

Introduction

Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,

And all the tradesman's honours overhead:

Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page

With letters huge inscribed from top to toe...¹

Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805)

In his account of the rise to dominance of the British supermarket, Andrew Simms describes a visit to an out of town shopping park, centred upon two huge warehouse-style buildings: 'from several positions, your whole world is Tesco; you can see nothing else'.² Although Simms describes only the buildings, it is a familiar vista replicated across the country, one dominated by the instantly recognisable logos of these retail giants, branded not only on buildings themselves, but also on trolleys, carrier bags and petrol pumps. Inside the stores, a diverse range of hundreds, if not thousands, of products bear the company's logo, all of which can be purchased with similarly marked credit cards. Even the employees are branded with the supermarket's identity, in blue uniforms and wearing badges with the company's logo on them. Simms' focus is upon one type of outlet, indeed one particular retailer, but in reality perhaps the brand name does not matter; rather, it is the fact that branding –

¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book VII (1805), in Rick Allen, *The Moving Pageant. A Literary Sourcebook on London Street-Life, 1700-1914* (London, 1998), p.81. Thanks to Ruth Mather and Ruth Scobie for this reference.

² Andrew Simms, *Tescopoly. How One Shop Came Out on Top and Why it Matters* (London, 2007), p.336.

logos, symbols, or devices – can, and does, entirely subsume the modern streetscape, the household and the person.

Very few material surfaces today are without some form of branding, be it proprietary or institutional. This saturation is blinding; one does not always notice it until it is pointed out. Look carefully: manhole covers, electrical plugs and coins – all contain some kind of branding, whether it is the mark of the manufacturer, a safety device or a royal symbol. We ‘organise our lives in brand culture’.³ From companies such as Apple and Coca-Cola to institutions such as universities or the National Health Service (NHS), we are surrounded by logos, symbols and marks claiming to represent the ‘brand image’ of an institution or corporation. These logos appear everywhere: individuals too are branded, whether by choice – such as selecting clothing with logos imprinted across them – or as part of a uniform imposed by their employers, as with the aforementioned supermarket employees. Likewise, institutional branding occurs everywhere: the terms on which this thesis was funded require the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) logo to be displayed on any presentation of this research.⁴ Vast amounts of money are invested in maintaining the integrity of brands. For example, the local health authorities that constitute the NHS underwent four name changes between 1997 and 2010, and are currently subject to a fifth to be implemented by 2013, changes that cumulate to an estimated cost in the millions.⁵ To

³ Sarah Banet-Weiser and Charlotte Lapansky, ‘RED is the new black: brand culture, consumer citizenship and political possibility’, *International Journal of Communication 2* (2008), p.1248.

⁴ ‘AHRC studentship terms and conditions’, <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Documents/Studentship%20Terms%20and%20Conditions.pdf> (accessed August 2011).

⁵ Jon Swaine, ‘NHS to spend millions to rebrand as “NHS”’, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 August 2008 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2497476/NHS-to-spend-millions-to-rebrand-as-NHS.html>); BBC News, ‘North East PCT boards merge prior to health changes’, 2 February 2011 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-12348885>).

this end, the NHS has an entire website devoted to its ‘brand guidelines’, including where and when the logo should be deployed (essentially, everywhere one could possibly think of from headed paper to sides of hospitals, surgeries, clinics and pharmacies), and a section on stylistic conventions including details on the ‘NHS blue’. As the website states, ‘our identity is largely shaped by what we do – treating illness and promoting health. But our communications also play an important part in defining who we are.’⁶ Branding, and its sign value, is an integral element of this communications process.

Despite a tendency by marketing and branding experts to define the process as an invention of the last century, Wordsworth’s description of shops from *The Prelude* reveals some continuity between early nineteenth-century and twenty-first-century branding. Names, signs and symbols are part of a long-established system of identifying one’s premises and the goods one sells. The *Encyclopedie Methodique* in 1783 described London as ‘remarkable for the beautiful signs that the merchants put up. They almost always surpass those of Paris for size, quality of execution, and price.’⁷ George Scharf’s detailed sketches of London street life also illustrate a firmly-established urban material culture covered with branding: shops on the Strand with proprietary branding devices found on every level of buildings, towering over passers-by; people carrying signs, known as ‘peripatetic placards’; and bills that were pasted on blank walls.⁸ Accordingly, the advertising covering every available surface

⁶ ‘NHS brand guidelines: the importance of our identity’, <http://www.nhsidentity.nhs.uk/about-the-nhs-brand/importance-of-the-nhs-identity> (accessed August 2011).

⁷ Quoted in David Garrioch, ‘House names, shop signs and social organisation in Western European cities, 1500-1900’, *Urban History* 21:1 (1994), p.45.

⁸ See for example, British Museum (hereafter BM), British Roy PV, 1862,0614.1187, ‘drawing/advertisement’ (c.1825); BM, British Roy PV, 1862,0614.1188, ‘drawing/advertisement’

was coined ‘the Language of the Walls’ by an 1855 contemporary, James Dawson Burn.⁹ Look more closely and one sees that goods, when paid for with ready money, were acquired through the exchange of coins, branded with the royal cipher – as they are today.

When historians have studied marks on goods and objects, they almost without exception have interpreted them solely as forms of commercial identity. David Garrioch, Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford are among those who have explored eighteenth-century proprietary branding in the form of, and on, street signs, trade cards and bill heads.¹⁰ Garrioch, Berg and Clifford’s focus has been upon how these symbols drew attention to shops and wares, how they reminded the customer where a product had been purchased and where to return for another. As such, these studies have presented these marks as ‘proto-brands’, anticipatory of the modern concept of branding because they were part of what consumers looked for and purchased. However, it is a central argument of this thesis that if we focus on the marks on objects, on the materiality of brands, we will find that such ‘brand’ marks are more multifaceted and complex than many contemporary theorists of ‘the brand’ would have us believe.

(1834, 1836-1840); BM, British Roy Scharf Vol.4 PV, 1862,0614.18, ‘drawing’ (c.1830); these are reproduced in Peter Jackson, *George Scharf’s London. Sketches and Watercolours of a Changing City, 1820-50* (London, 1987); Street advertising, pp.34-35; the Strand, p.60. Thanks to Mark Jenner for this reference.

⁹ Quoted in Sara Thornton, *Advertising, Subjectivity and the Nineteenth-Century Novel. Dickens, Balzac and the Language of the Walls* (Basingstoke, 2009), p.1. Thanks to Ruth Scobie for this reference.

¹⁰ Garrioch, ‘House names, shop signs and social organisation’; Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, ‘Selling consumption in the eighteenth century: advertising and the trade card in Britain and France’, *Cultural & Social History* 4 (2007), 145-170.

For these marks, or branding, represented marks of production as well as marks facilitating consumption. By considering the supply side of the object's life cycle, we can view these marks of commerce in a manner that complements the work of Berg, Clifford and Elizabeth Eger, who have focused on consumer demand and desire.¹¹ This is not to signal a return to the kind of economic history written prior to Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb's seminal *The Birth of the Consumer Society* in 1982, but rather to examine the scholarly concentration on the consumer's role in the process of consumption that has developed over the last thirty years. Furthermore, this thesis will show that marks on products had and have many audiences and take many forms, something that has been overlooked in most historical analyses of 'branded products'. When we focus on objects in the past and all the types of marking to which they have been subjected, we arrive at new ways to think about the consumption process and, indeed, branding itself.

