



The Emergence of the Public



**History of
Information i103
Geoff Nunberg**

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Today's Puzzlers

1. Where and when (± 10 years) was the first English coffeehouse established?





Today's Puzzlers

2. What was the tree of Cracow and why was it called that?





Today's Puzzlers

4. What did Louis XV, Robert Hooke, and Samuel Pepys have in common?





Today's Puzzlers

4. Who is the singer talking about and what is she saying?





Today's Puzzlers



Mme. de Pompadour

4. Who is the singer talking about and what is she saying?

That a bastard strumpet
Should get ahead in the court,
That in love and in wine,
Louis should seek some easy glory,
Ah! there he is, ah! there he is
He who doesn't have a care.



Today's Itinerary

Print in its context

The coffee-house & the 'virtuosi' – the beginnings of museums

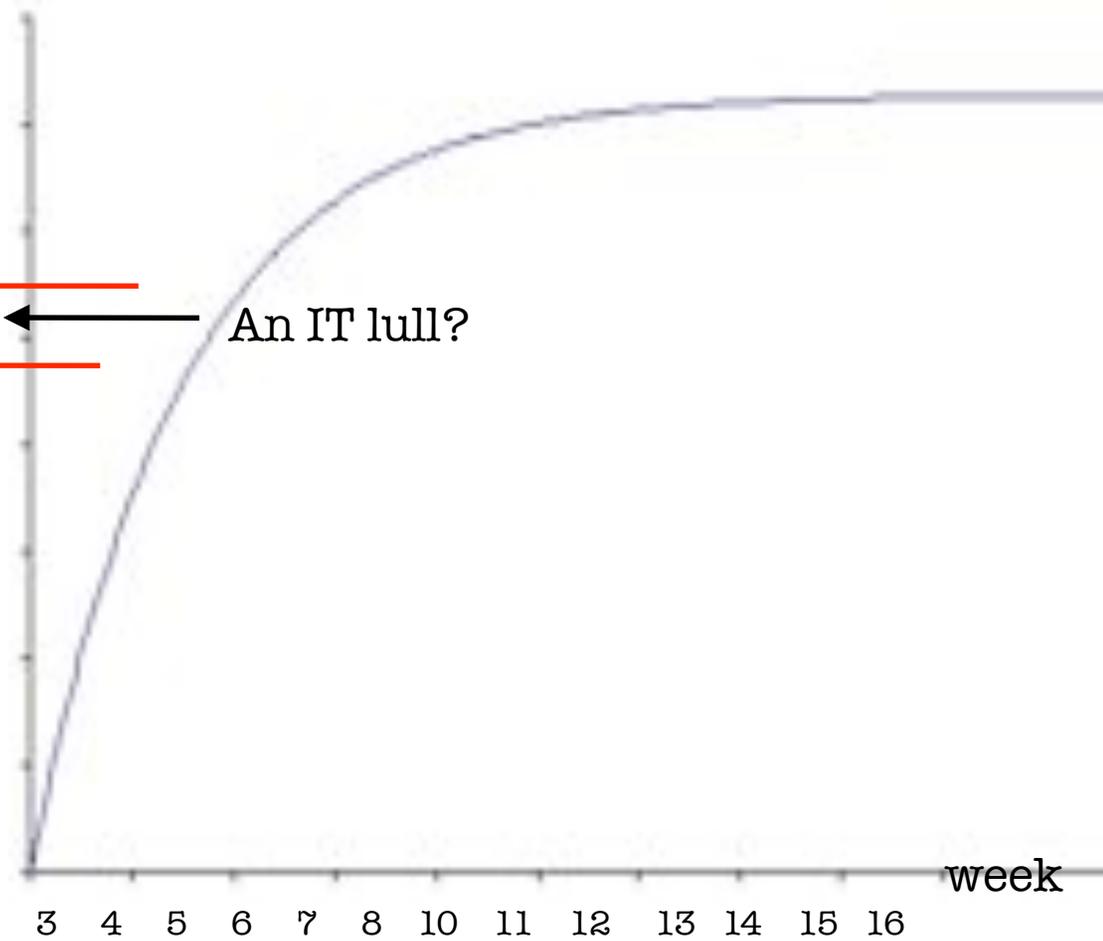
