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London coffee houses : the first hundred years

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London Coffee Houses: The First Hundred Years

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I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.

Abstract

This paper examines how early London coffee houses catered to the intellectual, political, religious and business communities in London, as well as put forward some information regarding what it was about coffee houses that made them "new meeting places" for Londoners. Coffee houses offered places for political debate and progressively modern forms of such debate, "penny university" lessons on all matter of science and the arts, simplicity and sobriety in which independent religious groups could meet, as well as the early development of a private office space.

Preface

I remember as a child watching my parents pouring themselves mugs of coffee each morning, the smell of the beans filling the kitchen, and since these early sights and smells, the world of coffee has been an intriguing, interesting, exotic, and informational part of my life. During high school I would often trek over to the local Barnes and Noble bookstore and sit in the café with my friends where we would do homework, gossip, and read magazines and books we took from the shelves of the store while enjoying mochas, frappuccinos and cappuccinos. In college the necessity for coffee became inevitable – how else is one to survive long days and short nights while still maintaining the level of excellence that college work at the University of Richmond demands? My aunt, another coffee lover, gave me my first coffee pot which has helped me through many late nights in the past four years of school. During my sophomore year of college, I began working as a Starbucks Barista and have become even more fascinated with workings of a coffee shop as well as the social interactions that accompany it, as I am steeped in it every week. The reasons people go to coffee houses are varied and intriguing. Some of our Starbucks customers come in to talk with friends while others simply enjoy the fact that we, their local Baristas, know their drink and are able to prepare it for them in a quick three minutes. There is one gentleman who comes into our store every day, ordering a Venti, "for here" cup coffee and a bagel, then he sits in the corner of the store and reads the newspaper. We also have students arriving at our door with books in hand, ready for that rush of caffeine to help them through their work. The other day, while working on this paper at Panera Bread (a place not dissimilar from Starbucks), the gentlemen at the table

next to me greeted two others who had just come in by saying, "welcome to my office." Coffee houses are valuable work spaces, it seems.

I am fascinated by the different ways coffee can be made to drink, as well as the detailed instructions that ensure coffee is nothing less than perfect. These social interactions are very much the same today as they were in some of the first coffee houses in England, back in 1652. While a cup of coffee no longer costs a penny, many of the social interactions, and activities that one sees at the Starbucks shops across the world today were the same interactions that happened within the coffee houses that peppered the streets of London in the 1650s and early 1700s.

In 1675, Charles II sent out a proclamation that outlawed all coffee houses. In this document he writes, coffee houses "have produced very evil and dangerous effects; as well for that many Tradesmen and others, do therein misspend their time, which might and probably would otherwise be employed in and about their Lawful Callings and Affairs, but also ... by occasion of the meetings of such persons therein ... false, malitious [sic] and scandalous reports are devised and spread aboard, to the Defamation of his Majesties Realm; his Majesty hath thought it fit and necessary, that the said coffee-houses be ... put down and suppressed."[1] (For full text, see Illustration 1) The king most likely feared the "propensity for political conversation" which seemed to flourish in these little shops, and he was certainly no stranger to the dangers of political rebellion, his predecessor having been executed not more than twenty six years earlier.[2] How could such a mild little drink like coffee, in such a benign little location as a coffee house, cause such a threat to the mighty king? In truth, coffee houses, with their sober drinks embodied an environment more dangerous to traditional rule than did the boisterous inebriation of the taverns. Freedom of class, freedom of thought, and freedom of debate was afoot amidst the smells of "burnt crust" and tobacco smoke, and caffeine. Hiding within these coffee houses were the seeds of change, and they provided a public sphere in which free thinking was encouraged, a concept that was crucial in the development of modern England. Coffee houses played an important role in the shaping of London's society, and through looking into their history and defining their roles, the reader can see that coffee drinking was not just a new fad, but the social meeting place in which the creation of modern society was discussed and developed.

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[1] Claudia Roden, Coffee (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), insert.
[2] Stephen B. Dobranski, "'Where Men of Differing Judgments Croud': Milton and the Culture of the Coffee Houses," Seventeenth Century 9, no. 1 (1994): 42.

My particular interest in London's coffee houses came from a somewhat obscure finding. While looking through the editor Gerald Newman's <u>Britain in the Hanoverian Age; 1714-1837, an Encyclopedia</u> (1997), I was intrigued that there, within what seemed at the time to be much more important historical topics, was a brief description on the history of coffee houses. Why were coffee houses, merely specialty shops that sold coffee to the public, given a defining place in the history of England? I have since come to understand that these public spaces were integral places in the lives of the people of the late 1600s and 1700s because they provided a venue in which political, social and academic debates were welcomed and expected. Coffee houses have the potential to be seen as defining spaces for the social history of England: "The history of coffee houses, ere, the invention of clubs, was that of the manners, the morals, and the politics of a people," Isaac D'Israeli claimed.[3] Indeed, in a time caught between medieval and modern England, a time when the political arena was trying to redefine the roles of the Crown and Parliament, a time when urban spaces were growing and the British empire was on the rise, yet a time when the logistics of nationalized trade agreements, insurance policies, even post offices were not yet fully defined, coffee houses "became revolutionary centers, encouraging the interchange of ideas and usually generating liberal and radical opinion."[4] The coffee, often described as "the intellectual drink of democracy," fueled the minds of the men of England to think through the challenges of modernity, and to sort out how English society should go about living within a newer modern framework.[5] Coffee houses were often models of the new ways in which to

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[3] Edward Robinson, <u>The Early English Coffee House</u> (Chirstchurch, England: The Dolphin Press, 1972, originally published in 1893), First page.
[4] Roden, 23.
[5] Roden, 23.

conduct business, to gain information, to discuss ideas, and to act socially in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Before the organizing of society into clubs and polite societies that the Victorian era seemed to focus on, coffee houses were a place where men of "differing judgments crowd," and where the seeds of modernity could be discussed, developed, and implemented.[6]

Since 1850, coffee houses have commanded some attention and focus from historians. Coffee houses are mentioned in many social historians' books concerning early modern England, establishing coffee house as a new and integral social forum for late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Englishmen. In Rosamond Bayne-Powell's book, Eighteenth-Century London Life, coffee houses are mentioned as places where the newest political gossip circulated, and also as places that were important meeting spaces for businessmen.[7] While the space devoted to coffee-houses is kept pretty narrow in most broad historical studies of seventeenth and eighteenth-century London, it is noteworthy that coffee houses commanded a place in such books at all, being no more than public spaces.

Historians often answer questions regarding the descriptive elements of coffee houses: What were coffee houses like? What did they serve? How were the rooms set up, and what happened during a typical day at a coffee house? Bryant Lillywhite offers the most thorough descriptive work on coffee-houses. In London Coffee Houses, Lillywhite (1963) indexes every coffee house ever discussed by seventeenth, eighteenth and even nineteenth century patrons. His work is perhaps the most thorough of its kind in indexing the basic knowledge of every happening in every coffee house in London.

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[6] Robinson, 96.
[7] Rosamond Bayne-Powell, Eighteenth-Century London Life (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, 1938), 127, 140.

William Boulton, an early twentieth-century writer, describes how men of similar interests and business tended to frequent similar coffee houses in his work, The Amusements of Old London (1901); he outlines who the general customer base was for each coffee house. His chapter on clubs and coffee houses suggests that coffee houses were the forerunners for the more private social clubs that began in the middle and late eighteenth century and extended through the Victorian era.

Many historians go beyond the descriptive element of coffee-houses to ask more analytical questions. Some discuss the relationship between the newly budding newspaper and pamphlet business and coffee houses (where these newspapers were mainly distributed). Historians are also interested in the relationship between new ideas and modern ways of living, and the coffee house. They see connections between the proliferation of coffee-houses around such places as the Royal Stock Exchange, and how this location favored the businessmen of London, versus those coffee houses that sprang up in Covent Garden where one might be more likely to hear debates on the latest theater productions by the enlightened minds of Joseph Addison and the like. Political minds and political party members, wits, religious fanatics and the great minds of the day such as Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison and John Milton are some of the key figures historians discuss in relation to coffee-house analysis. Milton's ideals and their relationship to how coffee-houses operated is outlined in Steven Dobranski's article, "'Where Men of Differing Judgments Crowd': Milton and the Culture of the Coffee Houses" (1994). Dobranski reasons that based on Milton's ideas of polite society and what we know of coffee-houses, it would make sense that such a man as Milton would frequent coffee-houses: "As unique centres of intense political debate, that included all

classes, coffee-houses not only contributed to the political context of Milton's later work, but also confirmed Milton's social view of writing."[8] Like Dobranski, other historians see coffee houses as both an inspiration for such great minds and also the vital space to produce such great debates and ideas on politics, religion, science and the like. While Dobranski tends to see coffee houses as inspirational settings for new political ideas, John and Linda Pelzer remarks that coffee houses "especially distinguished London from all other cities," that coffee houses, as was often stated by their patrons, were the "Londoner's home."[9]

One work in particular that I came across and believe needs special attention in regard to the study of coffee houses is the work done by Edward Robinson in 1893. In his book, The Early English Coffee House, he outlines the first geographical origins of coffee in Turkey, as well as explains the religious legends that accompany coffee's inception as a drink. He follows the travels of London merchants to Turkey where they first learned of coffee, and where Londoners got their social agenda and culture surrounding the consumption of coffee in coffee houses. His final chapters address only the earliest of coffee houses, only those established in London in the 1650s to the 1680s. His work has an immense amount of information and analysis on the earliest coffee houses – the ones which are most difficult to find any documentation on. Furthermore, he gives a strong analysis of coffee houses as spaces where puritans and other religious groups gathered and enjoyed the sobriety of coffee and tea.