1. Definitions of brands and branding practices

Branding is a complicated term, and is best conceived as having two (often overlapping) meanings. The word 'brand' can refer to physical marks and symbols, but it can also refer to imaginary constructs; it is composed of both logos and brand 'identities'. It is often this psychological construct to which we refer when we use the terms 'brands' and 'branding' in everyday parlance. Marketing scholar Marieke de Mooij has agreed that 'a brand is the proprietary visual, emotional, rational image that

¹¹ Berg and Clifford, 'Selling consumption in the eighteenth century'; see also: Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century. Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke, 2003).

people associate with a company or product.’¹² Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* and Liz Moor’s *The Rise of Brands* have both presented the physical logos and marks as facilitating the imaginative construction and manipulation of this powerful imagined entity.¹³

Many engaged in the study of branding have put forward a particular (westernised) historical narrative of branding, in which the growth of advertising and industry in the mid-nineteenth century combined with an increase in the numbers of marked or logoed products to create the concept of the ‘brand identity’. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century or even early twentieth century, this history implies, branding was limited in both purpose and scope. It consisted only of devices – presented as proto-logos – that served to differentiate products from rival manufacturers of similar goods and to reassure customers about authenticity and standards of quality. These marks were sparse, and were used primarily by pioneering entrepreneurs of industry such as Josiah Wedgwood. Indeed, Nancy F. Koehn’s study of commodity branding begins with Wedgwood’s ‘invention’ of marking all products with his name in the 1770s.¹⁴ These functions of the brand were superseded, so the narrative goes, by the birth of the ‘brand identity’. Moor describes post-World War II branding as a more sophisticated practice than that used in earlier periods. Present-day branding, she asserts, is a process ‘embodying a range of additional functions and possibilities

¹² Marieke de Mooij, *Global Marketing and Advertising. Understanding Cultural Paradoxes* (London, 1998), p.24.

¹³ Naomi Klein, *No Logo. No Space, No Choice, No Jobs* (London, 2010); Liz Moor, *The Rise of Brands* (Oxford, 2007).

¹⁴ Nancy F. Koehn, *Brand New. How Entrepreneurs Earned Consumers’ Trust from Wedgwood to Dell* (Boston, MA, 2001), p.33.

above and beyond those developed at the beginning of the twentieth century to differentiate products and reassure customers'.¹⁵

Most historical analyses of branding have adopted the broad chronological narrative posited by non-historians such as Klein and Moor. They have presented branding as an invention of the factory era, which led to mass-produced, standardised commodities that required differentiation: 'competitive branding became a necessity of the machine age – with a context of manufactured sameness, image-based difference had to be manufactured along with the product.'¹⁶ Indeed, an overview of studies of branded goods published in the *Economic History Review* from the last decade reveals that scholars of branding have focused upon the twentieth century, with only Roy Church and James Simpson situating their analysis in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Church considers the 1840s to be a 'turning point' in which commodity branding was introduced in England.¹⁸ Likewise, Mira Wilkins has asserted that brands developed in 'the late nineteenth and early twentieth century', a conclusion that Paul Duguid has stated that the majority of historians concur upon.¹⁹

¹⁵ Moor, *The Rise of Brands*, p.6.

¹⁶ Klein, *No Logo*, p.6.

¹⁷ Roy Church, 'Advertising consumer goods in nineteenth-century Britain: reinterpretations', *Economic History Review* 53:4 (2000), 621-645, and 'Salesmen and the transformation of selling in Britain and the US in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', *Economic History Review* 61:3 (2008), 695-725; James Simpson, 'Selling to reluctant drinkers: the British wine market, 1860-1914', *Economic History Review* 58:1 (2004), 80-108.

¹⁸ Church, 'Salesmen and the transformation of selling in Britain and the US in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', p.703.

¹⁹ Mira Wilkins, 'When and why brand names in food and drink?', in Geoffrey Jones and Nicholas J. Morgan (Eds.), *Adding Value. Brands and Marketing in Food and Drink* (London, 1994), p.22; Paul Duguid, 'Developing the brand: the case of alcohol, 1800-1880', *Enterprise & Society* 4:3 (2003), pp.405-406.

Scharf's images of early nineteenth-century London reveal a somewhat different story in terms of the presence of branded goods. They present an urban landscape in which there was a firmly established and widespread use of branding in terms of both its functional and experiential roles. A quick glance through the advertising pages of almanacs and newspapers from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries corroborates this, as does the work of Garrioch, Berg and Clifford on eighteenth-century trade cards and shop signs. The branding of products was not suddenly invented in the nineteenth century. Rather, as John Styles has discussed, it increased – rapidly – in this period.²⁰

Furthermore, marks and devices found on commodities were far more diverse than have previously been acknowledged. Discussions of branding have been framed overwhelmingly in terms of proprietary and retail marks and identities, an interpretation that has in the main been accepted by most disciplines without a challenge. Yet branding and marking practices in this period constructed far more than just proprietorial identities, not least political unities. Marks of the state and of institutions helped create, establish and maintain imagined communities. These marking practices also represented technologies of power: branding was a means by which control and authority was divided, shared and, to some extent, enacted.

²⁰ John Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London', *Past & Present* 168 (2000), p.148.

1.1 How historians have discussed branding practices

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the overwhelming emphasis placed upon proprietorial brand image and identity by today's branding and marketing industries, those working in other disciplines, including business, legal and consumer history, have adopted a definition of 'branding' which focuses entirely upon proprietorial concerns. In addition, there has been a great deal of lexical slippage by historians in discussions of branded goods. 'Brand' has been used to mean either a company or product name, or both, as well as a mark or logo.

The first in-depth historical studies into commodity branding on Wedgwood's pottery and George Packwood's razor strop trade by McKendrick unproblematically and unquestioningly used 'brand' to mean both a logo or mark and the name of a commodity.²¹ In his work on the nineteenth-century alcoholic drink trade, Duguid adopted a similarly relaxed approach when he stated that he 'elide[s] brands, trade names, and trademarks unless distinction seems important.'²² Again, an overview of the last thirty years' research on branded products in the *Economic History Review* illustrates the fluid nature of the terminology: in the majority of contributions, 'brand' has been used to mean both a company and a product name: in his 2008 analysis of the global beauty product industry, Geoffrey Jones has discussed the 'L'Oréal brand', by which the company name is intended.²³ By contrast, in his earlier work on

²¹ Neil McKendrick, 'Joseph Wedgwood and the commercialization of the potteries' and 'George Packwood and the commercialization of shaving', in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), 100-145 and 146-196.

²² Duguid, 'Developing the brand', p.414, fn.37.

²³ Geoffrey Jones, 'Blonde and blue-eyed? Globalizing beauty, c.1945-c.1980', *Economic History Review* 61:1 (2008), p.140.

