THE EUROPEAN COFFEE-HOUSE:

A POLITICAL HISTORY

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A THESIS
Presented to the Department of Political Science
and the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 2007

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Kelly Intile   for the degree of   Bachelor of Arts

In the Department of Political Science   to be taken   June 2007

Title: THE EUROPEAN COFFEE-HOUSE: A POLITICAL HISTORY

Approved: _____

Professor Craig Parsons

From the early sixteenth century to the Industrial Revolution, coffee-houses

spread from the Middle East throughout Europe and grew into important political,

economic, and social institutions. This paper investigates the role of the coffee-house in

developing and promoting these concepts and relates the ways in which the European

coffee-house gave rise to such organizations as the London Stock Exchange and Lloyd's

of London. As liberal political ideology developed, the coffee-house, especially in

England, became the forum through which the notions of freedom of speech and the

public sphere emerged, and this thesis pays particular attention to the impact of coffee-

house culture on the development of these concepts. It also gives an account of the

subsequent decline in influence of English coffee-houses, chronicling those cultural,

political, and financial changes that transformed the European coffee-house from an

epicenter of urban activity into an obsolete institution. Finally, it compares these

traditional European coffee-houses with post-WWII coffee bars and twenty-first century

"Starbucks revolution"-era coffee shops, contrasting the role of modern coffee-houses

with that of their seventeenth and eighteenth century European predecessors.

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Introduction

While I was visiting the Forbidden City in the center of Beijing, I became tired and thirsty. In between the Hall of Preserving Harmony and the Gate of Heavenly Purity, an unremarkable sign directed me to a small coffee shop. What I encountered, however, is the remarkable result of centuries of cultural, social, and political evolution of the coffee-house concept: a Starbucks coffee shop in the middle of the Forbidden City. In contemporary American society, we tend to think of the coffee shop as a distinctly European institution, but how is an American coffee chain located in the heart of China related to our conception of traditional European coffee-houses? More importantly, how did coffee-houses turn a Middle Eastern beverage into a catalyst for political and social change?

The answer lies in an in-depth investigation of how European coffee-houses emerged, developed, and interacted with the political, social, and economic circumstances of the time. This thesis examines how the coffee-house became a central part of European society from the mid-seventeenth century to the Industrial Revolution, and how its character evolved into the post-war era and into our modern lives.

Coffee began its journey into European culture as an exotic commodity from the Middle East. Originally grown in Ethiopia, it arrived in Yemen sometime in the fifteenth century and was initially used by Sufi Muslims for staying awake for prayers at all hours of the night. Although coffee was commonly consumed by Ethiopians in ceremonies that took place in the home, the public Middle Eastern coffee-house began to take shape as early as 1511 in Mecca. Despite various unsuccessful attempts to suppress them, Middle

Eastern coffee-houses survived and played host to many travelers and merchants from Europe.

As European visitors to the Middle East became acquainted with this exotic drink, they began to spread word of its mind-altering powers to their countrymen back home. Initially seen as an exotic indulgence of the elite, coffee eventually evolved to be the preferred drug of the working class, as well as a catalyst for radical thought and creative energy that would come to characterize the coffee-houses of Europe. Coffee-houses, evolving from street-peddlers and coffee stands of the early seventeenth century, began to spring up all over Europe, beginning in England in the 1650s. Rumors of the health benefits of coffee were abundant, and coffee-houses encouraged sobriety, rational thought, and articulate political discussion, whereas taverns merely provided a haven for irreverence and intoxication.

English coffee-houses developed in a way that was different from their counterparts on the European continent. Although certain aspects of coffee-house culture were present throughout Europe and its colonies in the Americas, English coffee-houses emerged as the quintessential egalitarian, commercial, and political meeting-places with which we now associate traditional notions of pre-Industrial Revolution coffee-houses.

The kind of political thought that took place in coffee-houses was particularly suited to the emergence of liberal political ideology, emphasizing public participation, civility, and rationality. Coffee-houses encouraged men (women were almost without exception excluded from coffee-houses) to behave according to an unspoken code of civilized conduct, which was not forced upon them by some authority, but which represented their gentility and prudence. The coffee-house was generally an egalitarian

and inclusive meeting place, but as it evolved particular groups discovered ways to create exclusivity and members-only organizations within the coffee-house environment.

The most substantial contribution the coffee-house made to the political development of Europe during this period was to promote the notion of the public sphere, especially by facilitating the distribution of news and information to all its patrons. Coffee-houses were often the first place new ideas of freedom of speech were put to the test; many coffee-houses became forums for debating often subversive topics that found no other environment for discussion. This reputation for sedition led to the proclamation in 1675 by King Charles II of England that all coffee-houses were to be closed; the defeat of this proclamation demonstrated the power of the economic claims of coffee-house owners over the whims of the monarchy. The coffee-house keepers successfully defended their economic interests, and in so doing preserved the notion of freedom of speech within the public sphere.

Despite resistance, coffee-houses survived as political epicenters for various revolutionary movements and often were infiltrated by those in power as a means of gauging public opinion and spying on those suspected of subversion. They also became the undisputed commercial hubs for the merchant and trading class, and soon grew into institutions like the London Stock Exchange and Lloyd's of London that came to characterize the English "Financial Revolution." By bringing together buyers and sellers in a sociable atmosphere, the coffee-house became the physical "market" that resulted in the natural setting of market prices. This practice evolved into the financial institutions we know today.

In addition to an account of how coffee-houses functioned in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, this thesis seeks to discover how, despite such a rapid rise in popularity and influence, the coffee-house began to pass into obscurity in England. Traditional English coffee-houses were almost entirely displaced by their competitors: restaurants, Parisian-style cafés, taverns, men's clubs, and tea-drinking in the home. Although there were undoubtedly establishments in England and elsewhere in Europe serving coffee after the Industrial Revolution, there was a marked decline in the influence and importance of coffee-houses as focal points for social activity, particularly economic. This occurred, I will argue, not because of changes in culinary preferences, but because the function played by coffee-houses in the development of the public sphere underwent a drastic transformation. The political consequences of English coffee-house culture – the evolution of the public sphere and the shaping of public opinion by open debate facilitated by accessibility to news and journalism– were no longer dependent upon the commodity of coffee itself. Coffee-houses "had served their purpose and were no longer needed as meeting-places for political or literary criticism and debate. They had seen the nation pass through one of its greatest periods of trial and tribulation; had fought and won the battle for individual freedom; had acted as a steadying influence in an age of profligacy; and had given us a standard of prose-writing and literary criticism unequalled before or since."[1]

Having related the political and historical narrative of the rise and fall of the European coffee-house, I will turn to its resurgence in the post-WWII era. After a drastic increase in coffee prices, the "Espresso Revolution" found its way into a niche market that offered a more streamlined, modern coffee experience, giving birth to the coffee bar.

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[1] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: 239.

The coffee bar emerged as a mingling place for young working- and middle-class Europeans who longed for a liberal and sociable environment as an escape from the repressive dictatorships of twentieth century Europe. I will discuss the extent to which coffee bar was a revitalized version of the traditional coffee-house, paying particular attention to its function (or lack thereof) as a political and economic focal point. The twentieth century coffee bar bears more resemblance to the Parisian café, and both of these are more closely related to the modern coffee-house than to the traditional English coffee-house. At the heart of this comparison lies the separation of political and economic life from the coffee-house that occurred with the emergence of exclusive clubs from coffee-house gatherings in the late seventeenth century.

The final chapter in this account of the political history of the European coffee-house will be a critique of the impact of the "Starbucks Revolution" on our modern conception of the role of the coffee-house in our political, economic, and cultural scene. I will debate whether or not Starbucks is a chain of European-style coffee-houses, which will help to elucidate the function pre-Industrial Revolution coffee-houses served in their era. This will help to reveal how globalization and consumerism have transformed the European coffee-house from an egalitarian and sociable common space to a status symbol frequented by people consuming a strange variation of traditional coffee and trying to escape the vivacious and bustling economic and political scene coffee-houses once promoted. I will conclude by drawing an analogy between the public sphere operated in the traditional European coffee-house arena and the public sphere that we find on the Internet today, which offers the same egalitarian opportunities to participate in political debates that coffee-house patrons enjoyed centuries ago.

Chapter 1

A New Commodity

Coffee and Coffee-houses in the Middle East

The cultivation of the coffee bean began in the highlands of Ethiopia, where it was probably consumed by chewing its beans or brewing its leaves into a tea during elaborate ceremonies (some of which still take place today).[2] As its use became more widespread, people reacted in a variety of ways to the stimulating and invigorating properties of coffee. Although the physical effects of coffee were embraced by certain elements in society (Sufi Muslims in the Middle East and political theorists, artists, and poets in Europe), coffeehouses and the conversations that took place within their walls aroused suspicion wherever they arose. Resistance to European coffee-houses as they spread throughout the continent was preceded by similar opposition in the Middle East, where coffeehouses were banned and then revived numerous times.

Sometime before the sixteenth century, coffee spread from Ethiopia to Yemen, and eventually throughout the Middle East. It has been suggested that the Ethiopians deliberately established coffee plantations during their invasion and subsequent fifty-year rule of Yemen in the sixth century.[3] An Islamic hermit from Yemen is often credited as being the first to make a drink out of the coffee bean itself[4]. Coffee plants took hold in the nearby hills and mountains, and coffee drinking was embraced by Sufi Muslims, who used the drink to stay awake and alert during prayers at all hours of the night. The Sufis

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[2] Allen, Stewart Lee. *The Devil's Cup: Coffee, The Driving Force in History.* (New York: Soho, 1999) 47.
[3] Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World.* (New York: Basic, 1999) 6.
[4] Allen, *The Devil's Cup:* 47.

were extremely pious, but by no means reclusive, so their habits soon became diffused throughout Middle Eastern society and coffee drinking became common in homes, bathhouses, markets, and workplaces.

Once coffee spread outside its originally religious context, it was embraced by people from across the economic spectrum, and under Ottoman Turkish rule, coffee was found to serve numerous purposes for people throughout every stratum of society. It was credited with invigorating the bodies of fatigued warriors as well as revitalizing the minds of tired philosophers and politicians. Even women became avid coffee drinkers, as its properties were said to ease the pains of labor; Turkish law allowed a women to divorce her husband if he was unable to provide (or attempted to refuse her access to) coffee.[5] While special "coffee rooms" for ceremonial coffee drinking were commonly found in wealthy households, coffeehouses, or *kaveh kanes* were established as a meeting place for common people to enjoy their coffee.[6]

Nonetheless, coffeehouses met with considerable opposition in the Muslim world. Although Sufis used it specifically as an aid in their daily devotions, some objected to its use by the masses, arguing that using its invigorating properties for any impious purpose was a perversion of coffee's proper consumption.[7] Alcohol was, of course, forbidden by Islamic law, and some feared that coffee was merely another intoxicant that should be banned as well. Coffee was a cause for concern not only because of its mind-altering properties, but because it had become a stimulus for sociability and conversation, which often led to the discussion of subversive or inappropriate subjects. The question of the

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[5] Jacob, Heinrich Eduard. *The Saga of Coffee: The Biography of an Economic Product.* Trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935) 31.

