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from The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces

THOMAS P. MILLER

THE INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH—A LITERACY CRISIS IN THE LEARNED CULTURE?

VIEWED FROM the educational centers of the classical tradition, the introduction of the vulgar tongue marked the beginning of the delatinization of higher education that ensued when standards declined as inadequately prepared students were admitted to universities. The perpetuation of classicism depended on the mastery of a narrow canon of classical texts from which one was to deduce all that was worth knowing, with students required to memorize and reproduce received knowledge in commonplace verses and syllogistic disputations that demonstrated that one had mastered the logical and rhetorical forms of the learned culture. From the antiquarian perspective of classicists, the only reason to speak English in a university would be if students had not been taught in grammar schools to understand appropriate academic discourse. The standard of classical languages was in fact declining in Scotland at this time, but the departure from classicism was viewed quite differently by the professors who began lecturing in English on modern cultural and social affairs. The language of public life was introduced into the universities by professors of rhetoric and moral philosophy who challenged not just the confines of the curriculum but its basic assumptions about how knowledge is generated and communicated. Those who introduced the "new" rhetoric and logic into higher education assumed that the best method for advancing knowledge was to reason

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"This work grew out of my decision in graduate school to study the history of rhetoric over the pragmatics of professional writing. I chose eighteenth-century rhetoric because I noticed that the many theoretical explications of the works of such figures as Hugh Blair and George Campbell did not include Scots, Irish, Americans, and dissenters, who introduced English studies as they began teaching modern political economy, psychology, sociology, and science. I realized that these newly defined areas for study represented a transition from classical to modern cultural studies."—TPM

inductively from the individual experience or phenomenon to the laws that governed the natural order. Such assumptions prompted a complete reformation of the curriculum.

At the end of the seventeenth century in Scotland as in England, antiquarianism enshrouded the curriculum, though the Scottish curriculum was less highly refined because few students had been inculcated into the learned culture in a private grammar school. The first year was spent translating canonical texts—the New Testament, Homer, or a few Greek rhetoricians such as Isocrates. The second year might include the study of Ramus but was largely taken up with mastering the forms of Aristotelian logic, and the last two years were also devoted to Aristotle (largely his ethics and physics) as well as some geometry and perhaps astronomy. As in England, students were initiated into the learned culture by a single tutor or "regent" who taught ancient languages, classical authorities, and syllogistic forms of reasoning that moved from indisputable premises to immutable conclusions. From the 1690s the Scottish universities began to respond to "experimental" trends in natural and moral philosophy, and by 1710 the teaching of natural philosophy had become "fundamentally Newtonian" (Wood, *Aberdeen* 7; see also Emerson, "Science and Moral Philosophy"; Shepherd). The Union of Parliaments in 1707 and the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 broadened the challenge to traditional assumptions and created a demand for studies that could be used to improve Scotland's place in Britain—studies of scientific innovations, political economy, and English tastes that could be used to modernize the primitive agricultural culture of the Highlands, expand Glasgow's role as a center of world trade, and enable Scots to speak as British gentlemen.

Scottish higher education was responsive to broader social changes because it was not limited to a narrow social class. Scottish students tended to be younger, less classically educated, and poorer than English university students.[1] For example, Witherspoon entered Edinburgh University at thirteen, Reid at twelve, and Hume and Robertson at eleven. While there were a few private grammar schools, Scottish education was less stratified than the "public" schools of England. Blair and other students from middle-class backgrounds attended "high schools" that emphasized classical languages, while those from more rural areas such as Alexander Carlyle and Adam Ferguson began their education in parish schools that taught reading, writing, and arithmetic along with the rudiments of classical languages for scholars who planned on attending college.[2] Parish schools brought students from a range of social classes together in the same classroom, particularly in the many isolated communities where the children of the local laird might study beside those of his dependents. Poorer students often attended college with financial aid from the parish or its patron. Some were admitted with a letter from their pastors certifying their inability to pay fees, which were about one-third of those at Oxford and Cambridge, and many students received financial aid from university-controlled scholarships.[3] Poorer students were encouraged to go on to college by the Calvinist emphasis on literate devotion and by the accessibility of the Scottish church from below.

The Scottish universities had specific institutional features that made them responsive to students from diverse backgrounds. Entrance exams were not established until the end of the nineteenth century, when the Scottish

universities were pressured to conform to the centers of British education. Unlike at Oxford and Cambridge, students were not continually reminded of their social class by their academic vestments and their places at dinner and in academic processions. Also, while England's two universities were located outside its major population centers, four Scottish cities and towns had colleges, with two offering a choice of more than one. Because they lacked the rich endowments of the English universities, the Scottish universities had to compete for students to survive, and such competition fostered innovation (see Wood, *Aberdeen* 61–62). Scottish higher education was also more broadly accessible because it did not have the religious tests that limited the English universities to those who swore to uphold the state religion. Many dissenters thus came north to study. Since most were middle class and had studied in a dissenting academy rather than a classical grammar school, they often supported utilitarian reforms. Students could support reform in a very tangible way because they paid fees directly to the professors whose classes they chose. According to such professors as Adam Smith and Thomas Reid, this system of payment created a competitive marketplace that rewarded professors for being active researchers and effective teachers (*Wealth of Nations* 2: 758–60; Reid, *Works* 734).

If such a system of rewarding teachers of high demand courses had continued to exist, introductory courses such as composition might not have ended up becoming the province of the lowest paid and least experienced teachers, and senior faculty would not be concentrating their efforts on specialized seminars. Of course higher education is not now and was not then a free marketplace of ideas. Scottish universities were gaining freedom from ecclesiastical authorities, who intervened less and less often to maintain orthodoxy from the middle of the eighteenth century. However, political patronage was increasing dramatically. In 1690, only four of forty-nine professorships were royally sponsored, but in 1800, twenty-four of seventy-two professors owed their positions directly to the English king. Even those who were not appointed to a royally financed chair like Hugh Blair's Regius Professorship of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres often received their jobs through party patronage. According to Emerson, "academic staffs changed in outlook about as rapidly as did the elites which gave them office but not at a much faster rate" ("Scottish Universities" 457). That rate of change was accelerated by the Union and intensified still further after the defeat of the rebellions of 1715 and 1745.