Unilever with Peter Miskell, the authors referred to the Persil and Ariel brands, by which a product name was intended.²⁴

Author, article and year All from <i>Economic History Review</i> (1984 – present)	Brand (product)	Brand (company)	Brand (mark)	Brand image / identity
Nicholas, 'The overseas marketing performance of British industry, 1870-1914' (1984)	✓	✓	✓	
Brown, 'The collapse of the British toy industry, 1979-1984' (1993)		✓		
Church, 'Advertising consumer goods in nineteenth-century Britain: reinterpretations' (2000)	✓	✓	✓	
Broadberry & Marrison, 'External economies of scale in the Lancashire cotton industry, 1900-1950' (2002)		✓		
Simpson, 'Selling to reluctant drinkers: the British wine market, 1860-1914' (2004)		✓	✓	
Bakker, 'The decline and fall of the European film industry: sunk costs, market size and market structure, 1895-1926' (2005)	✓			✓
Jones & Miskell, 'European integration and corporate restructuring: the strategy of Unilever, c.1957-c.1990' (2005)	✓	✓		
Jones, 'Blonde and blue-eyed? Globalizing beauty, c.1945-c.1980' (2008)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Church, 'Salesmen and the transformation of selling in Britain and the US in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' (2008)		✓	✓	
Scott & Walker, 'Advertising, promotion, and the competitive advantage of interwar British department stores' (2010)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1, survey of contributions to Economic History Review, 1984 - present

As Table 1 shows, in the last decade such fluidity and imprecision in the use of the vocabulary of branding by historians is not uncommon. Peter Scott and James Walker have similarly used the 'brand' to indicate a specific company, such as the John Lewis Partnership brand, and Church has discussed both product and company brands, which sometimes appear next to one another, as is the case with products such as Cadbury's Cocoa Essence.²⁵ Although in these discussions some goods are described as branded or marked – for example, the branded bottle corks to which Simpson refers

²⁴ Geoffrey Jones and Peter Miskell, 'European integration and corporate restructuring: the strategy of Unilever, c.1957-c.1990', *Economic History Review* 58:1 (2005), p.123.

²⁵ Peter Scott and James Walker, 'Advertising, promotion, and the competitive advantage of interwar British department stores', *Economic History Review*, 63:4 (2010), p.1125; Church, 'Advertising consumer goods in nineteenth-century Britain', p.635.

in his work on the drinks industry – the actual practice of marking products or indeed the mark or symbol that is displayed by these producers is not explicitly addressed.²⁶ It has been taken for granted that commodities or companies were branded for specific, commercial purposes – to be used in conjunction with advertising in order to differentiate or create a brand identity, the imagined ‘thing’, the study of which, as Table 1 demonstrates, has emerged only in recent years.

2. New ways of thinking about branding

Historians, then, often see branding as closely related to the ways in which it is used today. Increasingly, attention has been placed upon the experiential construct or brand image that the mark communicated, and how this was developed through advertising. It is the marketing and advertising of branded goods that have caught the attention of historians: they have been rather less concerned about branding practices and the material expression of these marks. This focus is not wholly problematic, but one result has been that these discussions of ‘branding’ by historians have become teleological; this treatment retroactively foreshadows what is meant by the term and practice.

Despite work by two historians, Gary Hamilton and Chi-Kong Lai, who twenty years ago argued for a fresh examination of historical interpretations of commodity branding and cited evidence for the practice in late imperial China, it is only recently

²⁶ Simpson, ‘Selling to reluctant drinkers’, p.94.

that these definitions have been revisited – by scholars from other disciplines.²⁷ It has been archaeologists and anthropologists who have driven this reinterpretation of branding and in so doing, have broadened its parameters. They concur with Moor's definition that branding constitutes forms of commodity marking which are comparable to modern practices. But they maintain that brands, or marks, have been used throughout history as a means of establishing origin and trustworthiness in transactions, as well as to evoke and display individual and communal identities. These scholars thus disagree with Moor and Klein in terms of periodisation and the suggestion that the roots of branding lay in capitalism.

In his 2008 article on commodity branding in *Current Anthropology*, archaeologist David Wengrow asserted that commodity branding is not as 'modern' as had been established, nor is it a direct result of capitalism; his interpretation of marks on ancient Mesopotamian jars and bottles reveal that societies had been branding their goods in order to act as guarantees of quality and origin thousands of years prior to the western industrial revolution of the nineteenth century AD.²⁸ In so doing, Wengrow countered the 'widespread perception that the branding of things, people, and knowledge is a distinctive creation of the post-industrial west, which is now being exported across the world, leading to the erosion of cultural diversity and local identities in new and unprecedented ways.'²⁹

²⁷ Gary G. Hamilton and Chi-Kong Lai, 'Consumerism without capitalism: consumption and brand names in late Imperial China', in Henry J. Rutz and Benjamin S. Orlove (Eds.), *The Social Economy of Consumption* (London, 1989), 253-279.

²⁸ David Wengrow, 'Prehistories of commodity branding', *Current Anthropology* 49:1 (2008), 7-34.

²⁹ David Wengrow, 'Introduction: commodity branding in archaeological and anthropological perspectives' in Andrew Bevan and David Wengrow (Eds.), *Cultures of Commodity Branding* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2010), p.12.

Though he did not explicitly state it, Wengrow highlighted that scholarly definitions of ‘brands’ had become subverted to mean ‘brand identity’ or ‘brand entity’ in much the same way that it is used today. As Mark Jenner and Patrick Wallis have argued with regards the definition of the ‘medical marketplace’, historians have been influenced by the ‘rising prominence of market-language in late twentieth-century society.’³⁰ Historical usage of ‘branding’ similarly owes much to this context. When submersed in this environment, it is sometimes difficult to separate the brand identity from the brand. As Julien Cayla and Eric J. Arnould have commented, ‘brands have become ubiquitous in global popular culture’.³¹ With brands and branding so pervasive in society, it can be hard to detach oneself from them in order to study them.

The established historical interpretation of ‘branding’ had restricted the study of branding and branded products to the period in which the techniques used today in order to communicate branding such as advertising and marketing, underpinned by effective and widespread distribution, were in full swing – which, as Table 1 shows, the contributors to the *Economic History Review* have located in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Wengrow encouraged a reassessment of the way in which we view commodity branding or marking practices. Wengrow’s initial article opened a veritable floodgate of researchers eager to rethink ‘branding’. Indeed, when it appeared in 2008, his article was accompanied by seven pages of responses.³² It invited significant interest from a variety of disciplines, including branding and

³⁰ Mark Jenner and Patrick Wallis, ‘The medical marketplace’ in M.S.R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis (Eds.), *Medicine and the Market in England and its Colonies, c.1450-c.1850* (Basingstoke, 2007), p.17.

³¹ Julien Cayla and Eric J. Arnould, ‘A cultural approach to branding in the global marketplace’, *Journal of International Marketing*, 16:4 (2008), p.86.