I am now attempting to add a chapter to this history of London coffee houses. The questions that I hope to address include: Who were the patrons of coffee houses?

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[8] Dobranski, 36.
[9] John Pelzer and Linda Pelzer, "The Coffee Houses of Augustan London," History Today (October 1982): 41.

What role did they really play in London's society after the first one opened in 1652? What needs were met by the coffee houses? How did these coffee houses really work and what impact did they have on the way England operated politically, socially, religiously and intellectually? In order to answer these questions, the reader must first understand what a coffee house in seventeenth and eighteenth century London was like.

The first coffee house to open on English soil was in Oxford at the Angel Inn at around 1650.[10] Here, the new bitter drink, coffee, was sold to students and professors alike. Independently of the opening at the Angel, Pasqua Rosee opened the first coffee house in London in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill in 1652.[11] The story goes that a certain Mr. Daniel Edwards, a London merchant whose travels took him to Turkey, upon "his return from Smyrna to London, brought over with him one Pasqua Rosee, a Ragusean Greek, who was used to prepar[ing] this Liquor for him every Morning. The Novelty of it drew so great Resort to his House, that he lost all the Fore-part of the day by it."[12] Getting frustrated with too many guests and friends troubling him for coffee, Mr. Edwards allowed his servant, Pasqua Rosee, along with his son-in-law's coachman, to set up shop at St. Michael's Alley.[13] In his advertisement he sings the praises of coffee, a drink that his 1655 signs says must "be taken hot as possibly can be endured the which will never fetch the skin off the mouth or raise any Blisters, by reason of that Heat."[14] Other advertisements were to follow, naming coffee as a panacea for all illnesses. A

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[10] William Boulton, The Amusements of Old London (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969, originally published in 1901), 164.
[11] Hazel Forsyth, "Seventeenth Century," in London Eats Out, 500 Years of Capital Dining, ed. Loyd Grossman (London: Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd., 1999), 43.
[12] Richard Bradley, To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, And to the Hounourable The Commons of Great Britain in Parliament Assembled, This History of Coffee, (London: E. Matthews and W. Mears, 1721), 21-22.
[13] Bradley, 22.
[14] Quoted in Forsyth, 45-46.

1657 advertisement for the Bartholomew Lane Coffee-House found in *The Intelligencer* professed that coffee was good for the eyes, "and better if you hold your Head over it, and take in the Steem that way" and further, that it would "prevent Drowsiness and make one fit for business."[15] Coffee was mentioned by some to prevent the Plague. In 1721, Richard Bradley wrote a *History of Coffee,* addressed to "The Commons of Great Britain in Parliament Assembled," in which he stated that, "Dr. Lemery of Paris, speaking of coffee as it is in use amongst the Europeans, tells us, it is of an excellent drying quality, comforts the brain, and dries up crudities in the stomach.... Other authors assert, it cures consumptions, swooning fits, and the rickets; and that it helps digestion ...suppresses vapours, gives life and gayety to the spirits, prevents sleepiness after eating, provokes urine and catamena."[16] For many, coffee offered a welcome alternative to alcoholic beverages, and was clearly seen to have health benefits as well.

Coffee drinking caught on quickly, and by the 1670s, "all the neighborhood swarm [to the coffee houses] like bees, and buzz there like them too," according to *The Ale Wives Complaint Against the Coffee-House,* published in 1675.[17] By 1663, there were 83 coffee houses sprinkled throughout the city, with particular concentrations around the business community centers (i.e., Broadstreet, Farrington, and Cornhill wards), and by 1740, there were roughly 550 houses selling coffee.[18] Based on information provided in a pamphlet, *An Answer to a Paper Set Forth by the Coffee-Men* (London, 1680s), Steve Pincus's article, "Coffee Politicians Does Create: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," reports that "During the Exclusion Crisis it was estimated that throughout

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[15] Quoted in Forsyth, 46.
[16] Bradley, 23-24.
[17] Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," The Journal of Modern History 67, no. 4 (1995), 812.
[18] Forsyth, 46.

England 100 tons of coffee were consumed per year."[19] To help understand how much coffee that truly was, Pincus provides a more detailed account of what 100 tons of coffee consumed per year would mean:

> [100 tons] was a truly prodigious amount since one pound of coffee beans was reckoned to produce two and one-half gallons of coffee, and since all the contemporary references suggest that a single cup of coffee was usually nursed for two or three hours.... By [Sir John Finch's] estimates, based on the numbers presented in the Exclusion Crisis, 61,740 pounds worth of coffee was sold per year. This would be enough to enable 15,500 people to drink one cup of coffee every day for the year. Since many entered coffeehouses and drank nothing, or drank tea, chocolate, sherbets, cock-ale, or cider instead, or smoked tobacco, the numbers who visited coffeehouses must have been extremely large.[20]

From these sorts of records, we can assume that coffee drinking quickly became an integral part of the day.

Coffee houses offered more than just coffee – there was lemon-, rose-, and violet-perfumed sherbets; mineral waters, and tea.[21] Chocolate was available. Many also served wines, cordials, beer, ale and spirits.[22] It seems hard to believe that these houses were all frequented by strictly sober people, seeing that many served alcoholic beverages as well which should remind readers that coffee houses were far from standardized, and they were usually flavored and the atmosphere of them shaped by their clientele/patrons. There is conflicting evidence over whether food was offered, and while some coffee contemporaries seemed to frequent coffee houses just for a cup of coffee and proceeded on to taverns for dinner, others claimed to have had dinner at the coffee house, and indeed, stay late into the evening at the same spot. John Macky's account of an evening in London was that "the general way is to make a party at the coffee house, to go and

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[19] Pincus, 812.
[20] Pincus, 812.
[21] Forsyth, 46.
[22] Forsyth, 46.

dine at the tavern, where we sit till six, unless you are invited to the table of some great man. After the play, the best company generally go to Tom's or Will's coffee house near adjoining, where there is playing picket and the best conversation till midnight."[23] Baron Pollnitz, a gentleman who frequented coffee houses, writing on coffee house habitué said, "the English gentleman saunters to some coffee or chocolate house frequented by the persons he would see, for 'tis a sort of rule with the English to go once a day at least, to houses of this sorty [sic], where they talk of business or news, read the newspapers, and often look at each other without opening their mouths...."[24] From this evidence it would seem that coffee houses were spots at which one could spend leisure time, but not at which one had dinner. Coffee houses were the places where men would regularly go to sit and talk about the issues of the day, the latest plays and literature; an experience different than sitting down to eat a meal. James Boswell in his London journals, however, cited the Turke's Head Coffee house as a place that he and Johnson had dinner on quite a few occasions. Here is an account of one such night in 1763: "At night Mr. Johnson and I had a room at the Turk's Head Coffee-house, which he encouraged because the mistress of the house is a good civil woman and wants business. And indeed we found better entertainment here than at the Mitre, and as reasonable."[25]

The physical layout of coffee house rooms are captured quite well in some of the surviving pictures we have of coffee houses from the early 1700s. Pictures that have endured the test of time show the rooms simply set, with wooden benches and tables, and a booth or bar at one end from which the coffee was served. In *The London Spy* (1698),

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[23] Quoted in Bayne-Powell, 45-46.
[24] Quoted in James Walvin, Fruits of Empire Exotic Produce and British Tasted, 1660-1800 (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 41.
[25] James Boswell, Boswell's London Journal; 1763-1763, ed. Frederick A Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc, 1950), 318-319.

