickley Ellis wrote and helped publish key details on the relationship between China and England; her work provides unique perspective on the tea transition period. The imagery of empire was quite recognizable through the *imperialist discourse* and avenues for women to participate in shaping the commodity empire, especially in the shopping category.⁸⁷ In her analysis of British artist Allom's 1845 drawing for the *Scrapbook*, "Apartment in a Mandarin's House, near Nanking,"⁸⁸ she illustrates that a peaceful commercial transaction can take place between British women, their husbands, and Chinese merchants. This image contextualizes the Victorian attitudes of propriety as to what women should do in a scenario such as this, to best support the domestic family and for greater Britain.⁸⁹ Restoring legitimacy to the role of women for their efforts to grow the commodity empire remains a worthy pursuit for the commodity historian. While advertisers aggressively pushed for increased legitimacy especially in nineteenth-century works such as the *Scrapbook* in framing empire-building's gendered spheres, the East India Company in the same century sought to

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Becker, "Poetical Illustrations," 347-348. Pdf.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 365. Figure 1. The image and text relationship prove that this engraving is an emblem, and the engraving itself can produce a variety of meanings based on who is analyzing it.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 363-365.

recover its own legitimacy from Parliament after having been de-monopolized in the China region after the passing of the Act of 1833.

EAST INDIA COMPANY: VYING FOR LEGITIMACY IN THE MIDST OF FREE TRADE

Government documents provide crucial details of the complexity of the transition era from China to India, and how officials with ties to the East India Company could use their influence to boost the Company's standing with the government. Colonel Sykes, Member of Parliament, F.R.S., (1790-1872), and skilled statistician, had been the Director of the East India Company on an alternating routine with other directors from 1840-1848; his role as M.P. of Aberdeen allowed him political backbone to directly press his opinion against free trade and for a complete return to EIC monopoly in China. Much like Tea-inspector Reeves had done in his own interview before Parliament in 1834, during the same period, Sykes praises the EIC's prominent level of success to ensure a steady delivery of tea and protecting the commodity chain despite having faced significant international challenges including the current revolution in China (the Taiping Rebellion). His 1862 Parliamentary address, the "Notes on the Progress of the Trade of England with China since 1833, and on its Present Condition and Prospects," provides unique insights as to the continued strain on trade relations between the two countries and delivers specific, although not completely guaranteed to be accurate, transactions of business records of the EIC's purchases of Chinese tea (and silk), and the payments made in silver and opium to Chinese merchants at Canton.⁹⁰ Much as how John Reeves, EIC inspector, sought to legitimize the Company's efforts, so too did Sykes as he contends that the Company can still act on the best interests of government. This move is a high-stakes gamble for Sykes as it risks both his legitimacy as a Parliamentary representative and as former EIC Director all in hopes for the Company's reinstatement. Sykes draws evidence of the EIC's records published in Chinese

⁹⁰ Colonel Sykes, "Notes on the Progress of the Trade of England with China since 1833, and on its Present Condition and Prospects," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 25, no. 1 (1862): 3-19, accessed Web. 19 Feb, 2017. www.jstor.org/stable/2338558.

newspapers (attached as Exhibit A) in Shanghai (Shanghae), Canton, Hong Kong, and North China.⁹¹ His positive language throughout the document accentuates his fondness and ties to the company: he describes the efforts of the EIC being “remarkable” and having made “marvelous progress”.⁹² Drawing upon the Hong Kong “Government Gazette,” the “Comparative Statement of the Export of Tea and Silk from Shanghai,” and the “Export of Tea and Silk from Shanghai, from 1st July, 1859, to 30th June, 1860,” Sykes argues that the Company can help solve the need to correct the trade imbalance of silver and opium for tea and silk, and that it has had the greatest impact to provide security over staples like tea.⁹³ He questions his fellow MPs as to whether the *British taxpayer* would support the continued, *forceful* Opium Wars on China, and appears to imply that the government and EIC should alter the current Treaty of Tien-Tsin with China allowing the British limited trade privileges.⁹⁴ Overall, Sykes aims to make use of his position to convince fellow MPs to reinstate the EIC monopoly, to reduce or eliminate free trade, and to renegotiate trade agreements with the Chinese.⁹⁵ Free trade had become another contentious issue during the expansion of Britain’s empire for the nation to decide upon as the appetite for cheap and sweet tea grew while the Company’s influence waned.