³² Wengrow, ‘Prehistories of commodity branding’, pp.21-29.

marketing as well as anthropology and archaeology, not to mention those working in the branding, marketing and advertising industries who were curious to know what civilisation's earliest 'brand name product' was, if it was not a nineteenth-century invention.³³

As such, the idea that branding is a modern phenomenon and that it is something that is unique to western capitalist society has been unpicked by a collection of scholars from archaeology, anthropology and marketing. The various scholars who contributed to Andrew Bevan and Wengrow's edited collection two years after his article in *Current Anthropology* confirmed that branding – marks that denote a point of origin and quality assurance in a homogenous commodity market as well as appealing to aspirations or beliefs – had existed well before industrialisation of the west began in the nineteenth century.³⁴ This built upon Hamilton and Lai's ground breaking work of twenty years previous.³⁵

Unlike the contributors to Bevan and Wengrow's edited volume, this thesis does not take a 'year zero' approach to establish the origins of commodity branding. Indeed, it does not fundamentally dispute the chronology presented by the contributors to the *Economic History Review* – for a specific *type* of commodity marking practice that is combined with extensive advertising. Their interpretation of branding stems from the use of a particular kind of source material, which has comprised company archives

³³ Ibid.; Wengrow, 'Introduction', pp.11-12.

³⁴ Andrew Bevan and David Wengrow (Eds.), *Cultures of Commodity Branding* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2010).

³⁵ Hamilton and Lai, 'Consumerism without capitalism'. Although Wengrow has acknowledged he was unaware of Hamilton and Lai's work before submission of his article to *Current Anthropology*, his work was highly complementary to Hamilton and Lai, see: Wengrow, 'Introduction', p.12.

concerned with marketing strategies, promotional materials such as newspapers, and legal records related to registration and protection of trademarks. Instead, this thesis complements the work of the contributors to *Cultures of Commodity Branding* by adopting a more open and broad interpretation of what constitutes 'branding', which is driven by the integration of non-textual material culture sources alongside textual evidence.

This 'material turn' in branding is complemented by a growing body of work that has demonstrated the importance of the visual consumption of branding: studies of marks, symbols or logos, such as that which featured in a special issue of *Marketing Theory* in 2006.³⁶ This work urges those engaged in the study of brands and branding to encompass a broader range of source material, including the aesthetic and the graphic. This thesis develops this interest in the analysis of non-textual material culture and the study of branding through its focus upon the materiality of marks. The incorporation of non-textual material culture prompts a return to a definition of 'branding' in its original context: the creation of a mark, logo or symbol.³⁷ As a result, it is the study of making these marks, and the ways in which they were propagated throughout society, which forms the focus of this thesis.

At the heart of the thesis, therefore, is an attempt to understand marking practices of mundane commodities, between c.1650 and c.1900. Methods of branding products

³⁶ See: Jonathan E. Schroeder, 'Editorial: introduction to the special issue on aesthetics, images and vision', *Marketing Theory*, 6:1 (2006), 5-10, and the other articles in this issue.

³⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'branding, n.', <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/Entry/22645> (accessed March 2012).

were many and varied. Products were marked with devices through embossing or stamps that were integrated into commodity packaging, or even in some cases, into the very fabric of the product. Some marks were attached by labels, tickets or wrapped around the object. Others were imprinted into a wax seal. In some instances, package design – shape and colour – became indelibly associated with the mark to the extent that it, too, came to constitute a medium of branding. Figure 1 illustrates a small sample of the range of marks and marking practices found on commodities between 1650 and 1900 from archaeological excavations and private and museum collections.



Fig. 1, branded goods, c.1650-c.1900³⁸

The range of marks that appeared upon commodities was therefore more diverse than the established historiography would imply. In addition to manufacturers' marks, Figure 1 also shows marks of ownership as well as retailers' marks. It also reveals marks of state and officialdom. Some of these devices had a dual purpose. These marks represented, therefore, a range of 'branders', or persons involved in the exchange of mundane goods, and accordingly hinted at different audiences or readers

³⁸ Clockwise from top right: National Trust Collections (hereafter NTC), 138194.4, 'Blacking bottle' (C19); York Archaeological Trust (hereafter YAT), Project 5000 (Hungate), SF83 'tobacco pipe' (C19); YAT, Project 0725 (Foss Islands), [no find number] 'ceramic plate' (C19); YAT, Project 5000, SF2622, 'glass bottle' (C19); YAT, Project 5000, SF82, 'vessel fragment' (C19); YAT, Project 0725, [no find number], 'stone bottle' (C19); YAT, Project 5000, SF158, 'stone bottle' (C19); Thackray Museum (hereafter TM), Patent Medicines Collection, 441.002, 'Summer's Lozenges box' (C19). Centre: Museum of the Royal Society of Pharmacists (hereafter MRSP), 'Singleton's Eye Ointment pot' (C18).

for these marks. Furthermore, Figure 1 also highlights this variety of means by which commodity branding occurred: marks were stamped *onto* the product, pasted *around* it and physically moulded *into* the container or even item itself. Some products bore multiple marks and so formed layers of branding, which represented the different identities involved in the product's life cycle. The integration of non-textual sources – the commodities themselves and their packaging – thus complicates and enriches the established historiography of branding.

2.1 Proprietary marks

Historical interest in branding has focused on a particular type of mark, of the kind represented in Figure 1 by three late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century containers: the 'W Linfoot / York' stone bottle, the 'Emmatt's / Aerated Water / Harrogate' bottle, the Day & Martin's label stuck onto the blacking bottle and the 'Singleton's Eye Ointment' gallipot. These marks reflected the identity of the people who filled these containers with alcohol, water or medicine, and were aimed at their consumers. By contrast, the early nineteenth-century bottle fragment shown in the bottom left of Figure 1 bears the ownership mark of John Kilby. Although Kilby was a brewer, research by Jeremy Kemp has demonstrated that Kilby was not a producer, but a consumer.³⁹ Rather than purchase wine in a bottle marked with a merchant's identity, he had his own marked bottles filled instead. This complicates the established history of branding, which has presumed branding reflected only a relationship between a producer and a consumer. Certainly, the Linfoot, Emmatt's, Day & Martin's and Singleton's marks did this. However, these marks reflected only

³⁹ See record entry for YAT Integrated Archaeological Database (hereafter IADB), Project 5000 (Hungate), SF82, 'vessel fragment'.

the producer of the good that was held inside the pot or bottle. The photograph of the nineteenth-century bottle fragment at the top left of Figure 1 reveals the stamp of the potter that created the bottle. This, then, was the mark of the producer of the bottle. While manufacturer, owner and retailer marks can be grouped together, united by a common interest in reflecting the proprietary interests of an individual or company, a closer reading of the marks reveals considerable diversity within this type of mark. They show that branding was representative of not only commerce, but also of ownership and production. This interpretation complements Henry Glassie's view that objects must be viewed as both acts of production as well as acts of consumption.⁴⁰

Analysis of the objects themselves also highlights the extent to which branding was a multifaceted process. Even though these marks can be linked by the fact that they all represent proprietary interests, the objects display, quite clearly, that many people were involved in the marking of products and in many ways. Did all of these 'branders' mark their product for the same audience? Did they have the same intent when they marked these items?