[6] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 6.

[7] Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East.* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1985) 25.

legality of coffee became more complex as coffeehouses took hold and became an environment that condoned undesirable behaviors, while coffee as a substance still played an important role in religious devotions.

The first official report of a place for coffee consumption and social gathering comes from Mecca in 1511. Reacting to reports of the rambunctious and unbecoming behavior of coffeehouse patrons, Khair-Beg, the young governor of Mecca, decreed that coffee, like alcohol, should be outlawed by the Koran and that all coffeehouses in Mecca should be closed, although it was rumored that this harsh reaction was a result of the satirical verses about Khair-Beg that were generated during coffeehouse meetings.[8] Much of the literature on Islamic resistance to Middle Eastern coffee-houses focuses on the relationship between coffee and other mind-altering substances, especially wine. Ralph S. Hattox cites a sixteenth century Middle Eastern manuscript of uncertain authorship which argues that:

> If you draw the analogy between coffee and intoxicants you are drawing a false one, since it has been made clear to you how it is quite the opposite in nature and effect. One drinks coffee with the name of the lord on his lips, and stays awake, while the person who seeks wanton delight in intoxicants disregards the Lord, and gets drunk.[9]

For most Muslims, coffee-houses provided a sociable meeting-place which did not conflict with the Holy Law of the Koran. While there were taverns scattered throughout Middle Eastern cities, they were run exclusively by non-Muslims for non-Muslims since, according to Islamic law, it was impermissible to even serve alcohol in the presence of Muslims. The coffee-house, therefore, provided the congenial atmosphere usually found in taverns to Middle Easterners

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[8] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds:* 6.
[9] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses:* 59.

whose religion would not permit the presence of alcohol. In fact, Heinrich Jacob draws an analogy between the presence of wine in ancient Western civilizations to that of coffee, the "wine of Islam," in the development of what he calls "Mohammedan civilization;" he asserts that "Anti-Bacchic stimulation, the idolization of reason, the religio-intellectualist doctrine of salvation which has always been characteristic of Mohammedanism, is cousin-german to the aroma of coffee."[10] This sentiment is echoed by European writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries arguing for the superiority of coffee-houses over taverns, both in terms of the respective beverages they provide, the activity and conversation they promote and the patrons they attract.

Future Middle Eastern rulers would also attempt to ban coffee and coffeehouses – like the Grand Vizier Kuprili of Constantinople, who was fearful of sedition during war – and the punishments for consuming coffee during these periods of prohibition ranged from beatings to being sewn into a leather bag and tossed into the Bosphorus[11]. However, coffee drinking continued and bans on coffeehouses were always repealed. Coffee had become an essential part of Middle Eastern society and was considered a fundamental part of most business transactions, and coffeehouses were often the site of such agreements, as well as for political conversation and various forms of entertainment. Love for coffee in the Middle East would not be contained, but the occupying Turks attempted to make sure its cultivation was.

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[10] Jacob, *The Saga of Coffee*: 31.
[11] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 6.

Travelers and Merchants

During the Ottoman Turkish occupation of Yemen, which began in 1536, coffee was exported throughout Europe. Muslim pilgrims had already spread coffee to Turkey, as well as Egypt, Persia, and North Africa. The Ottomans recognized the value of coffee as a trade commodity and strictly regulated its cultivation and sale. Europeans traveling through Muslim lands were introduced to coffee and reported that it offered numerous health benefits, including prevention of kidney stones and improved digestion. Information about the health benefits of coffee did not come from Muslim coffee drinkers, who consumed the beverage primarily for its stimulating properties, and overly-eager European coffee enthusiasts probably invented (or at the very least exaggerated) these claims.[12] Middle Eastern coffee merchants were happy to introduce the beverage to European travelers, who took a keen interest in the exotic beverage, and coffee shops (which sold take-out coffee, unlike coffeehouses) sprung up all over Istanbul to increase demand for coffee. Although coffeehouses were a distinctly Muslim institution, Christians and Jews were allowed into them (although this is not to say that they were frequent patrons), and Greeks and Armenians are often credited with introducing coffee to Europe.[13]

Many European travelers found coffee to be a barbaric drink because of its bitter, often burnt taste and its dark brown or black color. Sir George Sandys, a British poet, noted in 1610 that Turks spend most of their day chatting over a cup of coffee, which he described as "blacke as soote, and tasting not much unlike it.[14]" Those familiar with Middle Eastern traditions and culture could appreciate differences in the development of

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[12]Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*: 70.
[13] Ibid, 98.
[14] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 8.

the Middle Eastern palate and were, for obvious reasons, the best equipped to introduce this foreign beverage to Europe. According to legend, a particularly brave Polish interpreter named Kolschitzky disguised himself as a Turk and aided in the dispelling of the invading Turkish army from Vienna by passing successfully by the Turkish troops to recruit the help of nearby Polish troops The Turks were swiftly defeated and fled in such a hurry that they left five hundred sacks of a strange green bean behind, which were almost burned by the Viennese but for Kolschitzky's insistence that they were in fact an ingredient for making a traditional Ottoman beverage – coffee.[15]

At this time, all of the coffee in the world was exported through the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Turks were careful to safeguard their monopoly over the cultivation of this commodity, whose popularity was increasing exponentially. Most of the coffee that would eventually make its way to Europe was exported through the Yemeni port of Mocha (coffee that passed through this port was referred to by this name), then shipped to Suez and transported by camel to warehouses in Alexandria, where it was purchased and picked up by French and Venetian coffee merchants.[16] As Europeans began to demand more and more coffee, the Ottomans adopted strict policies to ensure that they maintained their domination of the world coffee market. They refused to allow any fertile berries to leave the country; all coffee berries had to be partially roasted or blanched in boiling water to prevent germination outside the Ottoman Empire.

This monopoly, however, would not last forever. Merchants and pilgrims eventually managed to smuggle fertile coffee berries out of the Ottoman Empire and begin cultivating them around the world. In the seventeenth century, a Muslim pilgrim

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[15] Jacob, *The Saga of Coffee*: 73.
[16] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 7.

managed to leave Yemen with seven fertile seeds taped to his stomach; he proceeded to plant and cultivate them in Southern India. Dutch merchants were able to transplant trees to the islands of the Dutch East Indies, where they took root and became the dominant crop whose yield determined the worldwide price of coffee.

Demand for coffee in Europe gradually began to increase as travelers and merchants returned from the Ottoman Empire, and as Europeans imported more and more coffee, they also inherited the coffeehouse concept. Coffee was initially seen as an exotic commodity that was only accessible to the wealthy elite, and coffee drinking in the home was seen as a fashionable and mysterious practice first in France, then in England and the Netherlands.[17] Eventually, as it had in the Middle East, coffee became popular among the masses. It was initially sold in on the streets of Italy and France by street peddlers who would brew coffee in portable stoves and fill customers' cups at their door. In mid-seventeenth century Italy, street peddlers went door-to-door selling coffee, chocolate, and liquor.[18] This form of distribution eventually disappeared as the idea of the Middle Eastern coffeehouse spread throughout Europe.

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[17] Woodruff D. Smith, "From Coffeehouse to Parlour: The consumption of coffee, tea and sugar in north-western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology.* Eds. Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt. (London: Routledge, 1995) 148.
[18] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds:* 8.

Chapter 2

Europeanization

Spread of Coffee-houses

Various alterations to its preparation and taste were necessary to make coffee more palatable to Europeans. Middle Easterners (and this is still true in general) would prefer their coffee to be roasted very dark, ground very fine, and boiled several times. Egyptian coffee-drinkers are cited as being the first to add sugar to their coffee sometime around 1625, although because dairy was not a staple in their diet, they never thought of adding milk.[19] Although the Turks believed that the virtue of coffee actually resided in the sediment that accumulated on the bottom of the cup, Kolschitzky found that the Viennese preferred a clarified coffee beverage which was strained to remove the grounds, and he often flavored it with milk and honey.[20] As coffee-houses spread into Europe, so did different ways of producing and serving the beverage itself. In general, the farther away from the Middle East coffee traveled, the more it was mixed with milk and the weaker – in terms of body, color, and sediment – it was brewed.

The first coffeehouses in Europe were established during the seventeenth century and quickly became known for vibrant conversation and a relaxed atmosphere. A Lebanese Jew opened up the first coffeehouse in England at Oxford University in 1650. London's first coffeehouse was established soon thereafter, in 1652, by a Greek who also gained notoriety for printing the first coffee advertisement, which extolled the many

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[19] Davids, Kenneth. *Coffee: A Guide to Buying, Brewing, and Enjoying.* (Santa Rosa: 101 Productions, 1991) 187.

[20] Jacob, *The Saga of Coffee*: 73.

medicinal benefits of the exotic brew. The Turkish ambassador to France introduced coffee at Parisian parties by 1669, and an Italian immigrant, Francois Procope, opened the famous Cafè de Procope twenty years later.[21] The year 1683 saw the opening of coffeehouses in Venice and Vienna. By 1700, there were at least two thousand coffeehouses in London, including Edward Lloyd's legendary coffeehouse, which would become the foundation for the renowned insurance company Lloyd's of London.[22] By the late eighteenth century, coffee-houses had spread to most of the significant metropolitan areas of England and continental Europe, as well as to the Iberian Peninsula and America.[23]

European coffeehouses, like those found throughout the Ottoman Empire, had a congenial, club-like atmosphere that combined leisure and business in an almost exclusively male environment. However, as the coffeehouse model spread, coffeehouses took on a distinctly European character. European coffeehouses, as opposed to their Middle Eastern predecessors, rarely featured live entertainment and music, and their patrons discussed political matters more frequently and with more intensity.[24] It was in European coffeehouses that coffee was first sweetened with milk and sugar. European demand for coffee continued to increase as the debate over the health benefits of coffee raged on, and doctors who encouraged coffee consumption in order to enhance overall health were accused of being in the employ of companies that imported and sold coffee. European coffee sellers and consumers took ownership of coffee, sometimes referring to

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[21] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 9.

[22] Ibid, 13.

[23] See Appendix A for a chronological list of coffee-houses established in major European cities.

[24] Jordan Goodman, "Excitantia: Or, how Enlightenment Europe took to soft drugs." *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology.* Eds. Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt. (London: Routledge, 1995) 132.

its eastern roots, but always maintaining that coffee was now a more refined, Europeanized commodity.