"News" and the public



where we are



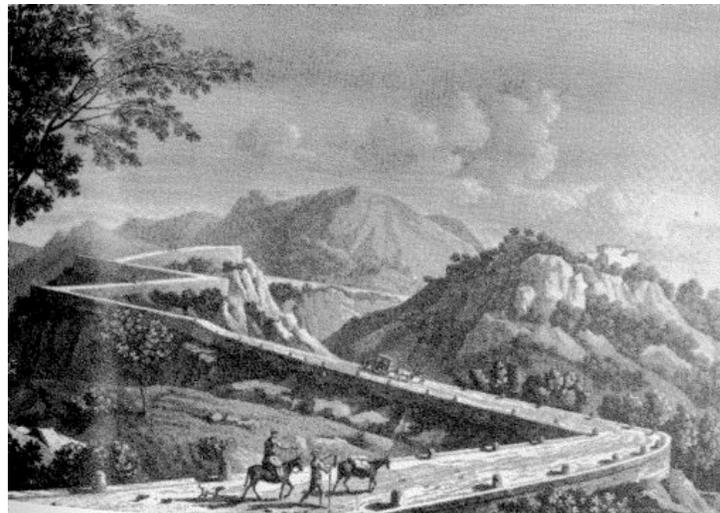
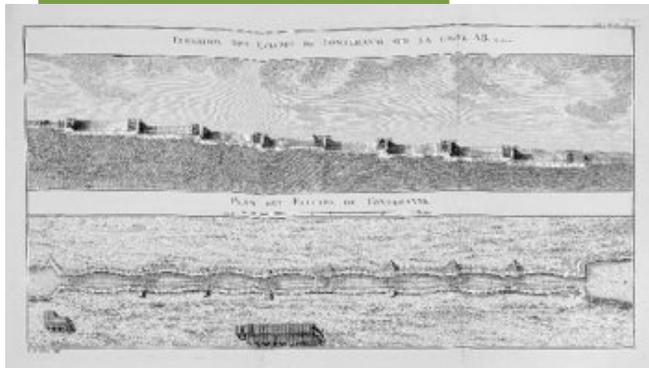
2009
1980
1950
1900
1800
1700
1600
1200
600
400
0
500
3000
5000
30,000
50,000





17th-18th c. Technology

Improved means of diffusion of information:





The Emergence of the Modern "Informational System"

Many, if not most, of the cultural phenomena of the modern world derive from [the 18th century] -- the periodical, the newspaper, the novel, the journalist, the critic, the public library, the concert, the public museum [*not to mention the dictionary and encyclopedia– GN*]. Perhaps most important of all, it was then that 'public opinion' came to be recognized as the ultimate arbiter in matters of taste and politics."--Tim Blanning, *The Culture of Power*



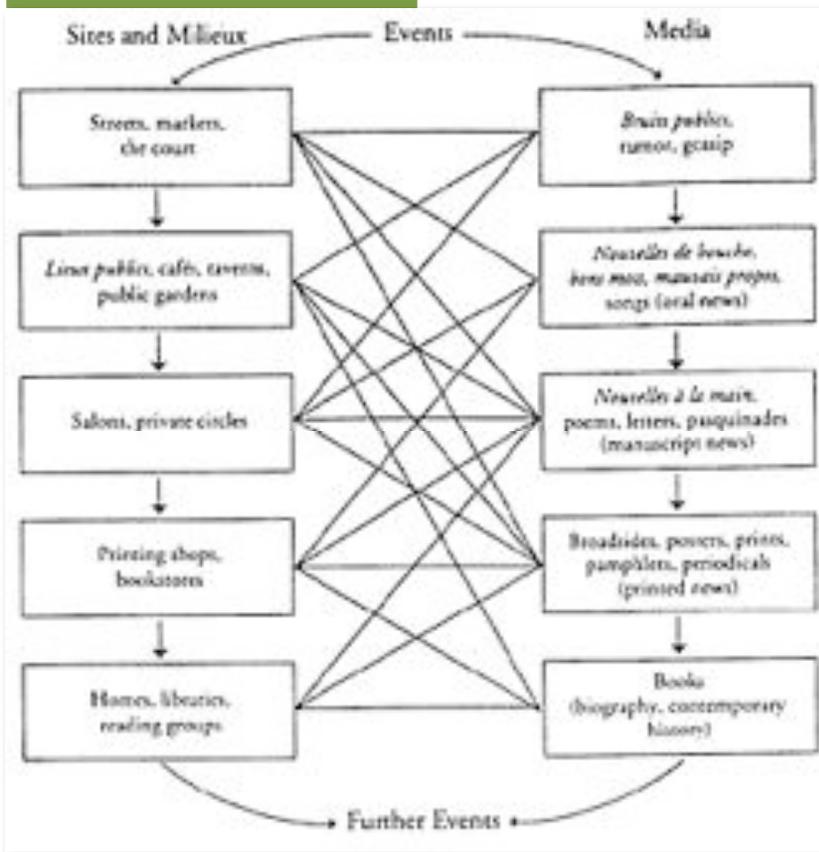
The doctrine of supercession: "Ceci tuera cela"