⁹¹ Sykes, Notes on the Progress of Trade,” 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 3, 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3, 7. See Appendix A for official East India Company records from the Chinese newspapers.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4, 19.

CONCLUSION

Freshly-steeped tea, the beverage of choice for many a Briton today, had become deeply entrenched itself in British life through a multiplicity of factors and forces over the course of several centuries. This fascinating story can be traced alongside the development and capitalistic expansion of the British Empire through the combined efforts of many actors, whether unknowing participants or active role-players, to integrate tea and many other commodities into standardized culture. Consuming *Britishness* became of importance to many parties involved, especially when Parliamentary actions could be swayed with medical “prescriptions” for empire, business interests and tea-histories, and more importantly to maintain legitimacy of government in the eyes of Britons. This analysis has attempted to restore appropriate legitimacy to the role of women involved in their sphere of influence regarding pro-empire supporters and anti-imperialists alike. Reconnecting the pieces of the commodity chain, which were broken due to the capitalist system, unveils the ambiguities in the splintering of the chain. Unfortunately, much exploitation of native labor had been necessary to achieve the most efficient system of production available at the time – that being plantation-style labor. From China and India came Britain’s taste for tea, and the transfusion of tea from these cultures remains a fundamental piece of Britain’s history.

Appendix A

Periods.	Ports.	Imports.	Exports.
		£	£
Gazette, 1857, No. 95, April 25	Amoy	221,500	211,292
„ „ 98, May 16	Canton	2,171,239	1,951,599
„ „ 89, March 14.....	Foochow	97,916	814,033
„ „ 90, March 21.....	Ningpoo	136,359	734,161
„ „ 97, May 9	Shanghae	2,156,829	9,031,270
		4,783,843	12,742,355
Value of Opium	—	4,000,000	
		8,783,843	

B 2

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(A.)—Comparative Statement of the EXPORT of TEA and SILK from SHANGHAE.

Year ending 30th June.	Total Black.	Total Green.	Tea, Total Pounds.	Silk, Total Bales.
1844-45.....	—	—	3,800,627	6,433
'45-46.....	—	—	12,459,988	15,192
'46-47.....	—	—	12,494,140	15,972
'47-48.....	—	—	15,711,142	21,176
'48-49.....	—	—	18,303,074	18,134
1849-50.....	—	—	22,363,370	15,237
'50-51.....	—	—	36,722,540	17,243
'51-52.....	—	—	57,675,000	20,631
'52-53.....	—	—	69,431,000	28,076
'53-54.....	—	—	50,343,847	58,319
1854-55.....	45,385,816	34,835,429	80,221,245	53,965
'55-56.....	29,115,273	30,184,693	59,299,966	57,463
'56-57.....	12,470,686	28,443,704	40,914,390	92,160
'57-58.....	23,978,114	25,988,527	51,317,003	66,391
'58-59.....	—	—	39,135,939	85,970
'59-60.....	25,663,666	27,800,105	53,463,771	67,874

EXPORT of TEA and SILK from SHANGHAE, from 1st July, 1859, to 30th June, 1860.

Destination.	Black Tea, lbs.	Green Tea, lbs.	Tea, Total lbs.	Total Bales. Silk.
To Great Britain, direct.....	23,098,813	8,522,391	31,621,204	19,084
„ United States	659,401	17,639,987	18,299,388	1,554
„ Australian Colonies	534,006	380,805	914,811	—
„ North American Colonies	48,533	386,330	434,863	—
„ The Continent of Europe	1,105,398	66,964	1,172,362	} 47,099
„ Coastwise	217,275	803,628	1,020,903	
„ Manila	240	—	240	137
Total	25,663,666	27,800,105	53,463,771	67,874

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Cain, P. J. and A. G. Hopkins. "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945." In *The Economic History Review* 40, no. 1 (Feb. 1987): 1-26, accessed July 20, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3698723>.

