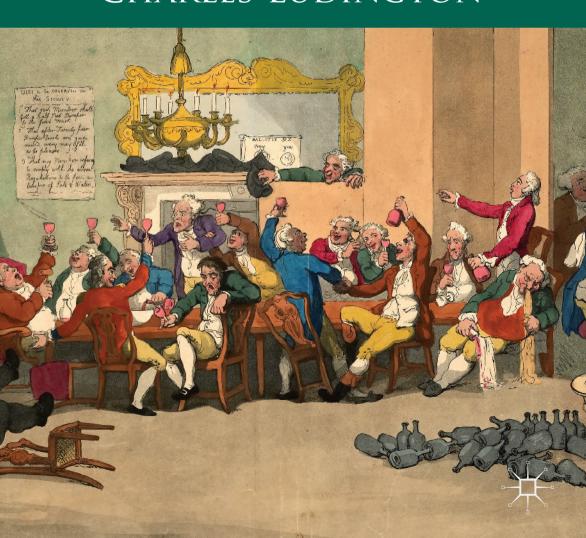# The Politics of Wine in Britain

A New Cultural History

Charles Ludington

"…a superb contribution, not only to the growing field of food history but also to our deeper appreciation of the evolution of political and cultural life in England and Scotland."

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"…imaginative, ambitious and well-researched […] Charles Ludington presents a provocative theory analyzing how changes in alcohol consumption constituted power, influence and legitimacy in politics over two centuries."

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The Politics of Wine in Britain

A New Cultural History

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Contents

List of Tables, Figures, and Graphs

Tables

Figures

Graphs

Preface: A Word or Two on Statistics, Measurements, and Spelling

This study relies upon official import statistics in order to discern a general picture of the taste for wine. Import figures are the most accurate way of inferring broad-based English or Scottish tastes for wine in any given period, but aggregate amounts do not account for individual preferences, for the differing qualities of the same type of wine, or for more general class, regional or other group-based tastes. In other words, a cross-section of aggregate imports reflects the relative popularity of different types of wine, and as such it gives a general outline of English and Scottish tastes.

That said, existing English, Scottish, and British import statistics are not unproblematic. For example, until 1675 London Customs returns did not always report the provenance of incoming wines, although a boat's port of embarkation was usually listed. From 1675 onwards, London port records are more detailed, although the ledgers of English and Welsh outports do not necessarily list the wine's provenance until 1697.[1] In that year, Charles Davenant became the Inspector General of Customs for the entire kingdom, and it was he who first compiled detailed English wine import statistics in a two-part report he submitted to the Parliament in 1713.[2] The first part of the report gave import statistics for London in the period 1675–96, and the second part gave import statistics for all of England and Wales in the period 1696–1712. Davenant's Toryism cannot be entirely overlooked when assessing the accuracy of his statistics, but unfortunately these cannot be verified, as some of the port ledgers he used are now partially illegible, and in some cases lost altogether. Compiling the information that does exist—which of course would not be definitive—would take a team of researchers even in the computer age, because for each port in which records do still exist, entries for wine are listed every day and are never totaled. However, random samplings of London wine imports from the years 1675 to 1696 are consistent with the overall percentages of wine recorded by Davenant during the same period, and therefore I rely upon his figures for this early period.[3]

Likewise, Davenant's statistics for all of England and Wales for the period 1697–1712 very nearly match those of later compilers such as Alexander Henderson and Cyrus Redding (who updated Henderson's statistics to 1850). Neither of these men used the original port books, but instead relied upon résumés of port records made by the Inspectorate of Customs, which may mean that Davenant's mistakes, if he made any, were simply repeated.[4] To overcome these possible inaccuracies I turned to the exhaustive 1897 Parliamentary Report on the history of customs tariffs, which gives a complete set of figures for English wine imports from 1697 to 1785.[5] These figures have the disadvantage of being listed in imperial gallons, which was neither the standard of measurement nor how wines were entered in the import ledgers until 1825. Instead, prior to 1825 wine imports were listed in terms of tuns, hogsheads, and gallons. My conversion of imperial gallons back

to tuns, hogsheads, and (old) gallons (four-fifths of their respective imperial measures—see Table P.1), found that Davenant's figures for 1697 to 1712 were essentially in line with later attempts to quantify the wine trade. Hence, this study also relies upon Davenant's English and Welsh wine import statistics for the period 1697–1712.

Table P.1 Wine measurements

Tuns	Pipes/Butts	Hogsheads	Imp. gallons	Gallons	Quarts	Pints
1	2	4	210	252	1,008	2,016
	1	2	105	126	504	1,008
		1	52.5	63	252	504
			1	1.2	4.8	9.6
				1	4	8
					1	2
						1

For the period 1713–91 in England, I rely upon Elizabeth B. Schumpeter's statistics published in 1960, which are generally considered by economic historians to be the most accurate set of import and export statistics for England in the eighteenth century.[6] Schumpeter derived her figures on wine and other commodities from the *Ledgers of Imports and Exports of England and Wales, 1697–1780* and the *Reports on the State of Navigation, Commerce, and Revenues of Great Britain from 1772*. In the main, Schumpeter's figures for wine correspond to those of Henderson, Redding, and the Parliamentary Report of 1897. The slight discrepancies between all sets of figures can be ascribed to clerical mistakes in copying from the originals (mistakes that are then repeated down the line), the omission in some résumés of marginal wines such as Canary or Levantine, or the practice of carrying over entries from a previous year that were entered late.

