

## ABSTRACT

ACKERMANN, NICOLE LYNN. Reforming and Informing Gender: How the *Female Tatler* Complemented Addison and Steele. (Under the direction of John Morillo.)

This paper considers how the rhetorical precedent set by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Tatler* and *Spectator* influenced one of eighteenth-century London's lesser-known periodicals, the *Female Tatler*. In order to survive within the male-dominated literary marketplace, the *Female Tatler* "complemented" the strategy of the more popular, better respected *Tatler* and *Spectator* by utilizing similar rhetorical practices. These practices emphasized the period's emerging natural, sexualized notion of gender which defined masculinity and femininity as directly oppositional; thereby aiding in the fashioning of increasingly polarized spheres of male and female activity.

The intention of the male-focused *Tatler* and *Spectator* was to politely reform the manners and morals of a society recently corrupted by the false ethics of materialism. The *Female Tatler* effectively imitated this goal of revising aesthetic and cultural tastes, though in a more female-focused manner: utilizing and encouraging a unique discourse contingent upon, what were suggested to be, inherent female characteristics, interests and behaviors. The gender ideology put forth by Addison and Steele and then reinforced by the *Female Tatler* placed men and women in complementary roles in relation to the well-being of one another – much like the complementary relationship between the three periodicals. Rhetorically, they characterize natural and unnatural masculinity and femininity according to a set of cultural values which make each optimally productive within their given sphere of activity. Ideal maleness was ultimately constructed in terms of a man's ability to identify with, and therefore navigate the public realm of commerce and exchange, while ideal

femaleness was constructed in terms of a woman's ability to perpetuate and benefit from a man's success. Though the *Female Tatler* was stylistically different from the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, it nevertheless fashioned the period's natural, sexualized notion of gender, which Addison and Steele contended to be the most civilizing for society, by capitalizing upon the use and production of sexually differentiated rhetoric.

REFORMING AND INFORMING GENDER:  
HOW THE *FEMALE TATLER* COMPLEMENTED ADDISON AND STEELE

by

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## **DEDICATION**

For my parents; whose immeasurable patience, incomparable guidance, and unyielding support has made my dreams possible.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Nicole Lynn Ackermann was born and raised in Sammamish, Washington. She is a graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington where she studied English Literature with an emphasis in English Education. Her parents, Matthew and Linda Marinos, and her brother, Shannon Marinos, still reside in the Pacific Northwest. She is an avid snow skier, gardener and traveler who enjoys spending time with her family and friends. Currently she lives in Raeford, North Carolina with her husband, SGT Jason Ackermann, and their dog, Brady. As a military spouse she is an active member of the Fort Bragg community, volunteering as a writer, point-of-contact and fundraiser for her husband's unit's Family Readiness Group. Professionally, she has worked in retail, property management and construction administration, and hopes to share her love of literature and writing with others by teaching.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*Fashioning Periodicals*

*Fashion ~ To form, mould or shape; to make good-looking, to beautify; to contrive, manage*  
- *Oxford English Dictionary*

The foundation for Coventry Patmore's well-known nineteenth-century feminine ideal of the "Angel in the House" was firmly laid in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. As the country's capitalist desire for consumption drove men to enter the public arenas of economic production, women became increasingly confined to the "uncorrupt" private, domestic realm to be devoted and submissive wives, mothers and daughters; self-sacrificing, charming, passive, pious, and above all, pure. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England were at once exciting and unsettling due to what we now understand as an incipient capitalist economic system. Cultural values shifted from "stabilizing ethic[s] of rational benevolence, community, and common sense" to "faulty [ones] that drive commerce – self-interest, novelty and impermanence, profit and loss" (Mackie 31). As a result, the burgeoning world of commerce was exhilarating for the ambitious, but also suddenly more dangerously corrupt. It came to be understood that in order for individuals to navigate such a realm they had to be routinely refocused on morals and manners that cultivated a civil, polite culture. And as men progressively ventured into the prosperous public sphere of business and commerce throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women came to be seen as less and less capable economically and more and more as that stabilizing source of virtue and companionship. Women took on a culturally-constructed role, defined by a new, naturalized conception of sexuality as the social "refocus-er," making the private realm distinctly opposite of the public.



By the eighteenth century an individual's sexual identity had become virtually synonymous with his or her personal identity. Social hierarchies of both the public and private spheres were suddenly guaranteed by gender, meaning that male and female sexuality began to be defined mainly in relation to each sex's "natural" biological limits (Parker 3). The old, aristocratic order which emphasized status was challenged by shifting class distinctions caused by the period's rapid economic growth. Previously, an English person was either only noble or common, rich or poor. But by the late seventeenth century a growing number of self-made individuals had significantly narrowed the gap between classes. Status was suddenly less important to one's social prestige and less reliable for defining one's self than the cultural differences believed to be fixed in gender (Mackie 20). Michael McKeon has been quoted as saying, "In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries England acquired the modern wisdom that there are not one but two sexes; that they are defined not by behavior, which is variable, but by nature, which is not" (qtd. in *Market à la Mode*: 164). Therefore, conventionalized notions of the individual's natural body, which arose during the period, attempted to define sexual difference by providing clear-cut, incommensurable gender categories. Male and female gender roles were effectively constructed as naturally contrastive to stabilize the innate sexual nature of the individual; to create order amidst an unstable and unfamiliar world.

According to Thomas Laqueur, pre-Enlightenment sexuality organized itself around the ancient, isomorphic Aristotelian/Galenic model that differentiated between male and female only in their relative degrees of "perfection." Women were considered to be imperfect knock-offs of men in construction; their "reproductive organs [...] paradigmatic

sites for displaying hierarchy” (qtd in Parker: 4-5). Alexander Pope articulates this best in his poem “Epistle II: To a Lady (Of the Characters of Women):”

And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,  
Woman's at best a Contradiction still.  
Heav'n, when it strives to polish all it can  
Its last best work, but forms a softer Man (269-272).

The isomorphic Aristotelian/Galenic model had held nicely with feudalist-based societies which were divided rigidly along hierarchical bloodlines. However, England’s changing socioeconomic landscape necessitated a more plausible justification for sexual relations by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The ideological demands of commerce and subjectivity yielded a concept of sexual difference based on completely separate reproductive bodies recognizable only in their opposition to one another. Men and women no longer shared in any kind of encompassing sexuality. Instead, anatomical, heterosexual differences (male versus female) compounded with gender differences (masculine versus feminine) to produce a new concept of the naturally or unnaturally sexed individual (*Market à la Mode* 165).

