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SOCIAL AND LITERARY FORM IN THE SPECTATOR

Scott Black

When Addison and Steele described the *Spectator* (1711–12) as a “Diurnal Essay,” they were claiming to be doubly modern, combining a literary innovation with a new technology.¹ The *Spectator* applied the rhythm of the daily newspapers to the essay, making the metropolitan press the measure of this literary form and providing a new use for the essay.² In turn, the periodical essay offered a new way to understand a sphere of social relations mediated by that periodical technology, and thus enabled a modern public distinct from both church and state. By applying the “Method” of an “Essay Writer” to the modern “Art of Printing” and the “Penny Papers” (*S*, no. 124, 1:507), Addison and Steele offered a mode of literary reflection for the modern city, using the form of the essay to represent—reflect, understand, explain, and define—its urban dynamics.³

In this paper, I present a reconstructive account of the *Spectator*'s internal logic, formal and developmental, to argue that its particular—literary—history is integral to understanding its place in broader historical and cultural developments. I explain the *Spectator* as written at the convergence of three early-modern phenomena: a new use of print technology, a new literary form, and a new social space. I argue that the daily press, the essay, and the city were mutually defining; that is, each was defined in terms of the influence of, and its own effect upon, the others. A new literary form was developed at the intersection of the city and the press; a new urbane ethos emerged from this meeting of literary form and technology; and, finally,

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that structure of politeness offered an indigenous form with which to explain the modern city to itself.

While recent accounts of the *Spectator* have complicated the once-standard Whiggish story of the rising middle class that featured Addison as the prophet of the bourgeoisie, those complications have not so much changed the terms of discussion as reversed them.⁴ Now Addison is read as the ideologue of the bourgeoisie, an agent of “class-consolidation” or the “disciplinary regime” of modernity.⁵ The effect of such criticism has been to focus on the persona of Mr. Spectator as a mechanism of modern subjectivity “constructed to subject readers to the anxiety of being observed” and to “force readers to conform to its values.”⁶ The suggestion that literature has its effects because readers simply imitate texts—compelled either to follow the leader or to question authority—underlies the urgent questioning of such texts. But our own practice of criticism belies this simple conception of reading, and we are routinely able to recognize the text’s efficacy without falling prey to its seductions. While critics read texts like the *Spectator* as enforcing ideological subjection, they demonstrate their own more complicated responses in those readings, raising questions—and kinds of questions—that are supposed not to occur to readers. Similarly, I suggest that the interest of the *Spectator* is not exhausted by insisting on its “mystification” in grounding authority in a consensus that it helps create, or by noting that its “mode of free, apparently random discourse is used to disguise an ideological program” and remarking that its “cultural achievement” is “deeply political and ideological.”⁷ In these terms, what else could it be? The study of ideology, though, often slips, in Raymond Williams’s words, from considering “the general process of the production of meanings and ideals” into an accusatory unmasking of “a system of illusory belief.”⁸ When critics who study “ideology” slide from the former sense to the latter and make their points by uncovering “ideology,” they belie their critical assumptions by suggesting a pathos of discovery that could only mean something if there was a discourse somehow not ideological.

This paper is less concerned with evaluating bourgeois subject formation than with understanding its formal preconditions, and such a question can not be answered in the terms of identity without begging a further question about how the forms that were internalized came to be. I offer an account, then, of how a particular literary form, the essay, was used to organize one of the first and most influential articulations of the nascent social formation, civil society. I take as axiomatic that this social formation was—as all social formations necessarily are—an ideological construct, serving to make (or allow) people to think of themselves and their world in particular ways. Instead of remarking what it was, I ask how this structure developed and was imagined to work. The answer I offer traces the development of the *Spectator* from its predecessor, the *Tatler*, through its own statements about its workings and use. Some readers may be disturbed by my failure to interrogate the claims of the work, to note that its assertions of inclusion actually excluded many people, that the equality of the coffeshop was underwritten by a set of highly unequal assumptions, or that the “conversational voice” was merely “fictional.”⁹ But, I hope that an account of how these social and literary forms interacted will enable the reader to decide what they therefore meant.

I

In the *Tatler*, a confluence of the new technology of the newspaper and the ancient literary form of satire produced a new kind of representation, one that provided a way to depict the modern public sphere in its indigenous terms. As he was starting the *Tatler*, Richard Steele was editing the London *Gazette*, an organ of the ministry that shows the range of the government's concerns in both content and form.¹⁰ If the referential geography of the *Gazette* were mapped, something like the ministerial imagination would emerge as a formal shape: a world with centers of gravity in Paris and Rome, lines of strong attraction from Harwich to Barbados strung through Guinea, weaker lines to Calcutta strained by the voyage around the Cape. A technology that at once shapes and responds to the substantive worries of the government, the *Gazette* offers a sketch of the form of the political imagination of Steele's ministerial employers. And when Steele, editor of the *Gazette* and man about town, turned the technology of the newspaper to the Town with the *Tatler*, he mapped an imagination defined by London's social geography.¹¹

Steele's new paper records the different topics of conversation heard in the different coffeehouses under their appropriate bylines, "From Will's Coffee-house," or "From St. James's Coffee-house"—"under such Dates of Places as may prepare you for the Matter you are to expect." The first number, for instance, includes a story of unlucky love under "White's Chocolate-house" (the site of "Accounts of Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment"); a review of Mr. Betterton in "Love for Love" under "Will's" (the place of "Poetry"); reports from Flanders about troop movements and peace negotiations under "St. James's" ("Foreign and Domestick News"); and a satiric account of the death of Mr. Partridge, the hoax of Swift's from which Steele borrowed the character of Bickerstaff, under the heading, "From my own Apartment" (where he presents "what else I have to offer on any other Subject").¹² Steele organizes his paper by "the Passages which occur in Action and Discourse throughout this Town" (*T*, 1:16) and, in doing so, he carefully matches the style of particular "Discourses" to the topics of "Action." So the language of "White's" is that of the beau, while "St. James's" is written in the idiom of the *Gazette*. The paper brings the variety of the city together, as both the actions and the discourses appropriate to each space are presented in jostling juxtaposition. The concerns of "White's" stand next to the voice of "St. James's," at once distinct but joined by a topographical form that lets each place speak to and be heard by each other—and lets all be heard by a general public defined by this formal innovation. In so transforming the practice of the press by structuring the *Tatler* around London's civil society, offering an epitome of its distinctive concerns and particular languages, Steele produced a way to represent a public sphere defined by those associational spaces.

Over the course of its two-year run, the *Tatler* developed from a paper structured by the social geography of London into one that offered a new kind of discourse—an urbane voice formed from the urban voices represented in its pages. This development of a polite style that incorporated the particular characteristics of the various social spaces of London into a flexible medium able to mediate their differences is epitomized by Bickerstaff's evolving style. In the first number, Steele opens the section from Bickerstaff's "Apartment": "I am sorry I am so oblig'd to trouble the

Publick with so much Discourse upon a Matter which I at the very first mentioned as a trifle, *viz.* the Death of Mr. *Partridge*" (*T*, 1:22). Starting with an apology that bows humbly to the audience but only in order to keep the speaker in view ("I" is repeated three times before we even know what he's talking about), the "Apartment" is the space of Bickerstaff's satiric critique on miscellaneous topics, "what else I have to offer on any other subject" (*T*, 1:16).¹³ The univocality of satire is central to Steele's initial project and echoes the preface to the paper, where Bickerstaff says he will "consider all Matters of what Kind so ever that shall occur to Me" (*T*, 1:15). First and foremost the site of a voice—one defined as "writing in an Air of Common Speech" (*T*, no. 5, "Apartment," 1:51)—the "Apartment" is the self-conscious place of style itself, where topics become subordinated to tone. Other sections match style to topic, but the "Apartment" matches topic to style, miscellaneous folly to satire.

