

THE COFFEEHOUSING OF AMERICA

An Independent Study

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INTRODUCTION

Aroma, body, acidity, and flavor (Pendergrast 1999) are the main components when assessing the value of coffee. However, the institution of coffee is an uncommon thing to ponder. It appears, in fact, few even CONSIDER this universal drink as an iconic tradition throughout the evolution of civilizations from nearly every continent. (Pendergrast 1999) Even though coffee provides a livelihood (of sorts) for over twenty million human beings (Pendergrast 1999), at the conclusion of an extensive research through journals, books, magazines, and newspapers it appears only a little over half dozen books and a little less than three dozen articles encircled (even indirectly at times) the culture of this beloved beverage.

HISTORY

Around 200 A.D. (Pendergrast 1999) the coffee bean was supposedly discovered by Kaldi, an Ethiopian goat shepherd. Legend has it when his flock gravitated daily toward a group of mysterious bushes they became visibly excited afterward. Initially positive his goats were consuming a poisonous substance, he soon let curiosity overcome him, and tried a bite. Convinced he found a miracle substance empowering him with never-before experienced energy, he set out to spread the news about this discovery. (Ellis 1956)

Officially termed a “cherry”, the coffee “fruit” contains the beans or seeds contemporary consumers recognize as coffee. However, what is uncommonly realized is they initially are harvested green, only becoming a deep brown after roasting. It appears early Ethiopians, as

they do today centuries later, consume the beans in an elaborate, multi-hour ceremony, eating the “beans” raw. (Hattox 1985)

With the invasion of Yemen in 525 A.D. (Gugino 2004), Ethiopians over the period of a half century began to spread their heralded stimulus around the Near East. (Hattox 1985) By establishing coffee plantations these temporary visitors instituted a new era of coffee consumption never before possible. (Hattox 1985) Positioned South of Saudi Arabia and across the Persian Gulf from Ethiopia, Yemen served as a vital link to the trading roads of this region. (Pendergrast 1999) It was in this country coffee became a commodity for speculation, a symbol for hospitality, and an excuse for social procrastination. (Hattox 1985)

Saudi Arabia actually, nevertheless, holds the honor of establishing the first known coffeehouse. Ironically, this citation foreshadows the impetus for civil unrest among countless cultures for centuries to come as in 1511, the King Khain-Beg attempted to close one such establishment in Mecca. According to Ralph S. Hattox, author of *Coffee and Coffeehouses: Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*, Mecca was the first allusion to presence of place for consuming coffee where people gather for social ends as well as refreshment. (Hattox 1985) Indeed, this appears to be quite sardonic in that the first known reference to coffeehouses is an attempt to close it.

It seems the opposition to coffee drinking over the years stemmed from the very reasons it initially caused alarm to those in power -- it is intoxicating or physically harmful, its rejection as it was an innovation, the political activities affiliated with its use that became an important part of social life of coffeehouse, and coffeehouse patrons indulging in improper pastimes

(citing gambling, sexual situations, public morality in question). (Hattox 1985) Yet, coffee came into general use in the lands of Islam sometime in the mid-fifteenth century. (Ellis 1956; Hattox 1985; Pendergrast 1999; Gugino 2004) And, in the year 1529, coffee became popular in Cairo. A particular increase was seen especially annually during month of fasting in Ramadan, bringing brisk business past dark. (Hattox 1985) Hattox points out, “In earlier times, there were few and particular reasons for a person to be out at night. The coffeehouse did much to change this. Men went out at night to drink, meet with others, exchange information, ideas or pleasantries, and otherwise amuse themselves.” (Hattox 1985)

Never before had residents experienced a reason to socialize in such a manner. Hattox notes, “The single most striking and significant result of the growing use of coffee in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, was its effect on the social life within the city, town, or village, for around the preparation and sale of this commodity was born a hitherto unknown social situation, the coffeehouse.” (Hattox 1985) It is important to note Muslims cannot drink wine, so coffee served as a socially acceptable substitute; in other words, it was not a cause of shame to be seen drinking coffee. (Gugino 2004) It soon began to draw people from all social strata. (Pendergrast 1999) “All sorts of people come to these places, without distinction of religion or social position: there is not the slightest bit of shame in entering such a place, and many go there simply to chat with one another.” (Hattox 1985)

Coffee consumption spread to Egypt around 1500 A.D. Soon an array of coffee-selling venues could be found ranging from the smaller coffee stalls (take out also selling alcohol, water, and other beverages), to coffee shops (larger but also for local residents), and

coffeehouses (grand establishments situated for more traversed key routes). (Hattox 1985) Usually these operated with one main large room serving as kitchen and salon, (Pendergrast 1999), and boasted entertainment, socialization, occasional drug use, politicking, and various sexual endeavors. (Hattox 1985)

The Ottoman Turks occupied Yemen in 1536 (Gugino 2004), and the first Turkish Coffeehouse appeared around 1540, in Constantinople. (Oldenburg 1999) By around 1570, a purported six hundred coffee houses, not shops, were located around Istanbul. (Hattox 1985) And, by the 1600's, the Turks seldom drank coffee at home, preferring to do so at coffee shops. (Hattox 1985) Hattox notes, "Turks embraced drink and coffeehouses as much, if not more than Arabs." (Hattox 1985) So important did the brew become in Turkey that a lack of sufficient coffee provided grounds for a woman to seek a divorce. (Gugino 2004)

This is all significant as Hattox points out, "In the Near East context we are speaking of a society without any significant restaurant culture. The inhabitants of the sixteenth-century Muslim city were, even by the standards of their contemporaries from Europe, short on dining spots." He continued with, "One went to the coffeehouse because one wished to go out, to spend the evening in the society of the fellows, to be entertained, to see and be seen." (Hattox 1985) Coffeehouse culture appeared to cater to a social need never before addressed in the history of civilization and mankind.