The archdeacon silently considered the giant edifice, then with a sigh extended his right hand toward the book that was open on the table and his left hand toward Notre-Dame, casting a sad look from the book to the church. "Alas," he said, "This will kill that."





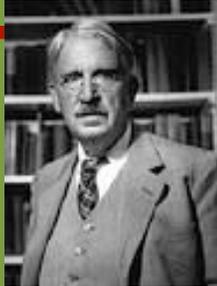
Print, Writing, & Orality



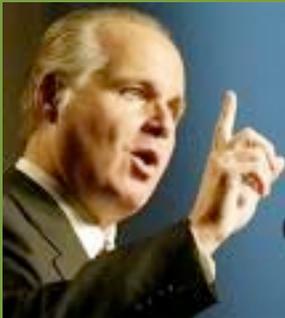
"It makes no sense, I think, to separate printed from oral and written modes of communication, as we casually do when we speak of "print culture," because they were all bound together in a multi-media system." Robert Darnton



All cultures are "multi-media"



Cf modern interaction of print/broadcast, intermediate oral forms...



"Vision is a spectator; hearing is a participator. Publication is partial and the public which results is partially informed and formed until the meanings it purveys pass from mouth to mouth." John Dewey





Coffeehouse Society



"The English have no settled Academies de Beaux-Esprits, as we have in Paris, but instead of such assemblies, the most ingenious persons ... meet either in places of promiscuous company, as coffee-house, or in private clubs, in taverns."--Abel Boyer, *Letters of Wit*, 1701

The coffeehouses bundled news and coffee together as a means of attracting their customers – Brian Cowan



Coffeehouse Society

A loathsome Potion, not yet understood,
Syrrop of soot, or Essence of Old Shoes,
Dasht with Diurnals, and the Books of News?
Broadside poem, 1663





Coffeehouse Society: The "Virtuosi"

"Coffee-houses make all sorts of people sociable, the rich and the poor meet together, as also do the learned and unlearned. It improves arts, merchandize, and all other knowledge; for here an inquisitive man, that aims at good learning, may get more in an evening than he shall by books in a month... I have heard a worthy friend of mine ...who was of good learning ... say, that he did think that coffee-houses had improved useful knowledge, as much as the universities have, and spake no way of slight to them neither."-- John Houghton, *Collections*, 1701



Knowledge and the "Virtuosi"



"[T]he reverence for antiquity, and the authority of men who have been esteemed great in philosophy ... have retarded men from advancing in science..." (Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 1620)



"He Trafficks to all places, and has his Correspondents in every part of the World; yet his Merchandizes serve not to promote our Luxury, nor encrease our Trade, and neither enrich the Nation, nor himself. A Box or two of Pebbles or Shells, and a dozen of Wasps, Spiders and Caterpillers are his Cargoe. He values a Camelion, or Salamander's Egg, above all the Sugars and Spices of the West and East-Indies... He visits Mines, Cole-pits, and Quarries frequently, but not for that sordid end that other Men usually do, viz, gain; but for the sake of the fossile Shells and Teeth that are sometimes found there." (Mary Astell, *Character of a Virtuoso*, 1696)



Knowledge and the "Virtuosi"



