

**‘The Darling of the *Temple-Coffee-House Club*’:
Science, Sociability, and Satire in Early-Eighteenth-Century London**

Introduction: Making Friends, Making Knowledge

On 20 June 1697, the Aldersgate apothecary and natural historian James Petiver (*c.* 1665-1718) wrote importunately to a local man whom he addressed as ‘M^r Evans’. Evans owned a set of natural-philosophical specimens that his ever-acquisitive correspondent was anxious to get his hands on, a proprietary inclination that Petiver’s brief note betrayed in the strongest possible terms:

Kind Friend

With noe less ardent desire am I possest to see the Shells you promist, then a passionate Lover waits for Night or y^e sooner appointed hour of his charming Mistress. I beg therefore you will please to send them by this Bearer, that I may be the better able to give you some Acc^t of them when wee meet att y^e Cock, where I shall then Accknowledge the many obligations you have been please to confer upon

S^r | Y^r most sincere Friend | & humble Serv.^t | James Petiver¹

Glossing over the disarming ardour with which the writer reveals his love for conchology, this short missive is suitably representative of the ways in which James Petiver went about organising his social and intellectual worlds. Their geographies were, it seems, continually overlapping. The conventions of familiar discourse, the close examination of the ‘Shells you promist’, the mooted meeting of minds ‘att y^e Cock’ (presumably the Fleet Street alehouse of that name): each were important stages along the road to attaining natural-philosophical knowledge.² Scientific enquiry in turn-of-the-century London not only depended upon the sociable behaviour of practitioners, it also produced it; and for James Petiver a kaleidoscope of contingent friendships and scattered learning was what gave life its colour.³

The interpersonal, epistolary exchange between Petiver and Evans that is instanced above forms the starting point from which this article investigates some of the ways in which practices of science and sociability stimulated and became intertwined with one another in London at the outset of the eighteenth century. It does so with broad reference to the model of association that had been developed during the preceding decades by the Royal Society of London, an organisation which has been characterised (by both contemporary and later commentators) as having become a locus of gentlemanly conversation and socialising as much as one of cerebral endeavour and knowledge production by the time that James Petiver was elected to its ranks during the 1690s. However, rather than examining the Society’s formal proceedings during the period, I focus instead on extra-curricular activities in which prominent Fellows then engaged (ostensibly with the encouragement of that body’s official leadership), reading them as material and discursive spaces that facilitated the congruence between friendship and learning.⁴ The first section of this essay begins by reviewing how Petiver (like many others) regularly exploited the possibilities of familiar correspondence, both for satisfying his natural-historical appetites and for reinforcing his intellectual and institutional status. Attention then turns more particularly to the convivial surroundings of the London coffee-house – a keenly contested urban resort of late – and the opportunities which it afforded clubbable congregations of like-minded men for discussion and debate. Having established this historical context – in part by identifying the discursive parallels and overlap between the very different spaces of correspondence and of coffee-houses – the second section of this article then approaches the history and historiography of the Temple Coffee-House Club (a metropolitan assembly of botanists within which Petiver was pivotal) as a touchstone for exploring both the problematic archaeology of coffee-

house sociability, and the ways in which its supposedly accessible and discursive constitution prompted vicious attacks from contemporaries who suspected that organisations like the Temple Club were rather more detrimental than they were beneficial to the quality of public scholarship. The final (and longest) section of this article develops this argument by offering a reading of William King’s satirical dialogue *The Transactioneer* (1700). Concentrating on the text’s relentless lampooning of Hans Sloane (in his capacity as Secretary to the Royal Society), and its cruel caricature of Petiver as ‘The Darling of the *Temple-Coffee-House Club*’, I conclude by demonstrating how the union between science and sociability – manifestly celebrated in the daily life of men like Petiver and Sloane – represented for others both a rhetorical and a real danger that threatened to destabilise the integrity of true natural philosophy and its achievements.

Science and Sociability, Correspondence and Coffee-Houses

The notion that a set of sociable processes implicitly structured the pursuit of natural-philosophical knowledge towards the end of the early-modern period is not a new or startling claim in itself. Indeed, it has been a central tenet of some of the most important histories of late-seventeenth-century science during the last forty years. Quentin Skinner long ago insistently revised the established narratives that had hitherto accounted for Thomas Hobbes’s exclusion from the Royal Society (his unsuitability for membership conventionally had been ascribed to a range of controversial religious and methodological allegiances), characterising that nascent organisation more as a ‘gentlemen’s club’ which traded on the amities and enmities of its Fellows than as a public body unremittingly committed to a specific academic agenda.⁵ This type of argument was later both instructive for and significantly developed within Simon Schaffer

and Steven Shapin’s *Leviathan and the Air Pump* (1985), a seminal project for ‘situating scientific method, and controversies about it, in a social context’.⁶ Schaffer and Shapin made extensive use of a protracted dispute between Hobbes and Robert Boyle – about the existence and properties of vacuums, and the most suitable methods for their observation – to explore how the apparently ahistorical epistemological value of the ‘matter of fact’ was actually partly secured by an intellectual credit contingent upon gentlemanly sociability and its practices.⁷ As Schaffer and Shapin were aware however, the socially exclusive basis for the Royal Society’s interactions could not act on its own as the guarantor of a stable scholarly environment. Michael Hunter’s account of the ‘institutionalisation’ of the new learning has shown how the foundational principles and formal procedures of becoming a public and corporate entity were explicitly valued by the early Fellows as bulwarks against the private interests, political sectarianism, and vicious nepotism that recent history had proven (in their eyes) to be so inimical to the quest for truth.⁸ Meanwhile, more recent treatments of the period have demonstrated how personal and expedient forms of exchange were instrumental for research undertaken both by individuals and by smaller, unofficial groups operating in the margins of the Royal Society (or indeed outside of the jurisdiction of its Fellows altogether). Rob Iliffe has explored how Robert Hooke positioned himself at the nodal point of a complex matrix of patrons and artisans from which he orchestrated his career as *virtuoso*, shuttling on a daily basis between the coffee-houses and workshops of Restoration London.⁹ Meanwhile, Anne Goldgar’s analysis of the ‘*commerce de lettres*’ enjoyed by far-flung Huguenot thinkers at the turn of the eighteenth century concluded that they ‘made of the practical necessities of learned life a true bond’, one founded on high ideals no more than upon ‘the exchange of service for service, book for book, friendship for friendship’.¹⁰

The intellectual exchange between remotely situated men of letters that epistolography enabled was indeed vital for the development of scientific life in seventeenth-century London. Throughout the period, a series of influential figures – in particular the intelligencer Samuel Hartlib, the Royal Society’s first Secretary Henry Oldenburg, and Hans Sloane (Oldenburg’s most notable immediate successor) – had constructed their own complex epistolary networks, each of them organised around the focal point of its progenitor’s sociable largesse and scholarly energies.¹¹ Similarly (if not on quite the same scale), James Petiver’s natural-historical researches generated significant manuscript corpuses of both familiar correspondence and technical disquisitions, documents he fastidiously (if not meticulously) compiled and preserved.¹² His extant letters (1000 or so survive from around 300 contacts) demonstrate an intercourse between the languages of curious enquiry and familiar intimation, and provide a fascinating record of the interests, habits, opinions, and activities of Petiver and those on whom he depended for specimens of fossils, flora, and fauna.¹³ Natural-philosophical endeavour typically relied upon personal and personable communities of amateurs and experts, merchants and *virtuosi*; and for Petiver, participation within such networks became in equal parts a scientific and a social pursuit, one that his obsessive practices determinedly archived.

Like Henry Oldenburg before him – and (more significantly) like his wealthier and more socially accomplished friend Hans Sloane – Petiver positioned himself at the nexus of an international web of corresponding *virtuosi* in an attempt both to enhance the quality of natural-philosophical knowledge available to the Royal Society, and to make

himself indispensable within its structures. The pages both of the Society’s *Journal Books* (the official records of the Thursday-evening meetings) and of the *Philosophical Transactions* (the private journal that was typically edited by the Society’s Secretary, and in which Fellows regularly published their own research) from the decades when Petiver was an active Fellow reveal a repeated institutional dependence upon the epistolary observations of distant (and often isolated) natural philosophers and historians. Petiver himself was characteristically precipitate in volunteering the latest missives from his own post-bag as materials for both private discussion and public dissemination; and he became increasingly adept at implementing the technologies of letter-writing for more personal ends.¹⁴ As Raymond Stearns has indicated, Petiver successfully manipulated both his professional status as a medical practitioner, and the social and sociable inclinations of others, as part of his strategy for securing and maintaining the contributions of overseas travellers to his ever-mushrooming cabinet of curious specimens.¹⁵

If the familiar letter offered one type of discursive space within which the need for friendship and the quest for knowledge could be concomitantly exercised, then the conversational constitution of the London coffee-house undoubtedly provided another. Coffee-houses famously have been celebrated (if at times uncritically) as public places wherein socially heterogeneous groups of men – from the poorer sort of artisan to the gentry – could associate freely, meeting as intellectual equals to engage in discussions concerning business, politics, and learning.¹⁶ To this extent the coffee-house interior was indexed by Jürgen Habermas as one of the principal social spaces which facilitated the production of a bourgeois public sphere in early-modern England, having been well placed to accommodate large quantities of people from divergent backgrounds, and to

encourage an elevated quality of ratio-critical discourse that permitted the development of a broad body of cogent opinion readily identifiable with the middling sort.¹⁷ Whilst the historical and methodological shortcomings of this provocative but fertile historiographical narrative have been repeatedly articulated since the 1989 English translation of Habermas's work, a glance at the advertisements printed in almost any London newspaper from the early-eighteenth century indicates the unquestionable importance of coffee-houses to the capital's communities.¹⁸ Besides their rather obvious if key purpose of serving coffee and other beverages to those able to pay, the names of different coffee-houses are endlessly designated in advertisements as auction rooms for the sale of paintings, wine, ships, and textiles; as lost-property offices for the return of mislaid or stolen goods; and as meeting points for committees of local government or for courses of public education.¹⁹

