CONSUMER CHOICES IN MARTINIQUE AND SAINT-DOMINGUE:
1740-1780
by Andrew J Dial

If an inhabitant of Saint-Pierre or Cap Français wanted to emulate the life of a European, what goods and foods were available to them? This thesis examines the flow of consumer goods that tied France’s West Indian colonies to the metopole. It argues that the ports of Bordeaux and Marseille connected the Caribbean consumers to a dense web of regional European trade routes which supplied them with a plethora of manufactured goods. Elites in the islands were able follow French fashions from a distance but often adapted metropolitan objects, such as kerciefs, to fit homegrown styles. In contrast to this mixing, the diet of West Indies was highly stratified with elites successfully recreating the foodways of France and slaves subsisting on cheap proteins.
CONSUMER CHOICES IN MARTINIQUE AND SAINT-DOMINGUE:

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A Thesis

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In his *Description Topographique, physique, civile, politique, et historique de la partie française de l’île Saint-Domingue*, creole lawyer M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, offered a glimpse into the living quarters and wardrobes of the mulatto woman:

One of these rooms serves as a salon: it is often without other wall coverings than wallpaper; a mirror, a table, a beautiful cabinet with porcelains, pretty painted wicker or rattan chairs, is all the furniture. In the second room are the same things, but in another style; also a bed covered with a beautiful Persian rug, lift four or five feet high, following the usage of the Colony; one or two armoires of the most beautiful mahogany, and a daybed of the same wood, the usage of which is not an insoluble problem…. All the most beautiful products of the Indies, the most precious muslins, kerchiefs, fabrics and linens, take the shape of fashion to embellish the colored sex [i.e. colored women]. Rich laces, jewels of which the multiplicity, more than their type, augment the worth, are employed with profusion; the desire for expensive things is so insatiable that there are a significant number of Mulatresses in Saint-Domingue who could change their entire outfits every day for a year.¹

If there was one member of West Indian society that represented the unique blend of African, European, and American heritage that existed in the eighteenth-century French Caribbean, it was the mulatto woman. As the offspring of a European male and an African female, the mulatto woman embodied slave and free, white and black, rich and poor within her lineage; making her distinctive to the slave society of the sugar islands. Like her genetic make-up, the apartment and wardrobe of the mulatto woman contained the products of several continents; yet they were displayed in a style unique to the West Indies, especially in regards to the bed. The mulatto woman, and by extension, the West Indies as a whole, served as the endpoint for a vast number of products from around Europe, Asia, and Africa. This thesis examines the trade networks which brought the armoires, Persian bedspread, and jewelry into the apartment which Moreau de Saint-Méry described; enlivening as well the trends of consumer goods across West Indian society as a whole.

The desire for consumer goods in the colonies was not confined to mulatto women. Unlike France’s North American possessions, the West Indian islands had a reputation for luxury and decadence fueled by the production of cash crops such as sugar, coffee, and indigo, which created fortunes for those who were able to acquire the necessary land and labor. Thomas Jeffries, a British writer who compiled an account of France’s American colonies, noted that the planters on Martinique had “expensive appetites”, which they fed by forcing their slaves to work both day and night.² Jean-Baptiste Thibaut de Chanvalon, gathering climate data from the Académie Royale, observed similar “ostentation” among the island’s elite, but dismissed its ill effects by

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² Thomas Jeffries, *The natural and civil history of the French dominions in North and South America giving a particular account of the climate, soil, minerals, vegetable, manufactures, trade, commerce and languages, together with the religion, government, genius, character, manners and customs of the Indians and other inhabitants* (London, 1760), 2:119.
arguing that even the most useful tree produces some insipid fruits.\(^3\) Moreau de Saint-Méry traced the colony’s profligate decadence back to the second generation of settlers and yearned nostalgically for the days before the colonists had developed “the art of changing superfluities into needs.”\(^4\) What tastes in both food and clothing defined this Martiniquais and Saint-Domingian quest for luxury? How closely did consumers in the colonies follow metropolitan fashions? Finally, how did these goods fit into the larger networks of production and trade that characterized the Atlantic world?

Cargo lists from major metropolitan ports help to answer these questions and provide a glimpse into the world of consumer culture in late eighteenth-century Caribbean. This thesis examines the consumer goods and foods that metropolitan merchants exported to the islands of Martinique and Saint-Domingue at mid-century, arguing that French ports such as Bordeaux and Marseille served the vital function of tying the islands into a dense web of European and global commerce. These webs are not well covered by a historiography which focuses on transatlantic networks.

It further argues that West Indian elites placed new meanings on material items that were different from the meanings those items possessed in the metropole, creating heavily syncretic culture representing a complicated relationship to France. In regards to food, the free inhabitants of the islands were able to overcome problems of preservation and land usage to recreate the foodways of Europe, thus distinguishing themselves from the enslaved inhabitants whose diets were more proscribed.

**Historiography**

During the 1970s, with Annales historiography at its height, historians examining transatlantic trade, such as Charles Carrière, Paul Butel, and John G. Clark, focused their attention on metropolitan ports, such as Marseille and Bordeaux, and the merchant families they housed.\(^5\) This approach often resulted in mammoth *histoire totale* volumes that thoroughly recreated the physical and governmental environments in which merchants exchanged their goods. They paid particular attention to the mechanics of the transatlantic trade and workings of the communities involved rather than the goods that were being carried. Dale Miquelon’s quantitative analysis of the papers left by Dugard of Rouen, for example, listed the cargos carried on a voyage only as an interesting aside to his discussion of the profit that Dugard made on that cargo. When goods were mentioned they were often bulk commodities of grain or cotton that were more easily considered in terms of production than consumption.\(^6\) This quantitative focus on merchant communities and the transport of bulk goods kept scholarly attention focused on the metropole and its role as a center for those merchant communities.

More recently, however, studies of the far more broadly defined “commerce” (meaning exchange in any form) and consumerism have kept the attention on networks but have shifted it

\(^3\) Jean-Baptiste Thibault de Chanvalon, *Voyage à la Martinique contenant diverses observations sur la physique, l’histoire naturelle, l’agriculture, les mœurs, & les usages de cette isle* (Paris: J.B. Baruche, 1763), 32.

\(^4\) Moreau de St. Méry, *Description Topographique*, 1:7.


away from the metropole. Throughout the early 2000s, exemplifying new trends in postcolonial and transnational history, David Hancock, Kenneth Banks, and Thomas Truxes (to name a few) have explored the pipelines of information and trade goods, which served as facilitators for the transmission of ideas across imperial and continental lines. In contrast with the approach of Clark and Miquelon, this trend engages with the exchanges themselves, rather than the financial or legal structures in which they took place. Hancock, for example, argues that Atlantic trade networks consisted of countless “conversations” which “were coordinating mechanisms whereby transatlantic businessmen determined what was a saleable product, who was a good partner, and what was a satisfactory transaction.”

This historiographical reframing to focus on linkages rather than merchant communities offers the advantage of a wider geographic scope that often spans the entire ocean rather than just metropolitan cities, thus making clear the connections between disparate events which have long been studied in isolation. Truxes’ reexamination of the American Revolution in light of New York’s illicit trade with the French West Indies during the Seven Years War provides a superb example of the advantages inherent in this line of inquiry. This approach also accurately captures the fluidity of the Atlantic world, where territory frequently changed hands and people migrated around the ocean’s rim.

As useful as this focus on trade networks has been, it has also created a decentralized model of the Atlantic. Where the studies of Butel and Carrière focused on the political and financial structures which radiated outward from the metropole; the new models of commercial networks are not beholden to these specific power loci. Neither of the trade routes described by Hancock and Truxes transects the metropole; they instead begin and end on the colonial periphery, creating the impression of the Atlantic as wheel without a hub.

The study of consumption has also reacted against the metropolitan structuralism of Carrière and Butel. In the three decades since Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plum first posited the existence of a late eighteenth century “Consumer Revolution” the study of consumer choices and goods has replaced the Marxist emphasis on production that dominated historical study throughout the mid-twentieth century. The historiography of consumption has explored the relationship between consumption and production, exploded the dichotomy of necessary goods versus luxury goods, and reconstructed the social dynamics of shopping and eating. The most useful aspect of this method of inquiry has been its ability to open the action

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8 Hancock, Oceans of Wine, 156.


of buying and selling beyond purely economic terms. As Jan DeVries acerbically observed; “[t]he economist’s confining terminology of budget constraints, elasticities of demand and marginal utility [has been] superseded by a symbolic and representational vocabulary whereby commodities reveal fantasies, fetishes, masochistic longings, power urges and internalized oppression.”

While not nearly as Freudian as DeVries’ fears, the reading of material objects by historians has profitably revealed previously unseen nuances of political discourse, gender roles, identity performance, and racial constructions among those who bought those objects.

Most recently, scholars of consumption have attempted to place consumers within their Atlantic context and examine them within the networks of trade developed by Hancock and Truxes. Amy Henderson, Ellen Hartigan-O’Conner, and Anne Smart Martin, to name a few, have all examined how consumers in British North America determined what was fashionable and how buyers interacted with the sellers of those goods. This blending of transatlantic networks and consumer choices dealing with the metropole in particular is both new and incomplete, particularly for francophone regions. Scholars of French colonial consumerism, such as Chaela Pastore, who noted that French planters used consumption as a way to reinforce their metropolitan identities, and Robert Duplessis have developed examples of what people in the colonies wore, but less attention has been paid to how those goods got there. No recent works have appeared on French transatlantic networks and the conversations that they represent à la Hancock.

As a result of this gap, this thesis uses information from the French empire to contextualize its primary sources, while relying on British Atlantic historiography to contextualize its arguments.


11 Jan De Vries, “Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy in early modern Europe,” in Consumption and the World of Goods, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 85. DeVries questions the terminology of the “consumer revolution” arguing that: “[t]he term ‘consumer revolution’ should probably be suppressed before frequent repetition secures for it a place in that used-car lot of explanatory vehicles reserved for historical concepts that break down directly after purchase by the passing scholar.” Instead, he posits an “industrious revolution” based on increased household output rather than access to credit. Ibid., 107.


14 Thomas Brennan’s Burgundy to Champagne: The Wine Trade in Early Modern France (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) is an exception, but it only focuses on the trade within France. See also Daniel Roche, Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the “Ancient Regime,” trans. Jean Birrell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Robert Duplessis, “Was There a Consumer Revolution in Eighteenth Century New France?”
Purpose
This study narrows that gap by wedding the metropolitan focus of Butel with the networks of Hancock and the consumerism of Pastore to create a more comprehensive picture of both the trade between France and its colonies and the consumer tastes in the French West Indies. In doing so, it postulates that examining material consumption can be a valuable way to examine the connections between colonies and the metropole as nuanced examples of syncretism, power relationships, and identity performance. It also demonstrates how trade networks in which France was enmeshed provided the goods to satisfy those tastes, and demonstrates that Bordeaux and Marseille’s role as a hub of regional, oceanic, and global trade reintegrates the metropole back to the center of transatlantic studies.

Primary Sources
In order to reach these conclusions, this thesis uses shipping records from the two largest French ports that serviced the West Indies, Marseille and Bordeaux. During the early 1770s, officials in both cities kept biannual ledgers with neatly listed columns of data divided into categories of “comestibles” and “dry merchandise.” These lists are broken down into six month intervals, and those of Marseille (covering the year 1774) are further divided into the cargos of individual ships, while those of Bordeaux (1772-1774) merely list all the goods departing the port during that interval. Similar manifests from the ports of La Rochelle (1767-1769), Le Havre (1767), and Dunkirk (1773) for the late 1760s add chronological and geographical depth to the study. On the whole, the description of goods on the lists can be both remarkably detailed and maddeningly imprecise. For example, specific types of kerchief are delineated (Béarn, cholet, des Indes) in the Bordelaise lists, while silk work is placed under the vague term “Étoffe en soye” in the cargos from Marseille. The lists are not entirely complete, as each one includes a disclaimer enumerating the amount of “diverse merchandise” which the compiler did not have the space to add. These manifests were most likely compiled by government officials within their respective cities; possibly in order to procure more information for the concurrent debate over ending the Exclusif. Summaries of cargo movements to and from the Caribbean exist for multiple ports during the late eighteenth century, but a wide variance of recording styles, focus on bulk commodities, and scattered coverage make most of them less than useful for consumer studies. The lists that this thesis uses are the most detailed available, despite their somewhat scattered chronology and unknown provenance.

Customs documents from individual merchant houses help to fill in those gaps, as they are more detailed and their provenance is more secure. Records from the house of Roux Freres held in the archives of the Chambre de Commerce et Industrie de Marseille compliment the information given in the cargo lists from Marseille. These documents consist of printed receipts recording the formal acceptance of merchandise by the ship’s captain. For each document, the goods in question are listed in detail, down to the level of individual titles for books, and their value in case the cargo was lost or damaged. This detail is helpful in providing the specificities often hidden behind the vague terms that are used in the broader cargo lists. The customs documents do cover a longer period, stretching from the 1750s through the 1790s and thus provide greater chronological coverage than the cargo lists allow.

