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Sacred and Useful Pleasures: The Temperance Tea Party and the Creation of a Sober Consumer Culture in Early Industrial Britain

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Abstract This essay argues that the strict branch of the temperance movement helped create and spread an idea of a sober consumer culture in early Victorian Britain. It specifically examines the material and gustatory, political, and religious culture of the mass temperance tea parties that emerged in the 1830s and the 1840s. Supported by middle- and working-class followers, evangelicals, and liberals, the strict branch of the temperance movement insisted that the consumption of tea, sugar, and wheat-based baked goods in a heterosocial setting would demonstrate the rewards of a religious and sober life. Mass tea parties disciplined consumers through satisfying the body and encouraging pleasurable cross-class and mixed-gender interactions. Temperance advocates hoped that the behaviors and values inculcated at the tea table would radiate to the home, the factory, and the marketplace. The temperance movement thus contributed to the notion that drinking tea produced well-behaved and energetic workers, as well as rational consumers.

Why tax tea and coffee, which are the antidotes to spirits, and a free and cheap use of which would in all probability, supersede the use of spirits?

Edward Brodribb, speech on Taxation before the Financial Reform Association, Liverpool, 22 November 1849[1]

When arguing for lower taxes on tea and coffee, tea broker Edward Brodribb employed rhetoric common to both early nineteenth-century free traders and temperance activists, who were then eagerly promoting the consumption of what they regarded as sacred and useful pleasures. In Britain, the belief that tea and coffee were "antidotes to spirits" had been around since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when medical and religious authorities, politicians and journalists, retailers and consumers had first proclaimed that tea, for example, was "a delicious Nectar" that had "all the good Effects of

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[1] Edward Brodribb, speech on taxation before the Financial Reform Association, *Liverpool Times*, 22 November 1849, also published in *Hunt's Merchants Magazine* (January–February 1850): 35, and in the postscript to *Tea and the Tea Trade: Parts First and Second* (New York, 1850).

wine without any of the ill."[2] In 1785, evangelical poet William Cowper captured these sentiments well when he labeled tea as "the Cup that Cheers but does not inebriate."[3] Nonetheless, into the nineteenth century an equal number of experts worried about the dire consequences that would result from the production, importation, and consumption of these foreign commodities.[4] This essay highlights the role of temperance in assuaging anxieties and promoting the consumption of tea in early Victorian Britain.[5]

Victorian temperance was a religiously and politically inspired consumer movement that shaped more than drink habits. It created new material and gustatory cultures, generating social and leisure practices that endowed food and drink with moral and pleasurable meanings about the self and the sacred. As the other essays in this forum also make clear, food and drink came to define class, community, and nation in very intimate yet also public ways in Victorian Britain. Debates such as whether roast beef should be served in the workhouse or fears about the healthiness of German sausages show us how political and other public discourses created meanings and tastes.[6] Tastes and distastes were thus forged in the public sphere, in workhouses and temperance halls, as much as they were in the kitchen and dining room. As we will see here, through the creation of a public culture of consumption, temperance advocates and their followers bestowed tea and its accompaniments, especially sugar and cotton, with a great deal of power. They implied that by drinking tea instead of alcohol, consumers would achieve class and gender harmony, political citizenship, and a heavenly home.

Many a temperance reformer had long advocated the moderate drinking of beer, wine, and cider, and such beliefs were remarkably long-lived. However, in the first half of the nineteenth century, several temperate groups with quite different political views and social backgrounds began to promote tea and coffee as antidotes to intemperance. Owenite socialists, Chartists, liberals, evangelicals, and missionaries served tea and coffee at soirées, bazaars, and tea parties to draw women to their cause and to inculcate a culture of sobriety within and beyond their communities. Tea and coffee

[2] *A Treatise on the Inherent Qualities of the Tea-Herb: Being an Account of the Natural Virtues of the Bohea, Green and Imperial Teas* (London, 1750), frontispiece.

[3] The actual phrase is "cups, That cheer but not inebriate," but it was always misquoted. William Cowper, *The Task: A Poem in Six Books* (London, 1785), book IV, 131.

[4] See, for example, Jonas Hanway, *An Essay on Tea: Considered as Pernicious to Health; Obstructing Industry; and Impoverishing the Nation* (London, 1756). For a full analysis, see Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1985); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants and Intoxicants* (New York, 1993); Elizabeth Kowalski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1997); Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713–1833* (Stanford, 2000), 34–48; Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and Respectability, 1600–1800* (New York, 2002); Timothy Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford, 2004); Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffee House* (New Haven, 2005).

[5] The most thorough study of the social and political history of temperance remains Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815–1872*, 2nd ed. (Staffordshire, 1994). See also Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade against Drink in Victorian England* (Hampshire, 1988); John Greenaway, *Drink and British Politics Since 1830: A Study in Policy-Making* (Hampshire, 2003); James Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester, 2009); Elizabeth Malcolm, *"Ireland Sober, Ireland Free": Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1986).

[6] See Durbach, Waddington, and Miller in this issue.

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were especially endorsed by the total abstinence or teetotal societies that emerged in the industrial communities in the north of England and in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales in the early 1830s and 1840s. "Teetotal" signified those who pledged to abstain from selling or consuming all alcohol, not an appreciation for tea per se. This branch of the temperance movement drank tea at home, but they also consumed what they viewed as sacred and useful pleasures in new public settings. They opened coffee shops and temperance hotels, and hosted, attended, and wrote about mass meals that came to be known as the temperance tea parties. In political debates about taxation and free trade, in sermons and tracts, through businesses and everyday practices, and in tea parties, temperance distinguished between productive and unproductive, moral and immoral, consumer behaviors and commodities. Believing in the power of education, moral suasion, and substitution as the best means to fight alcohol and the public house, temperance built a sober consumer culture of halls and hotels, coffee shops, and tea parties.[7]

The temperance tea parties that I focus on here were gustatory spectacles in which hundreds and at times thousands of working- and middle-class men and women gathered in a beautifully decorated setting to drink tea and coffee, feast on sugary foods, sing hymns, and listen to reformed drunkards and others preach the righteousness of sobriety. As Joseph Livesey, one of the leaders of the teetotal movement, explained, tea parties were "congenial and relatively inexpensive" mass affairs in which tea and the "companionship of females" softened and refined the manners of rough and rowdy workingmen.[8] Relying on such gendered narratives, scholars have often assumed that tea was a feminine pleasure primarily enjoyed within the private home.[9] However, although tea did have a feminine reputation, this gendering was not a social fact so much as an argument that advocates made when selling this commodity as a sobering or civilizing agent. Temperance advocates served tea to signify that women, as well as men, were welcome and desired. Tea's presence on the menu advertised an event as heterosocial, and this in turn implied that men and women would be expected to comport themselves in a respectable and "civilized" manner. Like the workhouse, the temperance movement created new class and gender identities, but unlike the workhouse, it did not separate the classes and

[7] On tea and temperance, see Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*. See also William H. Ukers, *All About Tea*, vol. I and II (New York, 1935); Sir Percival Griffiths, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry* (London, 1967); Denys Forrest, *Tea for the British: The Social and Economic History of a Famous Trade* (London, 1973); John Burnett, *A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* (London, 1999), 63; Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London, 2001), 13–32, 78; Alan MacFarlane and Iris MacFarlane, *Green Gold: The Empire of Tea: A Remarkable History of the Plant That Took Over the World* (London, 2003), 88–89; Roy Moxham, *Tea: Addiction, Exploitation, and Empire* (New York, 2003), 191; Beatrice Hohenegger, *Liquid Jade: The Story of Tea from East to West* (New York, 2006), 106–08; John Griffiths, *Tea: The Drink That Changed the World* (London, 2007), 54–56. Coffee and tea consumption were roughly on par with one another in the first half of the nineteenth century, but coffee declined dramatically between the 1850s and 1880s. For a contemporary explanation, see "The Decline of Coffee," *The Temperance Caterer* 10, no. 161 (7 January 1888): 10.

[8] "Tea Parties," *Livesey's Moral Reformer* 2 (13 January 1838): 10. Livesey does not tell us how these affairs were paid for, but it seems that most were funded by a combination of philanthropic contribution and low-cost tickets paid for by attendees. They often turned a profit and became a common source of fund-raising for temperance and other philanthropies well into the twentieth century.

[9] Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, 171–87; Kowalski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 19–36.

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sexes. Instead, the tea party disciplined consumers through satisfying the body and encouraging pleasurable cross-class and cross-gender interactions. The behaviors and values inculcated at the tea table would then, temperance advocates hoped, radiate to the home and the workplace.

Livesey and other like-minded temperance advocates believed that the mass consumption of tea could solve the central conundrum of an industrializing and expanding imperial economy: how to make modern efficient laborers *and* consumers. The temperance movement did not conceive of the consumer in precisely the same way that liberal theorists and activists would in the twentieth century, but it did address followers as consumers and believe that the reform of dietary, material, and other consumer practices would lead to spiritual and bodily health in addition to social—and for some even political—citizenship.[10] Temperance developed a moral narrative about the many rewards that would come with disciplining or channeling one's consumer desires. Advocates articulated and demonstrated these ideas through serving specific foods and drinks in particular settings decorated within meaningful décor. The commodities and consumers present at a temperance tea were then the *mis-en-scène* that constituted a spatial and material, visual and culinary performance. Ultimately, the temperance tea party functioned on several levels to promote, give meaning to, and manage the culture of consumption taking shape in the early nineteenth century.

Workers' enthusiasm for teetotalism and temperance tea parties does not indicate that they accepted the argument that tea was good for them. People joined the movement for a variety of reasons and did not always accept the values that leaders envisioned or promoted. It is helpful then to consider the movement as a site of struggle and a place in which notions of personhood and materiality were expressed and debated.[11] In his magisterial account of Victorian temperance, Brian Harrison argued that temperance contributed to changing material, culinary, and drinking cultures, particularly aiding the long-term shift from beer and spirits to more temperate drinks.[12] Of course, many just added new drinks to their diet, and the public house remained an epicenter of British working-class life throughout the nineteenth century, despite the growth of temperance. This essay, however, does not dispute Harrison's point, because I am not making a causal argument about temperance and shifting drink cultures and dietary habits here. Instead, I concentrate on the temperance tea party as a promotional occasion, something akin to an advertisement or any other mass cultural form that legitimated certain commodities while denigrating others as irrational, wasteful, and harmful.