In terms of this last function, Larry Stewart has shown how urban coffee-houses became sites for the economically advantageous co-operation between (in Daniel Defoe's words) 'Trade and Learning'.²⁰ Hosting lectures in mathematics and natural philosophy, Stewart argues that their metropolitan atmosphere, commercial ethos, and relative accessibility made coffee-houses an important force in liberating London's philosophical market-place from the constraints of status, protocol, and domineering personalities that are frequently thought to have stifled debate and innovation in the Royal Society by the early-eighteenth century. This period indeed is described by Stewart (and others) as one of severe decline for the Society, as the pioneering agenda of experimentation realised by earlier Fellows (and the technicians or 'mechanics' they employed) was gradually excluded from its confines, and forced to seek instead new spaces for expression in the public

demonstrations and educational courses staged elsewhere in the city.²¹ Without wishing to counter the claim that the experimental and mathematical work undertaken by the Royal Society had depreciated significantly by the late 1690s, there is conversely little doubt that (within the Society’s intellectual economy at least) such losses proved to the benefit of natural history and its exponents, whose work increasingly dominated institutional discussions, publications, and collections.²² At the same time, the dynamic and profitable interaction between people and discourse that Stewart observes in the experimenters’ enforced relocation to the coffee-house can also be detected in the coterie of botanists, entomologists, mineralogists, geologists, and horticulturists which gathered there. Notable amongst them was the Temple Coffee-House Club, a group that coalesced around Hans Sloane and James Petiver during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Like trade and learning, natural-historical science and urban sociability prospered alongside one another in coffee-houses, via processes of erudite exchange that were not obviously driven by economic necessity, nor inevitably antithetical to the contemporary Royal Society’s polite *modus operandi*. What seems to have propelled such interactions was a set of manifestly social impulses: namely a commitment to the collective improvement of natural knowledge, and the desire of individuals to signal and augment their public status and reputation through (for example) socialising with intellectual superiors, or patronising the researches of those of lower rank.

Coffee-houses – and above all the coffee-house club – can be identified therefore as paradigmatic spaces for the reciprocal production of natural learning and social friendship during the period. To this extent they present a physically immediate and local

analogue to the familiar letter’s capacity to assimilate distant correspondents within an interpersonal network. Moreover, as Peter Clark establishes in his magisterial work of historical survey and analysis, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800* (2000), their emergence can be situated within the wider reformulation of ‘social space’ in Britain, a project that Clark locates above all in the lives and interests of wealthy, male metropolitans of the type who dominated the membership rolls of both the Royal Society and the Temple Coffee-House Club.²³ As Clark asserts, such ‘voluntary associations’ provided a refined and regulated mode of assembly that modified and modernised older cultural forms which had depended upon the prompts and practices of customary and religious rituals and calendars. In this new kind of club – generally urban in setting – the individual’s pursuit of leisure within a corporate milieu both overlapped with and informed his concern for public reform and personal refashioning:

Despite its physical dimension, social space was less a regularly defined sphere than a field of action, where the social and cultural identities of the urban better-off were constantly reformulated and reshaped. For all its fluidity and imperfections, the evolving area of social space – free from the tyranny of the state and the family, and in which associations increasingly exercised the dominant voice – had important implications for the emergence of a new, more advanced society.²⁴

The remainder of this article reviews the history of the Temple Coffee-House Club, in order to test in a specific context the ways in which relationships between learning, aspiration, and urbane sociability were constructed and exploited by men like Petiver. My argument is structured around two broad and persistent problems inherent to the archaeology of coffee-house culture. The first is methodological, and concerns the practical feasibility of historicising in any detail a mode of association for which relatively little evidence survives. As Clark notes, this predicament is the norm rather than the

exception: ‘many societies were informal or short-lived, yielding few documentary traces’, and the Temple Club can certainly be counted amongst them.²⁵ The consequence is that whilst its existence has been repeatedly invoked by historians like Clark – who necessarily rely on the archival efforts of others – those who have returned directly to the peculiar ‘documentary traces’ of the Club in recent decades have found reasonable cause to question its very historicity.²⁶ The second problem is historiographical, and returns to some of the challenges that scholars have posed to the Habermasian notion of the coffee-house as ideal public space. In the absence of more substantial data, what assumptions (if any) is it permissible for the historian to make about the constitution, membership, and activities of an organisation on the basis of where it gathered? Furthermore, what do we know about how the Temple Coffee-House Club’s meeting-place (a location significant enough apparently to be appropriated to its institutional name) actually affected the ways in which members and contemporary observers viewed it? As my reading of William King’s pamphlet *The Transactioneer* demonstrates in the final section of this essay, ideological contests around the connections that were forged in the coffee-house between science and sociability have a history, and an early-modern history at that. When Petiver found himself cast by King as ‘the Darling of the Temple-Coffee-House-Club’, it is clear that he was being accorded a very doubtful accolade indeed.

Clubs for the Improvement of Learning: The Historiography of the Temple Coffee-House Club

In the first volume of his *Journey through England. In Familiar Letters* (1714), John Macky observed of the capital that

There are likewise an infinity of CLUBS, or SOCIETIES, for the Improvement of Learning, and keeping up good Humour and Mirth; of the first rank is the *Kitt-Catt* [...]. The *Hannover-Club*, also composed of Noblemen of the first Quality, and Officers of the Army, Affectionate and Zealous for the Succession of the Crown to that Illustrious Family have their Meeting as the former; they are, as all the other innumerable Clubs, kept within this Great City, prescribed by Rules; and have their *President, Secretary, &c.*²⁷

Macky’s sketch of the clubbable propensity – widely evidenced by the lifestyles of elite, urban males – is part gentle satire, part pseudo-travelogue. Nevertheless, his report concerning the prevalence of the associational instinct amongst the city’s aristocratic and merchant classes remains historically instructive, as does his characterisation of London’s ‘infinity of Clubs, or Societies’ as sites expressly dedicated to ‘the Improvement of Learning, and keeping up good Humour and Mirth’. Indeed, it can sometimes still seem that London was awash with clubs and societies at the turn of the eighteenth century, for semi-formal groupings were given over to a wide range of pursuits: drinking, politics, satire, poetry, polite reformation, the improvement of natural knowledge.²⁸ Amongst such conclaves of erudition and amity was the Temple Coffee-House Club, an organisation whose exact role and remit has for more than half-a-century been the cause of repeated speculation and enquiry within the annals of the history of science.

As has been noted, Peter Clark’s *British Clubs and Societies* is swift to draw attention to the methodological obstructions which encroach upon the scholar’s attempt to write the history of social space and the webs of people and discourse that are integral to its constitution. ‘There are numerous problems of analysis’, he comments with specific reference to the evidentiary lacunæ that impede the historian of the early-modern club:

Internal records – minute books and correspondence, along with other official papers – survive for no more than a tiny proportion (though extant

sets of rules are more common). The bodies for which records survive in abundance tend to be rather exceptional[.] [...] For many types of club and society, however, we have to rely on a pot-pourri of external sources: diaries and correspondence, sermons, ephemera like poems and tickets for the feast day, and the large volume of London, provincial, and colonial newspapers.²⁹

The Temple Coffee-House Club does not rank amongst Clark’s ‘rather exceptional’ ‘tiny proportion’: the patchy data that is available for determining its activities and membership has been accumulated piecemeal by a succession of researchers over a long period of time, and rather resembles the ‘pot-pourri of external sources’ that Clark advises his readers to anticipate. In the paragraphs that follow, I review the four most important accounts of the Temple Club (contextualised when necessary with reference to the pre-eminent extant manuscripts), in order to assess their motives, methods, and reliability, and to offer some reflections on the troubled and troublesome nature of historicising sociable networks that leave no substantial material trace of their existence.³⁰ Whilst valuing what such research has taught us about the structures and practices of the Club, I will go on to suggest that an historiographical preoccupation with the relative admissibility of evidence has occluded the precise attention that might have been paid to a literary source which can enrich our understanding of how the Temple Coffee-House Club was perceived and represented within its social, institutional, and intellectual worlds.

The fact that the Temple Club existed in real time, occupying social space, necessarily means that unlike a printed book or a manuscript archive of correspondence it did not automatically leave a significant trace of its activities. An assessment of such a collective – and, it seems clear, of coffee-house sociability in general – must tread carefully: hunting for clues, drawing out hypotheses, always acknowledging that

methodological limits heavily circumscribe what can be said with any certainty. The historiography of the Temple Coffee-House Club encapsulates how these limits have been situated at different points, by different scholars, writing from different scholarly positions. First uncovered by George Pasti, a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois who researched extensively amongst the Sloane manuscripts in London during the late 1940s, evidence for the Club’s existence and proceedings was judged to be ‘fragmentary’. Nonetheless, Pasti considered, ‘its importance warrants a parading’.³¹ This tentative excavation of the Club soon led to its celebration as the earliest natural history society in the world, most immediately by Pasti’s doctoral supervisor Raymond Stearns; who (whilst acknowledging his debt to his student’s narrative) made further use of the British Library’s Sloane deposit to describe a fully-fledged voluntary association boasting upwards of forty members, amongst whom were counted many prominent Fellows of the Royal Society.³² From a series of incidental references (to coffee-houses, compatriots, and curiosities) that they filtered out from the miscellaneous correspondence of a loose international coterie of contemporaries, Pasti and Stearns reconstructed (in the case of Stearns, around James Petiver in particular) an organisation that congregated weekly on Friday evenings for learned conversation and the exhibition of natural-historical (and specifically botanical) specimens over a period of ten, twelve, or perhaps even twenty-five years.