As useful as these sources are, the lists rarely indicate specific recipients for the cargos. Some goods were intended for certain categories of users, and as a result sometimes bore the label “for negros” or “for women.” Created to document the details of the cargos shipped, both the cargo lists and the Roux documents enumerate the only contents of the ships. By their
nature, they cannot reveal who bought the items once they arrived in Martinique and Saint-Domingue. These sources thus provide information on consumption without bestowing knowledge of the individual consumer. Pastore, however, provides the other side of this coin since she studies the inventory of a single planter, Monsieur Dussolier. Other available sources, such as travelogues and personal accounts, provide specific instances of people eating the stated food or wearing the described clothing. Such documentation, however, is extremely rare. Still, the goods themselves often provide clues to the socioeconomic status of their recipients. Silk stockings, for example, were more likely to have bought by rich planters for their own use than for slaves.\footnote{Although the work of Hartigan O’Connor and Anne Smart Martin have shown that slaves were involved in the marketplace in a myriad of ways, it is still more likely that silk stockings were meant for the \textit{grands blancs}.} The lack of names or socioeconomic standing of the consumers necessitates the use of such broad phrases such as “consumers” or “inhabitants” to describe the recipients of the items on the cargo lists.

Background

Several French ports served the West Indies; most significantly Bordeaux, Marseille, Nantes, La Rochelle, and Le Havre. Bordeaux dominated France’s commercial relationship with its West Indian colonies. In 1784, 48 percent of the ships arriving in Saint-Domingue came from Bordeaux; compared to 19 percent for Marseille, 16 percent for Nantes, 12 percent for Le Havre, and 0.3 percent for La Rochelle.\footnote{Butel, \textit{Négotiants Bordelais}, 33.} Located at the mouth of the Gironde in the southwest of France, Bordeaux enjoyed easy access to grain from Brittany, wine from Aquitaine, and brandy from Armagnac and was well connected to trading centers in Ireland, northern Europe, and the Mediterranean. These connections allowed Bordeaux to provide half of Saint-Domingue’s silks, 87.5 percent of its flour, 71.6 percent of its salted beef, and 92.6 percent of its wines in 1784.\footnote{Ibid., 33.} Bordeaux also served as a hub for trade with New France until the latter’s fall to the British in 1763; sending twenty-one ships to Quebec in 1754.

Connected to Bordeaux by the Canal de Midi, Marseille occupied a strategic position on the Mediterranean coast opposite the mouth of the Rhône. Founded by the Greeks in the seventh century BCE, Marseille possessed a population of 88,500 people in 1764 and was more economically diverse than Bordeaux.\footnote{Carrière, \textit{Négotiants Marseilleis}, 205.} In addition to being home to soap and candle manufacturers, Marseille had the silk center of Lyon and the weavers of Languedoc in its hinterland. Mediterranean trade routes also made it a transshipment point for goods from the Levant, Italy, Spain and the Barbary Coast; to the point that Saint-Domingue received 44 percent of its silk and 62 percent of its oil from Marseille.\footnote{Butel, \textit{Négotiants Bordelais}, 33.}

Nantes, La Rochelle, and Le Havre each served other roles that made them less suited for provisioning the West Indies with consumer goods. Nantes’ position as the center of the French slave trade gave it a unique economic niche among France’s Atlantic ports; however direct trade between that city and the Caribbean declined during the second half of the eighteenth century, decreasing its importance in comparison to Bordeaux and Marseille. La Rochelle, located between Nantes and Bordeaux, had been major Atlantic port during the seventeenth century but was overshadowed by its larger neighbors during the late eighteenth because it lacked riverine connections and had a harbor that was difficult to access. La Rochelle also served as a
secondary port to Bordeaux on the Quebec run (in 1754 it sent eight ships) and only sent thirteen ships to the West Indies in 1768; compared to fifty-nine for Marseille six years later. Le Havre’s location on the Seine gave it close connections to Paris and the North Sea, but also made transatlantic voyages more difficult.

The French Caribbean in the eighteenth century was in a state of military decline and commercial dependence. In addition to the mainland colonies of Louisiana and Cayenne, the French government divided its Caribbean possessions into two administrative units: the Windward Islands (Ils du Vent) controlled from Fort Royale on Martinique and the Leeward Islands (Ils sous le Vent) controlled from Port-au-Prince on Saint-Domingue. Arcing northward from South America, the French Windward Islands at mid-century consisted of Grenada, Saint Vincent, Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Saint-Bartélémy, and half of Saint-Martin.\(^{20}\) This number declined during the next half century as the French lost territories during the Seven Years War and the War of the American Independence until by 1789 only the largest and most heavily populated islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe remained under French control. Plantation agriculture dominated all of the Windward Islands, but was concentrated on Martinique and Guadeloupe, where larger land areas allowed for more cultivation. Lacking an indigenous labor source, planters used imported African slaves to grow sugar, coffee, cacao, tobacco, indigo, and cotton, which they sold to French merchants in exchange for slaves, foodstuffs, and European goods. Guadeloupe and Martinique functioned as hubs for this trade to the rest of the islands, since they were the only islands with enough population and commercial activity to warrant direct transatlantic sailings.

In contrast to this scattered chain, Saint-Domingue was France’s only possession in the Leeward Islands, comprising the western half of Hispaniola. With a land area of around 10,000 miles and a population of 500,000 inhabitants in 1789, Saint-Domingue had become the largest, richest, and most profitable colony in French Caribbean over the course of the eighteenth century. A dramatic increase in sugar production and exportation from 43,152 pounds in 1724 to 192 million pounds on the eve of the Haitian Revolution made Saint-Domingue the world’s largest sugar producer and made France the center of Europe’s largest sugar business.\(^{21}\) In order to support this increase, the colony needed an increasingly greater number of slaves: in the decade between 1720 and 1730 only forty percent of Nantes slavers called at Saint-Domingue, but by 1760, that number had increased to ninety percent.\(^{22}\) Despite this number, the French sugar islands as a whole were chronically short of slaves, since the French slave trading business was not as efficient or widespread as that of the British. Instead, planters procured slaves illegally from nearby British possessions such as Jamaica and Antigua, and through Dutch intermediaries in St. Eustatius and Curaçao.

The commercial framework which tied the French colonies to the metropole was evolving during the late eighteenth century as the dynamics of supply and demand inexorably undermined France’s mercantilist regulations, known as the Exclusif. The Exclusif, as defined in the letters patent of 1717 and 1727, barred foreign merchants from trading within the French

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\(^{20}\) Not included on this list are Marie-Galante, La Désirade, and the Îles des Saintes, which were typically considered part of Guadeloupe.


empire (foreign vessels were not allowed to approach within a league of Martinique) and required colonial merchants to carry their goods on French ships in order to benefit metropolitan merchants and producers. Metropolitan lawmakers exempted Spanish merchants from this rule, since they paid for their purchases with hard currency rather than in kind, leading to close commercial connections between French islands and the Spanish mainland. A British description of France’s American possessions, for example, noted that only a quarter of the goods that entered Saint-Domingue’s harbors actually stayed there, the rest were sold to Spanish colonies.23 Because French merchants were unable to provide enough slaves, animals, and foodstuffs to sustain the colonies, planters turned to British North America and Spanish South America for provisions; they imported foodstuffs from New York, slaves from Jamaica, and animals from Venezuela.24 In return, merchants in the islands regularly transshipped French goods, in addition to West Indian products, as payment for smuggled staples. A 1773 report by the Guadeloupe chamber of commerce, for example, claimed that 48% of the sugar grown on the island left through illicit means.25

Warfare, most notably the Seven Years War, did not end this less-than-legal exchange between the French and the British but instead further revealed the islands’ fundamental dependence on inter-imperial trade; a fact that the French government acknowledged in 1763 by opening the ports of Môle Saint-Nicolas on Saint-Domingue, Castries on Saint Lucia, and Point-à-Pitre on Guadeloupe to a carefully specified list of British products. This “free port” or “open port” system represented an attempt to control inter-imperial trade (British flour, fabric linen, and furniture were still excluded), by sanctioning it in relatively remote locations. A government summary of Martinique’s commerce for the year 1772 stated that island merchants exported wine, brandy, soap, cordage, syrup, and “European merchandise” including parasols, oil, liqueurs, jackets for negros, and brandied fruit to Britain’s North American colonies through Castries on St. Lucia in exchange for salted meat and horses.26 This era of slow de-mercantilization ended in 1784, when the French government opened such larger entrepôts as Port-au-Prince and Cap Français on Saint Domingue to foreign trade, although scholars still debate how truly “open” this new system was.27

This study focuses on two islands within this context: Martinique and Saint-Domingue. Although differing in size, both islands were commercial hubs for their region and sites of government. In 1773, Martinique had a population of 86,992 inhabitants of whom 14,048 were whites or free blacks living on the 381 square mile island.28 Saint-Domingue had over thirty times the land area and possessed a population of 500,108 inhabitants in 1789; of whom only one

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23 Jeffries, Natural and Civil History, 2:69.
24 For more thorough studies of these trades, see Kenneth Banks “Official Duplicity”; Wim Klooster, “Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600-1800,” in Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents 1500-1830, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault, 141-180 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009); and David Truxes’ Defying Empire.
25 Wim Klooster, Inter-imperial smuggling, 172.
26 État général du commerce de la Martinique pour 1772, Archives Nationales d’Outre Mer (ANOM) COL 8B 18 N°9.
tenth were free. Yet Martinique’s closer geographical position to France (4350 miles as opposed to over 4800) and proximity to other local islands increased its commercial standing relative to Saint-Domingue. As the two most important islands within the French Caribbean, they maintained the closest connections to metropolitan ports. During the year 1774, for example, Marseille received forty ships from Saint-Domingue and thirty from Martinique; compared to only nine from Guadeloupe and two from Guyenne. Together, both islands dominated France’s trade in West Indian cash crops. In 1755, Bordeaux imported ninety-two percent of its sucre blanc and sixty-one percent of its coffee from Martinique, while receiving ninety-two percent of its sucre brut and ninety-three percent of its indigo from Saint-Domingue. In order to move so much cargo, both islands had major port cities, Saint Pierre on Martinique and Cap Français on Saint-Domingue, which served as endpoints for transatlantic networks and hubs for inter-island trade. Each island also served as a seat of government, since Fort Royale and Port-au-Prince hosted the local governor and intendant for their respective regions.

The span of the cargo lists through the 1760s and 1770s provide a window into the commercial relationship between France and its colonies at a time when that relationship was in transition. As the French government opened the islands to foreign trade, consumers had more opportunities to interact with English, Dutch, and Spanish goods. Yet consumer’s prior reliance on metropolitan goods and Paris’ role as the center of fashion trends for both Europe and North America would have provided powerful counterweights to the influx foreign goods. Studying the goods that the French continued to supply to their West Indian colonies will help to make clear the bonds, both stylistic and economic that connected consumers in the Caribbean with suppliers in the metropole.

What follows is a close study of the items exported to the French West Indies during the mid-eighteenth century. Given the range of items shipped, the analyses of various types of goods have been divided into broad categories of “dry merchandise” and foodstuffs. Chapter two examines the consumer items listed under the category “dry merchandise”, such as furniture and fabrics. Analysis of the shipments and the way that colonial merchants perceived those objects upon their arrival displays a complex web of syncretic tendencies that undermined the island’s power structures and efforts to emulate the fashions of France. Equally, it notes that Marseille merchants connected the West Indies to a network of Mediterranean and Asian products that have been understudied by scholars. Chapter three narrows the focus to the “comestibles” on the cargo lists from Bordeaux and Marseille and compares the food listed there to the contemporary French diet. In contrast to the intricacies of meaning regarding material goods, the West Indian diet attempted to copy that of the metropole. The resulting foodways were, however, highly stratified with slaves eating cod and manioc while the free inhabitants enjoyed a wide variety of French delicacies. Metropolitan merchants gathered those delicacies

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31 Carrière, *Négoitants Marseillais*, 1053.


33 The situation was slightly more complicated on Martinique, where the governor resided at Fort Royale and the intendant at St. Pierre.
from around Europe through networks extending from the Baltic to the Levant, further connecting the West Indies into the web of European regional trade. Having analyzed in detail the shipments, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the contributions of the cargo lists to current scholarship and suggests new directions for future study.
Chapter 2: Baubles of France

In 1760, British writer Thomas Jeffries published a description of the French possessions in the Americas so that those members of the British public who were not well acquainted with geography could follow the campaigns of the ongoing Seven Year’s War. Stitched together from accounts of other travelers, his *Natural and civil history of the French dominions in North and South America* took the reader on a grand tour of Canada, Louisiana, and the West Indian sugar islands. Touching on Martinique, Jeffries stated that the planters there had “expensive appetites”, importing

all sorts of Birmingham and Sheffield wares, of which there are many
manufactories in France, with powder and ball, every implement necessary to the
plantation of land; hats, china, earthenware, linen and woollen cloth, rich laces,
cambricks, muslin and embroidery, ready-made cloathes of all prices, gold and
silver stuffs, utensils of the same metals, clocks and watches, well set jewels, all
sorts of ornamental furniture, and every thing that can flatter the pride and vanity
of the weaker sex.  

Jeffries’ list depicts a society that gloried in display and ostentation. Many of the items he lists, plantation implements excluded, are luxury goods rather than staples. In addition to the items that Jeffries enumerates, what consumer tastes defined Martiniquais and Saint-Domingian culture? How closely did those in the colonies follow metropolitan fashions? How did these goods fit into the larger networks of production and trade that characterized the Atlantic world?