E. Ward describes the rooms as having large sash windows, set high in walls lined with panels of deal adorned with "gilt Frames containing an abundance of Rarities...."[26] A large fire kept the boiler warm, and coffee and chocolate, kept in pewter and brass pots, sat on a large grate over the fire as well.[27] Closets held candlesticks, tobacco pipes and other coffee drinking supplies. Smoking often accompanied coffee drinking, and due to this, most coffee houses were not overly beautiful, nor clean. Cesar de Saussure a Frenchman who traveled to London, writes to his family, "In London, there are a great number of coffee-houses most of which, to tell the truth are not over clean or well furnished, owing to the quantity of people who resort to these places and because of the smoke which would quickly destroy good furniture."[28] Ward also complained of the chaos and dirt that engulfed coffee houses: "Had not my friend told me that he had brought me to a coffee-house, I would have regarded the place as the big booth of a cheap-jack," yet he later was "taken in" by the atmosphere, and desired to try a cup of coffee himself.[29]

What was it about these dirty, simplistic coffee houses that drew the public to them? What about these public spaces was new and different from taverns and ale-houses? Richard Bradley, in his address to Parliament, explained that "the Cheapness of [coffee], with the conveniences in this way of meeting, (being preferable to those in taverns and ale-houses) soon increased its drinkers and other coffee-houses were set up in most parts of the Kingdom: so that, in a few years, it did not only gain a general esteem with us, but also became one of the most valuable Commodities imported by the East-

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[26] Quoted in Forsyth, 47.
[27] Forsyth, 47.
[28] Cesar De Saussure, A Foreign View of England in 1725-1729. Letters of Monsieur Cesar De Saussure to His Family, ed. Madame Van Muyden (London: Caliban Books, 1995), 101.
[29] Quoted in Pelzer, 41.

India and Turkey Companies."[30] By offering a new "way of meeting," coffee houses

gained popularity. What was this new way? One way in which coffee houses differed

from other public meeting places was that they "leveled society" – anyone who could lay

a penny at the bar was invited and welcome. A pamphleteer, writing for *The Character*

of a Coffee-House in 1673, explains that in a coffee house, "each man seems a Leveller,

and ranks and files himself as he lists, without regard to degree or order; so that oft you

may see a silly fop, and a worshipful justice, a griping rook, and a grave citizen, a worthy

lawyer, and an errant pickpocket, a reverend Nonconformist, and a canting mountebank,

all blended together."[31] According to John Aubrey, an early eighteenth-century

gentleman, "the moderne advantage of coffee-howses [sic] [was that they allowed social

interactions] …before which, men knew not how to be acquainted, but with their owne

relations, or societies."[32] For early modern London, a meeting place where all levels of

society were welcome and could meet to drink coffee and debate ideas opened up a more

modern approach for Londoners to participate in the political and social decision making

process of the day. Coffee has often been quoted as the "democratic" drink, and the fact

that men of all walks of life would meet to drink coffee in the same coffee house, with no

regard for social class, made coffee houses the new forum for discussion and social

interaction amongst Londoners.[33]

Coffee houses differed from taverns and later chop houses and eat houses that

also sprung up in London. While taverns may have provided a seemingly democratic

atmosphere, the coffee houses were truly places that leveled society. Londoners were

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[30] Quoted in Bradley, 22.
[31] Pincus, 815.
[32] Kate Bennett, "John Aubrey, Joseph Barnes's Print-Shop and a Sham Newsletter," Library 21 no. 1 (1999): 50.
[33] Roden, 28.

social equals there, they could all discuss ideas with each other, as well as listen to the advice, knowledge and expertise of men in fields of study and places of work much different than their own. New ideas rattled the walls, fuelled by the caffeine rush that a cup of coffee affords. This exchange of ideas and ways of socially interacting were completely different in coffee houses than in alehouses and taverns, if for no other reason than one promoted sobriety by their main choices of drink, while the other promoted inebriation. In *Coffee-houses Vindicated in Answer to the late Published Character of a Coffee-House*, a pamphlet published in 1675, coffee houses are praised over taverns as the perfect meeting spaces for Londoners: "A Tavern reckoning soon breeds a purse-consumption, in an ale-house you must gorge your self with pot after pot, sit dully alone or be drawn in to club for others reckonings, be frown'd on by your Landlady as one that cumbers the house and hinders better guests, but here for a penny or two you may spend two or three hours, have the shelter of a house, the warmth of a fire, the diversion of company and convieniency if you please of taking a pipe of tobacco, and all this without any grumbling of repining."[34] When a Londoner entered a coffee house, he entered with a mindset of passionate energy, ready to discuss ideas, to change the workings of the world, to inquire into the curiosities that had recently blossomed around him. The coffee house welcomed such energy as a public space in which to warm one's self, stay for hours, and actively discuss political questions, societal concerns and academic queries.

All walks of life frequented coffee houses. The coffee-house was all things to all men; a forum for the famous (the Royal Society was founded in a coffee-house), and yet a cheap, warm meeting-place for poorer men. Indeed, this was one of the reasons that

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[34] *Coffee-Houses Vindicated in Answer to the late Published Character of a Coffee-House* (London: J. Lock, 1675), 3.

many coffee houses whose clientele was of the more famous, rich, and genteel sort, ended up forming more private social clubs so that they could keep the riff raff out while still enjoying the beverages and company that coffee houses afforded.   Before the clubs however, one could find all types of men in the same room:

> The stranger having once accustomed himself to the din and multitude of subjects, would next be surprised at the strange variety of social combinations which the coffee-house presented. A rhymester of 1665, in depicting the humors of the place, has amongst his characters a griping usurer, a player full fine, an ill-tempered Puritan, a Virtuoso, and a Country Bumpkin. For purposes of observation it is likened to the top of Paul's High Steeple: from that post of vantage the whole city was to be viewed and even so all people may here be seen.[35]

In another description of the coffee house crowd, Macaulay, the nineteenth century historian, states that "earls in stars and garters, clergymen in cassocks, pert templars, sheepish lads from the Universities, translators and index-makers in ragged coats" were all to be found at the wooden tables, sipping on coffee.[36] Coffee houses attracted all kinds of Londoners. Many found certain coffee houses to be more to their liking, based on the type of activities that were focused on within. At the Chapter Coffee House on Paternoster Row, a young writer in *The Connoisseur, No. 1, 1754,* describes how his publisher "would not forgive me, was I to leave the neighborhood without taking notice of the Chapter Coffee-house, which is frequented by those encouragers of literature and (as they are styled by an eminent critic) not the worst judges of merit, the booksellers, the conversation here naturally turns upon the newest publications; but their criticisms are somewhat singular. When they say a 'good' book, they do not mean to praise the style or sentiment, but the quick and extensive sale of it. That book is best

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[35] Robinson, 106-107.
[36] Thomas B. Macaulay, The History of England, vol. 1 (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1856): 288.

which sells the most...."[37] Indeed, if one was a writer, it was imperative for him to visit

the Chapter Coffee house where publishers would discuss what books they were willing

to publish, and read over reviews of the latest novels.

Whether women frequented London's coffee houses is an ongoing debate of

scholars today. Many historians look at *The Ale-Wives Complaint Against Coffee-houses*

(London, 1674) as an example of how troubled wives were by their husbands leaving

them to spend hours at coffee houses:

> Never did Men wear greater Breeches, or carry less in them of any Mettle
> whatsoever.... The Occasion of which Insufferable Disaster, after a serious
> Enquiry... we can Attribute to nothing more than the Excessive use of that
> Newfangled, Abominable, Heathenish Liquor called COFFEE, which Riffling
> Nature of her Choisest Treasures, and Drying up the Radical Moisture, has so
> Eunucht our Husbands, and Crippled our more kind gallants, that they are become
> as Impotent, as Age, and as unfruitful as those Desarts whence that unhappy
> Berry is said to be brought.[38]

In most descriptions, from coffee house witnesses as well as most diary entries by

James Boswell and Samuel Pepys, there is no mention of women being present.

However, Steve Pincus, having re-examined *The Ale-House Wives' Complaint,* argues

that most likely this document was written by alehouse proprietors, those who were

losing money and business to coffee houses, and not women who were sick of their men

spending all their time at coffee houses.[39] Pincus argues that "There is every reason to

believe that women frequently attended the newly fashionable coffeehouses, places that

celebrated sober discourse rather than inebriated play, cultural exchange rather than

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[37] Peter Cunningham, Handbook of London, Past and Present (London: John Murray, Albarle Street, 1850), 104.

[38] A Hope, Londoners Larder (London: 1990), 62.

[39] Pincus, 815.

social status."[40] Pincus provides information from personal journals, one from Sir

William Temple's sister, Martha, Lady Gifford, a respectable woman who was a habitué

of coffeehouses, as well as an article from the *City And County Mercury*, 1667 that states,

"'City ladies and citizens wives' were said to relish the opportunity for political

discussion the coffeehouses provided."[41] In *Evelina*, a novel from 1778, there is an

episode in which a certain Mr. Smith asks one of the female characters, "have you ever

been to Don Saltero's [coffee house] at Chelsea?" and the scene concludes with a certain

Miss Branghton voting for Saltero's Coffee Houses as the locale the party should head to

for the day.[42] It still stands to reason that women frequented coffee houses – there was no

shock from Miss Branghton's choice of a coffee house as the place to go (and with a

mixed party) for the day. Furthermore, if such polite and esteemed, respectable women

as Lady Gifford regularly sat at its booths, then it would seem that frequenting coffee

houses would in no way ostracize a woman from London society.

