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**Britannia's Lineage:  
The Development of British Identity in the Eighteenth Century**

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Britannia's Lineage:  
The Development of British Identity in the Eighteenth Century

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When Britain first at Heav'n's command  
Arose from out the azure main;  
This was the charter of the land,  
And guardian angels sang this strain;

Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves:  
Britons never will be slaves.

*Rule Britannia!*  
Thomas Augustine Arne,  
1740

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## Introduction

While working on this thesis I undertook a research trip to London where I immersed myself in the reading rooms of the British Library. While in town I also explored the city, all the while keeping in the back of my mind the purpose of my visit to Great Britain's capital: my thesis on the role of the Empire in the creation of the British identity. Because of this undertone to my tourist ramblings, I found myself grinning in the Twinings shop on the Strand (established in 1706) when I recognized the exotic sounding varieties of teas that had become common-place in our kitchens (such as Assam, Darjeeling, and Lap Sang), chuckling while taking pictures of Indian restaurants housed in Victorian buildings that were located next-door to traditional British pubs, and enjoying the genteel British accents of the East-Indian family playing cricket one sunny Saturday afternoon in Hyde Park as I walked by. Everywhere I turned in London my thesis met me head on, giving me proof that the British had (both consciously and unconsciously) absorbed many aspects of their far-flung Empire which had spanned the globe and many centuries.

I had thought at the time that London was a special case unto itself. As it was the most common point of entry into the archipelago, the capital was bound to appropriate and display the cultural characteristics of many of the societies that the British had encountered through their colonial expansion. Having finished my time in London however, I set off on a bus tour through southern England and was glad to see that the capital was not the only place where the themes of my thesis manifested themselves. The exotic teas of Twinings appeared in country-village tea houses, eastern-styled restaurants

were to be found in Elizabethan era half-timber buildings, and Asian décor was popping up in the historical museums and sites I was visiting. Even in rural England, almost fifty years after the majority of the formal Empire was disbanded, its influences could still be seen in the countryside, leaving its mark on the people and places of Britain.

And yet, nothing could have prepared me for Brighton. The Royal Pavilion of Brighton (see image 1-1) is a building which looks like it belongs on the plains of India, but is only five minutes from the British coast. One can imagine that the white stone exteriors with domed roofs would have been a welcome sight to any Mughal emperor, but the interior is an even greater shock to the senses.<sup>1</sup> Here, George IV allowed his interior designers to embrace the chinoiserie style and they sumptuously decorated the palace with eastern-inspired motifs. From the *trompe l'oeuil* paintings on the walls which give the appearance of bamboo molding, to the china vases placed every few feet in all the hallways, to the dragon sculptures that grace the ceilings, the Royal Pavilion is a standing testament to the impact that Britain's growing Empire had on the people back home.

Surrounded as it is by Regency buildings, the Pavilion has an even deeper meaning to the context of Britain's society during the early nineteenth century. Nestled in the heart of the old spa-town, the Royal Pavilion is strong evidence of a culture eager to embrace the exotic look, feel, and textures of the East. Every corner of the Pavilion reminds the viewer of Britain's global role at the time. Even the kitchens, proudly displayed to visiting guests during the nineteenth century (but still a site of work) did not escape the thematic décor of the building. Though plain in contrast to the grand dining

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<sup>1</sup> Historian of the British Raj Thomas Metcalf considers the role that architecture plays in the exertion of cultural identity in his work, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

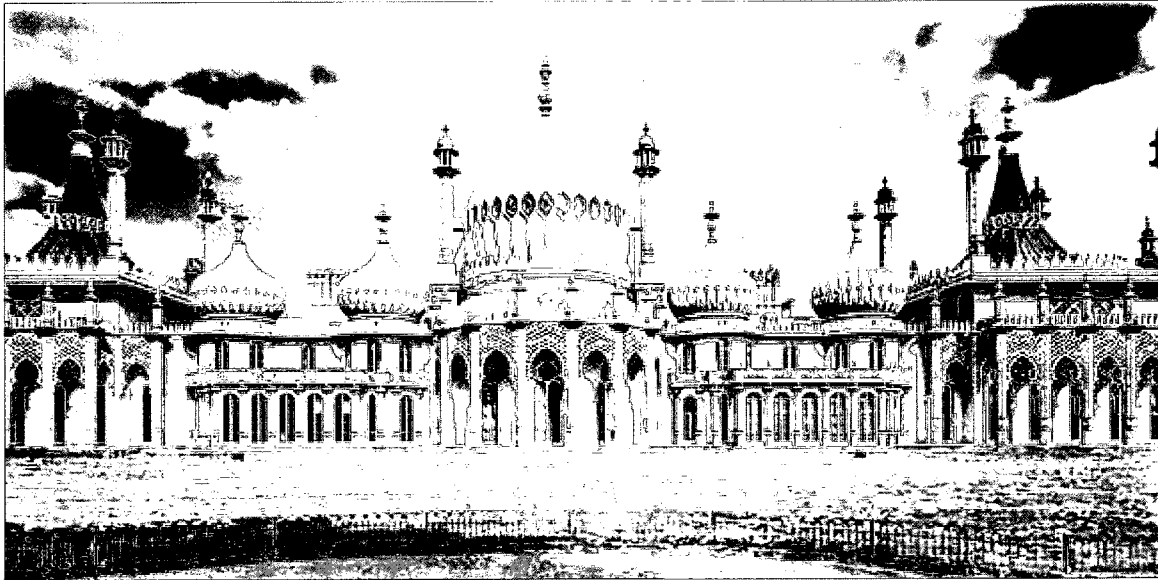


Image No. 1-1  
The Royal Pavilion, Brighton, United Kingdom  
Available from <<http://www.royalpavilion.org.uk>>

room mere footsteps away (with its massive dragon chandelier and oriental murals), this room has the feel of a plantation-house kitchen with its high ceilings, lots of natural light, and four support columns in the center of the room which are topped with palm fronds, giving them the appearance of being large trees. The Pavilion, and its royal resident(s), made Brighton a beacon for British society, cementing its place in the minds of the elites who flocked to the area for the company and health properties.<sup>2</sup>

What makes the Royal Pavilion so important to an analysis of imperial mentalities is that it stands as a grand example of how the Empire had become ubiquitous in British culture by the late eighteenth century. The Pavilion is a living monument to the British identity as it was molded by the Empire. London may have been the metropole into which the produce and profits of Empire flowed, but it was clearly re-exported

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica Rutherford, *The Royal Pavilion, Brighton: The Palace of King George IV*. Brighton: Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, 1994, p. 7

throughout Britain thanks to the trend-setters and merchants (like those considered elsewhere in this thesis), bringing with it not only décor, but also foodstuffs, mentalities, and a changing sense of self to the rest of the country.

Trying to ascertain how the British people of the eighteenth century saw themselves in relation to the British Empire requires a multi-disciplinary approach. The fields of empire building and identity are prominent ones that are thickly populated by British historians. More recent is the field of the history of consumption, which emerged in the 1980s. While the trend in academia to link the British Empire and national identity during the eighteenth century has become popular within the last twenty years,<sup>3</sup> the introduction of the study of consumption into that dynamic allows historians to measure and judge what impact these social phenomena had on the people. The problem with (and benefit of) consumption as a historical field is that it pervades every aspect of life, from the domestic, to the public, to the political. Because of this, social, demographic, political, and economic history must all be drawn upon to arrive at an understanding of the role that the Empire played in the development of the British identity.

This thesis seeks to elaborate on the important role that imperial goods played, and the resulting mentalities that they helped foster, in the creation of a British identity. Imperial goods as cultural ephemera and as material manifestations of imperial success played a key role in the configuration of Britain at this time, and this dissertation seeks to show how an empire of goods contributed to a shared sense of 'Britishness.' The process of cultural reconfiguration which occurred in order to accommodate the imperial

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<sup>3</sup> Thanks to works by historians such as Linda Colley's *Britons* and *Captives*, as well as Kathleen Wilson's *The Island Race*, as discussed and cited below.

experience, as it is revealed by the sources to be examined below, shows how profoundly the Empire touched the daily lives of Hanoverian Britons.

### **The British Empire**

Historians often find themselves subject to two main historiographical legacies in their studies of the British Empire in the eighteenth century. The first is periodization – most studies of the Empire in this period range from 1750 to 1850. These dates reflect the period between the Seven Years War (which began in 1756) and the Sepoy Rebellion in India (in 1858), as this era exhibits a recognizable increase in imperial activity and perception within British society and culture. Moreover, by the late 1740s the Empire had become a popularly conceived entity and its goods were almost universally present in the lives of Britons. On the other end of the spectrum, post-1850s, scholars are able to identify a changing understanding and expectation in imperial ideologies, as the ideals of Utilitarianism, Darwinism and paternalism motivated Britons throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

However, to place imperial consciousness halfway through the eighteenth century is a disservice to the multitude of peoples who worked to bring the Empire into fruition in the first half of that century. Merchants, tradesmen, and the social elite were conscious of, and engaged in, the activities of global expansion long before the mid-eighteenth century. What is often overlooked in the study of the Empire is its early entrepreneurial stage – the first half of the eighteenth century – in favour of its mantra of glory, God, and gold in the nineteenth. A common perception of this early stage of imperial growth is that it was as exploitative and as ruthless as its later stages;<sup>4</sup> nothing could be further

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<sup>4</sup> P.J. Marshall explores the contemporary perceptions and realities of the British Empire in his introduction to *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford

from the truth. Britons settling and engaging in commerce in the Atlantic world, the Caribbean and Asia were often there as guests of existing magnates, in conflict with other European nations or native populations, and as survivors of climates wholly unfamiliar and uncomfortable to them. The force of will required to engage in commercial activities in the face of these difficulties is evidence of British tenacity, voracity and determination – not a sense of righteousness and condescension as is so often attributed to them. By centering studies wholly in the eighteenth century, scholars are able to counter whiggish historical traditions (which begin in the mid-eighteenth century), and study the beginnings of the modern Empire, which leads to a better understanding of its lasting effects. That is what this thesis seeks to achieve.

The second stereotype that historians engage in when studying the Empire is another form of periodization, but one that is based on geography. This is done through the ‘first’ and ‘second’ empire paradigm. Traditionally, historians have divided the study of the Empire into two parts; the first lasts until 1783 (at which time the former American colonies won their independence) and is usually characterized as “Atlantic, colonial, and mercantile,” while the second begins after the victory of the battle of Waterloo (1815), and is seen as being based in Asia “and characterized by conquest and direct rule.”<sup>5</sup>

At first blush, this theory has merits. Before the loss of the Thirteen Colonies, Britons had a close relationship with their American subjects; they had begun to populate the former French colony of Canada; the majority of the sugar islands of the Caribbean (which frequently traded with the American colonies and supplied the British archipelago

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University Press, 2001, pp. 5-9. While Marshall does illustrate the fact that the Empire expanded through wars, he characterizes these conflicts as being European in nature.

<sup>5</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 21

with its most popular colonial import – sugar) were owned by the highest member of British society; and Ireland, though contentiously so, had been populated to some degree by the English since the Tudor age. Within this diaspora the people were not very different from those still living in Britain with regards to language, culture and politics, they moved amongst these locations, if not with ease, then with certainty of a similarity of life-style, and they depended upon one another for their financial health and imperial well-being. But, with the push for American independence, Britain faced a civil war that would be a painful loss no matter the outcome.<sup>6</sup> When American independence finally came in the 1780s, Britain withdrew “[h]umiliated, burdened with debt, and without friends...”<sup>7</sup> Historian Vincent T. Harlow characterizes the period between 1783 and the English defeat of the French at Waterloo as a “hiatus” from colonial activity. With this final and massive victory over their century-long enemy in the war of cultural attrition that had been fought across the Channel, the British regained their imperial momentum and colonization became an organized “art.”<sup>8</sup>

And yet, for its convenience of chronological packaging, the ‘first’ and ‘second’ empire theory does not bear up to deeper scrutiny. While the British were indeed working towards building an Atlantic empire at the start of the eighteenth century, it was by no means their only global foray at this time.<sup>9</sup> Beginning 1601, when Queen

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Lawson’s review article entitled “Anatomy of a Civil War: New Perspectives on England in the Age of the American Revolutions, 1767-82” which appeared in *Parliamentary History XIII* (1989), pp. 142-152, details the all-encompassing nature of the American Revolution and its impact on the culture of the metropole.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent T Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire*, vol 1. London: Longmans, 1964, p. 1

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2

<sup>9</sup> Ian Steele’s chapter, “The Anointed, the Appointed, and the Elected: Governance of the British Empire, 1689-1784,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 105-127, provides an overview of the political and governmental structure of the Empire. Though Steele’s focus is on the Atlantic experience, he does not overlook the existence and extension of British influence in India and Africa.

Elizabeth I issued a charter to the East India Company, the British presence in India had been continuous. Though the British were not formally in charge of administration in the sub-continent until the victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757, they had made themselves known in India in terms of both an economic and physical presence.<sup>10</sup> To characterize the British Empire before 1783 as being Atlantic is flawed; the same activities that allow one to characterize the ‘second’ empire as Asiatic were occurring while the American colonies were still considered British. The same is true in reverse – during the ‘second’ empire, Britain was in control and nurturing the growth of the Canadian colonies. The second empire can hardly be seen as centered in Asia when Canada, the Caribbean sugar islands, and Ireland were still perceived to be decidedly British.

Beyond mere locations, historians also characterize the purpose and functions of the ‘first’ and ‘second’ empires. The first is seen as being colonial and mercantile, while the second is seen as being defined by conquest and direct rule.<sup>11</sup> And yet, of these four characteristics, no one can be applied only to one ‘empire’ or the other. Both the Atlantic and Asiatic worlds were locations of settlement of British peoples, were utilized for their raw goods and trading markets, required the use of strategic force to make them profitable and inhabitable, and were, in one way or another, the site of British administration. Dividing the early Empire into time periods certainly makes it manageable, but at what cost?

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<sup>10</sup> Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, pp. 23-4

<sup>11</sup> See the work of Peter Marshal, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India and America, c.1750-1783*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, for a discussion of the differences in the ‘tone’ of colonial expansion between the eastern and western peripheries: the Atlantic world was characterized by a Christian mission of settlement, while the eastern world was characterized by a desire for commercial expansion.

Rather than viewing the early Empire as two entities, it should be seen as a single, continuous body characterized by expansion (of either economic influence or territorial control). While the form and purpose of that body changed by location, it was still a place into which Britons could expand, trade with, and inhabit. The idea of dividing the Empire into periods is anachronistic – contemporary Britons would hardly have perceived it in such a way. Evidence of this dynamic can be found in the career of Sir Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805). In 1775, in charge of seven regiments, the newly minted Major General Cornwallis left for the rebellious American colonies. Renowned for his concern of his troops' well being, the Major General was well liked by his men, though he faced a seemingly intractable situation. Forced to deal with the difficulties of terrain, hostile locals using guerrilla tactics, and the questionable abilities of his co-commanders, Cornwallis made a good showing for himself in the Americas until, on October 19, 1781, he was cornered by an American force led by Washington and a blockade of the French Navy at Yorktown, and was left with no other option but to surrender. Ostensibly, this ended the American Revolutionary War, and Britain lost her thirteen mainland American colonies.

And yet, Cornwallis's ability and experience were held in high esteem and, in 1786 he was made Governor General of India (a position he held until 1793). While in India, he worked to reform what he saw as the corrupt practices of Britons in both governance and trade. He also fought local power magnates to secure and strengthen British power in the region. Following his time in India, Cornwallis was made Lord

Lieutenant of Ireland from 1797 to 1801 where his experience as a military leader and administrator were required in face of rebellion by the United Irishmen.<sup>12</sup>

In the person of Charles Cornwallis we can see how the British conceptualized their Empire as a continuous entity – Cornwallis served in a leadership role in three major areas of Empire, and he did so during what historians characterize as both the ‘first’ and ‘second’ empires. And yet, Cornwallis’ presence in India, after his failure in the Americas, is indicative of just how needful experienced administrators were. While administration (or lack there-of) in the Atlantic and Asiatic colonies was fundamentally different in terms of parliament’s level of involvement, had the Pitt government seen the American experience as wholly separate from the Indian one (or had Cornwallis been considered one of the architects of the loss of the thirteen colonies) he would not have been entrusted with the control of the burgeoning eastern territories, nor the administration of the troubled Irish plantations. Rather, the continued role that Cornwallis played is evidence of how contemporaries clearly conceived of Britain’s global expansion as a single, continuous process.

Far from being on “hiatus” between the formal declaration of independence of the American colonies and the victory at Waterloo, as Harlow contends, the British Empire was still being ‘built’ and utilized for trade opportunities. The period between 1783 and 1815 was an era in which the institutions and society of Britain were active in their reaction(s) to colonial developments in the locals of Empire;<sup>13</sup> men like Cornwallis, and other administrators, were sent out into the imperial holdings to regulate and protect

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<sup>12</sup> Bayly, C. A. and Katherine Prior, ‘Cornwallis, Charles, first Marquess Cornwallis (1738–1805)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004.

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/view/article/6338>, accessed June 16, 2009]

<sup>13</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*. New York: Longman Group, 1989, pp. 1-15

British interests there, colonial goods were still being imported to – and bought and sold – in Britain, and people were still filing out into the wider world with the entrepreneurial hope of making their fortunes in the Empire. Conceptualizing the Empire as being divisible into periods ignores the contributions made by those involved in its growth, the impressions of contemporaries, and the actual compositions of the colonies of the British Empire. Rather, the Empire needs to be conceptualized as a single entity that was constantly growing and changing.

And yet, understanding what the ‘Empire’ was is difficult as well.<sup>14</sup> For the sake of clarity here, the term ‘Empire’ is used to describe areas of the globe where the British had some influence, be it economic, political, military, or demographic. But characterizing this power structure as British is also problematic. ‘Great Britain,’ as a political entity, did not exist until the Act of Union in 1707, when England and Scotland were formally united into one nation. From that time (until only recently) the regions of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland were united into one over-arching administrative unit. The use of the term “British” here, while anachronistic for seven years within this time period, is intended harmlessly – it is only used to denote a wider mentality that the people had, in which they understood themselves to be connected to Ireland through the settlements there, to the Atlantic and Asiatic colonies from whence the goods they consumed came, and to each other through a monarch and administrative system that

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<sup>14</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a comprehensive *definition* of Empire, which is an aggregate of subject territories ruled over by a sovereign state, but the perception of what the Empire actually was throughout the eighteenth century is far more complex and less than flattering - it was viewed as a drain on the metropole, populated by those of lower classes (according to Adam Smith and Richard Cumberland).

oversaw the entire archipelago. Before 1707 “Britons” did not exist in name, but they certainly existed in practice, and it is in that spirit that the term is used herein.<sup>15</sup>

## Identity

The topic of British identity has long been a point of contention for historians, specifically historians of the Hanoverian Age. Likened by some to obscurity,<sup>16</sup> or Wonderland,<sup>17</sup> this author prefers to see the question of British identity as a marshy bog. Natives may feel comfortable traversing it by bringing to bear their years of ingrained experience in knowing where the firmer foot-paths are, while still knowing that there are certain avenues that will be impassible. Foreigners, however, can easily find themselves trodding down a path that seems safe and well worn, only to find themselves either in a completely unexpected location or, worse, submerged and out of their depth. Like the natural splendor of the marshlands of England, the question of British identity appears to be just as natural, and just as old.

But Britons of the eighteenth century would hardly have linked their sense of self to bog-lands. Rather, this was an era of commercial and imperial expansion that saw them spread out across all the world’s oceans. One of the earliest representations of Empire and this maritime growth was Britannia. This personification of empire goes back as far as the times of Roman occupation, when she was depicted on coins as an

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<sup>15</sup> Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. London: Yale University Press, 2005, provides an analysis of the British culture beginning in 1707, but her study relies on the pre-existing conditions in that society leading up to the internal union to build her thesis. In the post-1707 landscape, Colley uses the analogy of the umbrella – the term Britain became a shelter under which all peoples of the archipelago could be collected.

<sup>16</sup> Kathleen Wilson states that “[s]cholars of eighteenth-century Britain aren’t sure [what identity is], but they think they know it when they see it,” paraphrasing the decision of US Supreme Court Judge Potter Stewart in his concurring opinion regarding *Jacobellis v. Ohio* 378 US 184 (1964). *The Island Race*. New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Connors and J.R.D. Falconer, “Cornering the Cheshire Cat: Reflections of the ‘New British History’ and Studies in Early Modern British Identities.” *Canadian Journal of History*. 36 (April, 2001), p. 85

embodiment of Britain and shown in a subservient pose to balance the image of the Roman Emperors on the coin's reverse.<sup>18</sup> (See image 1-2.) In John Dee's *General and Rare Memorials Pertayning to the Perfect Arte of Navigation* from 1577, Britannia is portrayed as a nymph "kneeling on a stretch of English shore and petitioning Queen Elizabeth, who rides on a ship at sea, to assist in the creation of a British empire based on maritime power."<sup>19</sup> It was with Dee that Britannia was reclaimed and used to signify the British state's imperial existence.

The modern depiction of Britannia, that of an often seated woman in flowing robes with a spear, a shield featuring the Union Jack and a classical Greco-style helmet, was created by John Rettiers of Antwerp in 1660. Reputably modeled after Charles II's mistress, Lady Frances Theresa Stuart, Duchess of Richmond and Lennox, Britannia appeared on the half penny for the first time in 1665, and then on a popular medal in 1667. Her emergence is linked with the English and Dutch wars of the era, and so with English expansion into the East as a colonial power.<sup>20</sup>

As the embodiment of an ever-expanding maritime power, Britannia appeared as a representation of ephemeral guardianship over England, a sovereign power, the flourishing of the British economy, and British sea-supremacy. Because of her links to the royal house of Stuart, Britannia was elevated to a position of national consciousness. Moreover, she personified honour, fortitude, bravery, and justice which led her to be inextricably linked to ruling elites and the ideals of maritime dominance.

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<sup>18</sup> Derk Kinnane-Roelofsma, "Britannia and Melita: Pseudomorphic Sisters." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 59 (1996), p. 130.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 130



Fig. 31—Britannia on coins. Left: Roman sestertius showing Britannia, c. 143–4 AD.  
 Centre: Britannia coin with a trident substituted for Roettiers' lance, 1797.  
 Right: modern Britannia with helm, 1933. London, British Museum

Image No. 1-2

Various coins depicting Britannia

Available in Derk Kinnane-Roelofsma's, "Britannia and Melita: Pseudomorphic Sisters." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 59 (1996), p. 131.

More importantly, Britannia's message resonated with all Britons.<sup>21</sup> She entered the popular lexicon through the mid-eighteenth century poem *Rule Britannia* by James Thomson, which became a tavern song in 1740 when Thomas Augustine Arne put it to music and rearranged some of the stanzas. Common to both incarnations is the refrain of

Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves:  
 Britons never will be slaves.

The concepts of divine right to maritime supremacy, victory over tyranny, and "cities [that] shall with commerce shine" run throughout both versions.<sup>22</sup> This popular ode to the personification of Britain rests on the concepts of political, military, and economic dominance. By the 1750s Britain was firmly established in North America and the Caribbean and had been experiencing an influx of Asiatic goods from their trading posts

<sup>21</sup> Roy T. Matthews, "Britannia and John Bull: From Birth to Maturity." *The Historian*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (June 2000), pp. 802-9.

<sup>22</sup> Britannia Internet Magazine, LLP, "Rule Britannia!" *Britannia*.  
 [http://www.britannia.com/rulebrit.html, accessed November 19, 2008].

in India and the far-east for over one hundred years. Thus, it must truly have appeared to Britons that they ruled the waves.

Britannia was conceived from the first, not as a representation of a specific territory, but as an Empire. From Rome's first use of her to depict their mastery of their colonial holdings, to Dee's re-claiming of her for the glory of England (and Glorianna), Britannia has been co-opted for different purposes, but her core meaning has remained the same. She is evidence that Britons then had long understood themselves to be part of an empire.<sup>23</sup>

One of the issues that makes discussions of British identity so challenging to approach is the archipelago's history of internal imperialism due to its Celtic dimensions. Beginning with the Roman occupation, power on the British Isles has been located (mainly) in the southern, English regions. Historian Hugh Kearney attributes this coalescence of power to a number of factors: the prosperity of the woolen trade which mainly benefited the southern regions of England; higher population rates which were centered in towns and markets that were more common in the south; the centralization of politics, economics, and administration in London; the concentration of sites of higher-learning (such as Universities and the Inns of Court); a relatively higher literacy rate; and an inordinate number of southerners who held political positions.<sup>24</sup> Beginning in the fifteenth century with early English colonial forays into Ireland, and more concretely in 1536 with the union of Wales and England, English dominance of the archipelago

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<sup>23</sup> Though the original incarnation of that empire was Roman, between these earliest times and the fifteenth century, Britain was under the authority of various external empires and dynasties, such as the Danes, the Normans, and the Plantagenets, and then their own, internal form of imperialism. For an overview of the process of internal colonialism, see Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd, 1975.

<sup>24</sup> Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 159-63

cultures, in terms of politics and laws, has a long-standing precedence. This pattern continued in 1707 and again in 1801 through the formal unions of Scotland and Ireland (respectively) with the English state.

The result of these political (and to some degree cultural) mergers in the historical account had been a focus on English history, styled British, in which the Celtic histories were mentioned only when they infringed on the smooth running of English politics. The trend in British historical writing in recent years however, has been to assess the development of either the individual 'nations', or the actual 'British' existence. Even more recently the move in academia has been toward assessing the British identity in light of the Empire. Scholars such as Maya Jasanoff, Linda Colley, and Kathleen Wilson have suggested that an examination of "Britishness" is incomplete without assessing the role that Britain's imperial activities played in its development.<sup>25</sup> The result has been a less political and more social approach to British imperial history, in which individual people have received a place of prominence in these studies.

However, this shift does operate within one major challenge. Though generally termed the "British Empire," this designation is somewhat inaccurate. Because the centralization of power and commerce occurred in England, the impetus for imperial expansion was generally English. This is not to say that the English created the Empire alone – far from it. While the individuals who went out into the wider world to work and settle came from all four cultures of the British archipelago (and, in fact, the Scottish peoples contributed more bodies by far), the driving force was undeniably English.

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<sup>25</sup> See specifically Jasanoff's *The Edge of Empire*, Colley's *Britons* and "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument." *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (October, 1992), pp. 309-329, and Wilson's *The Island Race* and "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, c. 1720-1785." *An Imperial State at War, 1689 to 1815*. Lawrence Stone (ed.). London: Routledge, 1994.

Though the focus here will be on the English experiences with Empire, the term ‘British Empire’ will be employed not only for clarity, but also to demonstrate a continuity of process of imperial influence that began in the eighteenth century, as scholars have shown that it was in the eighteenth century that these mentalities took hold.

The discrepancy between what was English and what was British in terms of the Empire can be laid at the feet of the English national character itself. As a social group, the English did not celebrate themselves, but rather their imperial projects. In the words of sociologist Krishan Kumar, “[t]he English saw themselves in the mirror of the larger enterprises in which they were engaged for the most of their history. It was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that they initially found their identity as constructors of Great Britain, and then later as creators of the British Empire ...”<sup>26</sup> According to Kumar, this dynamic of imperial expansion is fundamental to understanding the English, and later British, identity – often times, the “lack” of an English identity is blamed on centuries of imperialism, and yet their imperialism is what defined them to themselves and others. The English knew they were leading the Empire’s growth, and the stylization of it as “British” was a conscious choice used to solidify the internal bonds amongst the archipelago cultures.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Krishan Kumar, *The Making of the English National Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. ix-x.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 34-37. The aforementioned works, and their ideological construct of what the Empire truly was, are partially a response to the call from J.G.A. Pocock for a new subject in British History. Pocock recognized that while “dabbling in the politics of language and the politics of identity” are dangerous activities, he felt that the historiography of his age was lacking in the Celtic and colonial contexts. For him, British History needed to be “the plural history of a group of cultures situated along an Anglo-Celtic frontier and marked by an increasing English and political and cultural domination.” Within this ‘frontier,’ Pocock included the Atlantic colonies, as he found the settlement in these areas were as much Irish and Scottish as English. “British History: A Plea for a New Subject.” *The Journal of Modern History*. 47, 4 (December, 1975), pp. 601-622.