Much literature from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries directly and indirectly represents, takes issue with, and/or romanticizes this polarization of sexual spheres. Of these pre-“Angel in the House” works, the early-eighteenth-century periodical best presents a window into the *informing* and *reforming* of popular gender roles because of its unique position within the literary marketplace. As a commercially-driven form of entertainment, periodicals were often not only a financial endeavor but also a moral one for many writers who sought to curtail the selfish, corrupting effects of capitalism. Notably, the periodical’s

rise at the turn of the eighteenth century coincided with the formation of England's Society for the Reformation of Manners and Morals beginning in 1699, reflecting the period's increasing interest in regulating behavioral norms. New wealth had enabled previously less mobile classes to reposition themselves on society's hierarchical ladder. And while the masquerades, travels, fancy dress and generally extravagant lifestyles of the aristocracy were appealing and suddenly more accessible, the ruling classes were also largely regarded as morally deficient – often neglecting integrity, common sense and even good taste. Many literary genres during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aspired to address middle class audiences regarding these issues of moral decorum. From conduct novels to pamphlets, sermons and other religious material, many periodicals joined the ranks of reformatory reading while simultaneously exploiting the market of culture and fashion, and contemporary society's hunger for knowledge. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries England was imperialistic, politically tumultuous, rapidly advancing scientifically in areas like medicine and technology, and bustling with commerce. The periodical form offered an inexpensive, widespread way for all journal-writers to harness the sentiment behind, and interest in England's changing economic, political and cultural landscape to gain readership and ultimately profit. The generally reformatory character of some periodicals is thus complicated by the fact that the conditions of commodification and commercialization that these works warned of essentially came to define their nature and shape their author's approach (Mackie 3). The essay-periodical in particular was especially recognized for its ability to act as a kind of fashionable censor on eighteenth-century society.

The essay-periodical – first pioneered by Richard Steele's *Tatler* (1709-1711) and then further developed in his collaboration with Joseph Addison in the *Spectator* (1711-1712)

and 1714) – utilized creative fictional personae that dictated the style, tone and topic of each issue to allow for a uniquely distanced, yet personal criticism of the author’s reality (Italia 13). Its concise, manageable form of a single essay printed in two standard-periodical columns offered an ideal medium through which a single individual could directly and familiarly address readers. Authors like Addison and Steele used the guise of a fictional persona, Isaac Bickerstaff in the *Tatler* and Mr. Spectator in the *Spectator*, to appeal affectionately to their readers’ sensibilities through customary conversation for the purpose of informing and reforming popular moral decorum. The *Tatler* and *Spectator*’s importance within the periodical genre consequently stems not only from the fact that Addison and Steele are credited with developing and “perfecting” the essay-periodical form, but also from each paper’s self-proclaimed purpose, which was to civilize the middle class. In *Tatler* No. 144 Steele wrote through the voice of Isaac Bickerstaff that “In a Nation of Liberty, there is hardly a Person in the whole Mass of the People more absolutely necessary than a Censor.” And as he explicitly states in his dedication of the periodical:

The general Purpose of this Paper, is to expose the false Arts of Life, to pull off the Disguises of Cunning, Vanity and Affectation, and to recommend a general Simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse, and our Behavior [...] Your most Obligated, most Obedient, and most Humble Servant, Isaac Bickerstaff (*Tatler* Dedication to Mr. Maynwaring).

In *Spectator* No. 1 Addison writes through the voice of Mr. Spectator that the reason he will publish his “Sheet-full of Thoughts every Morning” is for the “benefit of my Contemporaries; and if I can any way contribute to the Diversion or Improvement of the Country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret

Satisfaction of thinking that I have not Lived in vain.” It is the goal of both papers then, to make England’s citizens both socially and economically valuable (Mackie 9).

If the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* aimed to censor the “evil” and exemplify the “good” of the public, commercial world, Addison and Steele – possibly more earnestly, though arguably less obviously – also intended to reshape the private, domestic realm. During the eighteenth century most professionals in the bourgeoisie were men though some women did manage and own shops. More often, women worked as hired labor, taking-in sewing and laundry or acting as housemaids and governesses. The employment opportunities created by the period’s rapid economic growth offered women only limited independence, however, considering that their incomes were typically necessary for their own or their family’s survival. Most women who ventured into the public realm were usually unmarried spinsters and widows; some “fallen” women, outcast by “proper” society for their sins and left to fend for themselves. The number of these “public women” was relatively small compared to the more “private” ones as the majority of eighteenth-century women either remained, or were expected to be, mothers and wives. In order to preserve the sanctity of the domestic realm, and to maintain a place where men could refocus their capitalist energy, Addison and Steele used the accessibility of the periodical to promote normative sexual prescriptions that helped to fashion the female-centered domestic sphere. In *Tatler* No. 1, after indirectly connecting the generality of “Good People of England” with the gendered use of “these Gentlemen” in reference to his paper’s intended audience, Isaac Bickerstaff takes special care to address his female readers: “I resolve also to have something which may be of Entertainment to the Fair Sex, in Honour of whom I have invented the Title of this Paper. I therefore earnestly desire all Persons, without Distinction, to take it in for the present Gratis.” And in *Spectator* No. 10

Mr. Spectator asserts that “there are none to whom this Paper will be more useful, than to the female World. I have often thought there has not been sufficient Pains taken in finding out proper Employments and Diversions for the Fair Ones.” A major purpose of both the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* was to divert the potentially sinful “idleness” of women; to redirect women’s tastes; to essentially fashion the components of what would later become the following century’s “Angel in the House.”

It has been argued that the influence of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* upon the essay-periodical, and journalism as a whole, cannot be overestimated (Italia 14). For example, “the *Spectator*, in particular, continued to be read, anthologized and praised as a model of English prose and moral thought until the early part of the twentieth century” (Italia 14). Both works are still the focus of many eighteenth-century studies – providing insight into literary, as well as social culture during the historically transitional period – and arguably, providing the model for much fashionably reformatory literature even today. From self-help pieces, editorials and even Dear Abbey columns, Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator left a journalistic legacy that informed and reformed culture from the vantage point of an authoritative social regulator. Likewise, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*’s frequency as well as longer length of publication compared to most of their contemporary competitors demonstrates the fact that Addison and Steele’s version of the essay-periodical offered something more “consumable” than others. Addison and Steele succeeded in making their perspective a commodity available for reading and internalization. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* captured the increasing distinction between their period’s new public and private realms by carefully balancing their business, entertainment and instructive objectives.

While a number of contemporary publications like the *Convent-Garden Journal*, *Prompter*, *Busy Body*, *Prattler*, and *Parrot*, for example, aspired to fulfill Addison and Steele's recipe for fictional journalism, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* were not only influential stylistically, but also ideologically. The immense popularity of the papers made the *Tatler* and *Spectator*'s ideas fashionable, cultivating fields of reflection among readers that effectively "clouded" – or, overshadowed – culture (Italia 14-15). More specifically, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* influenced their competitors, who often tried to complement or supplement the periodicals, by designating matters of cultural importance, thereby informing – fashioning – cultural tastes. The significance of the periodicals' influence is a result of their ability to articulate, and thus manipulate, what was fashionable, given the "false" ethics of materialism. This journalistic presence in eighteenth-century England makes the special attention paid to women in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* representative of Addison and Steele's contribution to the cultivation of modern gender norms. The fashionableness of their ideas, along with the fashionableness of the papers themselves made their opinions regarding "proper" and "improper" behavior – and arguably, gender – highly influential.