The account of the Temple Coffee-House Club that Pasti put forward and which Stearns made public has been widely accepted by historians of both botany and early-modern clubs, as the respective work of David Elliston Allen and Peter Clark demonstrates.³³ It has however also found its detractors. Foremost amongst them has

been the entomologist Les Jessop, whose scepticism in the face of manifest enthusiasm led him back to the manuscript letters (most of them written to or by Hans Sloane or James Petiver) which Pasti and Stearns had painstakingly gleaned, eventually concluding that relatively little about the elaborate organisation which these earlier scholars had dutifully restored (and subsequently bequeathed to the history of science as both ordinary and exemplary of its type) was concrete or authentic; and that much of what they had sought to establish was merely the convenient imagining by a pair of over-zealous readers of what lies between the lines.³⁴ Jessop correctly points out that only two of the numerous epistolary documents cited by his predecessors ever make precise reference to a natural history club meeting at the Temple Coffee-House (each of which I deal with briefly below); and he justly opines that ‘Pasti and Stearns did not strictly separate activities certainly attributable to the club at the Temple Coffee House from activities undertaken generally by the group of naturalists that existed in the London area’ at the time.³⁵ For Jessop, the Club (and he almost seems reluctant to admit that it had existed at all) was likely to have been a brief and almost-intangible affair, an associational identity that coalesced temporarily and haphazardly around a handful of Royal Society Fellows who took to gathering together for probably no more than a couple of years during the late 1690s and early 1700s.³⁶

The historiographical pattern of the Temple Club’s twentieth-century reputation is unexceptional. The eagle-eyed appropriation of a scant but nonetheless persuasive battery of evidence amongst the manuscripts of Sloane and Petiver empowered Pasti and Stearns to develop a convincing and alluring hypothesis about the interaction between scholarship and sociability in early-modern London, but one that perhaps inevitably

teetered over into unsubstantiated assumption when it came to account in detail for the day-to-day life of the Club itself. Revisiting the very same set of documents that had so excited his predecessors, Jessop proved a more sceptical and unforgiving reader, accepting only what he apparently considered to be incontrovertible facts for his own revisionist history. In the last couple of years however, there has been an attempt to mediate between these two polarised approaches. Margaret Riley’s article ‘The Club at the Temple Coffee House Revisited’ (2006) judges that ‘even when the initial evidence is re-assessed to take account of earlier inaccuracies, the club was indeed a significant focal point for scientific virtuosi and for promoting botanical knowledge’.³⁷ Like Jessop, Riley is careful when responding to the more speculative moments in Pasti and Stearns; but given that the available dataset is at best ‘fragmentary’, she is also prepared (and judiciously so) to employ inference and deduction when necessary. Moreover, unlike the Club’s earlier historians, Riley fruitfully ventures beyond the terrain of manuscript correspondence (which informed all that had been directly postulated hitherto) to include in her survey William King’s printed tract, *The Transactioneer* (1700), a satirical dialogue directed against Sloane and the Royal Society that (she declares) ‘substantiates the existing documentation while shedding light on the club’s activities’.³⁸ Although King’s references to the Temple Club had been picked up by Joseph Levine in *Dr Woodward’s Shield* (his critical revaluation of the natural-philosophical creditability and achievements of the physician John Woodward), Riley was the first to recognise their significance for this particular debate.³⁹

Riley’s further investigation into the Club sensitively moderates the competing analyses of other writers, evaluating and consolidating many of the research conclusions

that Jessop had thrown into doubt. She proves convincingly that a self-constituted society, known (in some quarters at least) as the ‘Temple Coffee-House Club’, did exist around the turn of the eighteenth century, and that it met from time to time in a London coffee-house. Riley argues that this location was probably ‘the Temple Coffee-house in Dev[e]reux Court’, an address used as a *poste restante* by both Hans Sloane and Richard Myddleton-Massey during the early 1700s. Whilst the most comprehensive statistical survey of early-modern coffee-houses in the capital (Bryant Lillywhite’s *London Coffee Houses*) does not supply a perfect match for this institution, Riley demonstrates the contemporary currency of the descriptor amongst those natural historians most closely associated with the Club, correctly intuiting that its meeting point ‘must have been close to the famous Grecian, a favourite haunt of Royal Society members’.⁴⁰ Given the relative fluidity both of the names of coffee-houses, and of the alternative nicknames by which different groups of patrons referred to them, it is possible that the ‘Temple Coffee-House’ in question was the Grecian itself. Equally of course, the club may have assembled at any one of a number of such premises in and around the Temple’s complex of legal chambers between the Cities of London and Westminster.⁴¹

If the precise location of the Club’s appointed *rendezvous* cannot unerringly be pinned down, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the site was appropriated with unambiguous familiarity by its members in order to signal their sense of institutional affiliation.⁴² As even Jessop had conceded, two documents verify this beyond reasonable doubt. Firstly, an undated letter to James Petiver from the eastern European physician David Krieg concludes with ‘My humble Service to all Friends especially to Dr Sloan, Dr

Lister, Dr Haar, Dr Woodward, & the noble club att the Temple Coffe house’.⁴³

Secondly, in July 1698 the Maryland naturalist William Vernon wrote to Sir Hans Sloane:

I met severall Curious parts of Naturall knowledge, which I’d rather refer to you in y^e Temple Coffe-House, yⁿ in Scriptis. I’ve a collection of plants for you & any other part of my Collection is at y^r Service. When I return, which I expect will be y^e later end of October, I shall bring every Fryday night a collection of plants to be discussed by you, & y^t Honourable Club, to whom my Service.⁴⁴

As Riley has shown moreover, beyond these epistolary references – contained in correspondence exchanged between frequenters of the Club – William King’s *The Transactioneer* mentions both ‘the *Temple-Coffee-House Club*’ and ‘the *Temple Club*’ (meaning by these designations one and the same body).⁴⁵ Taken collectively, this combination of manuscript and print sources suggests that by 1700 not only were the organisation’s name and identity well established amongst its frequenters, but its reputation extended somewhat beyond the relatively small band of prominent naturalists from which it was composed.

What else can the extant documentary traces of the Temple Coffee-House Club – variously interpreted as they have been by Pasti, Stearns, Jessop, and Riley – reveal about its associational habits: its lifespan, membership, structures, and procedures? For Pasti and Stearns, it is possible that the Temple Coffee-House Club existed in some form or other as early as 1689 or 1690. In any case it is clear from both Vernon’s letter to Sloane of 1698 and King’s satire of 1700 that by the turn of the eighteenth century it assembled regularly in the evening each Friday, which was (during the winter months at least) the day after the weekly sessions of its putative progenitor, the Royal Society.⁴⁶ Those who participated in meetings can be largely identified as the faction of the Society’s Fellows

that congregated around Hans Sloane, an Irish physician of Scottish descent whose wealth and energy were making him an increasingly important (if to some extent divisive) figure within that institution. Amongst those others who can be associated (albeit uncertainly) with the Club therefore are many luminaries from the world of natural philosophy, and particularly from the fast-developing discipline of botany: Martin Lister, Tancred Robinson, William Sherard, Samuel Doody, Samuel Dale, and James Petiver.⁴⁷ Yet the absence of any surviving written constitution or minutes (if they were ever drawn up in the first place) makes it difficult to corroborate this list, or to know how the rights of membership were conveyed or asserted (if they were at all). Indeed the fact that nothing in this way remains amongst the papers of either Sloane or Petiver – each of whom scrupulously archived their correspondence, commonplace observations, and other written remarks – can almost be taken as proof both that the Club's affairs were informal and undocumented, and that the register of participants was allowed to be fairly fluid. Nevertheless, it appears that those who played a part in meetings were united by three things: their sex (they were all men); their intellectual preoccupations with natural history; and (more broadly speaking) their status as upwardly mobile citizens, drawn from the middling and higher social ranks of professional scholars, medics, and clerics.

Just as it is problematic to determine the membership of the Club, so it is a challenge to reconstruct a sense of what they got up to together on those Friday evenings. The chosen location of the coffee-house is of course significant here: it implies – although of course it did not guarantee – a relatively colloquial atmosphere of friendship, relaxation, and familiarity. Whilst such establishments did serve alcohol, they were at least in theory more serious and less rowdy resorts than inns or taverns; so in

opting for such a meeting place the Temple Club was also staking a claim for some degree of organisational gravity and gentlemanly sociability.⁴⁸ When it comes to the issue of how affairs were conducted on the night meanwhile, what signs there are hint that the Club was procedurally open and internally egalitarian. Vernon's letter to Sloane (quoted above), reveals that both a material 'collection of plants' and the 'severall Curious parts of Naturall knowledge' represented 'in Scriptis' (or writing) could operate as an acceptable basis for debate by 'yt Honourable Club'. This suggests that members were welcome and perhaps even required to bring along physical specimens as well as intellectual matter for discussion. If indeed the Temple Coffee-House Club pursued a botanical agenda by examining a combination of written claims, published texts, and actual plants and flowers, then its formal practices unsurprisingly mirror those of the Royal Society's meetings, the twin pillars of which were the performance of experiment (the shared observation of which generated thereby a mutual stock of new knowledge) and the reading of papers (usually communicated for consideration by distant correspondents). In terms of extracurricular activities, letters exchanged between members confirm that there were those in the Club who regularly went out herborising together in the fields and districts around London; although as Les Jessop and Margaret Riley have emphasised, there is no documentary substantiation available for the hypothesis that such outings were sanctioned or sponsored by the organisation at any official level.⁴⁹

The Temple-Coffee House Club provides an exemplary instance of early-modern intersections between practices of intellectual production and urban sociability. Riley's research implies as much; yet at times even her methods raise questions. Specifically, she fails to read *The Transactioneer* as satire (although she is aware of its status as such), and

seems not fully cognisant of the limitations that such material presents to an interpretation wanting to deal with it as transparent, historical evidence. When, for example, the figure of the ‘Transactioneer’ – King’s explicit caricature of Sloane (as I explore below) – exclaims to his interlocutor “never heard of the *Temple* Club? Oh for shame, let’s see you there a *Friday* night. I’m President there [...] [a]nd Mr. *Pet[ive]r* is, Gad he’s every thing”, Riley accepts the intelligence at face value:⁵⁰

[I]t is apparent from the pages of *The Transactioneer* that proceedings were not as informal as previously thought. By 1700 at least, there were two officers, including a president, at the Friday evening meetings [...] [and] Hans Sloane and James Petiver, leading figures in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century scientific circles, were crucial to its organisation.⁵¹

Riley fails, I think, to attend to the broader, pejorative context of the text as a whole. There is, it is true, a fine gradation of literary hermeneutics to be determined, and one which different historians are entitled to gauge in their own way. Nevertheless, in these instances it seems to me that whilst it is permissible to extract incidental information – such as the Club’s ‘*Friday* night’ meeting-time – from an early-modern lampoon that makes no real attempt to disguise the identity of its target (and so presumably would discern no need to encode the more straightforward elements of its satirical narrative), when the information being retrieved is drawn directly from the distorted representation of the object of satire, a greater degree of caution must be exercised. Sloane may have been President of the Temple Coffee-House Club; but it is equally plausible that King cast him in this role within his fictionalised depiction of an informal and non-officiated body – which the satirist himself evidently considered little more than a drinking club for eccentrics – in order to send-up the physician’s very real aspirations for one day achieving that rank within the Royal Society. If the dialogue’s caricature of the Temple Club is

designed to operate as a deliberate travesty of the Society itself, then the features that it sketches must be interpreted with an appropriate sense of critical assiduity.