The question of a nation's identity is necessarily a multi-disciplinary study. Historians find themselves drawing upon the works of anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and psychologists in their efforts to understand how, when, and why a nation-wide identity in Hanoverian society emerged. One of the most influential voices in this cross-disciplinary discussion has been Benedict Anderson with his work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread and Origin of Nationalism*. Anderson contends that nations are imagined entities because individuals within them will never be acquainted with the whole, yet they have a sense that they are.<sup>28</sup> Anderson places the emergence of national identities in western societies within the context of the 'decline' of religion and dynasticism; as populations no longer had these over-arching and ephemeral organizations through which to understand their world system, they turned instead to the ideals of nations.

In the British case, the reconfiguration of religion occurred during the reign of Henry VIII (with the split from the Roman Catholic Church and the foundation of the English Church<sup>29</sup>), while the disassociation of dynasticism from power occurred with the regicide of Charles I and the rule of the 'commoner,' Oliver Cromwell. With these two major factors around which life had for so long been organized and understood fundamentally altered, a vacuum was created in which a new paradigm of self-understanding was needed. What emerged in the eighteenth century to replace both previous life-systems was national identity, assisted by the print culture. Anderson's

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<sup>28</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006, p. 6. It is important to note that while Anderson uses some aspects of English history to illustrate his thesis, his work is by no means a thorough examination of the English case.

<sup>29</sup> In England the restructured church, the Church of England, was a state religion. Thus, its unique version of Protestantism lent itself to the formulation of a distinctive English identity. For a recent discussion of the role of religion in the creation of this identity, see the review article of R. Connors and J.R.D. Falconer, "Cornering the Cheshire Cat."

position is that the mass printing of newspaper and novels created a shift in the mindset and thinking patterns of the general population of Europe. Reading these materials (in the vernacular) imparted a sense of shared existence with people whose lives were occurring at the same time, yet removed physically and by acquaintance, from the reader. The continuity and availability of published materials allowed people to share the same knowledge amongst themselves, and perhaps the same rituals of consuming that knowledge.<sup>30</sup> All these characteristics create a sense of interconnectedness amongst the inhabitants of a nation; it forces the thought processes of individuals to expand beyond their own existence and to consider the lives of their fellow ‘citizens’ in relation to their own. The emergence of widespread circulation of the novel and the newspaper in the eighteenth century “... provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind of* imagined community that is the nation.”<sup>31</sup>

Because of the emerging Empire, and thanks to the shift to a shared sense of a national community, British identity of the eighteenth century was informed by imperial experiences. Long associated with the imperial process because of their overt colonial presence in Ireland, the English brought together the disparate peoples of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and their newer, global colonies under the identity of “British.” That is not to say that those who were Celtic, and later colonial, ceased thinking of themselves as such – as Linda Colley reminds us, Britishness was “an umbrella, a shelter under which various groupings and identities could plausibly and advantageously congregate.”<sup>32</sup>

While there was not an ethnic race of ‘British’ people in the eighteenth century, there

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<sup>30</sup> Anderson uses the analogy of reading the morning paper – perhaps individual A and individual B retrieve, read, and understand the same publication in the same manner every day. *Imagined Communities*, pp. 22-36

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22

<sup>32</sup> Colley, *Britons*, pp. xi-x

were English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish; what united the people of the archipelago was the concept of being British, a concept made valid through the manifestation of imperial experiences that were undertaken in the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, an understanding of the British identity can only be arrived at if the British Empire is given prominence of place in any assessment.

What has been agreed upon by historians in recent years is that the old Whig methods of assessing the question of British identity are past their prime. Rather, a more nuanced social and cultural assessment is required to ascertain how identity was created and affected the people of Britain. The ideal of Britannia – perched on a throne, traditionally depicted looking out over the oceans upon which Britain built its Empire, or receiving gifts from the personifications of the colonies (see image 1-3) – stands in contrast to the reality of *Rule Britannia!* – the popular drinking song which created a shared sense of community and provided an opportunity to celebrate Britain’s imperial and (perceived) cultural supremacy over the rest of the world. British identity meant different things to different people, but it is undeniable that the Empire was part of contemporaries’ understanding of who they were, and their place in the wider world.

### **Consumption**

If one were to assign characteristics to eighteenth century England one would not be able to ignore its developing consumer culture. As the topic of much debate amongst contemporaries, consumption is an important aspect of society that helps historians understand the culture of the age. As will be shown in this thesis, contemporaries perceived consumption to be a major force in their daily lives, one that could not, and

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<sup>33</sup> Linda Colley’s central theses in *Britons* contends that Britishness also rested on Protestantism, trade and profit, xenophobia, and warfare, along with imperialism.

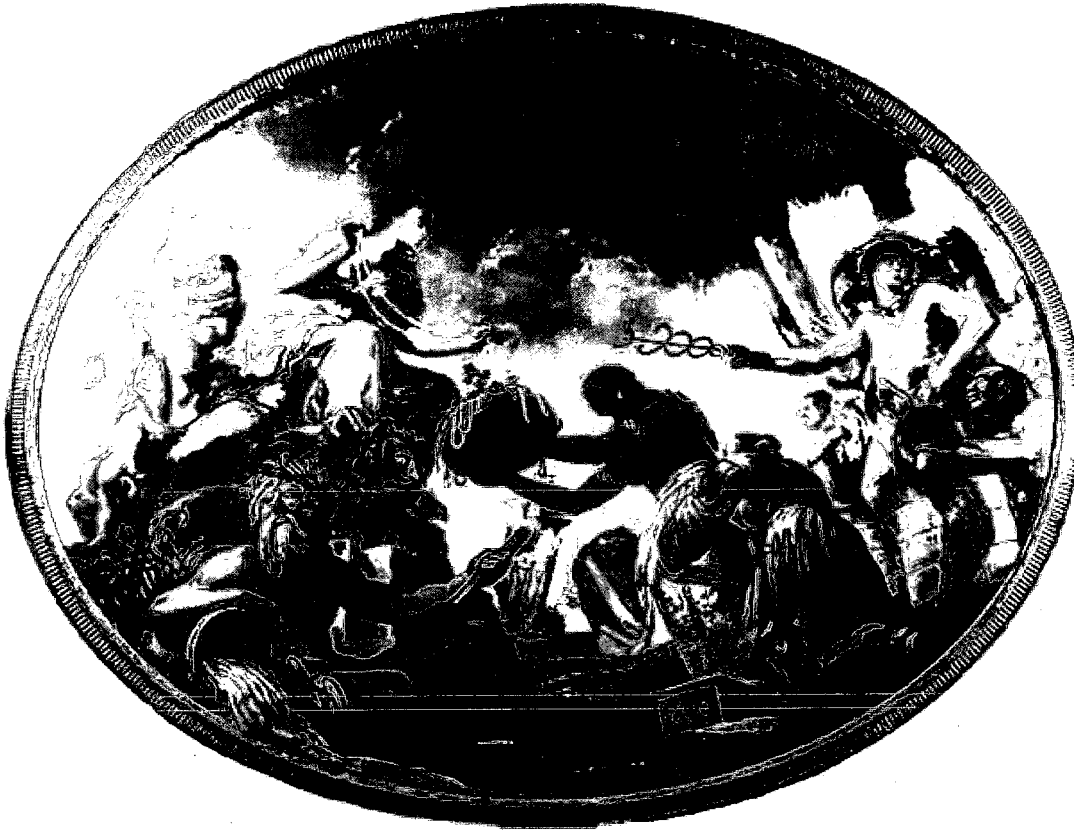


Image No. 1-3  
Spiridone Roma, *Britannia Receiving the Riches of the East*, 1778  
Wall painting from the head offices of the East India Company.  
The National Archives, London

cannot, be ignored. To this end, they published widely on the issue, exploring every facet of consumption. Though hardly the first writer on the subject, perhaps the most striking of its age was *The Grumbling Hive*, authored by Bernard Mandeville in 1705. This work satirically examines the state of British society in light of the growing consumer culture, finds it lacking in morals and decency, and sees it as degrading rapidly through the pursuit of ‘lusts and vanities.’ This work was an important part of the continuous discussions on the social order and consumption by Hanoverian contemporaries.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard Mandeville, *The Grumbling Hive; or Knaves Turn'd Honest*. London: 1705, p. 1a. For a discussion on the published debates over consumption and luxury, see Chapter 3 below.

The tradition of examining the impact of consumption on society that Mandeville contributed too with such resonance in the eighteenth century has continued into modern academia and has become an important field in British History. The study of consumption, and the resultant view of the culture that it produced (and which produced it), has been used by historians of economics, politics, and society as a means of understanding the eighteenth century. When the field first emerged it was dominated mainly by economic historians who focused on protoindustrialization and its implications on British growth.<sup>35</sup> The topics that they explored generally centered on the industrialists and capitalists, such as Wedgwood, Chippendale and the other financial success stories – but this research was achieved at the expense of the consumers. The fact that production and consumption are two sides of the same coin was lost in these studies as they focused their attention on the upper levels of society and ignored those who made up the largest block of consumers – the middling sorts and lower classes. Influenced by Marxist scholarship, academics were reliant (until the 1980s) upon what has been called “commodity fetishism.”<sup>36</sup> Since then, however, historians have turned their attention to consumers, and not *just* the producers, in order to obtain a fuller analysis of market society. In British history, the results were a series of studies spearheaded by noted historians such as Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, Roy Porter, and J. H. Plumb.

It was Neil McKendrick’s introduction to *The Birth of a Consumer Society* that laid out the necessity for such a shift in the field. His position is that the eighteenth

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<sup>35</sup> Lorna Weatherill points to scholars such as M.W. Flinn, A. Thomas, T.S. Ashton, and Phyllis Dean and W.A. Cole as those who examined consumption only so far as it would help explain the Industrial revolution. See Weatherill’s *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*. New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 16, fn. 32

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Christophe Agnew, “Coming Up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective.” *Consumption and the World of Goods*. John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds). London: Routledge, 1993, p. 20

century saw the fruition of a long (and sometimes painful) process, through which the early stages of modern consumerism emerged. McKendrick describes the preexisting conditions that were in place which allowed for such a major shift in western culture – mainly the general acceptance of the mercantilist world-view and expanding home markets, both of which led to the “democratization of consumption.” By the turn of the eighteenth century, a mind-set had emerged which encouraged a change for the positive in attitudes towards wage labour. It was understood that the wages paid to labourers were circular as the additional funds went towards purchasing consumer goods. The result was an expanding economy, which kept more people employed, thereby making more goods available to buy. Add to this the fact that multiple members of families were entering the work force (such as women and children), all employees were working longer hours, and there occurred a general drop in the price of food, and the picture that is created is of a society with disposable income, subject to the need and ability to shop for consumer goods. McKendrick also attributes the growing consumer culture to the structure of English society which allowed for upward mobility. Producers and sellers exploited the sense of competition amongst individual consumers and larger class groups by encouraging their customers to view goods as social indicators.

As London was the metropole for the British Empire it was naturally the major center of consumption practices. Between 1600 and 1800 the city’s population grew from 200,000 to 900,000 – that equates to a rise in the national population living in London from seven per cent in 1650, to eleven per cent in 1750. McKendrick calculates that one in six English adults lived in London at some point in their lives, exposing at

least one-sixth of the population to London's shopping, fashions and lifestyles.<sup>37</sup> The impact that this mass exposure had was only amplified by the developments in marketing and advertising techniques that emerged in this period. Finally, McKendrick also points to the large domestic servant class (that would have serviced those wealthy enough to engage in consumption in a committed way), which he claims led to lower-class patterns of emulation purchasing, the expenditure of their steady wages on consumer goods, and the transmission of styles and trends into the lower orders of society.<sup>38</sup>

The importance of *The Birth of a Consumer Society's* contribution to the study of consumer culture cannot be denied. McKendrick presents a fine overview of the culture and society that accommodated the growth and flourished under the influence of consumer goods. And yet, his work does introduce an important point that is under constant debate amongst scholars of the various disciplines that touch on consumption; this is the question of 'intentions.' To assign motives to an individual's purchasing and consuming patterns is extremely difficult when they have not left explicit accounts on their actions as they related to their intentions. Colin Campbell, in his historiographical contribution to *Consumption and the World of Goods*, focuses his attention on the emulation theory of consumption. It is a common trope in consumption histories to assign the motive of emulation to those of the lower classes when they purchased goods similar to those they saw being consumed by the higher classes. Campbell reminds his readers that behaviour can be imitative without being emulative; imitation is an activity while emulation is a motive. It is Campbell's position that some goods (such as coffee,

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<sup>37</sup> Neil McKendrick, "The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England." *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb (eds). London: Europa Publications Limited, 1982, p. 21

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 13-23

tea, sugar, etc.) were desired for what they were in and of themselves, and not for what it meant to consume them. This contribution to the field calls for an analysis of human motives when studying consumption, which requires establishing which activities were 'habits' and which were 'actions.' Too often, Campbell finds that motives are "...presumed and imputed when they need to be established." Assuming that individuals consumed in order to emulate is an attempt to use consequences to explain consumption, and "consequences cannot explain actions unless they also coincide with intentions."<sup>39</sup>

Campbell outlines the dangers that historians of consumption history must be aware of, as imputing feelings and intentions into activities can lead historians astray. In order to be better prepared and make sound conclusions, it behooves diligent historians to consult scholars outside of their field, specifically in the fields of the social sciences, to develop an understanding of human activity. Doing so allows scholars, specifically social historians, to apply the lessons currently being developed by behaviouralists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts on human behaviours in the past. Sociologists Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rocheberg-Halton believe that the study of the goods collected by people (and the patterns surrounding such activities) is telling of not only individuals, but also society(s) as a whole. It is their position that things can be either invested with meaning, or they can invest people with meaning. To this end, they state that men and women identify themselves

by first creating and then interacting with the material world. The nature of that transaction will determine, to a great extent, the kind of person that emerges. Thus the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are. The material objects we use are not just tools we can pick up and discard at our convenience;

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<sup>39</sup> Colin Campbell, "Understanding Traditional and Modern Patterns of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century England: A Character-Action Approach." *Consumption and the World of Goods*. John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds). London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 40-43

they constitute the framework of experience that gives order to our otherwise shapeless selves.<sup>40</sup>

Csikszentmihalyi and Rocheberg-Halton's contend that the best way to examine how people interacted with consumer goods, how they used them to define themselves, and how people understood their world through its physical components is to explore the goods they collect and keep within their homes. This theory is predicated on the simple fact that we cannot control what goods we encounter in the wider world, but the goods we keep at home are intimately connected to who we are as people, as we are inviting them into the most personal of spaces.<sup>41</sup>

It is in this spirit that consumption patterns cast light upon the development of the British identity in the eighteenth century. As discussed above, the Hanoverian Age was one in which the Empire was reaching unparalleled proportions in its contributions to the society and commerce of British culture. Linda Colley's use of the term 'cult of trade'<sup>42</sup> is helpful in describing the eighteenth century economy – a massive influx of goods originating from the Empire inspired mass-consumption of foreign and domestically produced goods, inspiring further imperial growth as profits became associated with being British. By examining the types of goods that people consumed, either as household goods or edible consumables, we can establish what role the Empire played in the daily life of Britons, thereby establishing how they perceived and understood themselves.

The focus on consumables in this thesis concentrates upon the goods that formed the basis of people's businesses, what could be found in their homes, and what foodstuffs

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<sup>40</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rocheberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 1 and pp. 15-16

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17

<sup>42</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p. 60

they chose to consume. The trends that are studied examine how people's interactions with consumerism enabled the intimate connections with Empire as discussed above. It is not this author's intention to assign motives to consumption patterns in Hanoverian Britain, rather, it is the goal herein to explore the *results* of this consumption. As such, this thesis seeks to integrate these disparate ideas of McKendrick with those of Campbell and of Csikszentmihalyi/Rocheberg-Halton as a way of considering the relationship between consumption and an emerging, imperialized Britain. The Empire's contribution to a shared existence is undeniable – it appeared in one form or another in print, on the tables, and in the discussions of Britons. The most common way that it was shared throughout the archipelago was through the consumer goods it supplied and inspired, and the daily routines created by the consumption of those goods.

But, to assign motives to the consumption of certain goods is impossible. Campbell is right – emulation cannot explain all consumption. McKendrick is right – the consumer goods originally introduced to the higher classes eventually reached the lower-classes, and part of that shift had to have been emulative. Csikszentmihalyi and Rocheberg-Halton are right – the goods we consume help to place us in a wider society while creating a highly individualized sense of self. These theories, while contradictory in some ways, are all accurate. It is impossible to make large-scale generalizations on the motives of individuals through the study of eighteenth century British consumption – there are countless people with an inestimable combination of variables that made up their daily lives that would have to be considered, and there are countless academics who would propose some paradigm on how to interpret those motives. Though a study of

motives is seemingly impossible, a study of the results and consequences of the consumption of the British Empire is possible, and that is what this work intends to do.

## **Methodology**

Approaching such a complex set of themes and trying to collect the historiographies, methodologies, and conclusions of so many different types of academic approaches is a daunting, and sometimes frustrating, task. An assessment of the works of authors who have contributed to the fields (or parallel fields) in question provides a basis for how to proceed in assessing the role of consumption in the creation of the British identity in the eighteenth century.

To this end, one scholar's work that is encouraging is Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. The basis of Schama's work is the Netherlands of the seventeenth century in which he tries to establish what the Dutch "*conscience collectif*" was through an examination of the "cultural peculiarities of the Dutch in the springtime of their nationality." Schama hopes to "discover how the Dutch made themselves up as they went along," by asking, "[w]hat animated their sense of community, what generated their allegiances; what crystallized the set of manners that became recognizable as their own?"<sup>43</sup>

Schama describes his methodological approach as being that of "shameless eclecticism" and accuses himself of being like a "thieving magpie"<sup>44</sup> and yet, for what he proposed to do (and did), it seems that no other approach could be warranted. By examining the art and print culture of the Dutch, Schama had countless primary sources to work from and with which to draw conclusions. Using paintings, prints, moveable

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<sup>43</sup> Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1987; pp. 3-9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8

household goods, architecture, and sculpture to draw his image of Dutch culture in their age of imperial expansion, Schama taps into the concepts of empire, consumption, and identity to understand the *brede middenstand* (or middling sort) of the Dutch.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps it is the daunting nature of Schama's methodology – the quantitative efforts and qualitative requirements – that have deterred historians from applying this type of study to the English case.

The same approach would be beneficial to an analysis of the British experience in the eighteenth century. Schama draws the parallels himself by observing how the Dutch became a global power within two generations, how its metropole was physically limited but considerably well off and stable, and how both the Dutch and English were engaged in similar global trade activities.<sup>46</sup> However, where the Dutch began the process, the English finished it. By treating the English case as Schama treated the Dutch case (which is to say, by examining the physical results of the imperial culture), through such forms of expression as art or writings, a better understanding of the creation of identity can be obtained using the parameters of Empire and consumerism.

As for the English case, and the subject of this thesis, the most useful study that employs similar themes is Maya Jasanoff's *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850*. The central argument to Jasanoff's work is that the British Empire was a consortium of collectors – both at an individual and an institutional level. For Jasanoff, the story of the Empire is the

legacies of men and women who engaged with foreign cultures in tangible ways: as collectors of objects... [these] collectors bought, commissioned, traded,

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<sup>45</sup> The other major characteristic at the basis of Schama's analysis is the Dutch sense of guilt, within their Calvinistic religion, over their financial success.

<sup>46</sup> Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, pp. 6-8

plundered, stole, captured, quested; they preserved and at times destroyed; they moved and coveted; they lost and remembered.<sup>47</sup>

By engaging with the goods they encountered and collected on the peripheries of Empire, these individuals participated in two important processes in the dissemination of Empire and the creation of a British imperial mentality. First, they used their collections as tools to define who they were as individuals within the larger collective, and second, they exposed new people to the sights, sounds, tastes and ideas of the wider world by displaying and sharing their treasures.<sup>48</sup> Both aspects of collection forced the idea of the Empire into the quotidian lives of Britons.

But as individuals collected, so too did the British state. Victories against global rivals and the collection of peoples from the wider world into a political empire built the modern British state. The most important international factor in the eighteenth century, war between Britain and France, helped the Empire grow through conquest and peace negotiations that included colonial holdings, as war with France led directly to over-seas expansion. Collecting an empire was a way for Britain to define its role in the wider world.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, because of Celtic and British archipelagic contributions to the expansion of Empire, the diaspora of “British” settlers were a collection of ethnicities themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Jasanoff’s work is intriguing and proposes an interesting methodological approach. Her convincing argument that the Empire had a causal link to the British identity and state development in the eighteenth century is proved in her discussions on individual collectors and how they fit into the larger collective. Her analysis of tangible,

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<sup>47</sup> Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p. 5

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8

foreign, and exotic goods to help explain the British identity is telling of these larger patterns. By building upon her approach and focusing on the metropole in detail (something Jasanoff does not do), this thesis will examine how the collecting habit, which began on the peripheries, seeped into the center; how those back home who did not collect, or at least not first-hand, defined themselves in relation to those who did; and, perhaps most important of all, how Britons used these new experiences to define themselves as a group.

And yet, often times the most complete analysis of the issues surrounding Empire, identity, and consumption can be found in the works of historians considering questions of gender in tandem with consumption. Contemporary understanding of the dynamics between consumption and gender in the eighteenth century means that modern historians naturally view these two fields as complementary and often rely on both to present a fuller view of the society that they are studying. To this end, the work of Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century*, speaks directly to the issues considered herein.

Kowaleski-Wallace's study is an examination of how "British culture projected onto the female subject both its fondest wish for the transforming power of consumerism and its deepest anxieties about the corrupting influence of goods."<sup>51</sup> Specifically, Kowaleski-Wallace looks at the goods and rituals associated with expansion into Asia. Her work places specific emphasis on the importance and role of tea. The consumption of tea and its complimentary by-products (i.e. furniture, fashion, and house wares) was considered a responsibility of British women and the act created a socially competitive

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<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 5.

world in which manners and material goods were indicators of success.<sup>52</sup> Most important to remember though, according to Kowaleski-Wallace, is the concept that,

the woman herself was poised at the place where the East would yield to the West; Orientalism was brought home in feminine hands. The fine china at the tea table, especially if it was domestically produced, added an underlying symbolism to the ritual: on a national level it evoked ‘the glories’ of mercantile expansion, demonstrating how the foreign had been brought home, transformed, possessed. On a familial level it testified to the status of a particular family who are participated in that same mercantile expansion.<sup>53</sup>

Kowaleski-Wallace’s description of the importance of tea to the sensibility of being British links identity, Empire, and consumption in an evident and pervasive manner; British women adopted, and adapted to, foreign goods in a way that then made them their own.

Where Kowaleski-Wallace’s study diverges from this thesis is that she does not explore how the society as a whole accepted, adapted and embraced colonial goods. Rather, because her work is mainly concerned with questions of gender and gender identity, Kowaleski-Wallace focuses on women and the stereotypes surrounding their purchasing patterns. Kowaleski-Wallace does not explain why Britons of both sexes, and British society as a whole, welcomed colonial goods and how those goods shaped the formation of the British identity. By broadening her study scholars would then be in a better position to understand eighteenth century British culture.

This thesis draws upon the approaches of various scholars to consider the connections and results of empire, identity, and consumption on Hanoverian culture. Schama’s wide variety of sources is represented herein with an examination of legislation, merchant directories, household accounts, probate records, published debates,

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 25-30

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60

private papers, published reference materials, and art. To fully understand imperial British culture it is important to consider as many aspects of Hanoverian society as possible. Jasanoff's work, with its focus on physical goods and individuals, has necessarily informed the chapters of this dissertation. She demonstrates that it was the people, along with the goods they cherished and used as social delineators which made up the experiences of Empire. As such, it is through an understanding of individuals and their intimate attachments with items that the development of the British identity can be understood. Finally, Kowaleski-Wallace's discussions, and her focus on the composition of Hanoverian culture, are important in considerations of the impact that new consumer goods from the Empire had on the quotidian nature of British life. It is her conceptualization of society that allows one to view the consumption of Empire as a participatory process, which is necessary for understanding how the people of Britain could share a sense of self.

Methodologically, this work draws on multiple disciplines and many specializations within the field of history itself. By casting our net wide, an over-view of how important the Empire was in defining the sense of self of Britons becomes clear. The composition of this thesis is thematic. Rather than approaching the study of Empire in a chronological fashion, it explores the imperial presence in the lives of Britons in a manner that focuses on the people and their experience within the world of imperial goods. Finally, this study encompasses all levels of British society, and both genders, in order to provide a wide overview on how pervasive and important the Empire became in the lives of Britons.

The following chapters seek to provide an analysis of the many ways in which the Empire contributed to the emergence of a commonly derived, imperial British *mentalité*, specifically through an examination of consumer goods. Chapter one explores the role of imperial goods within the political and financial systems of Britain. A consideration of the types of legislation passed by Parliament in order to legalize and legitimize the extraction of goods and the exertion of British power over the colonies leads to an understanding of how Britain, as a state, responded to the needs of its merchant classes for the expansion of trade. Once the goods in question had been obtained by Britons, it is also necessary to explore how they then passed from the hands of the suppliers to the consumers. To this end, the merchant directories of London provide an over-view of how comprehensive the sale and consumption of imperial goods had become by the end of the eighteenth century.

Chapter two aims to explore the presence of imperial goods within the homes of Britons. The surviving documents, such as household receipts and probate inventories, provide an overview of what kind of goods, and in what quantities, Britons were collecting within their homes. The fact that these sources remain is indicative of the importance of their authors and by their very nature these documents shed light on the popularity of the Empire's goods amongst the elite-classes.

As a complement to the proceeding chapter, chapter three seeks to explore how the Empire was encountered and experienced by all levels within British society. To this end, the existence of published debates on the consumption of luxury and imperial goods, the private papers of individuals both directly and passively involved in the procurement of imperial goods, the existence of household manuals, and popular art are considered in

order to explore the ways in which the lower-classes of Britain interacted with the Empire.

It is in the existence of colonial goods that the importance of Empire, identity and consumption coalesce to show modern historians how central the Empire was in the understanding that Britons had of themselves and their place in the world in the eighteenth century. Politics, laws, domestic life, and art all reflected the changes that were occurring in Hanoverian Britain as it related to the wider world and it is these changes that this thesis seeks to explore.

## Chapter 1: The Colonization of Commerce

Before examining how the Empire influenced the private lives of Britons, it is important to assess how society was structured to allow for the imperial dynamic, which emerged in the eighteenth century, to become a characterizing force. In many ways, an emerging public sphere in Hanoverian Britain was providing space and opportunity to accommodate the new imperial focus of state and society.<sup>1</sup> Exploring how the public sphere was structured to accommodate the need for the Empire's goods in the lives of Britons is made possible through an overview of the legislative activities of Parliament and the expanding presence of merchants who dealt in imperial goods. Examining these dimensions of eighteenth century Britain allows historians to trace how pervasive the Empire became in society, moreover it provides the context needed to understand how the goods of Empire were experienced by the people of Britain and how they worked to influence the creation and emergence of the British identity.