"No longer was a host necessarily surrounded by possessions, wife, children, slaves, and all the trappings and symbols of proprietorship that had always been present," Hattox explains,

“when one was extending to the guest the full resources of his household. The act of hospitality could now be transferred to a public place where one’s responsibilities, and perhaps prestige, as host were limited.” According to Hattox, in the Sixteenth Century in the Near East there was little way of restaurant patronage; as a result, meals were often taken at home. From this tradition the relationship between host and guest remained intimate. Instead, coffeehouses resulted in a very different way people socialized on a very basic level. This freedom allowed coffeehouses to serve as literary forums; poets and writers were able to submit their latest compositions for assessment of a critical public while others were satiated by heated discussions on art, sciences or literature. (Hattox 1985)

The socialization provided “a forum for the public ventilation of news, views, and grievances concerning the state possessed the potential for becoming a political ‘clubhouse’ from which concerted action might be taken by those with a common distaste for the regime.” (Hattox 1985) This denotes the first informal social gathering place without particulars of place, culture, or ethnicity where across the region people discussed political and social issues, all stimulated by the intellectual drink of the coffee bean. (Ellis 1956; Hattox 1985; Oldenburg 1999; Pendergrast 1999; Gugino 2004) In short, in the Near East as early as the Middle Ages coffee house culture as we know it today was prevalent within the everyday lives of locals.

In England, in 1650, a Lebanese Jew named Jacob established the first coffeehouse in Oxford. (Ellis 1956; Hattox 1985; Oldenburg 1999; Pendergrast 1999; Gugino 2004) Two years later Pasqua Rosee, a Greek immigrant, established the first coffeehouse in London. (Pendergrast 1999) Yet, it did not take long for coffee to take residence within the everyday

lifestyle of Englishmen. In fact, “between 1652 and 1675 of eight pamphlets written no fewer than four have the words ‘character of the coffeehouse’ in their title.” (Ellis 1956)

Below is an excerpt from Antouyn Ellis’ 1956 book, *The Penny Universities: The History of Coffeehouses*. It emotively describes the culture of acceptance crucial to the sense of community held in these locations.

RULES AND ORDERS OF THE COFFEEHOUSE

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

*First, gentry, tradesmen, all are welcome hither,
And may without affront sit down together;
Pre-eminence of place, none here should mind,
But take the next fit seat that he can find;
Nor need any, if Finer Persons come,
Rise up to assigne to them his room;
To limit men’s Expense we think not fair,
But let him forfeit twelve-pence that shall swear;
He that shall any Quarrel here begin,
Shall give each man a dish t’atone the sin;
And so shall he, whose complements extend
So far to drink in COFFEE to his Friend;
Let noise of loud disputes be quite forborn,
No Maudlin Lovers here in Corners mourn,
But all be brisk, and talk, but not too much.
On Sacred Things, let none presume to touch,
Nor profane Scriptures, nor saucily wrong
Affairs of State with an irreverent tongue:
Let mirth be innocent, and each man see
That all his jests without reflection be;
To keep the House more quiet and from blame,
We banish hence Cards, Dice and every Game:
Nor can allow of Wage(r)s*

Mark Pendergrast, author of *Uncommon Grounds*, cited how “each coffeehouse specialized in a different type of clientele. In one physicians could be consulted. Others served Protestants, puritans, Catholics, Jews, literati, merchants, traders, Fops, Whigs. Tories, army officers, actors, lawyers, clergy, or Wits [were also served].” (Pendergrast 1999) This is not unlike

contemporary coffeehouses operating today. In Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, home to the University of Illinois' flagship campus, upon behavior studies conducted by the researcher during the winter and spring of 2004, Café Kopi appears to serve businessmen, intellectual adults, and graduate students during the day, followed by a more liberal appearing crowd in the evening. Café Verde appears to appeal to a more chic crowd, along with Café Aroma (in part evidently to their wine list available). In Urbana Café Paradiso serves a more artsy student crowd along with less formal businessmen and faculty members of the University. Espresso Royale on the Urbana side of the University serves a more liberal crowd, while its counterpart on the West side of Campus in Champaign appears to cater more towards the Greek system students and undergraduates. In Campustown, Green Street Café serves mainly students, and Moonlight Chocolate Café serves a more graduate-age student crowd.

Returning to other side of the Atlantic Ocean, “the coffeehouses provided England with its first egalitarian meeting place, where a man was expected to chat with his tablemates whether he knew them or not.” (Pendergrast 1999) Even so, the *Women's Petition of 1674* protested the whole affair. It stated,

“We find of late a very sensible Decay of that true Old English Vigour...Never did Men wear greater Breeches, or carry less in them of any Mettle whatsoever.” This condition was due to “the Excessive use of that Newfangled, Abominable, Heathenish Liquor called Coffee, which...has so Eunucht our Husbands, and Crippled our more kind gallants....They come from it with nothing moist but their snotty Noses, nothings stiffe but their Joints, nor standing but their Ears”...It revealed that a typical day for the English male involved spending the morning in a tavern “till every one of them is as Drunk as a Drum, and then back again to the Coffeehouse to drink themselves sober.” After which point they returned to the taverns only to “stagger back to Soberize themselves with Coffee.” (Pendergrast 1999)

Not to be left publicly in shambles, the men defended their beverage. Far from rendering them impotent, “[coffee] makes the erection more Vigorous, the Ejaculation more full, adds a spiritualescency to the Sperme.” (Pendergrast 1999) It appears coffee became quite a “hot” topic for all in England during the Medieval Ages; it is hard to imagine such material being published in contemporary times, especially over something seemingly as trivial as coffee beans.