While there were many periodicals that clung to the coat-tails of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*'s success, the *Female Tatler* (1709-1710) in particular exploited one of Addison and Steele's familiar titles to achieve its own place in the eighteenth-century literary marketplace. Written first through the persona of Mrs. Phoebe Crackenthorpe and then "a society of modest ladies" (*Female Tatler* No. 51) named Emilia, Arabella, Rosella, Sophronia, Lucinda and Artesia, the *Female Tatler* followed the lead of its big brothers, the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, by aiming "to correct the vices and vanities which some of distinction, as well as others, willfully commit" (*Female Tatler* No. 1). It did so, however, from a

woman's perspective. Also like the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, the *Female Tatler* sought to reform by profiting from England's newly flourishing social scene. Just as men were beginning to frequent coffeehouses and chocolate-houses to indulge, socialize and engage in thoughtful discussion over the various forms of literature that circulated through such venues, drawing rooms and tea shops were increasingly patronized by women, who offered a strong, untapped market for the improvement of manners and morals. The *Female Tatler* attempted to enter into the daily lives of its readers much like the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, but differentiated itself within the marketplace by targeting women even more directly through a defined reflection of their interests and behaviors.

Fidelis Morgan has contended in an introduction to her collection of *Female Tatler* issues, that given the periodical's self-proclaimed purpose and the timing of its publication, the *Female Tatler* was primarily intended to complement rather than compete with its namesake and the *Spectator* (vii). One early example of this "harmonious" relationship can be found at the end of the *Female Spectator's* first issue when Mrs. Crackenthorpe signs off after saying, "and to prevent mistakes, which may happen by peoples' enquiring for either of the tatlers [sic], I shall publish mine the contrary days, viz. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays." Such a complementary schedule suggests that the representations of women and women's issues presented in the *Female Tatler* are roughly in line with those presented in the periodicals of Addison and Steele. Despite its independent, educated, well-to-do leading lady, and the fact that the *Female Tatler* frequently espoused the equal intelligence and abilities of women, the periodical was not intended to be, nor considered at the time, to be feminist. Therefore, given Addison and Steele's tremendous influence upon the literary



marketplace of eighteenth-century England, the *Female Tatler*'s "complementary" aim likely contributed to the period's polarization of sexual spheres.

Much modern scholarship has been undertaken to identify exactly how the eighteenth-century model of sexual difference was formed. As Erin Mackie notes, critics like Laqueur, McKeon, Ellen Pollak, and Laura Brown have all supported the idea that various kinds of discourse found within the period – from medical, to scientific, aesthetic, social, or even economic – combined to rhetorically construct separate spheres of sexual identification for each gender ("Fashioning Gender" 458). Labeled by Todd C. Parker, this "rhetoric of sexual difference" was informed by the absolutism defined by natural sexuality. When masculine and feminine are viewed as inherently opposite they must be classified according to separate sets of virtues. As a result, certain aspects of culture become tied to certain genders based on how they function within a given sphere of activity (*Market à la Mode* 146). Discourse is responsible for conceiving these connections. Cultural associations such as who one socializes with and what one chooses to possess, come to define worth and value, and can classify an individual as either natural or unnatural. These associations are cast by the social practices and attitudes fostered in discourse. Language – not just print media – has a way of characterizing its surroundings even as it devises them. Mackie points to Laqueur's example of this, which shows how prior to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, bodily organs like the ovaries and testicles had shared one name. The emergence of the period's natural, sexualized notion of gender however facilitated linguistic differentiation and so they were individually named – ovaries, testicles – to denote naturally different areas of identification (*Market à la Mode* 165).

Discourse afforded a theoretical space in which assignments of tangible objects could be made in an effort to restrict allowable forms of personal identity. The literal spaces – or places – of coffeehouses and tea tables housed an unrestricted coming-together of private people to form a public, comprised of its own opinions. Jürgen Habermas has called such a space the “bourgeois public sphere,” and within it, new fascinations with getting and spending, with class (as opposed to status), and the natural, sexualized notion of gender were rationally debated and negotiated. The nature of the public sphere necessitated products, with substance or meaning, which could be verbalized. “As a privatized individual, the bourgeois was two things in one: owner of goods and persons and one human being among others, i.e., *bourgeois* and *homme* [sic]” (Habermas 55). Consequently, to discourse about sexuality, sexuality had to be objectified, commodified into a perceivable entity that could be easily analyzed against what was increasingly familiar – exchange. Thus, what was found to be socially or politically acceptable or unacceptable in the public sphere could be merged with what was sexually acceptable or unacceptable.

Literature, including periodicals such as the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Female Tatler*, provided a unique *space* and *place* in which these cultural standards, originating out of verbal discourse, could be instituted as well as reintroduced into the realm of rational debate. Such a phenomenon made it possible for periodicals like the *Tatler* and *Spectator* to conservatively embrace their roles in policing the period’s emerging gender norms. For in viewing femininity and masculinity as distinctly opposite of each other, the set of intrinsic values that they assigned to each became informed by the reproductive relationship between male and female. The naturally conflicting qualities of strength and weakness, destruction and preservation grew to encompass those that were more emblematic in their construction, such

as purity and impurity, frivolity and seriousness, stability and instability, rationality and irrationality.

Something that is unique and fascinating about the *Female Tatler* in considering its relationship to the formation of the period's natural, sexualized gender norms, is that while it considers itself a female-oriented paper, the words of Mrs. Crackenthorpe and the Society of Ladies were written by both men and women. Currently there is no scholarship that believes that the male personae of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* were produced by anyone other than men. Though some scholarship has argued that there were several other contributors to the papers besides just Addison and Steele, all named have been men. Conversely, the *Female Tatler* endured a complicated and often controversial existence because of its authorship. The papers can be separated into three main parts: part one having been written by Mrs. Crackenthorpe, printed by B. Bragge and later Mrs. A. Baldwin; part two was written by the Society of Ladies and also printed by Mrs. A. Baldwin; and finally part three has been considered the "Fake" *Female Tatler*, also claiming to have been written by Mrs. Crackenthorpe but printed by B. Bragge after the ("real") original Mrs. Crackenthorpe began printing her paper with Mrs. A. Baldwin. And while the true identity of the contributors to all three versions of the periodical remains the subject of much scholarly speculation, the most convincing arguments have attributed the original papers of Mrs. Crackenthorpe to the dual-authorship of Delarivier Manley, who was a popular playwright and novelist as well as notorious producer of the Tory periodical, the *New Atalantis*, and Thomas Baker, a lawyer (Morgan vii-viii). The second set of papers, written by the Society of Ladies, may have had several authors but were more than likely primarily written by Dr. Bernard Mandeville, who was known for his translation of La Fontaine's *Fables*, and actress and playwright Susanna

Centlivre – who, on one hand bitterly denied involvement with the periodical but on the other produced works that closely resembled certain issues of the *Female Tatler*. It has also been argued that Delarivier Manley may have written under the guise of one of the Ladies in some of the later papers (Morgan ix). According to Fidelis Morgan’s introduction to her collection of issues from the *Female Tatler* there is even less proof of who wrote the fake *Female Tatler*:

It has been suggested that the fake *Female Tatler* was written by mathematician Thomas Lydal. His books are consistently advertised in it, and in her paper Mrs<sup>1</sup> Crackenthorpe makes sarcastic reference to her rival’s ‘Calculated Tables’. [...] Another theory is that [Thomas] Baker in fact wrote the fake *Female Tatler*, Manley the real one, and that Lydal was Baker’s assistant (viii).