The reformation of the curriculum followed closely upon the Union of Parliaments in 1707. Principal Carstares of Edinburgh University was the most influential Scottish educator of the time because of his close ties to King William. Like many of his colleagues, Carstares had contacts with dissenters in England and had studied in the Calvinist universities of Holland, which were already teaching modern history and the vernacular. Carstares introduced a series of reforms that would be adopted elsewhere.[4] Regents had traditionally taught all the subjects in the curriculum, but Carstares established professorships in "Logic and Metaphisick," "Ethics and Natural Philosophy," and "Pnewmaticks and Morall Philosophy." Moral philosophy was meant to be the capstone of the curriculum, but the course was free of student fees and overlapped with the one in ethics and natural philosophy (see Grant). The moral philosophy course did not become as significant as those at Glasgow

and Aberdeen until Ferguson took the chair in 1764 with the provision that he could charge student fees (see Sher, "Professors of Virtue"). As the study of contemporary ethics and politics gained importance, classical languages began to lose their interdisciplinary presence. Greek would be taught by a single faculty member, rather than being a pervasive part of the whole philosophy course and integrally involved with the study of syllogistic reasoning. Latin also became the province of a single professor of "Humanity" and largely became confined to the first year (see Grant 263–64). These changes mark the beginning of the modern decline of the classics in public education (see Withrington 173–74).

English was introduced into the university between the two Jacobite rebellions when reforms began to yield results after a period of political turmoil and economic stagnation. The defeat of the rebellion of 1715 led to a purging of faculty with allegiances to the old order, particularly at Aberdeen, where virtually all the professors were deposed for Jacobite sentiments in 1717. The rising generation of faculty accepted the Union and sought to improve Scotland's place in it. Most notable was Francis Hutcheson, professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow from 1729 to 1746. Hutcheson has traditionally been viewed as a primary source of the whole Scottish Enlightenment (see Scott). More important here, he was one of the first university professors to teach in English, though Glasgow divinity professors had "dropped into English" at times (H. M. B. Reid, *Divinity* 198). Moral philosophers were often among the first to lecture in English, including John Pringle at Edinburgh from 1734 to 1745 and Thomas Reid's teacher, George Turnbull, at Marischal College from 1721 to 1727. The moral philosophers who began lecturing in English on contemporary political and ethical issues were rejecting classicism, not classical humanism. Hutcheson, Turnbull, and Pringle drew on the civic ideals of Ciceronian humanism, but they recognized that the language of public life was now English and not Latin. The students of Hutcheson and the other moral philosophers of his generation would reorient the humanities to suit the needs of a "commercial society," devaluing divisive civic eloquence in order to maintain the decorum of civil society and avoid disturbing the natural laws of political economy. The transition from civic humanism to civility was consistent with the cosmopolitanism of the literary societies where Scots gathered to imitate the style and sensibility of the *Spectator,* and with the idealization of the "impartial spectator" by Hutcheson's student Adam Smith.

The introduction of the vernacular is one of the most important and least examined developments in the history of higher education. The adoption of English is the pivot point for the transition away from classicism. For the first time in over a millennium, the language of public life was being used and studied in college classrooms. The introduction of English did not end antiquarianism, but the arcane studies and ritualistic disputations that had maintained the boundaries of the learned culture must have come to seem quite confining, if not downright ridiculous, when students began discussing contemporary issues and no longer had to concentrate their attention on learning a technical jargon in a dead language. According to one professor, when English began to be used, "the eyes of men were opened to the unsuitable nature of the subjects which they treated," and they called for "radical reform" in "public education" (Jardine, *Outlines* 25). Just as it is not surprising that

English was first used by professors of moral philosophy who wanted to speak to contemporary social and cultural issues, it is no accident that when English became the language of instruction, professors across the curriculum began to challenge the authority of the ancients.

The interdisciplinary trends that shaped the transition from the ancients to the moderns are evident in the description of the Edinburgh curriculum published in *Scots Magazine* in 1741 by Robert Henderson, a librarian at the university. As elsewhere, a deepening awareness of cultural differences was leading to a more self-reflexive approach to the study of history. The professor of history was looking beyond the classical world to examine modern history and the art of composing histories. The practice of lecturing in Latin was defensively justified as a means to make the language "familiar" to students (Henderson 373). Trends in natural religion and natural philosophy were converging to redefine moral philosophy. Pringle's course is described as beginning with a "physical enquiry" into sensory phenomena and concluding with the study of "Natural Theology; or the existence and attributes of God demonstrated from the light of nature" (373). Strikingly absent is any reference to Aristotle, who was traditionally the foundation for ethics in particular and the curriculum in general. Generations of regents had taught Aristotle's physics along with his metaphysics, but ancient authorities were giving way to an experimental approach to natural philosophy, with a "set of Experiments" used to teach sciences like optics and hydrostatics that could be examined experimentally. An experimental course was being taught by the famous Newtonian mathematician Colin Maclaurin, who conducted experiments for a public audience of women as well as for his students (Henderson 372; Maclaurin v). The emphasis on experimental science was establishing Edinburgh's international preeminence in medicine, with professorships in anatomy, botany, chemistry, and the theory and practice of "Physick." While medicine remained an extracurricular study in England, the Scottish universities helped professionalize medicine by institutionalizing it as an area of academic research and formally certifying its practitioners.