The historiography of branding has overlooked these complexities of product distribution and presumed a simple relationship between a producer of a product and their consumer. Yet between 1650 and 1900, as now, commodities passed through multiple consumers throughout their existence, something that is revealed more clearly through detailed examination of the marks upon products. The potter's mark on the stoneware bottle fragment on the top left of Figure 1 is an ideal example. The

⁴⁰ Henry Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington, 1999), p.77.

bottle was intended to hold porter or wine. This is revealed through the proprietary mark of the wine merchant on the opposing side of the bottle, which is deliberately not included in this composite image. Analyses of branding have focused purely on these marks of the people that filled the bottle – marks that reflected the product contained within the bottle – and have overlooked the fact that the bottle itself was a product, made by a potter and branded with his mark. Just as the wine merchant's mark signalled information to their consumer – the drinker of the bottle – the potter's mark similarly transmitted information to *their* consumer – the merchant that filled the bottles.

As this thesis will demonstrate, potters or manufacturers of other commodity containers such as glass bottles, ceramic pots or paper bags, did not advertise their wares in quite the same way that the makers of the goods that were sold in these containers did. The latter often harnessed exciting new technologies and marketing strategies to promote their branded products. These left textual sources behind, as highlighted by McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, and as a result it is these types of marks that have received historical attention.

However, those engaged in the study of non-textual material culture sources have begun to highlight the life cycle of a commodity. Bevan has noted how branding reflects the distribution chain of a product: 'producer, distributor, buyer, and seller'.⁴¹

Through adopting predominantly archaeologically-recovered material as its starting

⁴¹ Andrew Bevan, 'Making and marking relationships: Bronze Age brandings and Mediterranean commodities', in Andrew Bevan and David Wengrow (Eds.), *Cultures of Commodity Branding* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2010), p.37.

point, this thesis also seeks to highlight this process through a focus upon the implementation of these marks in the product's creation, rather than focusing upon the use and divestment of goods. Marks of production, usually physically engrained into the object, tend to survive better than those applied by retailers. As a result, when considering the life cycle of these objects, it is the production and distribution, rather than the use and consumption of the goods that, in the main, form the primary concern of the thesis.

Branding can be understood as a layering process in which mark after mark is applied to a product. To some degree, this acts as a means of maintaining trust in a distribution chain, as each time the product changes hands (until it reaches the final consumer) it is marked. The diversity of marks also makes more explicit the overall number of transactions that one bottle went through. The potter's mark represented a transaction between him and his consumer, who filled the bottle with liquid. A label affixed to the bottle – depicted in the top right of Figure 1 – then reflected the second transaction that the bottle passed through. In the instance of the labelled bottle in Figure 1, this was Day & Martin, liquid blacking manufacturers, who sold their product to households across Britain, and indeed across the world. As the thesis will show, however, specific types of marks had to be placed at the packaging's production by a glassmaker, potter or clay pipe maker. A straightforward assumption that a mark was made by the person it represented is misleading, and complicates further the way in which commodity branding functions as a security device. This examination of the layering of branding upon a product suggests that contemporaries were aware of the way that this process potentially undermined the sanctity of their

branding. Adding their own mark through different means attempted to restore the confidence of *their* consumers in their product's supply and distribution chain.

The marks that appeared upon commodities were, therefore, aimed at different audiences. The extent to which these groups noticed the branding that was aimed at another group varied. This is something that archaeologist Marcos Martín-Torres has briefly broached in his examination of early modern freemasons' branding. He has suggested that freemasons' marks that were comprised of alchemic and religious symbols did not necessarily mean the same thing to every person who encountered it and has highlighted the way in which these masonic motifs have perplexed subsequent generations of non-freemasons, up to the present day. Potters engaged to make alchemic crucibles that displayed masonic motifs may not have understood what these marks meant and as such, may have simply ignored them.⁴² Likewise, even if users of a branded commodity understood the marks placed upon it for another audience, they may have simply ignored them. This remains the case today: as outlined at the beginning of the chapter, how many marks upon products in daily life do we simply cease to notice because not only are they so numerous, or because they are also not relevant to us?

⁴² Marcos Martín-Torres, "Of marks, prints, pots and Becherova: freemasons' branding in early modern Europe?", in Andrew Bevan and David Wengrow (Eds.), *Cultures of Commodity Branding* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2010), p.226.

2.2 Marks of officialdom

While proprietary marks are an important type of branding practice, one that has a powerful resonance with our consumer-focused society, they are not the only type of mark found upon commodities. Almost entirely overlooked are the marks of officialdom, placed by the state. Figure 1 depicts three types of state-required marks upon mundane commodities, along the top row a mark imprinted into a bottle beneath the potter's stamp and a label pasted across the lid of a box of pills, and in the bottom right hand corner, a stamp printed onto the base of a ceramic plate.

Histories of commodity consumption have largely overlooked the role of the state, distracted, perhaps, by the 'fantastic conspicuousness' of proprietary marks.⁴³ Official marks, by contrast were (and remain) largely uniform in appearance, and, it must be admitted, in most cases were far less aesthetically pleasing. Unlike proprietary marks, these symbols were not supported by exciting and innovative marketing and advertising strategies designed to 'train' consumers to look for them, and they were frequently ephemeral in nature. Often they performed mundane, though necessary functions, such as requiring all bakers to mark their bread in the monitoring of loaf size and weight in the assize of bread.⁴⁴ As such, the marks of officialdom that have generated the most discussion have been early modern guild devices.

⁴³Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures* (London, 1998), p.25.

⁴⁴ Abraham Greenberg, 'The ancient lineage of trade marks', *Journal of the Patent Office Society* 33:12 (1951), p.881.

The marks required by guilds varied depending on the guild itself, but they usually required a stamp to represent place of origin and the maker themselves, in order to provide a measure of accountability and quality control.⁴⁵ By the time we enter the beginnings of McKendrick's consumer revolution in the eighteenth century, the influence of the guilds had waned significantly. In his analysis of brand names before the modern period, Gary Richardson has presented the marks required by medieval guilds as 'branding mechanisms' that reflected standardisation and quality standards, much as the baker's mark required by the assize of bread.⁴⁶ There is an implicit story in the historiography that official marks decreased as the guilds' influence slowly faded.⁴⁷

Instead, rather the opposite occurred. Symbols of authority and power began to multiply upon commodities. However, they were not symbols of independent guilds, but marks of an increasingly powerful emerging nation state. Like today, they were to be found on an eclectic range of material surfaces from coinage to buildings to pottery. Their sheer abundance, however, has contributed to a 'blindness' where these marks are concerned: highly visible, they passed unnoticed at the same time.

⁴⁵ For more on guilds' control and inspection, see: Patrick Wallis, 'Controlling commodities: search and reconciliation in the early modern livery companies', in Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (Eds.), *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450-1800* (London, 2002), 85-100; Ronald F. Homer, 'The Pewterers' Company's country searches and the Company's regulation of prices', in Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (Eds.), *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450-1800* (London, 2002), 101-113. On marks specifically (although outside of Britain), see: Bert de Munck, 'Skills, trust, and changing consumer preferences: the decline of Antwerp's craft guilds from the perspective of the product market, c.1500-c.1800', *International Review of Social History* 53 (2008), 197-233.

⁴⁶ Gary Richardson, 'Brand names before the industrial revolution', National Bureau of Economics Research Working Paper 13930 (April 2008).