The medley of subjects of the "Apartment" is at once contemporary and literary. The "Graecian" coffeeshop (the site of "Learning") is not represented in the first number, but it perhaps hovers at the edges. The paper's Juvenalian motto, "Quicquid agunt Homines nostri Farrago Libelli" [whatever people do will form the mixed subject of my paper], refers to the classical form of satire, a farrago or medley that judges vice and folly by measuring it against an ideal.¹⁴ With the press, Steele applies the satirist's classical prerogative of publicity to the new public space.¹⁵ The stated purpose of the paper ("from Time to Time [to] Report and Consider Matters of what Kind so ever") is echoed by the satiric threat at the end of the paper: "I therefore give all Men fair warning to mend their Manners, for I shall from Time to Time print Bills of Mortality," bills that announce the public death of mere "pretenders" to "Being" (*T*, 1:23). Appearing "from Time to Time"—using the technology of the periodical press—as the means of his satire, Steele connects one of the most classical of literary practices to the most modern of social technologies, the "Bills of Mortality" that count populations and the newspapers that mediate those populations. In doing so, Steele develops a modern literary practice at the nexus of ancient literary forms and modern social formations.

Initially the *Tatler* applied the new mechanisms of publicity to the ancient project of satire, but gradually Steele synthesized these strands into a new project. The paper started out mimetic of London—its form shaped by the geography of the coffeehouses whose discourses it represented—but over the course of the first year, the dialogic variety of its subjects and spaces—"the different Tasts that reign in the different Parts of this City" (*T*, no. 164, 2:411)—begins to affect Bickerstaff's voice. A shift from representing particular urban voices to presenting a more general urbane voice occurs as the site of Bickerstaff's satire, the "Apartment," gradually becomes the focus, and eventually the sole content, of the paper.¹⁶ As more general topics come to occupy a greater part of the paper, Bickerstaff's voice undergoes a corresponding shift, losing much of its satiric edge as it not only subsumes the subjects but also integrates the styles of the other departments.

The variety of satire's topics becomes a variable voice as Steele folds his two representational modes together and places them within a club, the space of a sociable style. Described as the place to "relax and unbend [my Mind] in the Conversation of such as are rather easy than shining Companions," the club is the space of a

different voice. There “Conversation . . . takes the Mind down from Abstractions, leads it into the familiar Traces of Thought” (*T*, no. 132, 2:265). The club is the locus of the easy style, and I read the shift from Bickerstaff’s satiric commentary to a civil voice of criticism as figured by his inclusion in a club of “easy” “Companions.” A single discursive locus comes to dominate the *Tatler*, but that language is correspondingly simmered and reduced, able to represent the variety of the mundane with a mundane discourse. This marks the shift from the ancient literary mode of satire to a modern ethos of politeness. The satiric regulation of the self-conscious variety and lash of the “Apartment” is smoothed out into a kinder, gentler style, grounding a literary form geared not to the threat of pain but to the promise of friendship, mutuality, and pleasure. In the last number of the paper, Steele said he was most proud of this aspect of the *Tatler*: “it has been a most exquisite Pleasure to me to frame Characters of Domestick Life, and put those Parts of it which are least observed into an agreeable View...In a Word, to trace Humane Life thorough all its Mazes and Recesses” (*T*, 3:364). Steele’s social periodical becomes a sociable paper, developing into a tool that represents the previously unremarked spaces of civil society in their own terms, by offering an “agreeable” voice able to negotiate its variety; that is, by defining a discourse of civility.¹⁷

Steele and Addison further develop the *Tatler*’s formal and stylistic innovations in the *Spectator*. What had been peripheral in the former becomes the organizing structure of the latter, as Bickerstaff’s club is given a defining role in the new paper. The *Spectator* club is explicitly a “Representative” sociological portrait of England:

The Club of which I am a Member, is very luckily composed of such Persons as are engaged in different Ways of Life and deputed as it were out of the most conspicuous Classes of Mankind: By this Means I am furnished with the greatest Variety of Hints and Materials, and know every thing that passes in the different Quarters and Divisions, not only of the great City, but of the whole Kingdom. (*S*, no. 34, 1:141–42)

The *Tatler*’s representational spaces become representational figures in the *Spectator*. Its topological variety and its critical voice are combined into a typological variety, in which the spaces and topics of the public sphere are represented not only by a variety of styles but also by a variety of commentaries. The *Tatler* was organized in part both by miscellaneous topics matched to miscellaneous voices and by a single voice commenting on various topics. The *Spectator* takes this one step further and provides a means to represent a variety of commentaries to match the variety of topics and voices. Instead of a monologic commentary by the satirist, the *Spectator* is organized by a civil space of mutually-defining critical conversation that replaces the private center of criticism of the “Apartment.” A new critical voice, a condition of the modern public sphere, is thus enabled through the articulation of a style formed from that space.¹⁸

The *Spectator* club members incorporate various aspects of the *Tatler*’s style and form. The extralegal locus of politeness is embodied in a lawyer who studies the theater, figuring the shift from law to manners (and replacing “Will’s”).

Will Honeycomb, who “is very ready at the Sort of Discourse with which Men usually entertain Women” and whose “Way of Talking . . . very much enlivens the Conversation” (*S*, 1:12–13), replaces “White’s.” The concerns of “St. James’s” are split between Captain Sentry (a figure of a postchivalric virtue) and Sir Andrew Freeport (a figure of modern commerce and its virtues).¹⁹ An ill-defined clergyman, a shadowy presence here and practically nonexistent in the rest of the papers, marks the absence of such ecumenical concerns, stressing the mundane nature of the space of the club. Ironically, one of the few things that the clergyman does say announces his own marginality; he gives the purpose of the paper: “the great Use of this Paper might be of to the Publick...[is] reprehending those Vices which are too trivial for the Chastisement of the Law, and too fantastical for the Cognizance of the Pulpit” (*S*, 1:144). With the *Spectator*, the periodical press becomes a technology through which a mundane public can see itself in extralegal and extratheological terms, and the form used to thus represent itself was the essay.

The *Spectator* completes the *Tatler*’s experiment, perfecting the literary mode that the earlier paper had developed. In the *Spectator*, the satiric Bickerstaff becomes the politely comic Roger De Coverly. This marks a shift in genre. The gradual abstraction of the form and the style of the *Tatler* away from satire created a new, modern kind of representation which was structured by the variety of the mundane, but not based on the classical literary mode. The development of Bickerstaff’s voice in the direction of the discourse of his club—into a style informed by the dynamics of polite conversation—allowed Steele and Addison to separate the “Apartment,” the site of “what else I have to offer on any other Subject,” from its origin as the site of satire. In doing so, they arrived at the “irregular” form of the essay, as exemplified by Sir Roger’s “conversation”: “he entered into the Matter, after his blunt way of saying things, as they occur to his Imagination, without Regular Introduction, or Care to preserve the appearance of Chain of Thought” (*S*, 1:449). Sir Roger’s easy, essayistic style is the end point of the mellowing of Bickerstaff’s satire, marking the full development of the civil form that mediated civil society through the press.

II

The terms that Addison uses to describe Sir Roger’s conversation are those of the essay, and the exigencies and the structure of this literary form characterize the project of the *Spectator* as a whole. The “Office of a faithful Spectator” is to record the “singular” and the new (*S*, no. 81, 1:348), and its method is therefore casual and unmethodical.²⁰ In treating subjects “which I have not met with in other Writers,” Addison sets “them down as they have occurred to me, without being at Pains to Connect or methodise them” (*S*, no. 219, 2:351): “When I make Choice of a Subject that has not been treated of by others, I throw together my Reflections on it without any Order or Method, so that they may appear rather in the Looseness and Freedom of an Essay, than in the Regularity of a Set Discourse” (*S*, no. 249, 2:465). Representing the contingent and the new, the essay was the means by which the modern, as such, could apprehend itself. Rather than an abstraction based on disinterest, an abstraction *from* the world, the essay offers a kind of abstraction *of* the world.

Mimetic of the quotidian dynamics of friendship and conversation, the essay offers a way to represent mundane activities without recourse to extramundane structures.