Furniture

The discussion of furniture in the French West Indies has revolved primarily around the creation of “port furniture” in France’s Atlantic cities, the rise of West Indian mahogany as a construction material, and how this industry illuminated the commercial and stylistic connections between the colony and the metropole. The presence of mahogany in particular has been used to track societal changes within the colonies; for example, Chaela Pastore argues that the use of mahogany by mixed-race women devalued luxury goods as an indicator of social status. This focus on mahogany to analyze trans-Atlantic trade and definitions of luxury glosses over the role of other materials, such as marble and straw, and does not take into account the broader variety of furnishings imported to the islands.

In discussing the inventory of Monsieur Dussolier, Pastore found that he decorated according to metropolitan fashions. As evidence, she cites that he possessed “four wardrobes; forty chairs, including wing chairs, straw-seated chairs, and dining chairs with Moroccan leather seats; fifteen tables ranging from dining tables to bedside tables to toilet tables to card tables; three beds; a buffet; a couch; fifteen engravings; five candlesticks; four mirrors; three tapestries; and a clock”. The cargo lists and customs documents further support this conclusion, since many of the items from Dussolier’s inventory appear on the lists. At the same time they provide

a glimpse into both how those items were transported and how they fit into metropolitan furniture making trends.

The method by which furniture was transported to the West Indies provides a clue as to the extent of its circulation. Chairs and tables, for example, were often shipped in bulk, as were the thirty-three dozen caned chairs (chaise de paille) listed on board the Felicité for Martinique. Bulk shipment implies that they were meant for retail. Sets of furniture could also be shipped ensemble, as indicated by a particularly large group consisting of “four couches (canapés), seven armchairs (fauteuils garnis), four marble-topped wall and corner tables (demi & encoignure en marbre), and four marble-topped bedside tables (tables de nuit en marbre)” collectively valued at one hundred and eighty-five livres and placed on the same customs form. While it is impossible to tell whether these high end items were destined for the same house, their being listed together does at the very least imply a common retailer. Other collections of furniture, however, were small enough to indicate a single consumer, such as the “four couches and an ottoman” shipped to St. Pierre at the specific cost of “two hundred and forty French silver livres.” Nor was all furniture shipped whole. Dussolier’s inventory lists “Moroccan leather seats” but they are not found on any of the lists or customs documents. Bales of Moroccan leather (peaux Maroquin) were carried on most of the ships leaving Marseille for Martinique and chair wheels (roué de chaises) were exported from Dunkirk, reinforcing the value of skilled artisans within the West Indian community who would be needed to build the chairs on arrival.

Aside from the means of transportation, the way the furniture was recorded provides a window into how West Indian consumers organized their domestic spaces. Chairs (chaises) and armchairs (fauteuils), for example, were often counted together but labeled separately, as with the “38 and a half dozen chairs and armchairs” listed from Le Havre in 1767. This differentiation reflected an expectation of how each type of seat would be used, with the chairs creating a formal setting while armchairs encouraged relaxation. This specialization of furniture was part of an increase in furniture production that ran through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and followed a divisioning of domestic space that would reach its peak in the nineteenth. That the individuals recording the cargo lists (who were most likely not furniture connoisseurs themselves) understood this system is clear from the wide variety of folding tables (tables pliantes), card tables (tables à jouer), corner tables (encoigures), and toilets found in the lists; to the extent that the word table occurs alone only with cargos departing Dunkirk. The inclusion of couches (canapé) and ottomans in the lists from Marseille (though only couches are listed aboard the Amité for the entire year of 1774) embody a trend of informality that was sweeping across European décor. Beginning in the late seventeenth century and accelerating through the eighteenth, the rigidity of hierarchical seating patterns epitomized by Versailles were giving way to the relaxed conversation circles of the Paris salons, a change that was reflected in the creation of newer, more comfortable forms of seating, such as the couch and the ottoman.

This loosening of seating hierarchies went hand in hand with new moral standards that changed the way in which those pieces of furniture were seen on both sides of the Atlantic. In

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38 Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie Marseille Provence (CCIMP), L09/1102, Aug 8, 1787.
39 CCIMP, L09/1102, 10 May, 1787.
41 Harvre list.
Choderlos de Laclos’ *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, for example, the Viscomte de Valmont chooses an ottoman as the site for his sexual conquest of the Présidente de Tourvel.\(^{44}\) In the boudoir of a sexually-loose, mulatto woman Moreau de St. Méry described a mahogany daybed; “the usage of which,” he remarked darkly, “is not an insoluble problem.”\(^{45}\) The fact that writers on both sides of the Atlantic connected similar items of furniture to sex demonstrates the extent to which not only furniture, but also societal interpretations of furniture were becoming synchronized across the Atlantic.

In addition to recording furniture by use, the lists also occasionally specified the material from which it was constructed. Straw-seated chairs (*chaise de paille* and *fauteuils de paille*) must have been particularly popular. They appear on half of the Bordeaux lists and two ships from Marseille, *La Felicié* and *Le Sauveur*, each carried over three hundred to Martinique and Saint-Domingue respectively. Oddly, mahogany is never mentioned as a material in any of the cargo lists (a pinewood armoire, however, is listed from Bordeaux) despite its popularity in the Atlantic ports, distinctive place in elite houses, and ubiquity in the West Indian descriptions of furniture noted by Pastore and Dobie. Instead, the customs documents from Marseille mention marble as the favored construction material; a difference in recording demonstrated by the marble-topped tables shipped by Roux Frères. While this focus on marble instead of mahogany could be explained by a reduced usage of West Indian woods in southern France as compared to the ports of Western France (a topic that has yet to be studied) it more likely points to a difference in valuation between merchants in Europe and the West Indies. Marseille’s merchants described the marble of their furniture because it was a commodity with which they were familiar; the city held a key position in the Italian marble trade. Similarly, West Indian merchants remarked upon the wood as a result of their familiarity with the mahogany trade.

Overall, furniture makes up only a small portion of the items on the cargo lists. Yet the close correspondence of the lists with Dussolier’s inventory demonstrates that the items on the cargo lists also appeared in Martiniquais and Saint-Dominguan houses. The cargo lists support Pastore’s conclusion that West Indian planters attempted to copy metropolitan fashions, such as more comfortable designs for specialized uses. The lack of mahogany on the lists, particularly from Bordeaux and La Rochelle where the use of mahogany was more common, questions her conclusions on its ubiquity in West Indian furniture. Finally, the importation of marble-topped furniture from Marseille complicates the purely Atlantic trade patterns of West Indian wood and metropolitan furniture that have been sketched by scholars thus far.

**Fashion**

Where furniture represented only a small proportion of the items on the cargo lists, fashion items occur quite often. Among West Indian merchants, cloth was more ubiquitous than food. During the year 1788, fabrics of all types represented 22.4% of the value of Bordelais exports to the West Indies, whereas flour and wine made up 16.2% and 17.1% respectively.\(^{46}\) On the cargo lists, much of this fabric was hidden under generic terms such as “toile,” “drap,” or “étoffe.” The French word “toile”, meaning “fabric” occurs in a variety of forms; demonstrating extent to which the word was used and the varieties of goods available to consumers. Cotton fabric (*toile de cotton*), oilskins (*toile cireé*), and white fabric (*toile blanche*) all include the

\(^{45}\) Moreau de St. Méry, *Description Topographique*, 92.  
\(^{46}\) Butel, *Les Négociants Bordelais*, 35.
word; as do toile de Londrine, toile de Bretagne, toile de Combourg, toile de St. Quentin, toile Laval, toile Cholette, toile de Dinan, toile de Rouen, toile á voile, toile de Mortagne, toile St. George, toile Royalle, toile á robe, toile Revenant, toile rayée, toiles peintures, toile orange, toile de matelot, grosse toile, toile gris, toile fougène, toile de fil, toile d’embalage, toile de chanvre, toile de chambre, and toile de Brin. Most of these specialized forms of fabric came through the northern port of Le Havre, which had access to Flanders and Holland, active textile regions since the late Middle Ages.

Although oddly unmentioned by Jeffries’ list of Martiniquais imports, the most frequently imported fabric was silk. The production of silk in Lyon, where it employed between one-quarter and two-fifths of the city’s population, was one of the most profitable industries in France; where by 1789, 38% of the fabric mentioned in the wardrobes of the male Parisian nobility was silk. With its location down river from Lyon, Marseille was perfectly situated to take advantage of this trade. In 1787 Marseille exported 450,940 livres tournois of silk stockings to West Indian consumers in comparison to Bordelaise exports of 336,393 livres tournois. Indeed, references to silk pepper the manifests of Marseille’s outbound ships, not merely as material (éttoffe en soye), but also ribbons (rubans de soye), stockings (bas de soyes), laces (dentelles de soye), culottes (culottes de soye), vests (vestes de soye), and as silk work in general (ouvrages de soye). Pastore notes that Dussolier’s wardrobes contained multiple items of silk, specifically thirty five pairs of silk stockings, a black silk suit, and five pairs of black silk breaches. Silk had clearly become woven into the lives of the wealthy planters by the 1780s. Desire for silk was not limited to the grands blancs of the planter elite, however, as the eighteenth century saw an expansion of silk items into all classes of society on both sides of the Atlantic. In fact, in a study of probate inventories in 1770s Montreal, Robert DuPlessis notes that although silk made up only four to five percent of the fabric listed in wardrobes, half of the artisans and farmers owned an item of silk, even down to the poorer members of society. This widespread use of silk is unlikely to be a uniquely French phenomenon, but it does indicate that silk had lost its luster as a status symbol.

The Lyonnais silk industry has been used as an example of David Hancock’s “conversations” on a smaller and tighter scale. Producers of patterned silk in Lyon paid close attention to the fashions trending in Paris and Versailles while driving those trends by introducing new designs every six months. Creating products with a limited lifespan (the previous season’s designs became outdated the moment the new styles were released) forced consumers to constantly buy new clothes or risk falling behind the trends. This ability to create and harness consumer demand through skillful dialogue with a target audience drove early developments in capitalism and eventually made France the center of the modern fashion industry. These connections, however, could not be maintained across the Atlantic in the same manner.

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47 Roche, Culture of Clothing, 136.
50 DuPlessis, “Cloth and the emergence of the Atlantic economy,” 81.
way and West Indian consumers were always several steps behind Parisian fashions; to the point that retailers in Paris considered the Americas to be a convenient dumping ground for outdated styles.\footnote{Miller, “Paris-Lyon-Paris,” 162.}

While the transportation of silk material reveals patterns in consumption; the records of cotton reveal patterns in production. During the eighteenth century, clothing styles in Europe became less constrictive and heavier fabrics, such as broadcloths and woolens, slowly gave way to lighter cottons and silks; by 1789 a quarter of the male Parisian nobleman’s wardrobe consisted of cotton garments.\footnote{See Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello, “East and West, Textiles and Fashion in early Modern Europe,” Journal of Social History, (summer 2008), 887-916; Statistic from Roche, Culture of Clothing, 136.} This change was not confined to Europe; DuPlessis notes such a jump in the amount of cotton owned by Montreal inhabitants that he declares a “cotton revolution” occurred during the eighteenth century instead of a “consumer revolution.”\footnote{Robert DuPlessis, “Was there a Consumer Revolution in Eighteenth Century New France?”}  This demand for cotton was matched by the cultivation of the plant as a Caribbean crop, with production in Saint-Domingue doubling from one million pounds to two million between 1768 and 1788. Despite being a center of cotton cultivation, the West Indies did not process the cotton but instead shipped it directly to France or to England via Jamaica.\footnote{McClellan, Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime, 67.} Unlike silk production, which was tightly controlled by Lyon, the production of cotton was spread thinly throughout the French countryside; often in rural areas.\footnote{Sewell, “Empire of Fashion,” 108.} The cargo lists do not record large amounts of cotton material returning to the colonies, as cotton fabric (*toile du cotton*) and cotton thread (*fil du cotton*) hardly appear at all.\footnote{Toile de cotton occurs on two ships from Marseille and once on the lists from Harvre, while cotton is only mentioned once coming from Bordeaux. A bale of siamoise en cotton was also sent from La Rochelle to Martinique.}

Instead, finished cotton products, such as stockings and printed Asian fabrics, are listed far more often. Practically every ship departing Marseille had cotton stockings (*bas de cotton*) on board, while *indienne*, *siamoise*, Persian fabric (*Perse*) and painted fabric (*toiles peintures*) are listed in varying quantities (but never as much as silk). The appearance of Asian fabrics follows a European obsession with Asian patterns and styles that reached its peak during the eighteenth century. Arriving in Europe in increasing numbers since the voyages of Vasco de Gama in the fifteenth century, printed Indian textiles such as calico had long been imported through both the Levant and direct trade with India. Colbert, in an effort to develop France’s production of *indienne*, even encouraged the development of cotton dying in Marseille and Languedoc lead by Armenian specialists.\footnote{Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime (New York: Berg, 2008), 226.} However, from his death in the 1680s until 1759 the French government outlawed the import and manufacture of printed cottons within its territory in order to protect the French wool, silk, and linen trades.\footnote{Lemire and Riello, East & West, 898.} In Britain, similar measures resulted in large amounts of Indian textiles flooding into their North American colonies and a similar dynamic could explain their presence on the cargo lists. Despite the ban, underground cotton printing flourished, particularly along the Franco-Swiss border, where one “proto-factory” near
Neuchâtel employed 300 workers. By 1789, *Siamoise*, a linen-cotton mixture usually patterned in an East Asian style (hence the Siamese name), and *Indienne*, a Turkish printed cotton had become quite common in Europe. Both were so widely available that women shopkeepers possessed *Siamoise* and *Indienne* camisoles, and even servants were wearing Persian styled fabrics (*Perse*). By the 1760s, it was so cheap that Louisiana masters dressed their slaves in it, although the amounts specified on the cargo lists make this unlikely to have happened in the West Indies. Instead, this fabric was most likely bound for free-women of color of whom Moreau de Saint Méry remarked: “[t]he greatest token of love that one can give a negress is to take her to a merchant to choose the superb Indian and Persian muslins from which she makes her skirts.” As a raw material that was produced in the colonies, patterned in France and consumed by colonists as a finished product, cotton forms a textbook example of mercantilist principles in action. The predominance of Asian patterning among the cotton imports serves as a reminder of both the fad in *chinoiserie* sweeping Europe and France’s role in global trade.