The unsettled authorial history of the *Female Tatler* may indicate why the periodical has been largely neglected by modern scholarship. Arguably, our knowledge of the lives of Addison and Steele has made their papers much more accessible. That is why this study undertakes only the first set of *Female Tatler* issues; because of its fairly consistent production most likely by Delarivier Manley and through the consistent persona of Mrs. Phoebe Crackenthorpe. As women, both Manley and Mrs. Crackenthorpe lend themselves, their thoughts and their opinions to the understanding of eighteenth-century sexual ideals. If we consider then that these first issues were also collaborations with Thomas Baker, the supposedly feminist ethics promoted on the *Female Tatler*’s pages are even more telling.

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<sup>1</sup> The edition of the *Female Tatler* edited by Fidelis Morgan does not routinely include punctuation after abbreviations.

This study attempts to identify the ways in which the *Female Tatler* supports and/or diverges from the ideals of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, in whose likeness the female-oriented periodical was created, much like Adam and Eve. Though the *Female Tatler* presents a very different style, it promotes a prudent kind of femininity for women, conscious of its social limitations. This study supports the argument that its slight deviancy was guised in familiar prescriptions in order to allow the female-authored work to survive in the male-dominated literary marketplace. And it is in this balancing of business, entertainment and instruction – like its male counterparts – along with the added incorporation of realistic femininity that the *Female Tatler* reformed and informed cultural standards and thereby helped construct the next century’s “Angel in the House” ideal. However, it seems possible, given such circumstances, that one can specifically identify *how* exactly Addison and Steele characterize male and female gender roles and consequently “cloud” eighteenth century culture with their values. Furthermore, because of their literary influence, it seems possible to identify those same ideals in the competing (or “complementary”) female-oriented paper, *The Female Tatler*, to gain a male versus female perspective on the formation of gender norms in eighteenth-century England. This study thus contends that, because it was “clouded” by the presence of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, the *Female Tatler* effectively aided in the “fashioning” of the period’s emerging gender spheres by complementing the use of Todd C. Parker’s “rhetoric of sexual difference.” This study attempts to hold Parker’s argument against the *Tatler*, the *Spectator* and the *Female Tatler* to see how influential – or *complementary* – the three periodicals were in fashioning the natural, sexualized notion of gender. By analyzing language that ties particular cultural examples to specific definitions of gender, it is possible to see how the boundaries that define femininity and masculinity are

assigned first in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, and then reinforced in the *Female Tatler*. I would contend that the *Female Tatler* is more “pro-*Tatler*” than “anti” because it fashions ideals of masculinity and femininity that – like its relationship with the *Tatler* and *Spectator* – are complementary.

## CHAPTER 1

### *Impolitely Speaking: Fashioning Civil Tea Tables and Coffeehouses*

Born of England's coffeehouses and tea tables, the language of beauty took a prominent position in the eighteenth-century formulation of sexualized gender and taste. Robert W. Jones writes in *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty*, that beauty, as a term, "was perhaps most strikingly deployed in relation to the role of women in cultural and social debate. Writers [...] sought to employ the concept of beauty within inquiries which, while they were concerned with the rigours of philosophical discrimination, did not preclude a discussion of women's social place or her moral capacity" (1). Moving between a number of discursive and social meanings, the term beauty became a way of expressing idealism. Debates on issues of popular taste, culture, refinement and desire were all conducted with reference to it (Jones viii). The cultural domination of the concept formed, what Jones has called an "empire of beauty" – denoting the way in which a term originally intended to describe physical appearances was transformed to include more global, social judgments. For example the concept of beauty was often used to assess a woman's morality or conduct, and in relation to her role or significance.

The cultivation within the public sphere of conceptual capacities required for judging beauty exemplifies the formation of genteel taste during the eighteenth century. Subjective values with which individuals could distinguish between the "varying quality of cultural forms, to tell the good from the bad" were necessitated by an increasingly commercial marketplace ("Fashioning Taste on the Culture Market" 319). Being new, impersonal, contrived and fundamentally based on quantity rather than quality, commercialized culture

was perceived as a threat to social and aesthetic values. The *Tatler*, the *Spectator* and the *Female Tatler* proposed to offset this effect by ethically grounding popular taste. The reflective nature of the public sphere allowed all three of the periodicals to suggest how “proper” men and women *should* behave as they demonstrated these tasteful choices on their pages. And as the evolving definition of beauty reveals, matters of taste were linked to the emerging sexualized notion of gender by aiding in the assignment of each sex to an individual sphere of “appropriate” activity. Throughout the period, poor taste was considered as a kind of cross-gendering (Jones ix).

By the 1690s, when the literary public sphere was in its infancy, there were already emerging signs of an understanding of the relationship between economic and cultural change. Jones has suggested that civil discourse developed as a code of social practice during the early eighteenth century after the more feudalism-based, seventeenth-century need for martial masculinity began to dissolve with the rise of capitalism and business of making money. He contends that language emphasizing civility and politeness anticipated a tasteful, polite public culture (27). In attempting to reform the manners and morals of English society the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* observed a highly refined style, mirroring and shaping the oral conventions of the coffeehouse and tea table by way of accessible, realistic language. Civil discourse provided a socially accepted medium through which Addison and Steele could politely prescribe gender norms necessary to the reforming of society. Furthermore, it specifically exemplifies a kind of sexually differentiated rhetoric when the reforming and informing of civility – or tasteful behavior – seeks to strip men of their ill-mannered, violent tendencies while requiring an increasing delicacy of women for the improvement of commerce.



According to the pages of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* civility was tasteful. Civil discourse associated with the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* served to differentiate sexuality through the use of specific rhetorical customs: first, it reinforced male authority being spoken through the voices of Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator; second, it effectively separated what was public and what was private by politely promoting the upward mobility of the middle class. For example: in hoping to make society more civil the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* critiqued the immorality of aristocratic conduct and attitudes, thereby demonstrating distaste for such behavior. According to the periodicals, the indolence of the aristocracy was not only economically damaging because it threatened the capitalist desire for self-improvement, but also socially damaging by encouraging a kind of “sentimental masculinity” that sought to supplant the *polis* with the private (Maurer 7). This idea can be seen in No. 218 of the *Spectator* when Mr. Spectator recounts a chance-meeting between him and “two or three very plain sensible Men” at a coffeehouse in which they muse on the relationship between one’s credit and reputation. His retelling of one group-member’s evaluation of another as financially and socially stable, yet bored and dissatisfied suggests parallels between social classes considering that formerly upper-class problems related to wealth and privilege were suddenly realized in the middle-class:

He is, it seems, said the good Man, the most extravagant Creature in the World; has run through vast Sums, and yet been in continual Want; a Man, for all he talks so well of Oeconomy [sic], unfit for any of the Offices of Life, by reason of his Profuseness. It would be an unhappy thing to be his Wife, his Child, or his Friend; and yet he talks as well of those Duties of Life as any one (*Spectator* No. 218).