George Savile, Marquis of Halifax offers a context for Addison's terms. In his "Vindication" of Montaigne's *Essays*, prefaced to the third edition (1700) of Charles Cotton's popular translation, Halifax explains them as "justly ranked amongst Miscellaneous Books: for they are on various subjects, without order and connexion; and the very body of the discourses has still a greater variety."²¹ Halifax suggests that variety is the organizing principle of the *Essays*, not through "inadvertency," but because Montaigne "did not intend to make a regular Work": "the odd, or rather fantastical connexion of his discourses" and their "digressions" are modeled on the "Liberty" of "common Conversations," "set[ting] down in writing" the form of conversation between "two or three Interlocutors."²² Essays are organized by a horizontal structure of "conversation," a mutually defining relationship between two agents, and they offer an alternative structure to that of law, the relationship between a subject and law.²³ Halifax's comments refer to the essay "Of Friendship," where Montaigne discusses essay writing and friendship as mutually defining activities; both have no exterior point of reference or value, and both are defined only by choice and desire, not by duty, obligation, or reference to anything except their own performance.²⁴ A friend allows one to measure oneself through one's relation to another human being, not to a regulatory God or state, and essays are organized by this kind of relationship, offering a mode of literary reflection organized by the mutuality and interactivity of such "conversation" and—its exact cognate in the eighteenth century—"commerce."²⁵

By attaching the essay to the daily press, Addison gave Montaigne's literary form a new use.²⁶ In a fantasy about what a future historian might say about the literature of the Reign of Anne, Addison suggests that his "little Diurnal Essays" may be deserving of a paragraph alongside "men of Genius and Learning" (*S*, no. 101, 1:424). If on one hand Addison suggests that such "little Diurnal Essays" exist in the interstices of the day (they are themselves daily diversions like the ones they record), on the other hand, he says such ephemera will be preserved in the essays: the historian will turn to the *Spectator* for accounts of the "Diversions and Characters of the English Nation in his time" (*S*, 1:425). The manners that Addison anticipates being incomprehensible to a future audience except as "the Mirth and Humour of the Author" (*S*, 1:425)—in this better future things like incomprehensible music or party politics will only be recognized as ancient "Follies" (*S*, 1:425)—are later repeated as the domain of the essay. In no. 435, Addison distinguishes two forms of writing: his "more Serious Essays and Discourses" treat of "fixed and immutable subjects," while his "Occasional Papers...take their Rise from the Folly, Extravagance, and Caprice of the present Age" (*S*, 4:27). While in his earlier fantasy Addison hoped for enduring fame based on the latter, lighter papers, here he claims that most of his papers are of the former, more serious kind. But in both nos. 101 and 435, he roots the point of the *Spectator* in the "Occasional Papers": "I look upon my self as one set to watch the Manners and Behaviour of my Countrymen and Contemporaries, and to mark down every absurd Fashion, ridiculous Custom, or affected form of Speech that makes its

Appearance in the World, during the Course of these my Speculations" (S, no. 435, 4:27). The *Spectator's* claim to correct "Manners and Behavior" depends on its ability to "mark down"—to represent—such contingencies, and the ability to do so depends on developing a form at once of and about them. Such "Occasional Papers" comment on the "Irregularities" (S, 4:27) of the day by matching its vagaries with a literary form organized precisely by such irregularity. This new form redeems the occasional, mimicking its irregularities, and validates the experience of the mundane world, offering it as worthy of being noted, represented, and understood.

III

In describing the *Spectator* as an "Essay," Addison was referring to a form that is structured by mutuality, interdependence, and quotidian desire, one that offered a civil and secular alternative to the republican political formations and Puritan literary forms with which the journal has recently been identified. Michael Warner uses the *Spectator* to illustrate his claim that the periodical press was constitutive of a new form of public identity (republican disinterestedness), while Stuart Sherman reads it as a vehicle of a new private identity (structured by the diary), and Lawrence Klein as an example of a new kind of culture (Shaftesburyan politeness). These interpretations do not fit together to offer a coherent account of the *Spectator*. Placing the text against mutually exclusive backgrounds that only explain selective aspects of it (its significance in the development of a new political formation, literary form, or ethos) leads to a paradoxical composite picture of the *Spectator* as proffering a Puritan model of the self within a republican politics (whereas a public of diary-writers would look more like a community of saints than the *polis* of the republican imagination). Instead of using the *Spectator's* terms to explain the background, terms from the background are imported to explain Addison and Steele's own statements.

For Warner, the *Spectator* is an example of a "republican text" located at the nexus of the press and "republican rhetoric," and organized by Mr. Spectator's "Country posture of disinterested examination."²⁷ Crossing Pocock's account of civic humanism with Habermas's account of the public sphere, Warner explains the mechanization of print as offering a kind of blind behind which one's social identity is hidden, enabling a form of political participation that depends on foregoing such identity.²⁸ The disembodied abstraction of print becomes a necessary condition of the disinterested virtue that is required in republican politics, as the press is said to offer, in its mechanical impersonality, the means by which to participate in such politics.²⁹

While Warner's account is of a historical shift from "a technology of privacy underwritten by divine authority" to a republican "technology of publicity," Sherman reads the *Spectator* as an example of the former technology.³⁰ Rather than a new form of republican public identity mediated by the technology of print, Sherman explains the *Spectator* as providing a new form of private identity organized by the literary form of the diary. He describes the "diurnal form" of the periodical essay as an extension of the Protestant diary and, by focusing on Mr. Spectator as "the embodiment of a profoundly secretive self," characterizes the *Spectator* as a new kind

of “reflective” paper that “presents itself from the start more as monad than miscellany.”³¹ Reading the paper as “one voice delivering one discourse, usually on one topic,” Sherman presents the *Spectator* as providing the means to produce a model of the person based on passive reading, not republican activity: “To read Mr. Spectator’s daily self-rendering will be in some sense to compose it, to inhabit it, and even to recognize and accept his public prose as a comprehensive account of oneself; Mr. Spectator’s public journal becomes a surrogate version of, or substitute for, the reader’s private diary.”³² While one could quibble about whether diary writing was in decline during the *Spectator*’s run (probably just the opposite), Sherman’s larger point is that the *Spectator* should be understood as a vehicle of a new kind of identity, one based on a literary technology of “self-recording prose.”³³ But although the diary certainly defined one form of modernity, it was not the only one.

Instead of a register of republicanism, organized by the ancient *polis*, I understand the *Spectator*’s social imaginary as informed by a modern civil society. Rather than the Puritan form of the diary, organized by the relations of a person to God, the *Spectator* explained itself as an essay, a form organized by the relations between two agents in conversation. Addison and Steele used the genre of the “miscellany” to articulate a “technology of publicity” structured by social dependencies, and articulated the terms of a civil, urban, and secular public structured by the essay, a form of literary representation with which to understand a modernity defined by the dynamics of the city.

The mutually conditioning developments of a public sphere structured by commerce and sociability, and a civil ethos informed by conversation and politeness, depend on the experience of the modern city, as David Shields notes in his use of the *Spectator* as an example of “Belles Lettres and the Arenas of Metropolitan Conversation”: “When Addison and Steele adopted a club as a mask for the *Spectator*, the friendly, conversational intimacy of belles lettres became the means by which an anonymous readership was recruited into a sense of print fellowship.”³⁴ Shields offers a compelling account of *what* happened, but his terms do not explain *how* it happened. He argues that the technology of print mediated the new ethos of sociability through a literature of Shaftesburyan “private society.”³⁵ Yet, in his discussion he recognizes the limits of this account: “The possibility that conversation can be an open-ended exercise of social play is advanced in Shaftesburyan aesthetics, yet Shaftesbury envisions this occurring only in private companies when sociability is grounded in friendship.”³⁶ Shaftesbury’s formal imaginary refers to ancient ideals which he uses to present an alternative to, and an argument with, the modernity that informs Addison and Steele’s. Shaftesbury’s writing is organized by what Klein calls “the scene of gentlemen in polite conversation,” one imagined in the country, a metonym for a conception of human relations formed by the polis, classical virtue, and their eighteenth-century ideological equivalent, landed property. This was a republican project in the fully classical sense, based on an ontology informed by ancient stoical philosophy, a politics structured by land and a resistance to (even repugnance for) modern philosophy.³⁷ A remarkably pure version of *ancienneté*—“post-courtly” and “post-godly,” but premodern—Shaftesbury’s were the politics and philosophy of nostalgia, preserving a version of ancient ontology in the coolly abstracted air of the fading country Whigs.³⁸