In addition to colorful fabrics for garments, West Indian consumers also had a taste for colorful kerchiefs. France’s Atlantic ports were the centers of a lively kerchief trade as indicated by dazzling variety of *mouchoirs* (French for “kerchief”) recorded throughout the latter half of 1773. *Mouchoirs de Béarns, mouchoirs de Cholet*, *mouchoirs tout fil, mouchoir toile de robe* and *mouchoirs des Indes* all appear at that time, in addition to several references of the more generic *mouchoir* found in the lists of Marseille, Bordeaux, Harvre, and La Rochelle. In the metropole, kerchiefs were used to cover one’s nose as dictated by developing standards of hygiene, but in the West Indies, colored kerchiefs took on racial and sexual meanings. In Baron de Wimpffen’s description of mixed-race women at a dance party, he observed that: “[t]heir favorite coiffure is an India handkerchief, which is bound round the head: the advantages they derive from this simple ornament are inconceivable; they are the envy and despair of the white ladies, who aspire to imitate them, and who do not see that it is impossible for strong and glaring colors, calculated to animate the monotonous and livid hue of the mulatto, to harmonize with the alabaster and the roses of Europe!”

In the West Indies, the usage of colorful kerchiefs by mixed-race women as head gear was one of the first sights that travelers noticed, and writers roundly criticized white women’s attempts to adopt it. By the time of Napoleon, however, it had become so fashionable among the *grands blancs* that the wife of General Victoire-Immanuel LeClerc, Napoleon’s sister Pauline, adopted it when she accompanied him as he set off to put down the Haitian rebellion. The mixture of French fabrics, such as *Cholet* and *Béarns*, with imported Indian cotton is another reminder of France’s role as both a producer of goods and a hub of global trade between the

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60 Ibid., 897.
61 Roche, *Culture of Clothing*, 145.
62 DuPlessis, “Cloth and the Emergence of the Atlantic Economy,” 80.
64 Roche notes an increase in the percentages of kerchiefs as part of the overall wardrobe from 0.39% in the late seventeenth century to 0.57% in the late eighteenth. *Culture of Clothing*, 177.
65 Baron de Wimpffen, *A Voyage to Saint Domingo*, 114.
66 Pastore, “Consumer Choices,” 82-84. Since Napoleon’s wife Josephine was originally from Martinique, it would be interesting to examine the dynamic between West Indian fashions and those at Napoleon’s court.
American west and the Asian east. Furthermore, the fact that the kerchiefs had differing roles on opposite sides of the Atlantic illustrates the way in which objects changed their meaning depending on the colonial context.

Not everyone on the islands adopted syncretic headware, as indicated by the plethora of metropolitan hats sprinkling the cargo lists. Every city from which lists are extant exported hats to the West Indies and every ship departing Marseille had at least one case of them onboard. Most of these references merely utilize the generic term “hats” (chapeaux), although more detailed descriptions do occasionally occur. Most fascinating are the references to beaver hats (chapeaux de castor) and knock-off versions made with rabbit fur (chapeaux demi-castor) which came through the northern port of Le Havre in 1769. The acquisition of beaver fur for hats had been a driving force behind the French settlement of North America. Their appearance on the lists after New France fell to the British in 1763 and New Orleans was given to the Spanish in 1762 suggests the existence of an inter-imperial trade for this long-coveted item. Equally interesting is the reference on a Bordeaux list of 1773 to ostrich plumes as hat decoration (Plumets Blanc pour Chapeaux), indicating that French fashion drew from African wildlife in addition to Indian fabrics and North American mammals. Finally, that the wearing of wigs (perruques à cheveaux) in the Caribbean heat had not yet died out (although it must have been wearing rather thin) is indicated by their presence only once aboard the St. Simon from Marseille in 1774.

The head was not the only part of the body that a West Indian consumer adorned with items fabricated in the metropole, as colonial merchants also imported shoes and stockings. Stockings form a constant stream connecting Old World production to New World consumption. Silk stockings (bas de soyes), cotton stockings (bas de coton), knitted stockings (bas de fil), tricot stockings (bas de tricot) and wool stockings (bas de laine) all appear on the lists. Threaded stocking were particularly popular, but the quantity of cotton and silk was also high. The significant number of references to stockings mentioned on their way to the West Indies is not surprising considering that the average Parisian woman owned between six and twelve pairs and the average man between six and ten pairs, of which a third would have been silk even among the servants. Shoes (souliers) also dapple the lists of every city except Dunkirk; Martinique and Saint-Domingue each received over 30,000 pairs from Marseille during the year 1774 alone. In contemporary Paris every wardrobe contained at least one pair of shoes making their proliferation on the cargo lists well in line with metropolitan trends. A Roux Freres customs slip lists a case containing eighty-seven pairs of shoes worth 301 livres to be delivered “to the address of monsieur Raymond Rosier, negotiant at Saint Pierre.” The eighty-seven shoes within the case were broken down into sixty-two pairs of escarpins for men (a heeled shoe with a simple sole), twenty-four pairs of Moroccan shoes for women, and four pairs of calmande (a wool fabric with the consistency of satin), indicating that consumers on Martinique had variety of choice in footwear. None of the pairs was valued at more than 4 livres, a price consistent with middle- to low-end shoes in contemporary Paris.

Although appearing in far fewer quantities than shoes, hats, or stockings, shirts also crossed the Atlantic. Shirts (chemises) were a staple of European wardrobe from the fifteenth

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67 Roche, Culture of Clothing, 168, 177.
68 Ibid., 144.
69 CCIMP, 14 April 1778.
70 A new pair of shoes in Paris could cost between three and ten livres. Roche, Culture of Clothing, 144.
through the nineteenth centuries, and they occasionally crop up in lists from Marseille and Bordeaux. They are often delineated by usage, such as the 1,609 “shirts for men” (chemises pour hommes) shipped from Bordeaux to Saint Domingue during the second six months of 1772, or quality, such as the three cases of fine shirts (chemises fines) sent to Martinique on board La Félicité. The constant references to shoes, hats, and stockings as well as the occasional shirt indicate that the inhabitants of France’s West Indian colonies relied heavily on the metropole not just for an awareness of current fashions, but also for the objects themselves. Without French artisans to fabricate the shirts or the merchants to deliver the shoes, the populations of Martinique and Saint Domingue would have been literally shirtless and shoeless.

Less essential items, while not cited as frequently as hats or stockings, also appear on the lists. Parasols in silk and other fabrics were still a major export from both Marseille and Bordeaux, and it is not surprising that both cities tapped into the appeal of this item in the sun-drenched Caribbean. Parasols were also transshipped to British North America through Castries in exchange for horses and salted meat. Fans (éventail), in contrast, are only mentioned twice and the cliched silk purses (bourses en soye) once coming from Marseille. Jewelry (Bijouterie) appears on just two ships departing Marseille in 1774, but had a place on every list from Bordeaux during the same time. Jewelry in the eighteenth century served the dual purposes of wealth display and investment since it was easily portable. It may have had special appeal in the islands; making such a heavily transient and appearance-conscious society a valuable market for metropolitan jewelers.

In addition to the trends in lighter fabrics and headware, smaller stylistic innovations were making their way from the metropole to the colonies. Umbrellas, for example, were only slowly being accepted by mainstream European society, yet a case of parapluie was listed onboard the Heureuse Mère from Marseille in 1774. Men’s jackets (redingotes) were popular in France, to the point that they were listed in 45 percent of Parisian male wardrobes and were often found in female possession as well. Five ships from Marseille carried this new fashion article and it is mentioned twice on the lists from Bordeaux, indicating again that West Indian consumers followed the ebbs and flows of metropolitan fashion.

Although the compilers of the cargo lists did not record who the expected recipients were for the vast majority of the cargos, they did make an exception for one social group: slaves. The Code Noir of 1685 stipulated that masters provide their slaves with at least two sets of clothing, and “clothes for negroes” (habillements pour nègres), “coats for negroes” (cazaques pour nègres), “camisoles for negroes” (gilet pour nègres), and “culottes for negroes” all appear on the lists from Marseille. At first glance, the setting apart of clothing for slaves appears to be a Foucaultian expression of power on the part of masters. By forcing their slaves to wear the same or similar clothes, the masters encoded them with a sense of ownership. Yet, as Trevor Burnard has demonstrated, the power dynamics between slaves and masters were rarely that of straight forward dominance, and instead devolved into a far more intricate series of negotiations. Clothing slaves in generic uniforms may have enforced their sense of being owned and made it easier to separate slaves from free people of color, but it also provided them with a sense of shared community and forced masters to police the new sartorial requirements. Recent

71 ANOM, COL 88 18 N°9.
72 Ibid., 139.
consumption literature has also begun to focus on these “involuntary consumers,” finding that they actually had more choice available to them than would seem at first glance. Servants, for example, were able buy clothes using their employer’s credit and masters often sent slaves to shops in their place.\footnote{John Styles, “Involuntary Consumers? Consumers and their Clothes in Eighteenth-Century England.” Textile History 33 no. 1, 9-21 (2002); Hartigan O’Connor, The Ties that Buy, 173-174.} This negotiation of power and expansion of agency demonstrates the complication that existed behind the supposedly straightforward structures of West Indian society; complexities of which the compiler of the cargo lists would have been unaware.

In regards to clothing and their accessories, Michael Sonenscher and William Sewell Jr. have argued that the demand for luxury items gave the French an “empire of fashion”;\footnote{Carrière, Négotiants Marseillais, 211-212.} thus providing them with an economic edge. Famously, Timothy Breen has argued that British colonists expressed their connections toward the metropole by alternately desiring and rejecting British goods. In the West Indies the situation was far more complicated. French goods, such as kerciefs and daybeds, did not always represent the metropole in white colonial minds, but instead came to represent African sexual allure. Furthermore, in copying the styles of mixed-race women, grands blancs rejected France’s “empire of fashion” without embedding the action with overt rejections of France’s political and military authority à la Breen.

**Miscellaneous Indoor**

In addition to articles that furnished the house and adorned its occupant, other items of both practicality and ostentation speak to the images of refinement that West Indian elites attempted to create for themselves. Imported consumer goods in this category range from beauty supplies, through books, to decorative *objets d’art* and modes of transportation.

In addition to fashion trends, France set the standard for hygiene among its colonists. The appearance of perfume (listed as both *odeur* and *parfumerie*), powdered ointments (*poudre à poudre* and *poudre et pomade*), and hair powder (*poudre à cheveux*) serves as a reminder that the French were already leaders in the cosmetics industry dating back to the reign of Louis XIV. A case of lavender water (*eau de lavande*) sent from Bordeaux to Saint-Domingue in 1772 drives home the conclusion that West Indian elites used smell in addition to visual display to underscore their wealth and sophistication. Oddly, hairbrushes (*Bousses à cheveux*), pins (*épangles*), and needles (*eugilles*) each only appear once on the lists, although these items could have been shipped at a higher rate, hidden in the “diverse merchandise” entry at the end of each list.

More importantly, soap (*savon* and *savonnetes*) was exported heavily from both Bordeaux and Marseille.\footnote{Intriguingly, both soap and candles are listed with comestibles on the Marseille lists, but with dry goods on the Bordeaux lists. Such a distinction may cover a more significant difference in the way these goods were perceived within those cities, or it could just be a difference in recording practices.} Soap was a substantial industry in eighteenth-century Marseille. By the 1780s, thirty-two *fabricants de savon* were active in the city; exporting 700,000 quintals of soap per year valued at 30 million *livres*.\footnote{Carrièr, Négotiants Marseillais, 211-212.} Fifty-six of the fifty-nine ships departing Marseille contained soap and it appears on the Bordeaux lists as well, bespeaking a desire for cleanliness among the inhabitants of the French sugar islands. Standards of hygiene were becoming more defined and widespread in the eighteenth-century Atlantic, as a new language of refinement and gentility arose in British North America and the European aristocracy established new expectations of cleanliness. Among the French nobility, the bath had become a critical part of the morning.
toilette and was performed in a luxurious cabinet de bain. Bathing was slow to spread into the countryside and across the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{77} In Britain’s North American colonies, for example, soap was not used to wash the body but rather for linen and clothing. This method followed a seventeenth-century theory of bodily sanitation that wearing clean linen rather than bathing was the proper way to stay healthy.\textsuperscript{78} Thus, the soap referred to in the cargo lists would have been used for washing clothes rather than bodies while representing the increasing refinement of France’s West Indian colonies.