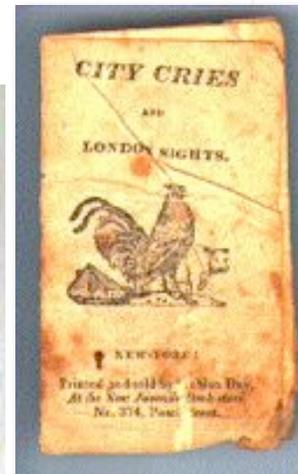
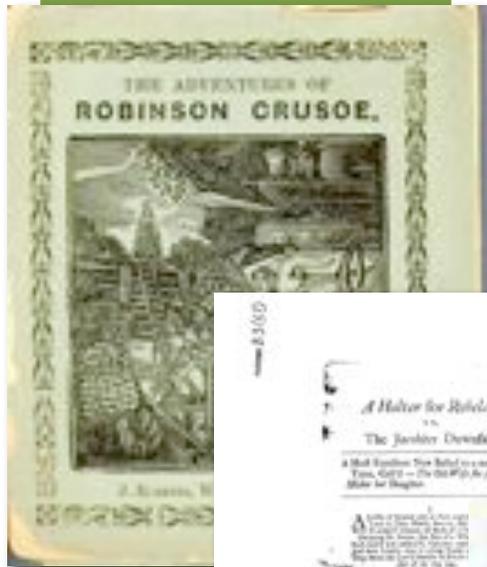
"I content myself with the speculative part of swimming; I care not for the practical. I seldom bring anything to use.... Knowledge is my ultimate end."

Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, in *The Virtuoso*, by Thomas Shadwell, 1676



New & Expanded Print Forms

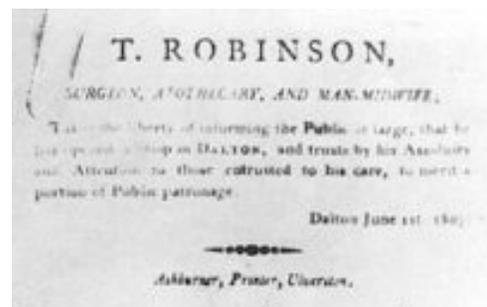
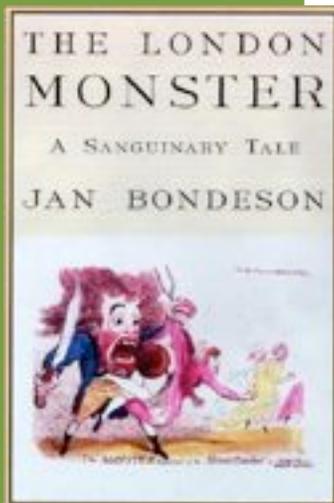
17th-18th c. see rise of chapbooks, broadsides, ballads, almanacs, pamphlets, etc.





Expansion of Print

Also: earliest printed handbills, labels, posters, handbills, forms, indentures, receipts, tickets, etc.





The Rise of the Periodical Press



"All Englishmen are great newsmongers. Workmen habitually begin the day by going to coffee-rooms in order to read the latest news. I have often seen shoeblacks and men of that class club together to purchase a farthing newspaper" --César de Sassure, 1726



An Age of Growing Use of Print

Some indicators:

Size of personal libraries

Personal library of typical French magistrate, 15th c. 60 books

Montaigne, late 16th c. 1000 books

Montesquieu, early 18th 3000 books

Annual sale of newspapers:

1750: 7 million

1810: 24 million

Increase in number of printed genres

Eighteenth Century: Earliest appearance of printed posters, theater bills, newspapers, handbills, labels, tickets, marriage certificates, papers of indenture, receipts, etc.



An Age of Growing Use of Print

Growing numbers of book titles, though not strictly linear:

Number of titles printed in England: (from Wm. St. Clair, *Reading Nation*)

1630s	600
1640s	1,600
1650s	1,200
1660s	800
1670s	1,000
1680s	1,500
1690s	1,400

1700-50	500
1750-89	600
1790-1800	800
1800-1810	800
By 1827	1,000 ("rising fast")



The Rise of the Periodical Press



1695 -- abolition of the Licensing Act
1702 -- appearance of the *Daily Courant*, usually considered 1st daily newspaper in England

Printed on one leaf, with blank side (like earlier news-letters) for insertion of handwritten additions.