In 1784, Britain's dependence on foreign goods came to the forefront in politics; in July of that year the choice between tea and sunlight was made by the Pitt Ministry – tea was deemed more important. *A Bill for Repealing the several Duties on Tea, and for granting to His Majesty other Duties in lieu thereof; and also several additional Duties on Houses, Windows, or Lights...* was enacted into law on July 30, 1784. The preamble

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Lake and Steve Pincus' "Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern Europe." *Journal of British Studies*, Vol 45, no. 2 (April 2006), pp. 270-292, qualifies the public sphere as the expanding physical and ephemeral realm where discussions of politics occurred with an increasing regularity. John Brewer's *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 139-200, details the increasing role that the press played in Hanoverian Britain as a local in which discussions of politics and public affairs occurred. Brewer's study focuses specifically on the case of John Wilkes and the radical movement he embodied.

explains that the Bill was necessary due to the high rate of duty imposed on the importation of tea “in Proportion to the Value of that Commodity,” which had resulted in smuggling and other illicit acts that were considered dangerous to the public good and detrimental to state revenue. Rather than tax a commodity that had become of central importance to the daily lives of Britons (and which was also incredibly susceptible to illicit trading), the Bill sets out two methods through which the government intended to maintain its current rate of revenue; first, new duties were to be “paid according to the real Value of such Tea,” and second, “several and respective additional Rates and Duties upon all inhabited Houses, [would be levied] according to the Number of Windows or Lights in each...” This Bill implies that keeping the cost of licit tea reasonable was more important than access to natural light.<sup>2</sup>

The Bill is indicative of several trends in eighteenth-century imperial Britain. First, as mentioned above, colonial goods were becoming part of quotidian life for the British – by exchanging duties on tea for duties on window, the importance of both items is clear, but because taxes were rarely levied on goods considered to be necessities for the poor,<sup>3</sup> a reduction in taxes on tea is indicative of how fully it had seeped into mainstream culture and into the lives of all Britons. Second, this Bill shows Parliament’s willingness to legislate on matters of imperial business; tea, and the members of society it supported (mainly the East India Company directors and members), were influential players in the

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<sup>2</sup> Windows may have been considered a luxury in the age, but there is no denying the multiple benefits of having natural light in the home. 24 George III. “A Bill [With The Amendments] For Repealing the several Duties on Tea, and for granting to His Majesty other Duties in lieu thereof; and also several additional Duties on Houses, Windows, or Lights; and upon the Importation of Cocoa Nuts and Coffee; and for repealing the Inland Duties of Excise thereon.” *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century 1715-1800*.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick K. O’Brien, “Inseparable Connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688-1815.” *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume 2: The Eighteenth Century*. ed. P.J. Marshall. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 69

social and political/parliamentary power dynamics and, moreover, the revenues that imperial goods supplied to the state were crucial to its global expansion. It is an example of how the need to protect the interest of both private and public finances surrounding imperial goods was understood to be of legislative importance. Finally, this Bill is demonstrative of the crucial role that the Empire had in Hanoverian Britain. The act of raising duties on windows rather than tea proves how lucrative the fruits of empire were to the state and the language used in this Bill (as well as the others explored herein) shows how individuals in international trade came to influence the state's decisions, either through lobbying Parliament, or by entering the Houses themselves<sup>4</sup>.

This bill is an example of the developing state of empire, trade and consumption in eighteenth century Britain. It allows one to expand upon the concepts it introduces and look for broader trends in Hanoverian society. Britons used their parliamentary system to legalize and legitimize the extraction of goods and wealth from their colonies, which led to the construction of the Empire. There were three general zones upon which Empire was built. The first was London, from where wealth, goods and politics were controlled and coordinated, making the capital central to Britain's global expansion. The second zone was the Atlantic colonies, where Britons imported and imposed a way of life and built a society designed to work in tandem with their metropolis. The third was Asia (mainly India), where Britain participated in a political/economic system with other Europeans at the direction of the Mughal emperor, but it was a system the British would eventually come to dominate by the end of the century. The different skills and tactics required to navigate all these arenas in the eighteenth century were considerable, but by

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<sup>4</sup> John Brooke's study on Parliament, *The House of Commons, 1754-1790*. Vol 1. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1968, pp. 220-239, provides an overview of the composition of Parliament and an assessment of the role of East and West Indian and North American in the political world of Hanoverian London.

utilizing their legal system the British were able to establish themselves as a permanent global power.<sup>5</sup> The focus of this section will be on activities in London as they concern the Asian and Atlantic colonies. Understanding some of the state's policies will create a backdrop for understanding the imperial influences on domestic British society and identity.

When conceptualizing how to understand the process through which the British legislated and legitimized their Empire, several points must be kept in mind. First, as John Brewer points out in *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783*, the eighteenth century was a period of sustained growth in global responsibilities and continuous power struggles for the British. Britain was entering into the wider world and engaging in trade patterns that brought it not only into contact with new cultures, but also into direct conflict with other European nations. The result of this process was oftentimes war, either for commercial dominance or national pride. Throughout the century the British met and beat the other European imperial powers on land and seas around the world and, in the end, became the dominant world power. Brewer attributes these developments to the emergence of Britain's 'fiscal-military state,' which was characterized by the government's ability to raise funds (through effective taxation) to pay for global expansion, the development of a national debt, and the growth of a public service to administer the fiscal and military responsibilities of the state.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Anthony Pagden's discussion of the roots of the Empire in his chapter, "The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Image of the Empire in the Atlantic, c. 1700," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Origins of Empire*. Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 34-54. The term 'permanent' is used here in a historical context, as the Empire lasted through various period of history and still continues, in albeit a reduced capacity, today.

<sup>6</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998, pp. xiv-xvii

Another major point to consider when conceptualizing empire-related legislation is proposed by Linda Colley in her work *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, which has become renowned for its analysis of the British identity in the eighteenth century. As Colley proves, any analysis of this period would be incomplete without considering the impact that trade and foreign expansion had on the people of Britain. Colley contends that the growing trade culture was dependent upon the state for survival and vice versa; merchants needed the British state for protection and stability, while the state needed chartered companies and merchants for the revenues it could raise taxing the production and consumption of goods.<sup>7</sup> Culturally speaking, the “cult of trade” was politically and socially universal. While there may have been tension between the elite classes who were from older, titled stock and the *nouveaux-riches* that trade was creating, everyone understood that trade was crucial to the British economy, state, and national character, and that its success had to be placed above internal differences.<sup>8</sup>

A consideration of the structure of British society within its higher levels (that is to say those who held positions of power in trade and politics) is also crucial to develop an understanding of how and why the British state was willing and able to legislate for the Empire. Huw Bowen points out in his work, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire, 1688-1775*, that the eighteenth century can be characterized as an era where power and wealth were becoming concentrated in the hands of fewer people, and that overseas trade was a major factor in this shift. Bowen conceptualizes the

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<sup>7</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. London: Yale University Press, 2005, p.71. John Brewer and Roy Porter claim, in their introduction to *Consumption and the World of Goods*. John Brewer and Roy Porter (ed.) New York: Routledge, that governments can only exist and survive if they are able to supply their people with the necessities of life. Because consumer society is a way of life that depends on the continued stability and growth of consumption and the supply of goods, the British state recognized the wisdom in (un)official partnerships with the trading and merchant communities. pp. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p. 60. The eighteenth century British, much like the seventeenth century Dutch, saw themselves as a ‘trading’ people.

Hanoverian elites as being divisible into three groups: the political/propertied elites, the mercantile elites, and the financial elites (who supported both the growth of trade and state). Bowen recognizes the difficulty in dividing the elites into sub-communities as there was a great deal of overlap amongst them, which aided in concentrating power in the hands of the few. Shared economic, political, and familial interests all played a role in determining how elites wielded their power in London. Moreover, decisions about how to proceed in business were made by considering the “worldwide British system of obligations and commitments” of which the successful businessman had to be aware.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of this section is not to explore how legislation drafted in London influenced daily life in the trading factories of India, or the plantation fields of the Caribbean, but rather how it influenced the metropolis and why it took the forms it did. In London, the communities of political, financial and mercantile elites forged a nationalist mentality and contributed to the construction of the fiscal-military state. By studying the language and purpose of bills enacted in the eighteenth century one can clearly see a national agenda,<sup>10</sup> which was designed to strengthen Britain’s place as an imperial power for the benefit of the people living in the metropolis.

### **Legislation**

Reviewing the legislation drafted in relation to the colonies allows one to appreciate how Britons perceived of their imperial possessions. When considering legislation passed for the Americas and the West Indies, the trend was towards bills that protected the extraction of raw materials for Britain’s use. Contrast this with legislation

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<sup>9</sup> Huw Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire, 1688-1775*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1996, pp. 47-49

<sup>10</sup> This ‘agenda’ was not an official policy of the British state, as there was no state-directed imperial oversight until the foundation of the Colonial Office in 1812.

passed with regard to India and the east, where the concern was to protect British interests in the face of an imperial overlord on the subcontinent – the Mughal dynasty. These pieces of legislation speak more to issues of governance, management, and the insulation of the British from the local community than to the extraction of raw goods as one might have expected from a mercantile trading culture. The challenge in taking a regional approach like the one discussed above comes when efforts are made to compare the Asian and Atlantic colonial experiences; the Atlantic colonies had no single company or organization to control them, unlike the East India Company which represented British interests in the East.<sup>11</sup> Rather, the Atlantic settlements were undertaken with an individual, entrepreneurial spirit instead of a corporate one.<sup>12</sup>

Nineteenth century historian Sir John Seeley famously noted that the British Empire seems to have been created “in a fit of absence of mind.”<sup>13</sup> This is true to some degree – there was no official government body working towards organizing the Empire until 1812, rather it was the entrepreneurial nature of merchant companies and traders that expanded British influence worldwide. Between early forays into Ireland in the sixteenth century, which were encouraged by the Crown and the Church, and the foundation of the Colonial Office, expansion was undertaken mainly on the initiative of companies and individuals. But to completely deny premeditated intent from this

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<sup>11</sup> Not to say that the East India Company always spoke with a united voice behind closed doors. Huw Bowen discusses the internal dynamic of the Company in *Revenue and Reform: The India Problem in British Politics, 1757-1773*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 32

<sup>12</sup> The major exception to this rule is, of course, the Hudson Bay Company, but its influence was primarily over the extraction of goods and its own factors, and not the governance of the majority of European settlers in the colonies. Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *Foundations: Readings in Pre-Confederation Canada*, Volume 1. Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2004, p. 234. See W.J. Eccles *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983, specifically the chapters entitled “The Fur Trade Frontier, 1663-1700,” and “The Imperial Frontier, 1700-1750,” for an overview of the activities of the Hudson Bay Company. For a discussion of the composition of the early Empire, see Nicholas Canny’s “Introduction” to *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Origins of Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 1-33.

<sup>13</sup> John R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures*. London: Macmillan, 1904, p. 10

process, as Seeley's observation implies, is erroneous. There may not have been a 'master plan' behind expansion, but as Huw Bowen observed, the elites and companies who engaged in trade were certainly tied closely enough to the Members of Parliament and the interests of the Crown to make expansion quasi-official.<sup>14</sup> As such, the global repercussions of British mercantile actions necessarily informed the state's decisions.

To this end, the relationship between the state and the merchants who helped expand the Empire needs to be understood. As noted economic historian Jacob Price points out, an imperial economy has two parts – the legal/political body which legitimizes it and the markets that it creates.<sup>15</sup> But, in the case of eighteenth-century imperial politics, it can be difficult to ascertain where the interests of policy makers lay. The East India Company was one of the most lucrative chartered companies in the Empire's history and was a popular opportunity in which to invest. The purchase of stock usually guaranteed a return of six to twelve per cent, per annum, on the original investment – a rate that even the Members of Parliament could not ignore. Between 1764 and 1774, approximately twenty-three per cent of Members in the House of Commons and thirty-four per cent of Members in the House of Lords owned stock in the East India Company. As these numbers suggest, Members who owned stock were over-represented in the parliamentary decision-making process. For example, of the thirty-one members chosen to sit on the Select Committee in 1772 (established to study the exploitative personal business of Company factors in India), fifteen were Company stockholders, and of those who engaged in the debates of the House of Commons on the same issue, forty-nine per

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<sup>14</sup> One must remember that there is a difference between a state's official policy and a state's officials. In fact, many of those who were directly involved in trade with the Empire sat in the Houses of Parliament.

<sup>15</sup> Jacob M. Price, "The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776." *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume 2: The Eighteenth Century.* ed. P.J. Marshall. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 78

cent were stockholders.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, the Members of Parliament were often heavily invested in the business of empire.<sup>17</sup>

At a national level, the role of the East India Company was of crucial importance to the development of state. The Company (along with other chartered organizations such as the Bank of England) was drawn upon for short- and long-term loans by the Government. This meant that the chartered companies were influential in the fiscal capacity of the state; their continued and growing success translated into additional loans to the state, which meant that national and international policies could be pursued with the assurance of secured funding. The Company raised funds for this type of fiscal activity (that is to say loans to the government) by selling India Bonds which had a negotiable value in the markets, giving the Company a central role in the commerce of Britain by making their stocks a type of currency within the investing community.<sup>18</sup> The lucrative nature of investing in imperial ventures also guaranteed the Company's directors and members had access to personal fortunes which were also used to finance personal loans to the government. Doing so ensured that the Company, and its members, maintained favorable ties with the government, which was required for additional prosperity.<sup>19</sup>

The reality of the situation was that imperial growth was a mutually beneficial process to both the state and the members of the merchant communities. Merchants

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<sup>16</sup> Bowen, *Revenue and Reform*, pp. 31-32

<sup>17</sup> In the elections of 1774 twenty-six directors and 'nabobs' of the East India Company were elected into Parliament, in the election of 1780, thirty-one were returned, and in 1784, forty-five gained seats. Moreover, in the same elections, those involved in the management of the Atlantic colonies won fourteen seats (in 1774), thirteen seats (in 1780) and nine seats (in 1784). See Brooke, *The House of Commons*, p. 225 and 231. The potential to create power-blocks is self-evident. The parliamentary influence of the East India Company was of great importance in the mid- to late-eighteenth century.

<sup>18</sup> Lucy Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth Century Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952, pp. 22-23

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26

supplied the organization, coordination and capital required to engage in global expansion.<sup>20</sup> In tandem with this, the state recognized that the stability it could provide merchants by securing global trade through the Navy would only encourage more ventures into the wider world for trading purposes, resulting in the opportunity to tax more incoming and outgoing goods.<sup>21</sup> The impetus for imperial growth, however, were the British people themselves who had both access to additional income (thanks to the demographic changes as discussed below) and the desire for exotic goods, which were both factors in driving foreign trade.<sup>22</sup> While the general population wanted to see the state expand for consumer/producer and nationalist purposes, the merchant and ruling communities benefited from this mentality and the existence of one another in encouraging expansion.

The easiest way to ascertain what goods, policies, and sections of society were considered the most important to the British economy is to examine various pieces of legislation that were passed by Parliament in the eighteenth century as they related to imperial ventures. By examining these official documents, the picture of a protectionist and expansionist Britain emerges. As discussed above, the legislation that was passed for the Atlantic and Asian holdings were fundamentally different. There is, however, one type of legislation that was designed with the global English and, after 1707, British economic system in mind, and these were the Navigation Acts. The Navigation Acts had multiple incarnations beginning in the reign of Richard II when legislation was passed limiting the nationality of vessels that could enter England for trade purposes. A later

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<sup>20</sup> O'Brien, p. 60

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54

version, passed in 1660, was designed to protect English interests against the Dutch and became the basis for all subsequent acts.<sup>23</sup>

In May of 1786, Parliament issued a revision of the Navigation Act in which the preamble states that the “wealth and strength of [Britain], and the prosperity and safety of every part of the British Empire, greatly depend on the encouragement given to shipping and navigation.” As such, it lays out strict regulations regarding who could trade within the British Empire; the Bill clearly states that no foreign built ship (except those won in war or by privateers) are entitled to “any of the privileges or advantages” of a British ship in terms of trade.<sup>24</sup>

When the Bill is taken in its global context, several points become clear. First, it was understood that in the mercantile world system (in which the British saw themselves as operating) insulation from competing colonial-power suppliers was required to ensure that all profits created by the Empire remained within British control. By limiting who could trade within the colonies, the British were taking a protectionist stance in regards to their economy, while creating a freer system of trade within their own holdings. Second, the Bill’s continued references to the origin of ships demonstrates that Parliament was interested in protecting the shipbuilding industry of the home market – this speaks directly to issues of raw goods and the protection of a British-dominated industry, the carrying trade.

On the whole, the Navigation Acts are demonstrative of the role that global goods were coming to play within the British economy. By legislating to control and protect

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<sup>23</sup> Oliver M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1951, p. 7

<sup>24</sup> 26 George III. “A Bill [With The Amendments] For The further Increase and Encouragement of Shipping and Navigation.” *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century 1715-1800*.

who had access to the goods and the profits they could bring, Parliament was ensuring the continued growth of a world system dominated by mercantile economics for the benefit of Britons.

Specifically, legislation that was issued in regards to the Atlantic colonies is also telling of the global system in which the British were operating. As an example, one should consider the Bill passed in April of 1729, entitled *A Bill for the better Preservation of his Majesty's Woods in America, and for the Encouragement of the Importation of Naval Stores from thence...* This Bill states that no one in America or Canada could cut, fell or destroy white pine trees not growing within any township or within the boundaries of the colonies/plantations without a license from the King to do so. Moreover, the Bill indicated that a reward and premium price would be offered for the importation of naval stores (such as hemp, masts, yards, bowsprights, tar, cordage, gage, pitch, and turpentine) into Britain, but that these higher prices would not be applied to mast wood.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the Bill indicated that the Admiralty would get first choice on any imported naval stores, expressly to aid in the upkeep and development of the Royal Navy.<sup>26</sup>

Parliament understood that passing such a Bill would ensure the protection of the supply of shipbuilding materiel that was becoming increasingly important to the economy of New England and the existing shipbuilding industry in the metropolis. Furthermore, by issuing licenses, officials were able to regulate the production activities of raw goods

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<sup>25</sup> The distinction was made in order to protect the woods of the Americas; in addition to this, only licensed woods could be imported into Britain. To further belabour the issue, the Bill includes strict instructions on what size of tree can be felled.

<sup>26</sup> "A Bill For better Preservation of his Majesty's Woods in America, and for the Encouragement of the Importation of Naval Stores from thence, and to Encourage the Importation of Masts, Yards, and Bowsprights, from that part of Great-Britain called Scotland." *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century 1715-1800*.

and take profit from both the acts of production and sale. This Bill is indicative of not only the importance of colonial goods in the Empire, but also the importance of Empire itself. Clearly, Parliament felt it necessary to protect what it recognized as a source of power – the basis of its shipbuilding industry – in relation to its trade and naval capabilities.

In contrast to the legislation regarding the Atlantic colonies, one should consider the legislation passed in relation to the Asian colonies, specifically India. The tone of these bills is not necessarily one of ‘for the public good,’ but rather, it is quite evident that the East India Company had a heavy hand in influencing how Parliament legislated affairs in the East.<sup>27</sup> As an example, an examination of *A Bill for Establishing certain Regulation for the better Management of the Affairs of the East India Company, as well in India as in Europe*<sup>28</sup> reveals the agenda of both London politicians and the Company itself. This Bill, issued in June of 1773, states that the previous charters granted to the East India Company had not been encompassing enough “to prevent or restrain the practice of various frauds, abuses, and oppressions” within the management of India by the Company, “to the great scandal and dishonour of the British nation, and to the manifest injury of the public credit, and the commercial interests of the said company.” As such, this Bill lays out how the internal management of the Company was to be structured, and what powers the Company would have in India. From the parliamentary

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<sup>27</sup> The Company was able to exert such an influence because of the financial dependence the state owed to it. See Sutherland’s discussion on the role of the chartered companies in the London money markets in *The East India Company*, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> 13 George III. “A Bill [With the Amendments] For Establishing certain Regulations for the better Management of the Affairs of the East India Company, as well in India as in Europe.” *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century 1715-1800*.

perspective, this Bill was intended to make the East India Company accountable to the House of Commons for its conduct in India.

And yet, taken as a whole, this Bill is demonstrative of Huw Bowen's assertion that the East India Company was the author of India-related legislation, which the House of Commons merely approved; it reads as if the interests of the Company directors came first, and the interests of the British people second.<sup>29</sup> To begin with, the Bill indicates that the current system of term limits for Directors was detrimental to the Company. As such, it laid out a schedule for terms which was designed to extend the tenure of the members at the highest levels within the organization. Moreover, it insulated the Company's directorship from outside interests by indicating that election to a Director's position was possible only if the candidate had been residing in England for two years. Also, the stock holdings that made one eligible for voting rights had to be owned for a minimum of twelve months before suffrage could be exercised. While this did create an atmosphere of accountability and continuity, it could limit those with recent, first-hand experience in India from becoming prominent in the Company's directorship.

To increase the power of the Company in India, this Bill contains both political and economic clauses. First, it created a Governor General (located in Bengal) with the purview to oversee a council of four, which was to represent the Company's interests in India. This system of oversight was charged with the ordering, management and government of all territorial acquisitions and revenues in the kingdoms of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the presidencies of Madras, Bombay, and Bencoolen. Through the general management clauses, the East India Company was also empowered to declare hostilities or war on *native* princes or powers, and to negotiate treaties and peace with them as

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<sup>29</sup> H. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire*, pp. 47-49

well.<sup>30</sup> Not only was the Company empowered to deal as an official state representative with native powers, but this Bill also extended the protection of the Company over all British subjects living in Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, making it a representative of the sovereign to the British people residing in India.

This Bill also sought to protect the Company's economic interests by reinforcing its monopoly; it states that anyone not employed by the East India Company could not trade in goods on pain of forfeiture and, possibly, removal to England. The Bill goes further to indicate individuals formerly engaged by the Company (who had either quit or been dismissed) were not allowed to undertake trade in India; one would assume this clause was designed to prevent former agents from utilizing any contacts that they had developed while in the Company's employ for private gain, which could have been interpreted as taking profits away from the Company. Finally, the Bill protects the Company's financial interests by clearly stating that British subjects could not trade with any companies, societies or corporations of other European states. In a mercantile world system, this ensured that all profits generated in India by Britons would remain within the British Empire. Taken contextually, this Bill is evidence of London's concerns regarding the current and future economic outlook of India, but more importantly, of Britain. Its clauses were designed to ensure the smooth management of the Company's economics in both locales, for the greater good of British investors and the state.

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<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that the Bill only allows the Company to negotiate with domestic powers in India – Parliament was clearly aware of the dangers of allowing a private company to negotiate with other European states on matters of foreign policy, which may have had global repercussions, and ensured this was outside their parameters of operations. And yet, even this was soon considered a flaw in the power structure of the company. In the legislation of 1784, to be discussed below, the British state gave itself the oversight capacity to regulate all correspondence between the Company and Indian rulers, thus making the issues of war and peace on the subcontinent a prerogative of the Crown. Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*. New York: Longman Publishing, 1987, p. 124

The Bill passed in 1773 concerning Company business stands in stark contrast to one passed in 1783 entitled *A Bill for Vesting the Affairs of the East India Company in the Hands of certain Commissioners for the Benefit of the Proprietors, and the Public*. This Bill, issued just three years before the Hastings' impeachment trial began, is a serious attempt to limit the power that the Company had amassed through their dealings in India in favor of more state oversight of British activities on the subcontinent.<sup>31</sup> The Hastings' affairs brought to the public's attention the returning 'nabobs' from India, who were coming home flush with Eastern wealth. The fear was that with their wealth, these 'upstarts' (for many were not of elite backgrounds) would bring back with them the despotism of the East. This was of particular worry because they were entering British politics to greater degrees and the concern was that they would spread tyranny. Its preamble states that the Bill was issued as a result of "disorders of an alarming nature and magnitude, [which] do still continue and increase, in the management of the territorial possessions, the revenues, and the commerce, of this kingdom in the East Indies..." It further states that the prosperity of the natives of India had diminished, and the financial interest of the British had been damaged and would "probably fall into utter ruin."<sup>32</sup> This Bill is clear evidence that Parliament blamed the East India Company for what it perceived to be a decline in the potential and actual economic growth of the British in the

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<sup>31</sup> As Phil Lawson narrates in his work on the history of the East India Company, the relationship between the state and the Company had been a contentious one ever since the Company became a force of governance on the subcontinent, the result of what Lawson terms the 'Clive legacy.' The Company's role in the financial health of the nation was seen as of the upmost importance to the state, so when the trade and management of Company affairs in India began disintegrating as a result of military action and corruption, the state intervened in 1753, 1773 and 1784 by passing legislation in an effort to resolve and better regulate the Company's business. The legislation from 1784 became the basis of the Company's management until it was finally disbanded in 1858. *Ibid*, pp. 116-125.

<sup>32</sup> 24 George III. "A Bill For Vesting the Affairs of the East India Company in the Hands of certain Commissioners, for the Benefit of the Proprietors, and the Public." *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century 1715-1800*.

East. The government's need to protect the revenues that the eastern trade brought them in taxes, the investments of Britons, and the general economic well being of the British state, were in part at the root of this Bill.

The changes to Britain's economics and political society in the eighteenth century can be traced through the legislation that was passed to facilitate, legitimize and legalize the extraction of goods from the colonies.<sup>33</sup> Contextually, a study of legislation demonstrates the growing importance of the Empire's goods; in terms of both society's desire for exotic goods, and the dependence of the state on the revenues this desire brought them, the fruits of Empire were impacting the people and state in ways previously unseen. Second, it is clear that Parliament was willing to legislate on the matter of protecting the economic interests of the Empire; focused on an ever-growing economic power base, the Empire afforded Parliament opportunities to exert British influence on a global stage. And finally, the study of legislation reveals the growing importance of the Empire itself; the financial benefits that were created for the people, the elites, and the state made the Empire's continued existence undeniably important in this age.

### **Merchant directories**

The manner in which British goods were collected from throughout the Empire may have represented a diverse set of legal practices, but from their original ports of lading the majority of these goods found their way into Britain through the country's financial and economic capital, London. By the latter part of the eighteenth century,

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<sup>33</sup> Huw Bowen's *Revenue and Reform* explores the changes to the British requirements for governance and control in India and examines the state and Company's response(s) to these new requirements. Bowen traces the efforts of British politicians to work in tandem with the East India Company and her agents in India to secure British dominance and economic supremacy on the subcontinent.

consumption of imperial goods had become a major part of daily life for Britons, and not just for those who lived in port towns or who were wealthy. Though often over quoted, to the point of being trite, Napoleon's quip that Britain was a 'nation of shopkeepers' seems entirely true when one begins to explore the dynamics of retail and commerce in the eighteenth century. At the time when the consumer society was being 'born'<sup>34</sup> Britain was also experiencing unparalleled advances with their Empire.<sup>35</sup> The overlap of both phenomena contributed to the creation of a society that embraced the ability to purchase more goods thanks to a general increase in living conditions, while taking advantage of the availability of new types of consumer goods that were introduced through the Empire's commercial reach.

London was the center of this new society. As the hub of politics and trade, London drove Britain's economic growth throughout the eighteenth century. Roy Porter characterizes Hanoverian London as being the site of both "court and port," which gave it the cultural and financial pre-requisites for being at the center of the nation's growth.<sup>36</sup> Besides being the hub of government and trade, London had also become the financial and credit capital for Britain by the 1690, and the Empire in the eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Because of its central importance to the national and international trades, as well as its

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<sup>34</sup> This is the thesis proposed by Neil McKendrick, who wisely points out that while consumption had been increasing in Britain since the early modern period, it was in the eighteenth century when it became common practice. Neil McKendrick, "Introduction." *Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds). London: Europa Publications Limited, 1992, p. 3. Other scholars, such as many of the contributors to *Consumption and the World of Goods*, and Joan Thirsk, in *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1978, concur.

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Bayly's *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*. New York: Longman Group, 1989, provides a complex overview of the various regions under British influence at the end of the eighteenth century, with a specific focus on the Muslim world, while Linda Colley's *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850*. New York: Anchor Boos, 2002, explores the personal experiences of Britons who ventured into the wider world and shaped (and were shaped by) the British Empire.

<sup>36</sup> Roy Porter. *London: A Social History*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 132

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 134

position as the largest British urban center, a study of London lends itself to achieving an overview of how the Empire entered England and, once there, how the people within the home economy interacted with it.

The social and economic dynamics of British life were changing in the eighteenth century to allow for shifts in purchasing power. Economic and social historians Hoh-Cheung Mui and Lorna H. Mui's analysis of the social conditions of the later Hanoverian period demonstrate that the demand for consumer goods was increasing because of the changes in the general economy<sup>38</sup> (primarily agricultural improvements,<sup>39</sup> which created wage-dependent labourers and an increase in real incomes), while the general availability of goods that would at one time have been considered luxuries was increasing. At the same time, the number of individuals who could be considered the 'middling sort' and urban dwellers were also on the rise.<sup>40</sup> The resulting society was one that was increasingly dependent on each other as wages and necessities were no longer individual prerogatives.<sup>41</sup>

London acted as a powerful draw for the populations of the British archipelago, the Empire and Europe. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the city's population was 575,000 – one hundred years later that number was closer to one million.<sup>42</sup> To support this growing population, commerce and trade became even more important to the

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<sup>38</sup> Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole calculate that the total real output in England between 1700 and 1805 increased by 1.8 per cent. *British Economic Growth, 1688-1959: Trends and Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> Deane and Cole found that between 1700 and 1800, the gross output of corn in England and Wales increased from almost fifteen million quarters to over twenty-one million, an increase of forty-three per cent. *Ibid*, p.65.