⁴⁷ S.R. Epstein, 'Craft guilds, apprenticeship, and technological change in preindustrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History* 58:3 (1998), 684-713; John Forbes, 'Search, immigration and the Goldsmiths' Company: a study in the decline of its powers', in Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (Eds.), *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450-1800* (London, 2002), 115-125; Michael Berlin, 'Guilds in decline? London livery companies and the rise of a liberal economy, 1600-1800', in S.R. Epstein and Maarten Prak (Eds.), *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400-1600* (Cambridge, 2008), 316-341.

Unnoticed of course, unless it was discovered that the marks were counterfeited or appropriated. There is something exceptionally powerful about such devices, particularly so given that these were symbols on objects that were (and still are) handled by citizens, kept close to their person, taken into their homes, in their place of worship or drinking establishment of choice. Marks of the state and monarchy were omnipresent in the everyday life of nearly every individual between 1650 and 1900, upon luxury and mundane goods, and many of these remain in use today, such as hallmarks on pewter, gold and silver or marks on coinage.⁴⁸

It is not a coincidence that the context within which this increase in state branding took place was a highly important one in terms of the formation of the English and British nation state. The late seventeenth and eighteenth century witnessed a development from money circulating between individuals through bills of exchange to cheques drawn on institutions that had the authority of Parliament.⁴⁹ The reputation and trust previously placed in the individual was now transferred to the state.⁵⁰ The level of trust involved in making the state the guarantor of all transactions was (and still is) an extremely potent one. One way of both establishing and then reinforcing this level of trust was to use branding; coins and bills bore the royal mark, controlled by and representative of the state. Such an interpretation supports John Brewer's interpretation of state building through the deliberate cultivation of a fiscal-military state, becoming the 'largest employer, borrower and spender of money in

⁴⁸ See: Jan Gadd, 'Hallmarks – fake and pseudo silver marks on pewter in 1636 and later', *Journal of the Pewter Society* 11:3 (1998); John Hatcher and TC Barker, *A History of British Pewter* (London, 1974); Malcolm Bell, *Old Pewter* (London, 1905).

⁴⁹ Natasha Glaisyer, 'Calculating credibility: print culture, trust and economic figures in early eighteenth-century England', *Economic History Review* 60:4 (2007), p.686.

⁵⁰ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation. The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.156.

England/Britain.’⁵¹ The state ‘cut a substantial figure, becoming the largest single actor in the economy.’⁵² The strength with which the British nation state emerged in the nineteenth century was echoed to an extent in its marking practices, which required emblems of nationality and of nationhood to appear upon a diverse range of goods. Furthermore, the compulsion to place and police these marks shaped industrial production processes, and were in part a reflection of the state’s strength. Once the state’s creditworthy reputation had been established - as argued by Brewer, Michael Braddick and William Ashworth, predominantly through the Excise – specific branding practices helped to maintain and reinforce this reputation.⁵³

These symbols of nationhood maintained a steady and subtle presence in people’s lives, not unlike a process that social scientist Michael Billig has termed ‘banal nationalism’. War, according to Billig, is an example of extreme nationalism; banal nationalism by contrast is almost stealth-like. The unnoticed symbols, practices and customs of a nation are an important aspect of contributing towards a sense of nationhood, and thus were part of the processes described by Brewer, Braddick and Ashworth concerning the creation of ‘the state’. Anthropologist Daniel Miller notes that things ‘work by being invisible and unremarked upon, a state they usually achieve by being familiar and taken for granted’.⁵⁴ As Billig points out, ‘because

⁵¹ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power. War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), p.xvii.

⁵² William Ashworth, *Customs and Excise. Trade, Production, and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford, 2003), p.20.

⁵³ See: Michael Braddick, *The Nerves of State. Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558-1700* (Manchester, 1996); Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1500-1700* (Cambridge, 2000); Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*; Brewer, *Sinews of Power*. The downgrading of the US’ creditworthiness in August 2011 demonstrated how quickly the reputation of a firmly established nation can be damaged. See: ‘US loses AAA credit rating after S&P downgrade’, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-14428930>, 6 August 2011 (accessed August 2011).

⁵⁴ Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge, 2010), p.50.

nationalism has deeply affected contemporary ways of thinking, it is not easily studied.⁵⁵ State branding, banal nationalism, whatever term you choose to use, is still a huge part of our society. They go unnoticed today, so we have not looked for them in the past. Such is the power of these state marks that it is by association with or by authorisation of other institutions, for example, Royal Letters Patent or the Royal Warrant, that trust is transmitted from the state to these institutions. There is an inherent credibility in the branding of institutions that appear to be regulated by the state – testament to the power of state branding. As this thesis will demonstrate, other users of branding sometimes appropriated these marks for a variety of purposes, and in so doing accorded them with an increased degree of credibility.

3. Methodology and sources

The thesis makes use of a combination of sources in order to broaden the way in which historians can think about trust and branding, drawing upon material culture as its starting point. It developed out of an endeavour to make sense of post-medieval archaeologically excavated artefacts through a systematic analysis of a large assemblage.⁵⁶ Similar work has been pioneered by Nigel Jeffries and Alastair Owens at Museum of London Archaeology and Queen Mary, University of London, and Tim Murray and Penny Crook at La Trobe University, Sydney.⁵⁷ This thesis began by focusing on York Archaeological Trust's excavation of Hungate, an area to the east

⁵⁵ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995), p.36.

⁵⁶ AHRC Grant No. 137608, 'Possessions, consumption and choice: three studies of the material culture of domestic goods in York and Yorkshire 1400-1900'.

⁵⁷ For example, see the joint MoLA/QMUL project, 'Living in Victorian London: material histories of everyday domestic life in the nineteenth-century metropolis', <http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/victorianlondon/index.html> (accessed March 2012) and a similar project in Sydney, 'Exploring the archaeology of the modern city', http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/heritagensw/spr01/3_arta.htm (accessed March 2012).

periphery of the city centre that, unusually for York, generated significant amounts of post-medieval finds. However, extreme systematic analysis of branded commodities specifically was not possible due to the amount and nature of artefacts recovered from Hungate, which was highly fragmentary and not as extensive as predicted. Through the integration of branded goods from other repositories, the thesis has become a study of the cultural practice of marking objects and what these can tell us about the societies through which these commodities were produced, distributed and consumed.

Most historical studies of branding have not utilised non-textual material culture sources. Research by John Styles on product development in the eighteenth century and by Patrick Wallis on seventeenth-century apothecary shops thus pioneered the integration of material culture into the historical analysis of branded goods.⁵⁸ By contrast, first-generation historians of consumption such as McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb made extensive use of the documentary evidence available to them, predominantly newspaper collections from the seventeenth century onwards. *The Birth of the Consumer Society* proved to be so influential that many subsequent studies utilised the same source base as McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb. Since 1982, these resources have continued to be mined for information by those interested in historical consumption practices. To that end, there has been considerable work on advertising in relation to consumption by historians based upon these newspapers.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London'; Patrick Wallis, 'Consumption, retailing, and medicine in early-modern London', *Economic History Review* 61:1 (2008), 26-53.