Here Addison and Steele exemplify how the use of unhurried, “proper” language makes authoritative their discussions of what is or is not civil. The discourse of everyday middle-class men consequently reflects and suggests an awareness of masculine responsibility. There is a disdain for personal and material waste conveyed in *Spectator* No. 218, resulting in a distinct awareness of what is and should be considered desirable. Accordingly, civil discourse becomes a means to define politely masculine and feminine roles as it expresses values that are socially preferred. The tastes portrayed in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* direct inherent maleness toward an association with sole, economic provider, while femaleness is directed towards nurturing of this role.

Defining taste for the purpose of civilizing society was a task imitated by the *Female Tatler*. Aspiring to be a more female-centered periodical, however, the *Female Tatler* sought to cultivate ideal standards in a slightly less “civilized,” yet equally customized way – one more befitting a woman, but not necessarily a lady. Like its big brothers the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, the *Female Tatler* also aimed “to correct the vices and vanities which some of distinction, as well as others, wilfully [sic] commit” (*Female Tatler* No. 1). But according to the periodical’s principle persona, Mrs. Phoebe Crackenthorpe, “the only way to correct great men’s foibles, is handsomely to ridicule ‘em; a seasonable banter has often had a reclaiming effect, when serious advice from a grave divine has been thought impudence” (*Female Tatler* No. 1). As a woman, she has deemed herself not only akin to “tattling” – which she argues “was ever adjudg’d peculiar to our [the female] sex” – but additionally judgmental, ridiculing and gossipy (*Female Tatler* No. 1). For a “Lady That Knows Everything” may be authoritative, but is also generally unattractive by eighteenth-century standards. This realistic evaluation of the social constraints that characterize womanhood allows the *Female*

*Tatler* to diverge quickly from the work of Addison and Steele; to establish its own, unique, “female” capacities in the reformation of morals and manners.

Mrs. Crackenthorpe subscribes most to what E.J. Clery has termed a “discourse of feminization,” which in Clery’s *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury*, is defined as “a rhetoric that supports economic expansion and links it to the refinement of manners” (3). The civility displayed in, and created by the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* represents a male-focused interpretation of this. Addison and Steele were “eager to establish a sphere of value and identification outside the commercial marketplace, where taste and culture [could be] bought and sold with little regard to any standard higher than the latest fashion” (Mackie 31). In effect, they sought to refine – or effeminize – masculinity only so far as to “culture” the self-made individual. They sought to create a nation of gentlemen. The *Female Tatler* on the other hand provides a fully-developed example of feminized rhetoric, for the most obvious reason that it was conveyed through the voice of a female persona and addressed mainly to a female audience.

While masculinity is definitely a concern of Phoebe Crackenthorpe’s, she is arguably most attentive to the reformation of her fellow sisters. She speaks most often of men only in relation to her primary subjects, women. More importantly though, she chooses not to delve into public politics, as did both the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, in accounts of party politics and business, but limits her musings to private going-ons. Household-related questions of marriage, courtship, getting, spending, parenting and religious virtue abound on the pages of the *Female Tatler*, as does ridicule of anything or anyone that threatens the idealized, “cultured” gentlewoman who balances them.

The market is represented as society's most dangerous source of corruption, yet also its most necessary source of protection and comfort for men and women alike when utilized appropriately. For example, in *Female Tatler* No. 13, Mrs. Crackenthorpe notes that she has recently received letters from Highgate which "give an account of a very fine summer house there near the road, which a very fine lady gives herself abundance of airs in." The "fine lady," who professes herself to be "Pepper, Deputy Pepper's daughter," has been observed to have been corrupted by her inherited financial and social prestige because she is no longer sensitive, humble or even civil, only wholly consumed with jealousy and materialism. For when "her relation died without seeing her, and when her parents reprimanded her ill conduct, she told 'em it was wit and humour" (*Female Tatler* No. 13). Mrs. Crackenthorpe concludes by asserting in regard to the letters, "A lady so extremely full of herself must be a most unhappy creature," and that "when she can endure a filthy fellow, perhaps she may dwindle into a wife, but she'll sooner endure a husband than she'll get one" (*Female Tatler* No. 13). Pepper's story serves to represent the negative, uncivilized outcomes of financial improvement – not simply wealth, considering that she is a common deputy's daughter. The market is defined in this fashion as *something* detrimental to an individual's character because it hypothetically empowers them, allowing them to reject the period's naturally organized norms which had been deemed necessary for optimal political, economic and social function.

Like Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator, Phoebe Crackenthorpe seeks to establish identifiable values absent of commercialized culture. As in the case of Pepper, the tastes that she articulates are subject to the market only indirectly – Pepper being the dependent of her successful father, the deputy. Thus notions of the private sphere and masculinity are drawn

as inherently complementary to the public sphere and femininity, a concept which can be seen in *Female Tatler* No. 37:

The young lady in the parish of St Laurence, near Guildhall, that lately went to the Coffee-House in man's clothes with the two 'prentices, called for a dish of Bohee<sup>2</sup>, smoked her pipe, and gave herself abundance of straddling masculine, is desired to do so no more.

Christopher Morose, the haberdasher, in the same parish, is desired not to affect quality so much as to have a separate bed from his wife ...

Not surprisingly, the person accused of "straddling masculine," that is cross-dressing, in the parish of St. Laurence is a woman, whose actions emphatically and inappropriately cross gender boundaries. She attempts to become what she biologically is not by associating herself with the people, places, and things that have come to define masculinity. As this example demonstrates then, Mrs. Crackenthorpe's "rhetoric of feminization" is based on conceptualizing the ultimate refinement of manners in a version of womanhood only slightly premature of the nineteenth century's "Angel in the House" – one that complements man's ability to act as the same sole, economic provider designed by the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. Essentially, the civility that Phoebe Crackenthorpe promotes for both men and women relies upon private, more personal satisfaction. For a tasteful, polite private sphere provides the foundation for a positive public reputation. Christopher Morose, the haberdasher, therefore should not be so selfish as to alienate himself from his wife because his reputation is dependent upon more than just his financially-based social status. According to Mrs.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Morgan's edition of the *Female Tatler*, "Bohee" is defined as a kind of "black, Indian tea."

Crackenthorpe, “proper” reputation or, true “quality” is necessitated by a strong, reputable marriage and conservative home-life.