Like advertisements, the tea party was understood and misunderstood differently by the workers, shopkeepers, manufactures, and merchants who attended these affairs. Cotton operatives who were experiencing the shift to the factory and facing reduced wages and restricted leisure no doubt appreciated the abundant food and drink served up at a tea party. These communities, as Anna Clark has shown, were especially coming to believe that abstention from drink would bring

[10] Here I am writing a prehistory to the conception of the consumer Frank Trentmann has documented in *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2008). See also Mariana Valverde, *Diseases of the Will: Alcohol and the Dilemmas of Freedom* (Cambridge, 1998).

[11] This is especially clear in a colonial setting. See Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth, NH, 1996).

[12] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 37.

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domestic happiness, social improvement, and political citizenship.[13] Small shopkeepers who helped found and were eager followers of the teetotal movement wanted to mark their place in respectable society, but they also assumed they would accrue profits that were typically spent at the public house. Large manufacturers were religiously inspired, but as Brian Harrison proposed long ago, many believed that temperance would create a sober workforce *and* stable domestic and foreign markets. Mill owners imagined that by stimulating the widespread consumption of tea in Britain, which was still entirely sourced from China, they would produce a mass market in China for British manufactured goods.[14] Evangelicals frowned on worldly pleasures and avoided dancing, drinking, and other stimulating and ungodly pastimes, but they did promote acceptable material comforts and consumer habits.[15] Whatever their politics, religion, and social position, diverse interests came together as a community at tea parties. At such meals, and as members of temperance organizations, tens of thousands of middle-class and working-class men and women thus shaped the history of British consumer culture.[16] Discourses and movements that sought to restrain and manage the consumer thus also promoted desire and pleasure. In truth, restraint and pleasure were ever intertwined.[17]

"THERE IS NO USEFUL STRENGTH IN IT": TEA AND THE WORKING CLASS IN EARLY INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN

Early modern attitudes toward tea and coffee lingered long into the nineteenth century. As Brian Cowan, Sidney Mintz, and others have explained, early modern

[13] Men and women operatives embraced temperance and new ideals of sexual morality and companionate marriage. Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley, 1995).

[14] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 119–20.

[15] Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London, 1976), 100–02. On material culture and evangelicalism, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago, 1987); Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven, 2006). For evangelical influence on business practices and economic thought, see Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795–1865* (Oxford, 1988).

[16] Key works on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries include Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society in England* (Bloomington 1982); Carole Shammas, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990); John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York, 1994); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* (Routledge, 1996); Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2005); Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005); John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2007); Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008); Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, 2009). For the late nineteenth century, see Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford, 1990); Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860–1914* (Manchester, 1999); Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women and the Making of London's West End* (Princeton, 2000).

[17] On the US context, see Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, 1994).

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Europeans had seen these exotic substances as foods and yet also as drugs that were part of similar medical, commercial, and consumer cultures.[18] The meanings surrounding these ingestible commodities were as dependent on cultural contexts as they were on any inherent quality.[19] Bodily feelings were never simply the stuff of physiology or even habit. A sweet cup of tea in 1830s Britain was flavored by shifting conditions of labor on sugar plantations in the West Indies, by deteriorating relations with China, and by yearnings for alternative sources of supply in India that had not yet materialized.[20] Industrialization, class and gender ideologies, political reform, and religious revival informed habits and tastes.

Although there was a great deal of diversity in its adoption, tea became a mass commodity—that is, something purchased on a regular basis by people at varying income levels—by the middle part of the eighteenth century.[21] Many elite and middle-rank households, along with some lower-class communities, took to tea between 1700 and 1725, but as Lorna Weatherill has put it, the "consumption hierarchy was not exactly the same as the social hierarchy."[22] Plebian consumption dramatically expanded with the reduction in prices that followed the Commutation Act in 1784.[23] Yet during the first third of the nineteenth century, demand failed to keep pace with population growth. Decades of war had been paid for in part by raises in the tea duty from a low 12½ percent in 1784 to 95 percent *ad valorem* in 1804, eventually increasing to 100 percent of the tea's value by 1824.[24] Chinese fiscal policies and high transport costs within China, and between China and Britain, also contributed to especially high retail prices in Britain in the 1830s, a situation that contributed to widespread smuggling and adulteration.[25] These practices, as well as the end of the East India Company's monopoly of the tea trade in 1833, make it especially difficult to assess prices. We do know that the working classes were paying more for their tea in the 1830s than they had for decades, and consumption suffered as a result.[26] At the same time, beer consumption was on the decline owing to a shift away from home brewing coupled with high taxes. In the 1830s, the decline of both beer and tea were at times taken as a sign of growing impoverishment of the working classes.[27]

[18] Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee*, especially chap. 2.

[19] Especially important are Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; Piya Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation* (Durham, 2001); Julie E. Fromer, *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England* (Athens, OH, 2008).

[20] Erika Rappaport, "Packaging China: Foreign Articles and Dangerous Tastes in the Mid-Victorian Tea Party," in *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power, and Identity in the Modern World,* ed. Frank Trentmann (Oxford, 2006), 125–46.

[21] Shammas, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England*, 78.

[22] Weatherill, *Consumer Behavior* (London, 1988), 185.

[23] Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, "Smuggling and the British Tea Trade before 1784," *American Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (October 1968): 44–73; Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, *The Management of Monopoly: A Study of the East India Company's Conduct of Its Tea Trade, 1784–1833* (Vancouver, 1984).

[24] Between 1801 and 1810, per capita consumption was at 1.41 pounds a year. It fell to 1.28 in the next decade and did not recover its earlier rates until the 1840s. Burnett, *A Social History of Drink*, 57; John Burnett, "Report on the Tea Duties," *Westminster Review* 22, no. 44 (April 1835): 374.

[25] Robert Gardella, *Harvesting Mountains: Fujian and the China Tea Trade, 1757–1937* (Berkeley, 1994), 38.

[26] Burnett, *A Social History of Drink*, 58.

[27] Ibid., 126–28.

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In general, however, speaking in terms of national markets and averages makes very little sense in these years when regional tastes predominated. For example, as late as the 1840s, tea was very popular in Edinburgh and along the English border, yet it was almost unknown in the north of Scotland and in the Highlands.[28] The Irish middle and upper classes, domestic servants, and Ulster weavers incorporated the beverage into their diets in the eighteenth century, but the latter group abandoned the habit as they faced economic distress in the nineteenth century. Tea thus only became the staple drink for Ireland's urban poor at the very end of the century.[29] Dietary changes, then, did not occur in a sudden consumer revolution or follow a straight upward curve.

Nevertheless, in the early nineteenth century, tea's presence in so many shops and larders, and its centrality to foreign trade and to government finances, meant that it garnered a great deal of public attention, and various individuals and groups were compelled to weigh in on its place in British society, political economy, and diets. Attitudes, like markets, did not fall into clear social, political, or geographic groupings, and some radicals, liberals, and conservatives were alike in their belief that, especially for Britain's laborers, tea was a wasteful commodity that consumed time and money without providing true energy. Some pointed out the dangers of adulteration, while others argued that tea was an intoxicant and no different than other nefarious substances that depleted working-class resources and bodies.[30] A key articulation of the anti-tea argument came from radical journalist William Cobbett. In *Cottage Economy* (1822), Cobbett identified how tea wasted women's labor and men's time. Far from being a new "convenience" food that could be made with little effort, Cobbett demonstrated how brewing tea involved numerous repetitive acts that turned the rural housewife into a domestic slave. At the same time, men became idlers, wasting hours "hanging about waiting for the tea." Cobbett quantified cost in terms of time, space, and the price of the whole cluster of commodities spent on the tea habit, including milk, sugar, fuel, and "tea-tackle." "[A] destroyer of health, an enfeebler of the frame, an engenderer of effeminacy and laziness, a debaucher of youth and a maker of misery for old age," tea, Cobbett opined, was a dangerously wasteful commodity. Furthermore, he insisted that "[t]here *is* no useful strength in it—it *does not* contain anything nutritious—and, besides being *good* for nothing, it has *badness* in it. . . . [I]t communicates *no* strength to the body," and therefore "does not in any degree assist in affording what labour demands."[31] Tea was thus unhealthy, unproductive, effeminizing, and unsuited to the lifestyle of the farm laborer. Relying on an imagined past that privileged local goods, self-sufficiency, and low taxes, Cobbett's nostalgia was in part a means to gain support from estate owners who produced grain used to brew beer.[32]

[28] Ian Levitt and Christopher Smout, *The State of the Scottish Working-Class in 1843: A Statistical and Spatial Enquiry Based on the Data from the Poor Law Commission Report of 1844* (Edinburgh, 1979), 25–35.

[29] Jane Gray, "Gender and Plebian Culture in Ulster," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 251–70; Patricia Lysaght, "'When I Makes Tea, I Makes Tea…': Innovation in Food —The Case of Tea in Ireland," *Ulster Folklife* 33 (1987): 44–71. See also E. Margaret Crawford, *Aspects of the Irish Diet* (PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 1985), 146.

[30] Rappaport, "Packaging China."

[31] William Cobbett, *Cottage Economy* (1822; London, 1926), 15–19.

[32] Leonora Nattrass, *William Cobbett: The Politics of Style* (Cambridge, 1995), 152–56.