Cain and Hopkins, referred to hereafter as C & H, are two leading British economic historians who focus their study on the largely neglected concept of *gentlemanly capitalism*. The period in which C & H consider most relevant to historical understanding lies between the mid-nineteenth to the mid-20th century. According to C & H, the role of gentlemanly capitalists had been *underestimated* by Industrial Revolution scholars; these capitalists grew in power and influence especially around the expanding metropol of London and S.E. England (18). C & H argue that Parliamentary fiscal policies created prime conditions for a shift of wealth investment to Britain's colonies and a shift in class power from the aristocracy to the middle and elite business class, especially those in positions of finance, after 1850 (2, 5). The government turned to its financial experts to determine future foreign policy decisions, the process is deemed *economic imperialism* by C & H; as a result, those in the 'service capitalis[t]' who now had more access to money and privilege, similar to what the aristocracy had experienced in prior years, had the ability to better direct political and social life through their investment of wealth in the colonies as a result of the élité's move to the sterling standard (3, 5, 11-12). Throughout the article, C & H effectively counter the prevailing narrative that British "economic development was not synonymous with the industrial revolution [as] non-industrial activities were far more important" (18).

Daly, Susan. "Introduction: Colonial Commodities and the Naturalization of Empire." In *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels*. Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014.

Daly argues that Victorian domestic novels both rationalized the empire-building efforts especially in India and constructed the ideal image of British national identity in the context of Empire. Her recent work enters the realm of cultural history as she carefully

places the British writers and novelists of the era such as Charles Dickens (1812-1870) as highly invested in the imperial investment in India to produce commodities (Daly 7). In these novels, the average British woman had been represented with a more domesticized role; however, these women were seen to be the economic powerhouse of British consumer-activity as shoppers of the empire (Daly 10-11). Her work gives 'life' to commodities where their role has been underappreciated by previous commodity scholars (Daly 7-8).

Daly, Susan. "Tea and the Mode of (Literary) Production." In *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014.

In her section on the British affinity for tea, Daly contends that from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth, tea had become inextricably linked with 'Britishness,' (87). According to Daly, Britain entered a massive shift after the 1760s in which a marshalling of consumer activity directed Britons towards incorporating more consumption into the products of empire. Tea, to which cultural historian Julie Fromer refers to as a 'necessary luxury,' went through a period of transition to be produced on the commodity-size scale to meet the needs of an expanding consumer base (Daly 87). She argues that due to the negative effects of the 'trade imbalance' and First Opium War (1840-42) with China, the British investment in the 'development' of India presented the best outcome of securing a reliable crop despite aggressive plantation-style labor to grow one's own 'British' tea (Daly 87, 89). For tea specifically, these novels intended to, according to Daly, eliminate the *harmful* effects of unfair trade, reduce fears of anxiety over artificially produced ('foreign and malevolent') green teas, and solidly connect tea drinking to civilization and civilized activity (92, 102-105).

Ellis, Sarah Stickney. "Pavillion and Gardens of a Mandarin." *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrapbook*, H. Fisher, Son & Co., 1844. In C. M. Becker, "Poetical Illustrations: Image, Text, Empire & History in British Literary Annuals." *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*. Santa Barbara: University of California, 2014. 361.

Ellis, Sarah Stickney. "Allom's Drawing: Apartment in a Mandarin's House, near Nanking." *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrapbook*, H. Fisher, Son & Co., 1844. In C. M. Becker, "Poetical Illustrations: Image, Text, Empire & History in British Literary Annuals." *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*. Santa Barbara: University of California, 2014: 365.

Fromer, Julie E. "'Deeply Indebted to the Tea-Plant': Representations of English National Identity in Victorian Histories of Tea," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36, no. 2 (2008): 531-547. Accessed 3 Apr., 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40347203>.

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Howes, David, ed. *Cross Cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Howes' work takes a sociological/anthropological approach to the history of commodities and provides key insights into understanding the effects of cross-cultural consumption. His primary argument is that goods change meaning and utility when they are introduced into other cultures as a result of the separation of the system, or 'culture,' of production from that of the culture of consumption (Howes 2). Continuing from here, Howes contends that the simplest method to understand the cultural significance of commodities would be as a *language*, teaching the student of commodities to recognize this language as the clearest representation of the *interplay of goods between two cultures* (2-3). By analyzing the language of commodity consumption through several paradigms, Howes reveals how the combination of globalization and capitalism shaped the modern world (2-3). He pinpoints scholarly consensus within the past twenty years around the "mirror of consumption," meaning that culture is shaped by both production forces and consumption forces (8-9). His paradigms are worth integrating into my analysis of consumption and identity and economic significance of the empire to Britain.