It seems possible, according to modern-day sexual standards, to interpret the *Female Tatler*’s emphasis on the economic importance of women in this manner as “feminist.” However, it also seems possible to argue that Mrs. Crackenthorpe’s opinions sought less to redefine gender boundaries than to make existing ones more comfortable for women. For one, she outlines values that are meant to protect a woman’s desirability. As Erin Mackie so eloquently states, the natural, sexualized notion of gender is founded on the idea that “men are men because they desire women” (*Market à la Mode* 167). Mrs. Crackenthorpe often comments on such social politics of the private sphere. In *Female Tatler* No. 11 she writes, “Nothing is so amazing to me as the choice of some women’s conversation who dream away their time in incoherent stuff which makes ‘em useless to the world,” and then proceeds to describe several women – Mrs Save-all, Lady Wou’d-be, Mrs Prim, and Mrs All-talk – who have been traditionally educated in literature, languages and the fine arts. In relation to Mrs. Wou’d-be she makes special emphasis to note, “Ask her, if she can make a tansy? – She’s never heard of it” (*Female Tatler* No. 11). Considering that a tansy is a kind of pudding, at first glance, Mrs. Crackenthorpe seems to be commenting on the intolerable state of women’s education. As one reads on, it becomes obvious that she seeks not to criticize the shortcomings of an education that trains women to be non-productive members of society, but more specifically, non-productive members of the private sphere. Mrs. Wou’d-be would not necessarily be more desirable if she knew how to make a tansy. On the contrary, she would be more desirable simply if she also concerned herself with more applicable domestic matters. Likewise, Mrs. Save-all, who is concerned only with shallow matters of materialism

and trivial gossip, would be more desirable if she knew Milton “by heart” and made Cowley her “bed-fellow” like her friend. The end moral of this issue aims to show these women, and not just their educations, in poor taste: “As virtue or vice, so wit and folly are adjudg’d people according to the company they keep, and as every man’s sobriety is suspected that associates with a libertine, I shou’d question his understanding that is seen often with a coxcomb” (*Female Tatler* No. 11). A well-rounded woman, who converses knowledgably with peers of both sexes, maintains her character, appearance and the sanctity of her home, is desirable. These “Fair ones” of a “more elevated Life and Conversation, that move in the exalted Sphere of Knowledge and Virtue, that join all the Beauties of the Mind to the Ornaments of Dress, and inspire a kind of Awe and Respect, as well as Love, into their Male-Beholders” represent the female ideal prescribed by Addison and Steele (*Spectator* No. 10). It seems much too easy to classify the *Female Tatler* as either an advocate or opponent of this conception – in a sense, distinctly misogynistic or feminist. Instead, Mrs. Crackenthorpe recognizes that conforming to the standards of Addison and Steele ultimately advances the minds and circumstances of women within the constraints of a newly commercialized culture, because it preserves their power – their sexuality – without compromising their attractiveness. Opportunities for education, experiences, acquaintances, responsibility, and most importantly, civil treatment, were dependent upon favor, and a woman in good favor would be rewarded and not ill-treated by men and other conservative members of society. As she points out in *Female Tatler* No. 47, even the tradition of courtship – which could be viewed as a kind of marketing of female sexuality – stands to “discover people’s sense and education more than any other undertaking...” by exposing women to new people and ideas.

Another example of this idea occurs in *Female Tatler* No. 46 amidst a drawing-room of ladies where Mrs. Crackenthorpe recounts the “rape” of a young woman named Almeria, who is described as “beauteous,” a “Nymph of Race divine.” Traveling by coach from Bath, and entrusted to the care of a fellow passenger – a Count, “who seemed to be a gentleman” – after her escort grows ill, Almeria is inappropriately toyed with, touched and kissed by her new companion and his valet. “Finding no house, no person near to relieve her extremity, and that prayers, tears and swoonings [sic] had proved ineffectual” Almeria preserves, as well as utilizes her power by creatively working within the confines of her natural, sexual desirability: “...she plucked up a little spirit, told him his rough behaviour had so surprised her that she knew not what she said, but if he would be prevailed upon, and as she had no aversion to his person, she knew not what influence his words might have over her” (*Female Tatler* No. 46). In other words, Almeria recognizes the inherency of her vulnerability and adjusts accordingly. As a result, “the scene was then changed to gentle touches, amorous sighs, and scrapes of ‘cease cruel tyrannizing” that made the situation somewhat less threatening until Almeria was fortunated with an opportunity for escape:

The poor lady tottering on by tedious marches, short restings [sic], pantings [sic] and strugglings [sic] for breath, at last reached the place of refuge. But whether providence, which brought her thither, more than natural strength, has still preserved her alive, intelligence is not yet known (*Female Tatler* No. 46).

Interestingly, Mrs. Crackenthorpe calls Almeria’s attempted rape a “misfortune,” insinuating that her situation was the result of bad luck. Similarly, Mrs. Crackenthorpe assumes that “providence” intervened in Almeria’s fate, possibly more so than Almeria’s own strength and determination. These evaluations serve to downplay the feminist overtones



associated with Almeria's lack of defenselessness, by playing-up her susceptibility to such situations. In this way, her attempted rape becomes just as dangerous as literal rape because, as a woman, Almeria's desirability – her innate femininity – warrants misuse. Almeria's actions however, defy her natural inferiority. According to Mrs. Crackenthorpe's language in *Female Tatler* No. 46, Almeria successfully protects her beauty, her charm and her virtue – and consequently becomes a kind of role model for other women – by recognizing, appreciating and utilizing her desirability for her own benefit. Though rape represents the potentially harmful effects of excessive male-favor, Almeria nevertheless preserves the favor of peers, her family and most importantly, potential husbands.

Thus, Phoebe Crackenthorpe's characterization as a plain-dealing “Lady That Knows Everything” combines with her “rhetoric of feminization” to create a kind of reasoned femininity that uses the traditional system to its advantage. She does not necessarily seek to make women wholly content *with* their circumstances, as opposed to *within* their circumstances. For Mrs. Crackenthorpe and her contemporary sisters, capitalism – consisting of commerce and exchange – like male-dominated society was unavoidable. The *Female Tatler* consequently stressed feminine ideals that made what was inevitable more comfortable. Women were urged to embrace and protect the attractiveness of their sexuality as they would any other commodity: as something with which to bargain for something else in return.

Phoebe Crackenthorpe does not just portray the economic and social positives of a complementary wife, daughter, sister, and mother. She also reveals the negative effects of non-conformity. In *Female Tatler* No. 20, Mrs. Crackenthorpe discusses one particular woman, Lady Lisp-well, who is fortunate enough to have a “roguish eye, a winning pout, a

fashionable waddle, and a thousand pretty taking affections,” yet forsakes everything including her marriage and family to run-off with a “distasteful wretch” by the name of Jack Medley-brain. After berating Lady Lisp-well – a previously “reserv’d, precise, censorious creature” – as having become so “airy and unaccountable, that people begin to suspect the regularity of her brain,” Mrs. Crackenthorpe proceeds to sympathize with her husband:

The good Sir Lionel, her spouse, whom ev’ry body [sic] speaks well of, and wou’d he not load his perriwig [sic] with so much powder, is as complete in his person as his understanding has, with lowest matrimonial submission, entreated her return to her children. But her Ladyship has her health nowhere but Hampstead. He supplies her with money; she wants more, has it, and ‘tis gone (*Female Tatler* No. 20).