Growth of Printing

Licensing Act permitted only 20 printers in England.
By 1724, 75+ printers in London, 28 in the provinces;
by 1785, 185 in London.



The Rise of the Periodical Press



1709: the *Tatler* first published by Richard Steele, under the pseudonym Isaac Bickerstaff

1711: Steele and Joseph Addison found the *Spectator*, with contributions from various members of the "Spectator Club."

Circulation around 3000, but Addison estimates (improbably) that each edition is read by 60,000 Londoners





press coverage



1618-48, <i>Corantos</i> , etc	1704 <i>Review</i>
1621 <i>Butter & Bourne Newsbook</i>	
1637 weekly public post newsletters, diurnals, etc	1709 <i>Tatler</i> 18 papers 35 per week
1665 <i>Oxford Gazette</i>	1710 <i>Examiner</i>
1695 <i>Flying Post</i>	1711 <i>Spectator</i>
1696 <i>Post-Boy, Post Man, Mercury</i>	1713 <i>Guardian</i> <i>Mercator</i> <i>British Merchant</i>
1702 <i>Daily Courant</i> <i>Observator</i>	

"Whereas the great Glut of News-Papers, that are of late publish'd on Saturdays, is grown almost as a common Nuisance ..."

-- *British Mercury*, 1715



cabinet government



cabinet papers

London Gazette

Review

Examiner

Post-Boy

Mercator



in-house journalists

Defoe

Swift ...



Economic Shifts

And what can we expect that's brave and great,
From a poor needy Wretch, that writes to eat?
Who the success of the next Play must wait
For Lodging, Food, and Cloaths, and whose chief
care
Is how to sponge for the next Meal, and where?
John Oldham, 1679



The "Age of Authors"



The present age... may be styled, with great propriety, the Age of Authors; for, perhaps, there was never a time when men of all degrees of ability, of every kind of education, of every profession and employment were posting with ardour so general to the press...

Samuel Johnson, 1763



Economic Shifts

Modern notions of intellectual property, publishing, authorship, etc.

Cf Oliver Goldsmith, 1761, "The Distress of a Hired Writer":



"...that fatal revolution whereby writing is converted to a mechanic trade; and booksellers, instead of the great, become the patrons and paymasters of men of genius... Can any thing more cramp and depress true genius, than to write under the direction of one whose learning does not extend beyond the multiplication-table and the London Evening-post?"



Economic Shifts

But Goldsmith adds:

For my own part, were I to buy an hat, I would not have it from a stocking-maker but an hatter; were I to buy shoes, I should not go to the taylor for that purpose. It is just so with regard to wit; did I for my life desire to be well served, I would apply only to those who made it their trade, and lived by it.





Economic Shifts



Writers (ostensibly) freed from direct dependence on patronage. Symbolized by Samuel Johnson's rejection of Lord Chesterfield's offer of patronage for the *Dictionary*:



BY APPOINTMENT TO THE ARTS AND SCIENCES OF GREAT BRITAIN.



Economic Shifts



Writers (ostensibly) freed from direct dependence on patronage. Symbolized by Samuel Johnson's rejection of Lord Chesterfield's offer of patronage for the *Dictionary*:



Is not a Patron, my Lord,
one who looks with
unconcern on a man
struggling for life in the
water, and, when he has
reached ground, encumbers
him with help?



Emergence of the Public

"[In the late seventeenth century] . . . a new cultural space developed, . . . a 'public sphere' in which private individuals came together to form a whole greater than the sum of the parts. By exchanging information, ideas, and criticism, these individuals created a cultural actor -- the public -- which has dominated European culture ever since. Many, if not most, of the cultural phenomena of the modern world derive from [this period] -- the periodical, the newspaper, the novel, the journalist, the critic, the public library, the concert, the public museum.. Perhaps most important of all, it was then that 'public opinion' came to be recognized as the ultimate arbiter in matters of taste and politics."--Tim Blanning, *The Culture of Power*



Defining "the Public"

public, n.

Am. Her: The community or the people as a whole. **2.** A group of people sharing a common interest: *the reading public*.