For all-inclusive British wine import statistics from 1786 onward, I use the 1897 Parliamentary Report, but for Scottish statistics alone other sources are necessary. Unfortunately, wine import figures for all of Scotland were not compiled by the Customs Office until 1756, so that prior to that year I rely upon existing Leith port records, and from those figures I derived approximations of national totals based upon the estimate that Leith accounted for at least two-thirds and as much as three-quarters of the Scottish wine trade.[7] Beginning in 1756, the Customs Office listed wine imports for all of Scotland under the country from which the wines arrived.[8] Thus, in every year small amounts of wine are listed under imports from such places as Sweden or the various Caribbean or North American colonies, although in every instance the type of wine is also given, so that it is possible to draw a complete picture of Scottish wine imports from 1756 until 1815, which is when the records cease. As far as I know I am the first to have compiled these Scottish wine import totals from the original figures, thus any mistakes made in counting and deriving statistics are completely my own.

It should be made absolutely clear that all of these figures together provide an accurate measurement of *legal* trade, but by definition official import

figures cannot account for smuggled wine, nor for fraudulently declared wine, such as when French wines were imported as "Spanish" or "Portuguese"—a frequent occurrence in England during the late Stuart era, and in Scotland for the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Thus, my method in using import figures from before 1787, when Pitt simplified and reduced the wine duties, is to compare the official figures with evidence of false declarations and smuggling, most of which is derived from government reports, private letters, and even popular literature. Broadly speaking, what I found is that prior to 1713 in England and 1780 in Scotland, the relative amount of French wine within the total amount of wine imported was never so low as official figures suggest, and the relative amounts of Portuguese and Spanish wine rarely so high. Perhaps more importantly, the actual total of all imported wines was somewhere between 25 percent and 100 percent greater than the recorded legal trade, with England usually closer to the former figure and Scotland closer to the latter. With these disparities in mind, I have not attempted to provide a precise revised figure for every year prior to Pitt's duty reforms, but I do provide a more accurate picture of the broad trends in the English, Scottish, and British wine trade.

It is also important to note that all measurements of wine quoted in this study are direct citations from the primary sources or conversions based on old-style (non-imperial) liquid measurements, which were used in the United Kingdom until 1825 and are still used in the United States today (see Table P.1). In this system, a gallon is 231 cubic inches or 128 (US) fluid ounces, tuns are 252 gallons, pipes are 126 gallons, and hogsheads are 63 gallons (see Table P.1). Where these amounts have been converted to bottles, 32 (US) ounce quart bottles are implied unless otherwise noted. Surprising as it is to many people, the quart bottle was the standard bottle size, and was slightly larger than a modern 75 centiliter wine bottle (see Chapter 10 for evidence of bottle sizes). Of course, all of these figures are necessarily approximations, as both casks and bottles were rarely the exact amounts stated.[9] However, except where the evidence tells specifically how many bottles were derived from a particular cask, it seems reasonable for the sake of consistency and the reader's understanding to standardize the amounts based upon perfect conditions. So, when a cellar or import record speaks of a hogshead of wine, that translates to 252 gallons or 1,008 bottles, although in reality the amount of wine was slightly more or less than that.

Likewise, unless otherwise stated all duty rates quoted are for tuns of wine arriving in the port of London in English ships and, from 1707 in British ships. Wines arriving in London in foreign ships paid roughly £3 more. Wines arriving in any of the "outports," (i.e. not London), which from 1707 included Scottish ports, paid up to £3 less, unless they arrived in foreign ships, in which case they paid roughly the same amount as British ships arriving in London. To be completely accurate, outport rates varied slightly from port to port, as certain ports had ancient privileges granting different rates, while other ports tacked on their own local imposts. Thus, it is for the sake of consistency and convenience for the reader that I use duty rates based on wine arriving in London in British ships.

Lastly, the capitalization of wine names is (and was) as inconsistent as the quality of early-modern wines themselves. Consequently, I have tried to be consistent without imposing a uniform rule for all wines that would needlessly capitalize some names and awkwardly put others in lower case. To wit, wines named after towns or regions are capitalized except where the name is (or was) commonly known, such as port, sherry, canary, palm, madeira, burgundy, and champagne. Rhenish wine, which was essentially synonymous with German wine, is therefore capitalized, while red wine from Bordeaux is referred to as claret. I have regularized the spellings to reflect modern usage, because English and Scottish spelling of wine names in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was erratic at best. However, in instances where the original spelling is particularly colorful or inconsistent within the same cellar record, I have retained the original spelling by placing it in quotations, in parentheses, or in a note.

Charles C. Ludington

Acknowledgments

The book began as a dissertation at Columbia University, where I had the privilege to be a graduate student at the turn of the new millennium, and where I was encouraged by my teachers to combine my fascination with British history and my historical interest in wine. If that did not sound like a particularly promising prospect at first, I was soon disabused of my concerns, as I discovered that there was indeed a wonderful history to be told about Britain and wine. In the process of researching and writing that history, I have incurred many debts.