⁵⁹ For example: R.B. Walker, 'Advertising in London newspapers, 1650-1750; Hill Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology and Popular Medicine*; Michael Harris, 'Timely notices: the uses of advertising and its relationship to news during the late seventeenth century' in Joad Raymond (Ed.), *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1999), 141-156; D. Hindley and G. Hindley, *Advertising in Victorian England 1837-1901* (London, 1972); Hamish Mathison, 'Tropes of promotion and wellbeing: advertisement and the eighteenth-century Scottish provincial press', in Joad Raymond (Ed.), *News, Newspapers and Society*, 206-225; Victoria Kelley, 'The All-Conquering

From printed documentary evidence, historians began to turn towards other forms of archives for evidence surrounding consumer desire and demand. Probate records detailing shop and household inventories as well as account books for evidence of people's material possessions became a key resource. Quantitative analysis such as that by Lorna Weatherill in the late 1980s helped to build a picture of the sheer variety of goods people in the early modern period came into possession.⁶⁰

Weatherill presented emulation as one of the leading motivations of consumer desire. Encouraged by her success in the archives, historians began to develop a more nuanced account of the factors that drove consumer demand, through a qualitative analysis of purchased goods. Borrowing interpretive structures and theories from anthropology and the social sciences opened up history to favouring a more interdisciplinary approach combining art history, history and archaeology.⁶¹ This

Advertiser"? Magazines, advertising and the consumer, 1880-1914', in Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde (Eds.), *Design and the Modern Magazine* (Manchester, 2007), 76-94; G.A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-1760* (Oxford, 1962); R.M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices. Early Provincial Newspapers* (Ohio, 1965); Hannah Barker, 'Medical advertising and trust in late Georgian England', *Urban History* 36:3 (2009), 379-398; Lyna Dries and Ilja Van Damme, 'A strategy of seduction? The role of commercial advertisements in the eighteenth-century retailing business of Antwerp', *Business History*, 51:1 (2009), 100-121; P.S. Brown, 'Medicines advertised in eighteenth-century Bath newspapers', *Medical History* 20:2 (1976), 152-168; P.S. Brown, 'The venders of medicines advertised in eighteenth-century Bath newspapers', *Medical History* 19 (1975), 352-369; Francis Doherty, 'The Anodyne Necklace: a quack remedy and its promotion', *Medical History* 34 (1990), 268-293; Elizabeth Lane Furdell, *Publishing and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Rochester, 2002); Lisa Forman Cody, '“No cure, no money”, or the invisible hand of quackery: the language of commerce, credit, and cash in eighteenth-century British medical advertisements', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 28 (1999), 103-30; Marie E. McAllister, 'John Burrows and the Vegetable Wars', in Linda E Merians (Ed.), *The Secret Malady. Venereal Disease in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Lexington, KY, 1996), 85-102; Colin Jones, 'The great chain of buying: medical advertisement, the bourgeois public sphere, and the origins of the French Revolution', *American Historical Review* 101:1 (1996), 13-40; J. Jefferson Looney, 'Advertising and Society in England 1720-1820. A Statistical Analysis of Yorkshire Newspaper Advertisements' (unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton, 1973).

⁶⁰ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London, 1988).

⁶¹ See for example: Jules David Prown, *Art as Evidence. Writings on Art and Material Culture* (London, 2001); Dan Hicks and Mary Beaudry (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2006).

cross-disciplinary foundation, combining resources from archaeology and art history collections, has become realised in the 'material turn'.

Increasing numbers of scholars are recognising the value of museum and archaeological collections as a source. Work by early modern historians such as Styles, with a background of working in museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, has helped to drive this interest, as well as other similarly serendipitous factors that have encouraged the development of working relationships between public and private curators of objects and historians such as a increased emphasis on collaboration in the higher education sector.⁶² From fashion and costume to medicine via household objects such as pots and pans, the study of objects has become firmly established in early modern history in the last decade, as those scholars most actively involved in its application have gone on to teach it in their own institutions, or published upon how to utilise these sources.⁶³ The thesis, therefore, is part of this interdisciplinary examination of material culture in combination with the documentary evidence. Sara Pennell has highlighted the importance of identifying the motives and influences behind acts of consumption.⁶⁴ Through reinterpreting commodity branding, the thesis helps to achieve this. In so doing it demonstrates that by challenging our assumptions about commodity marking practices, we are able to

⁶² For example, the Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior, which has brought together the Royal College of Art, the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Bedford Centre, Royal Holloway, University of London: <http://csdi.rca.ac.uk/> (accessed March 2012).

⁶³ See for example the contributions within: Chris Tilley et al (Eds.), *Handbook of Material Culture* (London, 2006); Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Eds.), *History Beyond the Text. A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London, 2008); Karen Harvey (Ed.), *History and Material Culture. A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London, 2009); Dan Hicks and Mary C Beaudry, *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (Oxford, 2010) and their bibliographies.

⁶⁴ Sara Pennell, 'Consumption and consumerism in early modern England', *Historical Journal*, 42:2 (1999), p.552.

complicate not only the established histories of consumption but also the way in which this impacted upon all areas of life.

The first wave of historians that worked upon on material culture focused upon luxury items.⁶⁵ These are the exceptional objects that, because of their beauty or rarity, often survive better than the throwaway disposable commodities that also make up an integral part of daily life for many people. This seems to be somewhat of an imbalance: luxury, by its very definition, implies special and precious, and probably does not really describe the majority of objects that people came into contact with in the early modern period. If the interest of historians looking at luxury items has been for the objects' sign value, then perhaps mundane, throwaway items imply by their very nature that they were of no value to contemporaries. This is oversimplifying the case, yet it remains that historians have only very recently turned their attention towards the 'mundane', the non-new and second-hand markets.⁶⁶ However, mundane commodities offer just as much value for study as their luxurious counterparts. The study of luxury items is important and has asked valid questions about people's buying habits. While the purchase of a luxury commodity may have warranted more risk due to its higher cost for many people, more basic items that were used frequently

⁶⁵ For example; Berg and Eger (Eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*; Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, *Consumers and Luxury. Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999).