OED: The community as an aggregate, but not in its organized capacity



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Ratio of occurrence in major newspapers:

<i>the American people/public</i>	4 to 1
<i>the Russian people/public</i>	3.5 to 1
<i>Iraqi people/public</i>	25 to 1

Goog Scholar hits for *the 19th/nineteenth-century public*: 1300;
the medieval public 128



What interests do members of a "public" share?

Am. Her: A group of people sharing a common interest: *the reading public.*

Google hits for:

the reading public (352k); *the filmgoing/movie going public* (152k hits); *tv-/television watching p.* (755); *the blogging public* (1090 hits)

BUT *the stamp-collecting public* (25); *the fishing public* (2); *the bowling public* (1)

"At AFFTA, we represent the industry's interests to the fishing public, legislators, and the media."

"Most, if any of these programs provide little or no cross marketing or local brand recognition, so the bowling public has no idea where to go."



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Occurrences in major newspapers, 2005:

<i>American people</i>	2660
<i>American public</i>	1350 (1:2)
<i>Iraqi people</i>	940
<i>Iraqi public</i>	37 (1:25)

cf. ? *The medieval British public*.

“The press created the public”: G. Tarde



Publics and "Public Opinion"

End of c. 17 (Britain): emergence of new social domain independent of state and private life: new role for "public opinion" to replace and complement authority of state. "Mediates between society and the state" (Habermas)



Publics and "Public Opinion"

"By 'the public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy." Jürgen Habermas



Social Background: Who were the public?

"the Town":

"a class of comparatively educated and polished persons, large enough to form a public, and not so large as to degenerate into a mob, distinct from the old feudal nobility, and regarding the life of the nobles with a certain contempt as rustic and brutal, more refined again than that class of hangers-on to the Court, of merchants and shopkeepers stamped with the peculiarities of their business..." Leslie Stephen



Coffeehouse Society

"The coffee-house... admits of no distinction of persons, but gentleman, mechanic, lord, and scoundrel mix, and are all of a piece, as if they were resolved into their very first principles."
Samuel Butler, 1667





Coffeehouse Society

Now being entered, there's no needing
Of compliments or gentle breeding,
For you may seat you any where,
There's no respect of persons there.

A Character of Coffee and Coffee-Houses,
1661





The emergence of a public discourse



"Rank and privilege" in theory set aside, and discourse becomes ostensibly impersonal:

"...when any work is addressed to the public, though I should have a friendship or enmity with the author, I must depart from this situation; and considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being and my peculiar circumstances." David Hume, 1757



The emergence of a public discourse



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Cf modern sports-talk radio



Publics and "Public Opinion"



"It is certainly right and prudent to consult the public opinion. ... If the public opinion did not happen to square with mine; if, after pointing out to them the danger, they did not see it in the same light with me, or if they conceived that another remedy was preferable to mine, I should consider it as my due to my king, due to my Country, due to my honour to retire ... but one thing is clear, that I ought to give the public the means of forming an opinion." Charles James Fox, 1792

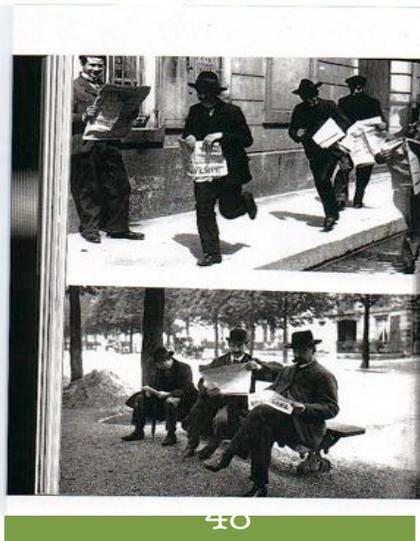


Print and the Creation of "Imagined Communities"



[Britain] has become a nation of readers. --Samuel Johnson, 1781

The newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbors, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life...creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations. -- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.