This is not to say that the *Female Tatler* necessarily champions Sir Lionel’s chivalry as a kind of idealized, protective form of masculinity. Mrs. Crackenthorpe merely includes him to demonstrate the effect of what she believes to be a woman’s irrational, selfish behavior.

Lady Lisp-well could be viewed as a strong, independent woman who takes control of her own destiny. For who knows what Sir Lionel is really like? Perhaps he is a tyrant, or worse yet, lazy and ineffectual? Regardless, Mrs. Crackenthorpe projects conservative values by suggesting that a husband and a wife have some sense of duty towards one another. The increasingly commercialized culture in which she writes clouds subjects like marriage, making unions contractual, negotiable – as can be seen specifically in *Female Tatler* No. 14 when Mrs. Crackenthorpe refers to a young woman named Clarissa as being “contracted” to a much older husband. Consequently, from Mrs. Crackenthorpe’s perspective, providing for the well-being of one’s partner requires different things of each sex. The emphasis upon Sir

Lionel's supplying Lady Lisp-well with as much money as she needs or wants demonstrates his fulfilling of the marriage-deal. In return, Lady Lisp-well should fulfill hers by returning to her family and her domestic responsibilities.

Mrs. Crackenthorpe repeatedly attempts to cultivate a civil, polite, productive society according to this *taste* for the comforts of self-made wealth and privilege. Relations between men and women – sexual and nonsexual – were increasingly associated with exchange and commerce during the period as individuals inexpertly applied their excitement with getting and spending across their culture. Thus, individuals who did not subscribe to these concepts of value and identification, and did not conform to their socially constructed arena of activity, were shunned, ridiculed and publicly embarrassed. In *Female Tatler* No. 39, Mrs. Crackenthorpe provides an example of a couple who, in poor taste, have become cross-gendered because of a reversal of their economic importance:

Poor Flatbottom, as the neighbors have nicknamed him, is so henpecked, because madam maintains him, that he's forced to ask pardon on his knees for light offences, and the gentleman that tips him half a crown to support his spirits with a glass of Burton, must be truly noble, who not only generously relieves him, but employs his wife, an industrious woman that makes night gowns for gentlemen, as well as roppers [sic] for ladies. About a month past, madam turns away her maid, and honest Flatbottom has cleaned her house, washed her dishes, and been her man-cook ever since... (*Female Tatler* No. 39).

If one's value or worth is defined by their unique contribution to the family's welfare, then according to modern-day standards Mr. and Mrs. Flatbottom are equal contributors.

However, Mrs. Crackenthorpe paints them as individuals to be pitied. Her conclusion that the gentleman who *tips* – or goes above and beyond what is necessary – Mr. Flatbottom half a crown is “truly noble,” suggests that both she and the gentleman feel compassion for his situation. In a culture where one’s worth is tied to what and why they have what they do, Mr. Flatbottom’s masculinity is completely non-existent. The maid, the house and the dishes are all classified as Mrs. Flatbottom’s – or “*hers*.”

The *Female Tatler* therefore fashions manners and morals for women that ultimately serve to complement man’s role as the sole, economic provider; accordingly relegating women to the opposite, private realm. A civilized woman fulfills Addison and Steele’s beautiful, virtuous, knowledgeable ideal to promote the economic capacities of her husband, father, brother or son, as well as preserve her own social comforts. Manliness and womanliness accordingly develop as distinctly opposite of each other, yet interdependent as they come to represent the contrasting worlds of business and pleasure. The question of class develops during the period as more than just a reliable indicator of an individual’s wealth. It also becomes a gauge of the appropriateness of one’s tastes in everything from clothing to entertainment to sexuality. Therefore, in cultivating the tastes and behaviors that preserve such a relationship, the *Female Tatler* aligns gender according to the “civil” functions that drive a male-dominated commercialized culture.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Characterizing Civility*

Throughout the eighteenth century “poor taste could be dismissed as effeminate, the product of an unmanly desire for fripperies and extravagance or the unwonted product of women’s involvement in properly masculine deliberations” (Jones ix). Accordingly, the desire of the *Tatler*, the *Spectator* and the *Female Tatler* to counterbalance this phenomenon with “good” tastes more befitting civil, productive men and women, resulted in the connecting of ethical and subjective standards to an individual’s character (*Market à la Mode* 206). Ideal character types represent the central object of the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Female Tatler*’s crusade for civility. Ideal character types embody the tastes that the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* want to make popular, and the *Female Tatler* wants to reinforce. Furthermore, ideal character types provide readers with value and identification because they afford simple, clear, accessible interpretations. Their inclusion therefore served to differentiate between the emulative and non-emulative aspects of fashionable society as associations with outward characteristics like dress, manners and morals – all signs of one’s class – came to define an individual’s inward character. Consequently, character types also served to differentiate between kinds of masculinity and femininity that were deemed worthy, as well as unworthy of emulation considering that those same outward characteristics also came to define one’s inherent sexuality during the eighteenth century.

The beautiful, virtuous, knowledgeable feminine ideal that emerged during the period did so in harmony with an oppositional ideal of masculinity. Tasteful and distasteful representations of a kind of masculinity that places men in the role of sole, economic

provider abound on the pages of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, as Erin Mackie points out in her book *Market à la Mode*:

*The Tatler* and *The Spectator* define the sober (heterosexual) bourgeois male by invoking, in order to displace, preexistent male types: the Restoration rake; the rakish, stylish turn-of-the-century beau; the exquisitely civil and extravagantly overdressed fop; and that foppish, foolish, effeminate type quite prevalent in the papers, the ‘Pretty Fellow.’ The new ideal masculine character is a domesticated man who nonetheless, is not a fop; an unequivocally masculine man who, nonetheless is not a rake; a man with a certain degree of worldly savoir faire who is by no means a beau or a pretty fellow” (192).

Notorious male characters like Tom Modely – who is deemed a member of the “Order of *Insipids* [sic]” (*Tatler* No. 166) – or the “Woman’s Man” – whose “Air and Behavior [are] quite different from the rest of our [male] Species: His Garb [...] more loose and negligent, his manner more soft and indolent” (*Spectator* No. 156) – embody the unacceptable characteristics of Addison and Steele’s ideal masculinity, for the purpose of moralizing heterosexuality. According to E.J. Clery masculine “effeminacy” or “effeminization” was considered highly unnatural, yet a very real problem facing English society during the eighteenth century. It consisted of a “complex of derogatory ideas [...], including corruption, weakness, cowardice, luxury, immorality and the unbridled play of passions” (Clery 10). And because these characteristics were undesirable in the cut-throat business world that was increasingly dominating regular society, they were dismissed in men as poor taste and associated with the private, domestic realm of women. Stereotypes like those personified by

Tom Modely or the “Woman’s Man” which were intended to be viewed negatively, were therefore consciously identified with culturally feminine, and by implication homosexual, symbols such as “soft and indolent” manners or “loose and negligent” clothing. It is important to note that the “Woman’s Man” was still considered to be effeminate even though he was quite obviously heterosexual, because his ideal, civil masculinity is overshadowed by his attention to fashion and over-appreciation of women.