Liu, Andrew B. "The Birth of a Noble Tea Country: on the Geography of Colonial Capital and the Origins of Indian Tea." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 23, no. 1 (March 2010):73-100.

Mintz, Sydney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1985): xvi-xxix, 19-150. Pdf.

Moxham, Roy. *Tea: Addiction, Exploitation, and Empire*. New York: Carroll and Graf, 2003. 9-50.

Offer, Anver. "The British Empire, 1870-1914: A Waste of Money?" In *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 46, no. 2 (May 1933): 215-238. Accessed July 20, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2598015>.

Offer's analysis pinpoints the late nineteenth-century as the high-point of the British Empire, contending that established scholarly views of the empire as an economic 'liability' are false notions that are based on scattered compilations of data. The interpretation of these data presented British governance of empire as 'irrational' as the methodology of data interpretation made it appear that the nation lost money on its imperial project (Offer 215). Offer, a twentieth-century economic historian, conducted a cost-benefit analysis of imperialism with military expenditures to conclude that both investment in, and the defense of empire, was worth the cost to the British taxpayer to secure the commodity chain (215, 232-236). Resulting from the imperial investment, Offer recognizes the returning boon of 'consumer surplus' as a driving force spurring

entrepreneurship in specialized industries such as ‘mercantile and financial services’ (233). Offer’s work restores legitimacy to those who financially invested in the British Empire: “More than two generations of well-informed investors chose to send their funds overseas. Their assets and income were safe, they felt, under British naval protection The empire was an adjunct of British wealth. It provided protection for that wealth, but also the temptation to fight for it,” (236).

Rappaport, Erika. *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Rappaport, Erika, Sandra Trudgen Dawson and Mark J. Crowley, eds. “Introduction.” In *Consuming Behaviors: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

The editors in *Consuming Behaviors* examine several essays concerning the ongoing development of *consumer* in British society, and the role of the consumer in British political economy. From their analysis, it is conclusive to say that the British population consumed (its) empire through political choices and through political and societal norms (Rappaport 3). Several historical actors responsible for the molding consumer behavior, the consumer, and ideas about commodities should be investigated to analyze the variety of angles in which the average Briton drew critical decision-making information (about consumption and empire); these actors include “marketers, advertisers, corporations, political parties, [and] voluntary and state agencies (Rappaport 3). They extend appropriate credit to leading British historian Frank Trentmann for influencing their analysis of consumer, and in their analysis, Rappaport, Dawson and Crowley call on their readers to recognize that the definition of consumer and consumption evolves over time (3). In the nineteenth century, “texts, images and spaces often . . . transformed commodities into everyday expressions of the imperial project, justifying empire as a comfortable and satisfying pursuit,” (Rappaport 6). Consumption must integrate not only economic aspects, but also the cultural and political forces driving consumer activity.

Schwarzkoeph, Stefan. “Consumer Communication as Commodity: British Advertising Agencies and the Global Market for Advertising, 1780-1980.” In *Consuming Behaviors: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

Schwarzkoeph explores the growth and development of the British advertising industry from the eighteenth to the twentieth century and the process to commodify space. The medium of communication to control the commodity of space was the print media, which British advertising agencies had been first in the world to effectively utilize (Schwarzkoeph 123-124). Techniques of advertising, according to Schwarzkoeph, taught manufacturers and businessmen how to brand products of empire as defending consumer health (128). The “formal Empire and its informal Empire” itself had created conditions for a “nationally integrated market for consumer goods,” promoted through British

advertising (Schwarzkoeph 128). Schwarzkoeph contends brilliantly that “unsurprisingly, it was packaged, branded and heavily advertised goods based on ingredients from the Empire, like tea (Lipton’s, Horniman’s, Mazawattee), cocoa and chocolate (Cadbury’s, Fry’s, Rowntree’s), sugar (Tate’s, Lyle’s), rubber products (Dunlop), and palm-oil-based products, such as soap (Pears’, Hudson, Lever Brothers), which provided the mainstay of work for the early British advertising industry” (128).