In addition to relying on France for their hygienic needs, the inhabitants of Martinique and Saint-Domingue relied on the metropole for illumination as well. Candles (Bougies, chandelles, chandelles de suif) are mentioned with equal frequency as soap, evidence of an industry in Marseille that by the end of the eighteenth century was exporting over 1.5 million livres worth of candles a year to the West Indies.\textsuperscript{79} The seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries saw an expansion in both the means and methods of illumination, with the inauguration of street lighting in Paris and new glass-making techniques leading to larger windows and mirrors. This expansive role of light permeated private homes as well, where a study of 3,000 seventeenth- and eighteenth-century inventories counted 8,000 lighting apparatuses, of which 63 percent were candlesticks.\textsuperscript{80} West Indian consumers also used candles to illuminate their homes after nightfall, although they encased them in glass in order to keep out tropical bugs.\textsuperscript{81} Most importantly, light held extremely important symbolic roles in early modern France with the church (“I am the light of the world”), the monarchy (the “Sun King”), and intellectuals (the “Enlightenment”) each connoting its metaphorical power. Metropolitan administrators often specified that celebrations of major political events, such as royal births or peace treaties, were to be marked by gunfire, bonfires, and illuminations. That France’s West Indian colonies had to rely so heavily on the metropole for their source of light further illuminates their position of dependence within the economic and political structure of French society.

While less frequently shipped than fashion items, books (livres, livres imprimé) appear on the lists for every city except La Rochelle, and are occasionally grouped with other literary objects, such as quills or paper. In the Roux documents, a 1752 shipment signed for by the captain of La Marie included “four volumes of La Decouverte des Indes and one volume of La Grammaire Portuguese et Francaise” destined for official use of the governor of Martinique.\textsuperscript{82} The intellectual sophistication of West Indian society was a theme in period descriptions of the islands. Jeffries noted that books sold well in Martinique, and Moreau de St. Méry’s 1797 description of Saint-Domingue contains sections on both colonial newspapers and the publication of an almanac in the 1760s.\textsuperscript{83} Several colonists on Saint-Domingue had libraries of over three hundred volumes. Works of history, literature, jurisprudence, science, and medicine made such collections the equivalent their metropolitan contemporaries.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{78} Kathleen M. Brown, \textit{Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 132.
\textsuperscript{79} Carrière, \textit{Négotiants Marseillais}, 212.
\textsuperscript{80} Roche, \textit{Everyday Things}, 123.
\textsuperscript{81} Baron de Wimpffen, \textit{Voyage to Saint Domingo}, 102.
\textsuperscript{82} CCIMP, L09/1102, 1 Aug 1752.
\textsuperscript{83} Moreau de St. Méry, \textit{Description topographique}, 531.
\textsuperscript{84} McClellan, \textit{Colonialism and Science}, 101-102.
Marseille also oversaw the movement of time pieces to the West Indies; clockwork (horlogerie) was listed on several ships during the 1760s and 1770s. Maps (cartes geographique) appear three times on ships departing Marseille for Saint-Domingue, a pendulum was shipped from Bordeaux in 1774, and a case of mathematical instruments (instruments de mathematique) was listed on board Le Septinaire for Saint Domingue during the same year. The shipment of mathematical instruments is odd for several reasons. First, as Anthony Turner has noted, the manufacture of precision instruments in Paris was highly localized and sporadic due to the byzantine restrictions of competing guilds. Artisans tended to cultivate close relationships with their clients in order to custom-make instruments specific to their needs, creating a niche industry that contrasted with the elastic bands of credit and distant relationships that stretched across the Atlantic. As a result, French scientists and astronomers often used English produced instruments which were in any event of better quality. If the instruments were fabricated in England, their being shipped out of Marseille bespeaks a complicated route of transshipment either around or across the face of France.

Second, Saint-Domingue had an exceptionally vibrant amateur scientific community in the late eighteenth century which became the Cercle des Philadelphes in 1784 and was issued a royal patent in 1789. Yet, as James McClellan has demonstrated, scientific research on Saint-Domingue primarily focused on subjects that served a practical purpose within the colony, such as medicine or botany, in order to slow the spread of tropical diseases or create more efficient food sources. This focus on usefulness rendered that particular intellectual community weak in the mathematical and physical sciences and extremely lacking in equipment, to the extent that a French team of scientists measured the 1769 transit of Venus and only naked-eye observations were recorded for an eclipse in 1776. It would seem that a case of mathematical instruments bound for Saint-Domingue would have been extremely rare. Alexandre Pingré, a member of the Académie Royale des Sciences who had observed both transits of Venus in 1761 and 1769, did set up an observatory at Cap Français in early 1770s that operated until the French Revolution, so the case in question could have contained his instruments.

The maps, pendulum, and mathematical instruments on the cargo lists serve as a reminder that the metropole exported trends in scientific inquiry in addition to furniture, fashions, and food. Although the Enlightenment is often considered to be a European phenomenon, scholars have recently begun to examine its Atlantic and global dimensions. In addition to McClellan’s work on Saint-Domingue, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra examined the writings of Latin Americans on Enlightenment topics while Dipesh Chakrabarty posited the existence of similar trends in India. In order to interact with European intellectuals, colonial scientists and thinkers needed access to the equipment, ideas, and trends at play in Europe. Pingré’s box of instruments (if they were indeed his), revealed this reliance.

Other items of intellectual and cultural pursuit also spoke to the growing level of sophistication within colonial society. Three cases of musical instruments (instrument de

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86 McClellan, Colonialism and Science, 124-127.
musique) accompanied by paper (presumably their sheet music) and violin strings (cordes de violin), appeared on the Marseille lists to Saint-Domingue. Cap Français had a vibrant musical community during the eighteenth century. Both Cap Français and Port-au-Prince had orchestras, while music instructors and instrument purveyors were available for private lessons throughout the colony. Baron de Wimpffen even recorded that freedmen on the islands had adopted European instruments; he described a dance party led by fiddlers “much superior to the talents which their occupation requires, to the majority of our European scrapers.” Tableware was also imported from France, although in small numbers, denoting that only the grands blancs could afford to dine in a truly metropolitan fashion. High-end glassware such as crystal glasses (verres de cristal) and goblets appear as testaments to the culture that was growing up around the consumption of wine and brandy, while napkins (serviettes et napes), table linen (linge de table), and silver dishes (vaisselles d’argent), also occasionally earned mention. Earthenware (fayance, fayance ronde) occurred far more frequently, particularly out of Marseille, and therefore would have made up the plates on most West Indian tables.

Smoking tobacco was a major pastime in the French West Indies, although the islanders had stopped growing their own tobacco in the early eighteenth century. Instead, the paraphernalia for consuming tobacco, along with the product itself, was imported from Europe. Marseille exported humidors (coffre des pipes), pipes, and snuffboxes (tabierre). Collecting snuffboxes was a major trend in Europe during the eighteenth century with monarchs such as Frederick the Great boasting large collections. Playing cards (cartes à jouer) were also used by European royalty, with fortunes being won and lost at the gaming tables of Versailles.

Taken together, high-end tableware, books, and musical instruments indicated the increasing level of refinement displayed by West Indian society during the late eighteenth century. With the frontier era of the seventeenth century behind them, elites were able to emulate metropolitan dining habits, literary tastes, and scientific pursuits, creating a cultural center that, in the case of Cap Français, rivaled the North American cities of Philadelphia and Boston. Unlike the sophistication of its northern contemporaries, the opulence of the French West Indies would not survive long into the next century, relegating the society that powdered its faces, read Portuguese grammar, and drank wine from crystal glasses to the halls of memory.

Miscellaneous Outdoor

Such reflections of metropolitan sophistication did not end inside the house. Garden seeds (graines de jardin) were listed within the Roux Freres papers although it is impossible to determine whether these were intended for ornamental gardens à la Versailles or the humble herb garden. Surprisingly, one of the most frequently mentioned materials leaving Marseille was marble, and variations of it occur often throughout the manifests. References to marble tiles (carreaux de marbre) and tablets (tableaux de marbre) are particularly numerous, leading to the possibility that marble served a greater role as a building material amongst the elite than historians have previously thought. Marble statues (statues de marbre, figures de marbre), marble pieces (pièces de marbre), and marble works (ouvrages de marbre) are also mentioned, although in far smaller quantities, indicating that marble was used as art in addition to building material. The profusion of marble products in the Marseille manifests is a reminder that French merchants connected the West Indies to the commercial networks of the Mediterranean in

88 McClellan, Colonialism and Science, 95, 102.
89 Baron de Wimpffen, A voyage to Saint-Domingo, 111.
addition to those of the Atlantic, while statuary demonstrates the ostentatious taste of a West Indian elite presumably attempting to copy the châteaux of France. The Caribbean colonial societies are traditionally seen as fundamentally transient, with high rates of absentee plantation ownership and mortality from disease, along with the periodic destruction of hurricanes and fires. Yet the importation of marble implies permanence or at least the expectation of stability among consumers that runs against the reputedly transient nature of West Indian society.

The ways in which the West Indian elite travelled also reflected their desire to follow closely habits of metropolitan consumption. Sedan chairs with poles (chaise à porteur avec ses batons), such as those listed twice on the Roux Frères documents, were an efficient means of urban conveyance. The compactness and long coastlines of Martinique and Saint-Domingue privileged water transport for travel outside the cities, although both colonies did have rudimentary road networks. A highway system constructed on Martinique during the late seventeenth century had largely decayed by the mid-eighteenth and travelers on the road linking Cap Français to Port-au-Prince were required to negotiate a 100-foot staircase carved into the face of a mountain until the passage was rebuilt for carriages in 1787. Two wheeled horse-drawn carriages are mentioned in the lists from both cities, but were transported (or merely recorded) differently. The two from Marseille are listed as single units with their accoutrements (cabriolet avec ses harnois), implying that they were shipped whole and bound for a particular owner. The lists from Bordeaux, in contrast, provide only component parts, such as pairs of wheels (roué de cabriolet), axles (essieux pour cabriollets), and iron wheel hubs (pivots de fer pour cabriollets). This transportation of individual parts may indicate that the parts were meant to be sold individually, rather than sent to a specific individual.

Consumers would have paid a hefty sum to acquire either sedan chairs or carriages, since the Roux documents list the transport cost for a carriage and its accoutrements at 200 silver island livres and a sedan chair at 120. The acquisition of horses with which to pull the carriages would have been more complex. As will be discussed in the next chapter, space on the islands for raising animals and growing their fodder was limited, more so on Martinique than Saint-Domingue. To fill this need, Martinique received regular shipments of horses from British North America through the “open port” of Castries, although this route was highly vulnerable during wartime. Acquiring horses on Saint-Domingue was much easier given the proximity of Spanish ranchers in Santo-Domingo, and Moreau de St. Méry recorded that in the 1780s the colony contained 40,000 horses or one horse for each white inhabitant. Travel by horse-drawn conveyance, particularly on Martinique, would have been expensive and reserved for the elites, making it a highly visible example of conspicuous consumption.

Summary

A survey of the cargos outbound from France to Martinique and Saint Domingue reveals several trends within French West Indian culture, and the Atlantic world as a whole. First, the trade networks that supplied the West Indies were not confined to the Atlantic, but were heavily linked to the Mediterranean as well, a connection revealed in their marked imports of silk.
cotton, and marble. Second, the presence of French luxury products is a reminder that bonds of taste and style in addition to edicts and displays of military power tied West Indian inhabitants to the metropole. Colonial consumers actively tried to copy French fashions in order to reinforce their French identity in contrast to that of their slaves they also adapted fashions from mixed-race women in order to acquire their exotic reputation. Third, the presence of printed cotton styles from Asia emphasizes the metropole’s role not merely as a colonial hub, but also as a linchpin of trade across the Eurasian landmass. Fourth, the importation of both colored kerchiefs and European hats indicates that a syncretistic culture of fashion was forming in the West Indies, where metropolitan head wear was giving way to lighter kerchiefs. Scholars such as Timothy Breen and Amy Herman have focused on the ways that material culture created a common language among diverse populations, whether along the eastern seaboard or across the Atlantic. Yet the differing social structures on opposite sides of the Atlantic could create differences in meaning for the same objects, such as the kerchiefs which represented both cleanliness and sexual allure. Thus, in addition to bonding West Indian consumers to France through metropolitan fashions, French goods also separated them from the metropole by taking on new meanings that were shaped by their colonial context.
Chapter 3: Bread and Goose Thighs

In describing the “expensive tastes” of the Martiniquais planters, Thomas Jefferies did not end with their material possessions, but enumerated their imported foods as well. “[B]eef, butter, dried fish, gammons of bacon, hams, tongues of oxen and hogs, sausages, cheese, corn, and dried fruit of all sorts that Europe affords, with…. wines, brandy, drams, and all things that can contribute to the use or pleasures of the table” were all brought by merchants into the harbor at St. Pierre. Historians have often portrayed the French West Indies as a society teetering on brink of famine, since planters had so reoriented the ecosystem of the islands to sugar production that they could not produce enough food to support themselves. Yet Jeffries’ list not only distinguishes Martinique as a center of gastronomical delight, but also reveals the extent to which West Indian islanders attempted to recreate a European diet. Despite living in a completely different ecosystem, they imported staples (such as the wine and fish on Jeffries’ list) and delicacies (ox tongues) along with items from multiple European regions (beef and butter from Ireland, fish from St. Mâlo, brandy from Gascony). How were such perishable items preserved? How closely were residents of the West Indies able to copy what people ate in the metropole? How did these goods fit into the larger trade networks that characterized the Atlantic world?