Programmatic educational reforms were also being instituted elsewhere, most notably at Marischal College, Aberdeen, where the whole curriculum was reorganized according to the inductive logic of the sciences. Sources of these reforms can be found in the works of George Turnbull, professor of moral philosophy at Marischal from 1721 to 1727, who is discussed further in chapter 7, and Turnbull's successor David Fordyce links the reforms at Marischal with the innovations in the dissenting academies that Fordyce had himself experienced as a student of Philip Doddridge. The proposals of Turnbull and Fordyce were implemented by Fordyce's student and successor Alexander Gerard. Gerard published the reforms at Marischal in *Scots Magazine* in 1752 (14: 606) and then in *A Plan of Education in the Marischal College* (1755). According to Wood's history of the curriculum, the most striking innovation is "the increasingly dominant role played by the natural sciences in the arts curriculum" (Wood, *Aberdeen* 163). Gerard worked from the assumption that "the only basis of Philosophy is now acknowledged to be an accurate and extensive history of nature, exhibiting an exact view of the various phenomena for which Philosophy is to account" (Gerard 3–4). Marischal's competitor, King's College, soon publicly committed itself to advancing

science. In *An Abstract of Some Statutes and Orders of King's College in Old Aberdeen* (1754), Turnbull's student Thomas Reid repudiated "the logic and Metaphysic of the Schoolmen" and professed the college's emphasis on "Natural and Experimental Philosophy."

With the institutionalization of Lockean assumptions about the primacy of inductive reasoning, higher education was reoriented away from transmitting static bodies of knowledge toward advancing "useful knowledge." While educators had long assumed that deductions from classical authorities were the natural way of reasoning, Gerard and his contemporaries believed that the only reliable method of advancing knowledge was by reasoning inductively from the phenomena studied in the particular area of inquiry. According to Gerard, individuals can reason logically from experience without formal instruction, and in fact, it is only by "observing the natural reasonings of mankind, that just *rules* of reasoning can be discovered" (17). Gerard maintained that the study of philosophy "must be entirely founded" on history, especially natural history, "the immediate foundation of almost all the arts of life, agriculture, gardening, manufactures, medicines, & c." (29, 31). After studying natural and civil history, students turned to "*Natural* and *Experimental* Philosophy," "criticism and the *Belles Lettres*," mathematics, and related subjects, with the final year dedicated to pneumatology, natural religion, natural law, and moral philosophy (28–32). With these changes, classical languages were largely confined to the first year, and the curriculum moved away from classicism toward a program of studies concerned with historical change and inductive reasonings from experience, the same program of studies that was being instituted in the dissenting academies at the time.

The "science of man" became a unifying emphasis of the whole curriculum as it was redefined by the logic of the individual experience. In the revised curriculum, the study of "the constitution of man" connected research on the individual arts and sciences with the concluding studies of ethics and politics: "moral Philosophy is founded as well as Logic on Pneumatics, and must therefore come after it. The constitution of man, and his several active powers must be explained, before his business, his duty, and his happiness can be discovered" (Gerard 23). The study of psychology under the traditional rubric of "pneumatics" or "pneumatology" preserved the continuity between natural religion and natural philosophy by using the experimental method to demonstrate the providential order of human nature. Aberdeen moral philosophers were leading advocates of this project, but pneumatics or pneumatology played the same pivotal role elsewhere in Scotland and in the dissenting academies as the area of moral philosophy that developed from "the science of man," to "the science of human nature," and then to the "science of mind" or "psychology." Pneumatics was where the epistemological trends in logic, rhetoric, and moral philosophy first converged on the modern project of disciplining the individual consciousness according to the logic of enlightened reason. This project served cosmopolitan purposes and identifies the reforms at Aberdeen with the efforts of the Edinburgh literati to promote self-improvement as a means to social advancement through cultural assimilation.[5]

While reformers saw the movement beyond the ancients as essential to advancing modern higher education, traditional intellectuals saw such reforms

as a decline and not an advance. The introduction of remedial Latin classes at Glasgow and Edinburgh early in the century suggests that a mastery of learned languages could no longer be assumed as a prerequisite. The faculty of King's College were complaining in 1763 that the basics of Latin had to be taught "in the way of a common Grammar School" (qtd. Wood, *Aberdeen* 58). Prevailing instructional practices suggest that learned languages were declining: the increasing reliance on basic translation exercises, the need to conclude Latin lectures with English summaries, and the frequent reiteration of official requirements that students were supposed to speak Latin. Standards had dropped so low by the end of the century that the descriptions of university curricula in Sinclair's *Statistical Account* readily note that Greek was taught at a rudimentary level and that additional professors of "humanity" were needed to teach the basics of Latin. Teachers of Greek were reportedly forced to popularize their courses to attract fee-paying students. According to Clarke's *Classical Education in Britain*, the professor of Greek at Glasgow from 1774 to 1821 tried to interest students by declaiming on "the liberty, the literature and the glory of ancient Greece, while tears of enthusiasm rolled down his cheek" (144). According to such accounts, professors had to resort to popular declamations to motivate students who needed remedial work to appreciate learned languages.

As I discuss in more detail in the concluding chapter, the institutionalization of the "new" rhetoric in the eighteenth century has basic parallels with the reintroduction of rhetoric into American English departments two centuries later, when open admissions led to the introduction of "basic" writing courses for those who were deemed to be too ill-prepared to study the classics of English literature. In both cases, more broadly based colleges introduced courses that elite institutions considered to be beneath them, and this so-called decline in standards occurred at the same time that previously excluded groups were gaining access to education. Such "literacy crises" mark junctures where the educated culture is having difficulty reproducing itself because it is expanding to include broader classes of students, new forms of knowledge, or cultural traditions that it has not yet assimilated. As they are assimilated, the educated culture becomes more attentive to the diversity of experience, the history of social relations, and the relations of the personal and political. More attention is also paid to how people read, write, and think because the processes no longer seem natural when they have to be taught to those who have not learned them as part of their natural upbringing. From one perspective, the need for such "remedial" instruction marks an era of decline, but from another, it marks a historical opportunity for cultural transformation because education is straining to maintain the hegemony of the dominant culture and the processes involved have been called into question and can be subjected to productive critical analysis.