Shaftesbury's "politeness" expresses a classical order of real Forms: real estate is guaranteed by an ideology based on a realist ontology, which in turn provides the terms with which to critique the associational epistemology that structures mobile property. But it is these latter dynamics that organize Addison and Steele's modern and urban conversational ethos. Formed not by ancient virtue but by modern politeness, not by the structure of the *polis* but that of the city, not by real estate but by commerce, and not with reference to a real condition of value but one derived from the processes of exchange—the mode of the periodical essay is structurally cognate with the spaces that distinguish it from Shaftesbury's political imaginary. Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* appeared during the *Spectator's* initial run (March 1711), and the two works present contemporary but differently conceived versions of the meeting of new technologies, literary forms, and political imaginaries. Rather than considering Shaftesbury's project one of modern politeness, I understand Shaftesbury as an example of the uses of print to express the conditions of republicanism. Shaftesbury does what Warner says the *Spectator* does: he defines a conception of the virtuous gentleman based on the abstract independence guaranteed by the disembodiment of print. The significance of this republican use of print, though, is not bound up with the periodical press. Rather, the nexus of republicanism and the press in early-eighteenth-century England is marked by Shaftesbury's highly crafted, exclusive, and expensive editions of the *Characteristics*—a use of this technology distinct from, and opposed to, the *Spectator's* widely disseminated and self-consciously inclusive papers.³⁹

For Shaftesbury, the "summit of polite philosophy was the dialogue."⁴⁰ His form depends on a mimesis of bodies in order to create the conditions for disembodied thought, while Addison's form is mimetic of an abstract form of relations in order to create the conditions for social negotiation between real people. In contrast to Shaftesbury's employment of the dialogue, Addison used the essay to develop a modern form based on the *structure* of friendship, but not necessarily the *fact* of it. The essay provided the mechanism by which a private ethos of friendship could become a public discourse of sociability. Shields comments that "Coffeehouses had in their own aestheticization displaced nobility from persons and located it in manners and things.... Nobility transmuted by sociability became gentility."⁴¹ In a similar way, I understand Addison and Steele to have displaced conversation from the form of Montaigne's *Essays*, which imitate the dynamics of friendship, to an ethos of politeness by displacing friendship from persons and locating its structure in manners: friendship transmuted by sociability became urbanity. The essay assumes a relationship between reader and writer structured by an *ethos* of friendship, but this does not necessarily require the *event* of friendship. Politeness is an abstraction of the dynamic of friendship, a way to treat strangers as friends, and urbanity construes this as the *formal* condition of living in the city, the formal means with which to understand these new urban relations.⁴²

IV

With the *Spectator*, what had been private for Shaftesbury becomes public, what had been "retired" is "canvass'd in every Assembly" (*S*, no. 124, 1:507), and what had been based on a formal structure of independence and classical virtue,

comes to be based on a modern form structured by dependence, interaction, and pleasure. With the “Method” of an “Essay Writer,” the *Spectator* articulated a kind of abstraction through which to understand the social person, a model of the self defined not by the private spaces of “closets” but by a public of “assemblies”:

I am amazed that the press should only be made use of in this Way by News-Writers, and the Zealots of Parties; as if it were not more advantageous to Mankind to be instructed in Wisdom and Virtue, than in Politicks; and to be made good Fathers, Husbands, and Sons, than Counsellours and Statesmen. Had the Philosophers and great Men of Antiquity, who took such Pains in order to instruct Mankind, and leave the World wiser and better than they found it; had they, I say, been possessed of the Art of Printing, there is no Question but that they would have made such an Advantage of it, in dealing out their Lectures to the Public. Our common Prints would be of great Use were they thus calculated to diffuse good Sense through the Bulk of the People, to clear up the Understanding, animate their Minds with Virtue, dissipate the Sorrows of a heavy Heart, or unbend the Mind from its more severe Employments with innocent Amusements. (*S*, no. 124, 1:507)

Using the press to provide a “Knowledge” no longer “bound up in Books, and kept in Libraries and Retirements,” but “obtruded upon the Publick,” “canvassed in every Assembly, and exposed upon every Table” (*S*, 1:507), the *Spectator* both defines the structure and fills in the content of that “Publick.” Articulating an ethos based on making the “common Prints” more common—one based on the roles of “Fathers, Husbands, and Sons,” not “Counsellours and Statesmen”—Addison describes the public in terms of the manners of “Assemblies” and “Tables,” the interactions of the civil and domestic spheres, not those of the solitary spaces of “Libraries and Retirements.” This public is secular but not republican, and it involves a mode of privacy, but not one based on Protestant structures. The *Spectator* gives the terms with which to understand a self-defined by its relations with other people, and that structure of mundane interdependence grounds what the divine or virtuous structures of religion and politics had grounded before.

The infrastructure of the press was a condition of articulating a civil model of personhood defined by one’s participation in a network of social relations. And it is the exigencies of this new technology, the need to sell papers to readers, that offer the terms with which to begin defining that new ethos. Pleasure, curiosity, the restless desire for novelty, and the imagination are explained as the social glue—the terms of participation—by which a public defined by the reach of the press is held together. Instead of understanding social roles in terms of virtue (either classical or Christian), Addison makes a virtue out of the limitations of his literary form, defining a new ethos in terms of the essay’s model of reading. The imperatives of the press—“that [readers’] Virtue and Discretion may not be short transient intermitting Starts of Thought, I have resolved to refresh their Memories from Day to Day” [*S*, no. 10, 1:44])—suggest a new kind of reading and a new kind of reader to be addressed:

Those who publish their Thoughts in distinct Sheets, and as it were Piece-meal...must immediately fall into our Subject, and treat every

Part of it in a lively Manner, or our Papers are thrown by as dull and insipid: Our Matter must lie close together, and either be wholly new in itself, or in the Turn it receives from our Expressions...notwithstanding some Papers may be made up of broken hints and irregular Sketches, it is often expected that every Sheet should be a kind of Treatise, and make out in Thought what it wants in Bulk...The ordinary Writers of Morality prescribe to their Readers after the Galenick Way; their Medicines are made up in large Quantities. An Essay Writer must practice in the Chymical Method, and give the Virtue of a full Draught in a few Drops. (S, no. 124, 1:506)

With its “lively manner” and promise of novelty, such “irregular” writing is directed to the reader’s curiosity and pleasure, and it invites—depends on—the participation of the reader in piecing together what is not fully said, reconstituting the thought from “broken hints.” Addison is repeating here a dynamic that he had described in an earlier essay on Virgil’s *Georgics* (1697):

Virgil...loves to suggest a truth indirectly, and without giving us a full and open view of it, to let us see just so much as will naturally lead the imagination into all the parts that lie concealed. This is wonderfully diverting to the understanding, thus to receive a precept, that enters as it were through a by-way, and to apprehend an Idea that draws a whole train after it. For here the Mind, which is always delighted with its own discoveries, only takes the hint from the Poet, and seems to work out the rest by the strength of her own faculties.⁴³

This “indirect” form is directed to the restlessness of the imagination; the motive of such reading is simple curiosity and its effect is “discovery” and “the strength of [the mind’s] own faculties,” perhaps even a discovery *of* the mind’s faculties. A mode of reading that depends on the reader’s active participation, the “Chymical Method” works with (and on) the reader’s own proclivities and experiences. Coded as modern, based on experimental knowledge, and not on the authority of the ancients like “the Galenick Way,” Addison’s “Chymical” “Morality” works like the epistemology of empiricism, depending on the reader’s own experience to confirm and validate the text.