<sup>40</sup> Hoh-Cheung Mui and Lorna H. Mui. *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989, pp. 12-13

<sup>41</sup> Jan de Vries' contribution to *Consumption and the World of Goods* provides a statistical summary of the changes to the consumption abilities of Britons during the eighteenth century. De Vries finds that the consequences of the consumer revolution as outlined by Mui and Mui was the result of "demand-led changes" to the increasingly industrial household, p. 121

<sup>42</sup> Porter, *London*, pp. 131-132

daily urban society and landscape. The merchants in London handled approximately three quarters of the colonial trade that passed through Britain, and though rapid growth of the commercial infrastructure began as early as the 1660s, it was legislation such as the Navigation Acts that helped secure them the financial and commodity influx that eighteenth century Britain experienced.<sup>43</sup> Thanks to its position at the center of this booming commercial world, the population of London had multiple avenues through which it could come into contact with the imperial economy. Beyond the initial need for man power to find and ship colonial goods once in Britain, imperial goods relied on a multitude of trades besides merchants to be dispersed to consumers. As urban historian Stephen Inwood points out, “warehousemen, wholesalers, retailers, refiners, producers, drovers, travelling salesmen, factors, middlemen and dealers...” all aided in the distribution of goods through such venues as “street markets, peddlars, hawkers, and retail shops.”<sup>44</sup> Conceivably, individuals who would have claimed no direct knowledge or contact with the colonies could have been involved in the distribution and/or consumption of imperial goods at every level of society.

If one were to characterize the consumption of durable imperial goods in the early half of the eighteenth century, it would be reasonable to note that it was mainly those who had some vested interest in the Empire who engaged in the act. Politicians, investors, and merchants who were knowledgeable of the goods available, how to go about obtaining them, and the value that they would have in a home, were those more likely to engage in imperial consumption. However, by the second half of the century,

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<sup>43</sup> Stephen Inwood, *A History of London*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998, pp. 317-8. Perry Guaci's *Emporium of the World* explores the interconnectedness of the individuals who engaged in long- and short-distanced trades, while using London (a “pressure-cooker”) as a hub. London: Continuum Books, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 324-5

the availability of goods, and the ability for a wider portion of British society to purchase them, becomes markedly evident.

Taking into account the influx of goods, and the desire and ability of more people to purchase them, a good source of information through which to observe increases in imperial consumption are the merchant directories of London. In general, the merchant directories would list the proprietor of a business, what type of trade they engaged in, and where they were located (see image 2-1). These lists were compiled alphabetically and would include not only the owners of businesses, but also, occasionally, the employees of larger corporations (such as the East India Company, the Bank of England, or assurance companies) and the aldermen of London.

These sources are not without their challenges. In general terms, these documents were massive undertakings that required large amounts of time and money to complete. The information that is included in the lists, while informative, must be taken at face value and not overly analyzed. Information was general gathered in one of two ways; the editors of the work would canvas the area in question and collect information themselves, or, they would solicit that those in trade who wished to be included in the publication submit the required information themselves.<sup>45</sup> In the first instance, inadvertently missing individual establishments was a possibility, or editors may have chosen to discriminate on class, area, and/or trade bias;<sup>46</sup> businesses not deemed big enough, important enough, or distinguished enough may have been excluded. In the second instance, solicitations for information may have been ignored or their existence unknown by those who should

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<sup>45</sup> Gareth Shaw and Allison Tipper. *British Directories: a Bibliography and Guide to Directories Published in England and Wales (1850-1950) and Scotland (1773-1950)*. London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1988, p. 7

<sup>46</sup> P.J. Atkins: *The Directories of London, 1677-1977*. London and New York: Mansell, 1990, p. 130

24 LONDON DIRECTORY.

Brownell, John, *tea merchant*, Strand.  
 Browning, John, *woolstapler*, Barnaby street.  
 Browning and Bell, *woolstaplers*, ditto.  
 Browning, Wm. *fellmonger*, Dock head.  
 Browning, Joseph, *hardwareman*, Minories.  
 Browning & Eykyn, *oilmen and blue makers*, Smithfield  
 bars.  
 Bruce, Richard, *insurance broker*, Greenlettice lane,  
 Cannon street.  
 Brucker, George, *sugar refiner*, 1, Little Distaff lane.  
 Bruniges, Martin, *sugar refiner*, Wentworth street,  
 Spitalfields.  
 Brant, John, *Blackwellhall factor*, Basinghall street.  
 Bryan, Pierce, *mercht.* Aulin friars.  
 Bryan, Guy, and Co. *scarlet dyers*, Vine court.  
 Brydges, Son, and Tatlock, *lacemen*, Bedford street,  
 Covent garden.  
 Buck, John, *biscuit baker*, Battle bridge.  
 Buckhoime, John, *mercht.* John's Coffee house.  
 Buckland, Wm. *cheesemonger*, Thames street.  
 Sackle and Maffa, *grocers*, Borough.  
 Buckley, John, and Son, *woolstaplers*, Barnaby street,  
 Southwark.  
 Buckley, James, *oilman*, Norton falgate.  
 Budgen, James, *currier*, Redcross street.  
 Buggin, Barrington, sen. *mercht.* Harpur street, Red  
 Lion square.  
 Bulkeley, Philip and Edward, *druggists*, Fleet street.  
 Bull, Frederick, Esq. Alderman, Leadenhall street.  
 Bull and Moody, *tea dealers*, ditto.  
 Bull, Edward, *Blackwellhall factor*, Blackwell hall.  
 Bullard and Forster, *lacemen*, Strand.  
 Bullcock, Robert, and Son, *haberdashers*, 28, Bishopf-  
 gate without.  
 Bullcock, James, John and James, *haberdashers*, 85,  
 Borough.  
 Bullen, John, *cooper*, Bush lane.  
 Buller, Richard, and Co. *merchts.* Bishopsgate.  
 Bullock, John and Henry, *leather sellers*, Queen square.  
 Bullock, Richard, *wine mercht.* Broad street.  
 Bullock, Giles, *mercht.* Great St. Thomas apostle's.  
 Bulner,

Image No. 2-1

From *Bailey's Northern directory, or, merchant's and tradesman's useful companion, for the year 1781*. Warrington: 1781.

Available through Eighteenth Century Collection On-line.

have received the requests, insuring that not everyone who owned a business would submit their information. Moreover, directories would often charge a fee for the inclusion of an individual or business's information, thereby deterring some who should have been included.<sup>47</sup>

It was not only the collection of information that presents difficulties, but also how that information was presented. It was not unheard of for publishers to plagiarize one another, meaning mistakes and omissions in one volume could be repeated in another. Furthermore, updated editions were not necessarily updated, merely printed with new dates.<sup>48</sup> The information that is listed was selected and organized at the editor's discretion. As editors chose how to classify businesses, and these classifications were usually very broad and subjective, the description of trades were generally brief and entries usually did not reflect the possibility that more than one trade was undertaken by any one establishment.<sup>49</sup> The introduction to Bailey's 1781 publication indicates that merchant directories were useful for merchants and traders to assist them in knowing where to apply for goods.<sup>50</sup> And yet, all the directories call on the public to inform them of changes and additions to their lists; this dichotomy (between the professional and public audience) makes assessing the actual purpose of these sources challenging. For

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<sup>47</sup> Shaw and Tipper, *British Directories*, p. 7

<sup>48</sup> Evelyn Cornell. "Focus on Trade Directories." *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*. Issue 7 (Spring, 2008), p. 53

<sup>49</sup> Atkins, *Directories of London*, pp. 123-4. In modern parlance, these documents are more like the white pages of a phonebook (not the yellow pages one might expect) as finding a business required an individual to know the name of the tradesman they wished to trade with, while finding an individual by their trade is much more difficult. This author suspects these documents were something of a vanity project – allowing retailers to see their name in print – rather than being a means to attract/facilitate business, as the pertinent information is difficult to access unless you know exactly who you are looking for.

<sup>50</sup> William Bailey's *Bailey's Northern directory, or, merchant's and tradesman's useful companion, for the year 1781*. Warrington: 1781.

our purposes, they will be approached as a source that could have been used by any contemporary to obtain information regarding access to imperial goods.

For all their challenges, demographer Harold Carter finds merchant directories to be of “inestimable value for the consideration of urban character.”<sup>51</sup> Though long-term comparisons may not be possible, and one has to understand that the information collected from the directories cannot possibly be the whole story, the image that individual directories present is extremely useful for obtaining an impression of the commercial life of Britain (and specifically London), which also tells the story of imperial consumption.

The editors of the directories were quick to laud their own works to the purchasing public. Within their introductions, they all play on the same theme that a merchant directory is an extremely useful tool to have. They also try to assure their readers that all efforts have been made to present true and accurate information.<sup>52</sup> It is only Mortimer’s directory that breaks from traditions and claims that all previous attempts at directories have been “extremely imperfect” and outlines how the editors of this particular publication aimed to remedy the problems their competition had faced.<sup>53</sup>

The major challenge facing historians in using merchant directories as a source is the sheer volume of information that must be culled in order to extract tallies and an over-

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<sup>51</sup> As quoted in Atkins, *Directories of London*, p. 132

<sup>52</sup> T. Lowndes (ed)’s *The London directory for the year 1776. Containing an alphabetical list of the names and places of abode of the merchants and principal traders of the cities of London and Westminster*. 9<sup>th</sup> edition. London: 1776, and Roger Wakefield’s *Wakefield’s merchant and tradesman’s general directory for London, Westminster, Borough of Southwark, and twenty-two miles circular from St. Paul’s, for the year 1790. Containing an accurate list of the names and places of abode of the merchants, manufacturers, and principle tradesmen...* London: 1789.

<sup>53</sup> The major complaint of the editor seems to be the laxity with which other editors categorized their entries and he outlines how he will be classifying the individuals he lists. Thomas Mortimer. *The universal director; or, the nobleman and gentleman’s true guide to the masters and professors of the liberal and polite arts and sciences; ... In three parts. ... To which is added, a distinct list of the booksellers, distinguishing the particular branches of their trade*. London: 1763.

view of imperial mercantile activities. Herein, various directories were consulted over a four-decade period, and from multiple editors, in order to view how the business of Empire was understood and presented to the public in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Thomas Mortimer's *The Universal Director* for 1763 contains approximately 2,800 entries; *The London Directory* for 1776 approximately 6,500; Bailey's *Northern Directory*, which provided information on London for 1781 contains approximately 3,500, while the same editor's *British Directory* for 1784 contains approximately 10,000;<sup>54</sup> and finally, Wakefield's *General Directory* for 1790 has approximately 19,900 entries. The volume of information is prodigious, but several trends emerge when considering the above-listed publications as a whole.

Firstly, the penchant of editors to list their entries under the generic title of "merchant" is problematic; in all publications, this category is undoubtedly the highest. In the *London Directory* for 1776, of the approximately 6,500 entries, 1,222 were listed as a generic "merchant." What these individuals did exactly is unknown; the salient detail of whether or not they contributed in any way to the importation/exportation and dissemination of imperial goods is lost, but in light of the high numbers in which they are found in all the directories consulted, what we know of the imperial economy and London's merchant/retail history, one would be safe in assuming that at least a portion of them were involved in the sales of colonial goods.

What is somewhat easier to track is the spread of specific colonial goods. Tea, for instance, emerges in several ways when consulting the directories' lists. The numbers of tea merchants and brokers rose proportionally with the number of entries in each

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<sup>54</sup> William Bailey. *Bailey's British directory; or, merchant's and trader's useful companion, for the year 1784, in four volumes. Comprising accurate lists of the bankers, merchants, manufacturers, ... in the metropolis, and different towns of Great Britain.* London: 1784.

directory, and consistently represent approximately 0.01% of all entries, but when considered within the larger context of London's commercial growth, the continual increase of individual merchants and brokers that dealt in tea were on the rise; in 1763, only twenty-four individuals (or companies) are listed as tea merchants/brokers, while by 1790, that number was 287.

And yet, tea merchants and brokers were not how the average Briton would have purchased their tea. Rather, the merchants and brokers would have acted as middlemen between the East India Company and the grocers who would have been the ones to distribute tea to the masses. Grocers are listed with common frequency in all the merchant directories and are occasionally listed as 'grocers and tea men,' indicating that teas were often sold alongside other items considered staples in the British diet and household. Tea was also sold in tandem with other goods. Occasionally, entries in the merchant directories show that tea could be purchased alongside spices or china – goods originating from the same geographical region which supplied the tea. The impression this gives is of a fluid economy in which the main supplier, the East India Company, recognized the ability to increase their profits by providing additional goods with the same exotic-value, or that would compliment the consumption of their main product, tea. This practice was hardly a novelty of this period, rather, it was a part of the logic of business that carried over from the previous century.<sup>55</sup>

The other way in which tea was frequently sold was alongside tobacco. If this was due to the similarity in the product's popularity or profitability, or simply due to its foreign nature, the motivations for this pairing was obviously employed by British shop-

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<sup>55</sup> Mui and Mui explore the methods with which tea dealers and retailers used to entice customers in their chapter "Forces of Competition" in *Shops and Shopkeeping*, pp. 249-287. See specifically the case of John Kendall of Bath, p. 262

keeps, as listings for ‘tobacco and tea men’ appear among the lists. A more frequent pairing for tobacco merchants, however, was to see them supplying both the raw product of tobacco and the finished product of snuff. Individual snuff merchants were rare, but the combination of the two is prevalent throughout all the directories. In terms of representation, tobacco dealers appear in the directories with only slightly less frequency than tea dealers and, like tea, it can be assumed that the supplying of tobacco to the people occurred in more ways than just the major brokers and dealers; it is reasonable to assume that the sale of tobacco (and tobacco products) occurred under the auspices of grocers and apothecaries. Taken as a whole, it appears that tobacco had as many retailers as tea did, indicating that the demand for this colonial product was as high as for tea (though one would assume that the actual consumption rate in terms of volume was lower).

Though china occasionally appeared alongside tea when classifying types of businesses, it also had a presence of its own in the merchant directories; chinamen, or china warehouses, appear as a category of organization in every merchant directory’s list. (See image 2-2.) One might assume that at these establishments Britons could purchase the items required to engage in the tea ceremony, as well as items to replace or compliment the more traditional service pieces,<sup>56</sup> or to obtain decorative pieces for their homes.<sup>57</sup> As in the case of tea, the numbers of purveyors of chinaware rose proportionally with the number of businesses listed, but it cannot be denied that the need and desire for china was high if, by 1790, Wakefield lists seventy-two individual china suppliers.

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<sup>56</sup> One china warehouse in *Bailey’s British Directory* for 1784 is also listed as an earthenware supplier.

<sup>57</sup> As is present in the inventory of Sunderland House. See chapter 2, below.

Wellings and Jacob, Chemists and Druggists.

*Poultry.*

Willis, Thomas. *Hermitage, Wapping.* Preparer of the Solid Phosphorus, and of the Vitriolic and Nitrous Æther.

Winch, Robert. *Haymarket.*

Wright, Richard, and Co. *Fenchurch-street.*

#### CHINA-MANUFACTURERS.

THE different Manufactories of English China, which have been brought to any tolerable degree of perfection, are here subjoined, with the names of the Proprietors or Managers, and the Places of Sale in London.

Crowther, John, Proprietor of the Bow China Manufactory. *At Bow in Essex; and in Cornhill.*

Sprimont, Nicholas, Proprietor of the Chelsea China Manufactory. *Laurence-street, Chelsea; and at the Warehouse in Piccadilly.*

Spurling, John, Proprietor of the Worcester China Manufactory. *London-house, Aldersgate-street.*

#### CHIRURGICAL-INSTRUMENT-MAKERS.

THESE are a distinct branch from the common Cutlers; and where it is not mentioned in the following List, that any of the Makers confine themselves to particular Instruments, as Trusses, &c. it is to be concluded they make all Chirurgical Instruments in general.

Best,

Image No. 2-2

From Thomas Mortimer's *The universal director; or, the nobleman and gentleman's true guide to the masters and professors of the liberal and polite arts and sciences; ... In three parts. ... To which is added, a distinct list of the booksellers, distinguishing the particular branches of their trade.* London: 1763. Available through Eighteenth Century Collection On-line.

Though tea was widely distributed and consumed, it was not seen as palatable to the British without the addition of sugar. As Price has demonstrated, sugar was the widest consumed colonial grocery, so it stands to reason that it would appear in the merchant directories.<sup>58</sup> When sugar is represented in these lists is in the refining processes; economically speaking, the shipping of refined sugar from the West Indies was not practical – the extra expense involved in removing moisture from molasses could be wasted during the damp Atlantic crossing. Rather, the south shores (for the most part) of the Thames were crowded with sugar refiners and coopers.<sup>59</sup> Once the moisture had been removed from the molasses, the overt presence of sugar practically disappears from the directories; though the occasional sugar broker is listed, there is no listing for a sugar retailer. Like tea, sugar must have been distributed from the refiners/producers and wholesalers into the common market through grocers; the fact that sugar was not sold exclusively by shopkeepers (as tea was) proves that its very nature had become so important and ubiquitous to Britons that it was no longer perceived as exotic – it had moved from a luxury to a necessity long before the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jacob M. Price, “The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776.” *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pg. 80

<sup>59</sup> An assessment of the geography of businesses is useful in understanding urban composition, as Gareth Shaw demonstrated in *British Directories as Sources in Historical Geography*, but such a study would require its own dissertation to properly cover. One word on geography, however: it is a common trend to see the generic entries of “merchants” listed in the directories not at private addresses, but rather in coffee houses, which speaks to the public nature of commerce. See image No. 2-1 for an example of this.

<sup>60</sup> Sydney Mintz’s study of the importance of sugar places it within the larger contemporary society and finds that the success of caffeinated beverages, such as tea, coffee, and chocolate, led to sugar’s ubiquitous nature in British homes. Sugar took a place of prominence in society because it was widely consumed and it maintained its links to its older meanings of wealth and luxury; as such, sugar was used as a “mark of rank - to validate one’s social position, to elevate others, or to define them as inferior.” With such a rich cultural legacy, both sub- and conscious, it is no wonder that sugar was such an important piece of Hanoverian society. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Viking Press, 1985, pp. 108-139

In many ways, an imperial presence can be found in the merchant directory lists of the latter half of the eighteenth century; though the obvious consumer goods such as tea, sugar, and tobacco speak the loudest, there are many other, smaller industries that are demonstrative of the lure that the goods of Empire had on the purchasing power of Britons. In terms of the industries that dealt with raw goods, timber merchants are frequently represented on the lists; with the passing of the Navigation Acts, it would be safe to assume that the wood passing through London on the order of the timber merchants came, for the most part, from the North American holdings. Similarly, the silk industry (from 'throwers,' to 'dyers', to the non-descriptive 'silk merchant') has a strong presence in the lists. This product would have originally been obtained from the far-east, but the demand was high enough that a thriving domestic industry emerged in the Spitalfields region of London by this time. The demand for this good was so high, that it appears with as much frequency as timber within the directories.

The merchant directories of London present challenges in their use and yet a wealth of information that cannot be ignored. While using the directories may never present modern historians with a complete over-view of the commercial importance of the Empire, they do provide enough information from which the following conclusion can be drawn: there is no denying that Britain in the eighteenth century was a 'nation of shopkeepers,' the fact that the commercial nation was emerging at the same time as the imperial nation allowed for the sale of foreign goods to the majority of the population. The desire and ability of the people to shop, coupled with the availability of new consumables, allowed for the British Empire to enter into the homes and general consciousness of the people, tying all Britons together. The merchant directories for

London are one source that reveals how much commerce was being undertaken during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and how much of that commerce was reliant on colonial and imperial expansion.

It is impossible to establish how the British Empire entered into the daily lives of Britons without first examining how it entered the public, commercial sphere. An effective way to understand the public relationship with the Empire is to examine the legislation passed in relation to the colonies that were designed to facilitate trade and commerce and, once goods had been extracted from these distant locals, how they were made available for Britons to buy. Parliament's legislation related to imperial goods is indicative of how crucial they had become to the state. The most obvious example is tea and yet there were a host of goods that Parliament sought to protect and exploit. Doing so guaranteed a continued level of taxation that helped the fiscal nature of the state to develop while also helping to grow the consumer society that emerged in this era. While the Empire was the result of individual efforts in this age, the state still saw its responsibility as the protection of its citizens at home and abroad. By legislating on matters to protect British trade, they ensured the prosperity and growth of the home economy in response to an expanding global market.

Once the goods of Empire were obtained by global merchants they were then shipped home, mainly to London, for sale and distribution. Assessing the commercial trade of the metropolis' capital provides an over-view of how thoroughly Hanoverian society was becoming commercialized and depended on the fruits of Empire. The existence of merchant directories, and the sheer volume of information that they contain, is demonstrative of how crucial trade was in the eighteenth century. That imperial goods

appear with such frequency in these lists is also demonstrative of the central role of global goods in British culture at this time.

It is evident that eighteenth century Britain was open to the goods it was discovering over-seas. From the fifteenth century, but increasingly into the eighteenth century, Parliament proved itself capable of legislating on commercial affairs that occurred in regions far removed from the metropolis, while the merchants of London proved themselves capable of receiving and distributing the fruits of Britain's imperial ventures. With the main dimension of the legal and commercial grounding of the Empire's consumption established, we can now turn to assessing how people experienced the Empire in their homes.

## Chapter 2: The Domestication of the Imperial Demesne

Interpreting how a person understands him or her self is a difficult task made even more difficult by a separation of centuries and cultural mindsets. Though the human condition has changed with time, there is still no better way to glimpse how people lived than to understand how they behaved in the privacy of their homes. One way to ascertain how the Empire influenced the development of the British identity in the eighteenth century is by trying to understand how Britons were intimately acquainted with the imperial goods found in their homes. While laws and public displays of the nation's imperial identity may have played on the peripheries of Britons' understandings of themselves, how they chose to stock their shelves and live within their homes is clearly indicative of how comfortable they were becoming with their imperial existence. To this end, examining the consumption patterns of imperial groceries, the *accoutrement* required to consume them (often in ritualized ways), and the furniture that graced the homes of those who left written accounts of their daily lives provides an opportunity to better understand how the people of imperial Britain saw their place in the wider world.

By examining surviving documents such as household receipts and probate records, one can gain a sense of how Britons organized their private spaces and what they chose to incorporate into their lives. The fact that colonial goods appear in the surviving records, and with such regularity, demonstrates that the Empire was moving into the homes of Britons with increasing frequency as the century progressed. The environment that was created by the existence of foreign goods in the homes of Britons is the focus of the current chapter; the manner in which people surrounded themselves with goods and

consumables is telling of how they saw themselves within the context of national developments, such as the expansion of Empire and the emerging sense of a shared cultural identity.<sup>1</sup>

### **Household Receipts**

A common form of surviving documents from the eighteenth century are receipts; issued on the purchase of goods, for the acknowledgement of services rendered, or as bills of lading, these sources give historians insight into what people bought, their costs, and, sometimes, the composition of a household. Ranging from scraps of paper to full sheets with engraved letter-head, these surviving documents chart the daily, intimate lives of those who kept them and are invaluable to scholars trying to reconstruct the experiences that people had with the goods of Empire. To draw on the concept introduced by historian Tim Breen, buying common goods from various ports of origins helped to create a sense of interconnectedness amongst diverse localities. While Breen's work focuses on the cross-Atlantic British culture of the late eighteenth century, the paradigm he proposes is applicable to the home economy and society as well.<sup>2</sup>

There are challenges in using these documents to draw large-scale conclusions on the society that created them, as there are for many sources, yet they can still prove useful if historians use them with care. A major problem is that surviving receipts cannot possibly provide the full story of a household's consumption history; because of the ephemeral nature of these documents the chance of losing, destroying, or re-using them must have been high. Diligent account keepers may have kept a majority of these

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Langford's work on the Hanoverian era, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783*, traces the shared sense of identity, specifically in relation to their commercial enterprises, which had become a form of global and domestic identification for Britons.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Breen. "Baubles of Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century." *Past and Present*. No. 119 (May, 1988), p. 76.

receipts, but there is simply no way of knowing to what degree the surviving documents reflect the whole story. Comparisons against family ledger books may be undertaken, but the accuracy and completeness of such a study will always present challenges for historians. For instance, Lord Egmont regularly paid his wife £12 per week (sometimes a few pence more) “for the house,” but how she then chose to spend those funds is absent from the household records.<sup>3</sup>

Other issues present themselves when using receipts. First, the amount of information can vary considerably, as they can detail the items purchased and their purpose (such as the expense “for poppys and other ingredients for the surfett water”<sup>4</sup> incurred on behalf of Queen Anne’s household), or they may contain no contextual information at all (such as the line item for “chocolat,”<sup>5</sup> which was purchased by country physician Charles Driver). Issues concerning detail also emerge in terms of consistency – there was no set way in which suppliers recorded the goods sold; some chose to record weights and costs, some just weights or just costs, and some nothing more than the item purchased. Moreover, as will be familiar to modern shoppers, households would often rely on multiple suppliers and purveyors; the remaining receipts likely only reveal a portion of a household’s expenditures on any given item. Thirdly, the issuing of receipts could vary anywhere from following individual purchases to a request for payment after a half-year, or year-long, period of time. Difficulty in ascertaining whether a receipt reflects a one-time, on-going, or totality of purchases makes it challenging to draw conclusions about the complete consumption of a household. However (and of central

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<sup>3</sup> British Library [hereafter, B.L.] Additional MSS [hereafter, Add MSS.] 47047, f. i+ 1-64.

<sup>4</sup> B.L. Add MSS. 61420, ff. 8-52b

<sup>5</sup> B.L. Add MSS. 42675, ff. 129-226

contention for this thesis) it is still possible to assess what kinds of goods were being purchased.

Finally, as with so many surviving documents, these records tend to over-represent the elites and upper-middling sorts within British society. That is to say, households where the head of the house (or an employed factor) had the time and education required to keep a log-book of expenses, are not only more likely to have survived, but to have existed in the first instance.<sup>6</sup> Though these sources speak directly to the upper classes of Hanoverian society, it is important to note that it is only one method in assessing the ways in which the Empire influenced the lives of Britons. As will be explored in the next chapter, there are a wealth of other sources that allow historians to examine the impact of British imperialism on all levels of society.

Though these sources may present difficulties in their use, their ability to shed light on the people who issued and received them cannot be denied. At their simplest level, these documents describe the existence of purchases; they may not be an effective tool for wide-spread and detailed conclusions, but receipts do reflect the activities of individual households which, taken in context with the surrounding society, can support the thesis that the Empire was encroaching on the daily lives of Britons and changing the quotidian nature of their existence.

To this end, household receipts that survived are excellent sources from which historians can draw an understanding of how individuals embraced the Empire in the most basic, yet intimate of ways; that is to say, how they literally consumed the Empire through foodstuffs. Anthropologists have long used food as a means to better understand

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<sup>6</sup> Amanda Vickery's *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*. London: Yale University Press, 1998, reflects the potential benefits of these sources for social historians.

the societies they study; early scholars in the field understood “[t]hat [food] cemented loyalties, reminded people who they were in relations to others, fortified them for their tasks, and linked them to their gods...”<sup>7</sup> Foodstuffs are one of the best ways through which to observe and understand a society as they are at once pervasive in their necessity and yet easily imbued with deeper meaning by human society.<sup>8</sup>

This theory can be easily applied to the British imperial economy; as Jacob Price points out, the ‘imperial economy’ was comprised of two major components: the statesmen and the merchants. While the state introduced (some) regulations, the open market(s) dictated what goods were to be produced and consumed.<sup>9</sup> In terms of colonial groceries, this supports Sidney Mintz’s theory on the consumption of colonial foods; Mintz contends that colonial production gives power to two distinct groups - the first are the producers who own the means of labour and production and the final product for sale, and the second is comprised of the consumers who have invested a social meaning in the products in question which, in turn, drives production.<sup>10</sup> Eighteenth century Britain was in the midst of an era in which production and importation were on the rise ensuring that by the end of the century imperial goods had trickled down into most common households and were no longer perceived as luxuries, but necessities.<sup>11</sup> Taken together, Price and Mintz’s theories illustrate the fact that Hanoverian Britain was able and willing to accept colonial goods; whether or not they would have been conscious of the fact, or willing to acknowledge it, Britons of all levels of society were implicit in the imperial

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<sup>7</sup> Sidney Mintz. *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture and the Past*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6-8

<sup>9</sup> Jacob M. Price. “The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776.” *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 78.