At Columbia University, thanks are due to the history department for awarding me a President's Scholar Fellowship, and to the Research Council on Western Europe for awarding me with a dissertation travel grant. Special thanks go to Kirsten Olsen and Barbara Locurto in the Columbia history department for making my life easier, and to Bob Scott and Trevor Dawes for making Butler Library a splendid home away from home. Also in New York, I owe a particular debt to the Mrs Giles Whiting Foundation for selecting me as a fellow in 2000–1. In London, where the Whiting Foundation grant made research possible, I am deeply indebted to the staff and librarians at the British Library, the Public Record Office at Kew (now known as the National Archives), the Guildhall Library, and the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. Particular thanks go to Joshua Lunn, Clive Jones, and Donald Munro. Thanks to John Roberts of John Roberts Wine Books Ltd, London, who kindly allowed me to examine some very rare documents in his possession. My thanks also go to the staff at the National Library of Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland, the Northumberland Record Office, the Durham Record Office, the Worcestershire Record Office, the Suffolk Record Office, the East Sussex Record Office, the Bibliothèque Municipale de Bordeaux, and the Instituto do Vinho do Porto. Olga Laçerda of the British Association in Oporto deserves special thanks for her warm welcome and for introducing me to many port producers. Among those producers, Dominic Symington of the Symington Family Estates, and Natasha Robertson Bridge of Taylor, Fladgate, and Yeatman, shared their time, energy, and wine with me, and gave me full access to company papers. In Bordeaux, Jean-Philippe Delmas and Prince Robert of Luxembourg, both of Chateau Haut Brion, must also be thanked for their time and generosity. Back in the United States, I am grateful to Maggie Powell at the Lewis Walpole Library of Yale University for awarding me with a fellowship, and to Joan Sussler and Anna Malicka for their invaluable research assistance. Likewise, thanks go to Robert Ritchie and Mary Robertson for their financial support and research help at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Here in the Research Triangle of North Carolina, the staff and librarians at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, and Duke University have all been invaluable.

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My greatest debt, of course, is to my family. My parents, Jane and Townsend Ludington, have encouraged my interest in the past, in ideas, and in writing well

Introduction

This is a book about politics, power, taste, and wine. In particular, it is a historical study of the way in which the taste for wine—by which I mean the type of wine and the way it was consumed—both reflected and constituted political power in England, Scotland, and ultimately Great Britain, between 1649 and 1862. These dates do not mark the absolute beginning and end of wine as a politicized and politicizing commodity, but they do demarcate an era in which the politics of wine was particularly intense. They also correspond, it should be stressed, to the time in which England (Wales inclusive) and Scotland went from being warring nations on the margins of European affairs to being a united if not entirely unified kingdom and the world's premier economic and imperial power. As such, a study of taste formation in this period provides a fascinating window into English, Scottish, and British state formation, identity creation, and cultural practices that had both a national and global impact. But most of all, the history of the taste for wine in this period reveals how political power was constructed and manipulated by the interrelated ideas and practices of class, masculinity, and national identity. In short, wine was integral to British political culture.

My starting premise is that wine, in both England and Scotland, was a symbol of political power and legitimacy because it had long represented the court, the aristocracy, and the Church. This symbolism became more acute when the authority of these institutions was challenged in the mid-seventeenth century, as supporters and detractors of the established order fought each other physically, verbally, and symbolically. And of all the symbols that were argued over and with, wine was perhaps the most potent and lasting. In fact, those who successfully challenged the old pillars of authority maintained the link between wine and political legitimacy when they themselves came to power. Thus wine and political legitimacy remained linked regardless of who was in power long after the authority of the court, the aristocracy, and the Church had begun to erode. Consequently, my primary argument is that throughout the period under study, the taste for wine was a blatant political statement because it structured social relationships. It follows from this argument that the strengthening of, or changes in, taste for wine—whether within or between England and Scotland—were politically significant and, therefore, warrant historical investigation. Indeed, the purpose of this study is to understand

what drove the major shifts in the taste for wine, and to discern their broader significance for politics and culture.

And this leads to my second argument. Simply put, the various tastes for wine in England, Scotland, and Great Britain during this period were not only political because they helped to order society, they were also created by politics, especially acts of the English, Scottish, and British Parliaments. This is not to deny the influence of tradition, geography, and concomitant consumer trends on the taste for wine; rather, it is to say that politics—by which I mean the acts, decisions, and affairs of the state—were the primary determinant of these tastes. Specifically, the politics of the period 1649 to 1714 gave rise to new political meanings for wine in general, to specific wines in particular, and to the ways in which wine was consumed. These politically constructed meanings were then used by competing groups to gain, maintain, or reject political power, and all subsequent politics surrounding wine were reactions to the meanings that had been set in motion during the Interregnum and late Stuart era. This study ends in 1860, precisely because the legislation passed at that time was an attempt to undo what the politics of wine of the previous two centuries had wrought.

As the previous paragraph implies, the meanings of different wines and consumption habits were malleable. However, unlike wine itself, they were not fluid; they could only be altered within a limited range of meanings from those they already possessed.[1] What did in fact change dramatically was the political landscape that the taste for wine both reflected and helped to instantiate. This meant, for instance, that the reputation of port (a wine from northern Portugal) as a manly wine might prove positive in the late eighteenth century but less so by the 1820s when the martial masculinity of the previous era was rejected in favor of greater "respectability" and decorum. So the idea of port as manly remained constant, but the social value of martial masculinity changed.