Coffeehouses in Europe evolved into forums for social and economic development. Unlike taverns, coffeehouses served a product that promoted rational thinking and lucidity and were an ideal environment for business transactions. Economic contracts agreed upon in a coffeehouse, as well as the parties involved in them, had the appearance of legitimacy, level-headedness and solidarity. European coffee drinkers, as opposed to their counterparts in taverns, exuded an air of self-control and health. Coffee drinking demonstrated one's prudence and discretion, as well as one's ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Regular consumption of coffee and tea was seen throughout Europe as a way to counteract sweet, dangerous solids and rebalance the humors.[25] Taking sugar with one's coffee is an extension of this belief, as sugar counterbalances the inherent bitterness of coffee.

Coffeehouses also helped to revolutionize social structure in seventeenth-century Europe. They helped to promote a new idea of European masculinity – one rooted in rationality and gentility. In the emerging bourgeois classes of Europe, coffeehouses provided an outlet for the expression of these much-desired male characteristics. Unlike taverns, which had been the meeting and gathering places of the past, coffeehouses were a place where the honesty, reliability, and prudence of one's fellow patrons were safe assumptions; merely being seen in a coffeehouse enhanced one's reputation. Those on the fringe of bourgeois society could frequent coffeehouses in order to gain the respect and admiration of their contemporaries by participating in the "natural order" that emerged among intellectuals discussing politics and other serious subjects. Especially in

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[25] Smith, "From Coffeehouse to Parlour." *Consuming Habits:* 153.

England, each coffeehouse had its own particular clientele, and these "penny

universities" (as coffeehouses were often referred to) quickly became England's premiere

egalitarian meeting places, where all patrons were considered to be more or less equal. In

coffeehouses, men could demonstrate their propriety and judiciousness during the short-

term business relationships that formed for specific purposes over the sobering brew.

Continental Cafés and Coffee-houses

Because English coffee-houses provide the most well-documented and instructive

example of the political history of European coffee-houses, most of my analysis focuses

on England. However, a brief history of French coffee-houses, with reference to coffee-

houses on other parts of the continent, will demonstrate the differences between the

political role of coffee-houses on the continent and those in England. To give an

adequate account of coffee-house culture in Paris, I must distinguish between Parisian

cafés and Parisian coffee-houses, which are often conflated to invoke a singular image.[26]

Cafés were very different from the traditional coffee-house as I have described; they

served food and liquor, were decorated with large mirrors and extravagant wall-hangings

to create an atmosphere of luxury for their almost exclusively elite, upper-class

clientele.[27] This form was to be mimicked by English coffee-house owners trying to

revitalize their businesses after the decline of the traditional English coffee-houses.

Patrons from the cultural elite, including women, frequented Parisian cafés to appear

fashionable and to showcase their etiquette. Although economics, literature, and politics

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[26] Here I use "Parisian coffee-houses" and "French coffee-houses" interchangeably due to the lack of information on French coffee-houses located outside of Paris. The coffee-house activity that this thesis focuses on mostly likely was centered in major metropolitan centers, so this generalization is reasonable for the purpose of my investigation.

[27] Ellis, Markman. *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History*. (London: Phoenix, 2004) 204.

often became topics of discussion, Parisian cafés did not have a reputation for being the hub of news and debate like English coffee-houses.

Parisian coffee-houses also developed with a unique character, both in terms of their atmosphere and their function within the French political scene. They emerged quite a bit later than their English counterparts, not gaining widespread popularity until the early eighteenth century. Women are mentioned more often in accounts of French coffee-houses than those of English coffee-houses, but it is unclear whether this meant a significant difference in the inclusion of women in political discussions. Before the volatile years leading up to the French Revolution, most of the intense political debate, economic interaction, and scientific and literary discussions that were common in English coffee-houses were taking place in salons, Masonic lodges, academic institutions, and debating clubs.[28] Leading French intellectuals were known to host weekly salons in their homes for the purpose of facilitating political or academic debate.

During the pre-revolutionary years of the late eighteenth century, Parisian coffee-houses increasingly became the prime locations for heated political discussion and debate. They also enabled men to display their rational and civil nature without being constrained by some rigid set of rules imposed on them by an authority figure. Woodruff D. Smith argues that French coffee-houses were instrumental in forming public opinion because pre-revolutionary France was "a society not well equipped with public institutions for the discussion of politics[29]." In light of the rising tide of discontentment among the Third Estate – the social stratum from which most Parisian coffee-house patrons hailed – coffee-house conversation was frequently filled with complaints, both

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[28] Ibid, 204.
[29] Smith, "From Coffeehouse to Parlour." *Consuming Habits:* 155.

economic and political. Heinrich Jacob notes that Parisian coffee-houses "were meeting-points between literature and economics, were the posting-stations at which mental discontent rubbed shoulders with material[30]."

The French authorities were undoubtedly concerned with the radical political conversations taking place at the coffee-houses. The police undertook efforts to conduct surveillance on coffee-houses and infiltrate the inner-circles of the political groups that met there. Interestingly, the French authorities were more concerned with the biological effects of coffee itself than by the goings-on in the coffee-houses. They were concerned that their subjects, fortified and emboldened by coffee and its ability to stave off fatigue, would stay awake all night and become vulnerable to radical ideologies and public opinion.[31] Finding itself in dire financial straits, the French government could not afford to deny licenses to coffee-house owners. Furthermore, like those who would oppose King Charles II's decree that all coffee-houses in England should be closed, French authorities saw the coffee-house as a harmless safety-valve for allowing the disgruntled bourgeoisie to voice its political dissent.[32]

There are, of course, references in the historical literature to coffeehouses outside of England and France. German coffee-houses met with strong resistance because they sought to introduce a beverage which would displace beer in an environment that would do the same to taverns and pubs. This was characterized by coffee-house critics as an abandonment of traditional German culture in favor of foreign customs. German coffee-houses did, however, open in Hamburg and Leipzig, although primarily for the purpose of serving travelers and merchants from England and France who had become

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[30] Jacob, *The Saga of Coffee*: 194.
[31] Ibid, 196.
[32] Ibid, 196.

accustomed to coffee. Coffee-drinking became well established in major metropolitan centers throughout Germany, but for the most part was dismissed by all but the upper classes as an indulgence of the French and English. Johann Sebastian Bach composed the famous *Coffee* Cantata in the 1730s, which depicts a father trying desperately to break his daughter of her coffee addiction. She laments that "if I can't drink my bowl of coffee three times daily, then in my torment, I will shrivel up like a piece of roast goat," and her father replies by threatening her with dismal marriage prospects if she cannot free herself from this habit.[33] It is clear, however, the coffee-house culture as it was known in England and later in France did not catch on until well into the eighteenth century in Germany.

Venice had long been familiar with coffee because it was home to a substantial population of Turkish merchants. It was originally sold by apothecaries in the mid-seventeenth century, and the first coffee-house was opened in Venice in 1683.[34] Another early coffee-house keeper was Floriano Francesconi, who opened his shop in St. Mark's Square in 1720. This coffee-house was to evolve into the famous Caffé Florian, which played host to such famous customers as Jean Jacques Rousseau and is still in business today at the same location.[35] The famous Venetian coffee-houses surround St. Mark's Square resemble Parisian cafés more than English coffee-houses; they served food and alcohol, and were frequented by men and women. Political and philosophical debates often took place in these Italian coffee-houses, but unlike those in England, they did not attract customers primarily because of their reputation for politics and commerce.

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[33] Ibid, 203.
[34] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 82.
[35] Ibid, 83.

Despite its reputation as a beverage of distinctly Muslim origins, coffee did not receive especially virulent criticism from the Catholic Church. According to one account, Pope Clement VIII tasted coffee before coffee or coffee-houses had really taken hold in Europe. His bishops brought him a cup of coffee, warning that this Muslim drink must be banned because of its foreign origins. Tasting it, he supposedly replied that "this Satan's drink is so delicious that it would be a pity to let the infidels have exclusive use of it. We shall fool Satan by baptizing it and making it a truly Christian beverage".[36] Whether or not this narrative is true, there is little evidence that coffee provoked the kind of religious disapproval in Europe that it did in the Middle East.

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[36] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 8.

Chapter III

English Coffee-houses

Coffee-house Culture

The defining characteristics of English coffee-house culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were sociability, unrestricted (but still civil) debate, and egalitarianism. Most coffee-houses had public rooms for those wishing to converse openly and freely with whomever happened to be there at the time, as well as small booths for people wishing to have more private conversations or who wanted to conduct business in relative privacy. As coffee-houses continued to evolve into the eighteenth century, separate private rooms that could be reserved for specific financial, political, or scientific gatherings became a prominent feature of most coffee-houses, especially those near Exchange Alley which were to become a major player in London's "Financial Revolution." The sociability of the English coffee-house at this time was akin to that of a tavern; one arrived at the coffee-house unsure of whom or what conversation awaited him inside.

One crucial difference between the amicable atmosphere of coffee-houses and that of taverns was the lucid and rational nature of coffee-house conversation, due to the different properties of their respective beverages. Coffee was a beverage uniquely suited to the emerging Protestant ethic, which called for diligence, prudence, and use of one's rationality. Max Weber chronicles this rejection of "impulsive enjoyment of life, which leads away from both work in a calling and from religious devotion…[which is] as such the enemy of rational asceticism, whether in the form of 'seigneurial' sports, or the

enjoyment of the dance-hall or the public-house of the common man."[37] The public

coffee room was an acceptable alternative to the dance-hall or public-house because it

served a beverage that promoted the sober and level-headed reflection that was conducive

to productive debates and successful business negotiations. An English Puritan poet

described the benefits of coffee in 1674 as follows:

> When the sweet Poison of the Treacherous Grape
> Had acted on the world a general rape;
> Drowning our Reason and our souls
> In such deep seas of large o'erflowing bowls
>
> When foggy Ale, leavying up mighty trains
> Of muddy vapours, had besieg'd our Brains,
> Then Heaven in Pity...
> First sent amongst us this All-healing Berry,
>
> Coffee arrives, that grave and wholesome Liquor,
> That heals the stomach, makes the genius quicker,
> Relieves the memory, revives the sad,
> And cheers the Spirits, without making mad.[38]

Sentiments like this were abundant throughout England. Not only did coffee

seem to promote rationality, gentility, and prudence; consuming it was also a means of

demonstrating that one valued these qualities. Especially in light of the emerging middle

class, opportunities to demonstrate one's adherence to the values of the Protestant Ethic

were valuable. As opposed to those who engaged in physical labor and frequented

taverns to participate in idle and meaningless debauchery, the seventeenth century

bourgeois distinguished itself by engaging in professions that involved mental labor and

by retiring to coffee-houses to continue this pattern of intellectual industriousness.

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[37] Weber, Max. "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism." Trans. Talcott Parsons. *The Essential Weber: A Reader*. Ed. Sam Whimster. (London: Routledge, 2004) 25.

[38] Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants."* Trans. David Jacobson. (New York: Pantheon, 1992) 34.

Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes that coffee "spread through the body and achieved chemically and pharmacologically what rationalism and the Protestant ethic sought to fulfill spiritually and ideologically...the result was a body which functioned in accord with the new demands -- a rationalistic, middle-class, forward-looking body."[39]

Another important facet of coffee-house culture in England at this time was the aura of free civility with respect to the debates that would inevitably arise between patrons. With few exceptions (the exclusion of women, for example), there were no rules governing the behavior of English coffee-house patrons. Especially early in the development of English coffee-houses, anyone who could afford to buy a cup of coffee was an equal participant in coffee-house debates and conversations. However, a commonly agreed upon code of conduct regulated interactions between customers and restricted their behavior in order to maintain the atmosphere of gentility, moderation, and civility that distinguished coffee-houses from taverns and other meeting places.[40] This is not to say that coffee-houses were devoid of noise and heated arguments; indeed, there are reports that some political debates became too intense, and the hot coffee bringing together these opposing viewpoints together was converted into a weapon.

The generally civil and rational behavior of coffee-house patrons was significant because it represented the capacity among all classes for gracious and civilized conduct without a strict hierarchy imposed by some formal authority. Coffee-house customers were expected to pay for their coffee, engage in polite and intellectually stimulating (although not overly-inflammatory) conversation, and to abstain from consuming intoxicants while in the coffee-house. These rules arose naturally out of the evolving

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[39] Ibid, 39.
[40] See Appendix B for complete text of "The Rules and Orders of the Coffee-House."

character of coffee-houses and were applied equally to patrons from all classes, professions, and political or religious affiliations. The code of conduct coincided closely with the Puritan ethic, although many coffee-house patrons were not adherents of this ethic per se. Aytoun Ellis observes that "there were Royalists and loyalist, yet they willingly subscribed to a set of Puritan rules and restrictions at the coffee-houses they favoured, without worrying one iota about their authorship."[41] Because these rules arose naturally out of the congenial atmosphere of the coffee-houses and the activities that took place within their walls and were not enforced by any formal authority, adherence to them was an object of free rational choice. Coffee-houses in England became a forum for behaving in accordance with the prudent, industrious Protestant ethic, although it did not result in religious coercion because its code of conduct was necessitated by the civil debates taking place in the coffee-houses.

The most drastic cultural change to take place in the coffee-houses of England was egalitarianism. The Muslim predecessors of English coffee-houses began this tradition by allowing Christians and Jews into their coffee-houses.[42] Anyone who could afford the price of a cup of coffee was considered an equal (although this would change as economic coffee-houses in particular became more exclusive and club-like). Coffee-houses revolutionized the way in which men met and conversed with each other, but the only women who frequented coffee-houses were the owners and coffee-women who operated them and occasional prostitutes who entertained their customers in coffee-houses. However, coffee-houses in general were not very good places to conduct business of this sort because coffee-house patrons usually wanted to promote their

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[41] Ellis, Aytoun. *The Penny Universities: A History of the Coffee-Houses.* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956) 50.
[42] Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*: 98.

reputations as prudent and rational citizens. For the most part, divisions of class,

education, birth, and economics disappeared within the coffee-houses, which "all had this

in common at the outset: they were open to any man, rich or poor, who paid his penny at

the bar and was prepared to obey the rules."[43]

Coffee as a consumable good was one of the first commodities to be desired by

and accessible to all veins of society. Before the introduction of coffee into Europe,

particular foods and beverages were consumed almost exclusively by corresponding

social and economic classes. What the nobility consumed was never considered to be

appropriate for the working classes, and vice versa. Massimo Montanari notes that

between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries:

> The dominant classes were particularly sensitive to the problem of
> defining the *lifestyles* of the various social groupings ...Rules of this sort
> revealed a desire for the normalization of dietary practices for the purpose
> of establishing order within the ruling classes during a period of intense
> social transformation, a period in which the bourgeois classes emerged
> alongside (or in opposition to) the traditional nobility.[44]

Although originally an exotic drink found primarily in the homes of the elite,

coffee soon became a brew for all classes. There is no evidence to indicate that it was

prepared with more care or diligence for wealthy coffee-house customers than for poor

ones. Perhaps because coffee was usually roasted by the coffee-house owner, brewed in

the Turkish style (boiled water in a pot with grounds stirred in and re-boiled) and cost

merely a penny, such price segmentation of the coffee-house market was both impractical

and unnecessary. Despite assertions by famous social theorists like Jürgen Habermas and

Nancy Fraser that coffee-houses were a forum for elitist debates and the legitimization of

class rule, most of the evidence supports an image of the coffee-house as a democratic

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[43] Ibid, 57.
[44] Montanari, Massimo. *The Culture of Food.* Trans. Carl Ipsen. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 82-83.

institution which resulted in the widespread acceptance of the value of public opinion.[45]
English coffee-houses were located in both affluent and poor neighborhoods, economic
centers and residential areas, metropolitan areas and provincial towns – even in Ireland
and Scotland. It was in the degeneration of coffee-houses into exclusive men's clubs and
members-only political societies that elitism and segregation crept back into life in the
public sphere.

Literature and Science

Even as the political importance of coffee-houses began to deteriorate, they still
remained vibrant forums for literary criticism and scientific debate. Many of the most
prominent and influential literary figures and scientific clubs of the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries met in coffee-houses because of the atmosphere of civility,
sociability, and intelligent discussion. As coffee-houses continued to evolve and become
more popular, each developed a unique clientele with a reputation for a specialized
interest. For scholars, coffee-houses provided a location for an exchange of ideas with
their colleagues; the coffee-house served simultaneously as an environment for peer
review and symposiums, an encyclopedia, and a research center.[46]

Will's Coffee-House on Russell Street in London became known as the "Wit's
coffee-house," and Aytoun Ellis describes it as "the great educator of public taste and an
inspiration and encouragement to many a pet and writer, whose name might never have
been heard of had it not been for *Will's.*"[47] Presided over by English literary figure John

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[45] Pincus, Steve. "Coffee Politicians Does Create: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture." *Journal of Modern History.* 67.4 (1995): 811.

[46] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 151.

[47] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: 58.

Dryden, it attracted all the most talented and famous wits and writers in England, as well as a significant population of "would-be-wits" who used the opportunity presented by the egalitarian nature of coffee-houses to rub elbows with their literary idols and attempt to make a name for themselves by conversing with such figures.[48] After the death of its chief patron, Dryden, in 1709, *Will's* experienced a decline in popularity and influence, giving rise to other Russell Street competitors, namely Tom's Coffee-House and Button's Coffee-House.

These rival literary coffee-houses were each known for espousing a different viewpoint on proper poetry and writing, giving rise to the modern notion of literary criticism. Dryden's influence on the literary world of his day was unmistakable, "setting the standard for literary appraisement and appreciation that was to be adopted and developed in the century that followed."[49] Literary criticism took on an institutionalized shape during this period, and objective judgments of quality began to emerge from the coffee-house discussions taking place on Russell Street in London. Individuals no longer had to define their own work independent of that of their contemporaries. On the contrary, traditions of poetry, writing, and wit developed and were fine-tuned in places like *Will's* and under the tutelage of literary masters like John Dryden, whose expertise became accessible to anyone and everyone with enough interest and inclination to frequent his favorite coffee-house.

Coffee-houses also revolutionized the scientific community in seventeenth and eighteenth century England by making scientific theories and debates accessible to everyone through the coffee-house venue. Scientific debates lost much of their abstract,

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[48] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*, 155.
[49] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: 68.

elitist nature and became more demonstrative, focusing on debating the genuine problems of everyday life in the concrete world, rather than discussing theoretical concepts restricted to the "ivory tower." Markman Ellis compares the role of English coffee-houses in the scientific world at this time to that of the internet in our modern scientific era; both enabled everyday people to access new kinds of knowledge.[50]

The development of the Royal Society for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge (known commonly as the Royal Society) exemplifies this new scientific openness. During the 1640s, a group of natural philosophers began meeting regularly at Gresham College, an exclusive locale that allowed them to exclude members whose theories and beliefs were not in agreement with their own. During the years of instability under Cromwell, a small group of defectors from this elitist group began meeting informally at Tillyard's Coffee-house in London, calling themselves the Oxford Coffee Club.[51] These meetings eventually gained the patronage of King Charles II in 1672 and evolved into the Royal Society, which came under the leadership of Isaac Newton in 1672.

Unlike the original gatherings at Gresham College, the coffee-house meetings of the Royal Society lacked the typical atmosphere of austerity and hierarchy. They made science accessible to a wide audience of participants and onlookers whose social status and credentials were no longer prerequisites for scientific involvement, performing various scientific experiments in the public venue of the coffee-house. Coffee-house scientific clubs were criticized, though, by elitist scientists for functioning as a shortcut to learning and wisdom that could become dangerous because of its unstructured and

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[50] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 158.
[51] Wild, Antony. *Coffee: A Dark History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005): 90.

shallow nature.[52] These scientific debates were not restricted to those who would promote the dominant viewpoint, and many challenges were made to the agenda of modern science. Coffee-house scientists were no longer working in isolation, but participating in a scientific dialogue with the public, whose hunger for knowledge was increasing due to their newfound access to coffee-house scientific clubs.[53]

Economics and the "Financial Revolution"

Perhaps the most significant institutions that began because of English coffee-house culture are the financial organizations that arose out of coffee-house business transactions. Lloyd's coffee-house, the predecessor to the famous insurance company Lloyd's of London, writes Aytoun Ellis, "will always remain in the mind of the public as one of the few tangible links with the old coffee-house days."[54] In addition, the coffee-houses became a tangible market where buyers and sellers could interact and market prices could be set, resulting in the Financial Revolution that gave birth to the London Stock Exchange. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, London was the financial hub of international trade, and its coffee-houses had a significant influence on the development of financial theories and institutions.

The most important role of the coffee-house in the economic system was that of information center. Because they had a reputation for sobriety, lucidity, and good judgment, coffee-houses provided a perfect environment for business transactions and negotiations. Presence in the coffee-houses of London's Exchange-Alley enhanced a business-man's reputation for responsible consumption and rationality. As coffee-houses

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[52] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 165.
[53] Ibid, 164.
[54] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: 117.

began to gain popularity, they promoted new models of proper masculine behavior in business; merchants and brokers came together in a sociable environment for flexible short-term associations based on mutual trust, respectability, and honesty.[55] In addition to the opportunities of association offered by coffee-houses, they provided invaluable business information and gossip.

Coffee-house owners often took it upon themselves to publish books listing the financial information sought by their customers. In the 1690s, as London's coffee-houses began to cater to specific industries and markets, their owners published lists of commodity prices, rates of exchange, prices of government stocks, publications in overseas trade, and marine lists – Edward Lloyd's coffee-house was the most famous example.[56] They also helped to institutionalize the rules and regulations that would come to govern public commodity exchanges. Buyers no longer specified the terms of the sale, but were only one aspect in the agreement of the market upon prices and quantities determined by the naturally emerging economic laws of supply and demand. Financial jargon, timing regulations, and informal codes of conduct regarding honor and civil behavior all were heavily influenced by London's coffee-houses, and many of these traditions remain intact today.