⁶⁶ For example: Sara Pennell, 'Mundane materiality, or, should small things still be forgotten?' in Karen Harvey (Ed.), *History and Material Culture. A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London, 2009); Sara Pennell, '“For a crack or flaw despis'd”: thinking about ceramic durability and the “everyday” in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England', in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, (Eds.), *Everyday Objects. Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham, 2010), 27-40 and others in this volume; Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme (Eds.), *Second-Hand and Modernity. Buying and Selling Used Goods in Europe, c.1700-1900* (Basingstoke, 2010); Alastair Owens, Nigel Jeffries, Karen Wehner and Rupert Featherby, 'Fragments of the modern city: material culture and the rhythms of everyday life in Victorian London', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 15:2 (2010), 212-225; Mark A. Hall, 'Money isn't everything: the cultural life of coins in the medieval burgh of Perth, Scotland', *Journal of Social Archaeology* 12:1 (2012), 72-91.

needed to be reliable and trustworthy; whether it was liquid shoe blacking or a clay pipe, consumers did not want to unnecessarily agonise over these decisions on a regular basis. Rather, they wanted to be able to repeatedly purchase these commodities quickly and easily. The analysis of the branding of mundane goods therefore offers an alternative and complementary perspective on the way in which people engaged with and responded to, these marks and marking practices. These products, then, were just as important as luxury items. As T.S. Eliot stated, ‘even the humblest material artefact, which is the product and symbol of a particular civilisation, is an emissary of the culture out of which it comes.’⁶⁷

To this end, this thesis will explore the branding of non-luxury goods, the mundane; items recovered mostly through archaeological excavation (aside from those kept in specialist museums from pharmacies or other shops): drinks and liquid blacking found in stoneware bottles; medicines; and clay tobacco pipes. Survival rates for each product varies, but the majority of the bottles and medicines have been dated to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, whereas the pipes originated predominantly from the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The thesis combines the archaeological material with other sources in order to address these chronological gaps. Despite starting with archaeological artefacts, and making use of archaeological reports, the thesis is not a conventional archaeological analysis, stating what percentage of objects excavated in a specific context contained a form of branding (whether proprietary or official). These are important statistics and provide us with valuable clues about the amount of branding that actually appeared on early modern

⁶⁷ T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, (London, 1948), p.92. I owe this reference to Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (London, 1988), p.11.

commodities. The thesis, however, uses the objects as a starting point for asking different questions.

As Pennell has noted, historians often use objects for illustrative purposes and ‘as mute (but often good-looking) “hooks” on which to hang explanation.’⁶⁸ The thesis attempts to go beyond this by including a close study of the diverse ways in which branding was materially realised is also important, as it was the way in which branding was experienced. Medicine bottles, for example, were embossed, stamped, incised, or had labels stuck upon them, both handwritten and printed. What impact did the materiality of branding have upon the way in which potential customers viewed a proprietor? There is something about the permanence and tangibility of physically branding products that implies a reassuring quality, perhaps longevity, to potential customers. Non-machine made branding such as signatures by contrast may have suggested more trustworthiness than those printed or otherwise mass-produced. The manner in which branding was physically made upon commodities has been overlooked in previous studies, beyond perhaps a straightforward description of the mark itself, as found in archaeological reports. Considerations of the materiality of types of branding and its consequences have only very recently begun to be discussed by historians, as demonstrated through Natasha Glaisyer’s overview of handwriting in early eighteenth-century interest payment advice texts.⁶⁹ This type of analysis can be extended to other commodities and raises other questions: haphazard stamping of a potter’s mark on a stoneware bottle may imply for example, a lack of finesse by that potter – did it follow that the quality of the bottle was also impaired, and therefore

⁶⁸ Sara Pennell, ‘Mundane materiality, or, should small things still be forgotten?’, p.175.

⁶⁹ Glaisyer, ‘Calculating credibility’, pp.685-711.

might leak? The study of counterfeits throughout the thesis – both actual examples of fake commodity packaging, as well as documentary literature raising concerns about these frauds – will be used in conjunction with the ‘genuine’ article to compare how branding might have been experienced.

4. Thesis summary

The thesis considers these various interpretations of branding through an analysis of commodities excavated in York and complemented by those from elsewhere: medicines, earthenwares and clay tobacco pipes. The first chapter examines the multifaceted nature of proprietary branding on medicines, 1650 to 1900. It shows that branding was fundamentally used as a signifier of a product’s authenticity as well as a reassurance to consumers of its quality. It also demonstrates the way in which traditional discussions of branding have overlooked the multifaceted nature of this process, both in terms of the variety of proprietorial identities that appeared upon commodities and of the many readers of the marks throughout the supply chain. It also highlights the ‘multimedia’ format of branding: these symbols were communicated in various different ways, through not only the many layers of packaging of an object, but also through its promotion.

Chapter two focuses on the late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century medicine stamp duty, which required a state mark to be placed upon all patent nostrums. It considers how medicine owners appropriated the stamp duty label, and the response of their rivals in the market for medicine, including physicians, apothecaries and surgeons.

The chapter complicates the current historiography of medicine that has presented proprietary medicines as either being outside of state or professional regulation or in tension with it, highlighting the way in which nostrum-vendors appropriated 'state branding' for their own purposes, and the implications this had for the consumers of medicines.

The third chapter is driven by the material character of a commodity's packaging, rather than the product itself. Using eighteenth- and nineteenth-century earthenware bottles as a lens of analysis, it establishes the way in which proprietorial branding was used for reassurance of authenticity and quality, but it also challenges the way in which historians have posited that brands were a mark of commerce between a producer and their consumer. Earthenware bottles, used for a multitude of different products, reveal that marks are context-specific and therefore can also be considered as marks of production. Focusing upon the early part of an object's life cycle, the chapter analyses the way in which branding could be viewed as both marks of production and of commerce, depending on the 'reader' of the mark and the way in which it was utilised. By incorporating the material object into this analysis the chapter also emphasises the way in which branding was 'layered' upon an object.

The penultimate chapter continues to analyse stone bottles, and examines a stamp placed upon these at the behest of the state: an excise mark. Although this mark was not an obvious emblem of nationhood in the way that medicine stamp duty labels were, the chapter considers the way in which marking practices could be interpreted as a state control mechanism to regulate production and shape the conduct of citizens.

In conforming and accepting their use, people accorded a degree of authority to these marks and those responsible for their monitoring.

The diverse range of marking practices found upon clay tobacco pipes forms the focus of the final chapter. As commodities whose manufacture has left little or no textual evidence, pipes have been overlooked by historians predominantly dependent on written source material. The marks on pipes were layered by different proprietorial identities, underlining my previous argument that historians need to interpret brands more broadly, and not to assume that they were part of the relationship between the producer and end consumer alone. Pipes bore both proprietary symbols as well as marks of state and civic authority. The multiple purposes and readings of these marks, however, further complicates our definition of branding as a commercial process alone, demonstrating that for producers, marking practices on commodities represented an opportunity for the construction of one's self through their trade.

5. Conclusion

The thesis makes a strong case for the importance of material culture for helping us uncover more about past societies, and demonstrates its applicability to more areas of historical research. Ultimately, the thesis aims to extend our understanding of 'branding' to incorporate the plethora of non-proprietary marks that are found on commodities, marks that are so often unseen, and to highlight the multiple users and audiences of branding. By doing so, our definition of branding is made richer and we

are prompted to think critically about established historiographies of trust, consumption, state formation and authority.

This analytical move also has implications for the way in which we think about branding in our own time. Wordsworth's description of 'fronts of houses, like a title-page / With letters huge inscribed from top to toe' does not sound so very different from Simms' account of the twenty-first-century British retail park. Likewise, it becomes apparent when branding is reinterpreted in this way, that the marks of state or state-related and state-authorized institutions are everywhere: in our homes, our places of work, on our clothes. As Miller has noted, 'the less we are aware of [objects], the more powerfully they can determine our expectations, by setting the scene and ensuring appropriate behaviour, without being open to challenge.'⁷⁰ This thesis will hopefully help us to think critically about twenty-first-century commodity marking practices as well as those of early modern Britain.

⁷⁰ Miller, *Stuff*, p.50.