Whether one defines it as a decline or an opportunity to reform the learned culture, the introduction of the public idiom into higher education transformed its relations with the public. As broader classes of students gained access to the educated culture, intense scrutiny was devoted to how individuals internalize cultural conventions, and efforts were made to formalize such conventions so that the less educated could be taught to respect them. The expansion of the reading public and the standardization of English were

discussed in chapter 1 in terms of the centrifugal and centripetal forces in discourse that surface most clearly at the boundaries of the educated culture. These trends had their greatest impact on higher education in those institutions that were most broadly accessible to the public—the Scottish universities and English dissenting academies. The standardization of English within provincial universities themselves is clearly documented in the Minutes of the Edinburgh Faculty Senate (see Morgan and Hannay 212–39). In the seventeenth century, most of the motions were in Latin, but some were also in Scots, with numerous spellings, terms, and phrasings that are unfamiliar to standard English speakers. From 1700 to 1740, Latin became less common, and the vernacular moved steadily toward standardized English, with variations from accepted usage virtually nonexistent after the 1750s—the period when English was beginning to be formally taught in the classroom. At Edinburgh as elsewhere, English was first taught by professors who had had to begin by teaching it to themselves.

ENGLISH STUDIES ENTER THE UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM

The first university professor to lecture on English literature, composition, and rhetoric was apparently John Stevenson, professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh from 1730 to 1777 (see Miller, Introduction). Crawford has called Stevenson "the herald of the new subject" of English literary studies, while Court has deemphasized Stevenson's significance in order to claim Smith as the first professor of English literature (Crawford 27; Court 18). Only fragmentary accounts of Stevenson's course of instruction remain. His "Lectures on Logic" show the influence of Bacon and Locke, though at least one of his students felt that he was overly attentive to syllogistic reasoning (see Sommerville). According to another student, one of the three hours of his course was devoted to Heineccius's *Logic* and a compendium of Locke's *Essay,* and a second hour was spent studying classical philosophy. In the third he lectured on Aristotle's *Poetics,* Longinus's *On the Sublime,* and "a judicious selection from the French and English critics" (Carlyle 47–48). Other accounts of the course also cite the works of Dryden, Addison, Cicero, and Quintilian. Students such as William Robertson, Hugh Blair, and John Witherspoon praised Stevenson for having had the most formative impact on their education. Stevenson's influence on Blair and Witherspoon is especially significant because they became the most influential teachers of English in Britain and America in the eighteenth century.

Stevenson apparently took a belletristic approach that was consistent with the paradigm that Blair institutionalized. From the outset, the paradigm of rhetoric and belles lettres emphasized polite taste and deemphasized rhetoric's traditional concern for civic discourse. Stevenson's belletristic perspective can be surmised from the collection of thirty-seven student essays that remain from his classes. This rare collection documents students' contributions to the classroom conversations that preceded the published works of Blair and the other "new" rhetoricians. Several of these essays adopt the style and sentiments of the essay of taste and manners that was popularized by the *Spectator* and taught by Blair and other early professors of English. For example, David Clerk's essay "Taste" (1740) argues that taste is a natural faculty founded on

"plain common Sense" that is in "Sympathy" with the natural order ("Book of Essays" 123). Even before the lectures of Blair and Smith, students such as Clerk had learned that taste is "not confined" to matters of literature or language, but "comprehends the whole Circle of Civility and good manners, and regulates Life and Conduct" (128–29). As in the essays of the *Spectator* and the literary societies modeled on them, this "Circle of Civility" included polite manners but not public politics. According to Clerk, "the Design of Schools, the Use of Universities, the Benefit of Conversation should all center" on taste, "and no one can properly be stiled a Gentleman, who has not made us[e] of every Opportunity to enrich his own Capacity, and settle the Elements of Taste" (128).

Another essay, George Drummond's "Rules of Conversation" (1740), outlines the proprieties that maintained the "Circle of Civility." These rules include the same proscriptions against heated debates that were implemented to preserve the polite decorum of literary societies. Whether "we are Magistrates, Judges, Men of Business, or however station'd in the Scale of Life, we must pay a regard to the particular Decorum, and Elegance of manners, that's suitable to our condition" ("Book of Essays" 105). Drummond stresses that "if we would generally please, and avoid bringing scandall on our professions," we must "divest our selves as much as possible of our public characters" (106). We must be careful "how far we enter into disputes, especially upon delicate subjects where our religious, or even political principles may too far interest our positions in the argument" (107). The art of polite conversation depends on the "moderation of good manners," and mastering that art is "the most natural and certain method of rising in the world and making one's fortune" (101). To assimilate into polite companies, "we must carefully adapt our behaviour and conduct to their designs, study to fall in with their views, accomodate our selves to their temper" (103). Drummond also notes that "the History of our own Country" shows anyone that the "art of making himself agreeable by the charms of a well regulated conversation" is more important than oratorical "Eloquence." These students' essays are motivated by the same anxieties about cultural assimilation that are evident in the works of Smith and Blair discussed in later chapters, and here as there, those anxieties lead the authors to distance themselves from public controversies and the rhetoric associated with them.

Few professors would want to be judged by their students' compositions because even the best tend to lack nuance. It is precisely the nuances of the essay that contain its critical potential, but these students' essays are as lacking in irony and critical self-awareness as the popular anthologies and elocutionary manuals that taught such students to read essays of taste and manners to learn how to speak with the voice of the *Spectator* or *Idler.* Like such sources, these student essayists present refined sentiments in a polished style to demonstrate that they had mastered the proprieties of civil society. Stevenson's students' essays suggest that some of the lessons popularized by the *Spectator* and taught by Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* were being learned by provincials in Blair's own school days. Of course no one ever accused Blair of originality. In many respects, his theories merely rationalized the anxieties of middle-class provincials and formalized the conventions they sought to master. To be admitted within the "Circle of Civility," provincials

recognized that they needed to remember their place, avoid speaking up on controversial topics, and studiously imitate the tastes of their betters. Provincial students wanted to learn how to be "stiled a Gentleman," and they were willing "to divest" themselves of their "public character" and remain silent on the sort of disputes that had been the civic locus of classical rhetoric. Such attitudes and anxieties were clearly evident in the literary societies and college classrooms where English studies were first defined in terms of the paradigm of rhetoric and belles lettres.