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Cobbett's jeremiads were hardly unique, however. In the 1820s, liberal and radical temperance reformers made similar points when they argued that a free trade in beer would combat excessive spirit consumption.[33] Lord Brougham, the Whig statesman who favored political reform, abolition, and temperance, denounced tea because it did not lead to "the cultivation of one single acre of English land." Brougham preferred beer, "a good sound, wholesome, constitutional beverage."[34] Anglican cleric and temperance advocate Sidney Smith expressed the same idea when he asked, "What two ideas are more inseparable than Beer and Britannia!"[35] Many radicals and liberals toasted Britannia with a pint of ale and were as yet unconvinced about the merits of the Chinese brew.

Georgian and early Victorian evangelicals were also divided about the social and spiritual significance of tea drinking. John Wesley personally renounced the brew in the 1740s, but by 1761 he had not only returned to drinking tea, but he commissioned Josiah Wedgwood to make him a one-gallon teapot.[36] Other serious Christians, however, worried that tea was an unnecessary modern luxury that undermined working-class efforts to produce moral domestic spaces. Esther Copley, the daughter of a Huguenot silk manufacturer, wife of a Baptist minister, and prolific writer, made this argument in *Cottage Comforts* (1825), a book that was designed to instruct the "labouring classes" on how "to provide themselves with decent habitation, wholesome food, and suitable raiment."[37] Appropriating much from Cobbett, Copley was really of two minds about tea. Though she recommended "a good copper tea-kettle" as the most durable type for the working-class larder, she nevertheless insisted that "tea *is* a luxury and the less of it there is used in a cottager's family, the better it will be for their pockets, and certainly not worse for their health." She also bemoaned the decline of the older breakfast of bread and cheese, beer, and porridge. Like Cobbett, Copley longed for a time of rural and domestic self-sufficiency, represented by home-brewed beer and warm "infusions of mint, roasted grain," and other "British herbs," which were "just as good and pleasant as the foreign tea."[38] Cobbett and Copley were primarily concerned with the shifting dietary and consumer habits of farm laborers in commercializing southern England, which consisted of formerly prosperous communities known to enjoy prodigious amounts of beef and beer.[39] Tea consumption seemed to grow with the impoverishment of these communities, leading many a social observer to write of tea as the symbol and even the *cause* of economic decline.

[33] This movement was also building on the arguments of anti-gin campaigners in the 1750s. Jessica Warner, "Faith in Numbers: Quantifying Gin and Sin in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 50, no. 1 (January 2011): 76–99.

[34] Quoted in Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 62.

[35] Ibid., 61.

[36] John Wesley, *A Letter to a Friend Concerning Tea*, 2nd ed. (Bristol, 1749); Forrest, *Tea for the British*, 56–57. For other examples of Methodism's early support of temperance, see Samuel Woolmer, "On the Tea Plant," *Methodist Magazine* 23 (1811): 45–49; Samuel Woolmer, "On the Natural and Commercial History of Tea," *Methodist Magazine* (Toronto) 10 (1827): 118.

[37] Esther Copley, *Cottage Comforts*, 12th ed. (1825; London, 1834), 1.

[38] Ibid., 37, 65–66.

[39] Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550–1780* (Cambridge, 2011).

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Tea and alcohol were not entirely distinct in the public mind, in politics, or in daily practices. During and after the wars with France, tea, coffee, and alcohol were all heavily taxed items, and many a radical urged abstention from buying, selling, or drinking these commodities as a way to protest corruption in an unreformed government.[40] The Bath Union Society for Parliamentary Reform spelled this out when it "earnestly recommended" that its members not spend "Money at public houses, because half of the said Money goes to Taxes, to feed the Maggots of Corruption."[41] In Glasgow, reformers abstained from whiskey, ale, tobacco, and tea. A Scottish radical association even produced a "sinecure teapot . . . with the gudwife's compliments to be smashed by the leader." Women activists carried "inverted gill stoups [whiskey glasses] and teapots at demonstrations along with placards proclaiming 'No luxuries.'"[42] Scotland had a history of rowdy anti-tea politics dating back to the mid-eighteenth century, when a popular campaign had passed resolutions "to stamp out the tea menace." This movement characterized tea as a "foreign" luxury, which, according to one group of tenant farmers, was inappropriate for "the more robust and manly parts of our business." Foreign luxuries, the farmers proposed, should be left to the wealthy or "those who can afford to be weak, indolent and useless."[43] As is well known, sugar also came in for a particularly harsh critique when abolitionists boycotted slave-produced West Indian sugar. While this movement drove home the point that even the poorest consumer shared in the enslavement of the African, it also highlighted the political potential of organizing such consumers.[44]

In the postemancipation era, social observers carried on and extended this critique to suggest that, through their consumption, sugar and tea contributed to the enslavement of the British working classes living in northern industrial cities. Seeing food as a barometer of social and economic change, liberals and radicals pointed to the prevalence of bread, sugar, tea, and coffee in working-class diets as symptoms and causes of social, moral, and physiological decline. Noting how tea and alcohol consumption were similar rather than distinct consumer practices, liberal William Rathbone Greg argued that poor-quality weak tea was especially "fatal to the constitution of all working men." Tea, he argued, was but a temporary means to relieve "internal languor and depression." Even worse, drinking tea often "calls for another and stronger stimulus; and it is generally the case, that those among the work people who have been long habituated to the use of tea as a frequent meal, are at length reduced to mix a large proportion of spirits in every cup they take. This pernicious practice prevails to an inconceivable extent among our manufacturing population, at every age, and in both sexes."[45] Dr. James Phillips Kay, Peter Gaskell, and Friedrich Engels also insisted that weak tea mixed with spirits and other stimulants signified poverty rather than

[40] For the broader history of taxation, see Martin Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan: The Politics of Taxation in Britain, 1799–1914* (Cambridge, 2001).

[41] Quoted in E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966), 740.

[42] Quoted in Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, 160.

[43] Quoted in Ukers, *All about Tea*, I:47.

[44] Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*; Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 35–40.

[45] William Rathbone Greg, *An Enquiry into the State of the Manufacturing Population, and the Causes and Cures of the Evils Therein Existing* (London, 1831), 10.

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prosperity."[46] Dr. William Alcott, a temperance enthusiast, similarly called tea a "narcotic" that provided only a "fictitious strength." As he put it: "The female who restores her strength by tea and the laboring man by a glass of spirits, and the Turk by his pill of opium are in precisely the same condition; so far, we mean, as the matter of stimulation is concerned."[47] Along the same lines, another temperance activist warned, "*Tea-drinking* visits open the floodgates of various temptations."[48]

All these writers associated tea with the decline of the working classes. So too did E. P. Thompson, who famously quipped that the working man's "share in the 'benefits of economic progress' consisted of more potatoes, a few articles of cotton clothing for his family, soap and candles, some tea and sugar, and a great many articles in the *Economic History Review*."[49] Tea, Thompson insisted, did not make up for the long and tedious hours of factory life, the loss of traditional forms of leisure, and intense political and social repression. In his seminal study of sugar, Sidney Mintz made a similar argument, though he widened the implications of this debate to show how cheap tea and sugar reproduced the British *and* the colonial working classes. Mintz acknowledged the long and varied ways that tea and sugar became absorbed into British culture and diets, but he replicated the rhetoric of temperance advocates when he proposed that factory workers took to tea because it was a cheap and convenient fuel for machinelike industrial bodies.[50] If we can believe Cobbett, tea may not have been as cheap or as convenient as Mintz assumed. As Cobbett pointed out, calculating cost should include the collective price of fuel, sugar, milk, and tea. He also factored in time and household labor, still significant in this era. When factory workers drank tea, they were not just reacting to cost, nor were they simply responding to new economic, social, and physiological needs and time pressures. They certainly were not being forced by their employers to drink tea, and they were not being bought off or seduced by mass culture. Rather, they participated in its creation.[51] One place in which we can see working- and middle-class reformers inventing consumer culture is at the temperance tea parties

[46] James Phillips Kay, MD, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London, 1832), 9; Peter Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England: Its Moral, Social, and Physical Conditions and Changes which have Arisen from the Use of Steam Machinery* (London, 1833), 107–10; Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1845), 106.

[47] William A. Alcott, *Tea and Coffee* (Boston, 1839), 17–18; J. A. Charters, "Spirits in the North-East? Gin and Other Vices in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Creating and Consuming Culture in North-East England, 1660–1830*, ed. Helen Berry and Jeremy Gregory (Aldershot, 2004), 38, 51–52.

[48] John Bowes, *Temperance as it is opposed to strong Drinks, Tobacco and Snuff, Tea and Coffee* (Aberdeen, 1836), 12.

[49] Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 318. For an alternative view of the mid-Victorian working-class diet, see Paul Clayton and Judith Rowbotham, "An Unsuitable and Degraded Diet? Part Two: Realities of the Mid-Victorian Diet," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 101 (2008): 350–57.

[50] Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*; Tamara Ketabgian, "'Foreign Tastes and Manchester Tea-Parties:' Eating and Drinking with the Victorian Lower Orders," in *Consuming Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century: Narratives of Consumption, 1700–1900*, ed. Tamara S. Wagner and Narin Hassan (New York, 2007), 125–40; Fromer, *A Necessary Luxury*, 116–69. See also Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley, 1990).

[51] For a similar point, see Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930* (Manchester, 1996).

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that grew and spread during the 1830s. These events were not solely responsible for the spread of the tea habit, but they do suggest that consumer practices associated with the afternoon tea did not simply trickle down the social ladder.

Standard histories of the ritual of afternoon tea assert that Anna Maria, the wife of the 7th Duke of Bedford, invented this meal in the 1840s in order to offset hunger and fatigue in the long afternoon hours between luncheon—also a new meal—and dinner, which was moving later.[52] The reality is far more complicated. At least a decade before the duchess turned the evening tea party into an afternoon affair, workers, shopkeepers, merchants, and manufacturers began to drink tea and eat sugary foods in the evening and the afternoon in schoolrooms, factories, and temperance and other meeting halls across Britain and its empire.[53] The duchess was an evangelical Christian, and it is quite likely that she knew about, attended, or even hosted temperance teas. Much more work is needed on the specific social networks that made such habits fashionable among different segments of British and imperial society. In particular, we still need to study the significance of religion in shaping Victorian foodways. However, by looking at the temperance tea party in early industrial Britain, we can see how local communities endowed the hot brew with specific religious, political, class, gender, and racial connotations.