Not only did coffee houses provide Londoners with a "new way of meeting," but

they also provided many public services that Restoration London had yet to iron out and

systematize. Before the modern conveniences of offices, regular work hours,

standardized house zoning, and reliable mail service, coffee houses were filling the roles

of such public services, later to be taken on either by the government or private

organizations. Coffee houses should be examined not as mere public spaces, serving

coffee to the men and women of London, but as important elements of London's culture,

as places that men and women were drawn to because coffee houses allowed for sober

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[40] Pincus, 815.
[41] Quoted in Pincus, 816.
[42] Fanny Burney, <u>Evelina, or A Young Lady's Entrance into the World</u> (London: Printed for T. Lowndes, 1778).

meeting places, discussion of all new things (political, natural and spiritual), and encouraged a more democratic way of socializing. Coffee houses were appealing to men of all backgrounds, vocations, and socio-economic classes – everyone from wits to clergymen, blackshoers to men of Parliament found a place for themselves at the booths of the coffee houses. The fact that such a setting as the coffee house was so popular shows how the culture of England was changing and developing different ways of living and learning, and discussing everything. In a time when urbanization was on the rise, one of these services provided was an early form of post office. We still find envelopes, one from 1727, with the receiver's address reading, "Coccoa Tree Pell Mell London" another envelope from 1756, addressed to "Peter Worsley 'at Tennis Court Coffee houfe White Hall London.'"[43] [See Illustration 2. for Tennis Court Coffee houfe envelope] It was easier and more efficient to send mail to coffee houses than trying to locate and then address letters to the dwellings of a person as London was a big, sprawling city, where the living arrangements of the receiver may not allow for sending and receiving mail. In the early days, the national Post Office (started in 1683) encouraged people to make use of coffee houses as places to bring and receive mail. However, this convenience bred problems for the Post Office: "Bags to receive letters destined overseas, were openly hung in coffee-houses where the coffeemen had well organized arrangements for forwarding in the care of shipmasters, and for many years these private arrangements were more efficient than those of the Post Office itself. Obviously the Post Office did not view the matter with complaisance. The revenue on both in-coming and out-going mail was being deflected...."[44] While both the Post Office Act of 1711, and the later Act of

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[43] Bryan Lillywhite, London Coffee Houses (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963), 256 and 417.
[44] Lillywhite, 21.

1765 tried to curb the using of coffee houses for postal needs, neither was very effective.[45] The Post Office was far from reliable, even though it was nationally organized, so many people chose to stick (for quite a while) to their old connections with the coffee houses, knowing that their local coffee house owner would see that the mail went where it needed to go.

People must have frequented coffee houses fairly regularly seeing that sending mail to such places was most efficient. The possibility of seeing coffee houses as precursors to modern day offices does not seem too far fetched. If not used as an office space, men could certainly frequent such houses in order to stay connected with his fellow city-folk. If one collected his mail at his favorite coffee house, he was undoubtedly going to run into other fellow Londoners doing the same thing. According to many notices, and pamphlets, it appears that many people also used their neighborhood coffee houses as a lost and found. A notice in the *General Advertiser* 28 August 1746 reads, "LOST on Monday last at Brompton a small yellow coulour Italian greyhound. … Had on a velvet collar with a silver plate engraved 'I belong to Miss Shaw in Albemarle St.' Answers to the name of Markey. Whoever will bring the same dog to Lauford's Coffee House in Great Marlborough Street shall have half a guinea reward."[46] Its funny that in such a big city, coffee houses retained such an informal and neighborly role for their customers. They acted as community centers just as much as business ventures for their owners.

Coffee houses were cheap, too, and because of this appealed to a much larger public. For a mere penny one could sit for two to three hours and enjoy a cup of coffee.

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[45] Lillywhite, 21.
[46] Lillywhite, 323.

The warmth of the fire, or the pleasure of a book could entertain a Londoner for hours, and hence he could use the coffee house as his mainstay, while spending only 1s. 6d. a week on a garret to sleep at nights.[47] Rosamond Bayne-Powell's explanation of this phenomenon is that "many decent men were content [with this living situation] ...and spent their leisure at a ...coffee house. There they could eat and drink, read the news, write their letters, and have a good address for their friends." [48]

There seems to be no evidence that men were hurried out of coffee houses after finishing their cup. Quite the contrary, coffee houses had always been seen as places to come and spend hours. Accounts of coffee houses in Turkey define these foreign coffee houses as social sites where men would gather and discuss the news of the day for hours, while sipping on coffee "in little China dishes, as hot as they can suffer it; black as Soot, and tasting not much unlike it."[49] The socializing and time spent sipping coffee in Turkey's coffee houses carried over into the coffee houses of London. Men would indeed go to pass their leisure time or to discuss the news of the day with friends. Pepys records in his diary on May 23, 1665, that he went "Thence to the coffee-house with Creed, where I have not been a great while – where all the news is of the Dutch being gone out – and of the plague growing upon us in this town and of remedies against it; some saying one thing, some another."[50] Pepys himself often would spend time at the Exchange followed by a trip to the coffee houses to hear bits of news, and visit with friends. In the *Spectator*, No. 1, we hear about a coffee house frequenter who writes, "Sometimes I smoke a pipe at Child's, and whilest I seem attentive to nothing but the

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[47] Bayne-Powell, 83.
[48] Bayne-Powell, 83.
[49] Bradley, 12.
[50] Samuel Pepys, The Shorter Pepys, Ed. Robert Lantham (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985) 108.

'postman,' overhear the conversation of every table in the room."[51] Clearly these spaces

could be utilized as a quieter leisure option than the loud, boisterous taverns and

alehouses, and they were places in which one could gather pertinent information on the

happenings in London.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the city of London was changing

dramatically, both in size (from 200,000 in 1603 to 575,000 in 1695 – a 187% increase)

and character of population. It was also changing dramatically in modes of

understanding the world and forms of education, and in ways of debating politics and

proceeding into modernity.[52] More people were learning to read, and many scholars were

examining the mechanics of the human body, and more generally, the world around them.

Sir Isaac Newton was making mathematical discoveries that would change the

understanding of the world. Ideas about how women and men should act around each

other in polite society were beginning to surface as the popular columns in the *Spectator*

began to focus on male – female interactions. How the crown and Parliament would

interact was a point in tension. The English watched the French on the brink of

revolution and wondered itself about the nature of government. Thomas Locke wrote his

famous essay on the rights of life, liberty and property. It was within this realm of

change that coffee houses served the public not only as physical spaces but also as

prominent and even vital spaces in which intellectual and political exchanges could be

sorted out. Coffee houses were certainly not standardized by any means, though they all

served similar drinks to all sorts of Londoners. Many had special attractions which drew

Londoners to them. The "age of enlightenment" (which is somewhat debated by

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[51] Cunningham, 118.
[52] Chris Cook and John Wroughton, English Historical Facts; 1603-1688 (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 226.

historians today yet still valid if for nothing more than to be called an age of curiosity for how things of the physical world worked, or an age of rationality) carried with it curious examinations and close studies of the physical workings of the world. Coffee houses played a key part in disseminating that knowledge. One attraction of some coffee houses was the focus on knowledge and science. The Chapter Coffee House was one of the more notable houses where new scientific studies were reported on, and where booksellers flocked to engage in a reading society.[53] While Oxford and Cambridge, prestigious institutions of higher learning, catered to young wealthy gentlemen, within the cramped rooms of the coffee houses, anyone, be he a wealthy landowner or a poor merchant could see such experiments for a mere penny. In fact, it was from this very sort of activity that coffee houses often became known as "penny universities," and the ones that provided public lectures were often found around universities. In a 1704 newspaper advertisement, Hogarth's Coffee House proclaimed itself as a place for Latin lessons:

> At Hogarths's Coffee House in St. John's Gate, the mid-way between Smithfield and Clerkenwell, there will meet every day at 4 a clock some Learned Gentlemen, who speak Latin readily, where any Gentleman that is either skilled in that Language or desirous to perfect himself in speaking thereof, will be welcome. There is likewise designed a Society of Trades to meet every Monday night in the Great Room over the Gateway, for the promoting their respective Trades.[54]

Some coffee houses provided their patrons with a "brass-plate" or an ivory tablet and a pencil upon which to write remarks. At Button's, there was a lion's head shaped box in which customers were encouraged to put their contributions for the *Guardian,* a periodical that circulated the coffee houses and streets of London during the late 1600s

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[53] Lillywhite, 153.
[54] Lillywhite, 270.

and early 1700s.[55] In 1781 "Professor John Playfair was introduced by Mr. B. Vaughan 'to a chemical society, which meets in the Chapter Coffee-House'. Here he met 'Mr. Whitehurst ..., Dr. Keir, Dr. Crauford and several others. The conversation was purely chemical, and turned on Bergmann's experiments on iron.'"[56] These activities very much encouraged educational advances amongst the coffee house's diverse clientele. Men (and women) were encouraged to both read and write, and to intellectually examine and debate their own ideas about manners, politics, and social rules.