The political purposes of this depoliticized paradigm become clear when one examines how the first university professorship dedicated to the teaching of English was founded to reward a leader of the Moderate Party for establishing subservience within the church. In the decade after they suppressed popular resistance in the Presbyterian Church, the Moderates were given some of the best clerical and educational posts in Scotland. As the leader of the Moderates, William Robertson received two sinecures and the principalship of Edinburgh University, which together yielded an income of three hundred and sixty pounds, making him perhaps the best-paid clergyman in Scotland. The Moderates were at the peak of their political influence because of their close contacts with the ministry of their countryman Lord Bute, young King George's principal advisor. Bute's personal secretary was the Moderate clergyman and dramatist John Home. As early as 1756, Home was maneuvering to establish a professorship in rhetoric, but it was originally intended not for Blair but for another Moderate, Adam Ferguson, who had been unsuccessfully touted for the professorship in moral philosophy in 1754. In a letter to Lord Milton in 1756, Home stressed that the need for a professor to teach "eloquence in the Art of speaking" was greater for a "Scotchman than any body else as he lies under some disadvantages which Art must remove." In 1757 a Moderate ally wrote to Gilbert Elliot (Bute's political agent in Scotland) praising the literati's efforts, including Ferguson's work on "a very ingenious System of Eloquence or Composition in general" (qtd. Sher, *Church* 108, 88). Ferguson would instead be given a professorship in natural philosophy and then moved to the chair of moral philosophy in 1764 when its occupant was bought off with a sinecure of two hundred pounds. If Ferguson had become professor of rhetoric, he might not have taken the belletristic approach that Blair institutionalized because Ferguson was devoted to the civic humanist tradition that maintained rhetoric and moral philosophy's shared concern for politics into the eighteenth century.[6]

Blair's professorship was established after a very successful series of public lectures delivered by Adam Smith at Edinburgh from 1748 to 1751, perhaps under the sponsorship of the Philosophical Society or another literary society.[7] Smith was reportedly selected because "his pronunciation and his style were much superior" to Scots who had not had the benefit of studying in England (qtd. Bryce 7). At Edinburgh and then as professor at Glasgow, Smith lectured on the "science" of political economy at the same time that he was lecturing on rhetoric and belles lettres. As discussed in the next chapter, Smith is the most important example of how the trend toward belletrism in rhetoric was paralleled by the movement of moral philosophy toward the social sciences. The "science of man" was the point of origin for both of these trends, as is evident in the course in logic that Smith taught at Glasgow in

1751 before moving to the chair in moral philosophy, which he held from 1752 to 1764. According to one account, Smith dismissed deductive reasoning with a few introductory comments and then lectured on rhetoric and belles lettres. Smith justified his approach by noting that "the best method of explaining and illustrating the various powers of the human mind" was through "an examination of the several ways of communicating our thoughts by speech, and from an attention to the principles of those literary compositions which contribute to persuasion and entertainment" (Stewart, *Collected Works* 10:11).

After Smith's departure for Glasgow, public lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres were continued at Edinburgh by Robert Watson until 1756, when he became professor of logic and rhetoric at St. Andrews (see Bator, "Formation of the Regius Chair" and "Lectures of Robert Watson"). Blair gave public lectures from December 1759 until 1760, when he was made professor without pay. In 1762 he formally became Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. In a letter in March 1762 to Gilbert Elliot thanking him for taking up the affair with Bute, Blair had requested that "belles lettres" be added to the title of the chair to give it a more "modern air" (NLS Mss 11009:111). Blair's correspondence shows that he was very concerned that he be allowed to charge students fees, rather than just be paid a flat salary for delivering public lectures. From its first year Blair's course attracted many students, and he sold the copyright to his lectures for the huge sum of fifteen hundred pounds in 1783. The incomes of most professors were rising at the time, from an average salary of thirty pounds in the first half of the century to around one hundred and ten pounds by the end of the century (Emerson, "Scottish Universities," 460). With salaries equal to many doctors and lawyers, professors were becoming comfortably middle class, and perhaps none was more comfortable with the middle-class reading public than Hugh Blair.

Blair was the first university professor I know of who was formally appointed to teach English, but English composition, rhetoric, and criticism were also being taught by professors of logic and moral philosophy. In addition to Smith at Glasgow and Watson at St. Andrews, James Beattie taught rhetoric at Marischal as professor of moral philosophy from 1760. Beattie's *Elements of Moral Science* (1790–1793) discuss "the Popular Essay, the Sermon, and the Oration" (2: 569–84). Beattie draws on classical rhetoric but upholds Addison's *Spectator* as more preferable to political discourse "dictated by party-spirit" (2: 573). Rather than teaching rhetoric as a political art, Beattie concentrated on polite taste and usage. He advised students to avoid the idioms of their own nation because such "barbarous language debases the taste" and "taints the mind." If Scottish words are allowed into English, "our speech must in a few years be barbarous. But this, every person of taste, who loves his country, understands its language, and wishes well to its literature, will do every thing in his power to counteract" (2: 524–25).[8] As Beattie became an increasingly strident opponent of republicanism and skepticism, he placed even more emphasis on teaching polite taste as a means to instill a deference to the proprieties of the dominant culture. He went so far as to conclude that "I am one of those who wish to see the English spirit and English manners prevail over the whole island" (qtd. Wood, *Aberdeen* 124). Professors like Beattie taught students to view their native culture as "barbarous," identify themselves

with the language and literature of England, and studiously imitate refined taste to improve not just their minds but "their" country as well.

Even at the origins of college English, professors apparently found it easier to lecture on criticism than to teach composition, for less evidence exists of the writing done in the first courses on English than in student societies. As discussed in the chapter on English studies in Ireland, such societies provided occasions for students to work on their English at a time when the curriculum provided few such opportunities. Compositions were assigned by such notable professors as Pringle, Stevenson, and Ferguson, but one cannot be sure how much composition was emphasized even in courses on rhetoric. In the 1760s the rhetoric class at Glasgow was criticized for failing to recognize that "to excel in composition, constant and almost daily practice is necessary: the rules did not teach composition; composition produced the rules" (Thom 316). Students also complained about the lack of attention to composition. Alexander Carlyle criticized his composition course at Glasgow with William Leechman for including only one writing assignment each term and concluded that he had learned much more from his writing and reading in a student society (95, 85; see also Leechman). Along the same lines, while praising Stevenson's teaching, Sommerville felt that groups like the Belles Lettres Society had contributed more to his progress "in literature, in composition, and in solid intellectual improvement" (39–40).