The history and historiography of the Temple Coffee-House Club largely fail (as Clark warns) to supply us with much in the way of fact. Although Riley’s careful combination of demonstration and speculation is both preferable to and more convincing than Jessop’s outright cynicism, when it comes to the important matters of the Club’s membership, activities, regulations, organisation, and life-span, little more is available than a series of probabilities and impressions. Whilst these tend to support the argument I set out earlier concerning the relationship between science and sociability in the early-eighteenth-century metropolis, they cannot really be said to generate it. The case of the Temple Club, in other words, reminds us that at a remove of three centuries or so, the quotidian practices and experiences of coffee-house sociability remain historically indistinct. If the particularising labours of their intellectual archaeology remain valuable and productive, they also constitute an inherently frustrating and indefinite process. In the final section of this article I therefore transfer my own methodological focus, moving away from the thorny problem of what we can know in terms of historical detail about moments of sociable encounter or knowledge production within the coffee-house, to enquire instead what we can learn from relevant literary sources (in this case King’s *Transactioneer*) about the ways in which these phenomena were imagined and contested within their own cultural world.

Satirising Sociable Science: William King’s *The Transactioneer* (1700)

The Transactioneer was first published in 1700, more-or-less at the time when the Temple Coffee-House Club appears to have been at its height. Anonymously issued but eventually attributed to the satirist William King, *The Transactioneer* ridicules both the *Philosophical Transactions* and its benign-but-controlling editor Hans Sloane. Its incidental use-value for the history of the Temple Club aside, the barbed attacks of *The Transactioneer* issue from a conviction that an alliance between scientific learning and metropolitan sociability – so vital for the natural-philosophical lives of Sloane, Petiver, and those Fellows of the Royal Society over whom they exercised influence – was proving detrimental to traditional scholarship and true learning. Pivotal to King’s strategy is the discrediting of a series of discursive sites that had become instrumental for this model of associational knowledge-production: the published journal, natural-philosophical correspondence, and the urban coffee-house. By engaging in such a skirmish, King was individually voicing a more widespread set of cultural anxieties about the relationships between social status, public space, and intellectual practices, which (as Brian Cowan articulates) begged the questions, ‘Did the coffeehouse offer an exciting new venue for the sharing of useful new knowledge? Or was it rather the lamentable site for the replacement of real learning with superficial, merely fashionable, social display?’⁵²

William King (1663-1712), the Westminster School and Christ Church educated son of a gentleman, had been honing his skills as a satirical writer since the mid-1690s (although earlier publications also included theological tracts, and poetry published in Dryden’s *Examem Poeticum* of 1693).⁵³ Having successfully courted Prince George’s favour via his *Animadversions on a Pretended Account of Denmark* (1694), which defended Danish interests against the assault of Robert Molesworth’s *An Account of Denmark* (1694),

King’s next significant incursion into print was his involvement in the scandal whipped up between Richard Bentley and Charles Boyle over the latter’s translation of the so-called *Epistles of Phalaris* (1695), a controversy expansively delineated in Joseph Levine’s *Battle of the Books*, and expertly examined with specific attention to King in an article by Colin Horne.⁵⁴ King was the figure supposedly present in the shop of Thomas Bennet when Bentley allegedly refused the book-seller’s application (on Boyle’s behalf) for the loan of some manuscripts owned by the Crown, and within Bentley’s gift as Keeper of the King’s Libraries.⁵⁵ Moreover, King appears to have participated fully within the circle of Oxford wits who assembled to compose *Dr Bentley’s Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris [...] Examin’d by the Honourable Charles Boyle* (1698), itself a response to the *Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris* (1697), Bentley’s academic demolition of Boyle’s classical scholarship. Within the *Dissertations [...] Examin’d*, King has often been credited with one of the more readable and amusing moments, in which ‘Boyle’ sets out to prove that future philologists would find serious reason to doubt whether Bentley was actually the author of his own work (a key contest between the two men had of course turned upon the authenticity of the *Epistles of Phalaris* themselves).⁵⁶ After an extensively enlarged edition of Bentley’s *Dissertation* retaliated against the Christ Church set once more in 1699, King responded with an acerbic portrait of ‘the Snarling Critick *Bentivoglio*’ in several of his *Dialogues of the Dead* (1699), and (it is thought) may have had a hand in *A Short Account of Dr Bentley’s Humanity and Justice* (1699).⁵⁷

At the same time as sharing in the collaborative retribution that was meted out to Bentley, King also began to train his sights upon the modern practitioners of another branch of knowledge: natural history. The case against Bentley had been predicated upon

his perceived pedantry; his obsession with the minute and the particular in preference to the universal and general; and his lack of deference to established conventions of rank (evidenced through his ungracious treatment of the genteel Boyle, manifestly his social superior). As he implies via the dispute over ‘Modern Learning’ between Signior Moderno and Signior Indifferentio in *Dialogues of the Dead*, King detected unnerving parallels of attitude and method between Bentley’s classicism and the activities and output of natural historians whose interests were increasingly dominating the Royal Society.⁵⁸ Quite why he seized upon Martin Lister’s *Journey to Paris in the Year 1698* (1698), which he sent-up in *A Journey to London, in the Year 1698* (1698), is not immediately clear; although neither Lister’s Williamite credentials (he had travelled to Paris as physician to the Earl of Portland), nor his circumstantial connections with Bentley (both had served on the Council of the Royal Society in 1697) would have recommended him to King.⁵⁹ But what *A Journey to London* really weighs into – and in so doing, foreshadows *The Transactioneer* – is the *virtuoso*’s attention to obscure artefacts and marginal details, and his willingness to allow personal taste and the direction of happenstance to determine his own programme of research.⁶⁰ Furthermore, King’s *Journey* also provided the space for the writer to develop further what was becoming his trademark set of satirical devices: the use of direct quotation (astutely edited, cleverly compressed, occasionally emended) from the text being parodied, deliberately printed in italics so that its author apparently indicts himself; the provision of marginal glosses that direct the reader (usually correctly) to the source passage that is being pilloried; and the deployment of a mock-index or table of contents. Already exercised to some extent in *Dr Bentley’s Dissertations [...] Examin’d* and the *Dialogues of the Dead*, these techniques were to be repeated to great effect in *The Transactioneer*.

A Journey to London and *The Transactioneer* were both self-consciously produced within a tradition of anti-virtuosic satire that suggested both general and particular targets for its railing sallies against contemporary experimental practitioners and writers of natural-philosophical papers.⁶¹ King’s turn-of-the-century attacks upon natural learning exploit (for example) the double strategy of Thomas Shadwell’s play *The Virtuoso*, which constructs the character of Sir Nicholas Gimcrack in a manner that combines a wide-ranging derogation of the new science as inherently susceptible to eccentricity and credulity, with an insinuated assault upon its principal public proponents (Robert Hooke for one famously felt that the eyes of fellow theatre-goers turned pointedly towards him when he went to see *The Virtuoso* performed on 2 June 1676).⁶² Although it sets its sights more broadly too in some ways, there is no doubt that *The Transactioneer: With Some of his Philosophical Fancies* is a publication expressly aimed at Dr Hans Sloane in his capacity as Secretary to the Royal Society. Having been elected to the post in 1695, Sloane had immediately set out to revive the Society’s failing journal, the *Philosophical Transactions*; but by the turn of the century he already stood accused of transforming it into an idiosyncratic and private publication, with injurious implications for natural-philosophical knowledge as a whole.⁶³

The Transactioneer explicitly and aggressively adopts and promulgates this perspective. Its ‘Preface’ superciliously announces the principal line of attack: though ‘I [...] am no Member of the R[oyal] S[ociety]’, the writer insists, ‘I am mov’d by the Respect I have for Natural Studies’ to ‘deal so freely with the Person, and some Correspondents, of one who is slipp’d into the Post of Secretary to that Illustrious Body’.⁶⁴ Deriding

Sloane’s approach to ‘Natural Studies’ as piecemeal and amateurish – he has nothing of the true scholar about him, but rather cuts the figure of a laughable and quackish *virtuoso* – the ‘Preface’ complains that the physician is

one who wants every Qualification that is requisite for such a Post. All who read his *Transactions* either in *England*, or beyond the Seas, cry out that the Subjects which he writes on are generally so ridiculous and mean: and he treats of them so emptily; and in a S[t]yle so confused and unintelligible, that it is plain he’s so far from any useful Knowledge, that he wants even common Grammar.⁶⁵

Furthermore, as the would-be disseminator of ‘useful Knowledge’, the writer snipes, Sloane falls short in ‘his own personal Capacity’, in ‘his Judgment in the choice of his Friends’, and in ‘the Discourses that he Publishes’.⁶⁶ There is, King would have his readers believe, a strong correlation between deficient intellectual production and indiscriminately excessive sociability. The distorting systems of social credit mean that ‘by Industry alone a Man may get so much Reputation almost in any Profession as shall be sufficient to amuse the World’, a circumstance epitomised by the elevated situation of one who ‘has certainly nothing but a bustling Temper to recommend him’.⁶⁷ In such a ‘World’, *The Transactioneer* darkly implies, friendship displaces scholarship, the trivial attracts fuller enquiry than the transcendent, and the self-important ‘bustling’ of the weak-minded outweighs the rigorous accomplishments of genuine ingenuity.

Following this introductory diatribe, *The Transactioneer* formally presents two mock philosophical-dialogues. The fictional scenario sustained concerns the encounters of a ‘Gentleman’ – the socially respectable, intellectually robust defender of truth – with two modern practitioners of natural philosophy: a ‘Virtuoso’ (in the first dialogue), who is evidently a convinced acolyte of Sloane and presumably intended to reflect the penchant

for the peculiar and the inane exhibited by Shadwell's Gimcrack; and (in the second dialogue) the 'Transactioneer' friend whom the Virtuoso so fulsomely admires, unmistakably a version of Sloane himself.⁶⁸ Moreover, the Gentleman's opening acknowledgement to the Virtuoso that he has 'scarce enquired after Philosophical News, since Dr. *Plot* and Mr. *Oldenburg* were taken from amongst us', immediately identifies him as a sometime subscriber to the *Transactions* whose interest in its pages has slumped owing to (the reader can only presume) his perception that its intellectual and editorial standards have declined during recent years.⁶⁹ At the very outset of this concourse of minds therefore, the Gentleman's former familiarity with 'Philosophical News', and his open readiness to re-engage with scientific learning, signals a crucial distinction that can be drawn (potentially at least) between two modes of enquiry. On the one hand stands the genteel and disinterested philosopher, the serious student of natural laws and knowledge who is represented by the Gentleman. On the other hand is imagined a whimsical chaser after marvels, aberrations, and curiosities – real or reported – who is damningly figured in the Gentleman's respective conversationists.