Some professors of higher learning were disgusted at this seeming disregard for the formalities of education and called coffee houses, "parasites on the tree of knowledge." "Wood [a contemporary scholar] (in 1661) complains bitterly that scholarly topics have ceased, so that 'nothing but news and the affaires of Christendome is discoursed off and that also generally at coffee houses.'"[57] In some ways, professors were right to be worried. Quacks and all other enterprising fools could stand up and perform for the coffee house crowd, and in so doing, spread false ideas and notions about the ways of the world. However, John Houghton, a Cambridge professor (in the name of a former member of the Royal Society) exclaimed that coffee houses were a democratic part of the knowledge of the nation, and were a great asset to all, and especially to those who had a higher learning: "that coffee houses had improved useful knowledge, as much as they [the universities] have .... They are both best, but I must confess, that he who has been well educated in the schools, is the fittest man to make good use of coffee houses...."[58] While rich young men were off in the cloistered walls of Oxford and

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[55] Roden, 30.
[56] Lillywhite, 153.
[57] Quoted in Robinson, 80.
[58] Quoted in Robinson, 79-80.

Cambridge, new educational systems were afoot. Coffee houses were providing new ways of disseminating ideas in science, literature and all manner of academia. They were pertinent spaces in the development and changing ideas about *who* should be receiving this "higher education." They brought democracy to the world of knowledge.

As stated earlier, not all coffee houses were the same, and some offered different activities, and some activities were not as highly moral as the ones discussed so far. Coffee houses with signs swinging above the door that had a woman's hand and arm pouring a cup of coffee usually functioned as brothels, or "temples of Venus," as Saussure astutely put it.[59] While some coffee houses offered quiet, such "Temples of Venus" were louder and more boisterous in nature. Garraway's held auctions "by the Candle" in which goods were bid on, and the bid that was last on the list when the candle burned down to nothing was that which bought the good. [See Illustration 3.] White's Chocolate House offered gambling opportunities. Not all coffee houses had noble, academic or political ends, yet even the less graceful ones offered Londoners spaces that would later be spaces/venues and activities that the government or other private entrepreneurs would take over and run, leaving the coffee houses, in later days, to simply selling coffee. Auctions which later were held in designated assembly places were held in coffee houses. It was said that Garraway's had a little museum of sorts in which Virtuosos would donate items from their travels to exotic lands, and also where they would gather to discuss such items. Poetry, literature and the arts took up the time and attention of those who went to Will's, especially during the period that Mr. John Dryden ("the presiding genius and chief arbiter of literary taste" and poet) frequented it.[60] Many

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[59] Saussure, 102-103.
[60] John Pelzer, 42.

famous wits and literary figures were regulars at coffee houses during their lifetimes. Addison made Button's a coffee house of scholarly wit. He set up a letter box in the shape of a lions head, in which to receive contributions for his paper, the *Guardian:* "It shall be set up in Button's coffee-house in Covent-garden, who is directed to shew the way to the lion's head and to instruct young authors how to convey his works into the mouth of it with safety and secrecy."[61] Dryden, Addison and others flavored the coffee houses they frequented with discussions about the latest plays and poetry that were no doubt circulating amongst their literary circles and such things as blank verse, meter and the like.

While the Chapter Coffee House catered to the academic crowd and Whites catered to the gamblers, Jonathan's, Lloyds and Garraways served the London businessmen. Coffee houses were an integral part of the daily business proceedings in London during the late 1600s and into the mid-1700s. In 1666, the square mile surrounding the Exchange had the highest concentration of coffee houses in the city of London. Clearly there was a market for such places as so many flourished around the business sector of town, and it is no surprise they were so popular: they provided businessmen a quiet, more private place to meet with friends and clients.[62] Indeed, many business deals were completed over a cup of coffee in the private booths of Lloyd's and Garraways. Pepys's diary provides an account of going to a coffee house to complete a business deal regarding the chartering of a ship (1665): "Then up and to my office, where till noon, and then to the Change; and at the Coffee-House alone Gifford, Hubland, the maister of the ship, and I read over and approved a Charter party for carrying goods for

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[61] Pelzer, 43.
[62] Pelzer, 44.

Tangier, wherein I hope to get some money."[63] Pepys, like many others chose to complete personal business transactions at a quiet setting where he could meet with the important members of the party involved.

Many insurance companies especially for maritime trading were started in coffee houses, and in fact some of the more well-known insurance companies and banks of today kept the names of the coffee-houses they began doing business in. Edward Lloyd opened his coffee house for "seafaring men" who could gather at this house on Tower Street and discuss the gossip about the sea and the ships of the day. At Lloyds, underwriters provided insurance to those venturing new capital in the shipping industry.[64] Today, Lloyds remains a successful worldwide insurance company.

Many businessmen, held regular hours at coffee houses: "In 1682 the Bank of Credit was formed and announced that they were ready to do business in coffee houses and that 'all persons that are desirous to subscribe may come either to Garraways's, Jonathan's or the Amsterdam within Temple Bar, Peter's Coffee House in Covent Garden, or the Mail Coffee House at Charing Cross, at all of which places books will be ready and persons attend from ten to twelve in the morning and from five to seven in the evening'."[65] Coffee houses became the spaces in which men networked for new contacts, clients and job opportunities and provided the city with a web of public spaces where men could promote themselves as enterprising individuals. The wooden booths were the forerunners of private offices of new more modern companies. While the Exchange saw the flurry of business activity, the coffee house was equally important for it provided men with a space to sit down and discuss the ins and outs, pros and cons,

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[63] Pepys, 28.
[64] Roden, 29.
[65] Roden, 29.

strengths and weaknesses of their business proceedings. In a letter to a certain Mr.

Mason, Chatterton, a publisher, instructed Mason to "send [him] whatever [Mason]

would have published, … [and have it] left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Paternoster-

row."[66] One can assume that Chatterton used the Chapter Coffee-house as an office

space where he was able to review writer's work and decide whether to publish it or not.

Coffee houses provided up-to-the-minute information and gossip about insurance,

politics, foreign affairs and all other manner of information for businessmen concerned

with their finances and business ventures.[67] If one wanted to be informed if ships had

successfully returned from colonies abroad, or if a particular ship had not returned to the

ports of London, coffee houses were the hotbed wherein one could gain such information.

In fact, there were boys who were hired to run from coffee house to coffee house and

proclaim the latest news regarding such important business ventures in shipping. Pepys

records in his daily diary that he went "to the Coffee-house, where certain news that the

Dutch have taken some of our Colliers to the north – some say four, some say seven."[68]

There was no formal newspaper in 1665, and so for Pepys and his fellow Englishmen the

coffee houses provided information on current events which surely influenced their daily

business dealings in the same way that television like CNN, and other world news reports

influence the stock market today. Word of mouth was regarded as such an authority, that

while restrictions limited the amount and quality of information available to the public

from the national arena, private wealthy individuals funded "Newsletters" in which

"handwritten contributions gathered from rumour[s]" within coffee houses were

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[66] Cunningham, 104.
[67] Walvin, 34.
[68] Pepys, 3.

circulated.[69] These probably proved invaluable to enterprising gentlemen who were looking for good investments of their funds.

At the end of the seventeenth century, coffee houses took on an even more significant role in London's business sphere. In 1697, stock-jobbers were removed from the Royal Exchange. From 1697 until 1773, the nation's stock exchange took place essentially within the walls of the coffee houses. Stock-jobbers took over any coffee house that had men willing to do business, both merchants and maritime alike. (Pelzer, 44-45) The business of underwriting of ships moved to Lloyd's where auctions for ships had already been going on for years (Lloyd's was used for such office space from 1727-1771).[70] The expulsion of stock-jobbers from the Exchange forced pieces of London's business world to look at their own role and influence within the business community. They had to define their expertise and begin to develop specialized institutions for conducting their business and while they were doing so, they could rely on the flexibility and amenities of coffee houses to provide them offices, meeting places, and information regarding current events.