Professors tended to be ambivalent about student societies, praising them for encouraging study, but also worried that they were not under faculty control. Like other universities, Glasgow several times attempted to suppress its student societies. While Robertson supported them at Edinburgh, Blair advised students to limit their discussions to what was "useful and manly," particularly topics directly related to their studies or which have a "relation to morals and taste" (*Lectures* 1: 241). One such group was the Belles Lettres Society cited by Sommerville. According to its "Proceedings," it was "instituted that proper opportunities might not be wanting where gentlemen of Taste might communicate their Opinions to one another and receive mutual improvement" (53–54; see also Bator). On this and other points, the "Proceedings" acceded to the Addisonian doctrines that Blair taught in the classroom, but some of the questions discussed were more explicitly political than those that professors taught and discussed in their own literary societies, including questions about the freedom of the press and the merits of the Union. Within several weeks of Principal Robertson, Blair, and other faculty members' becoming honorary members in April and May of 1760, a committee was formed to examine the minutes because the society had considered many "very Improper subjects of debate" ("Proceedings" 71). After that time, there is a noticeable decline in the number of political topics discussed.

The history of another Edinburgh student society, the Speculative Society founded in 1764, shows that political topics were becoming increasingly problematic as public unrest intensified in the last quarter of the century. The Speculative Society has already been cited in chapter 3 for having had contacts with Irish student societies. The society was founded by half a dozen students for the purpose of "improvement in Literary Composition and Public Speaking" (*History of the Speculative Society* 2). As in other societies, students met weekly to debate issues and practice their English elocution by reading essays, including their own compositions. The society also included Robertson, Stewart, and other faculty as honorary members. The rules founding the society were intended to maintain polite decorum, but like the Belles Lettres Society, the Speculative Society did not confine itself to traditional moralistic topics. The group questioned accepted positions on controversial issues, including the enslavement of Africans, the persecution of Jews, and the restrictions on Catholics. The group also discussed political rights and representation. The group got into trouble in the last two decades of the century when the revolutions in England and France made such topics more than merely academic. A conservative faction attempted to expel those with republican sympathies. Hume and other former members returned to push for expulsion and resigned in protest when a contingent of liberals led by Francis Jeffrey and Henry Brougham defeated them (*History* 31–34; see Dagg 51). Jeffrey and Brougham spoke for a rising generation of liberal reformers. As discussed in chapter 9, they went on to found a second *Edinburgh Review* and helped establish a secular university with a utilitarian orientation, the University of London. The University of London included the first professorship dedicated to the study of English literature, a study that almost immediately was set in opposition to Utilitarianism and provincialism.

Debates between liberal reformers and more conservative Scottish literati disturbed the disinterested civility of the literary societies that had supported the introduction of English studies. According to one observer, the war with the American colonies "became a principal object of conversation in every company and often excited angry debates, which impaired the pleasures of social life" (Sommerville 198–99). As political debates divided civil society, liberal ideas became suspect, and protégés like John Millar lost favor with mentors like Henry Home for expressing distrust of established authorities.[9] Radical Whigs splintered the ruling political interest, and when revolution abroad led to reaction at home, the literati's associate Henry Dundas suppressed dissent and imposed state controls on the press, making it difficult for his intellectual colleagues to claim to be cosmopolitans speaking from an impartial position in civil society. Urbanization, commercialization, and increasing social mobility further undermined the shared commitment to improvement that had brought traditional intellectuals together with political managers, men of business, and the gentry.[10] In the last decades of the century the middle classes were becoming dissatisfied with being cast in the role of disinterested spectators of politics. As they lost their traditional deference for the absentee aristocracy, the bourgeoisie became increasingly jealous of the gentry's ability to manipulate elections and began to organize for the purpose of political reform and not just polite self-improvement.

Literary societies had brought ministers, lawyers, country gentlemen, and merchants together around a shared interest in improvement, but when the interests of such groups diverged, literary societies began to close. The Select Society had already ended in 1764, the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen disbanded in 1773, the Literary Society of Glasgow closed in 1778, and the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh was absorbed into the Royal Society in 1783. As political divisions fractured civil society, literary societies gave way to popular debating societies and specialized organizations that limited their membership by professional affiliation or social class. According to McElroy,

from 1770 to 1800 "there was an unmistakable division upwards: aristocrats, intellectuals and scholars separated themselves and gathered together in societies which were no longer open to those in the middle ranks of society" (87). Unlike literary societies, debating societies such as the Pantheon and Forum defined themselves as public forums for people to speak to popular audiences on political issues.[11] Public debating societies were often centers of political agitation that had contacts with dissenters and the corresponding societies that spread critical literacy and political activism among the working classes. Such societies were an anathema to literati like Blair, who criticized "public and promiscuous Societies, in which multitudes are brought together who are often of low stations and occupations, who are joined by no common bond of union, except an absurd rage for Public Speaking" (*Lectures* 2: 240). Blair taught his students to identify themselves with a more refined and less "promiscuous" public, a civil society unified by cosmopolitan tastes and an aversion to the passions of popular politics.

CONCLUSION: BELLETRISM, SCIENTISM, AND THE RHETORICAL STANCE OF THE *SPECTATOR*

In this chapter I tried to show how the departure from classicism in the Scottish universities was influenced by political developments in related institutions, particularly the integration of the Scottish Church into the British patronage system and the spread of cosmopolitanism through literary societies modeled on the perspective of the *Spectator*. Literary societies provided a place where provincials committed to self-improvement could assume an impartial perspective on traditional political conflicts and concentrate on mastering the proprieties of "conversible society." In the church, the perspective of the disinterested observer proved to be an effective rhetorical stance for the Moderate clergy who established themselves as the dominant political faction by defending the authority of patrons against the democratic traditions of their own society. The Moderates are an important historical example of how traditional intellectuals serve the dominant interest while claiming to speak from a disinterested position free from the prejudice of any particular class. The leaders of the Moderates were rewarded for their efforts with influential clerical and academic posts. From these positions, professors such as Hugh Blair and William Robertson began to teach the modern culture from a depoliticized perspective that upheld assimilated Scots' authority as disinterested spokesmen for self-improvement and social progress. When this perspective is situated in its practical rhetorical context, one can understand why the rhetoricians who founded college English established trends that would eliminate rhetoric from the humanities, eventually exiling political discourse to the social sciences and confining the study of English to the study of literature.