<sup>10</sup> S. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, p. 12

<sup>11</sup> Troy Bickham. “Eating the Empire: Intersections of Food, Cookery and Imperialism in Eighteenth Century Britain.” *Past and Present*. No. 198, (Feb. 2008), pp. 71-109, p. 71.

process – some were involved as decision makers whose action had global implications, and some merely consumed the Empire’s products.

The understanding of, and desire for the goods of the imperial economy are borne out by the demand, which is evident in consumption statistics. During the eighteenth century, the British population increased slowly by one third between 1700 and 1776.<sup>12</sup> The importation of goods from the Americas, Asia and Africa, however, increased by almost 370%.<sup>13</sup> Many of these goods were, in turn, re-exported to Europe and Britain’s colonies, though one may assume that the quantities originally imported into Britain were sufficient to meet the internal market’s demand. The scale of the consumption of imperial goods cannot be denied. Beyond the startling increase in imports into Britain, foreign goods inspired the home markets to respond with imitations, thus growing the home production base, making consumer goods (of all kind, but most importantly those inspired by eastern styles) available to all levels of consumers.<sup>14</sup> What remains to be seen is how the consumer interacted with these goods.

According to Mintz, “[f]or many people, eating particular foods serves... [as a way]... of making some kind of declaration. Consumption, then, is at the same time a form of self-identification and of communication.”<sup>15</sup> What made colonial goods so appealing was their original association with luxury. Over time, however, these goods began appearing in more homes as the importation rates increased and their prices

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<sup>12</sup> E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield place the population of England in 1700/01 at 5,058,000 people and at 6,448,000 by 1770/01, as cited in Price’s “The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776,” p. 100

<sup>13</sup> J. Price, “The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776,” pp. 98-100

<sup>14</sup> Maxine Berg. “Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution.” *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds). Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2003, pp. 239-40

<sup>15</sup> S. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, pg. 13

dropped.<sup>16</sup> While the luxury appeal may no longer have applied in some cases as the century progressed, there were enough varieties (and qualities) of teas, sugars, tobaccos and other colonial goods to ensure that all strata of society could engage in colonial consumption.<sup>17</sup> To this end, historian Troy Bickham asserts that the "... preparation and consumption [of colonial goods] reflected and contributed to British discussions and perceptions of Empire."<sup>18</sup> This observation supports Mintz's theory: people were openly engaging in imperial consumption in order to feel like, and to identify themselves with, part of the larger national collective, which was becoming increasingly dependent on international trade for its economic growth, success, and identity. Colonial groceries became pervasive upon entering Britain and were a way in which all Britons could interact with the Empire. In this manner, the Empire entered into the homes of Britons and into the national dialogue.<sup>19</sup>

This sense of collectiveness contributed directly to the creation of British identity.<sup>20</sup> As there was no deep-rooted history of these goods in Britain, their appropriation made it possible for the population at large to enjoy and, in some cases, ritualize the consumption of foreign goods, which created common and shared experiences.<sup>21</sup> What is more, as the national consumer society was developing and

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<sup>16</sup> M. Berg, "Asian Luxuries," p. 229

<sup>17</sup> T. Bickham, "Eating the Empire," pp. 76 and 80

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71

<sup>19</sup> Philip Lawson discusses the specific case of tea in "Tea, Vice, and the English State, 1660-1784." *A Taste for Empire and Glory: Studies in British Overseas Expansion, 1660-1800*. David Cannadine, Linda Colley, and Ken Munro (eds). Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, Great Britain: Variorum, 1997. p. 2, while Sidney Mintz discusses the general case of food as a consumable good and its impact on identity in "The Changing Roles of Food in the Study of Consumption" in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, pp. 261-273

<sup>20</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 69

<sup>21</sup> The works of Harriet Guest and Beth Fowkes Tobin explain this process of 'de-' and 're-contextualization.' In her work on the practice and European interpretation of tattooing as found in Pacific island cultures, which can be applied to all foreign imports, Guest presents the notion of de-contextualization as the understanding of foreign practices which "thrives on the isolation of [the exotic]

because these goods could not be produced at home, Britons became intimately tied to and dependent upon foreign production and procurement to obtain desired goods. Finally, some imperial goods were readily transportable to, and within Britain, linking diverse regions through new consumables.<sup>22</sup> For example, the presence of tea in a farmer's kitchen in Kent was an undeniable, important, and common link to a Hong merchant who helped the East India Company obtain it, a plantation slave in the West Indies who produced the sugar that made the drink palatable, and his neighbors, peers, and betters throughout the country who were also drinking it.<sup>23</sup> These links were reinforced by the perception that the tea had passed through countless hands that made up the production, transportation, and sales system to reach him, and that he shared the enjoyment and drinking experience with thousands of other Britons. It was not only tea that had such a complex existence, but other products and goods that could be found throughout his home. With such widespread continuity of experiences, is it any wonder that imperial connections contributed to a shared sense of self amongst Britons?

The use of household receipts can show how prevalent and important these colonial goods were to the people. Preserved in batches or in the obscurity of

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object, on the colonizing displacement or dislocation of [the] object from any signs of the personal estate or cultural context that might produce legible or potent significance." Tobin follows this process through to its logical conclusion which is the act of re-contextualization which she describes as first "[t]he dynamics of strangeness within the frame of familiarity construct the category of the exotic, and yet, the exotic is always in danger of losing its alien quality as the exotic item becomes domesticated... acclimatized or culturally re-contextualized." Taking both processes into consideration helps explain how practices, goods and ideas translated from their original cultures into the British collective. See Harriet Guest, "Curiously Marked: Tattooing, Masculinity, and Nationality in Eighteenth-Century British Perceptions of the South Pacific." *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art, 1700-1850*. John Barrel (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 105, and Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, p. 186

<sup>22</sup> T. Bickham, "Eating the Empire," pp. 80-81

<sup>23</sup> Paul Gauci's work, *Emporium of the World*, paints England, but specifically London, as Britain's central hub of a global economic system. Into London flowed a seemingly never-ending stream of consumer goods from all corners of the globe that were then distributed amongst the merchants and internal markets of England.

uniqueness, household receipts all tell a similar story; not only were consumers of all social strata buying colonial goods, but they were buying them in significant quantities. Such tendencies can be seen in the buying practices of Charles Driver (1717-1744), a physician from Holborn, John Spencer, the First Earl of Spencer (1734-1783), and John Percival, the Third Earl of Egmont (1683-1748).

The household account of Driver can be found in the British Library's Brockman Papers collection, though his connection to the family is hard to establish<sup>24</sup>. Beyond the essential facts that Driver was a physician from Holborn, and married to Mary Driver, formerly of Minchinhampton, in Gloucestershire, information on him cannot be ascertained with any certainty,<sup>25</sup> though some general observations about his station in society can be made.

The social world in which Driver lived and worked was one where the successes of Britain's economy created disposable income for the elites and middling sort, if not for the lower orders as well; this led to the creation of a service economy, and to the firm establishment of "the helping professions."<sup>26</sup> The general assumption regarding physicians of the time was that they practiced in self-interest at the expense of their patients, whom they encountered at vulnerable times in their life-cycles. When possible, people doctored themselves, but they were relying on the skilled professionals with increasing regularity. For all the skepticism and cynicism that physicians encountered, it cannot be denied that their status in society (and wealth) was on the rise because people

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<sup>24</sup> B.L. Add MSS. 42675, ff. 129-226.

<sup>25</sup> Personal correspondence, Brockman Genealogical Society.

<sup>26</sup> Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter. *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth Century England*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989, p. 9. Penelope Corfield examines the increasing professionalization and demand for physicians in the eighteenth century (which she characterizes as the 'age of the doctor') in her work, *Power and the Professions in Britain, 1700-1850*. New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 137-173

were turning to them with more frequency; physicians were after all, and as Dorothy and Roy Porter suggest, created by the demand of patients.<sup>27</sup>

Charles Driver then, remains something of an enigma in the historical record. What is possible to glimpse of Driver are his consumption patterns. Filed alongside extensive receipts and accounts for the upkeep and repair of the home he lived in, the labourers he employed, and the apothecary from whom he obtained his supplies, Driver, and later his widow, also kept a detailed account of the purchases of imperial goods, interspersed with the rest of their groceries. Though generally listed by cost, and not weight, the details which are recorded in the receipts, and the frequency with which certain items were purchased, is striking.

Between November 1727 and May 1743, the Drivers purchased no less than eight different varieties of tea; green, hyson, congow, bloome, bohea, belveore rai, serinna, and havthorn appear amongst the itemized lists on their receipts, which generally reflect quantity as well as variety. Different suppliers had different ways of recording the amounts sold, but when weight is mentioned, the quantity is usually listed as a pound per purchase, with multiple varieties of tea being purchased on each receipt. For the most part, the receipts issued cover either a period of several months (indicating that the Drivers had credit with their suppliers), or a one time purchase. Receipts that were issued after a single purchase are usually scant in information, noting weights, and/or costs, while documentation for purchases over longer periods of time often records both weights and costs. When weights are listed, the average purchase of tea (often from a single supplier, Daniel Damsell), totals two pounds per month, over a period of four and a half months.

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<sup>27</sup> Porter and Porter, *Patient's Progress*, pp. 53-57

In these documents, it is not the large quantities of tea being purchased that stand out, but rather when tea is being purchased by the ounce. Between November 1742 and February 1743, the Widow Driver purchased two ounces each of Hyson (£0.2.3) and fine green tea (£0.1.6). On the same bill, she purchased a quarter of a pound each of Hyson (£0.4.6) and green tea (£0.3.0). One might assume that the purchase of the larger quantities of tea was for personal use, and likely of a lower quality, while the smaller amounts were ‘finer’ and so more expensive. This information supports Troy Bickham’s theory that expensive or relatively exotic versions of common foodstuffs could be used sparingly to impress guests.<sup>28</sup> This could very well have been Mary Driver’s intention: though she bought fine tea, it was in such a small quantity that it was likely used rarely, while the larger purchases of a lesser quality were more than likely destined for frequent personal use. It is this type of detail that is lost when using receipts, but it is revealing in itself to know that Mary Driver was aware of the different varieties, qualities, and costs of tea, and chose to purchase and consume various types in her home.

Though teas do make up the majority of individual items bought by the Driver household, the presence of other colonial foodstuffs is observable. Bought in smaller quantities, and less frequently, coffee, chocolate, and tobacco were also consumed by the Drivers. And yet, the single most consumed colonial grocery in the Driver household was sugar. Purchased occasionally from grocers alongside teas, coffee, and chocolate, the Drivers also had a regular supplier who, between March 28, 1737 and March 26, 1738 made twenty-seven deliveries of sugar to the household, usually in one pound quantities, once every two weeks. Over the year the Driver household consumed thirty-two and a quarter pounds of sugar. This supports Jacob Price’s analysis that sugar had become the

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<sup>28</sup> T. Bickham, “Eating the Empire,” p. 80

most consumed colonial good by the mid-eighteenth century. Price estimates that between 1700 and 1709 the average Briton consumed four pounds, per person, per year, while by 1770-1799, that number had reached eleven pounds.<sup>29</sup>

The massive quantity of sugar entering the Driver household on such a regular basis speaks to the consumption patterns of other foodstuffs; sugar is not a good that is eaten individually, but rather in conjunction with other consumable goods. The large quantity of teas, and the presence of coffee and chocolate, might explain how a majority of the sugar purchased by the Driver family was used.<sup>30</sup> As to the size of the Driver household, one might be able to make an educated guess based on Price's numbers and the quantity of sugar consumed. Being almost at the center of Price's period of analysis, one could calculate that the average consumption rate of sugar was seven pounds, per person, per year, at the time the Drivers were receiving these receipts. As such, there were likely four people living in the home (whether family or staff is unknown) if one assumes that the Drivers were an average household in the purchasing and consumption patterns. When one uses this information, it can be deduced that the consumption of tea (which averaged approximately one pound every three months, or four pounds a year, during a similar period) in the Drivers household was approximately a pound of tea, per year, per person. This quantity is more astonishing when one considers that the practice at the time was not to dispose of tea leaves after a single brewing, but rather to reuse them throughout the day – with this knowledge, the use of so much sugar in the

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<sup>29</sup> These numbers are based on the work of Ralph Davis in "English Foreign Trade, 1700-1774." *The Economic History Review*, Second Series, VII (1954), pp. 300-01, as cited in Price, "The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776," p. 80

<sup>30</sup> Though it cannot be denied that the British sweet tooth was well developed by this period; contemporary cookbooks overflow with recipes for sweets and puddings.

household is understandable, and an appreciation for how much tea was actually consumed by the ‘average’ British household becomes shocking.<sup>31</sup>

And what of a household that can in no way be considered ‘average’? To explore the elite aspect of British society, one needs only to consider the household receipts of John Spencer, the first Earl of Spencer. (See image 3-1.) Spencer came into his inheritance at the age of eleven with the death of his father; the estate he received was richly endowed by the family, as well as by Sarah Churchill, who left Spencer the manor and park of Wimbledon on the condition that he not accept political office or draw a salary from the Crown. Though blocked from this traditional (and expected) gentlemanly pursuit, Spencer was still active in Whig politics of the age, and used his estates and homes as centers of entertainment.<sup>32</sup> In London, the family built and inhabited Spencer House, which overlooked Green Park; entertainment was a frequent activity undertaken by the Spencers and was designed to “consolidate the political prestige and influence of the family... [and] to combine informal politics with formal social life.”<sup>33</sup> These entertainments are evident in the purchases of the consumables made by Spencer between April 1772 and June 1773.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Consumption within the home should also be considered in relation to the amount of tea that was imported into Britain during this period. Before the eighteenth century, only a few hundred pounds of tea entered England; in 1717, 200,000 pounds were imported; in 1757, the total reached three million pounds; and by 1777, twelve million pounds were imported, while seventeen million pounds sat in warehouses. Philip Lawson, “Tea, Vice and the English State, 1660-1784,” p. 3. The growing rates at which tea entered the country (and the amount that was kept in storage) are indicative of not only the East India Company’s ability to supply the good, but also of the demand for tea within the home economy.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Milward. “John Spencer, First Earl of Spencer (1734-1783).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004.  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/view/article/38713>, accessed June 16, 2009].

<sup>33</sup> Amanda Foreman. *The Duchess*. London: Harper Perennial, 1998, p. 6

<sup>34</sup> B.L. Add 75762 and Add 75763



Image No. 3-1  
Artist unknown, *John Spencer, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Spencer, c. 1765*  
The National Portrait Gallery, London

The records kept for consumables purchased on behalf of the Spencer household are remarkably complete and usually include weight, prices and descriptions. The major supplier of colonial goods to the Spencer house was Mary Mottier, who appears to have been a grocer. In a six month period, ranging from July 1 to December 24, 1772, Mottier's records show that the Spencer household purchased eleven pounds of green tea, fifty-seven pounds of coffee, ten pounds of 'superfine' tea (and one and a half

pounds of 'fine' tea), fifteen pounds of chocolate, and thirty and a half pounds of fine sugar. The quantities are not only remarkable, but the frequency in which these goods were purchased is also of note; in July alone, twenty-eight of the fifty-seven pounds of coffee were delivered, in two pound installments, approximately twice a week; and in terms of teas, fifteen pounds of the total twenty-two and a half pounds were delivered within the same period and with the same regularity.<sup>35</sup>

While tea commonly appears in the household receipts, the Spencers appear to have consumed far more coffee than tea. The key to understanding this lies in understanding the role that John Spencer played in British society; while not permitted a formal political career because of the conditions of Sarah Churchill's bequest of Wimbledon, Spencer was still permitted to sit in Parliament as a member of the House of Lords. During this period, the Whig oligarchy relied on private dealings and informal meetings to coalesce its power.<sup>36</sup> Spencer, a supporter of the Duke of Newcastle, built Spencer House with the express purpose of using it to entertain and be part of the political and ruling elite within London.<sup>37</sup> The consumption patterns evident in his household's receipts appear to show that he did just that.

As Elizabeth Kowalski-Wallace describes in her study of the gender dynamics associated with entertaining in eighteenth century England, the consumption of tea was

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<sup>35</sup> London's social season corresponded with the sitting of the House of Commons, which usually lasted from November to May. As such, the voluminous amount of tea, coffee, chocolate and sugar that the Spencer household was purchasing corresponds with a portion of the time of year during which the elites of Britain would have converged in London for Parliament and the social season. The fact that such large purchases were also made outside the London social season is indicative of the role and power that the Spencers must have commanded in society. P.D.G. Thomas. *The House of Commons in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 89

<sup>36</sup> Paul Langford traces the importance of the shared sense of position in culture and society amongst the landed elites as it related to the politics of Hanoverian Britain in *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991

<sup>37</sup> A. Foreman, *The Dutchess*, p, 6

seen as being a feminine endeavour, characterized by delicacy and refinement.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, coffee, and its association with the coffee-house and the public sphere, was a decidedly more masculine option.<sup>39</sup> It should come as no surprise then, that the consumption of coffee in the Spencer household was so high; entertaining the elite of the Whig political sphere as Lord Spencer did must have been a common occurrence if it required fifty-seven pounds of coffee over a six month period. That is not to say that Lady Spencer did not entertain, simply that the household requirement for tea and/or chocolate was far exceeded by the need for coffee. One other consumable that appears in the receipts of the Spencer household that is quite striking, and may speak to Spencer's frequent entertaining, is tobacco. In a six month period (from April to June, 1773), Thomas Gordard sold to the Earl, on the order of Robert Lowe, five pounds of tobacco. One would hope for the sake of the Earl's health that this was another commodity purchased for, and consumed with, his guests.

Finally, sugar consumption reveals the same story in here as it did in the Driver household – the Spencers, like the Drivers, purchased large quantities of sugar, and had multiple suppliers for this product. Between September 12, 1772 and November 28, 1772, the Spencer household purchased almost sixty pounds of sugar from two suppliers. What is more, four separate purchases are listed on a receipt issued by Mary Lowe, for the months of November, January, February, and April of 1772/73, but for which no quantities are listed; an analysis of similar purchases show that the Spencers always

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<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace. *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 20

<sup>39</sup> Brian Cowan's work on the coffee house and the political culture created in the public space as a result of the love of the drink demonstrates how important coffee was in the political, social and financial world of men in the eighteenth century. *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeeshouse*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. See also the work of Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeeshouses and Restoration Political Culture." *The Journal of Modern History*. Vol 67, no. 4, (December, 1995), pp. 807-834

bought sugar in quantities of no less than ten pounds, so one might assume, by taking Lowe's sales into account, that the Spencer household purchased and consumed seventy pounds of sugar in the seven months between September 12, 1772 and April, 1773 – again, around the time of the London season.

While the purchase of colonial consumables appears amongst the existing household receipts, durables are also noted amongst these goods. The most common kind of household furnishings that is represented in these sources are storage devices; often charged by the supplier at the same time as the purchase of tea, coffee, or chocolate, the 'pots,' 'canisters,' and 'boxes' that appear on the same itemized line as the caffeinated drinks seems to imply that individuals purchasing these goods were also purchasing the means to store them. Though not as fancy as a tea chest or caddy may have been, these items infer the type of service that suppliers were able to offer their clients, and the type of goods for which those clients were willing to pay.<sup>40</sup>

But beyond the simplest of storage items, household receipts will occasionally show other forms of colonial consumption related to daily life. John Percival, the first Lord Egmont's papers offer an example of this imperial consumption.<sup>41</sup> (See image 3-2.) Though many of the entries in his day book of receipts and expenses are listed as payments to his wife "for the house," readers can occasionally catch a glimpse of colonial consumption as directed by his Lordship. While women, for the most part, kept track of what was purchased for household use, Percival's accounts show him making minor purchases of things such as tea cups, snuff handkerchiefs, and a tea table. With the exception of the handkerchiefs, which are listed as "for myself," the rest of the goods he

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<sup>40</sup> B.L. Add 75762 Vol. cdlxii, B.L. Add 75763 Vol. cdlxiii, and B.L. Add 74649

<sup>41</sup> B.L. Add MSS. 47047, ff. i+ 1-64



Image No. 3-2

John Smith, after Sir Godfrey Kneller, *John Perceval, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Egmont*, 1704  
The National Portrait Gallery, London

bought or paid for the repair of (such as the half-dozen tea cups and the “mending” of a tea pot, respectively), could be seen as for the general use of the household. One purchase, however, stands out as being a luxury item, and that is the purchase of “Indian pictures” on October 11, 1712 for £15.2.6, but for which no additional information (such as its destined location in the house, or its general appearance) is provided.

The pattern presented by Egmont supports the assessment of historian Amanda Vickery on the consumption patterns of Britons in eighteenth century England.

According to Vickery, men were more likely to purchase specialized and luxury items, while women made the shopping decisions for everyday life.<sup>42</sup> Lord Egmont, a politician and diarist, was active in Irish politics and was a contemporary of George II and Sir Robert Walpole.<sup>43</sup> His wife, Catherine, clearly had control of the household as is demonstrated by the day book entries which report the regular payments to her for its management. One would expect that the purchase of consumables, such as tea, chocolate, coffee, and (perhaps) tobacco products, would appear in Catherine's accounts. While the quantity and frequency with which these goods were purchased are lost, we know that the Egmonts purchased them thanks to the entries for the items needed to consume them, which are present in the Lord's accounts of expenses. What is more, we know that the Egmonts used colonial themes in decorating their home; witness the presence of "Indian pictures."

Where one can see quantity and frequency mixed with the purchase of colonial accoutrement is in the Spencer papers. As has already been seen, the Spencers were the purchasers of mass quantities of coffee, sugar, and tea. What is also apparent in their household receipts is the purchase of the additional goods required to engage in the ritualized consumption of these products. In August of 1772, Spencer purchased a dozen tea pots; for a household that consumed far more coffee than tea, the number is staggering (recall, in a six month period from July to December of that year, the family purchased

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<sup>42</sup> Amanda Vickery. "His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Household Accounting in Eighteenth Century England." *Past and Present*. Supplement 1 (2006), p. 16. The same conclusion is drawn by Helen Berry in "Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, No. 12 (2002), pp. 381. Speaking in general terms, the surviving receipts for the Driver and Spencer households appear to have been, for the most part, issued following standing orders; what additional purchases for the household that their ladies may have made are unknown or impossible to assess.

<sup>43</sup> Betty Wood. "John Perceval, First Lord Egmont (1683-1748)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004.  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/view/article/21911?docPos=2>, accessed June 16, 2009].

fifty-seven pounds of coffee, but only twenty-two and a half pounds of tea). The purchase of tea/coffee/chocolate consumption vehicles continued regularly for the next two years as well; in the spring of 1773, receipts issued to the Spencers showed the purchase of a tea kettle, two small and one large coffee pot, and six coffee cups and saucers. At the same time the following year, two tea boards and china, a coffee mill, three tea kettles, and two coffee pots and one chocolate pot were purchased. The Spencers were either required to replace these items because of breakage (there are expenses listed for the repairing of a tea kettle and a coffee pot), because of changes in style, or because of an increase in their entertaining activities.<sup>44</sup> Whatever the scenario, the Spencer and Egmont homes were well stocked – if not full – with colonial products and the goods required to consume them.

### **Probate Records**

Household receipts are not the only way in which the presence of imperial tastes and commodities in daily life can be traced. Fortunately for historians, in 1529, England passed a law that stated everyone who died and left an estate valued at more than £5 was subject to probate on their estate. It was not, however, until the 1550s that probates became common place,<sup>45</sup> and as scholar Peter H. Lindert has observed, it was between the 1660s and the 1720s that English probates were the most common.<sup>46</sup> After the 1720s, probates became rare<sup>47</sup> and then virtually non-existent after 1760.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> B.L. Add 75762 and B.L. Add 75763

<sup>45</sup> Carole Shamas. *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 18

<sup>46</sup> Peter H. Lindert. "An Algorithm for Probate Sampling." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Vol 11, no. 4, (Spring 1981), p. 653

<sup>47</sup> Lorna Weatherhill. *Consuming Behaviours and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*. London: Routledge Press, 1988, p 2

<sup>48</sup> P. Lindert, "An Algorithm for Probate Sampling," p. 654

The use of probate data is paradoxically flawed and yet beneficial for scholars. Economic historian Alice Hanson Jones has characterized the use of probate materials as the “systematic [collection of] private wealth data,”<sup>49</sup> which can be invaluable to a wide variety of academics, as “[probate records] yield information on house and room functions and equipment, on diet and consumption of goods and life styles, as well as on kinship connections...”<sup>50</sup> What is more, according to historian Amy Louise Erickson, the transfer of property that accompanied the creation of a probate allows historians to observe “the ways in which property was distributed [as this] shaped the structure of society.”<sup>51</sup> Historians such as Lorna Weatherill and Carol Shammas have done what Jones believed academics could do with this data, and have created an image of consumer-life in Britain with their works.

And yet, for all the possibilities that probate documents present, there are also inherent flaws in them, as Lindert has shown, when scholars rely too heavily upon them to draw broad conclusions in their studies. Lindert points out that the multitude of variables that arise in data sets (such as geography, demographics, and socioeconomic station) make it difficult to arrive at accurate conclusions about the economic and social standing of subjects based solely on probate records. While authors such as Jones, Shammas and Weatherill see no problems with creating geographically diverse and random sets of data, Lindert points out that there are simply too many unknown and bias problems with this type of resource. For example, there is too much information missing in probate inventories to arrive at specific conclusions – heirs who had already removed

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<sup>49</sup> Alice Hanson Jones. “Estimating Wealth of the Living from a Probate Sample.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Vol 13, no. 2, (Autumn 1982), p. 279

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 275

<sup>51</sup> Amy Louise Erickson. *Women and Property in Early Modern England*. New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 4

goods from a household, informal transfers of goods preceding death, and the individuals who generated the lists' discretion of what was included (and how those items were categorized), all lead to questions on the true representative nature of probates.<sup>52</sup>

What is more, property and debts owed to the deceased were excluded from probate records.<sup>53</sup> These variables present modern interpreters with problems when assessing the true financial worth of the deceased, as a probate could discount a large portion of an estate. The final major hurdle that probate records present to scholars is their inherent demographic bias; this is true of two aspects of their existence. First, the majority of probate records were left by the elites; estates of value belonging to people of note were more likely to be recorded (and survive). Second, as is the nature of the document's necessity, they were usually produced in relation to the older members of a family. In her work, Shammas acknowledges these short-comings in the inventories; besides excluding property and debts, as well as over-representing the affluent and the elderly, these document also under-represent women.<sup>54</sup> For all these difficulties, Shammas maintains that probate records can still be used to follow general consumption trends.<sup>55</sup>

Bearing these qualifications in mind, in numerous ways probate records offer contemporary historians an excellent 'snap-shot' of an individual's life at the moment of their death. Probate records were used to document moveable wealth and were usually compiled by familiars of the deceased, and were sworn to be accurate in court. As they

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<sup>52</sup> P. Lindert, "An Algorithm for Probate Sampling," pp. 657-9

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 658

<sup>54</sup> C. Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer*, pp. 18-20

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19

were also generally made upon the death of a male head-of-household, they also reveal the state of a family at a particular time in its life-cycle.<sup>56</sup>

As a case study, the un-official probate of Charles Spencer, Third Earl of Sunderland, presents an interesting example. (See image 3-3.) Born as a second son on April 23, 1675, it was not until the death of his older brother in 1688 that Charles became heir to his father's estate. Married three times (in 1695 to Lady Arabella Cavendish, in 1700 to Lady Anne Churchill, and in 1717 to Judith Tichborne), it was his connections to his second wife's family, of the duchy of Marlborough, that served him best during his political career. Sunderland's life in politics began in 1695, when he entered the House of Commons, and it lasted until his death in 1722. From an influential family in society, and bolstered by his own political acumen, Sunderland's place among the political elite and members of polite society was within its highest echelons. Over the course of his political career, Sunderland sat as a Member in both the Commons and Lords, acted as a member Whig junto, was an advisor to Sarah Churchill (who in turn was an advisor to Queen Anne), was named envoy-extraordinary to the Holy Roman Emperor, held the office of Southern Secretary under Anne, was appointed to the Privy Council and the post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, was made Lord Privy Seal under George I, headed a joint ministry with Lord Stanhope, and was entrusted with various other political positions.<sup>57</sup> Throughout his career, Sunderland was an important player in British politics at all levels.