The study of food and its roles in society (more succinctly termed “foodways”) has been a growing trend in historical, sociological, and anthropological research over the past three decades. Foodways literature on ancien régime France has been particularly dense and centers on tracing the evolution and development of uniquely French cuisine through cookbooks and descriptions of meals. The diet of France’s colonists in the Caribbean has received far less attention. Pastore, in her article on Dussolier, uses the items in his kitchen and dining room along with newspaper articles of food sales to extrapolate that he used wine, salt beef, salt pork, rice, butter, and oil to follow metropolitan standards for intricate formal meals. The cargo lists from Bordeaux and Marseille support this synchronization between metropolitan and colonial diets. They point to a diet for white colonial inhabitants which was supported by many European regions, followed Mediterranean specialties, and separated their foodstuffs from that of the enslaved population.

Any discussion of food imports in the French West Indies must consider the question of smuggling, as it loomed larger in the acquisition of foodstuffs than material goods. Since most of the arable land on the islands was taken up with cash crop production, planters on Saint-Domingue and Martinique were unable to grow enough food to feed their slaves and animals. This situation, combined with exorbitant markups of metropolitan staples, forced planters to look to British North America for flour and salted beef. As Thomas Truxes has demonstrated, this illicit trade between residents of the two empires reached such proportions that the outbreak of the Seven Years War failed to halt it. New York merchants ignored the Flour Act of 1757, which specifically prohibited the North American colonies from exporting grain, flour, bread, and salted provisions to locations outside the British empire, and flaunted customs regulations in order to supply the West Indian need for foodstuffs. The illicit trading serves as a reminder

95 Jeffries, Natural and Civil History, 2:119.
97 Pastore, “Consumer Choices,” 86.
98 Truxes, Defying Empire, 68. See Truxes for further information on smuggling during the Seven Years War.
that the cargo lists do not provide a complete picture of all the food imported to Martinique and Saint-Domingue, but rather only show the items that metropolitan merchants exported to the colonies. Even within this context, the cargo lists do offer valuable insights into the diet of those living in the French West Indies.

**French Food**

Historians and foodways scholars alike have exhaustively studied the dietary and culinary traditions of eighteenth-century France in order to understand everything from the peasant unrests that lead to French Revolution to the origins of modern gastronomy. That research helps to contextualize the diet of the France’s West Indian colonists.

Although united by several broad themes, the diet of the average French man or woman in the eighteenth century varied by location and income. The most numerous socio-economic group in France, the rural peasants, had the smallest amount of nutritional choice, often subsisting on bread and soup. Bread made from locally grown cereals, together with gruel and porridge, made up ninety-five percent of rural poor’s caloric intake.\(^9\) The composition of the bread consumed by peasants varied by region, but was often black since it was typically made with cereals such as millet, rye, buckwheat, or barley rather than pure wheat flour. Bread made from chestnuts predominated in the Massif Central and cornbread was eaten in the South West, while farmers near the Piedmont were already experimenting with rice as a substitute for bread.\(^10\) The whiteness of the bread one consumed also provided a measure of one’s economic standing since pure wheat bread was more expensive than loaves made from mixed grains.

Soup made from vegetables grown in the household herb garden was another staple of the rural diet. A 1789 description of soup making in south western France strikingly emphasizes its simplicity and lack of nutritional variety: “The bread is all ready in a big wooden dish, with a little knob of butter, and then the boiling water is poured over it. Voila! That’s the soup. A clove of garlic and a raw onion grated by the cook is sprinkled over the soup--that’s the seasoning, the last word in culinary fashion.”\(^11\) This simplicity did not characterize all rural soups, as cabbages, turnips, carrots, milk, cheese, or pork (for peasants sufficiently well off to own a pig or cow), and fish (for those who lived by the coast) could also be added depending on the region.

The consumption of meat and alcohol increased as one moved up the social hierarchy. Priests and nobles had no difficulty in acquiring meat for their tables, but rural families fortunate enough to own an animal more often sold the resulting milk, cheese, butter, eggs and meat for extra income than eating it themselves.\(^12\) In the cattle regions of the north, animal fat and butter were used for cooking but the inhabitants of southern and central France used olive and walnut oil instead. Fish was the preeminent form of protein in coastal areas and was transported inland for consumption during Lent, Advent, and Friday fasts. Most peasants drank water and *bevande* (cheap wine mixed with water) along with regional specialties such as beer, cider, or brandy. Better quality wine was also available to those who could afford it.

The rural diet, then, was highly monotonous and tied closely to foods that could be produced locally. Although French rural folk could often achieve the requisite 3,000-3,500

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\(^10\) Ibid., 200; Roche, *Everyday Things*, 228.

\(^11\) Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 62.

\(^12\) Roche, *Everyday Things*, 230.
calories per day required for adults to survive, the dependence on cereals meant that changes in weather or local grain prices intensely affected the ability of rural households to maintain this standard.

The diet of those living in cities and towns largely avoided these problems of monotony and dependence, since these areas were connected by trade routes to more distant food sources. Paris, for example, drew on fish from the Channel coast, cheese from Brie and Picardy, wine from Orléans and Beaune, and meat from Brittany. Bread was still the primary source of calories, but urban workers often bought it on credit from bakers, and prices were enforced by the police in order to ensure its accessibility. Townspeople also ate more meat than their rural counterparts: 60 kilograms per year in 1789 Paris and 32 kilograms per year for Caen, well above the national average of 23.5 kilograms. As meat consumption increased during the eighteenth century, quality became the means of social distinction rather than quantity, since only the rich could afford the choice cuts. Likewise, urbanites had more drink choices. In 1755, a Parisian with four sous could buy a cup of coffee or a pint of wine, while five sous bought him or her a cup of chocolate, a bottle of beer or a pitcher of lemonade, and seven sous procured a glass of brandy. Although coffee was the most commonly sold drink in eighteenth-century cafés, the cellar of one Parisian establishment contained seven barrels of brandy, fourteen barrels of beer, one barrel of “vin rozay”, and one barrel of ratafia (a popular spiced brandy that also appears on the cargo lists). Thirsty Parisians could also visit tavernes or cabarets to purchase wine shipped from nearby Orléans, Burgundy, and Mâcon.

Several overarching themes thus ran through French diets. First, the vast majority of rural Frenchmen and Frenchwomen were dependent on locally grown food for their survival, while those in the towns were connected to long distance supply networks that granted them more variety and less reliance on local weather patterns. Second, diets varied drastically by region, given the reliance on multiple staples (corn, wheat, chestnuts) and methods of preparation (butter, olive oil). Third, despite this variety the traditional French staples of bread and wine were consumed by all levels of society across regional lines, although with varying degrees of quality according to income. These themes contrast with the dependence, dietary stratification, and geographic homogeneity of the French West Indian diet.

Problems of Supply

Unlike rural France, where food consumption was limited to local or household production, the climate and land usage in French West Indian islands forced the inhabitants to rely on a complex interweaving of logistics that emphasized long distance importation rather than local provisions. Neither the cereals nor the vines which anchored the French diet grew in the tropical climate, forcing those living there to use tropical plants as staples or import bread and wine from the metropole. Intensive land usage dictated the later course. By the mid-eighteenth century, cash crops dominated both Martinique and Saint-Domingue, despite government efforts to encourage the growing of foodstuffs. On Martinique, for example,
administrators attempted to create self-sufficiency by levying fines on planters who did not grow manioc or bananas on their land in addition to sugar and indigo; regulations which by mid-century had resulted in the planting of over 26 million manioc plants and 8 million banana trees. \(^{109}\) Although this effort did foster a limited measure of agricultural independence, it failed to produce enough food to make the colonies sustainable, requiring the inhabitants to import their food from elsewhere.

**Solutions of Preservation**

In importing their food, colonists faced the problem of preserving it for the long voyage across the Atlantic. The movement of foodstuffs in the eighteenth century was severely limited by what could and could not be preserved for the long voyages in this era before refrigeration. For the tropical climate of the West Indies, this problem was particularly intense since foods spoiled quickly in the heat and humidity. These limitations, and the solutions displayed in the cargo lists, had a major role in defining the West Indian diet.

The most frequently shipped foods were those that were not only the easiest to preserve, but those mainstays of French cuisine which maintained a relatively pleasing taste despite transoceanic shipment. Almonds appeared on nearly every ship out of Marseille. Likewise, flour not only traveled easily (provided that it was kept dry) but could be baked into bread upon arrival. Foods that are improved by long periods of aging, such as cheese also appear quite regularly.

Foods that spoiled easily, such as meats, vegetables, and fruits, required more attention. Salt is the most frequently cited method of preservation, with salted meats and fish (*boeuf saleé, viande saleé, hareng saleé*) appearing in great quantities. Salted meat was a staple ration on warships during the eighteenth century when crews would be away from land for months or years at a time; for similar reasons it could be shipped for consumption in distant colonies. A cargo of pickles (*cornichons*) from Marseille indicates the use of pickling to preserve fresh food, and vinegar-mentioned regularly in the exports from both cities—would have been used as a pickling agent.

Fruits frequently crossed the Atlantic, but never in their original state. Fermentation or distillation into alcohol was the most popular mode of preservation, in keeping with the French penchant for wine and brandy. Such drinks were ubiquitous on the cargo lists. Despite David Hancock’s claim that the French shipped their wine in breakable bottles and that their contents “soured horribly….even if they arrived intact”, the Bordeaux cargo lists record that merchants exported a greater volume of wine (measured in sturdy barrels called *tonneaux*) than any other commodity. \(^{110}\) Instead, Thomas Brennan states that French wine lasted for two to three years in the eighteenth century, allowing the grapes of Bourgogne to quench thirsts on Martinique and Saint-Domingue. \(^{111}\) For fruits that could not easily be converted into a liquid, preserving them in alcohol was still an option, and was used quite often, judging by the multiple *tonneaux* of brandied fruits (*fruits à l’eau-de-vie*) leaving Bordeaux every year. Jams (*confitures*) were a less

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\(^{110}\) Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 112.

frequently used variation on this method; they used the sugar in the fruits instead of alcohol to slow bacterial growth. Finally, the presence of dried raisins (raisons sechs) on fifty-three of the fifty-nine ships departing Marseille indicates that the ancient method of drying fruit was still very much in use, although preparing these fruits would have been easier in the sunny Mediterranean than on the windswept Atlantic coast. The ability of eighteenth-century food producers to preserve meat, vegetables, and fruits in addition to the easily stored foodstuffs increased the nutritional choices available to West Indian consumers and allowed them to synchronize their diets closely with that of the metropole.

**Involuntary Consumers**

Unlike in France, where all levels of society relied on similar staples but of differing quality, the West Indian diet was stratified. This division is particularly stark in the experience of the two populations of involuntary consumers on the islands: slaves and soldiers. The diet for adult slaves had been fixed by Colbert in the Code Noir of 1685 at two pounds of salted beef or three pounds of fish and six pounds of cassava bread or the equivalent in manioc flour. Despite this well-intentioned effort on the part of the French government, masters often ignored or sidestepped these requirements by serving meat so rancid that it had no nutritional value, leading to the undernourishment and death of their workforce.\(^{112}\) In order to avoid this trap while still keeping their expenses low, many planters allowed their slaves to grow their own food on marginal land not suitable for sugar cane production. On Martinique, the colonial government further stipulated that slaves be given every Sunday free of labor in order to tend these gardens and required masters to plant 25 banana trees per slave.\(^ {113}\) Slaves subsisted largely on carbohydrates that were grown domestically and proteins that were imported. The consumption of those proteins connected them to the larger world of the Atlantic. They ate salted beef from the metropole and cod from the Grand Banks, in striking contrast to peasants in France who subsisted almost entirely on household production.

Soldiers and sailors stationed on the island likewise had little choice in what they ate but enjoyed far more nutritional and geographic variety in their diet. The French army provided its soldiers with 24 to 28 ounces of baked bread each day, along with half a pound of meat and a quart of wine; a diet that produced around 4,000 calories and would have been supplemented with foraging while on campaign.\(^ {114}\) Since sailors did not have the opportunity to forage while at sea, the navy provided them with a more varied diet of 730 grams of bread or 550 grams of biscuit; 250 grams of salt beef or bacon; 0.5 liters of wine, or one and a half liters of beer, in addition to dry vegetables, peas, baked beans or haricots, cheese and rice on occasion, and olive oil as seasoning. This daily ration amounted to roughly the same caloric intake as their comrades on land while granting them more nutritional diversity.\(^ {115}\) Since the colonial government was under the Department of the Marine, the diet of the soldiers and sailors stationed in the West Indies closely followed that of the navy rather than the army, with a uniquely Atlantic twist. An inventory of the military storerooms on Martinique made in July of 1775 lists flour, bread and biscuits, salted beef, salted lard, cod, fresh meat, rice, peas, haricots, fresh herbs, cheese, olive


\(^ {114}\) Roche, *Everyday Things*, 226.

\(^ {115}\) Ibid., 226.
oil, vinegar, coffee, sugar, and wine from both Bordeaux and Saintonge. Like slaves, military personnel ate food produced on three continents: bread from France, cod from North America, and sugar from the Caribbean. Yet while Ministry of Marine regulations allowed French soldiers and sailors to maintain a French diet while in the colonies, slaves were unable to eat their native African food but instead subsisted off what their masters gave them or what they could grow. This stratification and reliance on non-local food supplies contrasts with the subsistence agriculture and dietary homogeneity of France.