The Virtuoso and the Transactioneer each undertake to reacquaint the initially compliant Gentleman with the latest advancements in learning. The satirical humour thenceforth largely resides in two complementary facets of their attempts to do so. Firstly, the lessons imparted by the Virtuoso and Transactioneer are communicated verbatim from papers published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, which when taken out of context sound ephemeral to the concerns of conventional natural philosophy, and often inherently ridiculous. As Adrian Johns notes, King hereby mimics a key satirical strategy of Shadwell.⁷⁰ Secondly, as the dialogues progress the Gentleman exhibits a perversely

escalating scepticism about the cultural value of both the journal itself and the scholarly credentials of its editor-compiler, expressed via an ever-more facetious commentary that he supplies in response to his interlocutors’ efforts. What is most compelling about his responses for this article is the manner in which King’s satire connects the collapse of the Gentleman’s faith in the Royal Society with instances of Fellows’ intellectual dependence – whether institutional or (in the case of Sloane) individual – upon both textual and material practices of sociability. The former (textual practices) are impugned as a consequence of the preponderance of grammatically haphazard, editorially uncorrected items of familiar correspondence that have insinuated their way into the pages of the *Philosophical Transactions*. The latter (material practices) are assailed via the Transactioneer’s unwitting account of the Temple Club’s preternatural oddity, and the text’s concluding sortie against coffee-house sociability in general.

As I have explained, much of the dialogues’ content comprises the attempts of the Virtuoso and the Transactioneer to summarise the principal findings of papers that had actually been published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, only for the reader to discover that once considered and interrogated by the searching and rational mind of the Gentleman, they appear more and more absurd. In total (according to my calculations) *The Transactioneer* refers directly to sixty-two articles that had appeared in the journal since 1678. All but nine of them post-date Sloane’s appointment as editor in 1695, and of those nine, three had been penned by the physician himself. In terms of authorship, up to forty-six different writers are represented (if three anonymous articles in the *Transactions* are counted separately); but almost a quarter of the papers come from just three contributors (each of whom has been closely identified with the Temple Club):

Sloane (eight papers), James Petiver, and Martin Lister (three papers each). Overall, whilst the pieces cover a variety of subjects, they deal largely with topics related to these three men's preferred preoccupations with natural history, medicine, and physic (Sloane and Lister were of course physicians, and Petiver a practising apothecary). Typical amongst those that King selects to quote from in *The Transactioneer* is the report of a woman who 'eating by mistake some Roots of common Hemlock amongst Parsnips, was immediately seized with Raving and Madness, [... so] that she would have given her Cow for a Bag-pipe'; and 'an Account of a Child born without a Brain, which had it lived long enough [as the *Transactioneer* opines] would have made an Excellent Publisher of Philosophical Transactions'.⁷¹

Further analysis indicates more about King's intentions in compiling *The Transactioneer*. Of the sixty-two papers, thirty-one (exactly half) are presented in the *Philosophical Transactions* as either excerpts from or entire transcripts of items of correspondence sent to prominent Fellows of the Royal Society. Once more, three figures have been singled out: the thirty-one letters incorporate seven received by Sloane, six by Lister, and two by Petiver.⁷² Whilst epistolary exchange was undoubtedly instrumental in facilitating the production of natural-philosophical discourse in early-eighteenth-century London, the preponderance of such texts amongst those chosen for derision by King is surely significant. With a rhetorical propensity to entertain as much as to inform, and formally addressed to a specific individual rather than to a general and learned audience, the personal letter may be a vehicle for the provisional communication of new research conclusions, or for colloquially debating a recently observed natural phenomenon; but in neither literary nor intellectual terms can it be considered (in King's

view) a suitable source of copy for a scholarly publication so intimately linked with the public reputation of the Royal Society. Tellingly however, at the commencement of his dialogue with the Gentleman, the Transactioneer is quick to defend ‘the great Correspondence which I am obliged to keep’, and the ‘Weight, Usefulness, and other Circumstances’ furnished by ‘the Discoveries and Improvements’ that it equips him with.⁷³ By privileging in the pages of his journal the dispatches of his own ‘Correspondents’ – whom the Gentleman archly observes to be ‘as Judicious, in making Observations, as you are in Publishing them’ – the Transactioneer therefore betrays editorial practices of social indulgence, scientific imprecision, and a partiality for novelty: three hallmarks of familiar epistolarity (and by extension, of the textual sociability of the *Philosophical Transactions* under Sloane) that King rules inimical to the integrity of true natural philosophy.⁷⁴

The ‘Half-Sentences, and broken Phrases’ that disfigure the published writings of the Transactioneer and his ‘Correspondents’ – who are adjudged in the preface to be ‘most of them so like himself for Learning and Understanding, that a Man may almost swear they were cast in the same Mold’ – represent for King the growing dereliction of modern scientific discourse in turn-of-the-century London, a circumstance which *The Transactioneer* so vehemently laments.⁷⁵ A second blight upon contemporary natural learning – related to the first in its apparent propensities towards garrulousness, cabals, and eccentricity – is manifest in the connections that King perceives between the intellectual productions of the Royal Society, and the overweening, imprecise chatter generated by coffee-house conviviality. Indeed, at the heart of his lampoon lies the attack upon the Temple Coffee-House Club, which is shown to be populated not by figures like

the polite and erudite Gentleman, but rather by men like the idiotic pedant Transactioneer, and his misshapen and scatty sidekick James Petiver.⁷⁶ Far from the sociable, equitable, and studious assembly that provided the fillip in the research of George Pasti and Raymond Stearns, the Club here is an organisation that relentlessly appropriates unimportant scraps of natural-historical information in order to dress them as cogent, scientific knowledge. More treacherously, both the Temple Club and the predilections of its foremost members threaten to overpower the once-prestigious Royal Society in obeisance to the ambitions of the charlatan Transactioneer:

I can never be [at a loss?] to seek where to begin then, as long as there is such a Personage as Mr. J[ames] Pet[ive]r in the Philosophical World. He’s a F[ellow] of the R[oyal] S[ociety] indeed! I made him so. ’Tis my way of Rewarding my Friends and Benefactors. We now begin to call it *Our Royal Society* (*mus Pet. Century* 5). One would never think it that looks upon him, but he’s certainly the Darling of the *Temple-Coffee-House Club*.⁷⁷

As the Transactioneer indicates, it is the technologies of patronage and interest (rather than the tests of status and intellect) that now govern admission to fellowship of the Royal Society. Even more than Sloane, the apothecary Petiver – a producer-retailer with no university education, yet who nevertheless is eulogised by the Transactioneer as ‘the Darling of the *Temple-Coffee-House-Club*’ – epitomises the disintegrating standards of discrimination that had once so keenly regulated its activities on the basis of social standing and sober scholarship.⁷⁸

Pressed by the Gentleman for further intelligence concerning Petiver and the Temple Club, the Transactioneer blithely continues:

And Mr. Pet[ive]r is, Gad he’s every thing. He’s the very Muffti, the Oracle of our Club. For my part I never saw any thing like him exactly. [...] Sir, he and I are all one. You must know we club Notions, laying them all up in a kind of Joynt-Stock, and have all things in common: Sometimes he

draws, and sometimes I, as we have occasion. But he pays in most plenteously. By my good-will I would never be without him. I call him the Philosophick *Sancho*, and he me *Don*.⁷⁹

Despite the friendship that undoubtedly existed between Sloane and Petiver, the satirist’s equation of the two men (‘he and I are all one’) – who together are engaged in ‘Philosophick’ endeavours that seem as potentially precarious in terms of credit as the new financial instruments revolutionising business on the Royal Exchange (‘we club Notions, laying them all up in [...] Joynt-Stock’) – would perhaps have seemed almost as much of an insult to the physician as their collective embodiment as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.⁸⁰ More pertinent however is the manner in which the criticisms levelled at the *Philosophical Transactions* under Sloane’s stewardship converge with King’s assault upon the group of botanists and natural historians who gathered around him at the Temple Club, and who stand accused of dragging the epistemological focus of the Royal Society away from its notional basis of useful experimental philosophy.⁸¹ Yet it is also telling that the Club is not imagined by the writer to operate in vacuous isolation from an otherwise sound system of social and intellectual relations, which it has temporarily (if regrettably) dislodged. Instead, it transpires, the Temple Coffee-House Club is the unfortunate product of the disagreeably modern and plebeian tendencies that are at work within London society as a whole.

In the organisation of its successive squibs, *The Transactioneer* often appears to be a rather hurried and contrived publication (an intuition born out by the number of typographical errors that the first edition contains). Yet the set-pieces that top and tail the second dialogue appear nonetheless to be very deliberately positioned. Whereas the opening topics of discussion between the *Transactioneer* and the Gentleman revolve

around the benefits of Sloane’s ‘great Correspondence’, and the erudition (or otherwise) of Petiver and the Temple Club, their final conversation concerns an article in issue 256 of the *Philosophical Transactions* (published in 1699) by the apothecary, agronomist, and historian of trades John Houghton. Houghton’s ‘Discourse of Coffee’ deals with the history and preparation of the beverage, as well as its spectacular popularisation within the coffee-houses of London. In addition to being a paper of uncertain natural-philosophical value therefore (at least in the eyes of King and his sympathisers), it neatly returns the satire to some of its central preoccupations with metropolitan sociability and intellectual crisis.⁸² Having recounted Houghton’s account of the first coffee-house to be established in England, the *Transactioneer* rounds off his summary of the ‘Discourse’ by quoting directly from his source’s own conclusion:

But this I have been told, *Coffee hath greatly encreased the Trade of Tobacco and Pipes, Earthen Dishes, Tin Wares, News Papers, Coals, Candles, Sugar, Tea, Chocolate, and what not? Coffe-hauses [sic] make all Sorts of People sociable, they improve Arts and Merchandize, and all other Knowledge. And a Worthy Member of this Society, has thought that Coffee-Houses have Improved Useful Knowledge very much.*⁸³

For Houghton, the *Transactioneer*, and (it would seem) the Royal Society as a whole, King’s recurring anxieties about the depth of relationship between coffee-house sociability and natural learning are transformed categorically into broader gains for life in England: intellectually, socially, and economically. Not only do ‘*Coffe-hauses make all Sorts of People sociable*’, but it seems that in addition they ‘*have Improved Useful Knowledge very much*’. Here then is a late-seventeenth-century depiction of the coffee-house as ideal public space, one that is unrestrainedly reasonable, accessible, productive. Yet then as now, this positive vision was neither uncontested, nor even necessarily imagined to be desirable. Under the sharp satire of *The Transactioneer*, Houghton’s rosy picture is cast immediately

into shadowy relief, its suppositions about the benefits accruing to civic society from this mode of collegiate speculation construed as specious and illusory.