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<sup>56</sup> A. Hanson Jones, "Estimating Wealth," p. 278

<sup>57</sup> Henry L. Snyder. "Charles Spencer, Third Earl of Sunderland (1675-1722)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004.  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/view/article/26117?docPos=2>, accessed June 16, 2009].



Image No. 3-3  
John Simon, after Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Charles Spencer, 3rd Earl of Sunderland*,  
1720  
The National Portrait Gallery, London

Upon his death on April 19, 1722 at Sunderland House in Piccadilly, London, an inventory and valuation of the home was undertaken. During a search of the house on May 4, factors found a wainscot box protected by two locks that contained more than 200 South Sea Company bonds, which were then valued at £200,000.<sup>58</sup> Firmly involved in

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<sup>58</sup> B.L. Add MSS. 61664, ff. 1-183. Sunderland was a main promoter of using the South Sea Company to assist in the reduction of the national debt. Consequently, he was heavily implicated with the eventual South Sea Bubble that rocked the financial community in London (and Britain) in 1720.

national and international politics as he was, Sunderland was also engaged in investing in Britain's global expansion – a common dynamic of the time.

Investment in global ventures was not the only way in which Sunderland interacted with Britain's Empire; he also surrounded himself with consumer goods inspired by, or imported from, the colonies. The level of detail found in his inventory is quite revealing as not only does it give a detailed description of the goods found in Sunderland House, but it also describes where in the home they were kept. This added detail helps historians create an image of the home and of its internal organization.

Alongside pieces of traditional European furniture, earthenware dishes, and standard linens were a wide variety of japanned tables, chests and stands, china plates, jars (vases?) and decorative items, and linens characterized as "Indian." Almost all rooms recorded in the inventory contained some goods with 'eastern' characteristics; the main rooms that contained oriental goods were the rooms used by Lord and Lady Sunderland (such as the bedchambers and dressing rooms), and rooms that may have been used by guests of the family (such as the "Crimson bedchamber" and the "Green drawing room"). The goods that appear in these areas of Sunderland House are both functional and decorative, but are also clearly described by the appraiser as having 'exotic' characteristics.<sup>59</sup>

The single largest collection of eastern-inspired goods in Sunderland's home was found in the Lady of the house's rooms (specifically in the closet off of Lady Judith's dressing room). The majority of this collection is comprised of chinaware; most prominent are the sets of cups (most with saucers, some without). The inventory lists 39 individual cups, in sets of 6; descriptions range from "coloured" to "blue and white" bone

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<sup>59</sup> B.L. Add MSS. 61664, ff. 1-183.

china. As each set was individually recorded, it would appear that they had different patterns or appearances. Lady Sunderland most likely had seven unique sets of cups for service. Not only were colours and patterns differentiated, but their uses were as well; of the seven sets of cups, four are distinguished as being for use with chocolate, while one set each is distinguished for use with coffee and tea, and one set is for unspecified use. Either the appraiser was more rigid in his classification of the use of these items than Lady Sunderland was in hers, or he made assumptions about the items, as among the list of goods are four individual tea pots (two of unspecified size or colour, one white and one red, but all listed as “china”), indicating that tea was consumed by her Ladyship with frequency.

Other types of tableware are also listed amongst the Lady Sunderland’s possessions, and these are mainly dishes and plates; the description of these items are comparatively sparse in contrast to the tea paraphernalia, but they are all characterized as being “china.”<sup>60</sup> The one type of chinaware that is detailed is the “fruit dishes” of which there were eleven. Besides the functional items in her Ladyship’s rooms that could be categorized as foreign-inspired, there were multiple decorative items. The inventory lists three china jars, two china vases, two china candle sticks, a round jappan hand tea board, and two chess sets – one of which was made of amber.

The inventory of Lady Judith’s rooms paints a picture of their appearances and function. The mix of oriental décor and pieces must not have been too over-whelming as there were a relatively small number of ‘china’ pieces in the inventory list that could be considered decorative. And yet, when Lady Sunderland would have entertained in her

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<sup>60</sup> Other types of plates/dishes are listed, but without description; these could be china or of some other design/material.

rooms, the variety and volume of tea table paraphernalia (even when tea was not being consumed) would have made a statement – if she so chose, the Lady of the house could have used a different set of cups and saucers every day of the week, a different tea pot every other day, and have enough plates to serve 25 people. As Kowalski-Wallace has pointed out, one of the most important points of the tea table ceremony was the consumption of tea’s necessary complimentary products (such as chinaware, silverware, etc), and, what is more, the ceremony’s rituals that were developed to display how expensive these complimentary products could be, and thereby display the owner’s worth.<sup>61</sup> As her husband was continuously at the forefront of British politics, Lady Sunderland’s position as a society matron would have been natural, thus necessitating frequent entertaining.

Her Ladyship’s rooms were not the only place where the tea table ceremony must have been enacted; his Lordship’s rooms were also equipped for the ritual, though on a much smaller-scale. Within the Lord’s dressing room, the inventory lists a red japanned tea table with five cups and saucers, two tea pots, milk and sugar service vessels, two guild tea-spoons, and a tea strainer. While Sunderland’s rooms do not appear to have been as luxuriously equipped as his wife’s for entertaining, he would still have been able to consume tea with the proper implements in his own rooms. The lack of entertaining-quantities is probably due to the gendered nature of the tea ceremony, as the traditional “cultural definition of the tea table was as a gendered site, a ‘feminine’ locus...”<sup>62</sup> While Lord Sunderland was equipped to enjoy tea in his private rooms, he would not be

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<sup>61</sup> E. Kowalski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, pp. 23-25

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 20-21

expected to entertain therein as his wife would. And yet, in the public areas of the house, the ability to host a tea was clear.

The room listed as the “Green drawing room” was probably used as the formal receiving room for guests; this conclusion can be drawn from the high quantity of eastern items on display for decorative purposes. Amongst the room’s items were two square Indian jappan tables, two Indian jappan trunks, seven large China jars and beakers, a large Indian jappan cabinet upon a jappan frame, and two small China jars “belonging to the cabinet.” If the room’s décor did not impress people, the tea service on the large India jappan tea table on a black frame, for as many as eight, might have. Listed on the inventory are ten saucers and eight cups, a china tea pot, a sugar box with cover, six chocolate saucers, and two silver tea pots (one of which is characterized as “large”). The Green drawing room appears to have been designed to entertain and impress guests with its eastern flavour and style.

The other room in the house that appears to have been arranged to impress guests is listed as the “Crimson damask bed chamber” in the inventory. This entry is unique as it is the only bedroom listed that is not associated with an individual of the household (either family or staff) – this may imply its use as a guest room. The eastern-inspired contents of this room include a “fine Indian Jappan cabinet, upon an Indian jappan frame” and an Indian Jappan tea board. Most interestingly though, are the fifteen jappaned round and square boxes; without further details it is hard to know what their purpose would have been, but taken within the context of the rest of the inventory, they were more than likely decorative.

The rooms belonging to the family and those used by guests were not the only sites of inventory. Interestingly, for insight into how the home worked, the rooms lived in and used by the household staff were also inventoried. Found in a large chest in the unidentified Mr. Hoocker's room were fifty pounds of chocolate "vernally" and one hundred pounds of plain chocolate – these entries mark the only appearance of colonial foodstuffs on the list.

The other specific staff room that was inventoried was that of an unnamed housekeeper; within the probate record, the housekeeper's room is treated almost as a separate inventory as the housekeeper had responsibility for the family's silver plate. Amongst the standard services pieces could be found items that were designed to accommodate imperial goods. Included in this characterization were three sugar and three pepper caskets that carried the Sunderland coat of arms, "large" and "small" tea kettles, and guild tea spoons.

Though the silver plate would have been reserved for special occasions, the kitchen is a study in how chinaware became an everyday tool in the lives of those who could afford it. Kitchen items included in the inventory were spread out amongst the kitchen proper, a pantry and a still room. In the kitchen proper, the appraiser recorded three pepper boxes (two brass, one pewter), while the pantry contained a large china bowl. In the still room, however, alongside "sundry pieces of earthenware," was found two coffee pots, fifteen small china dishes, twenty-five deep and fifty-seven flat china plates, nine china basins, seventeen china saucers, and fourteen brown china custard cups. The earthenware was obviously not deemed important enough to need much detail, but the chinaware is well accounted for with precision in its description. Sunderland House

was clearly a site of much entertainment as it required plates in such high quantities – being the home of the First Lord of the Treasury, this is only to be expected. The only items missing from the accounts of the kitchen that one might have expected to see were cups and saucers for hot beverage service.

For the most part, the remainder of the items on the inventory list appear scattered throughout the house; the three wrought Indian pillows found in the large chest in the maid's closet, the jappan stands for candle sticks in Lady Anne's room, the six-leaved Indian maps in black frames found in the "Great dining room," and the many china jars sprinkled throughout the rest of the house, interspersed with traditional European décor, leave those reconstructing Sunderland House to see it as possessing a variety of styles as was becoming popular in society homes. The inventory of Sunderland's home was undertaken in the spring of 1722 and its existence is a piece of luck, as this was the beginning of the end for the creation of probates.<sup>63</sup> The level of detail that is also found within the list is fortuitous, especially in the description of the chinaware. Lorna Weatherill attributes the high level of information seen in inventories like Sunderland's to the uniqueness of such consumer goods, as its presence would have caught the eye of the individual making the list of items.<sup>64</sup> In the Sunderland's case, novelty may not have been the only motivating factor. Another possibility is that the appraiser was being as thorough as possible, which would have been expected for an accounting of the wealth of such a prominent person in politics and society.

Debate exists over the validity and methodology of drawing conclusions about Hanoverian society based upon the goods left behind at the time of a person's death.

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<sup>63</sup> C. Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer*, p. 18

<sup>64</sup> L. Weatherill, *Consuming Behaviours*, p. 204

Nevertheless, in the case of Sunderland, and how his inventoried goods can be used as an indicator for the role that imperial commodities played in the development of the British identity, this debate does not necessarily apply as the conclusions reached here-in are not made to place the Earl within a particular socio-economic group, but rather they are made about how Sunderland and his family chose to represent themselves to their peers and how they chose to live within their home.

Sunderland House was, at the time of the Earl's death, a reflection of the larger political and social world in which he worked and lived. The eastern/oriental-inspired decorative and functional pieces co-existed alongside traditional furniture and décor. The appeal of the exotic was exploited most strongly in rooms designed to be seen by guests and for activities (such as dining and visiting) that were standard practice in the society. We know that Sunderland was heavily invested in trade in the far-east (witness his South Sea Company bonds, valued at £200,000 just two years after the South Sea Bubble, but more important, he was so involved with the Company's finances that he was implicated in the stock crisis of 1720), so it only stands to reason that he, like so many of his peers, would willingly embrace the goods of the Empire and let them become prominent in their homes. This was an age wherein Sunderland and his family were changing, as were all Britons at the time, to accommodate the Empire in their homes, their lives, and their perceptions of self.

It is easy for the modern historian to go back through the records of daily life of eighteenth century Britons and assess what goods were present in their homes; it is harder to assign to those goods the purpose and sentiments that their purchasers had for them.

The very nature of the documents that remain present the first major hurdle to this

dynamic. Though we know that the Spencers bought candles from Mr. Kentish and Son, “Who sell the best Foreign Brandy, fine Old Jamaica Rum, Shrub, peppermint, Hollands and other Fineva, with all sorts of Compounds. Likewise fine Old Raisin Wine, Oronooks, and Virgina Tobacco; Mould and other Candles, neat Curd Soap, Strartch, Blues, etc,”<sup>65</sup> we cannot know if they ever purchased the goods purveyed from Jamaica or Virginia, since there was no receipt(s) for them housed with the rest of the family papers. We cannot know what inspired Lady Henrietta Boyle to purchase “2 fine beaver hats,”<sup>66</sup> or what Georgiana Spencer did with the ¼ ounce of white china silk that she purchased for her trousseau for her marriage to the Duke of Devonshire.<sup>67</sup> Nor can we know how exactly Lady Egmont spent the £12 a week she received from her husband for the running of their household. All the finer details, sentimentality, and self awareness is lost when using household receipts and inventories to draft an understanding of people’s daily lives.

And yet, for all the difficulties we encounter with these sources, there is no denying that they do demonstrate the place that colonial goods had in the lives of Britons. The accounts left by the Spencers paint them as prodigious entertainers - the sheer quantity and quality of the colonial goods they purchased could only have been used by a great number of people. In the case of Lady Boyle’s purchase, we know that beavers were hunted to near extinction in Canada by the middle of the nineteenth century because of the popularity of using their felts for fashionable headgear in Europe. We can assume that no matter how troubled her married life was, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, had

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<sup>65</sup> B.L. Add 75762

<sup>66</sup> B.L. Add 75355, ff. 4

<sup>67</sup> B.L. Add 75754

only the very best for her trousseau when she made her brilliant society marriage.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, it can be understood that Lady Egmont, whose husband held an Irish peerage and was a friend to the royal couple, kept a home that would do her politically-minded husband proud, and one to which many of her contemporaries would have aspired.

The actual meaning of the goods we see in the homes of Hanoverian Britons may be hard to gauge, but their presence is telling in and of itself. That Britons filled their homes with colonial groceries and furnishings, and ritualized their use, is indicative of a growing understanding and comfort in adopting aspects of the cultures that were imported into the metropole thanks to Britain's imperial expansion in the eighteenth century. The presence of these goods, minus any personal context(s), is still indicative of their place in a society that was willing to allow itself to be identified by foreign characteristics.

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<sup>68</sup> See the biography by Amanda Foreman, *The Duchess*, for an account of the life and times of Georgiana Cavendish.

### Chapter 3: The Ephemera of Empire

Understanding the physical properties of a society and the meanings that people assigned to the goods they consumed is undeniably challenging. Perhaps even more difficult, however, is interpreting the personal impressions that people had of the world they lived in. And yet, this task is not impossible. Rather than relying on the parliamentary process, or the commercial enterprises of a nation, or accounts of household contents, one has only to turn to items that were created for the personal and daily use of the contemporaries they wish to understand. Two general categories will be considered here.

The first are documents that represent the ideal and elite discussions of the age; these sources range from pamphlets to books, and provide an impression of what the educated elites were debating and what issues affected the general portion of society. In terms of what these sources can tell us about the eighteenth century, they reflect quite clearly an active and on-going debate regarding the increasing consumption of goods, as well as the debate surrounding the consumption of luxury and specific colonial goods (such as tea). The second set of sources represents not the idealism of the first, but rather the quotidian reality of contemporary life; these can range from private diaries, to instructional manuals, to the arts. Though often times less obvious in their representation of society's views, these sources are more revealing because they were created not with an explicit agenda in mind, but rather as a reflection of the *mentalité* of the surrounding culture, or as an opportunity for individuals to live vicariously in the global empire. A

closer examination of both types of sources is warranted in order to appreciate how pervasive the British Empire was in the lives of Hanoverian Britons.

As has been established by historians such as John Brewer and Neil McKendrick, the eighteenth century saw the “birth of a consumer society.”<sup>1</sup> Though one might be inclined to view this consumer society as wholly devoted to the acquisition of material goods, it was also an era in which knowledge and information became a commodity to be purchased. In the words of historian John Money, knowledge was “an asset which could be reliably accumulated and readily exchanged, [a commodity] for which there was a steady market, it was also... ‘useful,’ both as a form of property and as an object of commerce and consumption.”<sup>2</sup> The methods of transmission of this commodity may have been the physical purchase and exchange of books, but it was the knowledge that was contained within these objects that became the desired good.<sup>3</sup>

### **Published debates**

Since the eighteenth century was an age of such momentous change in terms of both Britain’s domestic and global status, it should come as no surprise that discussions on these subjects were rampant within society too. Authors treated subjects such as consumption, luxury, trade, and commerce with such fervent emotion that no aspect of Britain’s global economic affairs was left unexamined. Methodologically speaking,

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<sup>1</sup> See John Brewer and Roy Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993 and Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds), *Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*. London: Europa Publications Limited, 1992. For a more recent discussion, see the work of Amanda Vickery and John Styles (eds.). *Gender, Taste, and Material culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> John Money, “Teaching in the market-place, or ‘Caesar adsum jam forte: Pompey aderat’: the retailing of knowledge in provincial England during the eighteenth century.” *Consumption and the World of Goods*. Brewer, John and Roy Porter (eds.). London and New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 336

<sup>3</sup> The edited work of Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object and Text* explores the “history of aesthetic artifacts as a history of their diverse receptions,” with an aim to assess how individuals consumed knowledge as a commodity in a consumer society. New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 15

books and essays on the morality questions of the day can be treated as newspapers.<sup>4</sup>

Though the differences are explicit, their similarities and continuity in the role that both mediums played warrants such a treatment. Newspapers became far more prevalent in Hanoverian society from 1695, with the lapsing of the Licensing Act, which had required publications to have permission from the Stationer's Company. With this legislative change, a print culture developed in England as more newspapers and treatises were published and readership expanded.<sup>5</sup> In the beginning, the popular papers published essays on matters of current affairs. In the latter part of the century, this type of content was removed in favour of advertisement or shorter news pieces; it was with this shift in publishing practices that essays transitioned into individual publications.<sup>6</sup>

It is in this context that some essays and books can be considered in the same vein as newspapers; they spoke of current affairs, fleshed out the arguments that had previously been debated in the dailies or weeklies, and offered a contemporary assessment of the issues they treated. While newspapers established the publishing culture, it quickly moved beyond its original constraints. Publishers understood that there was a market for non-news items, specifically for publications that discussed

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<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Wilson, "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, c.1720-1785." *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*. Lawrence Stone (ed). London and New York: Routledge Press, 1994, p. 134. This concept is supported by the work of Benedict Anderson and his use of print culture to explore the development of a shared national consciousness. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth-Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, pp.12-22. Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows explore this expanding print culture and the role it played in the development of political consciousness in their work, *Press, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Europe, 1760-1820*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, while Hannah Barker considers the role of the newspaper on the people and culture of Britain in London, the other urban centers, and the country-side in *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremy Black, *The English Press*, p. 26

consumption trends.<sup>7</sup> In an age of colonial expansion and trade, this oftentimes translated into an assessment of the status of Britain in light of new consumption patterns, through which readers “would be constantly reminded that their private lives were bounded by [the] wider context” of an imperial nation.<sup>8</sup>

To this end, the eighteenth century witnessed a wide variety of publications that examined how British lives were being defined through the context of the colonial nature of the nation. There were two general schools of thought on the matter. The first group of authors felt that opening Britain up to an increase in consumption would lead to its destruction. These works viewed the excesses of consumption as damaging to the physical bodies and/or moral spirit of British subjects, and more often than not these themes are treated as interrelated and inseparable. The second group felt that global expansion and the resultant consumption was a good thing – Britain could be, and was only strengthened through the opening of new markets, which contributed to the economic well-being of all subjects. Those who published within this school of thought were either high-minded economic philosophers (such as Adam Smith, David Hume, or Daniel Defoe), or satirical poets who treated the subject as earnestly as they could through their overly romanticized language (such as Duncan Campbell and the other anonymous authors considered below).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds), *Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*. London: Europa Publications Limited, 1992, p. 1

<sup>8</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. London: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 41

<sup>9</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740 to 1830* considers the interconnected role of the consumption of knowledge, national identity and imperial expansion in the chapter by Saree Makdisi. Makdisi considers the type of language used in published sources to assess how the Empire was understood by authors and their audiences. “Literature, National Identity, and Empire.” *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740 to 1830*. Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (eds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 61-79

There are two types of texts that need to be considered here. The first explores the effects of consumption and luxury on the people of Britain; the second explores the role of a specific colonial good, more specifically tea, on the same themes. The authors who were opposed to the increasingly commercialized society in which they were living and writing would sometimes make the same distinction, but very often they would not. For those in favour of Britain's increasing involvement in commerce, the concerns over specific goods were overlooked. Those writing in favour of specific goods, such as tea, give modern readers a sense of how welcome global commerce was.

Samuel Johnson's seminal dictionary contains within it an ambiguous line that is apropos for the current subject; it explains how people saw consumption in relation to the physical body. On the topic of consumption, the first English dictionary defines it as "the act of consuming or destroying; a disease."<sup>10</sup> The term 'consumption' is a play on words – not only is it the act of consuming goods, but it is also a medical term for a whole host of physical weaknesses related to the lungs. One could assume that it was the pulmonary definition that Johnson was giving, and yet, an assessment of the writings against contemporary consumption leaves this possibility in doubt. The arguments made against the increase in consumption often rested on the authors' contention that the act was damaging to the physical state and moral fiber of Britons.

Contemporaries opposed to the increasing rates of consumption in Britain were vitriolic in their opposition. For example, John Dennis' *An Essay upon Public Spirit* begins with an impassioned assessment of the current state of affairs in Britain thanks to the increasing consumption of luxury, which he characterizes as "the greatest Corrupter

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar.* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol. 1. London: 1756.

of Publick Manners, and the greatest Extinguisher of the Publick Spirit.”<sup>11</sup> For Dennis, the increase of consumption put at risk all that was British by introducing new customs to the society and by changing the physical nature of Britons. Because of the debauched lifestyles that Britons were living, girls were developing so quickly that they could be considered ready for marriage by age twelve (“as soon as those in the Indies”), while men were becoming effeminate like women and women were becoming more masculine in their desires and practices.<sup>12</sup> Not only had consumption ruined the moral state of society but, according to Dennis, it was also reversing accepted gender roles by ruining the physical state of the people.<sup>13</sup>

George Cheyne took the same view in his work *The English Malady*, which is the name he gave to Britain’s obsession with consuming goods. For Cheyne, Britain’s expansion into the world resulted in the “ransack[ing]” of other regions in order to make new goods available, which then led to “Riot, Luxury, and ... Excess” at home.<sup>14</sup> Cheyne also attributed both moral and physical failings to the new consumer society. Morally, Cheyne took issue with the spirit of competition that sprang up in which the increasing number of wealthy were in a continuous battle to out-do one another in their

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<sup>11</sup> John Dennis, *An essay upon publick spirit; being a satyr in prose upon the manners and luxury of the times, the chief sources of our present parties and divisions*. London: 1711, p. vi

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15. Not only was the concern that Britain’s men were becoming as effeminate as women, but they were also becoming effeminate like other Europeans, specifically the French. For a discussion on the British perception of the moral and physical failings of the French in this era see Richard Faber’s *French and English*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1975 (specifically pp. 45-68) or, for a contemporary view, see John Andrews’ *A Comparative View of the French and British Nations, in Their Manners, Politics and Literature*. London: T. Longman, G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1785, specifically p. 251

<sup>13</sup> Paul Langford conceptualized the ‘polite’ society that emerged in Hanoverian Britain as a result of the increasing consumption and, specifically, the increasing consumption of luxury goods, which spawned so many public debates as “[l]uxury was the subject of endless controversy.” See Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 4

<sup>14</sup> George Cheyne, *The English malady: or, a treatise of nervous diseases of all kinds, as spleen, vapours, lowness of spirits, hypochondriacal, and hysterical distempers, &c. In three parts*. Dublin: 1733, p. 49

purchase and consumption of luxury goods.<sup>15</sup> Cheyne, a medical doctor, believed that the western body could not process and healthily digest eastern foods,<sup>16</sup> and to do so would lead to the erosion of the stomach's lining.<sup>17</sup> As a remedy for all luxury- and consumption-related ailments, Dr. Cheyne suggests a simple cure: total abstinence from the goods that caused the maladies in the first place.<sup>18</sup>

Daniel Defoe, on the other hand, believed there was nothing more proper than for the British to look to the wider world for their economic security. He believed that international trade was nothing short of a divine gift: God had encouraged trade by spreading commodities throughout the world and making them accessible through maritime trade, navigation techniques and tools, the adventurous spirit, and by “furnishing all maritime nations with materials for shipping and the like...” For Defoe, the success in finding and extracting goods from the colonies was proof of Providence.<sup>19</sup> Defoe comes just short of claiming God is an Englishman, but the conviction is there in his text – the success that Britain had experienced in the early years of the eighteenth century was all the proof that Defoe needed to believe that the extraction and consumption of colonial goods was the providential right and what was expected for Britons.

Later, at mid-century, David Hume left behind the question of divine right and instead examined the importance of a healthy economy. He contended that a proper balance of exports and imports had to be struck in order to have a healthy national

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 184

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 158

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Defoe, “Of Divinity in Trade.” *The Best of Defoe's Review: An Anthology*. William L. Payne, ed. Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970, p. 110

economy.<sup>20</sup> Hume understood that the economic health of society was dependent on a mutually cooperative relationship between the men of commerce and the general public: when these men did well, so to did the public.<sup>21</sup> Written in the 1750s, Hume was no doubt thinking of the role of the chartered companies and individual producers who were experiencing continuous economic success in the colonies and whose products had become so important British society.

But of all the economic philosophers of the age, Adam Smith's arguments in *The Wealth of Nations* have proven to be the most resounding. Smith's assessment of the economic health of a nation rests on the relationship between the country and the town, which can also be understood as the colony and the metropolis. The relationship between both regions is also one of interconnectedness; the country-colony supplies the town-metropolis with goods to live upon and the raw materials for manufacture, while the town-metropolis supplies the country-colony with goods they would otherwise have lost time producing and a market at which their excess goods can be sold.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond a description of this theoretical relationship, Smith goes on to assess the state of affairs in the Atlantic colonies. He finds "...there are no colonies of which progress has been more rapid than that of the English in North America."<sup>23</sup> Through their relationship with Britain, the colonies gained a larger market for their surplus goods and Britain gained access to commodities that it could not naturally produce (such as tobacco,

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<sup>20</sup> David Hume, *Essays and treatises on several subjects*. London: 1758, p. 325

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 265

<sup>22</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations: Representative Sections*. Bruce Mazlish (ed). Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1961, p. 137. It is important to distinguish between the carrying and manufacturing trade in this context. Britain's economic dominance of the age can be attributed to the ability of the British to engage in both types of trade successfully. While the Dutch made their imperial fortune on their carrying trade, the British had more lasting power because of their abilities in both arenas.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 195

coffee, cocoa beans, beaver and other fur pelts, and ginger), or that they previously had to obtain from other European nations (such as timber, naval stores, and certain metals).<sup>24</sup>

The reciprocal nature of the relationship between British colonial interests and the metropolis was of benefit to both. Far from being degrading as characterized by both Dennis and Cheyne, Smith finds that the act of foreign trade and consumption “bread and formed the men who were capable of achieving ... great actions, and of laying the foundation of so great an empire...”<sup>25</sup>

For all these arguments for or against consumption, the simple fact is that they were rather high-minded and fairly technical; attacking a concept is far harder than attacking a specific good. On this front, there is no lack of sources to which modern scholars can turn. The debate that raged against consumption and luxury found a niche in the debate surrounding the consumption and role of tea in English society. Those who argued against the presence of tea in society used the same justifications of moral and physical damage as those who argued against consumption in general. In *An Essay on the Nature, Use and Abuse of Tea*, the anonymous author found that tea and opium shared the same damaging properties, but worse, tea was “a Drug, which has of late Years very much insinuated itself, as well into our Diet, as Regales and Entertainments...” while opium is a substance that people “have at present learn’d to avoid with more Caution.”<sup>26</sup> Specifically, the author found tea to be the cause of the new disease known as “hypochondriasis.” These “Hypochondriack” disorders occurred because tea thins the blood, letting disease in to the body. Moreover, it corrupted the

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 199-204

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 216-17

<sup>26</sup> Anonymous, *An essay on the nature, use, and abuse, of tea, in a letter to a lady; with an account of its mechanical operation*. London: 1722, pp. 14-15

blood and the spirit and brought on a number of other conditions that lead to disease.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, pregnant women damaged the fetus they carried because their blood was too thin to nourish the baby.<sup>28</sup> Men, on the other hand, lost their sexual potency because tea also diminishes “thick secretions.”<sup>29</sup> Once again, the basic gender roles were in danger, as we saw in arguments against the general consumption of luxury goods.