Edward Lloyd founded his coffee-house sometime before 1688, and it soon enjoyed a monopoly on reliable shipping information. Aytoun Ellis implies that Lloyd, an astute businessman, fashioned his coffee-house explicitly to cater to the needs of shipping insurance underwriters, who were without an established meeting place and had

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[55] Smith, Woodruff D. *From Coffeehouse to Parlour*: 154.
[56] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 173.

hitherto been forced to seek out merchants and ship-owners desiring insurance.[57] Much of the conversation in Lloyd's coffee-house involved shipping movement and gossip about the success or failure of different shipping ventures. Lloyd moved his coffee-house to Lombard Street to make this information accessible to underwriters of shipping insurance and began preparing publications to distribute to his customers. He also kept a careful log of who was spending time in his coffee-house to make sure that his most loyal customers earned access to the most up-to-date information, which marked the beginning of the evolution of Lloyd's from a coffee-house to a remarkably successful shipping insurance company. As insurance historian F.H. Haines notes, "coffee-houses like Lloyd's provided a place where ideas were developed as they would never have been in the private guild halls and brain muddled tap rooms."[58]

After over eighty years of successful business as a coffee-house, Lloyd's was recreated in a bigger building across Lombard Street by a committee of underwriters who were dissatisfied with negligent leadership after the death of Edward Lloyd.[59] This new Lloyd's charged a subscription fee and only allowed underwriters, merchants, and brokers into its members-only business. Lloyd's had officially ceased to be a coffee-house and had evolved into a full-fledged insurance business. Similarly, Jonathan's coffee-house in Exchange Alley leased a new building with a trading room on the ground floor and a coffee room upstairs. Like Lloyd's it eventually required members to pay a subscription fee. This turning-point in coffee-house history reached across the ocean to the United States, where Tontine Coffee-House in New York evolved into the New York

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[57] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: 118.
[58] Wood, *Coffee*: 74.
[59] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 179.

Insurance Company, and then became the New York Stock Exchange.[60] This

transformation underscored the decline in coffee's importance as the commodity that

enabled such business associations and the rise in specialized, exclusive business clubs

and organizations that would characterize the London financial scene from the late

eighteenth century to the modern era.

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[60] Ibid, 183.

Chapter IV:

Political Implications: The Public Sphere

Freedom of Speech?

Because of their egalitarian nature, coffee-houses became the first environment

where opinions could be openly debated. Even if segregation with regard to social class,

economics, and education still existed in greater England, it was suspended at the coffee-

house for the purpose of fostering an atmosphere of open and uncensored debate. The

reason coffee-houses differed from any other public forum at the time was that the

proprietors were concerned primarily with running and successful business, and not with

flattering the elitist pretensions of a few customers by excluding others. It was in their

best economic interests to promote an environment that welcomed all points of view,

regardless of the social status of their patrons. Certainly, particular ideas or points of

view often dominated the conversation, especially when it came to politics, but coffee-

house conversations were unique in that no one's viewpoint was discredited merely

because he "didn't belong." Steve Pincus notes the following about Restoration coffee-

houses:

> They also appear to have welcomed everyone regardless of gender, social
> status, or political outlook. "A coffee-house is free to all comers, so they
> have human shape," remarked one early commentator: "boldly therefore
> let any person who comes to drink coffee set down in the very chair, for
> here a seat is to be given to no man. That great privilege of equality is
> only peculiar to the Golden Age, and to a coffee house.[61]

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[61] Pincus, Steve. "Coffee Politicians Does Create: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture." *Journal of Modern History.* 67.4 (1995): 814-15. Pincus also argues that respectable women were welcomed into the political debates that took place in English coffee-houses, but most of the other literature implies that the occasional inclusion of women was by far the exception, not the rule. It is likely that in coffee-houses in especially affluent and liberally-minded neighborhoods, women might accompany their husbands or

Coffee-houses, with their egalitarianism, gave birth to the notion that everyone

had the right to be concerned with and passionately debate the political conditions of his

own life. Also, the role of the passive listener was an equally respectable one to play in

the coffee-house; quite and reflective men were not scorned by their more loquacious and

argumentative counterparts. Indeed, the coffee-house created a neutral and sympathetic

space where different conceptions of masculine sociability could overlap and interact.[62]

The reflective eavesdropper and the ambitious debater alike now had a legitimate interest

in knowing about public affairs and how they are governed – public opinion had been

born. In fact, coffee-houses were "so politically au courant, so ideologically up-to-date,

so accurate a gauge of public opinion...that they were the places that politicians and

journalists went to collect news and opinions."[63]

This was truly the inception of the notion of the public sphere in politics. Not

only were opinions allowed to be shared and debated, but men from all walks of life

considered participation in coffee-house political debates to be a civic duty of sorts.

Especially in light of the emerging Protestant ethic, coffee-houses became popular

because they combined relaxation and sociability with a respectable and industrious

intellectual undertaking – political debate. Coffee-house culture gave the viewpoints of

ordinary citizens a significant outlet and consequently it provoked an outpouring of

political opinions from across the ideological spectrum. A correspondent of politician

Joseph Williamson wrote that "'the coffee-houses' were responsible for turning 'every

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other male family members into the private rooms in coffee-houses to participate in political discussions,
but it seems far-fetched considering the literature on this period to imagine reputable women of the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries entering into coffee-house political debates with the same freedom
and acceptance as men.

[62] Ellis, *The Coffee-House.* 194.

[63] Pincus, *Coffee Politicians Does Create.* 821.

carman and porter' into 'a statesman.'"[64] Political debates were no longer confined to the elitist circles of theorists and intellectuals but were now accessible to an all-inclusive public sphere – a first step toward liberal democracy.

It is no coincidence that it was in England, where coffee-houses took hold with the most influence and vitality that the public sphere first emerged. Steven Pincus gives an account of German social theorist Jürgen Habermas' emphasis of the importance of this revolution in political life:

> "A public sphere that functioned in the political realm first arose in Great Britain at the turn of the eighteenth century." By public sphere Habermas means specifically an arena for public discussion, a space created for the "people's public use of their reason." "The political task of the bourgeois public sphere," he suggests," was the regulation of civil society…"; it was to offer a social space for public criticism of the state.[65]

Just as they enjoyed a reputation for having the most up-to-date financial news, so did coffee-houses function in the political sphere. New political theories and developments often were first brought to light in coffee-houses, where they were debated and critiqued by a population that was more or less representative of English society as a whole. The idea of a secret ballot and a one-man-one-vote political system owe their widespread acceptance in part to coffee-house political culture.[66] Certainly, different coffee-houses were dominated by different political groups, but nowhere was it presupposed that to participate in coffee-house political debates, one must profess a particular point of view.

John Barrell observes that "in late Stuart London, the freedom with which politics was discussed in coffee houses, and by men with, as it were, no title to discuss public

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[64] Pincus, *Coffee Politicians Does Create*: 825.
[65] Ibid, 808.
[66] Wild, *Coffee*: 91-2.

affairs, led to coffee houses being seen by the government as the breeding grounds of sedition and treason."[67] Coffee-houses became the informal headquarters for various political groups and clubs, and their ideas were often disseminated on pamphlets or other publications, provoking much resistance and opposition. Barrell continues to argue that political conversations taking place in coffee-houses were granted special status as private discourse, seditious comments and points of view were supposed to be under the special protection afforded and were not to be publicized. Later in the political evolution of coffee-houses, he argues, this was not always the case, as John Frost, a London attorney, was sentenced to six months in prison and an hour in the pillory after expressing his preference for a republican government over the monarchy in Britain in 1792.[68]

Resistance and Opposition

For obvious reasons, there were various groups who expressed strong opposition to the popularity and influence of coffee-houses. The best-documented resistance came from King Charles II of England, although there was robust opposition from social groups as well. Coffee-houses were criticized politically for inciting revolution and promoting false, libelous criticisms of those in power. Socially, they were charged with degrading the masculinity of English men and ultimately of English society as a whole.

On December 26, 1675, King Charles II issued the "Proclamation for the Suppression of Coffee Houses" which was to outlaw all coffeehouses as of January 10, 1676. His decree justified closing all coffeehouses, which he identified as the "great resort of Idle and disaffected persons," because it was within their walls that "false

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[67] Barrell, John. "Coffee-House Politicians." *Journal of British Studies.* 43.2 (2004): 210.
[68] Ibid, 210.

malitious and scandalous reports and devised the spread abroad to the Defamation of his

Majestie's Government, and to the Disturbance of the Peace and Quiet of the Realm."[69]

However, as news of the king's proclamation spread, riots erupted throughout Britain and

within a week the uproar over coffeehouses had reached a level that seriously threatened

the monarchy, causing Charles II to repeal the proclamation on January 8, 1676, before it

could ever take effect.

This victory of coffee-houses over a royal decree symbolized a turning point in

English political history. King Charles II had issued this particular proclamation partially

because of a genuine fear of the kind of seditious political activity that was going on in

English coffee-houses (especially works of satire at his expense), but within the context

of the political atmosphere of the late seventeenth century, the proclamation against

coffee was part of a larger effort to control the state more autocratically. Charles II had

prorogued Parliament in November of 1675, and his issuance of this proclamation was

clearly an effort to subvert the parliamentary system.[70] Without Parliament, Charles II

could legally issue proclamations that only reinforced or slightly modified existing

legislation, so the Proclamation for the Suppression of Coffee-Houses was a test of

whether or not a new authoritarian law could rest on the king's authority alone.

As it turned out, the economic interests of the coffee-house keepers took

precedence over the king's proclamation. The coffee-house keepers argued that in

addition to providing their own livelihoods, the taxes extracted from coffee-houses were

an important source of revenue for the government. And far from being lawless houses

of debauchery like taverns, coffee-houses were portrayed as rational meeting places that

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[69] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 14. For complete text of the Proclamation for the Suppression of Coffee Houses, see Appendix C.
[70] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 90.

served a "liquor of peace."[71] The coffee-house keepers also pressed the monarchy for extra time to sell their property before the proclamation took effect and many of them offered to spy on their customers and report seditious activity to the authorities.

Charles II decreed that as long as coffee-house owners swore an oath of allegiance to the crown and agreed to pay additional licensing fees, they would be granted six months to prove their loyalty, at which time an additional proclamation would be issued to determine the fate of English coffee-houses. Coffee-houses were to be reformed by controlling their printed materials and getting rid of their common rooms, but these modifications were virtually impossible to enforce, so business as usual resumed in coffee-houses throughout England, although patrons became suspicious and certain coffee-houses lost their reputation for free and open debate.