In his final exchange with the Transactioneer, the Gentleman – by now withering and aloof in the treatment he administers to his discussant – supplies a scathing assessment of the *Philosophical Transactions* and the discursive practices that are deemed to have produced them:

Gent. Sir, one may learn [from the *Philosophical Transactions*] how prettily You and your Correspondents are Employ’d: But nothing that will make a Man wiser, or more a Philosopher[.] [...] And as for your Coffee Story, I take it to be a Tale fit to be Related only amongst Old Women and Mechanicks.

Transact. And is that all you can see in such Improvements?

Gent. No, Sir, it’s not all, for your Correspondent tells us, That *Coffee* promotes the *Tobacco Trade*, and Consumes *Pipes* and *Candles*. But I suppose, any Coffee-Woman knows that, without the assistance of your Friend to inform her.⁸⁴

The Gentleman’s caustic derogation of Houghton’s ‘Discourse’, and of the *Philosophical Transactions* more generally, inevitably does nothing to frustrate the projects of the Transactioneer, who storms off retorting (in a gesture laced with irony) that ‘my Correspondents will not be discouraged from pursuing their Design, though the whole World Laugh at them’.⁸⁵ What the Gentleman does achieve, however, is to re-emphasise how the epistemological model favoured by the circles of Sloane and Petiver threatens to supplant true learning, through its mistaken coupling of natural philosophy with the engines of sociability. The reader is left to question the social usefulness and intellectual credit both of a mode of scientific discourse that is predicated upon correspondence and conversation, and of the institutional openness of the coffee-house itself (and the Temple Coffee-House Club above all). Far from having ‘*Improved Useful Knowledge very much*’ as the

Transactioneer reports, the informal coffee-house tittle-tattle of men like Sloane and Petiver risks reconstituting even the elevated and enchartered Royal Society as a haphazard club that may as well be made up of 'Old Women and Mechanicks'. If, as the Gentleman inveighs (in significantly gendered and socially elitist terms), the collected wisdom of Sloane's *Philosophical Transactions* is no more than the paltry store of what 'any Coffee-Woman knows', then (the suggestion seems to be) not only do the ranks of the intelligentsia need to be reformed, but they also need to spend rather less time frequenting her establishments.

The history of the Temple Coffee-House Club (including its satirical depiction by King) testifies to the growing influence of natural history and natural historians within the Royal Society at the turn of the eighteenth century. More pertinently it shows how practices of social and scholarly interaction and exchange were integrated at the structural level of the knowledge-production processes in which the Club's *habitués* were individually and institutionally engaged. As the historiography of the Temple Club reveals however, the archaeology of these practices – particularly in their social forms – can be a tricky business. During the six decades since the initial recovery of its membership and practices, a succession of scholars has contested its habits, its reach, and even its historicity. If doubts concerning the Club's existence have now been finally allayed – and whilst noting that this may allow us to validate its status both as the earliest natural history society in Britain, and as a quintessential instance of the coffee-house communion between sociability and learning – it also seems unlikely that much more will ever be known concerning the detail of its meetings, activities, or influence. Nevertheless, if determining exactly what happened in an elusive location like the Temple

Coffee-House remains invariably obscure, in this instance the available evidence can help us to understand how one educated outsider and satirist (William King) perceived, represented, and adjudged the intellectual status and cultural value of the changing sociable and scientific behaviours that men such as Sloane, Petiver, and their circle exhibited. In particular, the opprobrious vitriol with which *The Transactioneer* characterises a set of discursive spaces (the published journal, epistolary correspondence, the coffee-house club) and those who construct them (men who supposedly esteem conversation above erudition, and curiosity above rank), remind us that continuing debates about both the epistemological basis of natural philosophy, and the historical (and historiographical) meanings of the coffee-house, have complex, contested, and mutually overlapping early-modern histories.⁸⁶

Notes

- ¹ James Petiver to ‘Evans’ (London, 20 June 1697), London, British Library, Sloane MSS, 4062, fol. 272r.
- ² The Cock Alehouse (now operating as the Cock Tavern) stood opposite Middle Temple Gate on Fleet Street: see *The London Encyclopædia*, ed. by Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 186-87.
- ³ Throughout this article I use ‘science’ and its cognates to refer to that branch of knowledge and learning concerned with the phenomena of the material universe and the laws that are observed to govern them (or invoked to describe them). Whilst not unconventional, this practice is also self-consciously anachronistic: at the turn of the eighteenth century, the term ‘natural philosophy’ was that most commonly applied in those contexts where we would use ‘science’.
- ⁴ On the Society’s many sub-committees convened during the 1660s see Michael Hunter, *Establishing the New Science: The Experience of the Early Royal Society* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), pp. 73-101; on the new clubs instituted by Robert Hooke in the wake of his quarrel with Henry Oldenburg see Marie Boas Hall, *Promoting Experimental Learning: Experiment and the Royal Society, 1660-1727* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 17-19. On the dining clubs for Fellows that congregated around Hans Sloane’s rival Martin Folkes during the first half of the eighteenth century, see T. E. Allibone, ‘The Diaries of John Byrom, M.A., F.R.S., and their Relation to the Pre-History of the Royal Society Club’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 20 (1965), 162-83.
- ⁵ See Quentin Skinner, ‘Thomas Hobbes and the Nature of the Early Royal Society’, *Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), 217-39. Lotte and Glenn Mulligan drew on Skinner’s model to make much of the personal networks and interests of individual secretaries in their account of the Royal Society’s early development: see their ‘Reconstructing Restoration Science: Styles of Leadership and Social Composition of the Early Royal Society’, *Social Studies of Science*, 11 (1981), 327-64.
- ⁶ Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 14.
- ⁷ For a related discussion of the ‘matter of fact’ during this period see Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 139-67.
- ⁸ See Hunter, *Establishing the New Science*, esp. pp. 1-41.
- ⁹ See Robert Iliffe, ‘Material Doubts’: Robert Hooke, Artisanal Culture and the Exchange of Information in 1670s London’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 28 (1995), 285-318.
- ¹⁰ Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 26. On the concept of the Republic of Letters see Lorraine Daston, ‘The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment’, *Science in Context*, 4 (1991), 367-86; and the editor’s concise introduction to *Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sociability from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment*, ed. by Elena Russo, Yale French Studies 92 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 1-7.
- ¹¹ On Hartlib’s epistolary networks see Mark Greengrass, ‘Archive Refractions: Hartlib’s Papers and the Workings of an Intelligencer’, *Archives of the Scientific Revolution: The Formation and Exchange of Ideas in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Michael Hunter (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998), pp. 35-48; for Oldenburg see Hunter, *Establishing the New Science*, pp. 245-56, and Marie Boas Hall, *Henry Oldenburg: Shaping the Royal Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 125-239; for Sloane see Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, pp. 18-26, and Arthur MacGregor, ‘The Life, Character and Career of Sir Hans Sloane’, in *Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary Founding Father of the British Museum*, ed. by MacGregor (London: British Museum Press, 1994), pp. 11-45, p. 19.
- ¹² In the absence of a recent critical biography, the best accounts of Petiver’s life can be found in Henry Trimen and William T. Thistleton, *Flora of Middlesex: A Topographical and Historical Account of The Plants found in the County: With Sketches of its Physical Geography and Climate, and of the Progress of Middlesex Botany during the Last Three Centuries*. (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1869), pp. 379-86; and Raymond Phineas Stearns, ‘James Petiver: Promoter of Natural Science’, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 62 (1952), 243-365. Both draw extensively on manuscript sources. For a bibliography of his writings see Richard Pulteney, *Historical and Biographical Sketches of the History of Botany in England, from its Origin to the Introduction of the Linnaean System*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1790), II, 33-42. Petiver contributed around thirty papers to the *Transactions*, many of them drawing heavily or relying entirely upon letters received from overseas correspondents.

¹³ Most of the extant correspondence is preserved in the British Library’s Sloane deposit: surviving letters to Petiver are mainly bound in MSS 4062-67; draft out-letters can be found in MSS 3332-40. On the category and spaces of the archive as constructed by an individual (rather than by an institution) during this period, see Michael Hunter’s introduction to *Archives of the Scientific Revolution*, pp. 1-20.

¹⁴ See (for example) the series of seven articles on the plant-life of the Indian subcontinent published in the *Philosophical Transactions* between 1700-03, for which Petiver relied heavily on correspondence with the East India Company surgeon Samuel Brown. The first of these pieces is James Petiver, ‘An Account of Part of a Collection of Curious Plants and Drugs, Lately Given to the Royal Society by the East India Company’, *Philosophical Transactions*, 22 (1700-01), 579-94; the second is James Petiver, ‘An Account of Mr Sam. Brown His Second Book of East India Plants, with Their Names, Vertues, Description, etc. By James Petiver, Apothecary, and Fellow of the Royal Society’, *Philosophical Transactions*, 22 (1700-01), 699-721. The titles of the five subsequent articles follow the formula of the second paper, and can be found in *Philosophical Transactions*, 22 (1700-01) and 23 (1702-03), *passim*.

¹⁵ See Stearns, pp. 257-68, and *passim*.