As with Montaigne’s parallel between the “commerces” of reading and friendship, Addison describes the exigencies of his form in terms of the structure and pleasures of conversation between two human agents. Oriented to an interdependent exploration of the world and oneself, and articulating an alternative to forms defined by the republican ideal of independence and the formal structure of the “Religion of the Closet,” the *Spectator* is structured by a formal imperative of mutual dependency which depends on the passions and curiosity stimulated by the press.⁴⁴ In turn, through that network of interaction between text and audience, new terms are developed with which to explain what’s new and unique—modern—in that public sphere.

The *Spectator*’s aesthetics of “novelty,” laid out in “the Pleasures of the Imagination”—the pleasures of “agreeable surprise,” “curiosity,” “variety,” “new ideas,” and activity—provide a way to understand a social sphere defined by the

experience of reading periodical essays. “Novelty” revalues and validates the “News-Papers,” “Newswriters,” and “novelists” that Steele had complained about earlier (*T*, no. 172), and offers an aesthetics based on the periodical form:

Every thing that is new or uncommon raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprise, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest....whatever is new or uncommon contributes a little to vary human Life, and to divert our Minds, for a while, with the Strangeness of its Appearance....It is this that recommends Variety, where the Mind is every Instant called off to something new. (*S*, no. 412, 3:541)⁴⁵

Mr. Spectator is “wonderfully struck with the Sight of every Thing that is new or uncommon” (*S*, no. 50, 1:211), and says “Odd and uncommon Characters are the Game that I look for, and most delight in; for which Reason I was...pleased with the Novelty of the Person that talked to me” (*S*, no. 108, 1:448). The “Game” that Mr. Spectator hunts is defined by novelty and variety, and explained as an urban phenomenon; after a few weeks in the country, Mr. Spectator compares the city and the country: “the Town...is the great Field of Game for Sportsmen of my Species...in Town, whilst I am following one Character, it is ten to one but I am crossed in my Way by another, and put up such a Variety of odd Creatures in both Sexes, that they foil the Scent of one another, and puzzle the Chace. My greatest Difficulty in the Country is to find Sport, and in Town to chuse it” (*S*, no. 131, 2:19). In distilling the aesthetic category of novelty from the characteristics of the city, Addison provides the terms with which to understand the dynamics of the urban world.

Developed to explain the effects of the *Spectator*, the terms of “novelty” define the pleasures of essays. Addison writes: “Among my Daily-Papers, there are some which are written with Regularity and Method, and others that run out into the Wildness of those Compositions, which go by the Name of *Essays*” (*S*, no. 476; 4:185). He describes the experience of reading methodical papers as being “in a regular Plantation,” while the experience of essays is described as being “in a Wood that abounds with a great many noble Objects, rising among one another in the greatest Confusion and Disorder...You may ramble a whole Day together, and every Moment discover something or other that is new to you” (*S*, 4:186). An aesthetics of novelty offers a new mode of understanding structured by the essay. As with the essay’s relationship between writer and reader, the ethos of the new urban spaces is interdependent and interactive, organized by a different kind of order, even the pleasures of “Confusion and Disorder.” The pleasures of novelty are those of the mundane world, a world that is not preordered, and the aesthetics of novelty direct the reader to look at mundane relationships—not through them—and to take those activities themselves as the condition of their own meaning and validity.

V

At the beginning of this paper, I discussed the emergence of a new literary form out of the mutually defining innovations of the metropolitan press and

the modern public sphere; the *Spectator* emerged as an effect of social developments and offered the modern city an indigenous form of representation. In turn, a new social form developed out of this literary innovation. The periodical essay offered “a new way of Thinking,” a new way to understand those metropolitan spaces. In “The Present State of Wit” (1711), John Gay writes that Addison and Steele have “indeed rescued [Learning] out of the hands of pedants and fools, and discovered the true method of making it amiable and lovely to all mankind. In the dress he gives it, it is a most welcome guest at tea-tables and assemblies, and is relished and caressed by the merchants on the Change....his writings have set all our Wits and Men of Letters on a new way of Thinking.”⁴⁶ Gay emphasizes a particular *way* of thinking, and along these lines, I read Addison’s famous comment about taking philosophy “out of closets,” the spaces of privacy, and bringing it “into assemblies,” the spaces of conversation, as a comment on analytic method as well as social function: “It was said of Socrates, that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses” (*S*, no. 10, 1:44). Addison’s truncated history of philosophy offers the *Spectator* as a continuation of Socrates’s project; as philosophy was moved down from “Heaven” to “Men,” it is now moved out of “Schools” and into “Assemblies.” This double movement suggests that Socrates’s original humanizing of knowledge has been highjacked by scholars and in turn needs to be freed from their exclusive haunts. Addison hopes to be remembered as a Socratic figure, reclaiming philosophy, if not from heaven, then from those who claim an undue authority, who speak with divine voices.

Addison’s claim to supercede “colleges and schools” marks him as an heir to humanism, and his humanist ambition inscribes itself in the statement of it, couched in a buried quotation from Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations*.⁴⁷ Addison quotes Cicero’s claim to be Socratic, mimicking his method in the citation of it. (Humanist pedagogy works by making models one’s own.) In Addison’s source, as in Cicero’s sources, Socrates taught how to ground philosophy in conversation, in civil exchange, precisely by applying philosophy to the spaces of such association:

from the ancient days down to the time of Socrates...philosophy dealt with numbers and movements, with the problem whence all things came, or whither they returned, and zealously inquired into the size of the stars, the spaces that divided them, their courses and all celestial phenomena; Socrates on the other hand was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about morality and things good and evil.⁴⁸

Cicero describes a change of topic that entails a change of method. In turning from what Cicero’s Greek sources described as “speculation” about “the so-called ‘Cosmos’ of the Professors,” Socrates is said to have introduced a new mode of philosophy, a particular kind of inquiry with a limited set of possible claims.⁴⁹ Because speculation on the heavens is unresolvable, as illustrated by the endless debates about cosmology, Socrates’s “conversation was ever of human things.”⁵⁰ This new method implies a new space, a human world that is understood neither in relation to the

cosmos nor by “divine” methods of speculation. Plutarch writes: “He was the first to show that life at all times and all parts, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy.”⁵¹ Likewise for Cicero’s Socrates, the human world becomes the object of a knowledge that is formed by the experience of that world alone, displacing the methods of speculation—“numbers and movement”—that had been the province of earlier (Pythagorean) philosophy. For Socrates, the ontological commitment of knowledge is grounded in the process of dialogic exchange, and there is no privileged knowledge outside the process of knowing (or trying to know). The *Spectator* construes this dynamic in terms of the modern city, as Addison modernizes Cicero’s Socratic method and adopts his “many-sided method of discussion” with “varied” subjects—a varied method to match its various subjects—to explain the new urban spaces and their ideal urbane voice.⁵² Philosophy is redefined as the mutually correcting and confirming process of communication, offering a knowledge based on the mundane dynamics of conversation which define the modern city.⁵³

The ancient Socratic imperative is to look at where one is, a classicism that enjoins one always to be modern. Addison and Steele develop a new way to understand those modern, urban spaces based on this Socratic method. Directed not only to the practices of the modern city but also structured by such practices, the *Spectator* provides a new mode of reflection with which to explain an inclusive public sphere.⁵⁴ The *Spectator* defines that public as much by listening to it as speaking to it; the papers are full of letters, responses, and overheard comments. One such voice on the street asks, “why must this Paper turn altogether upon Topicks of Learning and Morality? Why should it pretend only to Wit, Humour, or the like? Things which are useful only to amuse Men of Literature and superior Education. I would have it consist also of all things which may be necessary or useful to any Part of Society, and the mechanick Arts should have their place as well as the liberal” (*S*, no. 428; 4:4). Steele here matches an inclusive structure of conversation (“I call all Artificers, as well as Philosophers, to my Assistance in the Publick Service” [*S*, 4:5]) to a “novel” image of a social space disclosed by such a form. Asking for “a paper written by a Merchant,” Steele promises a new world through a common style:

it is necessary to Caution [correspondents] only against using Terms of Art, and describing Things that are familiar to them in Words unknown to their Readers. I promise myself a great Harvest of new Circumstances, Persons, and Things from this Proposal; and a World, which many think they are well acquainted with, discovered as wholly new. This sort of Intelligence will give a lively Image of the Chain and mutual Dependence of Humane society, take off impertinent Prejudices, enlarge the Minds of those, whose Views are confin’d to their own Circumstances; and, in short, if the Knowing in Several Arts, Professions, and Trades will exert themselves, it cannot but produce a new field of Diversion, and Instruction more agreeable than has yet appear’d. (*S*, 4:6–7)