The literary societies in which Scots composed their theories of rhetoric and culture shaped the conceptions of audience and purpose assumed by those theories. In these societies, provincials could envision themselves as part of a cosmopolitan reading public where "the commerce of Letters is alike open to all" (Fordyce, *Dialogues* 1: 19). From their experiences in literary societies, Smith, Blair, and Campbell came to define modern rhetoric by the free exchange

of sentiments between responsive auditors in "conversible society." Faced with such audiences, those who introduced English into the university assumed the rhetorical stance of the impartial spectator who speaks from a disengaged and hence disinterested perspective. To master this stance, provincials imitated the *Spectator* and studiously eliminated all idioms and attitudes that challenged the decorum of civil society. In this chapter, I used these literary societies to begin to sketch out *cosmopolitanism* as an ideological formation and process, including the proprieties that demarcated civil society and the process through which individuals internalized those proprieties. Literary societies are important sites for studying cosmopolitanism as both a cultural ideology and a process of enculturation because they encouraged educated Scots to identify themselves with the educated public at a formative stage in British history.

For centuries in Scotland and elsewhere, an education in classical literature, ancient languages, and scholastic reasoning had effectively preserved the boundaries of the learned culture. From the educational centers of that culture, the introduction of English would have looked like a literacy crisis that began when provincial universities failed to maintain learned languages and began teaching the "vulgar," in the sense of both the common people and their language. As this literacy crisis deepened, learned languages would become confined to small departments at the periphery of the curriculum, and English departments would take up the work of maintaining standards of academic literacy and instilling a respect for the literary classics of the educated culture. Scottish educators were the first to repudiate classicism and proclaim that Aristotle had finally "resigned his empire to Bacon and Newton" ("Statistical Account of Marischal" 21: 114). The emphasis on ancient languages was condemned for having been "exclusively adapted to the education of churchmen" and "indifferent . . . to the progressive improvement of the times" (Reid, *Works* 734; Jardine, *Outlines* 14). According to such reformers, ancient languages had preserved the antiquated orthodoxies of outmoded elites by providing "a mysterious semblance of learning" and concealing "from common observation, and even from the masters themselves, the intrinsic defects of the system which they continued to pursue" (Jardine, *Outlines* 14). The rejection of classicism had become so established by 1760 that when the professor of ancient languages at Aberdeen complained of few students, Principal Chalmers rebuked him severely: "now that Education is put upon a more rational and useful footing, there are many Students who know nothing either of Latin and Greek. Their plans & schemes for Life" depend on more "useful knowledge" (Aberdeen Mss: K.44). No Oxford or Cambridge don would have made such a statement in the eighteenth century, nor perhaps in the nineteenth for that matter.

The Scots who taught the language and literature of England were intensely aware that what they studied was not part of their heritage by birth but had to be consciously acquired by mastering the conventions of the dominant culture. Their anxieties about their mastery of English were institutionalized in a conflicted conception of culture that combined a nostalgia for the primitive genius of receding traditions with a programmatic attempt to eradicate the language of those traditions. Such "dialogical" oppositions had a formative impact on college English studies. As universities expanded

beyond the traditional elite and became reoriented to the modern mission of educating the public, the production of discourse became subordinated to the reception of discourse. The paradigm of rhetoric and belles lettres was consistent with the nature of the reading public as a consumer society, but it disengaged the humanities from political action in the public sphere. Rhetoric had had a central role within the classical tradition as the art of persuading the public to follow the leadership of the educated, but the humanities in the modern period have tended to assume a more disinterested perspective on the public sphere. Grammar schools and universities had long served the needs of the elite by perpetuating the learned languages and classical authorities that maintained the boundaries of the educated culture, but from the eighteenth-century onward, the boundaries of the educated culture have been less easily defined and more contested, leaving educational institutions unsure of whether they are educating political agents or observers.

The expansion of the educated public and the standardization of educated usage involved dialectical forces that were reproduced within higher education, not just in the subordination of rhetoric to belletristic criticism, but also in the evolution of moral philosophy toward the social sciences. The "science of man" emerged out of the traditional study of "pneumatology," which among the Scots and the dissenters was shifting its focus from natural religion to human nature. For Smith and other leading moral philosophers, the "Newtonian method" provided a means to generalize from the study of man to the study of "human society" as "an immense machine" (*Theory of Moral Sentiments* 316). Moral philosophers became aware of the diversity of cultural conventions with the expansion of the "civilized" world, and they used the methods of science to account for the customs of foreign cultures and the economic changes that were transforming their own society. In the century before Marx, Smith and other moral philosophers such as John Millar developed a "science" of political economy that formalized the relations among land, labor, and capital.[12] In response to an intensifying awareness of cultural diversity and social change, moral philosophers established the "science of man" to demonstrate that "man is every where the same; and we must necessarily conclude that the untutored Indian and the civilized European have acted upon the same principles." "The general laws of our constitution" would explain alien cultures by scientific certainties that maintained traditional proprieties (Millar iii). In these ways, the "science of man" provided a stable reference point and reliable methodology for defining the laws that governed politics, morés, and morals as well as the conventions of educated discourse.

In subsequent chapters, the theories of rhetoric that contributed to the formation of college English studies are examined against the redefinition of moral philosophy by the "science of man." Into the eighteenth century, rhetoric and moral philosophy were indebted to a common tradition with the same two sources, the civic humanism of Cicero and Aristotle. As moral philosophers began to speak as scientists, they became less concerned with civic eloquence and more interested in mastering the laws governing psychology and political economy. Civic humanism is used as a point of departure for assessing the movement toward the social sciences that shaped the assumptions upon which college English studies were founded. Professors of moral philosophy such as Francis Hutcheson and George Turnbull are transitional figures who were influenced both by civic humanism and by the effort to apply the methods of natural philosophy to moral philosophy. With Hutcheson's student, Adam Smith, moral philosophers came to assume the perspective of the "impartial spectator." While Smith and his colleagues were among the first university professors to teach rhetoric in English, the departure from classicism would end up removing rhetoric from its traditional place at the center of the humanities. Belletrists like Smith and Blair focused on taste, while Campbell founded his project on the "science of human nature," but both perspectives treated discourse as essentially an internal phenomenon concerned with mental faculties rather than with putting shared knowledge into political action.

