



The Coffee House: A Cultural History

By Markman Ellis

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When the first coffeehouse opened in London in 1652, customers were bewildered by this strange new drink from Turkey—hot, bitter, and black as soot. But those who tried coffee were soon won over, and more coffee-houses were opened across London, America, and Europe. For a hundred years the coffeehouse occupied the center of urban life, creating a distinctive social culture. They played a key role in the explosion of political, financial, scientific, and literary change in the 18th century, as people gathered, discussed, and debated issues within their walls.

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Review

'THE COFFEE-HOUSE is everything it should be - careful, intelligent and embodying the spirit of its subject by being written for the digestion of the general public. It contains the perfect recipe of scholarship, stimulant and froth.' THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 'This is a convincing and meticulous read, building an intriguing and engrossing picture of coffee's role in British society. And what a relief that this isn't yet another wide-ranging cherry-picking history of a commodity, but rather a close examination of how particular rooms shaped the British identity. There are plenty of incidental surprises, but the total picture is the revelation: something happened when coffee met the English Enlightenment and the result was an explosion of creativity..' THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY '...readable and scholarly account of an important and curiously neglected phenomenon. Rich in evocative detail... and strong on social, political and economic context, The Coffee House is a book for the coffee-lover and historian alike.' THE SPECTATOR 'Ellis's sober, rigorous narrative lucidly dovetails the political with the cultural, and is particularly engaging as it charts the convulsions of England through its early modernisation... Ellis unpicks the ideologies that have contributed so importantly to our entrenched beliefs in freedom of speech and in our political constitution.' THE DAILY TELEGRAPH 'brilliant' -- Bee Wilson THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH MAGAZINE '... [Ellis] circles his subject, elegantly and thoughtfully investigating the cultures - political, literary and financial - that the rituals of the coffee house have helped to shape... coolly scrutinizing the romance of the bean, this book invites us to ask ourselves who we think we are when we order a cappuccino "with wings".' -- Norma Clarke TLS

About the Author

Markman Ellis was educated at the universities of Auckland and Cambridge, and now teaches 18th-century literature and culture at Queen Mary, University of London. He has published books on the sentimental novel and gothic fiction, and articles on many topics in 18th-century studies, including georgic poetry, slavery, kangaroos and lap-dogs.

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