Ellis, expert extraordinaire on the coffeehouse culture of this period notes how the Penny Universities 1650 to 1850 evolved as these coffeehouses (not universities) offered learning, beverage, news, and socialization for the price of a penny. (Ellis 1956) It was within these locations mail was delivered, news spread to local residents as they served as “news posts”, and for two pence price of cup of coffee could be obtained, for a penny a pipe, and newspapers were free. (Oldenburg 1999) It was precisely during this era the English coffeehouse contributed to the transformation of England into a superpower. (Suter 2004)

In addition, many Englishmen conducted business affairs within the walls of coffeehouses. Lloyds, the legendary insurance company of London, started in this very manner; the owner began doling advice to his coffee customers, and soon discovered higher profits resulted from the business practices of advisement than from selling coffee. (Pendergrast 1999)

Many others conducted informal business affairs at coffeehouses as they were essentially the hub of society from approximately 1650 to 1850 in England. (Pendergrast 1999)

Nevertheless, in numerous instances individuals in power in different countries recognized the civil unrest burgeoning from these locations. According to Ray Oldenburg, author of

The Great Good Place, King Charles II declared *A Proclamation for the Suppression of Coffeehouses* on December 29th, 1675. “Charles’ intention was to eliminate those public forums in which men think clearly and speak boldly had an unflattering irony about it. Cromwell had endured the presence of the coffeehouse and it had cost him; Charles’ friends had made abundant use of the free atmosphere of the coffeehouses to achieve his restoration.”

(Oldenburg 1999) With the ban going into effect January 10th, 1676, they became “the great resort of the Idle and disaffected persons’ where tradesmen neglected their affairs. The worst offense, however, was that in such houses ‘divers false malicious and scandalous reports are devised and spread abroad to the Defamation of his Majestie’s Government, and to the Disturbance of the Peace and Quiet of the Realm.’” (Pendergrast 1999) He backed down two days before the proclamation was to go into effect. (Pendergrast 1999)

This is significant, as yet again, the government felt threatened by the communicative effects simulated by coffee. This beverage never directly lead drinkers to discuss the state of leadership in their area; instead, by merely socially meeting within a regular location with other residents in an informal setting conversation appeared to have naturally gravitated to the most serious and relevant topics of the time. And, it appears, governmental misgivings were commonly at the top of the list. This theme was to appear countless additional times in in different countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas. (Pendergrast 1999; Oldenburg 1999; Hattox 1986)

The English coffeehouses began their decline in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. With mail delivery occurring at home and daily newspapers being distributed on the streets, the vitality of coffeehouses to the connection outside the local area became lost. (Oldenburg

1999) The socially affluent turned into private clubs by 1730, as their social networking habits moved to a more elitist venue; the less wealthy returned to local taverns. In addition, the British began to drink tea in the 18th century instead of coffee as it was much simpler to brew. No roasting or grinding was required, and it was much less time-consuming to obtain as the new Colony of India offered a plethora of tea. (Pendergrast 1999)

In 1689, conversely, France began its own obsession with the coffee bean. It was in this year Francois Procope, an Italian immigrant, opened Café de Procope. This served as the first of a long tradition of great French coffeehouses. The Parisian's new intoxication with public life magnified the adoration of coffee socialization when galleries and broadways afforded an entirely new appeal to the public realm. (Rudofsky 1969; Kostof 1991; Kostof 1992; Benjamin 1999) All over town coffee drinkers served as extra natural security on the streets. (Oldenburg 1999) However, not everyone supported this country's new fad. In 1679, French doctors were cited as declaring, "We note with horror that this beverage...has tended almost completely to disaccustom people from the enjoyment of wine." (Pendergrast 1999)

The European obsession did not, obviously, stop at the French border. Pope Clement VIII became immensely impressed upon a taste test and subsequently blessed the drink during his reign. By 1650, it was sold on Italian streets by *aquacedratato* or lemonade vendors, who dispensed coffee, chocolate, liquor as well. (Pendergrast 1999) Venice, a trading capital of the world during this period (Kidder 1955), had to wait for its first coffeehouse to open until 1683. (Pendergrast 1999)

According to Pendergrast, in July 1683, the Turkish army threatened Vienna. Franz George Kolschitzky, a Viennese, had lived in the Arab world for many years. In an attempt to obtain enemy secrets he was selected to disguise in Turkish uniform and cross enemy lines. Subsequently, with the secrets he obtained the Turks were routed. However, in yet another ironic turn of events after fleeing they left behind five hundred huge sacks of coffee. When the Viennese army discovered the bags they initially thought they contained manure; yet, the seemingly wise Kolschitzky knew better and begged commanders to place it in his possession.

Once more, with coffee positioned at the right place during the right time, he subsequently opened the first of the famous Viennese coffeehouses, the Blue Bottle. (Pendergrast 1999) However, the Viennese version of the coffeehouse, while having a garden outdoor seating area, found the indoor seating more popular (opposite from their French counterparts). Apartments are much more numerous than houses in Vienna; as such, the public “living rooms” found within coffeehouses provided an extension of the “home”. (Pendergrast 1999) In another interesting comparison, while the daily newspaper gave rise to the need for the Viennese coffeehouse, again, it was partly to blame for the demise of the English establishment.

WIDESPREAD DRINKING HABITS

The popularity of this drink spread far and wide. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Ben Franklin all visited coffeehouses around Europe and became captivated by coffeehouse drink and social culture. (Pendergrast 1999) The famous French Impressionists of the

second half of the Nineteenth Century begot many of their ideas during weekly meetings at the Café Guerbois in Paris. Here the artists Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Frederic Bazille, Auguste Renior, Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, Edgar Degas, and Paul Cezanne consulted and formulated theories with poets, novelists, sculptors, musicians, and photographers (including Emile Zola) on their latest ideas and difficulties. (Farrell 2001) The coffee was the indirect medium for collaborative circles to exist, giving members of the group reason to meet at a regular location.