This public is bound together by a discourse that can at once mediate those “mutual Dependencies” and offer “a lively Image” of them. A style that transforms “Terms of Art” is the condition of this representation of a polite society, and, in turn, such an image of “Humane society” serves to reproduce its conditions, removing “imperti-

nent Prejudices” and “enlarging...Minds.” Steele describes the conditions of a polite public in terms of the essay; an awareness of its interdependencies is disclosed by the pleasures of novelty, “a World, which many think they are well acquainted with, discovered as wholly new.” Envisioning a new field of writing in which what’s most new are social relations, Steele proleptically calls for the novel, the genre that records daily commerce, in terms of the commerce of the novel, where writing about the ordinary sells because it is at once familiar and new. Steele offers a way to comprehend society as grounded not on the authority of God or even virtue but on the social dependencies recognized through a representation of commerce.

The movement from “Closets” and “Schools” to “Assemblies” and “Coffeehouses” is at once an institutional and a methodological shift from the places and methods of solitary thought to those of sociability, crossing the space between two conceptions of knowledge and authority. The former, the institutional and formal locus of theology, imagines knowledge on a model of the relation between person and general (divine) law—with particulars distant shadows of the real; the latter, a secular site and form, imagines knowledge on a model of the relation between person and contingent event—with generalizations distant shadows of the real. This alternate form, articulated by Addison and Steele in the *Spectator*, comes to serve as the modern structure with which to challenge ontologies of divine law (or natural law) and offers the formal conditions with which to express a modern epistemology grounded in the interactive dynamics of human association—a “conversational” and “commercial” modernity.

VI

In 1714, Joseph Collet wrote to his daughter of the *Spectator*: “Next to the Bible you cannot read any writings so much to your purpose for the improvement of your mind and the conduct of your Actions.”⁵⁵ Collet’s comment suggests that the *Spectator* starts where the Bible stops, articulating a distinct sphere of *social* relations that are not defined by the duty of religion or the obligation of politics but by an ethos formed in the new public sphere.⁵⁶ The essay provided a formal structure for this new ethos, the means by which it could be represented, a literary methodology with which to explain a social world coordinated by the “looseness and freedom” of “conversation.”

To claim that the essay provided the formal conditions by which the public sphere could be understood seems to suggest that literary form had some necessary relation to its content or ethos. There were of course Protestant and republican periodical essays, and to say that the form inherently contains an ethos is surely to misunderstand both form and ethos.⁵⁷ My claim is, rather, that the relations between this particular literary form and this particular social formation were mutually defining. To echo Alastair Fowler’s statement that “kind tends to mode,” the essay form tended to the mode of politeness, an ethos of conversation that defined the conditions of participation in the emergent urban spaces.⁵⁸ This was an accidental confluence, a contingent meeting, but one that had an inherent historical logic—a logic that can be explained as a way of showing, not the unfolding of history along a determined track,

but its specific unfolding along the particular track that it did take. I understand this to be a three-part process, one that evolves along the axes of interaction between the city and the press, the press and the essay, and, finally, the essay and the city. Steele and Addison developed a distinctly modern literature at the nexus of the mutually defining technology of the press and the emerging social spaces of city, and characterized it as an essay, offering a new use of this literary form. The formal imperatives of the essay were then used to explain the distinctively *social* structure of relations of the modern city.

This new form of social coordination (politeness) is usually interpreted as an effect of a new systemic coordination, a function of ideology greasing the tracks of the market's development. In these terms, literature is seen as a functionary of the system, and the pathos of modernity is that systems functions⁵⁹ replace the organic ones of everyday life; people become cogs in the machine and agency becomes the effect of systems. But what is asserted as a historical fact is perhaps only a result of a methodological assumption, a choice about the process, content, and meaning of modernity. Literary critics have embraced a strategy of critical analysis that understands modern reflection as defined by a limited conception of instrumental reason.⁶⁰ But, throughout the history of modernity, claims have been made for a different form of reflection, one like that of Montaigne's essay, based on a communicative dynamic of mutuality and a shared assumption of agency—one organized by a mode of reading in which both text and reader are accorded agency. Our critical choice to privilege the formal imperatives of systems (the market's structure) over the formal imperatives of the social makes such claims immediately suspect, topics for a suspicious hermeneutics. But we may have it backwards. We depend on an abstraction of system to explain social relations, but it may be that that a social abstraction of human relations is required to understand the abstract system of the market at all.

I am arguing that it is productive to draw a theoretical distinction between the structures of politeness and those of the market, one that accounts for the self-understanding of the early eighteenth century. Our critical habit of collapsing the period's broadly social category of "commerce" into a restricted economic sense mistakes a crucial historical evolution. A systemic theory of the market was an *effect* of posttraditional social thinking. The history of the development of a market system passes through a posttraditional articulation of a sphere of mundane relations in which social bonds are articulated as distinct from theological (Protestant) and political (republican) commitments. Only when the logic of *presystemic* social structures is grasped can their *protosystemic* place in the histories of systems development be understood. First, society was reimagined as a distinct field of relations with its own dynamics and methodological imperatives—the moment of the communicative form of the essay I have discussed in this paper—and then a subsequent articulation of an economic system took off through the development of distinct analytic tools, ones that were derived from the models used to explain those new social relations. The purpose of posttraditional social thinking was not, first, to explain the mystery of new economic relations but to comprehend the new social relations of the modern city, and literary history is integral to explaining this because the formal structures of "commerce" and "conversation" that were used to do this had a specific provenance in the essay.

The essay offered the formal conditions of an alternative to a political imaginary construed in terms of the spaces of the country, the *polis*, or the *res publica*, and structured a different model of identity than one construed in terms of the relations of a subject to God, to law, or to a model of reason defined in those terms. I read the *Spectator*, finally, as humanist but not republican, as commercial but not capitalist, and as modern but not structured by a Protestant ethic.⁶¹ Providing the formal condition by which the metropolitan world became self-reflective, the periodical essay offered the dynamics of the modern city itself as a model of understanding the modern world.

NOTES

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1. Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), no. 101, 1:424 (hereafter abbreviated *S* and cited parenthetically in the text by number, volume, and page).

2. Since the English translation of Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), the mutually-defining developments of the press and the public sphere have (again) become a topos of eighteenth-century studies. For Habermas's remarks on the press, see *The Structural Transformation*, 15–16, 21–22, and for his remarks on periodical essays, see *ibid.*, 42–43. In *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997), John Brewer writes: “The city had become not only the center of culture but one of its key subjects” (3), and calls the periodical essay “the literary form of the busy, modern age” (104). I address how the city provided not just a new topic, but also a new structure with which to understand modern life, a structure that, as Brewer notes, was epitomized by the *Spectator*: “Letters, memoirs, essays and works of fiction throughout the century frequently cite the *Spectator* as the key to understanding modern city life” (39).

3. The modernity of print was a standard eighteenth-century topic. In *Spectator* no. 166, print is called “this great Invention of these latter Ages” (*S*, 2:154). George Colman, in the *Connoisseur* (1754), echoes this: “We writers of essays, or (as they are termed) periodical papers, justly claim to ourselves a place among the modern improvers of literature” (quoted in Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* [London: Croom Helm, 1987], 1). For background on the press, see also James Sunderland, *The Restoration Newspaper and its Development* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986).

4. Edward and Lillian Bloom's *Joseph Addison's Sociable Animal* (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1971) is the classic Whiggish account in both senses. For Addison's identity as a Whig, see 27–28, and for their Whiggish appraisal, see 209–10.