**Voluntary Consumers**

Those with the money to spend and the luxury of choice had a dazzling array of dietary variety available to them, allowing them to recreate the metropolitan diet. Yet the southern location of France’s two largest ports servicing the West Indies gave colonial food a southern French flair.

The free inhabitants of the French West Indies, like their counterparts in France, based their diet on bread and wine, with Bordeaux dominating both of these exports. Through their transportation, these staples provide a glimpse of the coastal, regional, and oceanic trading networks that gave West Indian inhabitants the ability to eat like those of France’s cities. Flour (*farine*) appears only on the Bordeaux cargo lists which do not specify whether it was the pure wheat flour eaten by French elites or mixed with cheaper cereals as consumed by the majority of the population. French grain harvests could be quite volatile, as shown by the shortages of the late 1780s that contributed to the Revolution, and problems with acquiring flour and transporting it to the coast often caused heavy losses for merchants, an issue that they attempted to mitigate by maintaining close connections with local millers. These variations in harvests and local transportation difficulties did not affect the metropole’s ability to feed the colonies since Bordeaux exports to Martinique remained around 9900 *barrils* over the period of the cargo lists. In fact, Bordeaux drew on a complex network of northern European cereal suppliers on the Baltic (St. Petersburg, Riga, Stockholm), the North Sea (Hamburg, Amsterdam, Ostend), and the Atlantic coast (La Rochelle, Nantes, St. Malo) as far away as Arkhangelsk in Russia to meet its export demands. These diverse sources of cereals that fed West Indian inhabitants contrast with the local subsistence of French peasants and illustrate the intimate connections between transatlantic trade networks and smaller, regional networks. Importing flour from such long distances actually made it relatively cheap, yet not cheap enough to be given to slaves, creating a dietary distinction that reflected societal divisions. This difference contrasts with the centrality of bread in France: while all classes of society ate bread, only a loaf’s level of whiteness demonstrated status.

Colonial inhabitants also had a varied selection of wine from France and Spain. Pastore, in an effort to establish Dussolier’s drinking habits, notes that wine was frequently imported to Saint-Domingue, and colonial retailers maintained close connections to wholesale suppliers in

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116 ANOM, COL C8A 74 F*140. The quantities of coffee and sugar listed on the inventory were far smaller than the other staples, implying that they were meant for officers, rather than general consumption.


118 The exact numbers are: 9952 barrils in the second six months of 1772; 9926 barrils in the first six months of 1773; 9873 barrils in the second six months of 1774.


Bordeaux. The cargo lists support her conclusion, since the exportation of wine from Bordeaux outstripped that of flour. The list from the second six months of 1773, for example, record that merchants exported 3074 tonneaux of wine to Martinique during that half year, while less than half that volume of flour (1393 tonneaux) was exported during the same period. Bordeaux listed its wine exports by color (vin rouge, vin blanc), revealing an overwhelming colonial desire for red wine (6,968 tonneaux exported during the first six months of 1773) as opposed to white wine (470 tonneaux). This preference for red wine is in line with consumption patterns in Paris, where merchants were accused of dying their white wines red in order to cope with demand. As with cereals, West Indian consumers drew on a variety of wine-producing locations. In addition to the domestic wines exported from Bordeaux and Marseille (every ship leaving Marseille had wine listed as part of its cargo); Muscat wine (vin musias), foreign wine (vin étranger), and Malaga wine (vin de malaga) also appear on the cargo lists. These more exotic wines appear in far smaller quantities than the domestic wines, but their inclusion granted consumers a relatively wide selection of choices.

With bread and wine, meat formed a third staple for consumers in the West Indian colonies, although its procurement reveals the complexities of Caribbean provisioning and consumption. Devoid of large animals prior to European contact, the open plains of Hispaniola and Martinique came to support herds of feral pigs, cattle, and sheep which early visitors or settlers introduced to the islands. With the rise of plantation agriculture during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, planters turned the pastureland on the islands to cash crop production. Removing land from livestock use, this shift created a tension between the continued need for animals as food and the new demand for increased sugar production.

On Martinique, the problem of acquiring large animals was particularly acute. A famine brought about by the War of Spanish Succession had practically eliminated large animals on the island and attempts to restock the supply through homegrown breeding in the 1730s failed miserably, leading to a constant shortage of large animals. This difficulty meant that the problem of supplying Martinique with animals and their meat occupied the attention of those in power in the same way that supplying Paris with bread challenged French administrators during the 1780s and 1790s. Regulations in 1756 and 1763 limited the number of butchers on the island and fixed the prices of their wares in order to better control the supply of meat to the populace. A 1774 study delivered by governor Vital August de Grégoire, Comte de Nozières and intendant Philippe-Athanaze Tächer to the Martinique’s governing council on the capabilities of the island to support itself in case of war noted that Martinique lacked a self-sustaining animal population and would be forced to rely on contraband with North America and trade with neutral islands to maintain its supply of animals for labor and food if war came. When the American Revolution disrupted the supply of animals in 1777, governor Robert, Comte d’Argout and intendant Täscher were forced to raise the prices of beef and veal to twenty-five sols per pound and that of mutton to twenty-two sols six derniers with the hope that in the future “the public

122 Ibid., 96.
123 May, Histoire Économique, 84-85.
124 Ibid., 86.
125 Mémoire communiqué au Conseil par M. le général et M. l’intendant sur les difficultés et la manière d’approvisionner les îles de Vent de l’Amérique et d’y procurer des resources de finance en cas de guerre (1774), ANOM, C8A 73 F°116.
circumstances can permit us to reestablish the prices at the level which they were previously fixed.”

This tight government control over meat prices and worries about its supply demonstrate the difficulties that Martinique faced in acquiring large animals for food.

In contrast to the scarcity on Martinique, Saint-Domingue enjoyed easy access to cattle through its proximity to the ranches of Spanish Santo-Domingo. Indeed, the livestock trade between the Bourbon colonies was not only legal, but was so extensive that the Commissionaire de la Marine valued it at 18 million livres tournois annually. By 1789, according to Moreau de Saint-Méry, 250,000 cattle were present on Saint-Domingue despite all the arable land on the island being occupied by plantation agriculture. This population allowed butchers in Port-au-Prince to slaughter fourteen head of cattle per day and those in Cap Français twenty although the results were not always equal to European standards.

With fresh meat more plentiful, its consumption of on Saint-Domingue became a way to showcase wealth and position. A 1793 account of a creole named “P” describes one particularly opulent meal in which:

the aforesaid calf was split from head to tail, and this opening was elegantly tied with pink ribbons….The veal was separated enough to be seen in his flanks a sheep prepared in the same manner, but tied with blue ribbons. In the mutton was an enormous turkey with green ribbons. In this turkey was a capon tied with yellow ribbons; and the capon contained as many ortolans as there were guests.

The presence of multiple varieties of meats, and their theatrical presentation with ribbons harkens back to the banquets of Roman emperors and medieval kings, who also used the consumption of exotic food, such as sugar sculpted into the form of castles, to impress their guests and reinforce political agendas. The fact that “P” remembered the meal in such detail demonstrates the extent to which the host’s acquisition of meat and its presentation had succeeded in making an impression.

For those who could not afford fresh meat, an easy solution was to import already processed meat. On the Bordeaux cargo lists, salted beef (boeuf saleé) was the most common item after wine and flour, amounting to 1136 tonneaux sent to Martinique during the second six months of 1773, and on the Marseille lists salted meat (viande saleé) appears on fifty-one of the fifty-nine ships that departed the port during 1774. Bordeaux’s close connections to northern Europe, and Ireland in particular, made it an ideal transshipment point for animal products, such as ham (jambon), salted pork (petite saleé), butter (buerre), and lard (lard en planche), all of which appear regularly on its cargo lists. La Rochelle, Nantes, and Bordeaux hosted significant populations of Irish merchants who regularly exchanged beef and butter for French wine and brandy. During the mid-eighteenth century, France was the largest importer of Irish salted

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126 Ordonnance Concernant La Vianede Boucherie, 8 January 1777, ANOM, C8A 76 F° 290.
127 Geggus, “Major Port Towns,” 96. This trade also extended to the Spanish mainland and included horses and mules.
128 “Their tables are ill furnished. Butchers[sic] meat is bad; poultry, with the exception of the Pintado, not much better.” Baron de Wimpffen, A Voyage to Saint Domingo, 103. Statistics from McClellan, Colonialism and Science, 33 and Geggus, Major Port Towns, 96.
129 Quoted in Pastore, “Consumer Choices,” 86.
131 For more on these Irish communities in France, see Louis Cullen, “Galway Merchants in the Outside World, 1650-1850,” in Galway: Town and Gown, 1484-1984, ed. Diarmuid Ó Cearbhaill, 63-89 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan,
beef, bringing in over 80,000 barrels per year. The trade was so profitable that the Seven Years War failed to stop it.\textsuperscript{132} Bordeaux dominated this transshipment trade to the colonies, exporting 5 million \textit{livres pesant} worth of Irish salted beef and 383,131 \textit{livres pesant} of Irish salted butter in 1787.\textsuperscript{133} Where fresh meat was rare in the Caribbean, salted meat was more plentiful, thanks to France’s close connections with Irish merchants. Consumption of staple meats, such as beef, gave the inhabitants of the French West Indies equal, if not greater, access to animal products than their contemporaries in rural areas of the metropole. The product they consumed, however, was of lower quality (since the meat was salted) and reliance on it reduced the islands’ self-sufficiency. The colonists’ importing of salted meat from long distances and inability to produce it locally made the West Indian experience more akin to that of those living in French towns who were well connected to long-distance trade routes.

In addition to sharing in the French staples of wine, bread, and meat, the free inhabitants of the island also had access to a wide variety of foods from across multiple regions of Europe, similar to the diet in French cities, rather than the countryside. An examination of the different beverages and cheeses on the cargo lists illustrates this geographical diversity.

West Indian consumers drew on a variety of wine producing locations. In addition to the red and white wine exported from Bordeaux and the generic “wine” exported from Marseille, Muscat wine (\textit{vin musias}), foreign wine (\textit{vin etranger}), and Spanish Malaga wine (\textit{vin de malaga}) gave island drinkers access to non-French varietals. Bordeaux’s lists are filled with locally produced brandy (\textit{eau-de-vie}), cognac, and anisette; supplemented by beer (\textit{bierre}) from northern Europe. Generic “Liqueurs” and “syrups” appear on fifty and forty-six of the ships departing Marseille respectively and are almost always listed together, sometimes with Muscat wine. Finally, the inclusion of tea (\textit{thé}) and chocolate on the lists reflects France’s global connections and the adoption of drinks from diverse parts of Asia and the Americas into the West Indian diet. Oddly, coffee does not appear on the lists, most likely because it was produced in the Caribbean and thus did not need to come from France. While the plant was not present in the seventeenth century Caribbean, the French government had introduced coffee to Martinique in the 1710s to replace cocoa trees that had been destroyed by insects.\textsuperscript{134} By 1789, coffee plantations outnumbered sugar plantations on Saint-Domingue by a wide margin (3,117 as compared to 793), but Martiniquais coffee was said to be of better quality and therefore slightly more expensive.\textsuperscript{135} The close correspondence between the contents of Parisian cellars and the holds of West Indian merchantmen demonstrates that the inhabitants of Martinique and Saint-Domingue possessed the same choices available as those in the largest French cities.

West Indian consumers also had an equally wide assortment of cheeses from which to choose. In a less-than-helpful exercise in labeling, the compiler of the Marseille cargo list enumerated that “cheese” was present on fifty of the fifty-nine ships that departed the port. The Bordeaux recorder, however, was far more descriptive. Cheeses from different locations such as Dutch cheese (\textit{fromage d’hollande}) and Gruyère cheese, share the lists with those of different consistency, such as cheese pâté (\textit{fromage patte grasse}), and shape, such as round cheese

\textsuperscript{132} Truxes, \textit{Defying Empire}, 56.
\textsuperscript{133} This amount of salted beef was five times that of the next highest exporter, Nantes. Butel, “Le traffic colonial de Bordeaux,” 289.
\textsuperscript{134} Pritchard, \textit{In Search of Empire}, 126.
\textsuperscript{135} McClellan, \textit{Colonialism and Science}, 64; Butel, \textit{Négotiants Bordelais}, 30.
(fromage ronde), showing that those living in the French West Indies had access to wide variety of foods in addition to beverages. Their diverse provenance reflects the choices available in urban France, rather than the local subsistence and regionalism present in rural meals. The ability of merchants to compile such an assortment of goods from across Europe serves as a reminder that maritime France was a center of local, regional, and global trade.

Even with foods that did not keep, such as vegetables, West Indian colonists had access to a large variety from both sides of the Atlantic. Baron de Wimpffen recorded that those on Saint-Domingue grew a species of spinach (from which they made a ragout called calaloux) and palm-cabbage, both of which pleased his sensitive palate. British diarist and amateur botanist Thomas Thistlewood recorded growing asparagus, broccoli, English peas, limes, figs, and carrots on Jamaica, demonstrating the foods that were available to those in the French colonies who had the time and effort to devote to gardening. Vegetables, such as green peas (pois verts), lentils, cabbage (choux), and rhubarb also appear on the cargo lists, although mostly in small quantities and limited to those that shipped easily.