In Bavaria, Bach wrote his jovial *Coffee Cantata*, and Beethoven ground precisely sixty beans to brew a cup. (Pendergrast 1999) In 1777, Fredrick the Great wrote a manifesto declaring,

“It is disgusting to notice the increase in quantity of coffee used by my subjects, and the like amount of money that goes out of the country in consequence. My people must drink beer. His Majesty was brought up on beer, and so were his ancestors.” Four years later he banned roasting it. (Pendergrast 1999)

Americans began drinking coffee from the beginning. (Pendergrast 1999) The Green Dragon, the first American coffeeshouse established in 1689, in Boston, was a pivotal gathering place for the formation of the United States of America. Like many of its later early American coffeeshouse counterparts, it also had often tea and beer. It was at this coffeeshouse (in existence consequently from 1679 to 1832) “John Adams, James Otis, and Paul Revere met to foment rebellion, prompting Daniel Webster to call it “the headquarters of the Revolution.” (Pendergrast 1999)

Of course, King George wanted to raise money and instituted a tea tax, prompting the now-famous cry “No taxation without representation!” (Gugino 2004) It was at the Green

Dragon in 1773, the organizers of the Boston Tea Party formulated their plans, a direct result of the large amounts of *tea* sent over from Britian to be bought (and thus taxed).

(Pendergrast 1999) It thus became Americans' patriotic duty to avoid tea and drink coffee.

(Pendergrast 1999)

William Ukers, author of *All About Coffee*, poignantly extolled the enormity of coffee on uprisings throughout history and said,

"Wherever it has been introduced it has spelled revolution. It has been the world' most radical drink in that its function has always been to make people think. And when the people began to think, they became dangerous to tyrants." (Pendergrast 1999)

According to Pendergrast, coffee did not always promote freedom; sometimes it was quite the opposite. As its popularity increased, more and more labor was needed; the sad tragedy of this era was the enslavement of people from Africa to do the "dirty work." (Pendergrast 1999) In 1788, San Domingo produced half of the world's coffee by means of slavery.

However, slaves revolted in 1791, and subsequently burned everything. The island (now known as Haiti) never again reached its status as premier coffee producer in the world as South American coffee commodities took hold. (Pendergrast 1999)

Unknown to many, after the War of 1812 American consumption skyrocketed as tea imports (via Great Britian and British India) were cut off. (Gugino 2004) By the end of the Nineteenth Century Americans consumed nearly half of the world's coffee. (Pendergrast 1999) From here coffee only had to battle beer to be able to claim bragging rights as American's favorite beverage.

In October 1902, most Latin American producers sent representative to the first International Congress for the Study of the Production and Consumption of Coffee held at the New York Coffee Exchange. (Pendergrast 1999) Not only was coffee consumed by United States citizens, it was now being distributed through American ports from South America to the rest of the world. (Pendergrast 1999) The four largest coffee companies battling one another for the lowest priced product were established during this era through savvy marketing and production tactics. Maxwell House (now owned by Kraft), Folgers (Proctor and Gamble), Hills Brothers (Sara Lee), and Nescafe (Nestle) all began small but early on realized dominance within some sector of coffee production was important. (Pendergrast 1999)

Other innovations also altered the culture of coffee consumption during the first half of the Twentieth Century. Decaf came about in 1911, when a German was convinced the caffeine killed his father. In 1901, Luigi Bezzera invented the modern espresso machine...“Coffee culture permeated Europe. In sidewalk cafes, fine restaurants, smoky subterranean coffeehouses, dining rooms and kitchens, Continentals enjoyed their coffee-either black or with varying amounts of milk, whipped cream, spices, sugar, or alcohol.”

In fact, coffee also played a role in instituting the Jazz Age in America by the publishment of a 1923 New York Times feature article announcing a “Coffee-Drunken New York”...subtitled “That’s why its so relentlessly Tense, or, So to Say, Jazzed Up.” After its printing “The” cool culture was Jazz. (Pendergrast 1999)

Additionally, during this era a new outlook arose concerning the science of consumerism thereby altering the hold coffee would have within the American psyche. In 1914, Dr. Hugo Muensterberg, a Harvard psych professor lectured on “Applying Psychology to Business.” He made extraordinary and frightening claims. “Business men will eventually realize that customers are merely bundles of mental states and that the mind is a mechanism that we can affect with the same exactitude with which we control a machine in a factory.” (Pendergrast 1999)

In 1917, the Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the sale of alcohol. This, with the innovations in coffee roasting techniques (previously done by hand over a flame) and the espresso machine, brought about a coffeehouse renaissance. (Pendergrast 1999)

Supplementing hundreds of saloons, coffee shops became THE location for community interaction in America. (Pendergrast 1999; Oldenburg 1999) They remained so until the onslaught of conventional zoning and suburban development neglected the informal meeting places of America. It was at these socially (again) acceptable locations youth were received and became acculturated within society, senior citizens operated to remain active members of communities instead of being relegated to assisted living, and all walks of life ventured together to assume a truly cohesive sense of community. (Oldenburg 1999)

Ray Oldenburg, author of *The Great Good Place*, is considered an expert on the documentation of these places within American culture. He said, “Beginning with a resolve ‘to promote the health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the inhabitants of _____,’ zoning ordinances do as much to promote loneliness, alienation, and the atomization of society.” He continued with, “If we valued fraternity as much as independence, and democracy as much as free

enterprise, our zoning codes would not enforce the social isolation that plagues our modern neighborhoods, but would require some form of public gathering place every block or two. We may one day rediscover the wisdom of James Oglethorpe who laid out Savannah such that her citizens lived close to public gathering areas. Indeed, he did so with such compelling effect that Sherman, in his destructive march to the sea, spared Savannah alone.” (Oldenburg 1999)

The craze did not stop here. In 1939, a national survey revealed 98 percent of families in the United States drank coffee in one form or another. (Pendergrast 1999) In 1952, the Pan American Coffee Bureau with a \$2 million annual ad campaign started the “coffee break” idea by advertising, “*Give Yourself a Coffee Break—And Get What Coffee Gives to You*”. It took less than a year to become part of U.S. language. (Pendergrast 1999)

With the perfection of modern espresso machine just after World War II the Italian coffee bar proliferated; it was during this epoch the cappuccino and latte drinks were invented. (Pendergrast 1999) As an interesting side note, while this brought a huge renaissance in Western Europe (minus the tea-drinking British), it did not in Eastern Europe and the Near East as these populations are largely lactose intolerant. (Pendergrast 1999) It did not take long for the technology to spread to the United States. By 1950, it arrived in NYC, sparking a small coffeehouse revival in the midst of suburbanization and the privatization of the American lifestyle. (Pendergrast 1999)