5. The first quotation is Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism from the Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), 10. The second is Scott Paul Gordon, “Voyeuristic Dreams: Mr. Spectator and the Power of Spectacle,” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 36 (1995): 4.

6. Gordon, “Voyeuristic Dreams,” 11; emphasis in original.

7. Thomas Woodman writes: “The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* played a major role in the creation of the ‘public sphere’ of relatively free discourse, secular, non-hierarchical and unimpinged upon by the State. Yet this whole development depends on and results from the weakening of other final authorities. Because of this Addison and Steele, in a brilliant mystification, use public opinion—consensus—as their source of authority in the very act of helping to create such a consensus. The mode of free, apparently random discourse is used to disguise an ideological program, or rather is its entirely appropriately medium.... This like the social life it mimics, is a genuine, perhaps an enviable cultural achievement. But the whole process is a deeply political and ideological one” (*Politeness and Poetry in the Age of Pope* [Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1989], 27).

8. Raymond Williams, "Ideology," *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 55.
9. Adam Potkay writes: "the supreme fiction of polite society is the conversational voice" (*The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994], 103).
10. See "The Gazetteer," chap. 4 of Calhoun Winton's *Captain Steele: The Early Career of Richard Steele* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1964).
11. Stuart Sherman discusses Steele's segue between the *Gazette* and *Tatler* (*Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660–1785* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996], 124), as does Richmond P. Bond, *The Tatler: The Making of a Literary Journal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), 3–4.
12. Steele and Addison, *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 1:16 (hereafter abbreviated *T* and cited in the text by volume and page). For details about Steele's appropriation of Swift's Bickerstaff, a satiric character of the astrologer almanac-maker, Partridge, see R. Bond, *The Tatler*, 7–8, and D. Bond's note, *T*, 1:22.
13. Shaftesbury calls miscellaneous writing "satiric" (*Miscellanies 1, Characteristics* [1711], ed. John M. Robertson, 2 vols. [New York: Bobbs-Merill, 1964], 2:169).
14. For this structure of satire, see Ronald Paulson, *The Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1967), 24.
15. Brian McCrea notes that Addison and Steele "redefine and domesticate satire" (*Addison and Steele are Dead* [Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1989], 30), and R. Bond mentions "Bickerstaff's general satiric methods" and "satiric procedures" (*The Tatler*, 164).
16. Both R. Bond (*The Tatler*, 133, 179–80) and Sherman (*Telling Time*, 129) comment on this development.
17. Steele stresses variety in this final number, saying he "spoke in the Character of an old Man, a Philosopher, an Humorist, an Astrologer, and a Censor, to allure my Readers with the Variety of my Subjects" (*T*, no. 271, 3:363).
18. In *the Structural Transformation*, Habermas writes of the public turning "the principle of publicity against the established authorities" (56), a "transformation" of "public authority" (60): "With the rise of a sphere of the social, over whose regulation public opinion battled with public power, the theme of the modern (in contrast to the ancient) public sphere shifted from the properly political tasks of a citizenry acting in common...to the more civic tasks of a society engaged in critical debate...The political task of the bourgeois public sphere was the regulating of civil society (in contradistinction to the *res publica*)" (52).
19. William Empson remarks that all politeness had an element of irony in it (*Some Versions of Pastoral* [New York: New Directions, 1968], 230), and these idealized models perhaps sounded sarcastic at the time, perfect icons to criticize the present. Empson's comment recognizes the structural condition of politeness: it cannot be compulsory—or it would be law—and the space between the choice and the exercise of politeness can be the space of irony as well as piety or wit.
20. Commenting on his account of "Party-Patches," Addison notes that it may "appear improbable to those who live at a distance from the fashionable World; but as it is a Distinction of a *very singular Nature, and what perhaps may never meet with a Parallel*, I think I should not have discharged the Office of a faithful Spectator had I not recorded it" (*S*, no. 81, 1:348; emphasis added).
21. George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, in *Essays of Michael, Seigneur de Montaigne*, 3d ed., trans. Charles Cotton, 3 vols. (London, 1700), 1:1; all citations of Halifax and Montaigne are to this edition.
22. Halifax writes: "No doubt but he thought that one might take the same Liberty in his Meditations, as is assumed in common Conversations, in which, tho' there be but two or three Interlocutors, 'tis observed that there is such variety in their discourses, that if they were set down in writing, it would appear that by digressions they are run away from their first subject, and that the last part of the conversation is very little answerable to the first. This I verily believe was his true intention, that he might present the World with a free and original Work" (*Essays*, 1:5–6).

23. Montaigne refers to Aristotle's distinction between friendship and law: "There is nothing to which Nature seems so much to have inclin'd us as to Society; and as Aristotle says, that the good Legislators have more respect to Friendship, than to Justice. Now the most supream point of its perfection is this: for generally all those that Pleasure, Profit, Publick or Private Interest, Create and Nourish, are so much the less Generous, and so much the less Friendships, by how much they mix another cause, and design, than simple, and pure Friendship" (*Essays*, 1:285–86). "Society" is perfected by friendship, and friendship in turn is perfected by being fully self-referential, being only about itself, undertaken for no reason other than its own enjoyment: "Friendship has no manner of Business or Traffick with any but it self" (*Essays*, 1:290).

24. See the methodological statement that opens "Of Friendship": "Having considered the Fancy of a Painter, I have that serves me, I had a mind to imitate his way; For he chooses the fairest Place and middle of any wall, or pannel of Wainscote, wherein to draw a Picture which he finishes with his utmost Care and Art, and the vacuity about it he fills with Grotesque; which are odd Fantastick Figures, without any Grace, but what they derive from their variety, and the extravagancy of their Shapes. And, in truth, what are these things I scribble, other than Grotesques, and monstrous Bodies, made of dissenting parts, without any certain Figure, or any other than accidental Order, Coherence, or Proportion" (*Essays*, 1:283–84).

25. In his *Dictionary* (1755), Johnson defined "association" as "union; conjunction; society"; "sociable" as "fit to be conjoined" and "friendly; familiar; conversible"; "conversation" as "familiar discourse; chat; easy talk" and "commerce; intercourse; familiarity"; and "commerce" as "common or familiar intercourse" (an Addison quotation is the example here).

26. Addison names Montaigne as the model for the essay (*S*, no. 476, 4:185). Hazlitt drew a direct line from "Montaigne and his imitators, to our Periodical Essayists" ("Of the Periodical Essayists," *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* [1819; New York: Dutton, 1910], 95).

27. Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990), 65–66.

28. Warner writes that print is "a discourse in which publicity will be impersonal by definition...the validity of [one's] utterance will be a negative relation to [one's] person" (*Letters of the Republic*, 38), and that in republicanism, "virtue comes to be defined by the negation of other traits of personhood, in particular as rational and disinterested concern for the public good" (42). For the relevant part of J. G. A. Pocock's magisterial account of early modernity, see his *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), chaps. 13–14.

29. "These artifacts represented the material reality of an abstract public: a *res publica* of letters...an abstraction *never localizable in any relation between persons*...the mutual recognition promised in print discourse was not an interaction between particularized persons, but among persons constituted by the negating abstractions of themselves. The impersonality ascribed to printed objects was the condition of the promise of a discourse of political interaction" (Warner, *Letters of the Republic*, 61–62; emphasis in original; see also 72). I take the Latin phrase to indicate that Warner's account of this political imagination is structured by an ancient conception of politics based on the *polis*, not the modern public sphere. Not all "republics" were imagined as *res publicae*; cf. Hume's use of the phrase, "Republic of Letters," to describe a condition of dependency and exchange, a commercial republic ("Of Essay-Writing" [1742], in *Essays*, ed. Eugene F. Miller [Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987], 536).

30. Warner, *Letters of the Republic*, 3.

31. Sherman, *Telling Time*, 114–16. At this point, diaries were a Protestant literary form, a point Sherman makes when he describes periodical essays as "secular diaries" (*Telling Time*, 22). J. Paul Hunter writes that the "purposes of [the] diary" were "to clarify for the autobiographer the patterns and meanings that could be presumably be discovered by the close observation of the details of a life" (45). He discusses the "Puritan diary," and "the Protestant culture" in which this "need to record the self" was rooted, in *Before Novels* (New York: Norton, 1990), ch. 12.