Admittedly, my argument that politics created the taste for wine is not new. Not only did Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone and the majority of Parliament in 1860 think this was the case, but so too have the few historians, antiquarians, and wine writers who have explored the history of wine consumption in England and Scotland. For example, in English historiography responsibility for taste has been ascribed to the Tory/Whig political divide in general, and to the Methuen Treaty of 1703 in particular.[2] The party divide is well known, the treaty less so. In fact, what has come to be called *the* Methuen Treaty was the third of three treaties negotiated in 1703 by the English special envoy to Portugal, John Methuen. This latter treaty guaranteed that the duty on imported Portuguese wines would be at least one-third less than the amount of import duty on French wines, in return for which the Portuguese agreed to remove prohibitive tariffs on English cloth. According to those who see the Methuen Treaty as the key determinant of taste, Whigs drank port because of their hatred of the French and their support for the treaty, while Tories drank claret—red wine from Bordeaux—because of their admiration for France and the Bourbon monarchy, their support for the exiled house of Stuart, and their antipathy to the treaty that foisted Portuguese wine upon an unsuspecting English public. Consequently, Whig political dominance

and the politically dictated lower cost of Portuguese wine insured that port was overwhelmingly the most popular wine in eighteenth-century England.

But there are two major problems with this story. First, Portuguese wine—most of which was port—surpassed French wine on the English market some years *prior* to the Methuen Treaty; and second, the greatest consumers of claret in early and mid-eighteenth-century England were *Whigs*. By overlooking these problems, historians and wine writers have failed to notice that the original claret versus port debate was about economic policy and popular English taste for wine, not the preferred wines of Whig or Tory aristocrats and gentlemen.[3] This misunderstanding seems to have developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a time in which the divided political allegiances of the British elite apparently could be discerned by their preference for fine, vintage port or top-growth claret.[4] But in the first half of the eighteenth century, while Whig leaders decried open trade with France, they saw nothing wrong with drinking claret themselves. The issue was not which wine they preferred, for that was French; rather, the issue was which country should supply the bulk of England's wine; or, put another way, which country should supply England's middle-ranking consumers.[5]

Within Scottish historiography, to the even smaller degree that wine has been dealt with, taste has been explained as a result of Jacobitism and widespread resistance to the Union of 1707.[6] Accordingly, Scottish wine drinkers preferred claret because it came from France. To Scottish Jacobites, who wanted to return the Stewart family to the throne of Scotland, France symbolized their aspirations; while for Scottish Hanoverians, French wine represented resistance to English domination within the newly created Kingdom of Great Britain.[7] However, as some authors have reluctantly acknowledged, and as this study conclusively shows, during the second half of the eighteenth century Scottish popular taste for wine switched from claret to port.[8] Clearly, this was a significant change, although no historian has addressed its probable meaning. To wit, if claret symbolized Scottish opposition to either the Hanoverians, the Union, or Anglicization, then surely when the majority of Scottish wine drinkers willingly began to drink more port than claret, it was an indication of the acceptance of some or, as I will argue, all of these things.

So, while others have asserted that English, Scottish, and British taste for wine were politically constructed and had political meanings, they have either failed to explain correctly how the taste was created, or what the political meanings of taste actually were. In some instances they have omitted explanation altogether. For example, just as no one has attempted to explicate the Scottish switch from claret to port, neither has anyone dared explain why heavy drinking and drunkenness was so fashionable among the English and Scottish elite in the late Georgian era other than to suggest that port was the culprit.[9] Likewise, the reason for the rise of sherry to primacy on the British market in the early Victorian era has yet to be investigated, much less explained. Yet surely this latter change was significant given that port had come to represent a particular idea of aggressively masculine, Anglo-British identity during the wars of the late eighteenth century. Indeed, sherry's ascendancy had everything to do with its reputation as a feminine—but not effeminizing—wine.

The preceding discussion of politically constructed taste leads to my third argument, which is that taste and the consumption habits it fosters are socially complex, complexly motivated, and never move in one direction. This is hardly a radical proposal. Yet there persists a school of thought among economists and historians alike that wittingly or otherwise follows Thorstein Veblen's emulation theory of consumption—that is, that people always try to keep up with the social strata just above them—thereby making the wealthiest consumers the heroes of a consumer-driven economy.[10] Yet, as the taste for wine in England and Scotland shows, taste does not always trickle down from the top. However, this does not mean that that taste marks fixed differences between social classes, an idea that is sometimes, and not entirely fairly, attributed to the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu correctly argued that taste is a reflection and creator of class differences, yet he could not explain how or why taste changed over time, how a specific commodity might have different meanings in different societies, or how taste crossed class boundaries within a given society.[11] Consequently, I employ a more dialectical approach for understanding changes in, and meanings of, taste. For instance, because taste is a statement that helps to establish and naturalize the social order, taste is a battleground for those who want to maintain or change the social order. Members of the ruling elite must, on occasion, change their tastes to address and rebut the charges against them. But since such changes in taste are a compromise, or synthesis, the ruling elite does not give over entirely to its opponents. As Bourdieu notes, elite consumption habits must have something about them that gives the consumer social distinction, otherwise the elite are no different than those over whom they claim the right to rule. And this is where elite tastes, which might on the surface look the same as those of their social inferiors, are different. Consequently, elites emphasize the quality, rarity, and "authenticity" of the things they consume, while dismissing cost as irrelevant.