In early 1970’s, coffeehouses began to serve as places for GIs on-leave to go to relax. Yet again, coffeehouses served as a breeding ground for dissenters. Pendergrast observed, “Ever

since 1511, When Khair-Beg tried to close the coffeehouses of Mecca, these caffeinated meeting places served as brood chambers for seditious literature and revolt against authority. They fostered dissent against Charles II, the French monarchy, colonial masters. Now the antiwar coffeehouses served as hotbeds for resistance to LBJ, and after the 1968 elections, Richard Nixon. As in the past, the authorities tried to shut them down through intimidation and legal maneuvers. In several cases arsonists burned the coffeehouses. The Ku Klux Klan targeted one, while others were riddled with gunfire. The surviving establishments eventually disbanded, but not before leaving their mark on American history.” (Pendergrast 1999)

It was during this decade specialty coffee roasters and coffeehouses began to appear in the United States and Canada. One such chain featuring this new “chic”, “cool”, and “hip” fad was Peet’s Coffeehouses, the forerunner of Starbucks. Yet again, coffee and coffee culture would learn to reinvent itself to meet the needs of its lovers and connoisseurs. This trend has continued and has been heightened in technique and effect to this day.

THE THIRD PLACE

In *The Great Good Place*, Oldenburg describes his epic “Third Place” theory. With home being the first place and the workplace being the second place, informal community places are third places. These usually intangible, overlooked (at least in zoning and government policy and codes) spaces and places provide the essence of community. He said,

“When the doctor leaves the neighborhood and relocates in a medical center four miles away, one may still receive the essential service. When the Mom-and-Pop grocery closes, one can still get the essential victuals when at the supermarket a mile and a half down the

avenue. But when the [coffeehouse] is removed from the corner and put out on the strip, its essential character is lost. When gathering places are situated too far from home, the patron no longer knows the other faces. What should be a lively assembly easily becomes the haunt of the living dead. The bottled spirits of the remote lounge are more an embalming fluid than a lubricant to lively conversation.” (Oldenburg 1999)

But it is the relationships between “regulars”, he stresses, that serve the community members through the support involved. Social capital, popularly coined by Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone* and his other works (Putnam 1993; Putnam 2000; Putnam and Feldstein 2003), can be as simple as sharing who the local expert is in underwater basket weaving through networking with regulars. (Berkowitz 1984) Oldenburg continued explaining his underground economy theory with,

“Third place regulars “do for one another,” as they would for blood relatives and old friends. They give things they no longer need; they loan items they still want; they do what they can to relieve hardship when it befalls “one of the gang.” When someone doesn’t “show” for a couple of days, somebody goes around to check on them. The financial benefits in all of this are considerable. Somebody in the group fixes lawn-mowers. Someone else can handle plumbing and appliances, or knows who does it at a considerable savings. Money-saving advice is forthcoming from somebody in the group who has confronted a given problem earlier on. Sometimes, alas, when the group’s collective resources are found wanting.” (Oldenburg 1999)

Friendship, membership, locatability, entertainment, fair game (meaning being approached by anyone and expected to give-n-take conversation with civility and good humor), bores (those who are regulars but never ask, and finding a strange collection of people are all key elements to successful third places. (Oldenburg 1999) He argues these are the only places “where in public their thoughts and actions are not being in some way arranged for them.” (Oldenburg 1999) However, even with all these factors present and accounted for

Oldenburg posits the American language is underdeveloped concerning informal conversations within the public realm compared to other countries. He said,

“The rate of pub visitation in England or café visitation in France is high and correspond to an obvious fondness for sociable conversation. American tourists, Scitovsky notes, ‘are usually struck and often morally shocked by the much more leisurely and frivolous attitude toward life of just about all foreigners, manifest by the tremendous amount of idle talk they engage in, on promenades and park benches, in cafes, sandwich shops, lobbies, doorways, and wherever people congregate.’ And, in the pubs and cafes, Scitovsky goes on to report, ‘socializing rather than drinking is clearly most people’s main occupation.’”

Oldenburg also cites a popular essay by Richard Goodwin called “The American Condition,” where the author invites readers to contrast the rush hour in our major cities with the close of the working day in Renaissance Italy. He paints a picture on the ease of other’s culture in conversation. Goodwin said,

“Now at Florence, when the air is red with the summer sunset and the campaniles begin to sound vespers and the day’s work is done, everyone collects in the piazzas. The steps of Santa Maria del Fiore swarm with men of every rank and every class; artisans, merchants, teachers, artists, doctors, technicians, poets, scholars. A thousand minds, a thousand arguments; a lively intermingling of questions, problems, news of the latest vibrant curiosity; the changeable temper of a thousand spirits by whom every object of discussion is broken into an infinity of sense and significations—all these spring into being, and then are spent. And this is the pleasure of the Florentine public.” (Oldenburg 1999)

In short, Oldenburg argues Americans are deficient in informal conversational skills. He said, “In our low estimation of idle talk, we Americans have correctly assessed the worth of much of what we hear. It is witless, trite, self-centered, and unreflective... this unfortunate condition is common where Americans share spaces with strangers. Our world-renowned gregariousness often seems to be a bottled-up quality lacking outward conventions for

‘breaking the ice.’” (Oldenburg 1999) While, of course, European culture may never have a place within America, perhaps there is a key element lost in the American way of life during the process of suburbanization (Mumford 1938; Cassidy 1960; Jacobs 1961; Mumford 1961; Etzioni 1993; Kunstler 1993; Kay 1997; Lennard 1997; Etzioni 1998; Crawford 2000; Putnam 2000; Ehrenhalt 2000, March/April; Bell 2001; Bressi 2002; Florida 2002; Schlosser 2002) As observed earlier in this essay, coffee HAS brought about cultural conversation previously in American history. It appears informal coffeetalk has become an anti-suburban “thing” as opposed to an anti-American “thing.”