Assignment 4: Due Mon. 3/16

The Royal Society was founded in England in 1660. It still exists today and claims to be the oldest scientific society. Thomas Sprat (1635–1713), the author of the principal work you have to read, was a student of one of the founders. He joined the Society in 1663 and was asked to write the Society's history. In this book, then, we have a contemporary, insider's account of the founding of a very influential society, one that people argue was at the center of the "scientific revolution." Henry Stubbe (or Stubbes, 1605–1678) was another contemporary, but embittered by the Royal Society's failure to take some of his "scientific observations" seriously he turned into one of its major opponents. His *Legends No Histories ...*, from which you are to read a short section, was written as a direct response to Sprat's book. (His opposition wasn't purely a result of his bitterness. He had been a companion of the great philosopher Thomas Hobbes and Hobbes was a principled opponent of the Society and its methods.)

Assignment 4:

Due Mon. 3/16

The texts are a challenge, but manageable with patience. Take them slowly--neither is very long. Note passages that don't make sense to discuss in class, but keep on reading. As you go on, what is at first confusing may become clear (or irrelevant). In the section of Sprat you are to read (beginning "I come now to the Second Period of my Narration" on p. 60), Sprat lays out a little of the underlying philosophy of the society, beginning with their "resolutions" and their "purpose"--this is the "Model" (or method) of scientific investigation which he thinks is better than any other that has come before (which he has spent a good deal of the earlier pages criticizing). Question: As he explains this model, does Sprat seem to you to be talking about science as we think of it today? Provide some evidence from the text to support your view

Assignment 4: Due Mon. 3/16

The HISTORY of the

preceptive idea is not in proper, for I suppose
 one to undergo: For it would not very desire too
 much of such Time: but it would grow, to make
 them able more successful in Philosophy, than in
 some others, by being long accustomed to command
 the organs, and direct the powers, of their Intel-
 lects. And as to the other particular, the large
 Room, which he designed to the maintenance of his
 College: It is visible, that it is a difficult thing, to
 draw such a noble willing to direct an ancient Society,
 which had long been in another Place, or to
 withdraw out of their own parish, to the supporting
 of any new Design, while it does nothing but
 promise, and hope: that, in such a case, it were (it
 may be) more advisable, to begin upon a small Scale,
 and to go on by degrees, than to attempt great things
 at first, and to call for much assistance, all in
 one lump together. However, it was not the exact-
 ing Nature: but, that he change some of the
 Age, that is, the design. His purpose is to make
 himself, and his house, and probably such of the
 other particulars of his design, the Royal society is
 now passing in practice.

I come now to the second Part of my Narra-
 tion: when it is possible, to give an account of what
 they did, all they were publicly owned, encouraged,
 and assisted by Royal Favour. And I shall, that I
 shall have produced many things, which will prove
 their attempts to be worthy of all His Majesty's
 assistance: though it was not intended to the honour,
 may be considered the frequency of it, and the
 building, that the House is still. But in my return
 upon this Part, being come to the top of the Hill, I
 begin to describe, and to apprehend the greatness of

ROYAL SOCIETY.

my labours. For I suppose that I have had my Share
 of such an, by so long, and so excellent a speech,
 as a full hour wonderful Model, which shall be
 served all the time, that I have attempted
 to have been successful. Now, though this were really
 so, as the least it is, yet I question, how it will
 look, after it has been deliver'd by my unworthy
 hands. But the design of my speech to have de-
 scrib'd me in the beginning. It is now too late to look
 back: and I currently apply my self to what past to-
 day, which a Great Man has promis'd to be impossi-
 ble to see before, than there is time to express
 to himself it, in any other language. To this I
 must give the best, and most advantageously
 my Countrymen, that they would interpret my fail-
 ing to be any proof of the want of love, which
 commands, or desire I could not still: and that they
 would take the measure of the Royal society, not
 from my late description of it; or from the
 name, and reputation, of some of such Men, of
 whom it is compos'd.

I will leave, in the full place, several more few
 Words, the whole piece of their design: which
 I shall then have occasion, to make upon myself.
 Their purpose is, to draw, to make habited Society,
 of all the Works of Nature, as yet, which concern
 within their reach: that in the perfect Age, and per-
 fection, may be able to put a mark on the Earth,
 which have been distinguished by long persecutions:
 to reduce the Truths, that have been neglected: to
 publish them, which are already known, to more
 reasons: and to make the way more public, to
 what remains unsearch'd. This is the compass of their
 Design.

1687. V.
 of some of
 the kind
 of it.