The aforementioned trends can be seen clearly in the taste for wine in Britain. For instance, in England, Parliamentary legislation beginning in the 1670s dramatically differentiated the price and availability of wines, and ensured that the elite and middle ranks had different taste because of cost. Meanwhile in Scotland, the higher tariffs brought about by the Union of 1707 had the unintended consequence of increasing smuggling and strengthening the idea that drinking French wine in Scotland was a form of resistance to Anglicization. However, after the failed Jacobite Rebellion of 1745–6, Scottish taste began slowly to mirror socially divided English taste; and during the final decades of the eighteenth century, the ruling elite throughout Britain began to drink more port than anything else, thereby mimicking middle-ranking English taste for wine, even though the port they drank was of a discernibly higher quality. In other words, the taste for wine, like the political legitimacy it represented, not only coalesced around English taste, but also trickled up, so to speak. What this transformation reveals is that political legitimacy was increasingly derived from the political views of the middle ranks, or what was called "public opinion."[12]

To assert that middle-ranking, and specifically male middle-ranking opinion, had become a critical component of political legitimacy by the middle decades of the eighteenth century is not, however, to revive the old Marxist (or simply materialist)

belief that the events of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, or nineteenth-century England—chronological imprecision was always a problem in the argument—illustrated the triumph of the bourgeoisie over the aristocracy.[13] It is true that the wealth and political influence of merchants, professionals, and financiers grew in both absolute and relative terms during these centuries, as England became a more commercial society.[14] However, revisionist scholarship of the last generation has shown that the aristocratic order did not end entirely in 1649, 1688, or even 1832.[15] This realization has led to a new orthodoxy, which emphasizes the survival of the landed elite over and against the futile efforts of the bourgeoisie and bureaucratic state. But this interpretation, like the Marxist one before it, is overly reductionist.[16]

Fortunately, an understanding of the taste for wine helps us to revise both of these explanatory narratives. For instance, rather than the demise of the aristocracy, what one sees throughout the two centuries under study here is an aristocracy that frequently reinvented itself by accommodating the cultural, and only gradually the political, demands of the middle ranks.[17] Specifically, by the mid-eighteenth century the landed elite had to appeal to, and eventually appear as, the more prosperous members of the middle classes. This was done to maintain power, not to give it away or acknowledge defeat. Concomitantly, and very much a part of the same process, the taste for wine allows us to see how English middle-ranking men successfully defined commercial interests as the national interest by the turn of the eighteenth century, which in turn, gradually allowed them to claim that they, whose money came primarily from commerce, embodied the nation as whole.[18]

Of course, continuity and change are a constant in human history and are never mutually exclusive; however, from the mid-seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, the continuity and change in the social positions and cultural practices of the elite and middle ranks in Britain was remarkably simultaneous. Indeed, it is the simultaneity of these trends that has caused so much confusion and dispute among historians about the structure of British society in the long eighteenth century. Was it an *Ancien Régime* society or the first modern society? Paradoxical as it seems, the answer is, both. The aristocracy managed to maintain its privileged position atop British society during the very same period that the middle classes gained political parity and cultural supremacy. Because the taste for wine both reflected and constructed cultural and political power, it allows us to see how this paradox of continuity and change unfolded.

Class: Definitions and problems

And that brings us to the problem of class. Studies such as this one, which seek both to reveal social divisions and use their existence as a way to understand the past, must define the various major social groups in the clearest possible terms. Inevitably, that means speaking of ideal types, which are just that, ideal, and never apply *in toto* to any actual individual or to a social group as a whole. But since historians are in the business of looking for both broad trends (the forest) as well as individual differences (the trees), we necessarily rely upon a certain amount of generalization whether our goal is to explain major currents in history

or to provide the context in which individuals and institutions have operated. Here then, is my social terminology, some of which is obvious, some less so.

The aristocracy, or titled landowners, should be clear, as should the greater gentry, who were untitled but substantial landowners. I refer to both of these as the landed elite. I use the more general term "elite" to include the landed elite and the politically and culturally powerful figures who did not come from landed wealth, but who were wealthy and fashionable, who perhaps purchased or married into a landed estate, and who certainly accepted the aristocratic order and sought to be a part of it.

The middle stratum of British society is more difficult to define.[19] For purposes of expediency, this study uses the terms "middle classes," "middle ranks," and "middling sorts" to discuss those people in the seventeenth and eighteenth century who, while not major landowners, made and reinvested capital for the sake of future profit, which implicitly suggests people who were trying to improve their economic status. This group included a broad range of (mostly) men, from wealthy merchants at the top to successful artisans and shopkeepers, and rural leaseholders at the bottom. In between, there were manufacturers, bankers, and tradesmen, as well as men in the professions of medicine, the law, university teaching, civil service, and lower-ranking officers in the army or navy.