Oldenburg cites “regulars” of third places as the source of informal conversation still in existence in pockets of community in America. He points out, “It is the regulars, whatever their number on any given occasion, who feel at home in a place and set the tone of conviviality...The host’s welcome, though important, is not the one that really matters; the welcome and acceptance extended on the other side of the bar-counter invites the newcomer to the world of the third place association.” (Oldenburg 1999)

DISCONNECT FROM SOCIETY FROM HOME LIFE

While Europeans often find places of residence in smaller apartments and thus needing the public realm for spatial purposes, Americans are learning to substitute this realm with the private one. Oldenburg said, “Increasingly, her citizens are encouraged to find their relaxation, entertainment, companionship, even safety, almost entirely within the privacy of homes that have become more a retreat from society than a connection to it.” (Oldenburg 1999)

Along these lines, Laura Lawson, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois, gave a lecture concerning the substitution of American public life for the private suburban home. Citing the restaurant being replaced with large kitchens and dining rooms, parks with backyards, entertainment venues with family rooms, the cleaners for the laundry room, the pub for the garage and poker, work offices with at-home-offices, coffeehouse chatting for internet chat rooms, and hotels for master bedroom suites, virtually every necessity is being “provided” for suburbanites. (Lawson 2004) Oldenburg agreed with, “In building and equipping these millions of private new domains [houses], American industry found a major alternative to military production...A man works in one place, sleeps in another, shops somewhere else, finds pleasure or companionship where he can, and cares about none of these places...They proceed as though a house can substitute for a community if only it is spacious enough, entertaining enough, comfortable enough, splendid enough—and suitably isolated from that common horde that politicians still refer to as our “fellow Americans” (Oldenburg 1999)

However, he counters with, “Indeed, there is often more encouragement to leave a given subdivision than to stay in it, for neither the homes nor the neighborhoods are equipped to see families or individuals through the cycle of life...The housing development’s lack of informal social centers or informal social centers or informal public gathering places puts people too much at the mercy of their closest neighbors. The small town taught us that people’s best friends and favorite companions rarely lived right next door to one another. Why should it be any different in the automobile suburbs? What are the odds, given that a hundred households are within easy walking distance, that one is most likely to hit it off with

the people next door? Small! Yet, the closest neighbors are the ones with whom friendships are most likely to be attempted, for how does one even find out enough about someone a block and a half away to justify an introduction?” (Oldenburg 1999)

While suburban residences may appear to offer everything, they still lack essential connections to American culture and support systems. “Writes Claudia Wallis, ‘It is a sorry sign of the times that the three best-selling drugs in the country are an ulcer medication (Tagamet), a hypertension drug (Inderal), and a tranquilizer (Valium.)’...We come dangerously close to the notion that one “gets sick” in the world beyond one’s domicile and one “gets well” by retreating from it.” (Oldenburg 1999) He also notes Americans compensate for this loss by super-home-decorating methods. (Oldenburg 1999) This is not surprising as Lowes and Home Depot are among the most profitable corporations in the world (Koolhaas 2002)

In another interesting side note, in some countries one night weekly television broadcasting is suspended so people will not forget the importance of community interaction. (Oldenburg 1999) Oldenburg concedes, “This tactic would probably not work in America. Sennett would argue that the middle class family, given its assessment of the public domain, would stay at home anyway.” (Oldenburg 1999) Perhaps the real question should instead be, “How do we get Americans to overcome their obsession with home life and mass media while still having it?”

THE STARBUCKS CRAZE

Starbucks started in 1971, by Jerry Baldwin, Zev Siegl, and Grodon Bowker. In 1981, plastics salesman named Howard Schultz caught on, and an impressed Baldwin made a motivated Schultz head of marketing. Under this position Schultz traveled to Italy and found vibrant coffee culture. From here Schultz became determined to offer this coffee/community lifestyle to Americans. (Pendergrast 1999)

Upon return he tried out the tactics he noticed in Italian cafes. While Italians did shots and stood, Americans wanted to sit. Schultz added chairs. Italians listened to Opera. Americans didn't. Schultz changed from opera to jazz music. And the campaign continued.

In 1987, Schultz bought Starbucks from Baldwin, and by 1990, it was making profit. By 1991, there were just over 100 stores making around \$57 million in sales. "Almost overnight, Starbucks became chic. Word of mouth, we discovered, is far more powerful than advertising." (Pendergrast 1999)

Ironically, Schultz read Oldenburg's *The Great Good Place*, and decided Starbucks could offer this culture to Americans all while increasing profit margins. While Oldenburg emphasized the simple corner store, Schultz envisioned a bigger, better, *cooler* version. In example, Starbucks expanded south from its home base in Seattle, Washington to where former owner Baldwin's newly acquired Peet's Specialty Coffee shop was located in California. When Baldwin refused to sell out to Schultz, Schultz opened a Starbucks four doors down from Baldwin's store. "The typical approach has been 'Why don't you sell out to us, or we'll crush you,'" said Baldwin. (Pendergrast 1999) Today Starbucks is the largest coffeehouse

chain in the world, with over 3,500 stores worldwide (as of November 2003). (Day 2003)

They are pushing into markets all over the world. (Pendergrast 2003)

COMMON TRAITS IN EVERY SHOP

Regardless of location, coffeeshops in America still offer many similar traits. Newspapers, specialty coffees, often wireless, great music, and board games are found at many locations. Starbucks, recognizing this, in fact, is coming out with its own line of music and games to provide customers. Often at these locations local arts and culture newspapers can be found. And, even though the barista may not know everyone (and even to a lesser extent do regulars know each other), they usually know the regulars. (Dru and Aslan 1989; Oldenburg 1999; Heath 2000; Oldenburg 2001; Elliott 2002; Hasebroek 2002; Silverman 2002; Wanless 2002; Young 2002; Barnsely 2003; Day 2003; Golab 2003; Kauffman 2003; Roberts 2003; Schumaier 2003; Thomason-Gonzales 2003; Unknown 2003; Unknown 2003; Ayers 2004; Bembeck 2004; Fausset 2004; Guardian 2004; Gugino 2004; Jamieson 2004; Rivas 2004; Scoop 2004; Suter 2004; Unknown 2004; Unknown 2004; Yim 2004)

In addition, coffeeshops can serve as office space. Oldenburg points out how this can be contributed to how neither party is on his or her “home ground”, but in a neutral place. He goes on to say, “The third place as ‘office’ is more popular in many other cultures than in the United States where a bureaucratic mentality is more pervasive. In the near and far east, many entrepreneurs are too poor to own offices of their own and use public eating or drinking places, even stating so on their business cards. In Ireland, where everybody deemed to have good sense frequents the pubs, pubs quite naturally are often used as informal offices.”