The harmful effects of tea on the body are a theme continued by Jonas Hanway in his travel journal from Portsmouth to Kingston upon Thames. In this work, Hanway makes multiple references to the physical dangers of tea drinking, which include intoxication, men becoming short and ugly, women losing their beauty, a shortening of the life span, the potential of metal poisoning from the vessels used to boil tea, malnutrition, cholera, hypochondria, weak eyes, weak limbs, suicide, and addiction. He too linked tea to opium by comparing British consumption of the product to the Turkish consumption of the narcotic. For Hanway, the result would be disastrous to the British way of life by making Britons more eastern, prompting him to ask: “Will the *sons* and *daughters* of this happy isle, this reputed abode of *sense* and *liberty*, for *ever* submit to the bondage of so *tyrannical* a custom as drinking tea?”<sup>30</sup> (See image 4-1.)

Beyond the physical problems that tea drinking induced, Hanway also highlighted the moral implications of such “An *idle custom* [and] *absured expence*.”<sup>31</sup> He clearly sees the introduction of tea drinking as a means of weakening the national fortitude of the people and he rhetorically asks, “Were they the *sons* of *tea sippers* who won the fields of

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53

<sup>30</sup> Jonas Hanway, *A journal of eight days journey from Portsmouth to Kingston upon Thames; through Southampton, Wiltshire, &c. with miscellaneous thoughts, ... in sixty-four letters: ... To which is added An essay on tea, ... In two volumes*. Vol. 2. London: 1756, pp. 35-36. Original emphasis appears in all quotations of Hanway’s work in this thesis.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 39

L E T T E R V.

*To the same.*

MADAM,

**T**HOUGH habit reconciles *us* to the use of *tea*, as it does the *Turks* to *opium*, may we not with great propriety ask the following questions?

Is it not disturbing the operations of nature, to *drink* when neither thirst nor heat provokes?

Do we not often *sip tea* when we have already drank too great a quantity of water, or other diluting liquors?

Would not *cold* liquids sometimes relieve nature better than *hot*?

Is it not the polite question, "have you drank your tea," and supposed that *every body* drinks tea *every evening*, and *every morning*?

Are not physicians generally agreed, that we have many choice and medicinal herbs of our own growth, better than tea?

Are they not also agreed, that tho' tea is proper for some persons, under particular circumstances, that it is in general hurtful to the constitution in the manner we use it?

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Image No. 4-1

From *A journal of eight days journey from Portsmouth to Kingston upon Thames; through Southampton, Wiltshire, &c. with miscellaneous thoughts, ... in sixty-four*

letters: ... To which is added An essay on tea, ... In two volumes. Vol. 2. London: 1756.

Available through Eighteenth Century Collection On-line.

*Cressy and Agincourt, or dyed the Danube's streams with Gallic blood?*<sup>32</sup> Tea made the population effeminate; it introduced luxury to the commoners, which introduced gluttony and debauchery," leading to a "loss of simplicity;" it employed smugglers; it led to the consumption of gin; and it encouraged extravagant living. Moreover, Hanway felt that the introduction of tea into Britain made the nation a pawn of the Chinese who took advantage of their obsession with the product, weakening Britain's global reputation.<sup>33</sup>

While David Hume noted that "...all Calculations concerning the balance of trade are founded on very uncertain facts and suppositions,"<sup>34</sup> Hanway felt comfortable enough to provide statistics that supported his contention that the tea ceremony had led to extravagant living. He estimated that between 1717 and 1726, an average of 700,000 pounds of tea was imported into Europe per year; by 1728, that number was five million pounds. In England alone, between 1732 and 1742, an average of 1.2 million pounds of tea was consumed; by 1755, that amount was three million pounds.<sup>35</sup> The most intriguing statistics that Hanway presents are found in his chapter entitled "Calculations of the expence in Tea." Taking into consideration the need for the tea itself, the sugar, the tea equipage, the cost of fuel for fires, and the kettles, Hanway estimates that the total annual expenditure of the nation on tea in 1753 was £9,691,665.<sup>36</sup> With such expense, one can

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 273

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 201

<sup>34</sup> Hume, *Essays and treatises* (1758), p. 322

<sup>35</sup> Hanway, *A journal of eight days* (1756), pp. 22-23

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 151-153

understand why Hanway saw his fellow Britons as “squander[ing] away [their] riches on tea.”<sup>37</sup>

But Hanway is not merely a pessimist; he also proposed several alternatives to replace the practice of drinking tea. His most detailed proposal is the suggestion that Britons replace the foreign herb with domestic ones. In a chapter entitled “Herbs in lieu of Tea,” Hanway suggested replacements such as ground ivy, lavender, thyme, mint, rosemary, penny-royal, common rosemary, trefoil, sorrel, angelical, peach and apple tree leaves, and cowslip.<sup>38</sup> Hanway urged home gardeners to mix domestically grown herbs as a grocer would mix tea “*for the good of your country.*”<sup>39</sup> If one would not drink domestic herbs, or cold water, Hanway stated that a minimum amount of tea, drunk cold and weak, and only by the upper classes, would reduce its harmful effects on British society.<sup>40</sup> Hanway’s position recommended an investment in the domestic market at the expense of international trade and exotic consumption.

In the anonymous essay *On Tea, Sugar... and Other Modern Luxuries* the author continues the complaints of Hanway. According to this work, the demand for consumer goods had created a wide divide between the rich and the poor members of society; the labourer of society, desiring goods such as sugar and tea, was suffering from extravagance and was extending himself outside of “... his proper sphere... [and was] void of management and economy.”<sup>41</sup> To make matters worse it was not only the monetary expense of the tea ceremony that the lower orders in society were succumbing

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 175

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 222-235. The author’s personal preference was for an infusion of ground ivy and stick liquorice.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 232

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 272

<sup>41</sup> Anonymous, *An essay on tea, sugar, white bread and butter, country alehouses, strong beer and geneva, and other modern luxuries*. Salisbury: 1777, pp. 7-8

to, it is also the chronological expense – our nameless author estimates that, in the winter, an individual spent half his day seeing to, and partaking in, the ritual of tea drinking.<sup>42</sup> For all this, the worst aspect of tea drinking at the poorer levels of society that the author found was the fact that the poor considered tea to be a *necessity* and not a luxury or decency. The author contended that this shift in thinking was the cause of the increases in the poor rates, and calls for all families drinking tea to be dropped from the parish dole.<sup>43</sup>

In rebuttal to those who maligned the drinking of tea, poets stepped forward in its defense. Duncan Campbell, in his *Poem Upon Tea*, spoke highly of the practice. Campbell's position is that the consumption of tea cleared the mind, made the blood flow faster, refined the senses, prevented and cured "Diseases of the Mind," gave women a place and event around which to collect, gossip and match-make, and it made women more genteel.<sup>44</sup> In addition to these benefits, Campbell also attributes to tea the ability to make boys more polite, to embolden the feeble, the renew youth, and teach good manners.<sup>45</sup> Campbell sings his praises for tea as highly as those wishing to bring it low introduced its flaws. In another poem, entitled *In Praise of Tea*, an anonymous author includes his own accolades for tea, finding it delightful and innocent and acknowledges the power it has to make one pleasant and merry, but not drunk.<sup>46</sup> Rather than oppose

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 26-27. The author's position is that, as tea is a luxury good, the poor should not be allowed to claim the need for charity if they consumed it.

<sup>44</sup> Duncan Campbell, *A poem upon tea. Wherein its antiquity, its several virtues and influences are set forth...* London: 1735, p. 10. Philip Lawson explores the role of women in the consumption of tea in his essay "Women and the Empire of Tea: Image and Counter-Image in Hanoverian England," as well as in "Tea, Vice and the English State," (specifically pp. 4-9). *A Taste for Empire and Glory: Studies in British Overseas Expansion, 1660-1800*. David Cannadine, Linda Colley, and Ken Munro (eds). Aldershot, Great Britain: Variorum, 1997

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15

<sup>46</sup> J.B., *In Praise of Tea*. Canterbury: 1736, pp. 5-6

participation by the poor in the tea ritual, the author celebrates the affordability of both tea and china, and claimed that tea, along with the traditional side-dish of buttered bread, was both cheap and filling.<sup>47</sup>

Though not as professionally minded as the opponents of tea appear to be, the proponents use satire and verse to attract the audience and win them over. Jonas Hanway's failings (and considering the continued and increased use of tea post-1753, his arguments can hardly be considered widely successful) may be attributed to the length and polemic nature of his work; Duncan Campbell's light-hearted assessment of the benefits of the consumption on tea, and the quick-worded dismissal of his opponents, may have won over more minds by being more accessible. And yet, there were those who argued for neither the discontinuation nor the continued excessive use of tea; there were those who published works calling for people to be moderate in their consumption.

At polar ends of the century, Daniel Duncan (1706) and the anonymous author of *Concise observations on the nature of our Own Common Food* (1787) had the same advice for their readers – tea itself was not inherently bad. However, it was made bad through its abuse and in the over-confidence people placed in its abilities. To this end, those wishing to be healthy would do well not to over-indulge in its consumption.<sup>48</sup>

What is more telling about the society, and its willingness to accept the fruits of Empire into their homes by this time, is the fact that an advice book, purported to be about British *Common Foods*, includes a chapter dedicated to an analysis of the benefits and pitfalls of

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9 and 6

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Duncan, *Wholesome advice against the abuse of hot liquors, particularly of coffee, chocolate, tea...* London: 1706, p. 6 and A Gentleman of the Faculty. *Concise observations on the nature of our common food, so far as it tends to promote or injure health...* London: 1787, p. 49

the consumption of coffee and tea. Clearly, by 1787, tea was no longer seen as an imperial/colonial good, but a domestic, inherently British commodity.<sup>49</sup>

An examination of published material from the eighteenth century is informative inasmuch as it allows modern historians to study the national debates that emerged concerning the issues of the Empire, its goods and consumption. In addition to this, they allow us to assess how people conceptualized their place in the wider world, and what the general understanding and opinion of that position was. General consumption and the consumption of tea present interesting parallels; much like any debate there were radicals on both sides of the argument, with moderates willing and able to find a middle ground.

That so much ink and paper went into debating the merits of consumption, and specifically the consumption of tea, is indicative of how important it was to people. Moreover, the debate is demonstrative of the role that the goods (and act) of imperialism played in society. The presence of these debates is representative of a changing society – one that had not yet come fully to terms with its new consuming nature or the reality of its imperial success. Nothing was truly settled by these arguments. People did not suddenly stop buying tea because Jonas Hanway advised them too,<sup>50</sup> nor did they cease investing in domestic agriculture when Adam Smith advised that foreign trade was the highest form of capital expenditure. Rather, tea continued to be consumed with an increasing regularity as the century progressed, and the characteristics of the new

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<sup>49</sup> One might argue that this is also a result of popular perceptions that the colonies from where these goods originated, while exotic and foreign, had become an inherent part of Britain.

<sup>50</sup> Philip Lawson states that in 1777, the East India Company imported twelve million pounds of tea into Britain, even though they already held seventeen million pounds in reserve. They did so to maintain their monopoly on the product and in response to market conditions. “Tea, Vice and the English State,” p. 3. Also, see Lawson’s Lawson, Philip. *The East India Company: A History*. New York: Longman Publishing, 1987, pp. 96-102

consumer society extended far beyond the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, these debates serve to illustrate issues of great importance to contemporaries.

## **Diaries**

Published debates represent only a fraction of the possible avenues we can use when studying how people consciously, and unconsciously, chose to incorporate the Empire into their lives. There exist sources such as autobiographical writings, diaries, and journals which allow us a glimpse at the most personal of personals; what people thought, what they put into their bodies, and how they expressed themselves.

An individual's diary is a useful guide to studying a person's perception of the self. Whether the author intended to keep their diaries private or to preserve for eternity the events of their lives affects what is included, but they are an important source for developing an understanding of self-perceptions of Hanoverian Britons. In the most basic of senses, "[p]ersonal papers are the physical survivals of a life."<sup>51</sup> They allow modern readers to attain a deeper level of understanding regarding the society in which the author lived than otherwise might be possible.<sup>52</sup> Methodologically speaking, diaries and personal papers can be viewed as both a case study (which allows historians to build their work concerning larger concepts and themes around a single individual), or as autobiography (as they allow for the study of the author themselves). In essence,

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<sup>51</sup> Angela Raspin, "Private Papers." *Contemporary History: Practice and Method*. Anthony Seldon (ed.). New York: B. Blackwell, 1988, p. 89

<sup>52</sup> Louise Corti, "Diaries, self-contemplation." *A-Z of Social Research: A Dictionary of Key Social Science Research Concepts*. Robert L. Miller and John D. Brewer (eds.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2003, p. 69

personal papers can be used to create both micro- and macro-histories.<sup>53</sup> For these reasons, they are indispensable for this study.

The major challenge in using these sources is coming to an understanding of their inherent bias. Everyone tells a story as they remember it; whether or not this perspective is accurate or flawed is as open for interpretation as the original event. What falls to academics is the challenge of interpretation. Sociologist Catherine Riessman highlights this act of interpretation by reminding her readers that “[i]ndividuals exclude experiences that undermine the current identities they wish to claim.”<sup>54</sup> If this is true, then so too must be the opposite; individuals must include experiences that support the identities with which they wish to be associated. To this end, “[i]nterpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations... Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded from narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean.”<sup>55</sup> Historians are left with the unenviable task of going through the private papers of people they cannot question for clarification, in order to assess what kind of lives they lived, and how they felt about the events that made up those lives. Though challenging, the effort provides an intimate view of a person’s life and the society of which they were a part.

William Stout of Lancaster (1665-1752) was a prolific writer. In the last years of his life, he collected his notes from a lifetime of frequent observations and set out to record the activities of his life within their personal, religious and economic contexts.

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<sup>53</sup> Robert Miller, “Autobiography and Biographical Method.” *A-Z of Social Research: A Dictionary of Key Social Science Research Concepts*. Robert L. Miller and John D. Brewer (eds.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2003, p. 16

<sup>54</sup> Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1993, p.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2

Born into a yeoman family, one of the founders of his family's tradesman tradition, and a converted Quaker, the retrospective account that Stout gives his reader shows a committed bachelor's life well and honourably lived, with a deep commitment to his Friends, family, acquaintances, and customers.<sup>56</sup>

In terms of his business, Stout can be characterized as a "decidedly self-conscious citizen of a trading nation..."<sup>57</sup> but specifically, a colonial trading nation. Stout began his career as a shopkeeper when he was pledged as an apprentice in 1682, he then opened his own establishment in 1689, he retired for the first time in 1698, only to return to retail in 1705 following a series of fortuitous and then ruinous events experienced and suffered by friends and family.<sup>58</sup> Stout's autobiography contains entries on many themes. Of interest here are his observations on his shop wares, his international ventures, his domestic affairs, and his observations on international events.

Though he does not list all the goods that he sold, Stout does make several references to the goods of Empire that could be procured from his shop. As apprentice to Henry Coward, one of his first jobs in retail was to prepare sugar and tobacco for market days.<sup>59</sup> These products make up the bulk of his comments on his wares throughout his journal. For the year 1688, Stout describes the difficulties that he had in obtaining tobacco from the Americas, specifically Virginia, because of the on-going war, which drove up prices.<sup>60</sup> And yet, Stout continued to supply his customers with tobacco in such large quantities that he estimated in 1691/92, his tobacco sales equaled one quarter of his

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<sup>56</sup> J. D. Marshall (ed), *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster, 1655-1752*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967, pp. 1-3

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95

total sales;<sup>61</sup> by 1709 that number had increased to one third.<sup>62</sup> In terms of the other goods Stout stocked, he records importing resin from New England, as it was plentiful and cheaper than the same product found in France;<sup>63</sup> from Barbados, Stout received sugar, Muscovado sugars, cotton wool, ginger, black ginger and molasses;<sup>64</sup> while from Jamaica, he received sugar, indigo, and pimentos.<sup>65</sup> Often the record of goods Stout makes in his autobiography are related to a specific shipping venture in which he was partnered.

Stout experienced more failures than success when it came to international trade, and yet he was an intrepid adventurer and investor. For instance, he frequently comments that the loss of his investment on a ship was so great that he was “discouraged” and had resolved to no longer invest in such activities.<sup>66</sup> Even though Stout sustained frequent losses on this type of investment, he continued to participate in them. Beginning in 1698 (the year of his first retirement) he helped with the building and stocking of the ship, the *Employment*,<sup>67</sup> and his over-seas investments continued until 1719, with a minimal investment of £10 in the *Betty Gally*.<sup>68</sup> In those years, Stout was involved in nine separate ventures on five individual ships. Only two of these ventures, those of the *Content* in 1705 and the *Love* in 1715, saw any profit, and those were of a minimal margin.

The true success Stout experienced in business came from his shop in Lancaster. Throughout the years of apprentices, retirements, bad sales on credit, expenses,

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 106

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 161

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 131 and p. 138

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 155

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 155 and p. 172

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 123

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179

infrastructure repair, and purchases, Stout made a considerable profit, which allowed him to retire with a tidy sum of money. At the end of the entry for most years (beginning in 1700) Stout calculates his losses and gains; though some years were lean, he never ended a year with less money to his name than when he began. In the first year of recording (eleven years after opening his own business) Stout indicates that the current value of his wealth totaled £1,185.<sup>69</sup> In the year before he retired from running his own business (1726), Stout calculated his total worth “after [he] had deducted what [he] did owe in all to sundry persons” to be £4,950. This was a substantial nest-egg upon which Stout was able to retire from trade.<sup>70</sup>

Stout was also a prolific commentator on events that occurred in his region of England (the Northwest). As a large portion of his business was consumed with the sale of tobacco, Stout makes frequent references to the alteration of laws and taxes that directly impacted the importation and sale of the commodity.<sup>71</sup> Stout also commented on the state of his neighbors’ businesses. An entry of note was the unexpected closure of John Hodgson’s sugar refinery in Lancaster in 1688 because of a shortage of raw goods to process. This was seen as worthy of observation because Hodgson was attributed with being the first Lancastrian to import raw sugar directly into the city. From that time onwards, Stout and his colleagues were forced to go to Bristol or Liverpool to obtain sugar for their own stores.<sup>72</sup>

Also of note were external events that tied Stout to his community or Britain as a whole. Occasionally mentioned is the growth and development of the Pennsylvania

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 132

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.196

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82, p. 106, and p. 161

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p. 98

colony because of its close affiliations with the Quaker movement, while updates on immigration and the growth of Philadelphia also appear in Stout's writings.<sup>73</sup> Accounts of victories and the war effort(s), the death of friends and acquaintances in far off corners of the world, and the role of the colonies in keeping Britain afloat all find prominence of place in Stout's assessment of his life.<sup>74</sup>

The picture that Stout paints of himself is one of an important cog in his locality, which is active within the context of the larger, imperial machine. Not only was his shop full of imperial goods (which he was responsible for distributing to his patrons, who must have been many judging from his financial reckonings at year ends), but he was also conscious of and interested in the events of the wider world which further connected him to the imperial experiences of others. Stout might not have consciously lived his life as a member of the "British Empire," but by his own account he was certainly interconnected within the larger imperial system.

Stout's position in society was prominent as a respected member of the Quaker church, a successful shopkeeper in a mid-sized industrial and port town, and a wealthy member of society. To this end, his journal shows how interconnected a person of means and status was with the imperial experience. But what of someone in the same relative position who was not so wealthy and who was further removed from the larger centers of commerce? For this point of view, historians can turn to the diary of Thomas Turner. Born in 1729 and a shopkeeper in East Hoathly, Sussex, Turner can be characterized as the quintessential eighteenth century every-man. His diary records his daily activities, his

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77, p. 129, and p. 130

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 196, p. 111, and p. 229

diet, his struggles with drink and his wife, and his impression of several important imperial events.<sup>75</sup>

While the quotidian nature of his trade is lost, Turner does make observe the larger problem with his business in a way that is reminiscent of the complaints of authors such as John Dennis or Jonas Hanway. Turner writes,

A most prodigious melancholy time, and very little to do. I think that luxury increases so fast in this part of the nation, that people have little or no money to spare to buy what is really necessary... the exorbitant practice of tea-drinking has corrupted the morals of people of almost every rank.<sup>76</sup>

Turner, a man with an affinity for alcohol, often showed disdain for those who drank tea and entries of his own consumption of the good do not appear until the latter half of his diary. Nevertheless, Turner frequently has tea with many neighbors and associates in East Hoathly, proving that even an opponent could not avoid tea entirely. But by making this observation, Turner is engaging with the debate surrounding the changing nature of British consumption and the increasing consumption of luxury and imperial goods.

The true value of Turner's diary, for our immediate purposes, is found in his description of domestic reactions to colonial affairs. When news reached East Hoathly of the capture of Cape Breton, the town exploded in a fracas of celebration. In the words of Turner:

I walked down to Halland... in order for a rejoicing for the taking of Cape Breton, etc., where there was a bonfire of six hundred of faggots, the cannon fired, and two barrels of beer given to the populace, and a very good supper provided for the principal tradesman of this and neighbouring parishes... After supper we drank a great many loyall healths...<sup>77</sup> [sic]

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<sup>75</sup> What is absent is an assessment of his business, other than the occasional lamentation that it is slow.

<sup>76</sup> Florence Maris Turner (ed), *The Diary of Thomas Turner of East Hoathly, 1754-1765*. Bungay, Suffolk: R. Clay and Sons Ltd., 1925, p. 41

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43

News of imperial affairs was often at hand, such as the capture of Minorca,<sup>78</sup> the surrender of Martinico (Martinique?) to the English<sup>79</sup> and, with more detail, an accounting of the battle on the Plains of Abraham:

In the even, read the 'Extraordinary Gazette' for Wednesday, which gives an account of our army in America, under the command of General Woolf, beating the French army under General Montcalm, near the city of Quebec, wherein both generals were killed... as also the surrender of the city of Quebec. Oh, what a pleasure it is to every true Briton, to see with what success it pleases Almighty GOD to bless his Majestie's arms, they having success at this time in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America! I think in this affair, our generals, officers, and common men, have behaved with uncommon courage and resolution, having many and great difficulties to encounter before they could bring the city to surrender.<sup>80</sup> [sic]

For a man from a corner of rural Sussex, Turner was able to obtain a complete account of the outcome of the battle, and to provide an assessment of the global situation in which Britain found itself. He is clearly a citizen of an imperial nation when he laments the loss of colonies, lauds the success of Britain's forces, and helps to celebrate their victories.

But men were not the only individuals who left a personalized record of daily life. Diaries are one source that does not inherently discriminate based on gender – both male and female authors abound, as both men and women could be educated enough to be literate. Anne Hughes (born sometime in the 1770s, and who is traceable only until the end of her diary in 1797) stands as an example of female daily life at the end of the eighteenth century. The undercurrent of her journal, *The Diary of a Farmer's Wife*, differs from that of Stout and Turner – she is not reporting on international affairs, nor on the status of the British Empire; rather, Hughes' journal is a record of her housekeeping, her socializing, and the relationships she had with those around her. While Stout and

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 72

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 55-56

Turner's accounts overtly make reference to the themes of Empire, identity and consumption, Hughes' accounts makes reference to those ideas in such an innocuous way that the reader is given the sense that the Empire is so ingrained in the life of Hughes (and Britons) that it does not warrant extra attention from contemporaries.

Hughes' account of her life centers around tea: it was drunk as part of the social routine, it was used to distinguish the time of day in her account, it was considered an important part of the courting ritual, and it had its place in special occasions. Often, her accounts of visiting or hosting neighbors make reference of the use of tea.<sup>81</sup> Her description of her time is divided by the tea ceremony standing as a chronological delineator – it is seen as a time for a break from the routine of the day or as a meal.<sup>82</sup> These breaks often coincided with a need for some physical fortification, which tea supplied. In the entry for October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1796, Hughes describes an attempted robbery of her larder, which she and her servant Sarah interrupted and foiled. After beating off the intruders with sticks, both women found themselves needing something to help them calm down and resorted to boiling a kettle for tea.<sup>83</sup> The excitement in Hughes' life did not end there; after multiple accounts of thieving from her pantry (with no ready explanation of who could be the culprit), Hughes must have thought she was in for a repeat of the events of October when, during a visit from a friend in December of the following year, their conversation was interrupted by “a grett bigge crashe from thee larder,” which caused them to “starte upp wythe frite.” Both women went to investigate the noise, armed with “tee bigge iron poker” and an intent to “settle with the theiffe,”

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<sup>81</sup> Anne Hughes, *The Diary of a Farmer's Wife, 1796-1797*. London: Country Wise Books, 1964, pp. 26, p. 36, and p. 72

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40 and p. 78

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 98-100

only to be met with Hughes' mother-in-law's tom cat when they opened the door; the unnamed feline, and obvious culprit, had "gott in to steale thee goode thynges on thee shelves ande hadd smashed sum dishes therebye." After appreciating the humour in the situation, Hughes instructed Sarah to boil a kettle for tea, and took some as fortification following her travails.<sup>84</sup>

While for the most part Hughes' reference to tea is brief and non descriptive as to the quality and species, there is one exception. During a visit from Lady Susan, the wife of a local magnate, in February of 1796, Hughes describes receiving a gift from the Lady in return for the three joints of pig that Hughes had sent to her. This gift was a "passel of Chany tee lyke shee doe herselfe drynke," for which Hughes thanked her "hartilie [as] itt costen toe muche for [her] toe drink itt offen."<sup>85</sup> This special treat appears occasionally throughout the rest of Hughes' account: shortly before the death of Lady Susan, she brings Hughes an additional portion of the tea,<sup>86</sup> it was used to entertain friends, though sparingly ("Mistress Jones doe drynke sum off mye Chany tee... Shee never taisiting itt before didd prase itt highly, soe that I didd giv her a pinshe albeit onlie a pinshe."<sup>87</sup>), and for impressing guests.<sup>88</sup>

Hughes' use of imperial goods in her home is recorded with such regularity, and without the need to elaborate, that the impression it leaves on the historian is that Hughes was living in an age when the Empire was considered a natural part of the lives of Britons. The products that it supplied were present in the home and so frequently used as

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 137

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25

<sup>86</sup> It appears that the Lady may have been distributing her goods amongst her friends and acquaintances in advance of her death; Hughes describes her as looking thin and unwell, and suffering recently from the heat. On the same visit, Lady Susan gifted Hughes' servant Sarah with one of her cloaks. pp. 51-52

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p. 103

to no longer be considered a novelty or an exotic good; rather, they had become as British as the byproducts of the cows Hughes helped tend, or the honey she collected from wild bees, or the homemade wines she served her guests at meals.

The reminiscences of Stout, Turner and Hughes are examples of how historians can use diaries to describe the societies in which they were created; what were passing observations and comments to the authors are often time academic treasures for modern historians. For example, toss-away comments on the types of sugar that were sold in Stout's store were nothing more than a diligent accounting of the consumption patterns of his customers, but within this context, they are examples of the wide variety of colonial goods that found their way into the homes of Britons. Stout's accounts of the growth of Pennsylvania are intended to record the flight of Quakers from a restrictive religious system in England, but herein they become evidence of the transportation of the British culture to a new continent, aiding in the spread of 'Britishness.' Turner's observations on the local celebrations following imperial victories in Canada were a way for the author to record memories of a good time spent with friends at good food and drink, but they are also indicative of how a society chose to celebrate its imperial expansion. His summary of the contents of an article about the British victory at Quebec is a way for him to show off (perhaps just to himself) his ability to obtain reading materials concerning the wider world,<sup>89</sup> but in reality, is an example of how he feels connected to events occurring in places halfway across the world that have no immediate, tangible effect on his own life. Hughes' recounting of the role of tea in her life was nothing more than a description of

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<sup>89</sup> He does boast of reading Wilkes' paper, *North Briton* No. 45. John Brewer outlines the career (and provides an assessment of the personality) of John Wilkes and his ability to garner public support (especially through his writings) in his chapter "Personality, Propaganda and Ritual: Wilkes and the Wilkites," in *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 201-206

her days, but now it is useful to track how pervasive tea had become. And finally, Hughes' description of the worth of a particular type of tea allowed her to reflect on the generosity of a good friend, but for the modern historian, it is an example of discerning taste and the variety of goods that could be obtained from the colonies. On the surface, personal papers supply historians with a micro-history, but with contextual interpretation, they become evidence for cultural macro-histories and for this reason, they are invaluable.