Sussman, Charlotte. *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713-1833*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Historian Charlotte Sussman discusses the eighteenth-century backlash against the aggressive imperialist commodification process in which slavery had significant ramifications on the rhetoric of the antislavery movement. A paradox emerged in the process of accumulation: accumulating colonial commodities had been seen to be inherently British in nature and this accumulation caused much strain (*anxiety*) on the moral compass of the consumer (Sussman 13-14). One of the strongest movements against foreign imperial consumption of commodities took shape in organized protest movements, most especially through the message of antislavery (Sussman 14-15). Sussman defends her argument that that consumption should be viewed in favor of consumer choice, more rather, in favor of home-produced goods; current consumption trends tended to be racialized and excessive to produce the effect of convincing the public that they should feel “anx[ious]” about consuming something that required violent production methods and the commodification (and exploitation) of foreign labor (14). In order to convince the public of the inhumanity of production practices, with the reactive push especially against slavery, literature was disseminated through works such as *Robinson Crusoe* with the hope that the consumer would not commit the sin of cannibalism (14-15).

Sykes, Col. William Henry. “Notes on the Progress of England with China since 1833, and on its Present Condition and Prospects.” *Journal of the Staistical Society of London* 25, no. 1 (March 1862): 3-19. www.jstor.org/stable/2338558.

Thompson, Andrew and Gary Magee. “A Soft Touch? British Industry, Empire Markets, and the Self-Governing Dominions, c. 1870-1914.” In *The Economic History Review* 56, no. 4 (Nov. 2003): 689-717. Accessed July 19, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3698723>.

Thompson and Magee’s, hereafter referred to as T&M, analysis falls into the category of economic history and follows market activity during the high point of the British Empire, the so-called free-trade era, between 1870-1914. These historians situate their argument in the modern debate over economic decline of Britain during the twentieth-century; both the Conservative and Liberal parties take similar positions that the Empire did more to harm than benefit Britain. The source of misinformation has been historians who, according to T&M, put forward what is commonly referred to as the “soft-market thesis”, arguing that it was *easy* or *soft* to convince the colonies buy British manufactured goods

because the Empire insulated against foreign competition (690). This argument has little evidence to support the claim that the colonial consumer would more than likely prefer to purchase *British* goods (T&M 691-692). T&M argue that British manufacturers could not necessarily convince the colonial consumer to purchase the homeland's goods without first appealing to the consumer's individual tastes and culture depending on the region in the Empire. For example, British manufacturers had to stimulate an appeal for *British* beer to meet the preferences (including taste and labeling) of the Australian consumer: "British beer exports to Australia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century depended on the ability of individual exporters to adapt to changed circumstances" (T&M 693). Directly countering the source of scholarly misinformation of easy empire markets, T&M contend that Britain had to expend much energy and finances to compete for its own colonies to buy British; colonists in the Empire would buy British if the price was right, otherwise they would seek out international sales for their manufactured goods (694). Individuals and businesses who invested Empire markets took on significant risks both in monetary terms and guarantee of a constant supply of revenue from colonial purchase of national manufacture (T&M 694). T&M conclusively determine that British manufacturers had to fight for consumer interest in their product, and in order to do so, they had to appeal to consumer's demand being "value [or utility] for money" (696). Most importantly, the attentiveness these historians give to the role of consumer culture and its more important facet of 'cultural preference' is critical to understanding the economic significance of empire (T&M 708). That the British manufacturing class carefully monitored and responded adequately to changing trends in the *empire markets* rebuffs previous (nationalistic?) scholarship that manufacturers did not need to change their approach to colonial marketing (T&M 713).

Trentmann, Frank. "Introduction." In *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, From the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First*. New York: Harper Collins, 2016.

British historian Frank Trentmann's work on consumption enlightens the modern reader to the significance and origins of consumerism. His definition of consumption is particularly useful to realize that consumption is active and evolving and not a passive process: "To be precise, [consumption] concerns the interplay between two processes: one is how institutions and ideas shaped consumption over time; the other is how consumption, in turn, transformed power, social relations and value systems" (Trentmann 6). It is fascinating to realize that consumption creates an *identity* which touches "states, societies, and daily life," and in the process of consumption particular choices by historical actors to expand and further integrate consumption into the body politic (Trentmann 1). One can investigate consumption from two perspectives: macro and micro. A macro analysis of consumption examines a broader perspective and arguably, according to Trentmann, is somewhat easier to make conclusions as to changes on the societal and state level (9). The micro-analysis highlights relevant features of consumer behavior in terms of the observable 'habits and routines' present and in addition, the consumer's 'individual motivations and desire' (14-17). In order to adequately assess consumption trends, both the macro and micro must be integrated in order to gain a more