(Oldenburg 1999) While other countries have a rich history of conducting business within coffeehouses, Oldenburg seems to glaze over this phenomenon.

Several newspapers cite the increased compatibility of coffeehouses to conduct work within. “[Smith] is one of a growing number of people who – thanks to laptops, cell phones and wireless internet – don’t need to be tethered to a traditional office to do a day’s work, and prefer to be out among people instead of alone in a home office.” (Kauffman 2003) Indeed, freelancers, regulars shifting their meetings to their favorite place, faculty, students, informal business meetings, and formal business meetings are all taking place within these locations. (Silverman 2002; Young 2002; Kauffman 2003; Thomason-Gonzales 2003; Ayers 2004; Unknown 2004) With half of American adults drinking coffee every day, and another quarter drinking it occasionally (Rivas 2004), it seems obvious why they gravitate to these informal settings. The specialty coffee industry has grown to a \$5 billion-dollar annual industry. (Bembeck 2004) It appears the “coffee break” campaign worked.

There are other niches trying to get into the game. Many new public libraries around the country are picking up on the success of Borders and Barnes and Noble bookstores are having by offering coffee successfully while selling more books without much damage. (Golab 2003) The Columbian Coffee Federation, a coalition of more than 500,000 Columbian coffee growers, is planning to open its first “Juan Valdez” coffee shops in hopes of directing more of the profit from sold coffee directly to the farmers in Columbia. By increasing their return from about 1 to 2 cents per cup to about 4 to 5 cents per cup they hope to gain a better foothold in the American coffee industry. However, they do not want to cater towards the Starbucks crowd. While Starbucks offers a cozy, sit down atmosphere,

the Juan Valdez coffeeshops will encourage less gathering in turn for the promise of offering “the best coffee in the world.” (Day 2003) Even with their entrance into the market, it appears not everyone is folding to the tactics of Starbucks. (Roberts 2003)

And, with the urban core market saturated, chains are trying to figure out how to move into the suburbs successfully. With a plethora of strip mall locations available, the startup does not pose problems. Instead, it’s ensuring the “image” of the store brand is retained in the process. (Unknown 2003)

Additionally, the design of coffeeshops is important to consider. Throughout history their design has encouraged informal conversation. Yet, as Oldenburg points out, Americans have difficulty with this skill. He states as evidence, “The importance of the regular crowd is demonstrated every day throughout America in licensed drinking establishments that don’t have a loyal patronage. The patrons sit spaced apart from one another. Many appear to be hunching over some invisible lead ball of misery sitting on their laps. They peel labels off beer bottles. They study advertising messages on matchbooks. They watch afternoon television as though it were of compelling interest.” (Oldenburg 1999)

In opposition to the view of Schultz and Starbucks (Pendergrast 1999), Oldenburg assumes plain décor is more inviting than mass-produced décor. (Oldenburg 1999) Yet, as Dr. Hugo Muensterberg, predicted in the early Twentieth Century, “Business men will eventually realize that customers are merely bundles of mental states and that the mind is a mechanism that we can affect with the same exactitude with which we control a machine in a factory.”

(Pendergrast 1999) The commercial industry in the United States, in all reality, has American consumers pegged, even without our knowing. (Weiss 1988)

Perhaps, however, it is not a question of fancy or plain décor instigating conversation, but it is instead the placement of physical structures. For instance, with the presence of a bar with seating, patrons are encouraged to sit individually with the option of talking to others (potential “regulars”) next to them. (Pendergrast 1999) This, in combination with chairs, would seem to provide the best array of seating for the aforementioned uses. In fact, upon reviewing the latest designs, it appears this is precisely what designers are striving for. (Dru and Aslan 1989; Boschetti 2003; Services 2004) Giving patrons options for seating appears to be key in finding a design solution; the researcher conducted countless hours of observation in both Italian and American coffeehouses where this trait seemed to support this theory. As such, it appears some of the most successful coffee shops provide an array of outdoor and indoor seating options and styles. Another important design intervention to consider in today’s world is the placement of outlets for portable electronic devices.

DESIGN AFFECTING COFFEEHOUSES CONVERSATION

Further study on the effects of design and placement of seating arrangements has on conversation subject matter between strangers or non-strangers is needed to determine if there is, in fact, a direct link between coffeehouses and the political discussions of contemporary days. Oldenburg does assert taverns and pubs offer this type of atmosphere, but few coffeehouses contain bars (supposedly the location where most of the informal conversation he has observed occurs). (Oldenburg 1999) A vital link needs to be made

between historical benefits of coffee-stimulated democratic conversation and location in coffeehouses via design.

To review, he said, “third places are political fora of great importance. In many countries the emergent solidarity of labor owed strictly to the profusion of cafes in which the workers discussed their common problems, realized their collective strength, and planned their strikes and other strategies...it is not difficult to understand why coffeehouses came under attack by government leaders in England, in Scandinavia, and in Saudi Arabia at various points in history. It was in the coffeehouses where people congregated and often, in their discussions, found fault with the countries’ rulers.” (Oldenburg 1999)

But, there is still a fundamental capability missing, even with tavern bars to sit at, preventing most Americans from participating in such activities.