The partial submission of the king's will to the claims of the coffee-house keepers amounted to proof that the whims of the monarchy were not legitimate grounds to quell the political discussions and debates of the public sphere. David Hume captured this notion, writing that "the King, observing the people to be much dissatisfied, yielded to a petition of the coffee-men…and the proclamation was recalled."[72] In the minds of the king's political opponents, it solidified the Stuart conspiracy to undermine Parliament and demonstrated that public opinion was now a deeply entrenched value in the British political system.[73] The effects of the proclamation also changed the character of the English coffee-house by introducing a new variable – surveillance. The government sought to use coffee-houses in two seemingly incompatible capacities: as a means of gathering information on subversive political activities, while simultaneously suppressing

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[71] Ibid, 100.

[72] Pincus, *Coffee Politicians Does Create.* 832.

[73] Ellis, *The Coffee-House,* 105.

them. The Earl of Shaftsbury and the Duke of Buckingham, leaders of opposition to the monarchy, were using the sociability of London's coffee-houses, especially Garraway's Coffee-House, to organize followers in order to be ready as soon as Parliament was recalled. Garraway reported the Duke of Buckingham's conversations to the authorities, but not before toning down their subversive nature, ultimately protecting the opposing political parties.[74]

The king's assertion that coffeehouses caused men to neglect their families and their duties echoed a sentiment expressed earlier, supposedly by an outspoken group of London women, who issued their own document decrying coffee and coffeehouses in 1674. The "Womens Petition Against Coffee" argued that coffeehouses provided a haven for men who had been drinking in taverns to get sober again, before heading back out to the taverns. The Women's Petition, which Steve Pincus argues was probably written by high churchmen as it echoes many of their concerns, also accused men of losing their sex drive and becoming effeminate; it even threatened the end of the species due to the popularity of coffee-houses. The predecessor to the Women's Petition was the Maiden's Petition Against Coffee, also of questionable authorship, written in 1663. It charged that the drying properties of coffee were keeping men from their homes and making them impotent.[75]

Many social commentators expressed concern over the evolving coffee-house masculinity, which was a drastic departure from traditional English masculinity, which revolved around drinking English beer at the tavern. Instead, coffee-house men were known for their tranquil demeanor and accused of being prone to gossip more than

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[74] Ibid, 101-2.
[75] Ibid, 108.

women. In many satirical works of the time, "coffee-house denizens were ridiculed for their abstention from traditional masculine recreations."[76] Coffee enthusiasts countered with claims of coffee's ability to encourage rationality, moderation, and sobriety in a fashionable environment. As opposed to alcohol, coffee promoted level-headedness, making for more prudent business transactions and more intelligent and stimulating political conversations. Additionally, coffee-houses were a much more economical place to pass one's time. A pamphleteer defending coffee-houses in 1673 argues that "he that comes often to the coffeehouse saves two pence a week in Gazettes, and has his news and his coffee for the same charge".[77]

The Anglican Royalists also voiced strong political opposition to coffee-house politics. They accused coffee-houses of disseminating false information and spawning political conspiracies. Their worries reiterated those of King Charles II's proclamation, decrying the "stories, pamphlets, and squibs" that turned coffee-houses into "direct seminaries or sedition, and offices for the dispatch of lying."[78] Despite the enthusiastic defense coffee-houses enjoyed against their opponents, British coffeehouses reached their peak in popularity in the late seventeenth century, and by 1730 most of them had become exclusive men's clubs or business institutions.[79] As coffee-houses began to decline in popularity – the reasons for which will be discussed in the following chapter – these oppositions did not cease. On the contrary, in light of the American and French revolutions, concerns remained about the subversive nature of the remaining English coffee-houses.

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[76] Pincus, *Coffee Politicians Does Create*: 823.
[77] Ibid, 817.
[78] Ibid, 829.
[79] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds:* 14.

Chapter V:

The Demise of the English Coffee-House

Competition

The decline of the English coffee-house has often been attributed to the rise in popularity of its competitors. Tea, the primary coffee alternative, has often been blamed for supplanting coffee at England's national beverage, and exclusive men's clubs are charged with assuming the traditional role of the coffee-house as social and political epicenters. While the latter appears to have been true for a variety of reasons, the former was more a result of the demise of coffee-houses than a cause. Although many coffee-houses served tea as well as coffee, as coffee-houses disappeared or lost their influence they were not replaced in the political and economic spheres by tea-houses. The fall of the coffee-house was a two-fold transformation. While coffee-houses became more exclusive, their vibrant, egalitarian character began to erode, and so English coffee-houses lost their grip on the imagination of the English people; as this change was taking place, tea was gaining popularity in the home, especially in women's circles. The coffee-house became a "dead metaphor," lacking the excitement, vitality, and sociability it had enjoyed in the early eighteenth century, and so became vulnerable to replacement by another stimulating beverage.

The myth that tea's replacement of coffee as England's favorite beverage led to the decline of the coffee-house often claims that tea was preferred to coffee because it was more readily available through the British East India Company and was cheaper because it was cultivated in India, a British colony. The decline of England's coffee-

houses began in the mid-eighteenth century, and India only began producing tea after the British introduced it from China in the 1790s.[80]   Tea fulfilled a very different role in British society – it was commonly associated with femininity, domestic life, and Victorian ideals. The sociable life of the English coffee-house found itself split between tea drinking in the home and an upsurge in Parisian cafes, which supplanted coffee-houses as the quintessentially urban gathering places of intellectuals, artists, and writers. Indeed, coffee-houses, cafés, and salons in Paris, Vienna, Venice, and elsewhere on the continent were thriving, and English travelers began to hunger for a taste of this more elegant, bohemian, exclusive coffee experience. English coffee-houses lost their privileged position in society when they lost their revolutionary egalitarianism as political and economic centers.

The real competition with English coffee-houses in terms of culture and character came from London's increasing number of exclusive political, social, and economic clubs. These clubs often evolved out of coffee-houses, where a few elitist patrons would wish to exclude others from their activities and would split off from the egalitarian world of the coffee-house to form a private group whose membership they could control. Stock exchanges, clubs associated with various political parties, and groups of merchants segregated themselves into these exclusive groups so that they could control the flow of information between members, as well as create formal rules and procedures to govern their actions. This movement was essentially a reversal of the coffee-house revolution, and contributed to increasing marginalization of the traditional coffee-house in English political and economic culture.

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[80] Chow, Kit and Ione Kramer, *All the Tea in China.* (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, 2000): 27-28.

Economic Factors and the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution was also a turning point in the evolution of England's coffee-houses. It divided the time of a working-class Londoner into two clearly delineated spheres – work and home. This division left little time for the preparation of meals and the running of the household, and still less for leisurely political conversation at the coffee-house. For many workers, the Industrial Revolution also meant relinquishing authority over one's schedule to the mercy of the time clock; no longer could working men close their shops and retire to the coffee-house for a midday cup of coffee and to catch up on the latest political and economic news. Since most of the economic and political influence of the coffee-houses was fading away in favor of exclusive clubs, working-class Englanders felt little to no compulsion to frequent England's remaining coffee-houses. They preferred to consume their coffee at home or during short "coffee breaks" at work, where it offered the illusion of warmth and nutrition, or during "coffee breaks" at work. Mark Pendergrast observes that "the drink of the aristocracy had become the necessary drug of the masses, and morning coffee replaced beer soup for breakfast"[81]

Economic factors influencing the price and quality of coffee imported into England at this time also had an influence on the disappearance of traditional English coffee-houses. Beginning in the 1720s, both the French and the Dutch began to sell coffee they had grown in their West Indian colonies, which competed with the higher-quality beans from the Ottoman Empire, driving overall coffee prices down.[82] Undoubtedly, some English coffee-houses abandoned the expensive Arabian beans in

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[81] Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*: 17.
[82] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 209.

favor of cheaper substitutes, which may have turned some of their loyal customers into tea drinkers.[83] The official government policy in England was to foster trade with both China and India, so all economic policies favored stimulating the demand for tea at the expense of the coffee market. After the introduction of tea to India, the British East India Company monopolized the tea trade and exercised strict control over both price and quality, while using their political influence to negotiate advantageous tariff agreements which made tea a much more economically appealing commodity than coffee. As demand for coffee declined, growers began to cut corners and employ low-cost roasting and processing techniques, which only exacerbated the already drastically deteriorating quality of coffee available in Europe.

Another economic development that led to the downfall of English coffee-house culture was the over-reaching of the coffee-house owners themselves. Just as many coffee-houses had begun to distribute economic publications to keep their most loyal customers informed, the more ambitious coffee-house keepers (or coffee-men as they were often known) began to appreciate their unique position as media between the government, politicians, and their constituents. They had already struck a deal with King Charles II to inform him about seditious goings-on in their coffee-houses, although it is unclear how often they actually reported these activities. In 1729, the coffee-men announced that they should be given a monopoly on reliable news; they called on the government to recognize "Coffee-House Masters" as the protectors of public liberty and trustworthy communication by securing the *Coffee-house Gazette*, a publication sold by

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[83] Tea was often served alongside coffee in many English coffee-houses, so some coffee-house patrons may have switched to tea drinking when coffee began to decline in quality, but it was when coffee-houses lost their political and economic role that most of their customers abandoned them.

the coffee-men, from competition from unlicensed news vendors, essentially sanctioning coffee-men as the only legitimate journalists.[84]

The coffee-men justified this claim by criticizing their competition, arguing that newspapers were "choked with advertisements and filled with foolish stories, picked up at all places of public entertainment, ale-houses, etc., 'persons being employed – one or two for each paper – at so much a week, to haunt coffee-houses, and thrust themselves into companies where they are not known...in order to pick up matter for the papers.'"[85] This uncivilized method of journalism was to be replaced by a more systematic, institutionalized news-gathering process, which would involve encouraging customers to document news articles and submit them at their favorite coffee-houses. The coffee-men, who claimed responsibility for securing freedom of the press from government censure, would of course be pocketing all the profits from the *Gazette*, as well as from increased attendance at their coffee-houses.

This scheme, unfortunately for the coffee-men, backfired. Well-established publications like *The Tatler* and *The Guardian* ridiculed this proposal, and a critic published the following in a pamphlet called "The Case between the Proprietors of Newspapers and the Coffee Men of London and Westminster:"

> For a People to sound their own Praise, as being more wise and sagacious than the rest of the world, may justly be called a Vanity...yet our coffee men are so vain as to think they can furnish the Town with something more extraordinary than what they are at present Masters of...There are serious charges that can be made concerning the flagrant scandalous and growing impositions of the coffee-houses upon the public...The collectors of News, 'tis true, gather up most of their intelligence form Coffee-houses; but what of that? They *pay* for their coffee, and very often run the Hazard

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[84] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: 223-24.
[85] Ibid, 224.

of Broken Bones into the Bargain; which I think a sufficient argument to entitle them to the Property of the Papers.[86]

The coffee-men had over-stretched their influence and, in a failed attempt to capitalize further on the importance of coffee-houses as information centers, had discredited themselves in the eyes of some of their most important customers – journalists. This tactical failure on the part of the coffee-men, in combination with increasing suspicion that the coffee-men were reporting to the government on the activities of their customers, led to a drastic decrease in the status and authority of the coffee-men, and consequently of their coffee-houses.