FOOD AND FEASTING IN A SOBER SOCIETY

On 11 July 1832, 540 working men and women from the northern industrial town of Preston attended a new type of public banquet that became known as the Temperance Tea Party.[54] This meal was held in the Cloth Hall of the Corn Exchange in the middle of race day, traditionally a time of excessive drinking. The location, timing, menu, decorations, and table equipage set out, along with the speeches and songs performed, brought to mind the promises of sobriety and free trade. Tea was the star of the show, but the piles of bread and butter, cakes and fruit, and cotton decorations also lent much flavor to the affair. A reporter for the temperance journal the *Moral Reformer* described Preston's Tea Party as a feast for the eyes and stomach, and proof of the civilizing effects of cross-class and heterosocial forms of leisure. The walls, this sympathetic observer pointed out, were "entirely covered with bleached calico, tastefully arrayed, and decorated with various emblems." The food and drink were "good" and the tea "served up with so much order and regularity as to astonish the visitors." Men who "had never been absent from the races, usually intoxicated, [were] now seated at the table with their wives and friends!" After tea was served, various speakers addressed the audience, and the next day the

[52] Arnold Palmer, *Movable Feasts: A Reconnaissance of the Origins and Consequences of Fluctuations in Meal Times with special attention to the Introduction of Luncheon and Afternoon Tea* (London, 1952), 59; Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea,* 102. Laura Mason, "Everything Stops for Tea," in *Eating with the Victorians*, ed. C. Anne Wilson (London, 1994), 68–85; Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (London, 2007), 58–77.

[53] On the multiple ways afternoon tea developed, see Ivan Day, "Teatime," in *Eat, Drink and Be Merry: The British at Table, 1600–2000*, ed. Ivan Day (London, 2000), 107–30.

[54] Joseph Dearden, *A Brief History of Ancient and Modern Tee-Totalism: With a short account of Drunkenness, and the various means used for its Suppression* (Preston, 1840), 21.

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speeches continued at a field meeting on Preston Moor. This had surely been, the journalist concluded, a "feast of reason."[55]

Incorporating the public nature of radical and reform politics with Methodist-style tent meetings and the use of personal testimony in the conversion experience, the temperance tea party can be seen as a material and culinary expression of popular liberalism and evangelical revival.[56] Inspired by the founding of the American Temperance Society in 1826, British anti-spirit societies formed independently of one another in the summer of 1829. By 1830, most major cities had such a society, including Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, Dublin, Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Bradford, and London.[57] Like earlier movements, none of these new societies initially required total abstinence. They campaigned against spirits and worried that the reduction of taxes on spirits in 1825 had increased drunkenness.[58] The passage of the Beer Act of 1830, which no longer required beer sellers to obtain licenses from magistrates, had also appeared to increase this sin. Whether true or not, philanthropists and politicians proclaimed alcohol abuse as the social problem of the day. Only twelve days after the passage of the Beer Act, Sidney Smith wrote, "Everybody is drunk."[59] Temperance enthusiast, radical, and oriental traveler James Silk Buckingham made a similar point before the House of Commons in 1834. Using evidence from police reports, coroners' inquests, and hospital and public records in England, Scotland, and Ireland, Buckingham argued that there was the "most irresistible proof . . . that Intemperance, like a mighty and destroying flood, is fast overwhelming the land."[60]

The teetotal movement, or turn to total abstinence, emerged in part as a reaction to the successes and disappointments of radical politics. The passage of the Beer Act and the failure to achieve universal suffrage with the passage of the Reform Act in 1832 turned many moderates into total abstainers and activists. As James Vernon has explained, some radicals came to believe that it was "their mobbish unrespectability," among other things, that had led to "the great middle-class betrayal."[61] Even before this disillusionment, Robert Owen and his followers took up temperance to bring about gender and social equality within radical families, politics, and society at large.[62] At least a year before Preston's first tea party, socialists and feminists began hosting teas to raise money and further their cause.[63] On such occasions, several

[55] "Temperance Cause in Preston," *Moral Reformer, and Protestor against Vices, Abuses, and Corruptions of the Age* 2, no. 8 (1 August 1832): 246.

[56] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 130.

[57] Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 98; Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 103–06. P. T. Winskill, *The Temperance Movement: A Record of Social, Moral, Religious and Political Progress*, vol. 1 (London, 1891), 5.

[58] Nicholls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 89.

[59] Quoted in Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 82.

[60] James Silk Buckingham, "Speech of Mr. Buckingham on the Extent, Causes, and Effects of Drunkenness," delivered in the House of Commons on Tuesday, 3 June 1834, *Parliamentary Review* (7 June 1834): 742.

[61] James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study of English Political Culture, c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge, 1993), 215; Nicolls, *The Politics of Alcohol*, 81.

[62] Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 222.

[63] "Tea Parties," *Poor Man's Guardian* (18 March 1831): 7. Also see (12 March 1831): 8 and (23 April 1831): 8. For the domestic and political significance of this temperate culture, see Clark, *Struggle for the Breeches*; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, 207–50; and James Epstein, "Some Organizational and Cultural

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hundred men and women (and sometimes children) ate and drank temperate beverages, listened to and made speeches, and danced into the late hours. In early spring of 1831, for example, a Belfast co-operative society hosted a tea party of about a hundred persons, many of whom were described as "respectable well dressed females." "No spirituous liquors" were served, so speakers toasted their radical heroes and heroines over cups of coffee. They honored "Working people, the source of all wealth" and looked forward to the "the withering blight of competition" giving way to the "rising sun of Co-operation." "Miss Frances Wright, Mrs. Wheeler, and the Rights of Women," Dr. Birkbeck and the movement for mechanics institutes, Robert Owen, and Lord Brougham were all similarly honored before the room was cleared for dancing.[64] There were many similar demonstrations of radical tea drinking, such as an all-female tea party held in Brighton in 1836 to protest the New Poor Law, often termed the "Starvation Act."[65] Radical communities thus invested tea and the sober consumer culture of temperance with the power to bring about political as well as social citizenship for men and women. Evangelical teetotalers drew upon this rich radical ceremonial tradition. However, as Barbara Taylor has pointed out, while socialist temperance advocates "urged the money saved through abstinence from alcohol should be invested in communities," evangelical advocates assumed that abstinence would "lead working people into sober, industrious behavior within the existing system."[66] Taylor noted, moreover, that teetotalers sometimes clashed with their more radical colleagues, even banning them from their meetings.

Teetotalers nevertheless vigorously worked to create cross-class and mixed-gender societies. They tried to appeal to middle-class industrial elites, large merchants, small shopkeepers, and factory operatives—groups that often clashed but were also drawn together by nonconformity, family and business connections, and by some political issues as well.[67] This community was profoundly strained, but it did not entirely break after the passage of the Great Reform Act in 1832 and the class tensions that grew thereafter. Indeed, it was in the cotton town of Preston in 1832 that Joseph Livesey, a self-educated-handloom-weaver-turned-cheese-factor, and several other Lancashire merchants and working men founded the teetotal movement.[68] Like Livesey, many but not all of the movement's leadership had been involved in political reform and would later become active in the Anti-Corn Law League, the

Aspects of the Chartist Movement in Nottingham," in *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830–1860*, ed. James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (London, 1982), 221–68.

[64] *Poor Man's Guardian* (18 March 1831): 7.

[65] "Female Opposition to the New Poor Law," *Cleave's Weekly Police Gazette* (9 April 1836): n.p. James Vernon has argued that the New Poor Law brought hunger and plenty into a new framework. James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 18–20.

[66] Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 222.

[67] John K. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558–1939* (Manchester, 1987), 251.

[68] Weavers, spinners, shoemakers, mechanics, cabinetmakers, and shopkeepers were the first to sign the pledge. Winskill, *The Temperance Movement*, 107. James Ellison, *Dawn of Teetotalism: Being the Story of the Origin of the Total Abstinence Pledge signed by the "Seven Men of Preston," and the Introduction of Teetotalism* (Preston, 1932); Ian Levett, ed., *Joseph Livesey of Preston: Business, Temperance and Moral Reform* (Lancashire, 1996); E. C. Urwin, *A Weaver at the Loom of Time: A Sketch of the Life of Joseph Livesey the Early Temperance Reformer* (London, 1923); Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 117–18; Shiman, *Crusade against Drink*, 18.

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fight to lower the tea duties in the 1830s and 1840s, and other similar causes. The movement flourished among nonconformist textile manufacturing communities in Ireland, Scotland, and England. It gained support from Whig newspapers such as the *Preston Chronicle*, and cotton manufacturers and their wives and daughters joined societies, and hosted and spoke at meetings.[69] Temperance was part of a broader middle-class social practice of self-improvement and benevolence that sought to inculcate thrift and good behavior among workers. It was a means through which a new middle class sought to affirm its own "social aspirations and identity."[70] It was also an expression of religious affiliation and beliefs.

Organizers of temperance tea parties nearly always proclaimed that they were promoting "sobriety, industry and religion."[71] Teetotalism was, as one historian put it, permeated with "popular evangelicalism." The movement used propaganda techniques and methods of organization learned in both American and British revivalism.[72] The first meeting of Preston's society was presided over by a Wesleyan minister and held in a Wesleyan chapel. Livesey was a Scotch Baptist who sought to model his conduct on the "charitable and forgiving spirit of Jesus."[73] Anglicans and many Wesleyans were ambivalent or even hostile to total abstinence, but the Congregationalists, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians in the West of England, and Calvinistic Methodists in Wales were quite enthusiastic. Long before teetotal societies formed in the 1830s, the working-class Salford Bible Christian Church developed a Christian diet that abstained from "the use of animal food and intoxicating liquors."[74] Quakers were more lenient. They banned believers from making, selling, or drinking hard alcohol, but they saw nothing wrong with beer, and notable Quaker families like the Cadburys built business empires selling temperance brews.[75] Evangelical organizations that were not solely dedicated to temperance also became committed to tea and tea parties. In his diary in 1846, the Earl of Shaftesbury recorded that he had chaired a tea party at the new evangelical organization the YMCA. His description replicated the language of temperance literature when he noted how it had been "a very striking scene" to see four hundred "shopmen, with their mothers and sisters, attending really in a religious spirit."[76] Nonconformist ministers, who were gaining professional status and becoming spiritual and cultural leaders in industrial cities, frequently preached at tea parties. Former drunkards also

[69] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 95.