Many Londoners went to coffee houses because they were centers of political debate. In 1675, King Charles II issued a proclamation attempting to shut down coffee houses because he feared political conspiracies spawned and spread throughout these houses. King Charles II had good reason to worry. Coffee houses often invited new ideas and new political ideals simply by the nature of their mixed clientele and atmosphere of freedom of speech. "Where men of differing judgments" crowded these houses in order to not only hear what others were discussing but to put in their two-cents

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[69] Roden, 29.
[70] Pelzer, 44-45.

as well. In *The Character of A Coffee-House,* published in 1665, our "eye and ear witness's" character, the "Curioso," exclaims, "Sirs unto me/ It reason seems that liberty/ Of speech and words should be allow'd/Where men of differing judgments crowd,/And that's a Coffee-house, for where/Should men discourse so free as there?/Coffee and Commonwealth begin/Both with one letter, both came in/Together for a Reformation,/To makes a free and sober Nation."[71] At Ozinda's Chocolate House, located on St. James's Street, records show that there were Jacobite tendencies amongst its customers as well as owner (as well as being labeled Ashton, a contemporary writer, a patron of coffee houses, in 1702 as a Tory house). In 1715, the Chancellor's "Memorials of St. James's street," states that "Guards were seen entering the place, and Mr. Ozinda was, with Sir Richard Vivyan and Captain Forde, who had been found on the premises, brought out and carried away captive...."[72] Following this capture, Sir Richard was imprisoned as a Jacobite in September of 1715, illustrating the fears that many governmental members felt about the risky political nature of coffee houses. The government used coffee houses to their advantage as well. They sent out people on the inside of government affairs to spread false rumors. Oftentimes when the government was looking to see what the public opinion was about a certain policy, they would circulate rumors about it through coffee houses. Pepys was urged to go to coffee houses and disperse rumors that the Dutch were mistreating British sailors during the British Dutch war in 1665-1667.[73]

The spirit of revolution which had kicked up in England during this time (the Glorious Revolution attests to this) permeated through the coffee houses. Men gathered to discuss current affairs, and could, without penalty (as long as they didn't get caught, or

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[71] An Ear and Eye Witness, The Character of a Coffee-House (1665): 6.
[72] Lillywhite, 432.
[73] Walvin, 39.

argue too loudly against the king) discuss their own viewpoints on domestic and foreign policies. Macaulay, a historian writing in the 1800s, believed that coffee houses were vital to the political workings of the city:

> The coffee-house must not be dismissed with a cursory mention. It might indeed, at that time, have been not improperly called a most important political institution. No parliament had sat for years. The municipal council of the city had ceased to speak the sense of citizens. Public meetings, harangues, resolutions, and the rest of the modern machinery of agitation, had not yet come into fashion. Nothing resembling the modern newspaper existed. In such circumstances, the coffee-houses were the chief organs through which the public opinion of the metropolis vented itself.[74]

The country was in the throes of political change. The Commonwealth, followed by the Restoration of the crown begged for political ideas to be cast about, ideals sought out, and practical matters of how to proceed within the newly formed and forming political world were concepts very present in the minds of the men during the 1680s through the 1700s. Coffee houses provided them with a space in which to firstly discuss their ideas and to find others who were part of their party to bond with and create answers with.

DeFoe, in A Journey Through England, 1722, states that "the parties have their different places, where, however, a stranger is always well received; but a Whig will no more go to the Cocoa-tree or Ozinda's than a Tory will be seen at the coffee-house of St. James'."[75] A man could frequent any coffee house, but it was clear which ones he would be more comfortable at and he tended to frequent only the ones whose clientele had similar interests and opinions. It is interesting to note that differing political parties frequented differing coffee houses. Every gentleman could air his interests and convictions on whichever political party he decided to be a part of. In this way, there was

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[74] Macaulay, 287.
[75] Quoted in Cunningham, 134.

no one spot for political inquiry – Parliament was no longer the one seat wherein men

discussed political issues of the day – they now proceeded to sort out questions in the

over 500 coffee houses throughout London. As Swift so astutely put it, "I am not yet

convinced that any access to men in power gives a man more truth or light than the

politicks of a coffee house," suggesting that it was indeed within the coffee houses that

men truly began debating issues of power and government, and that it was the men who

frequented the coffee houses (and thus were privy to the gossip, information, pamphlets

and rumors of the day) who were the ones most enlightened and able to make and debate

political issues.[76] Boswell records a lively debate he had about politics at Child's Coffee

House on December 11, 1762 in which he, a Physician and two other "citizens" debated

England's relations with the French concerning colonies in America:

1 citizen. Pray now, what do you really think of this Peace? *2 citizen.* That it is a
damned bad one, to be sure! *Physician.* Damned bad one? Pray what would you be at?
Have not you had all that you wanted? Did you not begin the war to settle your
boundaries in North America? And have not you got that done, as Mr. Pitt the great
champion of the Opposition acknowledged in the House, better than could have been
expected? Have not you got a large tract of country ceded to you? Is not the line of
division plain and straight? *Boswell.* Suppose, Sir, I went out a-hunting with intention to
bring home a hare to dinner, and catch three hares. Don't you think that I may also bring
home the other two? Now, Sir, I grant you that we began the war with intention only to
settle our boundaries in America and would have been satisfied with that and nothing
more. But, Sir, we have had uncommon success. We have not only got what we
intended, but we have also picked up some other little things, such as Havana,
Guadeloupe, &c. I should be glad to know why we are to part with them? *Physician.*
Because the French will not make peace except we do so. And we cannot carry on this
war another year. *1 citizen.* But we can. *Physician.* From whence have you the money?
Who will furnish that? *1 citizen.* The City of London.[77]

Their debate goes on about who is to fund this new campaign they see as a necessary in

fighting the French, and from this account one can imagine it and many conversations

like it happening in coffee houses throughout the city sharpening the debating skills and

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[76] Quoted in Pelzer, 44
[77] Boswell, Boswell's London Journal, 74-75.

ability to reason through such governmental issues of London citizens. One must note that the names of the citizens aren't included, and perhaps weren't important. Anyone could speak on what he thought was the best policy for England while drinking their coffee.

In 1659-60, James Harrington founded a Club called the Rota, which met at the Turke's Head (also known as Miles's Coffee House), wherein men gathered around an oval table at which Harrington presented some of his political schemes following the days of confusion that trailed after Cromwell's death in 1658.[78] The table had a passage in the middle so that Miles (the owner of the coffee house) could deliver coffee, and the oval table presented a unique arrangement for discussing new political thoughts. Henry Nevill, Major Wildman, Samuel Pepys as well as Earl Tirconnel, Sir John Penruddock, Sir John Birkenhead (for opposition purposes) and others were invited to sit, listen and discuss Harrington's new political schemes.[79] It was at this coffee house that the first ballot box was presented. A writer who went to Miles's Coffee House explained how an evening there would proceed: "The room was every evening full as it could be crammed and that the arguments in the Parliament House were flat, to the discourses here. Several of the Parliamentary soldiers, were accustomed to attend these debates, and they went so far as to have (very formally) a balloting-box, and to the ballot how things should be carried...."[80] From this account one can see some of the democratic policies and dissemination of political ideas emerging: the first democratic election processes using

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[78] Lillywhite, 166.
[79] Robinson, 97.
[80] Lillywhite, 366.

ballot boxes, the discussion of new political ideas amongst men both in Parliament and without, and all could voice new opinions for 18d. and an invitation from Harrington.[81]

> "When after heated disputation, a member desired to test the opinion of the meeting, any particular point might be agreement be put to the vote, and then everything depended upon 'our wooden oracle,' the first balloting-box ever seen in England. Formal methods of procedure, and the intensely practical nature of the subjects discussed, combined to give a real importance to this Amateur Parliament...A due respect for minorities, and the certainty of being able to record an opinion without incurring pains and penalties, made this a more impartial assembly than that other which sat in daily fear in Westminster Hall."[82]

From Robinson and Lillywhite's findings about this club and it's proceedings at Miles's Coffee House (or, the Turke's Head), one can glean that coffee houses were as much an institution for new political thought, policy and debate as was Westminster Hall, and the formal traditional methods of politics.