Cultural Changes: Private v. Public

As coffee-houses tried to walk the fine line between fostering free and open political debate and protecting themselves from government by conducting covert surveillance on their customers, two interesting cases arose in which citizens were prosecuted on the basis of comments made during coffee-house conversations. These cases highlighted a theme, highlighted by John Barrell in *Coffee-house Politicians*, of threats to freedom of speech in the public and private spheres. John Frost, as mentioned earlier, spent six months in jail for professing a preference for republican government over the monarchy, and Dr. William Hodgson, a physician and proponent of women's rights, was convicted to two years in prison (later extended to four years because he was unable to pay the accompanying fines) for proposing a toast first to "Equality" and then to the "French Republic" in 1793.[87] The prosecution of these forms of free speech signified a shift in English polite culture, where fear of revolution sparked by coffee-

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[86] Ibid, 224-25.
[87] Barrell, *Coffee-house Politicians*: 219.

house political debates (citing the French Revolution as an example) took precedence over notions of gentlemanly discretion and the sanctity of coffee-house conversations as private exchanges.

Early in their history, England's coffee-houses had earned a reputation for protecting the privacy of its members. Although it was undoubtedly a public space, comments and conversations between patrons were assumed to be taking place in private, earning them protection from censure and ridicule. Barrell notes that the coffee-house code of privacy "owed its origins to the notion that coffee houses were among the places were the privacy of public men was lived out; places where they could unbend, could be 'themselves,' as we put it, or could be other than themselves and could enjoy, however guardedly, what Habermas calls 'the parity of "common humanity,"' without that reflecting on their public reputation."[88] Just as social, economic, and intellectual distinctions were often laid to rest during coffee-house conversations, so were reputations preserved from being tarnished based on these debates. All of these special circumstances arose naturally out of a desire among coffee-house patrons for their discussions to remain free and open.

As I have already discussed, coffee-houses began to lose much of their pure, egalitarian nature as they evolved into economic and political clubs; similarly, the special realm of freedom of speech created in coffee-houses began to erode as political fears (perhaps incited by the French Revolution) took priority over the gentlemanly code of coffee-house conduct. As people like Frost and Hodgson would learn, the freedom from accountability that had sustained the free-speech atmosphere of the coffee-houses was turning into a "regulated freedom, at once the product of the new social space and

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[88] Ibid, 227.

constitutive of its development, and it involved a new relation of the concepts of public and private."[89] Coffee-house speech was no longer protected as an extension of the private, and political debaters must now temper their speech to protect themselves from persecution. This contributed significantly to the decline of coffee-houses, as the elite formed private political clubs whose membership they could monitor and within which they were free to speak as they wished and the common man relegated his political conversations to the private realm of the home (perhaps over a cup of tea or a homemade cup of coffee).

Who Needs Coffee?

The demise of English coffee-houses cannot be attributed to one single factor, nor can its activities be identified as having transferred to one replacement venue or another. The primary reason coffee-houses declined in influence, popularity, and status in late eighteenth century England was that coffee as a commodity was no longer necessary for the activities that had traditionally taken place in coffee-houses. Aytoun Ellis captures this transformation as follows:

> If no longer the homes of temperance, as they were at the outset, they still remained the home of liberty, and almost to the end they continued to attract the great poets, writers, artists, and architects, scientists, and physicians, in whose wit and genius all could freely share. As with any democratic institution there was abuse, and it was found that undesirables could only be barred from entry by turning the open house into an exclusive club. Once this transition began, the days of the coffee-house were numbered.[90]

Tea, undoubtedly, replaced coffee as a national beverage, but exclusive clubs, not tea-houses, replaced the coffee-house as an institution. This happened for a number of

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[89] Ibid, 210.
[90] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: xvi.

reasons. First, elitist political and economic groups that had originated in coffee-houses found themselves wishing that they could regulate the membership of their groups and even charge a subscription fee. Coffee-house associations evolved into exclusive clubs which, in combination with the Industrial Revolution, resurrected the segregation between the aristocracy and the common man.

The clientele of the English coffee-house divided along social and political lines and each segment of the population found its own coffee-house substitute. The poor and working-classes consumed tea (or perhaps still coffee) in the home and returned to taverns for sociability and amusement. Politicians, as well as businessmen and brokers in the new Stock Exchange abandoned coffee-houses in favor of exclusive organizations, some of which continued to meet in the private rooms of coffee-houses, but most of which established their own premises. Political dissenters had an additional incentive to leave the public sphere of the coffee-house, as their opinions were being increasingly monitored and the government threatened to prosecute them in light of the French Revolution. The elite started to frequent Parisian-style cafés or, like the working-class, began to take tea in the home, resulting in the English tradition of afternoon tea. This new custom re-emphasized newly emerging Victorian ideals, and reflected the femininity and domesticity of the home. English coffee-houses had been eclipsed, but their social, economic, and political effects – especially their creation of the public sphere – endured.

Chapter VI:

Reemergence in Post-War Europe

Interim Period: Eighteenth Century to World War II

Information on this period in the history of the European coffee-house is vague. Tea rooms were set up in hotels and tea-shops and became meeting-places for men and women, although they were never as influential as coffee-houses. Coffee stalls and coffee-taverns sold the beverage, along with sandwiches, bread rolls, and cake, to working-class consumers on their "coffee breaks."[91] Coffee taverns were a poor substitute for coffee-houses, though, and were financed heavily by middle-class charities, which saw them as a solution to excessive consumption of alcohol.

Cafés in continental Europe essentially maintained their elitist, ornately-decorated character, and coffee-houses based on the traditional English model virtually dropped out of existence.[92] Like traditional coffee-houses, cafés facilitated sociability and interaction between migrant workers of different backgrounds, but clients from different classes were rarely allowed to associate. Unlike their predecessors, these cafés used alcohol to fuel their convivial atmosphere, and were labeled an "island of bohemia in the heart of London."[93] Many of these cafés earned a reputation for being the seat of anti-authoritarian politics, and so were suppressed by the dictatorships of the early twentieth century.

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[91] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 212.
[92] Although there were quite a few Parisian cafés set up in England by enterprising business men hoping to cater to the extravagant habits of the elite, I do not consider those to be "English coffee-houses" for the purposes of this discussion.
[93] Ellis, *The Coffee-House:* 220.

The romantic notion of the traditional coffee-house during this period was the object of nostalgic memory. Especially considering the repressive totalitarian regimes that led up to World War II, Londoners and Europeans across the continent alike longed for a retreat, somewhere they could have rational discussions in an egalitarian environment and feel free from persecution. One aspect of coffee-house culture that remained relatively unchanged was its function as a stage for the exhibition of literary and artistic works. This practice translated almost seamlessly to London's new cafés, but it was also suppressed during the pre-WWII years.

The Espresso Revolution

Espresso was an invention of opportunity. Coffee-prices increased in the years following WWII, creating a niche market for espresso, which required fewer beans because it used pressure to extract maximum flavor from a small amount of finely-ground coffee. Coffee drinks we commonly associate with espresso (the café latte, cappuccino, or macchiato, for example) were made before the espresso revolution by heating milk and adding it to strong coffee. Espresso machines, the first of which was invented by Fernando Illy in 1904, streamlined the espresso process and created the sounds and smells we now associated with modern coffee-bars.[94] Making espresso became an art, and the coffee-bar became a modern gathering-place, especially for the disillusioned youth, as well as the artistic and intellectual communities.

These new coffee-bars looked more like European cafés than traditional English coffee-houses, featuring modern art and architecture, as well as the shiny chrome of the

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[94] Dicum, Gregory and Nina Luttinger. *The Coffee Book: Anatomy of an Industry From Crop to the Last Drop.* (New York: New Press, 1999) 153.

espresso machine. The 1950s and 1960s represented an aesthetic shift away from mere imitation of American tastes, and European coffee-bars represented a way to preserve nostalgic European coffee culture, while at the same time providing a venue for expression of youth culture.[95] Coffee-bars offered many of the features found in English coffee-houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, they provided communal seating to facilitate conversation between strangers and offered various books, magazines, and newspapers to keep clients up-to-date on political and economic news. Coffee-bars were similar to traditional European coffee-houses in that they provided a mean of enjoying oneself without spending too much money or participating in outdated social rituals of formality. They also boasted an impressively diverse clientele. Working and middle class men and women from a range of cultural backgrounds all congregated at the espresso bar to partake in casual conversation with a stimulating beverage.

Coffee-bars addressed an issue, however, that had essentially been ignored by traditional European coffee-houses: youth culture. The youth found in twentieth-century coffee-bars what the working class found in traditional European coffee-houses – a legitimate forum for expressing their hitherto unheard concerns and opinions. The "teenager" became an object of serious concern during the decades following WWII, and the European coffee-house became a microcosm through which the rest of the world could view youth culture at its most honest and fresh. These youths, many of whom felt alienated from bourgeois existence and American consumerism, were the subject of numerous studies, all of which examined coffee-bar behavior as a way to understand the teenage psyche.[96] To the authorities, coffee-bars looked like both the cause of rebellious

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[95] Ellis, *The Coffee-House:* 232.
[96] Ibid, 245.

teenage behavior and the solution, facilitating free and open discussions but also

providing a relatively harmless outlet for them.

Chapter VII:

The Coffee-house Today

Americanization and the Starbucks Revolution

Colonial American coffee-houses developed much in the same way as their counterparts across the Atlantic. American coffee-houses figured prominently in the Revolutionary War, playing host to the Sons of Liberty and the planning of the Boston Tea Party. For the most part, coffee played the role of a stimulant in American history, sustaining gold miners and explorers as they traveled west across the continent. After the Industrial Revolution, coffee was primarily brewed at home, and Americans were resistant to the strong taste of espresso. As coffee continued to evolve into an experience of connoisseurship and anti-Establishment culture, thanks to Alfred Peet and Howard Schultz, gourmet coffee took America by storm.

The acceptance of coffee-house culture in America was more a labor of marketing than a natural evolution of consumption habits. In 1966 Alfred Peet, a Dutch immigrant, opened a whole-bean coffee shop in Berkeley where his business focused on product quality and educating its customers about the origins of coffee.[97] Peet's shop served coffee, but only as a means to market whole beans to customers; this American coffee shop certainly was no relative of European coffee-houses. Many industry analysts have credited Peet with creating the niche market for specialty coffee, which has since been dominated by Starbucks Coffee Company.

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[97] Ellis, *The Coffee-House:* 246.