32. Sherman, 113, 115. Reading the *Spectator's* regular publication and eidolon as "features of a diary, but of a diary turned inside out," Sherman notes: "The *Spectator* read like an essay, came out like a daily newspaper, and looked like one too in its typeface and general design" (113). But perhaps the question that should follow this is not, how is an essay like a diary, but, what does it mean that the *Spectator* is an essay, and one that looks like a newspaper?

33. Sherman, *Telling Time*, 158.

34. David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1997), 33; the first quoted phrase is the title of his second chapter. Shields writes: “Belles lettres enabled the transmission of a secularized, cosmopolitan, genteel culture” (12), and “Addison and Steele “infused the politeness of belles lettres into the print world” (267). Based on pleasure and company, not the austere and solitary virtue of either republicanism or Protestantism, sociability defined both community and individual in terms of association (31–33; see also 313–14).

35. Shields starts off his study by discussing Shaftesbury’s notion of “private society” (*Civil Tongues*, xiii), and grounds his notion of belles lettres in “Shaftesbury’s social aesthetics” (*Civil Tongues*, 36).

36. Shields, 44.

37. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 9. The movement from Shaftesbury to Addison can be considered the literary or formal dimension of the development of modern Whiggery from old Whig, exemplified by the retired Shaftesbury, to commercial Whig, exemplified by Addison the minister. Shaftesbury wrote: “thinking I could best serve Him [the king] & my Country in a disinterested Station, I resolv’d absolutely against taking any Employment at Court” (quoted in Robert Voitle, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1984], 212). When he started writing for the *Tatler*, Addison was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1708–10); his highest office was Secretary of State of the Southern Department (1717–18). See Peter Smithers, *The Life of Joseph Addison*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), chaps. 5 and 10.

38. The quoted phrases are Klein’s (*Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, 9, 193); he discusses country Whigs and the politics of the “landed elite” on 143–44. I refer to Isaac Kramnick’s subtitle in order to suggest that a dialectic between Shaftesbury and Addison and Steele can be understood as an earlier version of the midcentury debates Kramnick discusses; see his *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968), 80. I borrow the term “anciennoté” from Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 6.

39. Shaftesbury’s books were as elite and exclusionary as the *Spectator* was popular and inclusionary; for details on the production of his books, see Klein (*Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, 123–24) and Voitle (*The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 338–39). For Shaftesbury’s disembodied—Platonic—disinterest, see Paulson (*The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1997], 24), and Voitle (*The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 319–21).

40. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, 115. Klein discusses Shaftesbury “assigning the highest prestige to dialogue” (116). See Shaftesbury’s comments on dialogue in *Miscellaneous Reflections* (2:333–34) and “Soliloquy” (1:127); for complaints about essays, see “Soliloquy” (1:108–9).

41. Shields, *Civil Tongues*, 37. In his catalogue of examples of “conversational” literary forms (33), Shields does not include the essay.

42. This is not to say that urbanity is only possible or proper in the city, or that one cannot or should not live in urban areas without urbanity; but rather that in the modern social imaginary, the two were articulated as mutually defining: the model of behavior associated with urban areas is urbanity.

43. Addison, “Essay on Virgil’s *Georgics*” (1697), in *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch, 2 vols. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914), 2:6.

44. I take the description of Puritanism as a “Religion of the Closer” from Warner, who quotes it from Cotton Mather’s 1718 *Diary* (*Letters of the Republic*, 19).

45. Paulson discusses the “Pleasures” as theorizing the *Spectator*’s practice (*Beautiful, Novel, and Strange*, 73). For a discussion of the relation between novelty and news, see J. Paul Hunter’s *Before Novels*, chap. 7. Hunter discusses John Dunton, whose 1690s popular weekly, *The Athenian Mercury*, was an important source of the discourse of novelty; Dunton defined “Athenians” as “lovers of novelty,” and “Athenianism” as “a search after novelties” (*Before Novels*, 15).

46. John Gay (3 May 1711), quoted in *Addison and Steele: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 226.

47. For an excellent background discussion, see Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995), esp. 11–12.

48. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J. E. King (Cambridge: Loeb, 1945), 5.4.10.
49. Julian wrote that Socrates “rejected the speculative life and embraced a life of action” (“Letter to Themistes,” 264b–c, in *Works*, trans. W. C. Wright, 3 vols. [Cambridge: Loeb, 1913], 2:229). Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* is one locus for Cicero’s statement (trans. E. C. Marchant [Cambridge: Loeb, 1923], 1.1.11–13.)
50. Xenophon, 1.1.16.
51. Plutarch, *Moralia* 796d–e, trans. H. N. Fowler, 15 vols. (Cambridge: Loeb, 1936), 10:147.
52. Cicero, *Tusculan Dispositions*, 5.4.10.
53. In his famous appraisal of Addison, Johnson praises the “genuine Anglicism” of his “idiomatical” style (“Addison,” *Lives of the Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill, 3 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905], 2:149). Johnson’s praise, though, had its limit in his claim that “the graces of writing and conversation are of different kinds” (*Rambler*, no. 14), and he offers this mild, but I think central, critique: Addison “sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation” (3:149).
54. From the beginning, Steele claimed such inclusiveness. He describes the origin of the *Tatler*: “it appeared no unprofitable Undertaking to publish a Paper which should observe upon the Manners of the Pleasurable, as well as the Busie Part of Mankind. To make it generally read, it seemed the most proper Method to form it by Way of a Letter of Intelligence, consisting of such Parts as might gratify the Curiosity of Persons of all Conditions, and of each Sex” (*T*, 1:7).
55. Quoted in *S*, 1:xcv. In an earlier letter, Collet says the Bible “teach[es] me the whole Compass of my Duty to God and man” (*S*, 1.lxxxvi). The addition of the *Spectator* to this duty marks its lessons as a complement to divine duty; the *Spectator* addresses the duty of person to person, which has become distinct from divine duty.
56. See Pocock on the early-eighteenth-century problem of articulating “a defense of urban life and politics as neither an ancient *polis* nor a *faeces Romuli*,” “an understanding of commercial modernity” based on “social, cultural, and commercial values, ones we associate especially with the name of Addison” (“Varieties of Whiggism,” in *Virtue, Commerce, History* [New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985], 235). Gordon Wood calls the *Spectator* a key text in the shift from “classical public virtue” to “modern social virtue,” from the “social adhesives” of monarchy—“force, kinship, patronage”—to “a new, modern virtue” associated with “sociability” and a “new emphasis on politeness” that he too calls “Addisonian” (*The Radicalism of the American Revolution* [New York: Vintage Press, 1991], 230, 215–16).
57. Shaftesbury complains about “Party-Pamphlets” and “new-fashion’d *theological Essays*” (*Miscellaneous Reflections* 5, 2:337). For examples, see *Contemporaries of the Tatler and the Spectator* (Los Angeles: Augustan Reprints, 1954).
58. Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction of the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), 167. Fowler suggests that the distinction between kind (or genre) and mode contains a historical dimension: Form precedes mode, and mode is an effect, “a selection or abstraction from kind” (106).
59. This methodological distinction of Habermas’s lies behind my comments here: “society is perceived from the perspective of the acting subjects as the lifeworld of a social group. In contrast, from the observer’s perspective of someone not involved, society can be conceived only as a system of actions, such that each action has a functional significance according to the maintenance of the system” (Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols. [Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987], 2:117).
60. Habermas offers a critique of the Weberian “cognitive-instrumental abridgements of reason” that lie—via Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—behind many of the current literary critical approaches to the eighteenth century: “Instrumental reason is set out in concepts of subject-object relations. The interpersonal relation between subject and subject, which is decisive for the model of exchange, has no constitutive significance for instrumental reason” (Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 1:xlxi, 1:379).
61. This is not, of course, to say that paradigms derived from Pocock, Marx, or Weber are mistaken about the eighteenth century, just that they are not exhaustive.