complete picture of the process. Studies of consumption must also avoid the tendency to conceive of “material culture as a separate sphere of everyday life . . . [because it often] treat[s] daily life, the market and politics as separate spheres making it all but impossible to follow the interplay between them” (Trentmann 9). One can look to explanations for commodification in historical analysis and observe how *precious luxuries* became *exotic drugs* and *everyday items* (78). Over time, commodity consumption built its own culture and ‘habit[s],’ which had more impact than the addictive stimulants in foreign goods such as tea, coffee, and chocolate (Trentmann 81). Historiography of such *commodity biographies* began in the 1980s with Sydney Mintz’s sugar study *Sweetness and Power* (1985) (Trentmann 79). Trentmann works to reconnect the missing links in the commodity chain as the capitalist system shields production practices from the consumer. For example, Trentmann brilliantly recognizes that “The warm comfort of a cup of sweetened tea served in Britain is connected with the brutality of slave plantations in the Carribean” (79). In addition, commodities have the ability to change cultural meaning across different boundaries; specifically, Trentmann contends that these goods have a *social life* (79). For one particular commodity, coffee, the male British middle-upper class, in which its consumption interested primarily businessmen and scholars in the coffeehouse, had social *sobering* qualities to appeal to elite attitudes: these attitudes specifically involved “reason, control and moderation” (Trentmann 85). Over time, consumer preference for foreign beverage shifted from coffee to tea due to quality and taste preference and a shift in overseas commodity investment from coffee to tea and (the added sweetness of) sugar cane (Trentmann 92). In sum, Trentmann advises modern consumption historians to recognize that trade “enlarged the basket of goods for Britons at home and in the colonies. [It] was significant because it cheapened consumer goods at a time when food prices were rising. It was those with disposable income, the middling sort and the rich, who were the main beneficiaries” (92-93).

Trentmann, Frank. “Political Culture and Political Economy: Interest, Ideology, and Free Trade.” *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998): 217-251. Accessed February 8, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4177265>.

Walvin, James. *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1600-1800*. New York: New York University Press, 1987.

Walvin’s analysis focuses on the development of the British Empire by investigating the extension of trade networks and imperialist policies to create the consumer society. This work rests neatly in the modern-day debate on the origins of that consumer society. According to Walvin, it is crucial to recognize for any emerging British history scholar that the development of *Britishness* and British identity has been significantly shaped by interactions with the world; this approach requires an extended look beyond traditional Eurocentric history (x). It is essential to remember that the pursuit of colonial commodities involved much imperialism, specifically that of “aggressive European colonial expansion,” and that imperialist expansion must be integrated into the context of

reading commodity stories (xii). In his chapter titled “Questions of Taste, Addiction and Empire,” Walvin clearly points to the development of British *taste* as being acquired over time by several factors; these factors included a generally accepted “acquired taste” for commodities, and the development of commodity culture through *custom* (195-196). Whether consumers realized it or not, they were direct participants in the extension of empire. These *fruits of empire* were not acquired by a simple accident – this was a purposeful move by a nation expanding to support various actors’ interests: “here was a form of profitable trade and dominion – a source of lucrative business whose ramifications reached deep into every corner of British life” (Walvin 197). The arrival of commodities in different stages accelerated the growth of empire – especially once the first shipments of sugar arrived from the British West Indies (196)

Similar to how Frank Trentmann has coined the *social life* process of commodities, Walvin also recognizes that ‘social usage’ of each commodity for the British developed from an *emulat[ive]*, aristocratic privilege and luxury to an *integral* and *entrenched* part of *British life* (196). For example, the luxury of drinking tea slowly trickled down to the lower classes and took root in British culture, albeit gendered in terms of *ritualized* consumption, especially after sugar was introduced (196). Commodity consumption involves a visible *Ritualization*, according to Walvin, which distinguishes itself across the categories of class and gender (196).

In terms of how Walvin’s argument might be connected to modern-day British consumption, although the Empire has been significantly reduced in size and scope, modern British consumers still benefit from the former work of the Empire with consumption trends which have been tightly engrained into the notion of being British (198).

- Works through strong primary sources to build his argument
- Chronological approach; good block quotes
- Origin story of several commodities to their new usage/ritualization process in Britain over time