¹⁶ The early-modern coffee-house has been thoroughly researched and re-evaluated in recent years. The two most important contributions to the field are Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2004); and Brian Cowan *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), which goes so far as to suggest that ‘it was primarily by means of its initial virtuoso patrons that the coffeehouse came to be associated with polite society’ (p. 101). Both scholars subsequently have published their respective accounts of coffee-house historiography: see the ‘Introduction’ to Markman Ellis (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Coffee-House Culture*, 4 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006), I, xi-xxxi; and Brian Cowan, ‘Publicity and Privacy in the History of the British Coffeehouse’, *History Compass*, 5 (2007), 1180-1213.

¹⁷ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), esp. pp. 27-56. For a summary of the arguments and problems produced within Habermas’s work on the public sphere see Craig Calhoun, ‘Habermas and the Public Sphere’, in Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 1-48

¹⁸ One of the chief historical (and historiographical) complaints about Habermas’s account concerns the idealisation of the coffee-house within his argument: detailed research has subsequently shown that the coffee-house’s precincts were rarely as peaceable, egalitarian, or discursively rational as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* suggests. The main theoretical problem with which it is associated has been the question of how adequately a strictly male homosocial space can answer the critical demand to operate as a model for the contemporary retransformation of the ‘bourgeois public sphere’. Both Ellis and Cowan have problems with Habermas: see Ellis, *Coffee-House Culture*, I, xiii-xvii; and Cowan, ‘Publicity and Privacy’, pp. 1186-92. For a more thorough declamation of the ‘public sphere’ paradigm see J. A. Downie’s essays, ‘How Useful to Eighteenth-Century English Studies is the Paradigm of the ‘Bourgeois Public Sphere?’’, *Literature Compass*, 1 (2003), 1-19; and ‘Public and Private: The Myth of the Bourgeois Public Sphere’, in *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Cynthia Wall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 58-79. See also Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona Ó Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton (eds), *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁹ For example, the *Daily Courant* for 27 April 1704 invites those with intelligence concerning Mr Yates’s ‘Bay Gelding’ stolen from ‘Hagerston near Shoreditch’ to report to Buckridge’s Coffee-House on Aldersgate Street, where a twenty-shilling reward awaits; advertises ‘about 40 Hogsheads of choice Lincoln Ale to be Sold’ from the same venue; gives notice of a ‘Publick Mathematick Lecture’ by John Harris, forthcoming at the Marine Coffee-House in Birchin Lane; reminds readers that the ‘Liquor of Azam, [...] a most noble Medicine both for prevention and cure’ can be purchased from John’s Coffee-House in Sweetings Alley; and announces ‘A Collection of Original and other curious Paintings, to be Sold by the Hand’ at the Temple-Change Coffee-House near Temple Bar.

²⁰ Stewart makes use of a passage in Daniel Defoe’s *The Complete English Tradesman* (1726): see Larry Stewart, ‘Other Centres of Calculation, or, Where the Royal Society Didn’t Count: Commerce, Coffee-Houses and Natural Philosophy in Early Modern London’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 32 (1999), 133-53, pp. 135-36.

²¹ See for example Margaret Espinasse, ‘The Decline and Fall of Restoration Science’, *Past and Present*, 14 (1958), 71-89, esp. pp. 74-77; Stephen Pumfrey, ‘Who Did the Work? Experimental Philosophers and

Public Demonstrators in Augustan England’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 28 (1995), 131-56, p. 136; Stewart, pp. 140-41. The most comprehensive account of the place of experimentation within early meetings of the Royal Society is Hall’s *Promoting Experimental Learning*; she is nonetheless keen to point out that she ‘do[es] not mean to imply that experimental activity was in some way ‘better’ than other activity’ (p. 7). A strenuous counter-argument to the narrative of decline can be found in Richard Sorrenson, ‘Towards a History of the Royal Society in the Eighteenth Century’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 50 (1996), 29-46.

²² As the astronomer John Flamsteed scathingly observed in a letter to Abraham Sharp of 21 October 1704, the Society ‘decays & produces nothing remarkable nor is like to doe it I fear whilst tis governed by psons [*sic*] that either value nothing but their own Interests or understand little but Vegetables’ (quoted in Stewart, p. 141).

²³ See Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), especially pp. 1-5, 462-64.

²⁴ Clark, p. 464. On contemporary ideas about the relationship between clubs, societies, and cultural progress, see also David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 76-84.

²⁵ Clark, p. 9.

²⁶ See Clark, p. 63.

²⁷ [John Macky], *A Journey through England: In Familiar Letters from A Gentleman here, to His Friend Abroad*, 2 vols (London: T. Caldecott & J. Pemberton, 1714-22), I, 188.

²⁸ See Clark for a comprehensive review of the different types of club convened in London throughout this period.

²⁹ Clark, p. 9.

³⁰ The four histories of the Temple Coffee-House Club that I judge to be the most important are: George Pasti, ‘Consul Sherard: Amateur Botanist and Patron of Learning, 1659-1728’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1950), pp. 48-55; Stearns, pp. 253-54 and *passim*; Les Jessop, ‘The Club at the Temple Coffee House: Facts and Supposition’, *Archives of Natural History*, 16 (1989), 263-74; and Margaret Riley, ‘The Club at the Temple Coffee House Revisited’, *Archives of Natural History*, 33 (2006), 90-100.

³¹ Pasti, p. 48. A brief CV for Pasti is appended to his dissertation: see Pasti, p. 254.

³² See Stearns, p. 254. For a refutation of the forty-member claim, see Jessop, pp. 265, 268-69; and Riley, p. 93.

³³ See David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History* (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 10-11; and Clark, pp. 63, 74.

³⁴ See Jessop, *passim*.

³⁵ Jessop, p. 273. The two manuscript letters are those from Krieg to Petiver and Vernon to Sloane (see below).

³⁶ See Jessop, pp. 273-74, for details of the historical conclusions that he is prepared to draw from the available epistolary data.

³⁷ Riley, p. 90.

³⁸ Riley, p. 90.

³⁹ Joseph Levine, *Dr. Woodward’s Shield: History, Science, and Satire in Augustan England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 85-86. The pertinent passage is also discussed in Richard Coulton, ‘Curiosity, Commerce, and Conversation in the Writing of London Horticulturists during the Early-Eighteenth Century’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2005), pp. 195-97.

⁴⁰ Riley, pp. 93, 98 (n.); see also Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963). On the early history of George Constantine’s Grecian Coffee-House see Jonathan Harris, ‘The Grecian Coffee-House and Political Debate in London 1688-1714’, *The London Journal*, 25 (2000), 1-13, pp. 2-4. Ralph Thoresby’s diary notes several occasions on which he retired there with other Fellows following meetings of the Royal Society: see for example the entry for 5 June 1712 in *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F. R. S.; Author of the Topography of Leeds (1677-1724)*, ed. by Joseph Hunter, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), II, 111.

⁴¹ Lillywhite lists four coffee-houses on Devereux Court at the very start of the eighteenth century: Andrew’s (perhaps formerly ‘Mrs Andrews’s’); the Devereux (about which next to nothing is known); the

Grecian (probably the business once known as ‘Constantine’s’); and Tom’s: see Lillywhite, pp. 85, 190, 243, 568, 593-96. By the mid-century, the number of coffee-houses in the same location was apparently the same, although in place of Andrew’s and the Devereux (and perhaps housed in different buildings) were now George’s and the Widow’s. On the coffee-houses around the Temple (and in Devereux Court particularly) in the period, see Markman Ellis, ‘Coffee-house Libraries in Mid Eighteenth-Century London’, *The Library*, 7th series, 10 (2009), 3-40, pp. 17-22.

⁴² The near-impossibility of pinning down the Club’s own ‘Temple Coffee-House’ at this historical distance is evidenced by four newspaper advertisements from the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Each of them refers to a site of that name (but apparently not listed as such by Lillywhite), and between them they might plausibly refer to anywhere between one and four separate coffee-house(s) (though a total of two is most likely). *The London Gazette*, 23 November 1685, advertises that tickets for the ‘Annual Feast for the County of Bucks’ are available from ‘Temple Coffee-house in Essex-Street’; ‘[a]ll Persons desiring Passage’ from St. Katherine’s Stairs to Calais on board the ‘Boneto Yatch’ are advised to enquire at the ‘Temple Coffee-House in Fleetstreet’ by *The Post Boy*, 7 December 1699; notice is given of a sale of books to take place at ‘the Temple Coffee-house, over against St. Dunstan’s Church in Fleetstreet’ in *The Post Boy*, 7 December 1700; and the ‘Temple-Coffee-house in Devereux Court, near Essex Street’, is advertised as the venue for a rather complex-sounding investment scheme in *The Post Boy*, 17 April 1701. Despite the absence of any such-named venue in Lillywhite’s *Reference Book*, further credence for the notion that a business widely known as the ‘Temple Coffee-House’ did stand on Devereux Court is supplied by the title of Edmund Curll’s *Bibliotheca Legalis: Being a Catalogue of Books [...] Which will Begin to be Sold by Auction on Thursday January the 31st, 1706. at the Temple-Coffee-House in Devereux-Court, from Four to Eight in the Evening Daily till All are Sold* (London: Edmund Curll, 1706).

⁴³ David Krieg to James Petiver (undated), Sloane MSS, 4067, fol. 7^r.

⁴⁴ William Vernon to Hans Sloane (Annapolis, 24 July 1698), Sloane MSS, 4037, fols 102-03, fol. 103^r.

⁴⁵ [William King], *The Transactioneer, with Some of his Philosophical Fancies: in Two Dialogues* (London: [no pub.], 1700), pp. 33-34.

⁴⁶ The day of the week on which the club assembled is mentioned by Vernon to Sloane, 24 July 1698, f. 103^r; and also in [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 34. Rather different time-frames have been ascribed to the Club by different historians: Stearns (pp. 253-54) considers that it probably began in 1689 and lasted into the 1710s; Jessop is reluctant to infer that it met at any time outside of 1698 (p. 273); whilst Riley posits its life-span as being between roughly 1690 and 1706 (pp. 95-96).

⁴⁷ On the evidence concerning the Club’s membership see Pasti, pp. 49-53; Jessop, pp. 272-73; and Riley, pp. 93-95.

⁴⁸ On the intimate relationship between the model of sociability developed by English *virtuosi* (especially men of science) and the institution of the coffee-house, see Cowan, *Social Life*, pp. 101-12. See also Ellis, *Coffee-House*, pp. 157-65.