What united all of these people was freedom from domination by the aristocracy and/or an all-powerful employer whose decisions could deny them any chance at earning a livelihood.[20] In that sense, being "middling" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was by definition masculine.[21] This is not to deny the existence of women in the middle ranks, it is only to say that women and "femininity" were not a significant aspect of middle-ranking identity until the early nineteenth century, precisely because that identity was linked to conceptions of independence and self-sufficiency—something which very few women obtained.[22]

To be sure, the term "middle classes" was used in the eighteenth century, although like "middle ranks" and "middling sort" it referred to a multitude of social ranks rather than a collective, self-conscious group.[23] However, by the early nineteenth century, and especially after 1832, the idea of the middle classes as one large, and largely united, "middle class" began to prevail. Moreover, compared to their forebears, the middle classes of the nineteenth century were dominated by financiers, professionals, and manufacturers, rather than merchants and successful tradesmen.[24] Perhaps more importantly, the middle classes of the nineteenth century were not only independent from the aristocracy, they were also broadly united as a group in their desire for greater political power.

Notably, however, I avoid the term "middle class" as a noun to describe a distinct group of people on the grounds that it is overly reductionist and, as Dror Warhman has pointed out, a conspicuous historical construction masquerading as an ineluctable historical force.[25] Instead, I use the term "middle class" as an adjective to describe the tastes and habits of the middling sorts. But this is not to agree entirely with Wahrman, for attempts to deny historical agency to the broadly defined middle classes have been as unsuccessful as attempts to portray the middle classes as united and acting solely in their class interests. My semantic distinctions

are, therefore, an attempt to acknowledge the social and political complexity of those who stood between the aristocracy and wealthy gentry on the one hand, and the laboring classes on the other, without denying the broad, collective existence of the middle strata as a historical force that pushed Britain in a more commercial and democratic direction. Thus, when referring to the period after the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1815), I use the term "middle classes" or "bourgeoisie."

Likewise, I use the terms "laboring classes," "working classes," and "lower orders," when referring to the majority of English, Scottish, and British subjects who, whatever their many differences as individuals, had little to no discretionary income and certainly no capital to invest. Some artisans fell within the working classes, others among the middle ranks, but those who purchased wine on a routine basis were making a clear statement that they had some discretionary money and saw themselves (and wanted others to see them) as "middling." Wine drinking did not draw a clean economic division between classes because such a division was never clean. But wine drinking did draw a division between social representations, and this is precisely why wine provides a helpful demarcator between the middle and lower classes.

In analyzing these different social groups, I see class as both a linguistic construction and a social reality. This reality is proven by material differences that inflect worldviews, life opportunities, and personal health. Nevertheless, the precise contours of class as social reality are subjective since they rely upon the viewer, the time, and the place. More specifically, as David Cannadine has shown in his brilliant study of class in modern Britain, class is generally seen and discussed in one of three ways: as a complex and finely graded hierarchy; as a triadic division of upper, middle, and lower; and as a dichotomous split between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, the rulers and the people.[26] The first of these is probably the closest description of social reality in that there were (and are) many gradations of social difference, and any model that does not acknowledge as much is necessarily reductionist. However, the hierarchy model is not merely a description of society, it is also a politically potent model that has its roots in the Great Chain of Being, which articulated a divinely created and, therefore, static social order. Not only has this model historically been invoked to keep people "in their place," it has also been used to elide broad-based social divisions where they have existed (and still exist). In other words, stressing the infinite complexity of social divisions is the divide-and-conquer model of society, and not surprisingly it has been most wholeheartedly adopted by the ruling elite and those who, for whatever reason, find themselves on top.

Equally unsurprisingly, the triadic and dichotomous models are also deeply political. For instance, people who think of themselves in the middle of a social hierarchy, at least since the eighteenth century, have often preferred a triadic view of society. In this model, one most often finds the virtuous middle classes stuck between the idle aristocracy or filthy rich on the one hand, and the indolent poor on the other. Fighting on all fronts against various forms of sleaze and sloth while upholding God's and the marketplace's command to be honest and industrious, it is clear in this model who the heroes are, or at least should be.

The dichotomous model meanwhile has generally been favored by those who perceive themselves to be on the bottom of society, although when expedient it has been adopted by almost anyone who feels that his or her society is an oligarchy and he or she is not among the oligarchs. Conversely, the dichotomous model has also been invoked by the political and economic elite who see themselves as the rightful rulers of the ignorant and often unappreciative masses.

In other words, none of these models is an exact description of social reality, because all descriptions of social reality are inflected by the subjectivity of the viewer. Nevertheless, all three models contain a degree of truth, which can be shown by examining the material conditions, life patterns, and cultural practices of the groups described.

However, a book cannot simultaneously invoke three analytical models any more than an author can speak simultaneously in three voices. Yet one can write with all three models in mind and allow the evidence to speak for itself, and that is precisely what I have tried to do. For example, the taste for wine divided both English and Scottish—and later British—society into two broad groups: those who drank wine on a regular basis, and those who rarely ever drank wine except perhaps as medicine. In that sense, the taste for wine, some or none, reveals a clear dichotomy in British society between the "haves" and the "have-nots." But the taste for wine created a second dichotomy among wine drinkers, the "haves", based on the type or quality of the wine being consumed. This division was between those who generally purchased the most expensive wine, and those who usually drank the less expensive sort. Of course, there was a subtle hierarchy of taste among wine drinkers, but broadly speaking the division between wine drinkers helps us physically to recognize a triadic division of society: those who drank expensive wines, those who drank inexpensive wines, and those who drank almost no wine at all. And these categories, in the main, correspond to what I have defined as the elite, the middle classes, and the lower classes.