Civic humanism had suited a *polis*, and even a republic of letters, but the traditional opposition of the public good and private corruption did not make sense in a commercial society defined in laissez-faire terms that devalued the political sphere, made economics more than a private matter, and further blurred the opposition of the private and the public by constituting the social as a domain that was public but not political—a distinction inconceivable within civic humanism. The first major British theorist of modern society was Adam Smith, and his works popularized the virtues of sociability, the power of consumption as the driving force in "commercial society," and the model of a laissez-faire political economy that devalued not just politics but the public sphere generally as a domain where people use rhetoric to adjudicate conflicts, celebrate shared values, and deliberate over the best courses of action. Smith's works mapped out the discursive domain within which English was first constituted as an object of university study. That domain was the carefully demarcated sphere of civil society where individuals conduct the business of daily life and express their feelings freely, as long as they remain free of the passions and party interests of popular politics. This domain was idealized in print and realized in practice in the literary societies where educated Scots stepped back from the divisive controversies of the time and imitated the perspective of the *Spectator* as a model of the decorum of the polite reading public. While such a perspective proved to be conducive to the development of literary criticism and the social sciences, it cast the individual in the stance of critical observer and not political agent, in practice a highly rhetorical stance but in theory one with little need for rhetoric.

NOTES

1. With pride in a system that was being forced to conform to the centers of English education, J. S. Mill concluded in 1867 that "every Scottish University is not an University only, but a High School, to supply the deficiency of other schools. And if the English Universities do not do the same, it is not because the same need does not exist, but because it is disregarded. Youths come to the Scottish Universities ignorant, and are there taught. The majority of those who come to the English Universities come still more ignorant, and ignorant they go away" (136–37).

2. On the High School of Edinburgh that was attended by Blair and other literati, see Chalmers's *Life of Ruddiman* (1794).

3. The descriptions of Marischal and King's Colleges included in Sinclair's *Statistical Account* note that each offered about fifty scholarships to student populations that were between 100 and 130 for King's and 120 to 140 for Marischal (21: 111, 121 and 21:89). Campbell and Skinner have estimated that the English universities cost three times as much as the Scottish universities (23).

4. Carstares's reforms were established at Glasgow University by a government commission in 1727, and the regenting system was also ended at St. Andrews in 1747, at Marischal College in 1753, and at King's in 1790.

5. According to Wood, "by promoting the ideals of polite learning" in a traditional center of Jacobite politics and Highland culture, "the curriculum reforms of 1753 can . . . be regarded as having furthered the ends of pacification, and as having thereby contributed to the consolidation of Hanoverian control in Scotland" (*Aberdeen* 162).

6. Ferguson seems to have been more committed to teaching than Blair, who taught for over twenty years without making many substantial revisions in his lectures. Ferguson published notes and several versions of his moral philosophy course so that students would not have to concentrate on copying down his words and could think about the ideas. Blair did not apparently devote much time to teaching writing, or oratory for that matter, but notes from Ferguson's lectures suggest that he emphasized composition. He had students write and submit "essays" and "exercises" argued inductively in order to teach "method," "Persuasion," and "Precision of Thought" and thus "cultivate . . . the Powers of Reason & of Elocution" (Edin. Univ. Mss. DC.1.84, 1:14–15).

7. In 1758 Hume tried to lure Smith back to Edinburgh by reminding him that he had earned over a hundred pounds a year as a public lecturer and suggesting that an income of one hundred and fifty pounds (equal to Stevenson's, he notes) might be possible if Smith were established as a professor in the college (Smith, *Correspondence* 24).

8. Patriotic Scots were frequently advised to eradicate the characteristic idioms of their own country. In addition to Beattie's dictionary of proscribed terms, John Sinclair published *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* (1782) to help Scots learn to speak like the English, and some editions of Hume's *Political Discourses* (1752) included a list of Scotticisms for readers to study along with his political theories (see Crawford 23–26).

9. According to his contemporary biographer, Home regularly refused to discuss politics because he felt that those who were not involved in state affairs were too ignorant to speak wisely of them and that political discussions only increased factionalism. For the same reasons, he also favored restrictions on the press (Tytler, *Memoirs* 2:335–37).

10. According to Hamilton, Scotland's economic development can be divided into three periods. From midcentury to 1780, trade expanded, and improvements were made in agriculture and traditional industries like linen making (Scotland's main product). In 1755 imports and exports were 465,412 and 535,577 pounds sterling. In 1770 they had grown to 1,213,360 and 1,857,334. Exports to America grew from 82,669 pounds in 1755 to 2,118,936 in 1770, and linen rose from 2.1 million yards in 1728 to thirteen million yards in 1770 (Dickson 99). The second period, from 1780 to 1830, was "the first stage of the Industrial Revolution," and after 1830 Scotland became a center of heavy industry, including mining and shipbuilding (Hamilton 3).

11. The public debating societies of the last decades of the century were part of a different tradition than that of Bacon and learned societies. Their most famous predecessor was the Robin Hood Society, which was founded in London as a secret political society in 1613 but became a public group in 1667 and remained as such until the 1770s. Members included laborers, aristocrats, deists, and more practically engaged radicals like Peter Annet, one of the last people in England to be convicted of blasphemy because his penny pamphlets spread skepticism beyond the polite reading public. As in popular debating societies, a meeting of the Robin Hood Society included hundreds of people, rather than a dozen soft-spoken gentlemen correcting each other's English.

12. Reportedly referring to Millar, Smith, Ferguson, Hume, and Stewart, Marx wrote in a letter that he deserved no "credit" for "discovering the existence of classes in modern society nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of the class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes" (qtd. Perkins 27).

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