And why not gather at coffee houses for political debates - it was within these places that the fresh news of the day circulated. As Macaulay observed, "Thither the Londoners flocked as the Athenians of old flocked to the market place to hear whether there was any news. There men might learn how brutally a Whig had been treated the day before in Westminster Hall, what horrible accounts the letters from Edinburgh gave of the torturing of Covenanters, how grossly the navy board had cheated the crown in the victualling of the fleet, and what grave charges the Lord Privy Seal had brought against the Treasury in the matter of the hearth money."[83] Stories such as those described by Macaulay in the quote above were surely the stuff that shaped the ideas of the many coffee drinkers, as well as made them aware of what their government was endorsing. Political agendas were shaped around such affairs both domestic and foreign, and it was

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[81] Lillywhite, 166.
[82] Robinson, 97.
[83] Macaulay, 305.

up to those smart politicians and sharp statesmen of London to learn of such news, and discuss how best to proceed both in colonial and foreign affairs, and within their own country. "'Coffee and Commonwealth,' says a pamphleteer of 1665, 'came in together for a Reformation to make's a free and sober nation.' The same writer ...argues that liberty of speech should be allowed, 'where men of differing judgments crowd;' 'and,' he adds, 'that's a coffee-house, for where should men discourse so free as there?'"[84]

Coffee houses offered the public sphere in which to learn about the news of the day, and this was chiefly because they provided many of the new reading materials that were proliferating at a mad frenzy during the late 1600s and early 1700s. Many coffee houses included the latest newspapers and gazettes in the price of the cup of coffee.[85] Saussure writes home to his French family of his visits to some London coffee houses, and reports on the great amount of reading that happened in them: "I have often seen shoeblacks and other persons of that class club together to purchase a farthing paper."[86] Within the booths of coffee houses, the *Spectator* and the *Tatler,* famous eighteenth century periodicals about the manners and the nature of British society were formulated, written and read. Some of the stories and points about polite social discourse were tales of the goings on in coffee houses themselves. The *Spectator* and *Tatler* were some of the more noteworthy of pamphlets and periodicals of the day, but they were by no means the only options for reading. The constituency of readers had changed from being political patrons to a more general type of reader, and writers, if they were to survive this new era of publishing, had to catch on quickly. "Writers were soon made to realize that political patronage was no longer the royal road to affluence for men of letters," Walter Graham

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[84] Robinson, 96.
[85] Pelzer, 41.
[86] Saussure, 101.

asserts in his analysis of the Hanoverian era. "As the eighteenth century passed, [writers] found their encouragement and reward in the stipends paid by the rapidly increasing numbers of newspapers, essay-serials, magazines and reviews – the periodicals.... Although the days of personal and political patronage were gone, writers could look forward hopefully to the new day when an educated reading public should be man's critic and his best patron."[87] In creating his pamphlet, the *Tatler*, Steele proposed that he would "have 'accounts of gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment' come from White's Chocolate House, poetry from Will's Coffee House, learning from the Grecian, foreign and domestic news from St. James's, and whatever else he had to offer on any subject from 'My own Apartment'" all of which were some of the most popular coffee houses (save his own apartment) in London.[88] His choices were not arbitrary, and he knew his columns would be filled with interesting stories, essays, and political news, all the very newest of the news too. White's Chocolate House was one of the most fashionable gaming clubs in London, and he was sure to find some interesting characters from this place to write about, Will's, being the place where Dryden and other "wits" of the day hung out was sure to turn up the most prestigious critiques of poetry and art, the Grecian would prove an amiable spot to pick up news on interesting science breakthroughs and other intellectual bits as it was frequented by members of the Royal Society, and St. James's place was visited by the King's soldiers – who were bound to have political gossip to spill.[89] Clearly, coffee houses were the popular places to gather, for whatever the reason, and the newspapers and periodicals were written with these spaces in mind, and most times, while sitting within the coffee houses themselves. Having newspapers

[87] Walter Graham, English Literary Periodicals (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1930), 20-21.
[88] Graham, 65-66.
[89] Graham, 65-66.

and periodicals and news briefs for anyone who could lay a penny at the coffee bar was a forerunner to a more modern way of communicating the news of the day. Men and women could read the news, and because coffee houses were open to everyone, regardless of their social class, everyone was privy to pertinent, and new information and news of the day. In some coffee houses, the Government Gazette was read aloud to all those who could not read for themselves.[90] The sense of public sphere in coffee houses was perhaps felt the most strongly in its ability to provide all Londoners with the smattering of articles about the newly changing world of culture (manners and social interactions), science, art and politics. Coffee houses were "the quintessence" of "the universal liberty of speech of the English nation," and this new democratic freedom of speech and discussion of ideals threatened the traditional way of organizing government, and the nation as a whole, and this new way of politically interacting threatened the king and the rest of the old regime, and traditional seats of power."[91]

Coffee houses, while championing the debates over political matters and the leveling of society, were also democratic spaces for religious groups. Many coffee houses hung their "rules" above the bar, and many of these sets of rules, like those below favored sobriety, and polite discussion while prohibiting gambling and swearing – all values that Puritan and other religious groups held as ideal:

> The Rules and Orders of the Coffee House./Enter sirs freely, But first if you please,/Peruse our Civil-Orders, which are these./ First, Gentry, Tradesmen, all are welcome hither,/And may without affront sit down together:/Pre-eminence of place, none here should mind,/ But take the next fir seat that he can find:/Nor need any, if Finer Persons come,/ Rise up to assigne to them his room;/To limit men's Expence we think not fair,/But let him forfeit Twelve-pence that shall swear:/He that shall any Quarrel here begin,/Shall give each man a Dish t'atone the sin;/ And so shall he, whose Complements extend/ So far to drink in COFFEE

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[90] Dobranski, 41.
[91] Pelzer, 41.

to his Friend;/ Let Noise of loud disputes be quite forborn,/ No Maudlin Lovers here in corners mourn,/ But all be brisk, and talk, but not too much./ ON Sacred Things, let none presume to touch,/ Nor profane Scripture, nor saucily wrong/ Affairs of State with an irreverent tongue:/ Let mirth be innocent and each man see/ That all his jests without reflection be;/To keep the House more quiet and from blame,/ We banish hence Cards, Dice and every Game:/ Nor can allow of Wages that exceed/ Five shillings, which oft-times much trouble breed,/ Let all that's lost, or forfeited, be spent/ In such Good Liquor as the House doth vent,/ And Customers endeavor to their powers,/ For to observe still seasonable hours./ Lastly, let each man what he calls for Pay,/ And so you're welcome to come every day.[92]

This list of rules followed a "Brief Description of…that sober and wholesome drink, [coffee]" in a pamphlet published in 1674. While these rules were not universal (some coffee houses endorsed gambling and Garraway's had auctions every week as already noted), they do suggest that Puritan religious groups would meet in coffee houses, and furthermore, that the rules and regulations surrounding the social sphere of coffee houses was amiable to such religious radicals, those who looked on new ideas for guidance in spiritual matters. Roy Porter in his work, English Society in the Eighteenth Century, explains that churches were rivaled by coffee houses as "assembly places," explaining "If the Puritan chapel had been the citadel of seventeenth-century freedoms, by the eighteenth the coffee has had become – in Prevost's words – the 'seat of English liberty' – because of the open political discussion held there. Unlike churches, they were open to all denominations."[93] This claim is supported by Ward's first hand account of the coffee house crowd: "No manner of distinction knew,/T'wixt Christian, Heathen, Turk, or Jew."[94] The lack of significance given to things like genteel breeding in coffee houses made them a particularly amiable and likable place for Puritans, who scorned such social

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[92] Quoted in Robinson, 110.
[93] Roy Porter, English Society in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Penguin Books, 1990): 226-227.
[94] Quoted in Dobranski, 40.

distinctions.[95] The simplistic nature of coffee houses, combined with the focus on

sobriety, and open-mindedness surrounding discussion of "sacred things" made for an

ideal locale for many little religious groups hoping to start a new idea of faith, god, or

religion. Here they could practice their values, and not be punished for having differing

ideas than the more popular religious notions and religious sects of the day. Coffee

houses acted as a new assembly place, a new forum for such groups that did not have

formal social or political recognition from the government, or from popular society. It

was the freedom within these walls that encouraged little groups to grow. Because coffee

houses were open to all sorts of London folks, and because coffee houses were common

places of discussion of new ideas and of debate, the way in which religion was viewed

and the place it held in a Londoner's daily routine was altered as well. Here was a place

in which all religious thought was able to be questioned, challenged, and even

disbelieved. New religious sects took root, and grew. Others became stronger in their

convictions. During the 1640s and 1650s "there was a proliferation of types of sect and a

hardening of the divisions between them. Ranters, Quakers and Fifth Monarchists are

three of the groups to emerge in this period as distinct formations."[96] Undoubtedly the

growth of such sects was in part due to the availability of a public space in which such

groups could meet, where they truly were tolerated, places like coffee houses.

Clergymen were often quoted to have been amongst the crowds at coffee houses.

This also was a change in the way people found "religion" and how religious thoughts

disseminated in the changing world between traditional and modern England. Here, we

have clergy reaching out to men in coffee houses, preaching their ideals, rather than

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[95] Robinson, 109.
[96] Cook, 103-104.

gaining publicity and reputation through their sermons on Sunday. Coffee itself was taking over the religious sphere – Londoners were recommended to have a cup of coffee in order to stay awake through church on Sundays! It was clear that the space in which to capture men's imaginations and their souls was where they drank their coffee.