“As Winston Kirby remarked of those individuals who have grown up with television, ‘the product of the TV age does not identify with his city or apparently any city. He is a product of this, his planet, or as McLuhan says, the global village.’. Few means to lure and invite citizens into public gatherings were overlooked. The forums, colosseums, theaters, and amphitheaters were grand structures, and admission to them was free. Third places have never since been as prominent. Attempts at elegance and grand scale continued to be made but with far less impact. Many cultures evolved public baths on a grand scale...In the past, American gregariousness found its expression and established its numerous outposts without plan or even a conscious sense of purpose. The people simply invaded, took over, commandeered, or otherwise appropriated a wide variety of establishments never intended to serve as social centers. The cracker-barrel circle of the old country store never counted it their responsibility to build or fund a public lounging area. Those crusty stalwarts simply inveigled their way into space designed for quite another purpose. Small-town druggists did not assume it their duty to provide the main hangout for the local adolescent population. It just worked out that way. The waiting seats a barber

had to offer were not intended for the use of non-customers, but that was often their major use. The local post office was not kept open twenty-four hours a day to allow the locals a place to chat and exchange news, but it was appropriated for that purpose as much as for any other. Hotel coffee shops were there for guests, but were often most used and relied upon, if not most appreciated, by locals.” (Oldenburg 1999)

COFFEEHOUSES WITHIN THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

Currently, the figure we must figure out how to overcome if Americans are to attempt to rekindle the place of coffeehouses as a bastion of democracy is, “Americans spend about 90 percent of their leisure time in their homes.” (Oldenburg 1999) Design MUST be connected to community building, which MUST be connected to the desired American culture. The alternative is to accept contemporary home life as acceptable in its ability to continually shelter and prevent its residents from experiencing REAL community. However, we are gambling with the future of our country. Centuries have proven the intellectual stimulus of coffee has forced the hand of better government as it has served as an invisible “checks and balances” tool for different eras and areas. Isn’t it a bit of a gamble to assume a five century pattern of coffee socialization (the impetus) allowing this type of uncensored discussion to occur is unnecessary (as it is unaccounted for in contemporary city codes for its inclusion within our urban areas). While it may seem presumptuous, the entire situation may be unable to remedy; however, it again may be as simple as redesigning the location of coffeehouses within neighborhoods (so they are more easily accessible), and redesigning the interior (thus encouraging more informal conversation naturally through perhaps the inclusion of a bar). At any rate, it is astounding to reflect upon the impact a simple fruit, the

coffee cherry, has had on the evolution of civilization as we know it, while pondering what it may have in store for us in the future.

In closing, on a lighter note, as with the true spirit of a “third place”, I have chosen to include an insert by Jym Annear on the different types of people found in coffeehouses. I hope you enjoy. To coffee!

Different Coffeehouse Archetypes **by Jym Annear**

I've been a barista for about four years now. I've worked in quite different areas of the country, for quite different coffeehouses. But people are people, and I've noticed they invariably fall into one of several different archetypes. Fellow baristas will recognize them; fellow coffee patrons should beware them.

The Wanderer

Walks in the door. Walks to the bar. Orders nothing. Walks to the condiment stand. Walks to the bathroom. Walks to the newsstand. Walks out.

The Pretentious Git

Orders a 'macchiato'. Has no clue what it actually is.

The Ultra-Pretentious Git

Orders a 'macchiato'. Knows what it is.

The Epicurean

"I want a skinny-double-half-cup-latte with extra foam. Cinnamon on top. Cardamom, not plain."

Apparently Your Best Friend

"Dude, can I borrow your phone, use your bathroom, take this paper with me, bum a cigarette, and oh, I just want water."

The Legally Blind

"Where's your menu?" You point to the huge menu directly behind you. "Do you have espresso?" You point to the huge \$14,000 espresso machine next to you. "Where are your prices?" etc., etc.,.....

The Smart-Aleck We Can All Do Without

"Do you guys sell coffee here? Hub hub."

The Purist

Orders triple espressos. Drinks them like Evian. Usually has groupies. Competes with others in drinking espressos like they were at a frat party.

The Moron Purist

Orders a triple espresso decaf.

The Trendy Cynic

Comes in, orders one cup of plain coffee, sits by the door for the rest of the day sneering at whoever comes in.

The Trendy Moron About to Get Beaten With a Bat

Comes in regularly, and asks for something with coffee in it that doesn't taste like coffee. When coffeehouses became the new fad these idiots came out in droves. Blame "Friends".

It's Always ShowTime

Always comes in with a musical instrument (guitar, bongo drums). Plays regardless of being asked, regardless of being asked to stop. Acts hurt when you ask him to play elsewhere.

The Requisite Nutbar

Asks for hot water, claiming he has a tea bag he bought elsewhere. Sits in the corner talking to himself and staring at the wall. Tries to argue with imaginary friend in opposite chair, gets angry at imaginary friend's silence. Asks you to mediate dispute between them.

Wasting Her Time

Seems to think coffee's the Diet Drink of Tomorrow: "I want a decaf latte with skim milk, a shot of sugar-free vanilla, nondairy whipped cream on top and could you point me to the powdered creamer?"

Wasting My Time

"Gimme a double-espresso. No, make that a vanilla capp. No, I actually want a hazelnut mocha. No, I meant to say almond. Ab, screw it, just gimme coffee."

Coffee Nazis

Complains that your coffee wasn't organically grown. Complains your Tanzanian Peaberry isn't acidic enough, your Sumatra too acidic. Complains if the coffee wasn't brewed less than five minutes ago, demands a fresh pot. Complains the Colombian doesn't taste as good as the place down the street's. Complains about the prices. Complains that you've been using Folgers to deceive customers and save money, etc.

The Undead

*Those whose introduction to coffee was Starbucks. Obviously undemanding, fairly easy to please, but cannot comprehend that the REAL world doesn't use nondairy creamer and *doesn't* call a small coffee "tall".*

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