Methods and objectives: A new cultural history

And now we arrive at the book's subtitle. It follows from my belief that class is both a social reality and a linguistic construct, that this book endeavors to reconcile the materialist insights of social historians of the previous generation, and the dexterous decoding of language, cultural practices, and material objects that is the distinguishing feature of more recent cultural history. Methodologically, this book is indebted to both camps. As a social historian, I count—in this case mostly casks and bottles—I derive statistics, I compare them synchronically and diachronically, and I look for trends. I argue that these trends reveal the existence of structures such as class, gender, and national identity, and that these structures helped to organize and influence the behavior of people within them. But as a cultural historian, I reject the idea that structures are fixed and that numbers reveal the entire truth. Instead, there is symbolic meaning in language, cultural practice, and material objects—types of wine and wine drinking, for instance—far beyond what is readily observable or quantifiable, and these

symbolic representations must be read and interpreted like texts in order to find that meaning. In this regard, quantitative analysis should be a valuable tool in the cultural historian's toolbox, precisely because it helps to reveal patterns and delimit possible interpretations of the meanings of things. To summarize, the "New Cultural History," which has been much theorized but rarely practiced on a grand scale during the past generation, acknowledges the deeply representational nature of culture without dismissing the social structures that are created by and help to create the physical and emotional realities that shape human lives.[27] This book is my attempt to write such a history.

That said, I emphatically reject the propensity of much cultural history to over-look the significance of politics. Like social history before it, cultural history has been engaged in the entirely laudable undertaking of moving the practice of his-tory far beyond the study of statesmen, statecraft, elections, political revolutions, and wars, and instead, trying to understand more about how ordinary people lived their lives, what they believed, how they behaved and why. In the process of discerning the meaning of cultural practices, cultural historians have been keen to point out how behavior, language, and material objects are all deeply political (i.e. they help to order social relationships). But in so doing, the acts, decisions, and affairs of the state—what we might call high politics—are often seen as mere representations of culture, while the consequences of high politics are often dis-missed, despite the fact that they help to construct the culture that they represent. In contrast, this study of the taste for wine uses a high political narrative (as it pertains to wine) in order to reunite politics with cultural history, and in so doing show that politics shape political power and cultural practices as much as they were, and are, shaped by them.

This book is also concerned with gender. In particular, this is a study of mascu-linity and the way that competing forms of masculinity are often manifestations of struggles for political power. In making this argument, I rely upon R.W. Connell's theoretical conception of hegemonic masculinity, which is the idea that at any given point in the history of a polity, there is a set of masculine norms that are most valued and as much as possible practiced by the politically domi-nant class, and that these norms help to maintain that class in power. However, hegemonic masculinity, in whatever form it takes, is always being contested by other forms of masculinity and is therefore rarely stable. Moreover, hegemonic masculinity is not always about physical strength, battlefield courage, practical competence, and independence from other men, although these are powerfully recurring themes. But where Connell overstates his case is in his assertion that hegemonic masculinity is synonymous with patriarchy.[28] In fact, this study of the taste for wine reveals that hegemonic masculinity is often just as concerned with establishing a pecking order among men as it is an attempt to uphold sexual domination over women. Hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy often overlap, but they are not the same thing.[29]

Lastly, while this book is principally an argument about taste, power, and British political culture, it is also intended to be a major contribution to the history of food and drink. This exciting, young field has been inspired by cultural history's

interest in ritual and everyday objects, by concern about the environment and human health, by globalization, and by the "foodie" movement that both benefits from and rejects aspects of the increasingly homogenized world. Food and drink history, if you will pardon the dual metaphor, is mushrooming so quickly that it is difficult to keep up with the field. That is the good news. The less good news is that too much food and drink history is journalistic, or, if it has nice pictures, coffee-table history. In other words, much of it is fun without also being rigorous or terribly insightful. But it can and should be both of these things.

My vision of food and drink history is of a field of inquiry that seeks to answer difficult historical questions about the two things without which human beings cannot live. Food and drink history should, as much as possible, combine the approaches and insights of various sub-disciplines within the historical profession, while borrowing from the approaches and insights of other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, law, biology, and medicine. Because of food and drink's centrality to our lives, perhaps no other aspect of human history offers the opportunity for such interdisciplinarity. Just as importantly, food and drink history needs to ask (and hopefully answer) difficult questions. It is not enough to assert that this plant, or that animal, or that type of food or drink that was derived from that plant or animal, helped to create the world as we know it. There are very few plants, animals, foods, and drinks about which that cannot be said; indeed, on an environmental level, perhaps none. Instead, we need to know how and why specific plants, animals, foods, and drinks became so important, how they helped structure society and were structured by it, what they signified, and what their relationship was to such things as government policy, cultural practices, wealth and poverty, social and gender relationships, the environment, and human health.

It should be abundantly clear by now that this study attempts to overcome the all-too-frequent compartmentalization of professional history. As I have just acknowledged, sub-disciplinary approaches to studying the human past are critical components of historical research; narrow digging can go deep, and it often draws attention to hitherto neglected sources and subjects. However, narrow digging, by its very nature, cannot reveal the complexity, the diversity, or anywhere near the totality of the evolving historical process. We historians need to rise above our narrow fields of interest whenever possible, to pollinate our work with the insights of other sub-fields and disciplines, and to write history that matters both to our colleagues and a broader audience. Whatever its imperfections, this book is my attempt to do just that.