At their best, most idealized state, coffee houses were, as the J. Lock's "Coffee-Houses Vindicated in Answer to the late Published Character of a Coffee-house," praises and attests, "The Sanctuary of Health, The Nursery of Temperance, The Delight of Frugality, An Academy of Civility, AND Free-School of Ingenuity."[97] Coffee houses, their exotic smells, crowded rooms, enticing beverages, energetic debates were spheres of change and flexibility. What at first seems like a simple product, and a simple meeting place for seventeenth and eighteenth century Londoners, was really a space, a "sphere" that ended up lending so much more than a cup of coffee to the construction of society. While not all coffee houses could claim to be as highly moral, esteemed, and reputable, as they are described to be in "Coffee-houses Vindicated," the description holds some truth. Many brilliant minds and those willing to learn could in fact walk into a coffee house and have their needs met. With scientific experiments being performed, newspapers being read aloud, and debates bubbling up from every booth, coffee houses were natural centers for edification of a society. Beyond, perhaps "below" its esteemed ideals, coffee houses provided the assembly places for Londoners to receive many services yet to be organized which would come in time as London became more modern. They became the spaces in which waffling between formalized systems of mailing and old time connections could coincide, where men of differing political backgrounds and

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[97] *Coffee Houses Vindicated,* 5.

agendas could heatedly debate issues without over-stepping their hierarchal bounds, and

where Londoners created new networks upon which they moved toward modern society.

By the King.

A PROCLAMATION

FOR THE

Suppression of Coffee-Houfes.

CHARLES R.

Whereas it is moſt apparent, that the Multitude of Coffee-houſes of late years ſet up and kept within this Kingdom, the Dominion of Wales, and the Town of Berwick upon Tweed, and the great reſort of Idle and diſaffected perſons to them, have produced very evil and dangerous effects; as well for that many Tradeſmen and others, do therein miſpend much of their time, which might and probably would otherwiſe be imployed in and about their Lawful Callings and Affairs; but alſo, for that in ſuch Houſes, and by occaſion of the meetings of ſuch perſons therein, divers Falſe, Malicious and Scandalous Reports are deviſed and ſpread abroad, to the Defamation of His Majeſties Government, and to the Diſturbance of the Peace and Quiet of the Realm; His Majeſty hath thought it fit and neceſſary, That the ſaid Coffee-houſes be (for the future) Put down and Suppreſſed, and doth (with the Advice of His Privy Council) by this His Royal Proclamation, Strictly Charge and Command all manner of perſons, That they or any of them do not preſume from and after the Tenth Day of January next enſuing, to keep any Publick Coffee-houſe, or to Utter or ſell by retail, in his, her or their houſe or houſes (to be ſpent or conſumed within the ſame) any Coffee, Chocolet, Sherbett or Tea, as they will anſwer the contrary at their utmoſt perils.

And for the better accompliſhment of this His Majeſties Royal Pleaſure, His Majeſty doth hereby Will and require the Juſtices of Peace within their ſeveral Counties, and the Chief Magiſtrates in all Cities and Towns Corporate, that they do at their next reſpective General Seſſions of the peace (to be holden within their ſeveral and reſpective Counties, Diviſions and Precincts) recall and make void all Licenſes at any time heretofore Granted, for the ſelling or Retailing of any Coffee, Chocolet, Sherbett or Tea. And that they or any of them do not (for the future) make or grant any ſuch Licenſe or Licenſes, to any perſon or perſons whatſoever. And his Majeſty doth further hereby declare, that if any perſon or perſons ſhall take upon them, him or her, after his, her or their Licenſe or Licenſes recalled, or otherwiſe without Licenſe, to ſell by retail (as aforeſaid) any of the Liquors aforeſaid, that then the perſon or perſons ſo Offending, ſhall not only be proceeded againſt, upon the Statute made in the Fifteenth year of His Majeſties Reign (which gives the forfeiture of five pounds for every moneth wherein he, ſhe or they ſhall offend therein) but ſhall (in caſe they perſevere to Offend) receive the ſevereſt puniſhments that may by Law be inflicted.
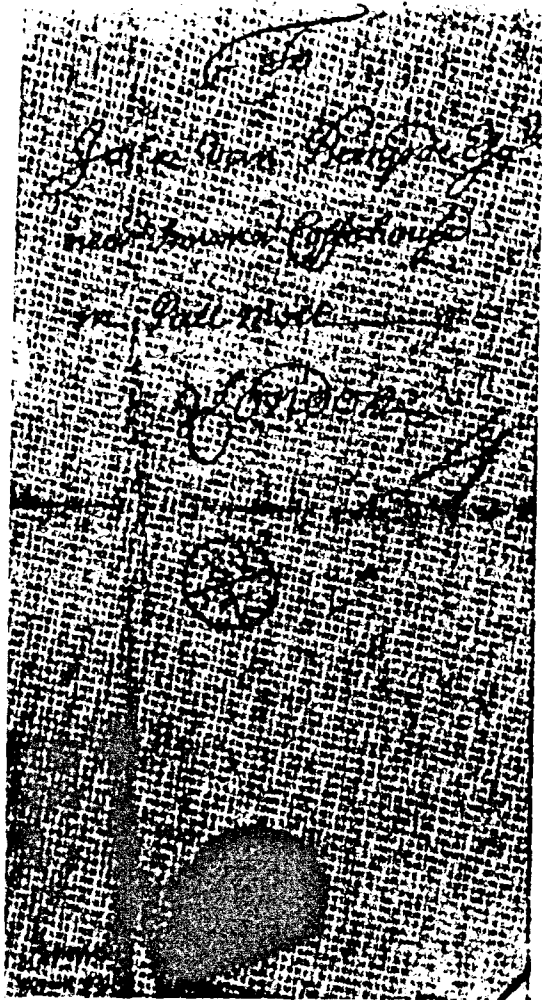
Given at Our Court at *Whitehal*, this Nine and twentieth day of *December* 1675. in the Seven and twentieth year of Our Reign.
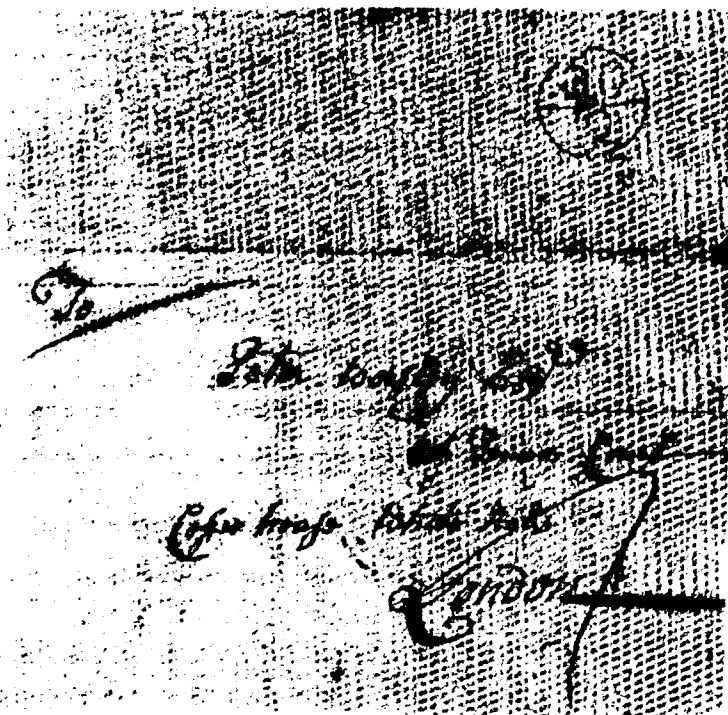
God fave the King.

Illustration 1.

98. Roden, insert.

16A. Letter dated March 2, 1722, addressed to John Van Bempde 'neer Smirna Coffehoufe in Pall Mell London'.
The Smyrna or Smirna Coffee House in Pall Mall from the beginning of the 18th-century, removed to St. James's Street about 1768-69, where it remained until about 1820.
See No. 1222.

16B. Letter dated October 1, 1756, addressed to Peter Worsley 'at Tennis Court Coffee houfe White Hall London'.
See No. 1328.

Illustration 2.

FOR

SALE

BY THE

CANDLE,

AT

GARRAWAY's Coffee-Houfe, in *Ex-change-alley, Cornhill,*

On *Thurfday* the 5th of *December,* 1765, at Five o'Clock in the Afternoon, the following Goods, *viz.*

54 Barrels Rice, garbled and feparated from the Damag'd
18 Ditto garbling Duft
35 Ditto total Damaged

54 Barrels Rice, garbled and feparated from the Damag'd in 8 Lots, Tare as on the Cafks, with cuftomary Allowances, at   per ℔, to advance 3d.

	Lot 1	13 Barrels
	2	9
	3	4
	4	1

12. Sale by Candle notice at Garraway's
    Coffee-Houfe in Exchange-alley,
    Cornhill, 5th December, 1765.
    See No. 433.

Illustration 3.

0. Lillywhfte, insert.

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