[70] Anthony Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830–1860* (Oxford, 1984), 273. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*; Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840–1914* (Manchester, 2000); Rachel Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption: Food, Space and Identity in London and Paris, 1850–1914* (Manchester, 2011); Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford, 2012).

[71] "Female Abstinence Society," *Teetotal Times and General Advertiser* 1, no. 1 (15 December 1838), n.p.

[72] Louis Billington, "Popular Religion and Social Reform: A Study of Revivalism and Teetotalism, 1830–1850," *Journal of Religious History* 10, no. 3 (June 1979): 266–93.

[73] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 117–18.

[74] Derek Antrobus, *A Guiltless Feast: The Salford Bible Christian Church and the Rise of the Modern Vegetarian Movement* (Salford, 1997), 59. On the particular denominations, see Billington, "Popular Religion and Social Reform." On Christian food ideals, see David Grumett and Rachel Muers, *Theology on the Menu: Asceticism, Meat, and the Christian Diet* (London, 2010).

[75] Kenneth Williams, *The Story of Ty-phoo and the Birmingham Tea Industry* (London 1990), 11–13; Shiman, *Crusade against Drink*, 64; Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 179–95.

[76] Quoted in Bradley, *A Call To Seriousness*, 47.

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stood before the crowds and confessed how religion had helped them give up the "love of the glass," as one pensioner put it during a Bolton tea party in October 1833. Since joining the New Temperance Society, this pensioner explained how it had been fourteen weeks since he had tasted anything stronger than "tea or coffee." He now believed he would "be able to live more consistently as a professor of our holy religion."[77] Such confessions sanctified tea and other temperance drinks as the symbol of, and the path to, a holy life.

Broadly speaking, the temperance movement was divided about how or whether the government should regulate drink. Though some proponents were committed to government intervention, in a more general way tea parties constructed a liberal and Christian notion of the self. In particular, speeches, hymns, and tracts appealed to both liberal and Christian beliefs in the power of the individual to overcome his or her past. As in the United States, such narratives could be said to have transformed "an ancient virtue of moderation into a distinctively liberal practice of freedom."[78] The décor, banners, and food at the temperance tea party also illustrated a liberal story, one that showed how calicos, plentiful food, and tea were legitimate and desirable forms of working-class consumption. The material and gastronomic culture of the temperance tea party thus fashioned a mixed-class crowd into a market. Abstinence did not imply renunciation of the sensual or the material. Rather, temperance advocates addressed their followers as consumers whose desires could become moral and profitable.

Frequently held during the Christmas season, tea parties celebrated the holiday as a time of feasting and family togetherness rather than drunken revelry, transforming this once raucous holiday into a consumer-oriented family affair.[79] Whenever they were held, tea parties provided a brief taste of the sweet life and showed how the rejection of certain material pleasures would bring an ever-lasting world of copious food, moral drinks, and domestic happiness. Temperance journals described such affairs in delicious detail. For example, we know that 1,200 men and women attended a Temperance Tea on Christmas Day in 1834. As they had at previous events, the organizers draped the walls and windows of Preston's Cloth Hall with white cambric decorated with colored rosettes and evergreen garlands. The same material covered 630 feet of tables and the 40 former drunkards who served tea dressed in white aprons printed with the word "temperance" on the front. The *Preston Temperance Advocate* explained that "the tables were loaded with provisions, and plenty seemed to smile upon the guests." "Plenty" was certainly part of the party's official message, because it was printed on the festooned walls, along with the words "Temperance," "Sobriety," "Peace," and "Happiness." Instead of the

[77] "Bolton Tea Party," *Moral Reformer, and Protestor Against the Vices, Abuses, and Corruptions of the Age* 3, no. 11 (November 1833): 353. There is a rich historiography on nonconformity and the middle classes in these cities. Gunn is helpful because he connects this literature to a broader study of urban culture. See especially chapter 5 of *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Classes*.

[78] Thomas Augst, "Temperance, Mass Culture and the Romance of Experience," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 298. For another important study of temperance and the formation of Canadian consumer culture, see Donica Belisle's forthoming study, *Contesting Consumption: Women and the Rise of Canadian Consumer Modernity*, chap. 2.

[79] Tara Moore, "National Identity and Victorian Christmas Foods," in *Consuming Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 141–54.

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dancing that ended a socialist tea party, this event ended quietly with the singing of temperance hymns, accompanied by a small band that played softly.[80]

In Preston and other locales, tea parties were repeated approximately twice a year, and with repetition they began to tell very similar stories. In 1836, Preston's Cloth Hall was once again "elegantly decorated with evergreens, rosettes, artificial flowers, fruit trees, etc." Fifty-six windows were also "tastefully festooned," and "900 yards of white cotton shirting" covered the tables and walls, which again were printed with the words, "'temperance,' 'sobriety,' 'peace,' 'happiness,' and 'plenty'"—the last word appearing directly above tables loaded with mountains of bread and butter. The themes of plenty, regularity, cheerfulness, and social harmony were conveyed in the descriptions of such events as well. The writer who described this affair made sure to note, for example, how "75 sets of beautiful tea and coffee services" and "34 tea kettles holding about 250 gallons of water" served between 1,200 and 1,300 at precisely "half-past four o'clock." He also noted that Preston's mayor, "his lady, and son" were especially "gratified with the splendid scene, and the cheerful and happy countenances of those who were partaking a liquor which cheers but does not inebriate."[81] Sympathetic observers such as this one virtually always wrote about public tea parties as rational, cheerful, and disciplined occasions. This interpretation was not only a statement of fact but also a political and economic argument.

In 1836, when this tea party took place, Preston's operatives were out on strike, protesting declining wages.[82] Livesey explained to the striking operatives that sobriety could help them in their struggle to preserve their jobs. "Masters are continually inventing new machinery in order to dispense with manual labour," he explained, because they are not "able to depend on their men, in consequence of their drinking."[83] Livesey argued that tea was not so much a cheap fuel for an industrial labor force. Rather he believed that sober workers were so productive that they made machinery unnecessary. Tea thus was a useful commodity because it prevented the waste of labor itself. Livesey was engaging in what James Vernon and Peter Gurney have described as a politics of hunger and consumption.[84] He was telling a specific narrative about how workers could improve their material conditions regardless of whether managers raised or lowered wages. He was suggesting, moreover, that religion, personal reform, and social and gender harmony, rather than violence, would lead to plenty, peace, and happiness. In Preston and surrounding regions, labor activism thus flavored the taste of tea and food served up at temperance meals.

Preston was certainly an epicenter of both temperance and labor activity, but the movement spread as temperance agents, conferences, letters, and periodicals published the tea party's recipe. Livesey and his colleagues embarked on what they called "temperance missionary" tours. On one such tour in the summer of 1833, they traveled through the streets of Blackburn, Heywood, Rochdale, Oldham,

[80] "Splendid Tea Party," *Preston Temperance Advocate* (January 1834): 1.

[81] "Preston Temperance Tea Party," *Preston Temperance Advocate* (February 1836): 12–13.

[82] In the 1820s, Preston was a thriving cotton and market town. *A Topographical, Statistical, and Historical Account of the Borough of Preston* (Preston, 1821), 118. Ten years later, its weavers were utterly destitute. *Poor Man's Guardian* (4 February 1831), 1. Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, 164.

[83] *Preston Temperance Advocate* (May 1836): 39.

[84] Vernon, *Hunger*; Peter Gurney, "'Rejoicing in Potatoes': The Politics of Consumption in England during the 'Hungry Forties,'" *Past & Present* 203 (May 2009): 133.

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Stockport, Manchester, and Bolton ringing a bell, announcing meetings, and waving a small white silk flag exhorting others to "touch not, taste not, handle not, drink not, buy not, sell not, brew not, distil not intoxicating liquors."[85] Teetotal organizations had just formed in these communities and they had already hosted a number of tea parties. For example, on Guy Fawkes Day, 5 November 1832, 300 sat down to tea in Oldham's Methodist School Room.[86] On December 22, about 100 persons held a party at the Brown Street Sabbath schoolroom in Chester.[87] A few weeks later, on January 12, 450 took tea in "the large room of a mill belonging to Mrs. Scholfield" at Heywood. The village clergyman, a Baptist minister, a Wesleyan minister, the schoolmaster, and John Bright all drank tea with the workers that day.[88] At a Liverpool tea party, 2,500 with "wealth, beauty and intelligence" listened to "an Englishman, a Welshman, and a Scotchman" address the crowd, and 500 then signed the pledge of total abstinence.[89]

Typically held on holidays and as a means to raise funds, tea parties took place in towns and villages where teetotalism was gaining ground. They were especially popular in Wales and in manufacturing districts in the midlands, the north of England, and in Scotland, places such as Sunderland, Stockport, Middleborough, Bradford, in and around Gloucester, Birmingham, and Nottingham.[90] As in the case in Wilsden in the West Riding region of Yorkshire in April 1835, the tea party was part of several days of activities and often began with a procession through the town's streets. On this occasion, at precisely "twelve o'clock the doors of the church were opened and the multitude entered and arranged themselves in the pews." The teetotalers said prayers, sang hymns, and listened to speakers. After this, they celebrated with a feast served in "a splendid tent" that had been erected outside the church. Writing thirty years after the affair, temperance historian Samuel Couling repeated the themes laid out in earlier accounts. Couling commented on the fact that so many could be fed without disarray or confusion. He noted how the tent, which measured "135 feet in length by 54 feet in width," was "supported by three rows of pillars, eight in each row, and adorned with flags, evergreens, and artificial flowers." This party, he noted,

> [b]egan at exactly five o'clock, with the greatest of order, each seat was occupied, and 1,400 partook of tea and its accompaniment. No sooner had the company received sufficient then "with an orderly and simultaneous movement," they made way for 1,100 others, who had been patiently waiting without. At the departure of this second company, the conductors, officers, and others, to the number of 200, regaled themselves. Thus, 2,700 persons sat down to tea on this grand occasion.[91]

[85] Winskill, *Temperance*, 105.