Sources, chapter outline, and omissions

In writing the 12 chapters of this book I have drawn upon a shamelessly eclectic array of sources. I rely upon official import and export statistics from England, Scotland, Great Britain, France, and Portugal to form the skeleton of my narrative; but it is the other evidence—Parliamentary papers and reports, letters and diaries, cellar records and merchant ledgers, newspapers and journals, auctions records

and advertisements, novels and memoirs, poems and ballads, print and paintings, and even a few wine-tasting notes—that fleshes out the story.

Part I shows how and why wines were politicized and given specific meanings in England and Scotland from the mid-seventeenth century to the end of Queen Anne's reign in 1714. Chapter 1 argues that the abolition of the monarchy in 1649 fastened the symbolic link between wine, the aristocracy, and the Royalist cause, despite the fact that Cromwell's court was no stranger to wine. The link between wine and Royalists became a more specific claret–Tory link by 1681. Chapter 2 explores three different types of fraud created by the various embargoes and tax increases against French wine in the period 1678–1702, and shows how by the end of that period both Portuguese and Spanish wines already surpassed French wine imports. Chapter 3 turns to Scotland and reveals how claret became a symbol of Scottish resistance to English political domination at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Part II focuses on claret and its alternatives. Chapter 4 examines the debates about wine in England from the Methuen Treaty with Portugal in 1703 until the rejection of the Commercial Treaty with France in 1713. At the latter date, claret was rejected as the tavern wine of England while port became linked to a Whig conception of English national identity that emphasized commercial wealth and bluff masculinity. Chapter 5 shows why the Whig ruling elite in England, despite promoting port as the drink for the middle ranks, drank large amounts of claret, and usually the most expensive sort. Chapter 6 returns to Scotland to uncover the mystery of how Scottish consumers, rich and poor alike, continued to drink vast amounts of claret long after the Treaty of Union should have made French wine prohibitively expensive for all but the very wealthy.

Part III shifts the focus to port, and shows how port became the dominant wine among all classes of drinkers during the second half of the eighteenth century in both England and Scotland. Chapter 7 reveals the symbolic connection between port and the English middle ranks, and Chapter 8 argues that it was precisely this connection, along with improvement in quality, that caused port to be embraced by the English elite in the second half of the eighteenth century. Chapter 9, meanwhile, explains why a majority of Scottish wine consumers began to drink more port than claret by at least 1780, and is intended as a major intervention in the ongoing debate about the Britishness of Scottish identity.

With English and Scottish taste for wine unified by the last decades of the eighteenth century, the chapters in Part IV examine Great Britain as a whole. In particular, Chapter 10 asserts and explains the extreme drunkenness of the elite and middle ranks in the period c. 1780–1820, while Chapter 11 shows how and why fashionable dissipation was rejected in the post-Napoleonic War era. Two results of this new sobriety and the values surrounding it were the rise of sherry and the increased importance of women wine consumers in shaping the British market. Chapter 12, the concluding chapter, unearths the now-forgotten nineteenth-century wine debate that occupied the minds of politicians, economists, wine merchants, and social reformers from the 1820s until 1860. In the latter year, Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone, representing the

reforming goals of the Liberal Party, tried to undo the politics of wine of the previous two centuries and return British taste to unfortified, French wine.

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If it is clear what this book is about, it should also be stated at the outset what it is not about, or what it does not include. For instance, this book is not about the wine trade. Rather, it deals with the wine trade insofar as merchants entered the political arena with petitions, circumvented the law, shaped the law, put pressure on producers, solicited consumers, and in all these myriad ways helped to create taste. But the reader will not find any close analysis of how individual wine merchants ran their business on a day-to-day basis. Nor does this study illuminate the daily lives of grape growers or wine producers. Rather, growers and producers enter the story inasmuch as they responded to political actions or to the demands of consumers.

More controversially perhaps, this book focuses on the taste of elite and middling British men. Why? This is a study of how the taste for wine reflected and constituted political power, of how politics created the taste for wine, and of what wine tells us about political culture from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. It is therefore a study of the political nation, and in the period under study, the English, Scottish, and British political nations were dominated by elite and middling men. Moreover, men are the focus of this study because, quite simply, they drank most of the wine. Indeed, until the middle of the nineteenth century, just before this study ends, women's taste for wine seems to have had very little impact upon British taste as a whole. That said, the concept of femininity plays a large role in the construction (and destruction) of political power in England and Scotland, but femininity was such a powerful idea among politically powerful or aspiring men precisely because it was necessary for the construction of masculine identities that helped to maintain or challenge political power.

Finally, although this is a book about the meaning of taste for wine in the past, it is also meant to speak to the present. Commodities have meanings and consumption remains a political act. I do not lament this fact. However, this book is written in the hope that we who live in the world of consumer capitalism might be less naïve about the widespread belief that there is no accounting for taste, or that we are all rational consumers freely constructing our identity in the marketplace. That, of course, is nonsense. We can account for taste, and when we do, what we find is that laws and market availability, class and gender, national identity and ethnicity, custom and geography, and price, dramatically circumscribe the choices we make. Within a limited range of choices, taste both reflects and creates our social relationships. Taste stratifies, solidifies, and undermines the social order all at once. Taste is political. Taste is power.

Part I
The Politicization of Wine