The first Starbucks store, which sold high-quality coffee-beans and drip-brew coffee, was opened in Seattle's Pike Place Market in 1970. Howard Schultz, the current chairman of Starbucks, traveled to Europe and experienced Italian coffee-bar culture firsthand, recalling that he "discovered the ritual and the romance of coffee bars in Italy. I saw how popular they were, and how vibrant. Each one had its own unique character, but there was one common thread: the camaraderie between the customers, who knew each other well, and the barista, who was performing with flair."[98] He offered up the idea of creating a chain of coffee-bars in the US, but the management at Starbucks was skeptical. Schultz left the company and started his own coffee bar, Il Giornale, which enjoyed enormous success. Eventually the owners of Starbucks sold the company to Schultz, who integrated the espresso bar concept into the Starbucks brand. Il Giornale's success proved that Americans were warming to the concept of the coffee bar. They seemed to desire the kind of welcoming, comfortable meeting-place the coffee-bars provided, and their European origins offered an aura of romance and community.[99]

Undoubtedly, Starbucks Americanized coffee as a commodity. As opposed to the strongly-flavored espresso shots of Europe, which are often flavored with equal amounts of hot milk, Starbucks serves "hot milk drinks flavored with coffee."[100] Just as Europeans altered the brewing and serving of coffee to appeal to local palates, so has Starbucks made strong Italian espresso palatable to Americans. Starbucks also deviates from traditional coffee-houses in that its activities truly revolve around the coffee bean, while in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, coffee was just a means of bringing

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[98] Schultz, Howard, and Dori Jones Yang. *Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time.* (New York: Hyperion, 1997) 51.
[99] Ellis, *The Coffee-House*: 248.
[100] Ibid, 254.

citizens together for the higher purpose of political or intellectual discussions. Consuming coffee at a Starbucks coffee shop is hardly the political experience it was in traditional English coffee-houses, but it has maintained much of its sociability in the interactions between Starbucks employees and their regular customers.

Markman Ellis differentiates the Starbucks coffee experience from that of traditional European coffee-houses by observing that Starbucks' coffee culture is based on consumption, not conversation.[101] Clearly, there are not intensely heated political debates going on in modern Starbucks coffee shops, and there are few who frequent a Starbucks location with the intention of conversing with whoever happens to be seated at the next table. These aspects of coffee-house culture have been lost in the Americanizing translation that was the Starbucks Revolution.

Is the Coffee-house Still European?

Perhaps the most curious aspect of the modern-day coffee-house relates to globalization of the American coffee-house. Starbucks branded the American coffee experience and has marketed it successfully all over the world, including in Europe. Certain aspects of Starbucks are not palatable to Europeans, like the concept of taking coffee "to-go," and so Starbucks has had to adjust its product and service offering accordingly. Although most of the coffee products are homogeneous across the company's global outlets, pastries are still purchased from local bakeries and food items cater to local tastes. Starbucks recognized that coffee shops around the world can not be managed effectively from one headquarters in Seattle, and so Starbucks outlets in many countries (including China) are leased to a local company with better on-the-ground

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[101] Ibid, 255.

infrastructure and a better grasp of local culture. In fact, several European companies have begun marketing the "Seattle coffee experience" to Europeans in an effort to compete with Starbucks at its own game. They seem to recognize the inherent differences between traditional European coffee-houses and modern-day Starbucks-esque coffee shops.

Starbucks markets its coffee shop experience as one of leisure, community, and enjoyment. A far cry from its European predecessors, the modern coffee-house is more an activity of isolation and relaxation. It is where people go to unwind from the stresses of political and economic life, not to participate in heated debates within these realms. The modern coffee-house atmosphere is a drastic departure from traditional coffee-house culture. As Markman Ellis writes, the modern coffee-house associates itself with the "romance of the coffee-bean," not the traditional coffee-house history of "gossip, scandal, sedition, irony, and satire."[102] Coffee-houses have lost their edge, so to speak. They are sterile, cheerful, consumer-driven refuges from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, whereas at the height of their popularity European coffee-houses *were* the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

The modern-day coffee-house bears more resemblance to the continental cafés of the late eighteenth century than to Lloyd's of London and its contemporaries. People arrive at modern coffee-houses to chat with close friends, but coffee-houses are no longer the place where one *meets new friends* and shares common interests with strangers. While business meetings often take place at modern coffee-houses, the terms are usually agreed upon beforehand and the coffee-house meeting is a means of "sealing the deal," not a venue for its negotiation or a marketplace for bringing buyers and sellers together.

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[102] Ibid, 258.

Perhaps the most drastic shift in coffee-house culture is the almost total deterioration of its political influence. In the modern era, it is considered impolite to raise controversial issues of politics or religion in the serene atmosphere of the coffee-house. After all, we retreat to the coffee-house to escape political and economic life, not to participate in it.

Conclusion

As Isaac D'Israeli observed, "the history of coffee-houses, ere the invention of clubs, was that of the manners, the morals, and the politics of a people."[103] Examining this history has implications for how we think about the public sphere today. The significance of this study of European coffee-house is to demonstrate how the public sphere emerged not out of any deliberate attempt to create a forum for free speech, but because of a commodity that promoted rationality and the social space that developed for its consumption. Because of the culture that emerged following the introduction of coffee into Europe, the public sphere became a deeply ingrained facet of the British political system. Attempts by the authorities and social groups to quell the outpouring of free ideas and opinions were unsuccessful because of the necessity of the environment that coffee-houses provided.

As opposed to being an edict from above, the freedom of speech that arose in European coffee-houses emerged naturally out of the rational and civilized order of coffee-house culture. Patrons set aside their distinctions of rank and class because they valued freedom of expression more than formality or reserve. This natural materialization of the public sphere was truly a home-grown movement, and whether or not it would have developed the same way without coffee as a commodity raises questions about whether the acceptance of revolutionary political ideologies is a deliberate and premeditated movement propagated by powerful political figures or somewhat of a historical "coincidence" that is contingent upon which commodities are consumed and by whom.

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[103] Ellis, *The Penny Universities*: xiii

In conclusion, I want to highlight how my notion of the traditional European coffee-house has been drastically changed by undertaking this project. I used to believe that my consumption of modern-day American coffee amounted to participation in the tradition of European coffee-houses, but now I understand that a more appropriate analogy exists between the traditional European coffee-house and the internet. The internet serves as a forum for expressing one's opinion without submitting to an examination of one's credentials, education, experience, or class. These distinctions disappear as we hide behind our computer screens, just as they were set aside in the coffee-house to promote free speech. Chat rooms are much like the public coffee-rooms because they facilitate conversation between strangers on topics of mutual interest. Indeed, even coffee-house political clubs have taken a new form on the internet as discussion boards and blogs.

This analogy has been made in much of the contemporary literature on this subject, and the fact that wireless internet is available in most modern-day coffee-shops underscores this point. The Starbucks coffee shop in the Forbidden City in Beijing is no longer such a curious concept. It reflects a worldwide desire for a place of refuge where one can go to escape from the demands of daily life. Relaxation, leisure, sociability – these are the ideals that the modern coffee-house inherited from its European predecessors and these are what allows it to translate across cultures and languages to serve tourists in a country like China that has never consumed coffee. The value of the public sphere is universal, and this project impresses upon me that it is the coffee-house I have to thank for the freedom to participate in the modern public sphere.

Appendix A: The Spread of Coffee-houses
Source: Ellis, Markman. *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History*. (London: Phoenix, 2004) 259.

1511	Mecca
1532	Cairo
1554	Constantinople
1652	London
1655	Oxford
1669	Bremen
1670	Boston
1671	Marseilles
1671	Paris
1673	Edinburgh
1673	Glasgow
1683	Venice
1685	Vienna
1694	Leipzig
1696	New York
1700	Salzburg
1703	Philadelphia
1714	Prague
1718	Stockholm
Late 1700s	Madrid

Appendix B: The Rules and Orders of the Coffee House

Source: Ellis, Aytoun. *The Penny University: A History of the Coffee-Houses.* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956) 46.

THE RULES AND ORDERS OF THE COFFEE HOUSE

Enter sirs freely, But first if you please,
Peruse our Civil-Orders which are these:

First, gentry, tradesmen, all are welcome hither,
And may without affront sit down together;
Pre-eminence of place, none here should mind,
But take the next fit seat that he can find;
Nor need any, if Finer Persons come,
Rise up to assigne to them his room;
To limit men's Expence we think not fair,
But let him forfeit twelve-pence that shall swear;
He that shall any Quarrel here begin,
Shall give each man a dish t'atone the sin;
And so shall he, whose complements extend
So far to drink in COFFEE to his Friend;
Let noise of loud disputes be quite forborn,
No Maudlin Lovers here in Corners mourn,
But all be brisk, and talk, but not too much.
On Sacred Things, let none presume to touch,
Nor profane Scriptures, nor saucily wrong
Affairs of State with an irreverent tongue:
Let mirth be innocent, and each man see
That all his jests without reflection be;
To keep the House more quiet and from blame,
We banish hence Cards, Dice and every Game:
Nor can allow of Wage(r)s that exceed
Five Shillings, which oft-time much trouble breed;
Let all that's lost, or forfeited, be spent
In such Good Liquor as the House doth vent,
And Customers endeavour to their powers,
For to observe still seasonable hours.
Lastly, let each man what he calls for Pay,
And so you're welcome to come every day.

Appendix C: Proclamation for the Suppression of Coffee-Houses
Source: Ellis, Aytoun. *The Penny University: A History of the Coffee-Houses.* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956) 92.

BY THE KING: A PROCLAMATION FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF COFFEE HOUSES

CHARLES R.

Whereas it is most apparent that the multitude of Coffee-houses of late years set up and kept within this Kingdom, the Dominion of Wales, and Town of Berwick upon Tweed, and the great resort of Idle and disaffected persons to them, have produced very evil and dangerous effects: as well for that many Tradesmen and others, do therein misspend much of their time, which might and probably would otherwise be imployed in and about their Lawful Callings and Affairs; but also, for that in such Houses...divers False, Halitious and Scandalous Reports are devised and spread abroad, to the Defamation of His Majestie's Government, and to the disturbance of the Peace and Quiet of the Realm; His Majesty hath thought it fit and necessary, That the said Coffee-Houses be (for the future) Put down and Suppressed, and doth...Strictly Charge and Command all manner of persons, That they or any of them do not presume from and after the Tenth Day of January next ensuing, to keep any Publick Coffee-house, or to Utter or sell by retail, in his, her or their house or houses (to be spent or consumed within the same) any Coffee, Chocolet, Sherbett or Tea, as they will answer the contrary at their utmost perils...(*All licenses formerly granted to be revoked*).

Given at our court at Whitehall, this Nine-and-twentieth day of December 1675, in the Seven and twentieth year of Our Reign.

GOD SAVE THE KING

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