[86] "Tea Party," *Preston Temperance Advocate* (January 1834): 7.

[87] Letter to the editor, *Preston Temperance Advocate* (January 1834): 11.

[88] Richard Cobden subscribed to the British Association for the Promotion of Temperance when it formed in Manchester in 1835. *Preston Temperance Advocate* (November 1835): 94.

[89] *Preston Temperance Advocate* (September 1836) quoted in Winskill, *The Temperance Movement*, 150.

[90] Winskill chronicled dozens of parties in the 1830s. He noted, though that it is difficult to actually count them because many newspapers were in the hands of the drink trade and they thus avoided reporting the movement. *The Temperance Movement*, 2.

[91] Samuel Couling, *A History of the Temperance Movement in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1862), 65.

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Not all parties were as large as those in Wilsden and Preston because Lancashire and Yorkshire had the largest communities of teetotalers.[92] Nevertheless, the food and drink, the decorations, and the moral messages were quite similar whether copper miners in Kendall hosted a tea festival in a barn and farmhouse or Londoners "partook of the exhilarating but not inebriating beverage" in a large room in Theobald Road.[93] In the empire, tea parties followed a similar pattern. For example, an army colonel began hosting tea parties for his and other regiments after he opened a temperance coffee room in Kurnaul (Karnal), India, in 1837. He claimed that he had been inspired to do so after reading American and British temperance literature.[94] When American journals reported on Preston's activities, they emphasized the same story of the beautiful halls and cheerful behavior.[95] *Livesey's Moral Reformer* thus noted in 1838 that Preston's Christmas Day tea party "has been regarded as the PATTERN," followed year after year in Preston and across England.[96] These reports established tea parties as social rituals with a relatively stable set of meanings.

These descriptions advocated the new gender and domestic ideologies particularly associated with evangelicalism. Wealthy women, who donated so much money, food, space, and time to temperance, spread these new domestic ideals, redefined their own consuming habits as legitimate, and carved out a space for themselves in the public sphere by reforming the consumerism of others. Eighteenth-century critics had often labeled wealthy women's tea parties as frivolous gossipy affairs that were but an idle waste of time.[97] By linking tea to religion and social reform, wealthy women changed this private pastime into a public good.[98] Elizabeth Kowalksi-Wallace has written that the tea table disciplined bourgeois women, but this self-discipline also allowed women to participate in a public sphere where they disciplined others.[99] Philanthropic and reforming ladies particularly liked to argue, however, that a well-behaved cross-class shared culture of consumption could bring social understanding rather than class conflict. An observer of the factory system in the early 1840s, Mrs. William Cooke Taylor described tea parties as evidence of "good feeling between masters and men" and "cordiality and good fellowship between the operatives and their employers." She especially pointed out that the event took place in a "large room crowded with persons of both sexes, all from the mills . . . [yet] everything went most orderly. . . [and] the whole affair went off with as little breach of propriety, or even etiquette, as if it had been a fashionable dining room; no noise or confusion of any kind."[100] Catherine Marsh, a well-known evangelical philanthropist and writer, organized mass tea parties for navies, factory workers, villagers, and

[92] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 109.

[93] "Tea Festival at Kendall," *Preston Temperance Advocate* (February 1836): 12; "London Tea Party," *Preston Temperance Advocate* (March 1836): 20.

[94] T. Brooks, "Temperance in India," *Livesey's Moral Reformer*, 22 (January 1839): 213.

[95] "Temperance Society of Congress," *Spirit of the Age and Journal of Humanity* 1, no. 42 (6 March 1834): 2; *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine* 6, no. 42 (8 March 1834): 147.

[96] "Tea Parties," *Livesey's Moral Reformer* (January 1838): 10.

[97] *Domestic Life; or, Hints for Daily Use* (London, 1841).

[98] Sometimes these were all-female events. "Female Abstinence Festival," *Teetotal Times and General Advertiser* (Liverpool) 1, no. 1 (15 December 1838), n.p.

[99] Kowalski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*.

[100] William Cooke Taylor, *Factories and the Factory System: From Parliamentary Documents and Personal Examination* (London, 1844), 53.

Sunday school children on numerous occasions.[101] Marsh believed that sharing food and drink, particularly tea and cakes, created cross-class friendships and common Christian behaviors that would obviate the deep class divisions that plagued Victorian society.[102] Women such as Marsh believed that sharing food was a deeply Christian act, and in this sense they challenged political economists' use of food as discipline or punishment to achieve good behavior.

At the same time, temperance ideology did ask workers to accept bourgeois forms of bodily discipline and gendered behaviors. It emphasized middle- and upper-class tea table etiquette and the respectable and proper way to drink tea and eat food. In this sense, it underscored the disciplinary aspects of the factory, workhouse, plantation, exhibition, and similar Victorian institutions.[103] Workers came to the tea table, however, because it spoke to their own concerns and fantasies. As John Styles has recently pointed out, eighteenth-century workers were already invested in looking good and eating well; thus, consumerism was not necessarily a middle-class value foisted upon plebian communities.[104] Nevertheless, temperance advocates were in the process of working out a moral stance on various cultures of consumption. In 1843, Livesey, for example, reproached working women for engaging in the idle practice of shopping, which he wrote brought only "disputes, litigation, and immorality." Indeed, he surmised "drinking and idleness" were "too often accompaniments of shopping."[105] The Victorian middle classes often expressed concerns about women's love of shopping, and as a retailer Livesey knew quite well that unpaid debts ruined retailers and led to a flurry of disputes, litigation, and charges of immorality.[106] He was much less concerned with eating sugary foods and sipping tea than he was with drinking and shopping, however.

In truth, tea parties invited participants to look at, smell, and experience the gustatory pleasures of tea, sugar, bread, butter, and cake. Livesey claimed that such feasts drew on historical and biblical examples, and he especially pointed to the marriage supper in the New Testament as a moral yet public feast. Ignoring the fact that Jesus was said to have turned water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana, Livesey's biblical interpretations were selective. The tea party, Livesey opined, was a form of

[101] Catherine Marsh, *English Hearts and Minds; or, the Railway and the Trenches* (New York, 1858), 16, 353. Lucy Elizabeth and Marshall O'Rorke, *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh* (London, 1917), 70, 161, 183, 289.

[102] On this populist discourse, see Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848–1914* (Cambridge, 1991); Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994).

[103] On the disciplinary function of mass spectacles such as the Great Exhibition, see Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations* 4 (Spring 1988): 73–102. The most important book on leisure and social control remains Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830–1885* (London, 1978). See also Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780–1880* (New York, 1980); A. P. Donajgrodzki, ed., *Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1977). For the disciplinary functions of a public meal in the twentieth century, see Vernon, *Hunger*, chap. 6.

[104] John Styles, *The Dress of the People*.

[105] Quoted in Peter Gurney, "'The Sublime of the Bazaar': A Moment in the Making of a Consumer Culture in Mid-Nineteenth Century England," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 393–94.

[106] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 48–73. For other examples of this sort of anxiety, see Mariana Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse," *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 169–88.

rational feasting that usefully superseded "the sumptuous and riotous *eating and drinking* much too prevalent in this country."[107] These events consumed vast quantities of bread and cake, butter and cream, fruits, sugar, tea, and coffee. At one such festival, 1,400 persons consumed "700 pounds of current bread, 364 pounds of common bread, 130 pounds of lump sugar, 60 pounds of brown sugar, 81 quarts of cream, 30 pounds of coffee, 10 pounds of tea, 50 pounds of butter, 84 dozen oranges, [and] 800 pounds of apples, &c."[108] Food was spectacle at the tea party and in the street. Temperance processions carted oversized foods through urban streets as signifiers of the "fruits of teetotalism." In Manchester, for example, a temperance cart was loaded with a sack of flour, a 65-pound ham, 85-pound cheese, and a loaf of bread weighing in at 60 pounds.[109] This was a sober yet bountiful version of the mythical Land of Cockayne, that place where peasants stuffed themselves and lived a life of ease. Making a spectacle of food was at the same time also a modern practice that replicated the technologies of Victorian advertising. Retailers often paraded around oversized commodities through city streets on carts throughout the 1830s and 1840s.[110] We cannot say whether advertisers or reformers first developed the idea, but this was a long-lived practice. Thomas Lipton was famous for parading giant hams and cheeses in late Victorian Scotland and England, and even the most average of grocers delighted in capturing a sense of abundance by piling mounds of food and provisions in their windows.[111]

Feasting and fantasizing about food were very old traditions, but tea parties were also modern banquets serving up new foods that were purchased in shops and public eateries, rather than baked or brewed at home.[112] The movement certainly approved of the broader dietary shift from alcohol and grains such as oats to caffeine, sugar, and wheat. Sugar appeared in multiple forms, baked in cakes and sweet breads, added to hot drinks and cold drinks, and in its natural state in the many fruits that graced the temperance table. Temperance tracts recommended chocolate, aerated and spiced waters such as ginger beer, and "lemonade and similar compounds."[113] While declining prices and other factors abetted the spectacular increases in sugar consumption during these years, temperance was also a significant factor in stimulating the British sweet tooth.[114] Coffee was always a favored drink, and by 1847 London already had between 1,500 and 1,800 temperance coffee rooms that served tea and coffee at affordable prices and provided space for meetings and organizing.[115]

[107] "Tea Parties," *Livesey's Moral Reformer* 2 (13 January 1838): 10.

