slog away at each other. In the end, with the second Exclusion Bill a failure, Charles called Parliament to Oxford, dismissed it (never to recall it), and, as Coote notes in Chapter Seventeen, arrested Shaftesbury for treason. Acquittal by a Whig-packed jury followed, despite Dryden's superb efforts in *Absalom and Achitophel*. This penultimate chapter also outlines the Rye House Plot, Monmouth's exile, Louis XIV's further involvement in Charles' political affairs, and the King's death.

The Afterword offers, at the end of this somewhat symphonic *tour de force*, a necessary *dénouement*. It briefly covers the exasperating if mercifully short reign (as Charles had predicted it would be) of James II (formerly Duke of York), the rebellion and execution of Monmouth (1685), the subsequent Bloody Assizes, and James' undignified departure in 1688, allowing the succession of William and Mary. There follow a list of references, a bibliography, and an index.

Stephen Coote's *Royal Survivor* is a masterly, compelling piece of work. He has assembled his myriad of details with care and discrimination and has managed to bring events and personalities vividly before the mind. More documentation will probably be wanted by some readers, and to many a more generous supply of dates throughout the text would be helpful. Nonetheless, this volume, as it stands, is one for which we can be grateful–utterly useful in terms of an historical study and splendid literary fare as well.

Brendan Dooley. *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. viii + 213 pp. $42.95. Review by LAURA CRUZ, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY.

Brendan Dooley ends *The Social History of Skepticism* by pointing out that his is a cautionary tale. His message, which he shares with Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (a central figure in the work), is that scholarship needs to be protected from the

wiles of the market, whether in the seventeenth century or the twenty-first. When information becomes a commodity, then truth, understanding, and order are impeded and progress of all sorts is disrupted. Like modern tabloid journalists, seventeenth-century news writers, whether they were the desperate men copying newsletters in the back room or respected court historians, produced a massive amount of disinformation–from dramatic embellishments to outright lies–that made many scholars (and rulers) despair of ever finding an objective and practical account of events in the past. *The Social History of Skepticism* is both an example and a description of the methodological philosophy that developed in order to save the discipline of history from capitalism's evil clutches and the dustbins of Cartesian skepticism.

It is no surprise that the business of news was lively in sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Italy, where Dooley focuses his attentions. The political vicissitudes of the various city-states and their involvement in foreign wars meant that accurate information was in high demand. The first vehicle to respond to that demand was the newsletter, essentially a hand-written sheet of insider political gossip. Newsletters were soon joined by printed newspapers, although the latter never completely supplanted the former and, in fact, often copied them verbatim, as Dooley impressively illustrates with several colorful examples. With the advent of newspapers, the buying and selling of information became an orderly business subject to rules and regulation like other municipal trades.

On the surface, the newsletters and newspapers appear to be very unpromising sources from which to work. Like other kinds of ephemera, they are imperfectly preserved. They were produced sporadically, almost always by anonymous copyists hoping to avoid nearly constant censorship. Most of the information contained in them is completely unverifiable and, as is true for most early texts, we have no idea who read them or what effect they may have had on the population at large. A lesser historian might have been daunted, but Dooley is able to turn these vices into virtues. By focusing on the context from which they sprang–the poor job pros-

pects for many copyists, the availability of insider information, the interest of important clients–he is able to piece together the world of the newsletter. His sketch of the contours of that market and the motivations and strategies of the actors involved make a welcome contribution to the history of early modern journalism before the French Revolution, which hitherto had consisted of only a handful of specialized texts.