### **Cookbooks**

Beyond diaries and journals, there exist a series of surviving sources that were intended for personal use and which demonstrate how common the products and concept of Empire had become in the lives of Britons. Advice books on cooking are an excellent source to examine for evidence of the Empire's pervasive nature. From individual ingredients, to foreign-inspired recipes, to general knowledge, cookbooks (though seemingly innocuous) contain a wealth of examples of Britain's imperial nature.

In general, the sense one gains perusing eighteenth century cookbooks is that the majority of the dishes must have been boringly repetitive. Common spices and cooking techniques appear *ad nauseum*; cloves, mace and nutmeg appear in all types of dishes from soups, to meats, to puddings. Though these ingredients are exotic in origin, they are the standard, and it is not the standard that is intriguing – rather it is when one stumbles upon the unexpected that the true nature of the place of the Empire in British homes is revealed.

Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy* from 1747, contains almost nothing that would distinguish it from similar publications. That is, until one

reaches the pages containing the recipes for “Mutton Kebob’d,” “a Currey the India Way,” and a “Pellow the India Way.”<sup>90</sup> (See image 4-2.) These entries stand out from the rest of the collection because they are so obviously inspired by foreign dishes. And yet, Glasse’s exotic fare is far from authentic. For example, her curry is hardly what one expects from curry today. Her ingredients include cubed meat, onions, and a large spoonful of rice. Her seasonings are deceptively simple and ingenious. Only two spices are required: browned coriander seeds and thirty peppercorns. In a volume of dishes that are heavily seasoned with warm spices like mace and nutmeg, the addition of coriander would have introduced a new dimension to the dish, one that would have been exotic in terms of taste. In such a high concentration, the peppercorns would have added the heat that one expects from curry. The need to make a dish almost uncomfortably hot in order to make it reminiscent of its inspirations would leave very few options to the average British chef, as ‘spicy’ is not a descriptive term that would be applicable to any of the other dishes in the book. Glasse’s curry is a poor substitution for modern palates, but for her contemporaries, it would have been a novelty.

Glasse was not the only author to offer up a variation on curry. James Jenks’ 1768 version of *The Complete Cook* includes a recipe “To Stew Chickens, Pullets or Fowls, in the manner the East-Indians call Currie.” Jenks’ repeats Glasse’s call for coriander, but the only other spice included is bay, which would impart an earthy tone to the dish, but there would be no heat. He does direct his readers to include six fried cucumbers and six fried onions with the dish, which is to be served over boiled rice with

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<sup>90</sup> Hannah Glasse, *The art of cookery, made plain and easy; which far exceeds any thing of the kind ever yet published*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: 1747, p. 101

*To dress a loin of pork with onions.*

TAKE a fore-loin of pork, and roast it as at another time, peel a quarter of a peck of onions, and slice them thin, lay them in the dripping-pan, which must be very clean, under the pork; let the fat drop on them; when the pork is nigh enough, put the onions into the fauce-pan, let them simmer over the fire a quarter of an hour, shaking them well, then pour out all the fat as well as you can, shake in a very little flour, a spoonful of vinegar, and three tea-spoonfuls of mustard, shake all well together, and stir in the mustard, set it over the fire for four or five minutes, lay the pork in a dish, and the onions in a bason. This is an admirable dish to those who love onions.

*To make a currey the Indian way.*

TAKE two small chickens, skin them and cut them as for a fricasee, wash them clean, and stew them in about a quart of water, for about five minutes, then strain off the liquor and put the chickens in a clean dish; take three large onions, chop them small, and fry them in about two ounces of butter, then put in the chickens and fry them together till they are brown, take a quarter of an ounce of turmeric, a large spoonful of ginger and beaten pepper together, and a little salt to your palate: strew all these ingredients over the chickens whilst it is frying, then pour in the liquor, and let it stew about half an hour, then put in a quarter of a pint of cream, and the juice of two lemons, and serve it up. The ginger, pepper, and turmeric must be beat very fine.

*To boil the rice.*

PUT two quarts of water to a pint of rice, let it boil till you think it is done enough, then throw in a spoonful of salt, and turn it out into a cullender; then let it stand about five minutes before the fire to dry, and serve it up in a dish by itself. Dish it up and send it to table, the rice in a dish by itself.

*To make a pellow the Indian way.*

TAKE three pounds of rice, pick and wash it very clean, put it into a cullender, and let it drain very dry; take three quarters of a pound of butter, and put it into a pan over a very slow fire till it melts, then put in the rice and cover it over very close, that it may keep all the steam in; add to it a little salt, some whole pepper, half a dozen blades of mace, and a few cloves. You must put in a little water to keep it from burning,

then stir it up very often, and let it stew till the rice is soft. Boil two fowls, and a fine piece of bacon of about two pounds weight as common, cut the bacon in two pieces, lay it in the dish with the fowls, cover it over with the rice, and garnish it with about half a dozen hard eggs and a dozen of onions fried whole and very brown.

Note, This is the true Indian way of dressing them,

*Another way to make a pellow.*

TAKE a leg of veal about twelve or fourteen pounds weight, an old cock skinned, chop both to pieces, put it into a pot with five or six blades of mace, some whole white pepper, and three gallons of water, half a pound of bacon, two onions, and six cloves; cover it close, and when it boils let it do very softly till the meat is good for nothing, and above two-thirds is wasted, then strain it; the next day put this soup into a sauce-pan, with a pound of rice, set it over a very slow fire, take great care it do not burn; when the rice is very thick and dry, turn it into a dish. Garnish with hard eggs cut in two, and have roasted fowls in another dish.

Note, You are to observe, if your rice simmers too fast it will burn, when it comes to be thick. It must be very thick and dry, and the rice not boiled to a mummy.

*To make essence of ham.*

TAKE off the fat of a ham, and cut the lean in slices, beat them well and lay them in the bottom of a stew-pan, with slices of carrots, parsnips, and onions; cover your pan, and set it over a gentle fire: let them stew till they begin to stick, then sprinkle on a little flour, and turn them; then moisten with broth and veal gravy. Season them with three or four mushrooms, as many truffles, a whole leek, some parsley, and half a dozen cloves: or instead of a leek, a clove of garlick. Put in some crusts of bread, and let them simmer over the fire for a quarter of an hour; strain it, and set away for use. Any pork or ham does for this, that is well made.

*Rules to be observed in all made-dishes.*

FIRST, that the stew-pans, or sauce-pans, and covers, be very clean, free from sand, and well tinned; and that all the white sauces have a little tartness, and be very smooth and of a fine thicknesse, and all the time any white sauce is over the fire keep stirring it one way.

And

Image No. 4-2

From *The art of cookery, made plain and easy; which far exceeds any thing of the kind ever yet published.* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: 1747

Available from Eighteenth Century Collection On-line.

a strong gravy.<sup>91</sup> Though from later in the century, when traffic between India and England would have been more frequent, Jenks' version resembles even less than Glasse's interpretation what we know curry to actually be.

Curries were not the only recipes that derived inspiration from foreign places and found their way into cookbooks for British home-chefs. John Farley's 1792 edition of *The London Art of Cookery* included recipes for Indian pickles and imitation bamboo. Identified as suitable vegetables for "India pickle, or Piccalillo" were cauliflower, white cabbage, cucumbers, radish, kidney beans, and beetroots. Home cooks were instructed to sun dry their selected vegetables, then season with brown mustard seeds and turmeric before letting stand for twelve days near a heat sources until the pickles were "of a bright yellow colour." From there, cooks were to season their pickles with mace, white pepper, cloves, long pepper, and nutmeg.<sup>92</sup> The result would be a bright concoction, made spicy by the addition of mustard and two types of pepper.

Within the same volume is a recipe for "Indian Bamboo imitatied." For this dish, cooks are instructed to harvest the hearts of the shoots of elder in the beginning of May and to pickle them in gooseberry vinegar and ale, and then to season them with long pepper, ginger, Jamaica pepper and mace.<sup>93</sup> The use of common British goods in combination with exotic spices to recreate an Asiatic dish is an intriguing mixture of imperial sensibilities with domestic produce. Whether the average Briton had ever before heard of the bamboo plant is debatable, but Mr. Farley has herein assured them that a

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<sup>91</sup> James Jenks. *The complete cook: teaching the art of cookery in all its branches; ... Containing the greatest variety of approved receipts ... With an appendix teaching the art of making wine...* London: 1768, p. 148

<sup>92</sup> John Farley, *The London art of cookery, and housekeeper's complete assistant. ... To which is added, an appendix...* 7<sup>th</sup> edition. London: 1792, p. 267

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p. 247

suitable substitute can be found growing in their own regions and, with the addition of a few imported spices, can be made to resemble a dish served halfway across the world.

Not only were dishes imitated, but methods were as well. 1762's *The London Cook* by William Gelleroy contains two recipes that imply the home-cook can create exotic dishes. The recipes "To Make Melon Mangoes" and "To Mango Cucumbers" are a trifle confusing to read through the first time, as the fruit referenced in the title is completely absent from the ingredients, until modern readers realize that "to mango" is the methodology that the author is using to prepare melons and cucumbers in an exotic fashion. In the first instance, home-cooks are instructed to use unripe melons and pickle them with a seasoning of mustard seeds and garlic.<sup>94</sup> The second concoction follows the same pickling technique as the later, but calls for cucumbers seasoned with mustard-seed, garlic, ginger and horseradish.<sup>95</sup> The mustard seed would act as heat in the dish and the garlic would add novelty (as it is not a common ingredient in the majority of dishes in the collection). In the second dish, the addition of ginger and horseradish would add even more spicy notes to the palate and would counter the blandness of the cucumbers.

While the majority of publications focus solely on providing Britons with recipes, Farley's work also includes encyclopedic entries on a selection of ingredients, particularly those used in pickling. *The London Art of Cookery* contains a description of five types of pepper, information on where they are grown, how they are harvested, and what their general flavours are. Also included is similar information on ginger, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, all spice, "turmerick," and sugar. Here, in easily accessible format, the

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<sup>94</sup> William Gelleroy, *The London cook, or the whole art of cookery made easy and familiar. Containing a great number of approved and practical receipts in every branch of cookery.* London: 1762, p. 274

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 278

*Pepper.*

THERE are three kinds of pepper, the black, the white, and the long. The Cayenne and Jamaica pepper are not of that kind, though called by that name. There are two sorts of white pepper; one is made by steeping black pepper in sea-water, and then taking off the skin; the other is the fruit of a different plant, but very like the black pepper. These are both long trailing plants; they have jointed stalks, and are small. The fruit follows them. It is first green, then reddish, and of a deep purple when ripe, but grows black and wrinkled when dressing. Pepper is gathered in November, and the white is larger and milder than the black. It comes from the East Indies. That which is largest, and most free from dust, is the best. The long pepper is of the same nature, but milder.

*Ginger.*

THIS is a root which grows in the East Indies, and in many parts of America. The plant which springs from it has leaves like flags. It bears small flowers. The best comes from Calcutta, but very good from many other places. It is dug up in autumn, then washed, and spread on thin hurdles, supported on trussels. That which is found, and of the deepest yellow, is best.

*Cloves.*

THE Dutch have monopolized this spice almost entirely to themselves. They have destroyed them in the Molucca islands, and have propagated them in the island of Ternate. They are the fruit of a large beautiful tree, and are gathered before they are ripe. The tree has leaves like the bay. The clove is first green, and as soon as it begins to turn a little brown, it is gathered long before it is ripe. What are left upon the trees grow very large, and are called the mother of cloves. The small ones are gathered in the

Image No. 4-3

From *The London art of cookery, and housekeeper's complete assistant. ... To which is added, an appendix...* 7<sup>th</sup> edition. London: 1792

Available from Eighteenth Century Collection On-Line

\*The sentence above finishes: "the middle of the day, and laid in a shady and airy place to dry."

average British chef was given a partial lesson on the climate, location, and economy of various colonies from around the world.<sup>96</sup> (See image 4-3.)

These publications, and their place in the homes of Britons, must have been popular as there are multiple titles, many with multiple editions. Clearly, people were buying and using these instructional manuals to prepare food that would be consumed by their families and friends. The fact that they include the occasional reference to the colonies is telling of the state of the society. People were curious for information about the Empire and desirous of having the ability to create dishes that were exotic novelties. As imperial-inspired recipes appeared in cookbooks, it is reasonable to assume that authors and publishers were responding to a trend in the society to whom they were trying to sell their wares, and publishing information on how individuals could vicariously experience the Empire. Cookbooks allowed Britons, who might have had no direct, personal connection to the Empire, a chance to experience the flavour of the colonies without leaving home.

## **Art**

But what of public displays of appreciation for the Empire? While published debates and cookbooks allowed people to explore different aspects of the Empire in their own homes, there were also opportunities to do so in the public sphere. As art has forever been a mode of human expression, it is a useful source for the historian to access a visual representation of a society or particular event. In the case of eighteenth century

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<sup>96</sup> John Farley, *The London art of cookery, and housekeeper's complete assistant*, pp. 250-252

imperial Britain, *The Death of General Wolfe*, by Benjamin West, serves as a telling case study amongst countless possibilities.<sup>97</sup> (See image 4-4.)

Benjamin West was born in 1738 in Pennsylvania and studied art in Rome from 1759 to 1762 under the German artist Anton Mengs until he settled in London in 1763.<sup>98</sup> Having George III as his official patron, and being an important member of both the Society of Art and later the Royal Society of Art, West was both well known and liked as an artist.<sup>99</sup> *The Death of General Wolfe* was painted in 1770, ten years after the battle on the Plains of Abraham which it depicts. This work was, according to historian Maya Jasanoff, “the British Empire of the 1760s as it liked to be seen.” Though Robert Clive’s victory at Plassey in India in 1757 was arguably, in the Empire’s long-term context, more important than Quebec, Wolfe’s struggle for North America was also a watershed moment that people could recognize and easily relate to. Following three years of defeats,<sup>100</sup> this victory illustrated two main points in this “clash of civilizations” between the English and the French; first, the British were clearly fighting an imperial war which they could not afford to lose, and second, it was a war they were winning.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *The Death of General Wolfe* and the event that inspired it have spawned a voluminous field in history. For our purposes, it is important to recall that Wolfe’s death served as a touch-stone for the people of Britain in the eighteenth century in relation to the Empire and victory over the French. For a consideration of these themes, see Joan Coutu’s chapter “Legitimizing the British Empire: The Monuments to General Wolfe in Westminster Abbey,” in *Conflicting Visions: War and Visual Culture in Britain and France, c.1700-1830*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, pp. 61-84, Stephen Brumwell’s *Paths of Glory: The Life and Death of General James Wolfe*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006 and “The First Trans-Atlantic Hero? General James Wolfe and British North America.” *The Historian*. 84 (2004), pp. 8-15, and Simon Schama’s *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)*. Toronto: Random House, 1991.

<sup>98</sup> *The Biography Channel*, “Benjamin West Biography (1738–1820).”

<http://www.biography.com/search/article.do?id=9528194>

<sup>99</sup> Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West*. Milan, Italy: Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 50-51

<sup>100</sup> With the exception of the victory at Louisbourg in 1758.

<sup>101</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005, pp. 19-20



Image No. 4-4  
Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

The work is a massive canvas over a meter and a half tall and more than two meters wide. Visually, the spacing of the work is triangular; the eye is immediately drawn to Wolfe, reclining on the ground, then to those surrounding him, and finally, the eye is drawn upwards thanks to the flag and the darker patch of clouds behind it. West's use of colour is highly effective at drawing the viewer's eye around the work. The brightest spot of colour is, by far, General Wolfe's red tunic and snowy-white undershirt; no other red in the composition is quite as vivid as the shade found in this one area. From Wolfe, the eye is drawn to the blue jacket of the surgeon attending him, only to be pulled, partially by colour and partially by spacing, to the rich olive-toned skin of the Native

American. The eye is then drawn to the green jacket of the Ranger behind the Native, and finally around to the rest of the easily distinguished people surrounding Wolfe. Almost as an afterthought the viewer's eye is drawn to the muted tones of the people in the background, and away from the clustered individuals in the forefront, to where the battle is still taking place. The content of the painting has long been controversial.<sup>102</sup> In the various reproductions created by West himself, there are discrepancies in the people surrounding Wolfe; in reality, Wolfe died with only four people present.<sup>103</sup> But West believed "that an elevated truth of expression capturing the spirit of the subject is 'truer' than a more literal truth of reportage."<sup>104</sup>

What makes this painting truly fascinating is its combination of spacing, colour and content. Though the main focus of the work is the moment in time of Wolfe's death, when one reads the portrait from right to left, a five-hour long narrative is being told in which the British can be seen coming over the bluff around five in the morning, then the taking of the city of Quebec (which occurred by ten in the morning), and the culmination of the battle with the death of the British commander. To the right of the work we see the English boats in the St. Laurent River and to the left the church spire of Quebec; nowhere on the Plains of Abraham can one find this angle. The cloud cover depicted further confirms this passage of time; accounts of the battle describe a light drizzle as the British came up over the cliffs, while the sun broke through when they attained the city.<sup>105</sup> By telling the chronological and spatial story of the battle, West is providing his viewing

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<sup>102</sup> Simon Schama outlines the acclaim and criticism that West's work received from both contemporary art critics and political commentators, as well as provides an overview of the implications and importance of the piece. *Dead Certainties*, pp. 21-39

<sup>103</sup> Dennis Montagna, "Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe*: A Nationalist Narrative." *American Art Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2. (Spring, 1981), p. 75

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77. In fact, West is known to have accepted pay to include people in his scene who wanted to be associated with the victory and the great imperial hero, Wolfe.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78

audience with additional details and information regarding Britain's victory, thereby including his viewers in the nuances of imperial events.

The use of colour is also something of a narrative. Those surrounding the dying General are all wearing different uniforms, which distinguish them from one another in terms of cultural heritage. The Ranger, in green, was a resident of North America; as the blending of the old and new worlds, he is representative of Britain's future in the Canadas. Simon Fraser of the 78<sup>th</sup> Highlanders, standing behind the Ranger, as well as Isaac Barre, dressed in red and orange and supporting Wolfe in his last moments, are representative of the united effort of the British archipelago; the Highlanders were a Scottish regiment and Barre, Wolfe's second in command, was born in Dublin to Huguenots.<sup>106</sup> Finally, the un-named Native with his bare chest of ocher-coloured skin, is a figment of West's imagination; no aboriginals are known to have participated in the battle. However, taken as a whole, the painting's composition depicts the imperial efforts of many of the culture that made up the British Empire.

Contemporary reception of this work was overwhelmingly popular. And, despite its "flattering miss-representations," it was "relentlessly emulated and satirized – the painting became an instant icon of British art."<sup>107</sup> Not only did this work create the mass-market and industry for reproductions<sup>108</sup> by being "the single more reproduced work of art in the eighteenth century," but it also appeared on teacups, beer mugs, iron trays and needle-works.<sup>109</sup> All of this contributed to making it a ubiquitous part of daily life.

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<sup>106</sup> Martin Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinity in British Art, 1750-1810*. China: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 110

<sup>107</sup> Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire* (2005), pp. 19-20

<sup>108</sup> von Effra, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (1986), p. 62

<sup>109</sup> Elizabeth L. Roark, *Artists of Colonial America*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003, p. 183

The manner in which the public was exposed to this work also contributed to the imperial *mentalité* its existence encouraged. *The Death of General Wolfe* was often displayed along side *The Death of General Nelson*, also by West, and *The Death of the Earl of Chatham*, by John Singleton Copely. These three works taken together, as well as individually, evoke the image of Christ as the ultimate martyr. According to Helmut von Effra and Allen Staley, “West carefully organized the components of the *Death of Wolfe* to give it the monumental dignity of traditional history paintings and to convey the message [of] martyrdom by making Wolfe’s death recall scenes of the death of heroes and the lamentation over the dead Christ.”<sup>110</sup> By composing his work to mimic the look of Christ coming off the cross, West is reminding his viewers that Wolfe, with men like Nelson and Copely’s Pitt, died for freedom and liberty; because Wolfe appears as the epitome of genteel British manliness in his death,<sup>111</sup> his life’s sacrifice is made all the more poignant.

This work was meant to embody the ideals of the quickly expanding British Empire. From its composition to how it was intended to be interpreted by contemporaries, it was designed to create a sense of pride and admiration in Britons for the Empire. The numerous types of peoples surrounding Wolfe, be they from Great Britain or North America, are united by two factors; first, they are witnessing the death of a great hero and martyr of the British cause, and second, they do so while standing under the Union Jack, making them literally united by the symbolism of Britain. Finally, the fact that this work seeped into everyday life through reproductions, through tableware and through handicrafts is indicative of a growing sense of nationalism, pride and the

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<sup>110</sup> von Effra, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (1986), p. 58

<sup>111</sup> Myron, *Bodybuilding* (2005), p. 119

recognized potential for profits in the ideals that this work represented – and that is the Empire.

*The Death of General Wolfe* stands as an example amongst many that glorified imperial themes, which was a popular subject in Hanoverian Britain. Not only was this piece admired in the public domain, it resonated so deeply with the people that it inspired reproductions, which ensured its presence in many British homes. The imagery that must have been at work in these homes is stunning – the consumption of tea from the far east, sweetened with sugar from the plantations of the Caribbean, served along-side (perhaps) some imitation bamboo or curry, and poured from a tea pot depicting the British victory over the French in Canada (or under the watchful eye of the same image stitched in needle-point and hung on the wall) is a conceivable scene. Britons consumed and experienced Empire, even vicariously, in ways that were so innocuous that it is no wonder it became such a ubiquitous part of their identity.

In the case of eighteenth century Britain, the ephemera created by the Empire can be found everywhere one chooses to look. It is contained in the publications that focused on debates over the safety and merits of consumption, luxury and tea; it is ingrained in the accounts of daily lives that have survived for centuries through diaries and personal narratives; it stands out in instructional manuals intended to simplify lives and add flavour to them; and it is represented in the brush strokes of paintings that were popularly displayed and reproduced which used the Empire as their inspiration. The Empire was everywhere in the daily lives of Hanoverian Britons. Its influence and products could be found in homes, on docksides, in shops, on street corners, in public galleries, in texts and pamphlets, in print and paintings, and in the thoughts (both conscious and unconscious),

of all Britons, rich and poor alike. One cannot deny that the eighteenth century was an age of change in Britain, and not just in terms of the state's development and economics – the people of Britain were changing in response to the external influence introduced through the Empire, which was changing them from the inside out.

## Conclusions

In the eighteenth century the British Empire was a collection of economically integrated interests which, for the most part, were independent from continuous state direction. Even though the state was not the driving force behind colonial development(s), it was more than willing to encourage and utilize the Empire for its own interests. The structure of the British state was made stronger and more efficient with the state's ability to tax the incoming colonial goods and (though trade levels fell off during times of war) to utilize the massive merchant fleet that was being created by trade for naval purposes.<sup>1</sup> In this era, the Empire was also contributing in an important way to the development of the British identity. As Britannia's continued presence indicates, the British people were determined to be successful in their wider global pursuits; she demonstrates that the Empire was understood to be a global endeavour, looked upon favorably by divine powers, and as a testament to the freedom and power of the British people. Shared experiences in terms of wars, colonial successes, and domestic growth resulting from imperial efforts were affecting all Britons and providing them a common dialogue that contributed to the creation of their identity.<sup>2</sup> Politics, laws, domestic life, and art all reflected the changes that were occurring in Britain in the eighteenth century as it related to the wider world, and it is these changes that are the focus of this thesis.

In the eighteenth century it was common practice for the British Parliament to pass legislation designed to legalize and legitimize the extraction of goods from their imperial possessions. The efforts of the individuals and companies who took advantage

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<sup>1</sup> This fiscal-military state model is the focus of John Brewer's *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. London: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 5

of the state's support of foreign trade can be seen not only in the composition of legislation, but also in the commercial atmosphere that existed in London by the end of the century. To these ends, merchant directories shed light on the role of consumerism in Hanoverian culture and, by using them to seek out the existence of colonial influences in the consumer culture, the pervasive presence of imperial commerce is clear. Chapter one sought to show how the legal and commercial spheres of Hanoverian Britain reacted to the ever-increasing presence of the goods of empire in their midst; a consideration of these dimensions proves how important the Empire was in the creation of a shared sense of "Britishness" and the growth of Britain's economy.

From the shops of London (and other localities throughout Britain), imperial goods entered the homes of Britons to be displayed or consumed in both private and social situations. Household receipts are indicative of just how often colonial groceries were consumed, while probate records show the way in which Britons collected the Empire in their homes. Moreover, household receipts demonstrate the savvy nature of shoppers by including both descriptions and prices, which allow modern historians to observe the discerning tastes of Britons, as well as the wide variety of goods that had become available for purchase. Chapter two sought to explore how pervasive imperial goods were and what place they had in the homes of Britons. By considering the quantities, frequencies and uses of these goods, an understanding of the participatory nature of the Empire and the manner in which its goods were perceived as being of central importance to the British domestic scene becomes clear.

Beyond the overt physical consumption of Empire, the surviving sources from Hanoverian society allow us to explore the intellectual consumption and resultant

mentalities of a shared identity which emerged in the eighteenth century in response to colonial growth. Published debates on the issues of consumption and luxury goods allow historians to assess how the Empire was received and interpreted. For the same reason, one should consider personal papers, as these works were created in the most intimate of settings and detail the author's perception(s) of self and their society. An understanding of the development of the British identity through the Empire can also be found in the cook-books that were published in the eighteenth century. These collections often contained dishes inspired by distant colonies along-side the traditional fare of English roasts and puddings. With their publication even the most isolated and regional-centric individuals had access to the shared collective of experiences resulting from the nation's global imperialism. Finally, artistic expression by individuals created works with imperial themes which provided their viewers with a visual understanding of exotic lands and the peoples that were being absorbed into the British Empire. These sources, perhaps more so than the physical remains of consumerism, speak directly to the internalization of the Empire and its connective powers. Chapter three sought to demonstrate that the connections between Britons based on these ephemeral ties contributed to a nation-wide, shared experience with the Empire at its center.

Hanoverian society was in a state of flux. Internal and external forces were at work that affected the economic, social, and political landscapes. One of the major influencing factors on all these aspects of Hanoverian culture was imperial expansion. The Empire contributed to, and encouraged expansion into the wider-world, which resulted in massive changes to Britain's internal economic and political structures. Often times in the study of imperial histories the focus is on the impact that imperialism had on

the colonized, but equally important is an assessment of how the colonies changed the colonizers. The effort to exert the culture of the metropole in the peripheries is virtually impossible, as that way of life is constantly being changed and influenced by the very colonies it is trying to mold. The process was no different in Hanoverian Britain.

Politically, those with imperial experience and a vested interest in imperial expansion exerted influence over Parliament, encouraging the passing of laws to protect and expand the economic benefits of Empire for Britain. Socially, the Empire created a new culture; the ritualized consumption of imperial goods led to shared experiences and common practices which defined the quotidian lives of Britons. Moreover, the Empire gave the peoples of the British Isles space into which they could expand, which created the potential for growth and advancement. All of the archipelago's cultures contributed people to imperial adventures, a process which is at the root of British identity. The existence of an external 'other' forced the cultures of Britain to unite together as a single front through which to deal with the challenges presented by the colonies.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the growing market economy (in terms of both foreign imports/exports and domestic manufacturing inspired by foreign goods and consumption patterns) created a financial environment in which almost everyone could engage in consumption, and chose to do so by the purchasing foreign goods.<sup>4</sup> It is in the obvious popularity of colonial goods that the importance of Empire, identity and consumption coalesce to show historians how

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<sup>3</sup> But also through their European competitors.

<sup>4</sup> Neil McKendrick's analysis of the ability of Britons to consume is explored in *The Birth of a Consumer Society* and is complimented by the work of Maxine Berg. "Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution." *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds). Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 228-244

central the Empire was in the self-awareness that Britons had of themselves and their place in the world in the eighteenth century.

While the eighteenth century was a period of momentous change for Britain in terms of industrialization, politics, and religion, it is important not to over-look the central role that the growing Empire played in the changes occurring in society as well. It cannot be denied that the Empire was a major contributing factor in the creation of the British identity as contemporaries understood it and as we know it today. The surest way to track how such important changes occurred is by examine them through the defining characteristics of the society, and one of the most obvious ways to do so for this period is by examining the emergence of the consumer culture. The British identity that was created in the eighteenth century was a direct result of the consumption by Britons of the good that were produced and introduced through their imperial experiences.

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