[108] Dearden, *A Brief History of Ancient and Modern Tee-Totalism*, 21.

[109] Winskill, *The Temperance Movement*, 117.

[110] Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, 48–49.

[111] On Lipton's advertising techniques, see Erika Rappaport, *An Acquired Taste: A Global History of Tea, Empire and Consumer Culture* (forthcoming); Anandi Ramamurthy, *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising* (Manchester, 2003), 106–16. There are many popular histories of Lipton, but the best study remains Peter Mathias, *Retailing Revolution: A History of Multiple Retailing in the Food Trades based upon the Allied Suppliers Group of Companies* (London, 1967).

[112] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 48–73.

[113] *The Temperance Movement*, pamphlet, c. 1845, 17.

[114] Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 143.

[115] "Coffee Shops in London," *Penny Magazine* 9, no. 558 (12 December 1840): 488. Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 83; John Burnett, *England Eats Out: A Social History of Eating Out in England from 1830 to the Present* (Harlow, 2004), 46–50. Low duties on West Indian coffee and the expansion of cultivation in Ceylon led to falling prices and very rapidly expanding markets. Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, 80–84. *The*

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The temperance coffee shop and the tea party were both new forms of mass catering that encouraged the creation of sober workers and rational consumers.

The coffee shop targeted male workers in urban settings, while the tea party was designed to "prevent young persons of both sexes from going to public houses and beer shops."[116] Organizers believed that both "honest lads and bonnie lasses" would enjoy the company of the opposite sex and perhaps even meet a future spouse who shared their values if they came to a tea party.[117] As Anna Clark has shown, heavy drinking was associated with the more violent aspects of masculine artisanal culture. It ate up paychecks, instigated domestic violence, and crystallized competition over scarce resources within the working-class family.[118] Working women would have been especially interested in attending tea parties then, so they might find sober, responsible, and peaceful husbands. Men would have similarly been looking for sober wives. These affairs demonstrated and allowed working men and women to enact a vision of "moral" heterosexuality and comfortable domesticity, the presumed consequences of signing the pledge and following a Christian path.

At a party held in Wigan's Commercial Hall on Christmas Day in 1838, however, we begin to see an articulation of how the temperance version of heterosexuality also began to objectifiy femininity. Like other forms of mass culture in the nineteenth century, temperance affairs commodified female audiences and organizers to gain male followers. The writer who described Wigan's party stated that looking at the women who were serving the tea was a pleasure, akin to ingesting food and admiring lovely décor: "The Ladies who had undertaken tea services on the occasion, amounted to thirty in number, arranging themselves, forming a decoration not less beautiful, and infinitely more interesting than the perishing productions behind them."[119] Such descriptions and the parties themselves promoted a commercialized heterosexuality that was moral because the consequence of looking and flirting was stable families and marital happiness.

While trying to win over workers to Christianity, sobriety, and domesticity, temperance was also teaching the middle and upper classes to evaluate the significance of sober workers quietly and seemingly happily ingesting mountains of provisions. Temperance propaganda, tea parties, and their descriptions relentlessly portrayed the working classes as a contented and well-behaved mass market. This fact was demonstrated not only by the food that was ingested but also by the yards of cotton that decorated every tea party, a pleasing sight to northern mill owners facing mounting surpluses and declining profits. Temperance in effect created a positive image of the working-class crowd as audience and market rather than as strikers and rioters. The temperance tea party made visible and knowable a working-class

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Preston Temperance Advocate (January 1834): 14; Nathaniel Whittock, *The Complete Book of Trades; or, the Parents' Guide and Youths' Instructor: Forming a Popular Encyclopedia of Trades, Manufactures, and Commerce* (London, 1842), 159.

[116] Dearden, *A Brief History of Ancient and Modern Tee-Totalism*, 21.

[117] "Annual Christmas Tea Party of the Preston Temperance Society," *Teetotal Times and General Advertiser* 1, no. 4 (5 January 1839): n.p.

[118] Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, 79–82.

[119] "Wigan Temperance Tea Party," *Teetotal Times and General Advertiser* 1, no. 3 (29 December 1838): n.p.

market in much the same way that Mary Poovey and others have argued that new scientific, exhibitionary, and other technologies were forging the Victorian public into a social body.[120] Attending or reading about a tea party taught retailers and manufacturers to fantasize about crowds of plebian consumers quietly consuming reams of cotton and pounds of sugar, butter, wheat, and tea.

Temperance turned workers into consumers and shared some of advertising's technologies. Advocates also often used liberal arguments to appeal to shopkeepers, merchants, and manufacturers by explaining that sobriety would redirect wasteful consumption on drink to productive alternatives. As one Irish campaigner explained it in 1840, "Ale houses, spirit shops, &c. will be substituted by the . . . baker, the soup shop, the coffee house." Abstinence provided funds for "clothing, good food, all the comforts of life, in a word, shall well reward the grower and manufacturer."[121] "Nearly all the money spent at public houses ought to be," Livesey told retailers, "spent at YOUR SHOPS."[122] Free traders who were pushing for low tea duties and the abolition of the East India Company's (EIC) monopoly of the China trade were also making explicit this connection between home and foreign markets. They were revealing the connection between the buying and selling of tea and cotton.

Even before the tea parties became popular, tea, cotton, and Manchester goods became ideologically linked as free traders struggled to end the EIC's monopoly of the eastern trade. Glasgow and Liverpool merchants and Manchester manufacturers had already sanctified tea, temperance, and overseas trade when they attacked the company for being an unscientific, inefficient, and archaic institution that had stymied legitimate and moral "temperate" desires, particular a free trade in tea.[123] Entering into the debate on the renewal of the company's charter, a correspondent who wrote to the *Glasgow Chronicle* in 1812 compared the Company to a restrictive dealer who had unfairly inhibited the supply of tea to "a retired valley of Scotland." The EIC was, this writer proposed, engaging in immoral economics that kept tea, that "enemy to *strong drink*," from the people.[124] When the Company's charter was again debated in the early 1830s, merchants and manufacturers in Manchester and Liverpool passed resolutions and printed numerous pamphlets and articles spelling out how monopoly restricted home and foreign markets for tea and cotton.[125]

[120] Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* (Chicago, 1995); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (New York, 1973); Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago, 1991); Vernon, *Hunger*.

[121] Rev. James Birmingham, *A Memoir of the Very Rev. Theobald Matthew* (Dublin, 1840), 69.

[122] Quoted in Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 97.

[123] A good overview remains Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China, 1800–1842* (Cambridge, 1951), 175–95. *First Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company (China Trade)* (1830: Dublin, 1971) and *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to Enquire into the Present State of the Affairs of the East-India Company and into the Trade between Great Britain, the East-Indies and China* (London, 1830). The cotton industry was particularly export oriented at this time. D. A. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry and the World Market, 1815–1896* (Oxford, 1979), 86.

[124] *Letters on the East India Monopoly* originally published in the *Glasgow Chronicle* 1 (Glasgow 1812), 106.

[125] John Ramsey McCulloch, *Observations on the Influence of the East India Company's Monopoly on the Price and Supply of Tea; and on the Commerce with India, China, etc.* . . . (London, 1831): 5; *Corrected*

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We now know that this trade was more open and more efficient than these critics suggested.[126] By the 1820s, "private English" trade had gained a place within the Canton system, and at the time the Company lost its charter in 1833, more than half of the trade was already in private hands.[127] Moreover, as Robert Gardella has shown, Qing policy recognized the legitimacy of foreign trade, and both Chinese and British merchants were able to bend the rules to fit their needs.[128] Nevertheless, activists such as James Silk Buckingham, who led the struggle against the Company and drunkenness in the early 1830s, did not see it this way. For Buckingham and fellow liberals, the EIC immorally prevented a free trade in tea and cotton, temperate and legitimate commodities. Regulation of commerce itself, then, could be said to be sinful. The struggle against the Company had brought temperance and free trade together, a fact well recognized at the time. For example, at a temperance meeting in Liverpool in October 1834, a leading teetotaler professed that "[i]n opening the China trade Mr. Buckingham had rendered greater service to the country than any other man or body of men in England. The reform of drunkenness was of far greater importance than the reform of parliament."[129] Free trade, this advocate imagined, would create a temperate nation not simply because commerce was civilizing but because tea was now free.

After the Company lost its monopoly, however, foreign markets did not materialize, in part because tea became momentarily more expensive. Fearing the loss of approximately £3,300,000 in revenue derived from tea, the British government introduced a new three-tiered duty that increased prices for the lowest-quality tea largely drunk by the working classes.[130] Teetotalers, large importers, and radicals came together to fight these new duties. "If government were really alive to the true interests of the labouring classes," the *Preston Temperance Advocate* opined in 1836, it "would, from considerations of a moral character, reduce the duty on tea, coffee, and sugar."[131] In a somewhat dramatic gesture, radical grocer and Chartist teetotaler J. J. Faulkner protested these duties by dressing in a Chinese costume while selling tea and other groceries in his Oxford shop. He later stopped selling all taxed groceries with the explanation that he would not become the government's tax collector.[132] Radical stuff weavers sent a letter to the *Leeds Times* in 1835 complaining that "[t]heir labour has been taken from them by the power-loom; their bread is taxed; their malt is taxed; their sugar, their tea, their soap, and almost every other thing they use or consume, is taxed. But the power-loom is not taxed."[133] Tea's temperate nature had become central to arguments about the

Report of the Speeches of Sir George Staunton on the China Trade in the House of Commons, June 4 and June 14th 1833 (London, 1833).

[126] Hoh-Cheung and Lorna Mui, *The Management of Monopoly.*

[127] Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China*, 175.

[128] Gardella, *Harvesting Mountains*.

[129] Winskill, *The Temperance Movement*, 11.

[130] John Phipps, *A Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade* (Calcutta, 1835), 106–07.

[131] *Preston Temperance Advocate* (January 1836): 7.