The persistence of newsletters, Dooley argues, is proof of a developing market for information that had previously been reserved for a select few. The theory that the advent of print turned the once private affairs of state into fodder for public consumption is certainly not new, but Dooley does give the public sphere argument an original twist. While journalism may have created informed citizens and more accountable governments, it also had deleterious consequences. The information revolution produced as much disinformation as information and it was difficult to tell which was which. Even "respectable'" sources like newspapers and published histories became suspect in the eyes of the discerning viewer. Newspapers were subject to censorship and could lose their privileges or be forced to print expensive retractions should their work run afoul of local authorities. Writers often colored their accounts in order to gain the patronage or protection of the characters involved and many admitted that they simply fabricated those parts for which no hard information was available. According to Dooley, with more and more of such suspicious texts around, many readers did not know what or whom to believe.

For many scholars, the answer was nothing and no one. Dooley suggests that the spread of yellow journalism contributed directly to the growth of the philosophy of skepticism. Because he concentrates on its contributions to philosophical thought, he neatly avoids the pitfalls of establishing the causal connections between texts and their readers. Unlike the average reader, the scholars of the seventeenth century conveniently wrote many of their thoughts down and many of them mentioned the pernicious affects of journalism specifically. The bewildering and seemingly insolvable problem of finding objective accounts of events in the recent past

dovetailed nicely with the suppositions of the empiricists that history is unverifiable and Descartes' belief that is was "oriented towards pursuing information about affairs of no moral significance" (137).

Dooley is hard pressed to show that this was much more than a coincidence. Although these scholars may have read and often disapproved of the popular newspapers, there is no way to tell whether or not that disapproval affected their ideas about the importance of received wisdom in general. This link between journalism and skepticism is the most ambitious section of the book and the most questionable. If taken to their logical conclusion, his findings suggest that the roots of the Enlightenment can be traced back to sixteenth-century Italy, a hypothesis sure to cause controversy. To his credit, Dooley does not claim that political journalism was the only factor that influenced the growth of skepticism nor does he claim that the Italian experience is necessarily representative of Europe as a whole. This modesty makes his claims more obtainable, but they also reduce the dramatic impact of his work. What is left is the tantalizing hypothesis that political journalism may have contributed some small part to the growth of the philosophies that caused Europe to completely re-examine her intellectual foundations. How significant or necessary that link was, we may never know.

It is ironic that history was saved by a number of Italian philosophers (among others). The very people who had the most potential exposure to the vagaries of the Italian equivalent of Grub Street are the same ones who worked to find it a place in the new intellectual environment. In Dooley's model, the connection between journalism and historiography is predicated on the first connection between journalism and skepticism, and so the direct causal links between the reformers of history and the authors of scintillating newsletter gossip are practically non-existent. He does succeed, however, in drawing attention to a number of lesser-known Italian philosophers whose contributions to the post-Cartesian universe may have been under-appreciated.

According to seventeenth-century writers such as Ludovico Antonio Muratori and Benedetto Bacchini, history is not a science and cannot, therefore, satisfy scientific ideas about truth, but that does not mean that it is meaningless or futile. Rather, "a distinction could be drawn between reasonable and unreasonable doubt" based on informed, critical readings of documents, manuscripts, and even visual evidence (142). The gaps between those sources could reasonably be filled by the historical imagination, but this was not the free-flowing imagination of a poet or painters or storytellers. Good historical writing needed to be consciously tempered by a responsibility to the actual events of the past. These criteria separated good history from bad history and scholarship from journalism.

That separation remained theoretical, however, until scholarship was truly able to free itself from the same constraints that the journalists had to operate under, namely, capitalism and censorship (if it ever really has). Even if they were not able to reap what they had sown, the historians of the seventeenth century began a movement to put academic history on a foundation sufficiently solid to support it to this day. Dooley's book is evidence of that. It is based on a solid familiarity over a wide range of disparate primary material, which he pieces together with a keen sense of the weaknesses inherent in his main sources. He exercises his imagination not only to wrest significance from inauspicious sources but also to make a possible connection between a limited, isolated phenomenon (the Italian newsletters) to a European-wide movement of revolutionary proportions and to modern historical methodology. Did he definitively prove each of these "leaps of imagination"? Probably not, but arguably all he needed to do was to overcome reasonable doubt.