One plant that does appear frequently on the Bordeaux lists had a particularly storied history: the artichoke. Used extensively throughout the Roman era (the fifth-century Apicius cookbook provided seven recipes for it), the artichoke fell out of fashion during the Middle Ages but made a comeback during the Renaissance. Brought to France by Marie de Medici, it quickly became a fad among French noblemen and a staple of French gardens; François Menon’s 1739 Nouveau traité de la cuisine provided 19 ways to cook it. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the artichoke also took on a reputation as an aphrodisiac. Louis XIII used it for that purpose, and Madame du Berry served it to Louis XV as a side with stag meat and pheasant in white wine. The multiple meanings attached to the artichoke illustrate the advantages of foodways methodology. “Reading” foods as material objects brings out shifting webs of social and cultural meanings, which scholars have argued are vital to understanding their consumption. Yet in the case of the artichoke, it is difficult to tell whether its European meanings traveled with it across the Atlantic. In a society as allegedly libertine as that of Saint-Domingue, the artichoke’s reputation as an aphrodisiac could have equaled its nutritional role, but no documentation exists to support this implication.

Finally, island consumers enjoyed specialties that were typically eaten only by French elites. Delicacies such as goose thighs (cuisines d’oye), boeuf à la daube, boeuf à la mode, pâté grasse, stuffed tongues (langues fourréé), and pork intestines (andouille) all appear regularly on the lists from Bordeaux; along with an occurrence of oysters (huîtres), most likely from the beds near La Rochelle, and truffles. In France, the consumption of choice cuts of intestines or tongues was limited to elites who lived in cities, where both wealth and access to variety were

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136 Baron de Wimpffen, A Voyage to Saint Domingo, 104.
137 Trevor Burnard, Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire, 124-125.
139 By way of comparison, he only provided four recipes for asparagus, one for broccoli, two for cabbage, two for cauliflower, and two for cucumbers. T. Sarah Peterson, Acquired Taste: The French Origins of Modern Cooking (Ithaca, Cornell University Press: 1994), 127.
concentrated. By dining on rare specialties that only those with wealth and status in France consumed, the inhabitants of the French West Indian islands underscored their own wealth and status and portrayed themselves as equal in taste and sophistication to those in the metropole. The presence of such goods on the lists highlights the diversity of diet which the free inhabitants of the islands enjoyed, in contrast to both rural French peasants and plantation slaves.

This variety and the consumption of delicacies further contrasts to the trend of simplicity and more “natural” meals that defined French cooking during the eighteenth century. Inspired by Louis XIV’s court at Versailles, fine dining in the late seventeenth century came to be distinguished by elaborate, complex meals that matched the formal theatricality of baroque artistry. After the Sun King’s death, the tastes of the regent Duc d’Orleans, a new desire for the perceived simplicity of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and changing theories of dietetics combined to create a new style of cooking known as nouvelle cuisine. This form of cookery reacted against baroque formality by putting forth unadorned dishes with complimentary flavors from a well-organized kitchen. “I am for the simplest method” François Marin proclaimed in his 1739 cookbook Les Dons de Comus, “and I believe that it is the best for health.” By mid-century, nouvelle cuisine had further spawned cuisine bourgeoise which propounded recipes that were easy to prepare by a single woman cook and focused on fresh, natural ingredients rather than complex ornamentation. The presence of delicacies such as goose thighs and stuffed tongues on the cargo lists, along with records of theatrical meals such as that recorded by “P.,” demonstrate that Caribbean elites used expensive, theatrically prepared foods to display their economic and social status, rather than favoring the simpler styles of the nouvelle cuisine. Thus, while those in the West Indies succeeded in replicating what those in the metropole ate, they apparently rejected the trends of how to eat it.

In addition to staples and specialties from northern Europe, the location of Bordeaux and Marseille in the south of France meant that the French West Indian diet had a significant Mediterranean component. The traditional Provençal specialties of cheese, capers, olives, anchovies, almonds, raisins, olive oil, and legumes appear on practically every ship departing Marseille and on most of the Bordeaux lists as well. Plums, figs, and sardines were also exported from both cities, although in lesser quantities. The many Mediterranean goods exported to the West Indies indicates that there was a large market for foods from the south of France. Indeed, one nineteenth-century traveler to Martinique and Guadeloupe noted that the inhabitants cooked with olive oil in the style of Provence rather than cream as did those in Paris, which makes sense considering the lack of land on the island for dairy cows. This Mediterranean influence on Caribbean cooking has been neglected by scholars and reveals the extent to which the West Indies were tied into Mediterranean, in addition to Atlantic, trade networks.

Summary

142 Roche, Everyday Things, 233.
143 Mennell, All Manners of Food, 73-76; Pinkard, A Revolution in Taste, 173-175.
144 Pinkard, A Revolution in Taste, 173.
145 Ibid., 178.
In Rousseau’s 1762 Émile or On Education, the protagonist’s tutor takes him to the dinner parties of both an aristocrat and a peasant. The tutor then expounds on the virtues of the peasant’s meal, stating:

This whole wheat bread you find so good comes from wheat harvested by this peasant; his wine, black and coarse but refreshing and healthy, is the product of his own vine; the linen comes from his hemp, woven in the winter by his wife, his daughters, and his servant girl. No hands other than those of his family made the preparations for his table; the nearest mill and the neighboring market are the limits of the universe for him. In what way then did you really enjoy everything provided at that other table by distant lands and the hands of men? If all that did not give you a better meal, what have you gained from this abundance?147

The inhabitants of France’s West Indian colonies were the gastronomic antithesis of the tutor’s lesson. Since they were unable to grow their own wheat or press their own grapes, they relied on the “distant lands and the hands of men” to supply them. For those in the West Indies, the self sufficiency espoused by Rousseau was an unreachable goal. Yet, they successfully recreated the diet of those in French cites with much expense and effort. For those who could pay, merchants in Bordeaux and Marseille provided foods from diverse sources across Europe and the Atlantic; with the preponderance of Mediterranean specialties and the provision of animal products from Ireland demonstrating that the West Indies were intimately tied into a web of regional European networks. In contrast to the French diet, food consumption in the West Indies was more stratified. Where all regions and economic levels of French society ate bread and wine, Caribbean slaves ate a diet of cod and manioc that was distinct from the foodways of either Europeans or free inhabitants of the islands. This dietary stratification contrasted with the complication of visual hierarchies displayed by the grands blancs’ wearing of slave women’s headscarves. Finally, although the French West Indies is often portrayed as a society constantly on the brink of famine, the variety of foods listed on the cargo list and the presence of European delicacies points to a region that was better provisioned than scholars have portrayed. In displaying their gastronomic plenty, West Indian consumers rejected the metropolitan trend of natural simplicity embodied by both nouvelle cuisine and cuisine bourguoise.

147 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile or On Education, Qtd in Pinkard, A Revolution in Taste, 199.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

The cargo lists challenge the current trends of Atlantic networks and consumerism. First, they beg the question of how far the historian should pursue those strands that extend beyond the Atlantic basin. Several of the items on the Marseille cargo lists come from Asia, such as silks from China and cotton textiles from India. Should a study of West Indian trade based on the lists include information on the growing of silk in China or French factories in India? With such widely spread connections, any study of the eighteenth-century Atlantic trading networks instantly broadens into a global perspective, which may illuminate the disparate connections that made up the Atlantic world, but also makes focused studies difficult. In this respect, previous studies based on political entities such as nation-states had the advantage of confining the historical narrative within well defined borders. Networks by definition lack such limits. While not offering a solution to this problem, the cargo lists at least force historians to consider the question of how to frame studies of phenomena that do not respect national or regional boundaries.

Second, because these global commodities were present on the quays of Bordeaux and Marseille, the cargo lists reassert France’s position, and by extension the position of each European metropole, as the hub of a vast web of regional, oceanic, and global trade, rather than reducing it to the bastion of an intrusive, but easily ignored imperial government. By transshipping herring from the North Sea, pine boards from North America, and siamoise fabrics from Asia, France served as a collection point and vital supply center for goods that were integral to colonial survival and production. This picture of French ports as international clearing houses stands in contrast to both Truxes’ portrayal of the British metropole as a source of annoying directives for its American colonists and Hancock’s model of the Atlantic as a decentralized web of networks. Instead, this interpretation of the cargo lists reinforces Nuala Zahedieh’s assertion that the metropole deserves a prime place in studies of early modern Atlantic empires, specifically because its role as a center of both commerce and government encouraged interaction between merchants and politicians. One hopes that studies in this vein further expand our understanding of metropolitan trade in the coming years.

Third, the cargo lists show the colonial desire to copy metropolitan fashions, serving as a reminder that the metropole was important as a determiner of taste, rather than a source of annoying and often ignored missives. Recent historiography on the French Atlantic by Shannon Lee Dawdy and Kenneth Banks has created model of a European state unable to enforce its will upon unruly colonists. France was the center of an “empire of fashion” extending across the Atlantic, and colonists did actively attempt to ape the foods and dresses of their contemporaries in the metropole. By downplaying consumer goods headed for the colonies, historians have ignored one of the more successful means by which the metropole linked itself to the colonies.

Fourth, in addition to its role as an exchange center, the cargo lists reassert the primacy of the metropole’s productive capabilities in the face of a historiography that focuses on the colonies and consumption. Large numbers of finished goods, such as shoes and hats, pepper the lists from both Bordeaux and Marseille, illustrating that the fashion items which were consumed in the Americas were stitched together in nascent European factories. The picture of French proto-factories efficient enough to shod the feet and cover the heads of the West Indian populace requires a readjustment of Atlantic merchant networks to include modes of production as more

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than merely a distant beginning for goods whose true expression lies in their colonial purchase and use. Ideally, the pendulum swings of scholarly obsession with production and consumption would be avoided by uniting them with the transportation and retail networks that connected the two end points and treating all three stages in a balanced manner. Current scholarship is slowly bringing all three into balance. A recent collection of essays on the Parisian luxury trade contained equal sections on production, marketing and consumption; while Hancock’s *Oceans of Wine* covers in detail the production, distribution and consumption of Madeira. The cargo lists from Bordeaux and Marseille refocus scholarly attention away from the colonies and back on the metropole as a center of both trade and production.

Fifth, while displaying the rise of global trade, the cargo lists also serve as a reminder that Atlantic commercial networks were the ultimate expression of preexisting regional trade routes and methods of commerce. Marseille, for example, had been a Mediterranean trading port since its foundation by Greek sailors and its trade with the Americas supplemented that Mediterranean role rather than supplanting it. Indeed, the manifests of the ships that left Marseille for the West Indies contain Italian marble, rice from the Levant, olive oil from Aleppo, and Malaga wine from Spain. They reveal a Caribbean economy that was intimately tied into a web of Mediterranean, not just Atlantic, trade networks. Annales historians such as Carrière have examined specific towns, and cultural historians such as McCabe have examined how Mediterranean connections have shaped France, but the connections between Mediterranean networks and Atlantic networks still have yet to be fleshed out, as do the effects that those links had on the colonies. This close intertwining between regional and transoceanic trade networks calls for a more nuanced construction of the Atlantic economy that incorporates the smaller, older trading patterns into the historiography of the Caribbean.

By modeling the Atlantic as a set of interlocking regions in addition to the vast transoceanic webs of Hancock and Ann Smart Martin, two benefits emerge. Examining the interplay between regional trade and transatlantic trade allows for a more nuanced analysis of both networks, since neither existed independent of each other. Focusing on regions also provides insights into the origins of the Atlantic economy. The methods by which Hancock’s merchants created and maintained their networks did not arise in a vacuum but were instead the culmination of Mediterranean and European coastal commerce that had existed for centuries. Exploring those forms of commerce would therefore lead to a more complete understanding of how those larger oceanic networks evolved and functioned.

**New Directions**

Barrels of wine, pairs of shoes, pine boards, olive oil, printed silks, Gruyère cheese, marble tiles, flour, indienne fabric, and carriage wheels: Each of these objects, mundane though they may seem, reveal both the productive power of eighteenth-century France and the complex web of regional trade networks to which France connected its West Indian colonies. Focusing on those smaller networks of distinctly European trade would illuminate the economic roles of cities such as Marseille, Copenhagen, and Barcelona which were not dominated by the transoceanic trade to the same extent as Liverpool, Bordeaux, or Cadiz. It would also interpret their regional commerce within an Atlantic framework. Examining how those smaller networks grew into the larger linkages studied by Hancock and Ann Smart Martin would emphasize the connection of the early modern Atlantic to its pre-modern roots. Redefining the Atlantic to look backward as well as forward would therefore open new avenues of inquiry into the origins of the European Atlantic empires and provide them with a deeper historical context.
Studying these networks would also return scholarly attention to the metropole after a lengthy hiatus; thus uniting the metropole’s role as a political center with its role as the hub of a tripartite regional, oceanic, and global trade. Such a study could possibly follow the model set up by Zahedieh for London as a center for colonial government and empire-spanning trade. Or it could build from Emma Rothschild’s study of an Edinburgh family with European connections to France, Atlantic ties to Jamaica, and global travels to India.\textsuperscript{149} Either methodology more fully illuminates the centrality of the metropole within the Atlantic empires of the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries.

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