[132] Robert S. Stephen, *The Oxford of J. J. Faulkner, 1798–1857: Grocer, Chartist and Temperance Advocate* (Oxford, 2001), 37.

[133] Quoted in Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 304. Also see John Ramsey's McCulloch's position in "Commutation of Taxes," *Edinburgh Review* (April 1833): 2.

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morality of free trade, fiscal policy, and a government that still denied working men and women a political voice.

In the 1840s, after the resolution of the Opium War, manufactures and merchants were even more committed to the fantasy that "now, China, with her almost countless millions, is ready to receive from us our manufactures. . . . [S]he is also ready to give us in return her Tea."[134] At a meeting of the Liverpool Committee to Reduce the Tea Duties in 1846, Lord Sandon proposed that low taxes would increase the British working man's "consumption of a wholesome, agreeable, and unintoxicating beverage" and also "extend commercial intercourse with China." Making a similar argument, William Brown, the member of Parliament for South Lancashire, professed: "I am interested in promoting the social comfort and domestic happiness of the people," and this means "substitut[ing] the moral teapot in the place of the demoralizing ale-jug."[135] Manufactures and their representatives thus assumed that the mass consumption of tea in Britain was the key to the ever-elusive Chinese market. Liberals such as Edward Brodribb, who was quoted at the outset of this article, were part of this political and moral conversation that claimed tea was an "antidote to spirits."[136] The moral teapot had thus become central to a broader discussion about the morality of global commerce in early and mid-Victorian Britain.

THE TRAVELS OF THE TEA PARTY

Tea parties thus could have multiple possible meanings even within industrial Lancashire. Local class and gender politics, national and imperial politics (such as the debate about the EIC and the tea duties), and free trade together informed the history of the tea party. By way of conclusion, I want to point out that Preston was just one site in a broader global history. Brian Harrison wrote long ago that temperance was an Anglo-American movement whose border was at the "Appalachian Mountains rather than in the Atlantic Ocean."[137] One of the most thorough Victorian temperance historians, P. T. Winskill believed the global reach of early temperance proved that the temperance "seed had been divinely spread."[138] In other words, the fact that temperance societies had formed in Asia, Europe, and North America revealed the work of God not man. On a more mundane level, I would like to suggest that it was in fact missionaries, soldiers, businessmen, merchants, and philanthropic "ladies" who spread temperance through personal networks that linked communities throughout a broader British World that encompassed North America and the empire.[139]

We do know that it was several American ship captains who were docked in Liverpool in the autumn of 1829 who first distributed American tracts and inspired the

[134] *Report on the Proceedings of the Public Meeting on the Tea Duties* (Liverpool, 1846), v.

[135] *Proceedings of the Pubic Meeting on the Tea Duties*, 3, 5.

[136] Also see Charles Knight, "Illustrations of Cheapness: Tea," *Household Words* (8 June 1850): 256.

[137] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 101.

[138] Winskill, *The Temperance Movement*, 5.

[139] The essays in Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003) primarily focus on the later nineteenth century, but James Belich has proposed a longer history. See *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford, 2009).

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founding of the movement in the port city. A Liverpool iron merchant with business dealings in Preston then personally "reformed" his drunken business associate, Thomas Swindlehurst, who would become one of the original founders of Preston's teetotal society. At virtually the same time, "two ladies" known as Miss Allan and Miss Graham of Glasgow heard of the movement in America and founded a society for women near Glasgow.[140] Glasgow, like Liverpool, became a conduit for American ideas that then spread with temperance activists to British and imperial locales. For example, Mr. James McNair, who in 1819 was president of the Greenock Radical Association, a group that abstained from all intoxicating liquors and tea, coffee, and tobacco, founded a total abstinence society in Scotland before moving to New Zealand to promote teetotalism among the Maoris and English colonists in the early 1830s.[141] In these years before the telegraph and other modern systems of communications, temperance, much like abolitionism and evangelicalism, traveled with missionaries, soldiers, sailors, business people, and reformers. These mobile populations created a shared set of ideas and habits over huge geographic distances. Similar practices nevertheless were shaped by diverse ideologies, politics, and contexts.

In the United States tea parties were not unlike those held in Britain, but at times they reached truly spectacular proportions and became popular among quite elite American women. In 1843, for example, the ladies of Cincinnati hosted former president John Quincy Adams at a temperance tea, which was attended by over five thousand persons. The executive committee of the American Temperance Union found the whole proceeding had reached a "scale of great magnificence."[142] John Adams renounced tea during the revolution, but by the 1840s, American business was heavily involved in the tea trade and the beverage no longer carried any threat to American independence.[143] It is true that the American temperance movement was especially fond of coffee and the coffee shop as a substitute for the saloon.[144] At the same time, tea's temperate nature also signified the political, economic, and cultural exchanges that stretched across the Atlantic.

Context was everything. Missionaries served tea at some of the earliest colonial encounters.[145] Mass tea meetings became very popular in South Africa, and tea had long been part of the conversion process.[146] In 1823, for example, Samuel Broadbent first approached the Tswana with the offer of a cup of tea. He later recalled that when "[t]wo women came into my hut. . . . I let them taste my tea and presented each of them with a needle, thread and thimble."[147] John and Jean Comaroff cited

[140] Winskill, *The Temperance Movement*, 58, 63, 75–76.

[141] Ibid., 60.

[142] *Report of the Executive Committee of the American Union, 1844* (New York, 1844), 14.

[143] There is a growing body of literature on American consumer culture and the China trade. See Caroline Frank, *Objectifying China, Imagining America: Chinese Commodities in Early America* (Chicago, 2011); Eric Jay Dolin, *When America First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2012).

[144] "The Tea Saloon," *Public Opinion* 26, no. 25 (June 1899): 782.

[145] *The American Missionary Register for the Year 1825* VI (December 1825): 375.

[146] See, for example, a 2,000-person tea party described in *Chronicle of the London Missionary Society* XII, no. 137 (May 1903): 111.

[147] Quoted in John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1997), 236.

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this incident as an example of how missionaries tried to inculcate new gender and domestic practices. They emphasized the needle and thread as symbolic of European domesticity and the evangelical passion to clothe Africans in Western attire. Tea was critical to the presentation of Western Christianity. The story of two women entering a missionary's hut and encountering tea for the first time, however, seems to have been apocryphal. Describing his experiences in the Cape in the spring of 1820, the Reverend John Campbell wrote of a king who brought "his two wives into the tent and introduced them; but they appeared chiefly to have come to see our teapot, the fame of which had reached them. They viewed it with great attention, and expressed their astonishment with uplifted hands."[148] Such stories tell us nothing about African engagement with material culture, but they do reveal that missionaries invested tea and tea things with sacred significance, especially for women.[149] At home and in the empire, missionaries, businessmen, and colonial authorities had a shared faith in the civilizing potential of certain forms of consumerism.

Tea parties moved across political as well as geographic borders. Like any public event, they could be adopted for other uses and even oppositional messages. The Chartists and Rochdale Co-operators returned to radical expressions of tea drinking, but they also maintained teetotalers' vision of rational working-class consumerism.[150] The Anti-Corn Law League was also fond of the tea party, making explicit the liberal message inherent in earlier teetotal affairs.[151] Conservative organizations, such as the Birmingham Loyal and Constitutional Association, even followed the same ceremonial calendar as radicals. So, for example, this group held a mass tea party to commemorate its second anniversary on 26 December 1836.[152] Christmas became a holiday dedicated to Christian commercialism, but in the 1830s it was also a popular moment for conservatives and radicals to gather together in mass settings to drink tea. These groups disagreed about many things, but they all used food and especially tea as a means to sell their vision of moral consumer practices.

By the second half of the century, the tea party was such a routine and popular practice that refreshment contractors sold their expertise at putting on temperance teas, and a few enterprising retailers even used the movement as a brand name.[153] Especially after the drink trade was regulated in the 1870s, publicans, brewers, and distillers looked to the Tories to defend their interests. Still, liberals and conservatives now agreed that tea achieved goodwill between the classes and the sexes, advanced international commerce, and created jobs and profits for workers and manufactures alike. Tea had moved beyond class and beyond party, and had become the nation's

[148] Rev. John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, undertaken at the request of the London Missionary Society; being an account of a Second Journey in the Interior of the Cape*, vol. 1 (London: Francis Westley, 1822), 164.

[149] These accounts also imply that Africans were not yet connected to the world economy, and this has been disproved by a number of historians. On East Africa in this period, see Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley, 2008).

[150] Gurney, *Co-Operative Culture*.

[151] *League*, 28 September 1844, quoted in Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrell, *The People's Bread: A History of the Anti-Corn Law League* (London: 2000), 134.

[152] *Report of the Conservative Tea Party* (Birmingham, 1836), 49.

[153] *The Temperance Record*, 25 January 1873, 47. By the 1880s, a specialized journal, the *Temperance Caterer*, served this socially minded catering trade.

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drink.[154] It is well to remember, however, that in the 1830s this was not yet the case. Many were still dubious about the foreign import, and it took a lot of work to convince consumers that tea was a sacred taste and a useful pleasure.

The temperance tea party was a global and local practice. It was a public meal that ascribed tea and its accompaniments with variety of meanings. It was one key site in which tea was transformed into what Daniel Miller has labeled a "meta-symbol."[155] Like Coca-Cola in the twentieth century, tea was more than highly meaningful. It became a commodity that raised larger issues about the materiality and morality of culture and its consumption. When working- and middle-class men and women drank tea together in the early nineteenth century, they participated in wider debates about the personal, social, physiological, and spiritual consequences of industrialization, long-distance trade, and consumer society. Tea acquired such significance when, as Arjun Appadurai has theorized, it was "absorbed into local political and cultural economies."[156]

[154] For a further elaboration, see Erika Rappaport, *Tea Revives the World: The British Empire and the Making of a Global Consumer Culture* (forthcoming).

[155] Daniel Miller, "Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink from Trinidad," in *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, ed. Daniel Miller (Chicago, 1998), 170.

[156] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, 1996), 42.

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