⁴⁹ On Club activities (and non-activities) see Jessop, pp. 272-73; and Riley, pp. 95-97.

⁵⁰ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 34. *The Transactioneer* (including the relevant passage) is discussed at greater length in the final section of this article.

⁵¹ Riley, p. 97.

⁵² Cowan, *Social Life*, p. 101.

⁵³ In the absence of a fuller biography, see Hugh de Quehen, ‘King, William (1663-1712)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (January 2008) <www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15604> [accessed 17 June 2008].

⁵⁴ See Joseph Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 47-84; and Colin Horne, ‘The Phalaris Controversy: King versus Bentley’, *Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), 289-303.

⁵⁵ Adrian Johns considers those elements of the controversy that centred on Bennet’s bookshop in *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 177-79.

⁵⁶ See *Dr Bentley’s Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris, and the Fables of Æsop, Examined by the Honourable Charles Boyle, Esq.* (London: Thomas Bennet, 1698), pp. 184-201. The primary evidence for the claim concerning King’s authorship of this section relies on the testimony of Alexander Pope, as it was reported by his literary executor William Warburton in a letter to William Hurd of 19 August 1749: see the

posthumously published William Warburton, *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate to One of his Friends* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, [1793?]), pp. 7-10.

⁵⁷ See [William King], *Dialogues of the Dead: Relating to the Present Controversy Concerning the Epistles of Phalaris* (London: Abigail Baldwin, 1699), p. 2 and *passim*.

⁵⁸ [King], *Dialogues*, pp. 52-67. King’s immediate target at this point in the *Dialogues* is William Wootton’s *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694).

⁵⁹ The device of a journey to London did at least allow King another opportunity to swipe at Bentley. The *Journey*’s narrator, a fictionalised version of Samuel de Sorbière (1615-70) (himself a published antagonist of the Royal Society), complains that civility prevents him from waiting upon the ‘Learned Library Keeper’ at St James’s, who is ‘so busy in answering a Book which had been lately wrote against him, concerning *Phalaris*’ that he does not have the time to show visitors the royal collections there: see [William King], *A Journey to London, in the Year, 1698. After the Ingenious Method of that Made by Dr. Martin Lyster to Paris, in the Same Year, &c. W[r]itten Originally in French, by Monsieur Sorbiere, and Newly Translated into English* (London: Abigail Baldwin, 1698), p. 23. Raymond Stearns has written briefly on *A Journey to London*, but does not offer any explanation for King’s satire beyond a sense that Lister’s book was considered offensive to ‘literary taste and pretensions’: see Martin Lister, *A Journey to Paris in the Year 1698*, ed. by Raymond Phineas Stearns (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. xii-xiv.

⁶⁰ For a studied and sympathetic account of the cultural identity and cultivated ‘sensibility’ of the virtuoso in seventeenth-century England, see Walter Houghton, ‘The English Virtuoso in the Seventeenth Century’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 3 (1942), 51-73, 190-219.

⁶¹ See for example Shadwell’s *Virtuoso* (discussed below); and [Mary Astell], *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex: In which are Inserted the Characters of a Pedant, a Squire, a Beau, a Vertuoso, a Poetaster, a City-Criticke, &c. In a Letter to a Lady*. (London: A. Roper, E. Wilkinson, and R. Clavel, 1696), pp. 96-108. Astell mockingly characterises the virtuoso as an exemplary exponent of ‘*Impertinence*’, or ‘a humour of busying our selves about things trivial, and of no moment in themselves, or unseasonably in things of no concern to us, or wherein we are able to do nothing to any Purpose’ (p. 84). Later examples of satirical writing about the experimental and social practices of *virtuosi* in general and the Royal Society in particular include King’s own *Useful Transactions in Philosophy* (1709); the chapters describing the Academy at Lagado in book three of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726); aspects of books three and four of Pope’s *Dunciad* (1742-43); the anonymously published *Teague-Root Display’d* (1746); and Sir John Hill’s *Dissertation on Royal Societies* (1750).

⁶² See Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso: A Comedy, Acted at the Duke’s Theatre* (London: Henry Herringman, 1676); and Robert Hooke, *The Diary of Robert Hooke M.A., M.D., F.R.S. 1672-1680 Transcribed from the Original in the Possession of the Corporation of the City of London (Guildhall Library)*, ed. by Henry Robinson and Walter Adams (London: Taylor and Francis, 1935), p. 235. For recent critical revaluations of the play see Tita Chico, ‘Gimcrack’s Legacy: Sex, Wealth, and the Theater of Experimental Philosophy’, *Comparative Drama*, 42 (2008), 29-49, which reads the titular ‘virtuoso’ as the deliberate, comic anti-type for the ideal ‘modest witness’ or gentleman natural philosopher; and Peter Anstey, ‘Literary Responses to Robert Boyle’s Natural Philosophy’, in *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*, ed. by Juliet Cummins and David Burchell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 145-62, which considers Shadwell’s critique of the new science both in literary context, and in relation to the intellectual output of Robert Boyle (who ranks alongside Hooke as the play’s probable direct-target).

⁶³ On the early history of the *Philosophical Transactions* see Hall, *Promoting Experimental Learning*, *passim*; and Dwight Atkinson, *Scientific Discourse in Sociobistorical Context: The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, 1675-1975* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999), pp. 17-27. For Sloane’s account of his commission to take on the *Transactions* see his ‘Preface’ to *Philosophical Transactions*, 19 (1695-97).

⁶⁴ [King], *Transactioneer*, sig. A2^v.

⁶⁵ [King], *Transactioneer*, sigs A2^v-3^r.

⁶⁶ [King], *Transactioneer*, sig. A2^r.

⁶⁷ [King], *Transactioneer*, sig. A2^r.

⁶⁸ I have not identified a specific target who can be identified with the ‘Virtuoso’, nor (on balance) do I think it likely that King had one in mind. He is however most obviously assailing those natural historians who were Sloane’s most intimate metropolitan associates – men like Lister, Petiver, and the members of the Temple Coffee-House Club.

⁶⁹ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 1. Henry Oldenburg died in 1667, editing the *Philosophical Transactions* until shortly before his death; Robert Plot (who died in 1696) had been editor of the journal between 1682-84.

⁷⁰ See Johns, pp. 456-57.

⁷¹ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 44, 56.

⁷² The remaining sixteen had gone to fifteen different recipients – two of whom are anonymous – with two conveyed to Plot.

⁷³ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 32.

⁷⁴ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 57. For an historically sensitive defence of Sloane’s editorial habits, see T. Christopher Bond, ‘Keeping up with the Latest Transactions: The Literary Critique of Scientific Writing in the Hans Sloane Years’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 22:2 (1998), 1-17. A less sympathetic (and less satisfactory) account can be found in Roger Lund, ‘More Strange than True’: Sir Hans Sloane, King’s *Transactioneer*, and the Deformation of English Prose’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 14 (1985), 213-31.

⁷⁵ [King], *Transactioneer*, sig. A2^v.

⁷⁶ Petiver’s alleged ugliness was noted unsympathetically by one forthright visitor, who equated the apothecary’s irregular appearance with his equally chaotic collections: see *London in 1710: From the Travels of Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach*, trans. by W. H. Quarrell and Margaret Mare (London: Faber, 1934), pp. 126-27.

⁷⁷ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 33. King’s (accurate) reference is to James Petiver, *Musei Petiveriani Centuria Prima [- Decima], Rariora Naturae Continens; viz. Animalia, Fossilia, Plantas, ex variis Mundi Plagis Advecta, ordine digesta, et Nominibus propriis signata*, 10 vols (London: Samuel Smith, 1695-1703), V (1699), sig. C7^r.

⁷⁸ The attack against Petiver continues for several pages: see [King], *Transactioneer*, pp. 33-38. Sloane apart, no other figure receives this mode of sustained treatment within the satire. On the role and identity of early-modern apothecaries as ‘producer-retailers’ see Patrick Wallis, ‘Consumption, Retailing, and Medicine in Early-Modern London’, *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), 26-53.

⁷⁹ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 34.

⁸⁰ On the cultural manifestations of contemporary anxieties around the new finance – including the figure of the stock-jobber – see the ‘Introduction’ to Colin Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance: Capital Satires of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-26.

⁸¹ It is important to note that King holds back from a wholesale derogation of natural philosophy: the text apparently validates the Gentleman’s scientific curiosity. Similarly, Mary Astell qualifies the character of a virtuoso in her *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*, with the caveat that ‘I wou’d not have any Body mistake me so far, as to think I wou’d in the least reflect upon any sincere and intelligent Enquirer into Nature’; pointedly her fictional correspondent considers ‘Mr. Boyle more honourable for his learned Labours, than for his Noble Birth’, but fears that the current Fellows of the Royal Society are ‘a Faithless, Incredulous Generation of Men that will give credit no farther than the visible Stock will extend’ (pp. 104-05).

⁸² John Houghton, ‘A Discourse of Coffee, Read at a Meeting of the Royal Society’, *Philosophical Transactions*, 21 (1699), 311-317. A critical introduction to the paper is supplied in Ellis, *Coffee-House Culture*, IV, 155-56. On the place of the history of trades within the Royal Society’s agenda for natural learning, see Kathleen Ochs, ‘The Royal Society of London’s History of Trades Programme: An Early Episode in Applied Science’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 39 (1985), 129-58; and Hunter, *Establishing the New Science*, pp. 36-37, 284-85.

⁸³ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 86.

⁸⁴ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 87. The consumption of coffee and tobacco apparently went side-by-side in coffee-houses, which are often portrayed as filthily smoky in contemporary satires: see for example *The Character of a Coffee-House, with the Symptomes of a Town-Wit* (London: Jonathan Edwin, 1673), p. 2; and [Edward Ward], *The London-Spy Compleat, in Eighteen Parts* (London: J. How, 1703), p. 11. See also Cowan, *Social Life*, pp. 82-83.

⁸⁵ [King], *Transactioneer*, p. 88.

⁸⁶ This article was initially presented as a conference paper at an annual meeting of ASECS (the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies) in Las Vegas. I am grateful to all those present who made comments and suggestions about both the content and argument; and in particular I would like to thank Markman Ellis at Queen Mary, University of London for his advice and support (as well as for several of the points of detail that enrich the discussion of coffee-houses near the Temple).