Calling for a certain degree of effeminacy *was* pertinent in fashioning a polite, civilized society however. Though generally suggestive of absolute impotence, the positively effeminized man was only minimally de-sexualized; his sexual prowess appropriately mannered and morally grounded for optimal function within an increasingly commercialized culture. This kind of acceptably effeminized man is perhaps nowhere better represented in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* than in the narrative forms of Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator. These idolons possess the correct balance of physical strength, honesty, stoicism, responsibility and awareness to successfully navigate the marketplace, yet also enough selflessness and integrity to exemplify refined masculinity and maintain their authority as “Censor[s] of Great Britain” (*Tatler* No. 144). Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator do not necessarily represent the perfect balance of masculinity, but a realistically flawed example. As men, within a male-dominated society, their characterizations make them acceptable, believable examples of civility within the public and private spheres. The values that they espouse from such a position are formed when readers identify with and reflect upon Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator’s standards of judgment used to describe both positively and negatively effeminized individuals. In turn, readers identify with and

reflect upon the standards of valuation. And it is in this way that Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator are at once convincing and influential for both men and women.

In the case of the *Female Tatler*, however, which reforms through the voice of a woman, the positively effeminized man is shaped through the narrator's characterization as a perhaps less naturally refined moral-authoritarian, though equally persuasive personification of tasteful and distasteful sexual characteristics. Mrs. Crackenthorpe claims for herself qualities that were usually seen as unfit for her sex – like reason, “plain-dealing” and ugliness: “But if he saw my face he'd think no more of adoration, Beauty was ever the least of my aim, I would rather chose [sic] to recommend myself by a tolerable understanding” (*Female Tatler* No. 8). These culturally-constructed, masculine characteristics combine with the fact that she has a fair fortune, to make her neither a typical coffeehouse-goer nor tea-table-sitter as Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator claim to be. For though Mr. Spectator was “born to a small Hereditary Estate” (*Spectator* No. 1) and Isaac Bickerstaff is affluent enough “to go daily to Will's [Coffeehouse]” (*Tatler* No. 1), they naturally exemplify members of the male-dominated public sphere. As a woman, Mrs. Crackenthorpe must carve her own place both within genteel society and within the literary marketplace. Her place must be authoritative, while still realistic. She actually disassociates herself from the beautiful, virtuous, knowledgeable feminine ideal, becoming somewhat homosexual like the overly effeminized man.

Mrs. Crackenthorpe is similar to the overly-effeminized man because she characterizes herself as principally interested in matters of her own sex, yet only marginally concerned with fulfilling the vary norms that she assigns to femininity. For example, in *Female Tatler* No. 43 Mrs. Crackenthorpe recounts her lineage, affirming her social status



and economic class, explaining that she was born into an example of what she deems “every true English family ought to be, and what in this age, very few are:” loyal to the Protestant church, the crown and the best-interest of their country, but above-all, protective of their estates and bloodlines. She thus characterizes herself as financially and socially above the individuals that she hopes to reform: the unrefined and therefore undesirable members of the middle class. Essentially, she characterizes herself as already refined and desirable. In *Female Tatler* No. 47 she announces in regard to the various suitors that have surfaced as a result of her publishing her lineage: “Upon the whole, an ingenious lawyer, a man in vogue, and business, who will not only get an estate, but knows how to preserve it, whose profession is honourable, and whose parts must be acute, is the person I would choose to make an alliance with.” This ideal man becomes an unattainable fantasy for Mrs. Crackenthorpe however. While she recalls several male suitors who possess a variety of unattractive masculine characteristics – being brutish, childish, or Roman Catholic – she is nevertheless unmarried, childless and responsible for her own financial survival. She refuses to compromise even though she herself is not ideal. For it can be assumed that in discreetly saying that her “circumstances were not sufficient to raise a family,” Mrs. Crackenthorpe means to suggest that she cannot bare children (*Female Tatler* No. 47). She refuses to discover the vary “sense and education” that she has proposed one finds through courtship (*Female Tatler* No. 47). Instead, she stubbornly, and somewhat snobbishly, considers the standards that she regards as ideally and inherently feminine inapplicable to her own well-being. And it is in this valuation of independence and power that she takes on the characteristics of homosexuality: valuing masculine qualities within the female form – even if it is her own.

The eighteenth-century notion of heterosexuality was linearly organized with purely natural forms of femininity and masculinity on opposing ends of the sexual spectrum. “Homosexual” tastes allegedly pulled these conceptions inward, toward one another. The ideally effeminized man thus located himself just inside the extreme of martial masculinity, just as the ideal, virtuous yet knowledgeable woman located herself just inside the opposing extreme of complete and utter powerlessness. Arguably, Phoebe Crackenthorpe centers herself on the sexual landscape – effectively between spheres. For example, she dates all of her “advices” from her own apartment though she is able to account for the goings-on at fashionable venues like Will’s Coffeehouse or White’s Chocolate-house (*Female Tatler* No. 1). Her characterization makes her not entirely socially accepted but also not entirely unaccepted, as one can interpret in the gender-blurring that occurs in *Female Tatler* No. 12:

The States of Holland having desired the favour of Mrs. Crackenthorpe’s picture, she designs to sit speedily, and desires Mr. Richardson<sup>3</sup> to let her know when he’s left at leisure. The posture she is to be in has been the subject of very learned debates. This lady says that being a studious person, she should lie on a couch, with one leg dangling off. Another lady would have her walking in a solitary grove. A third, as rising from her chair to receive company; and a West Country lady advis’d her to be smoking a pipe of tobacco. As she was in fifty minds who should draw it, she is now in fifty more how it shall be drawn; and when ‘tis finished perhaps it must be as many times alter’d before it pleases her.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Morgan’s edition of the *Female Tatler*, “Mr. Richardson” refers to Jonathan Richardson, a celebrated portrait painter.

The flood of sexually-assigned signifiers within this passage – in which, ironically, Mrs. Crackenthorpe reflects upon herself – shows her as much the subject of attention, as an over-sexed, lonely, needy and of course, masculine non-conformist. She represents many, but not necessarily all of the things eighteenth-century women were expected *not* to be: she is knowledgeable, observant, sociable and well-acquainted, genteel in manner and style, yet rational and “plain-dealing.” As a result, she becomes someone to be envied, as a kind of sexual rebel, while simultaneously pitied. But most importantly, she comes to possess a kind of realistic authority that is founded on the fact that she is appropriately gendered for the act of “tattling,” yet socially removed from – or above – its repercussions.

Such a uniquely sophisticated and successful persona was likely influenced by the reality of the *Female Tatler*’s real-life author and/or authors. Modern scholarship – based on textual analysis of Susanna Centlivre’s play, *The Man’s Bewitched*, which references Richard Steele and Delarivier Manley as co-operatives in the business of reform, and the periodicals, the *British Apollo* and the *General Review* – has attributed the authorship of the *Female Tatler* to Manley and a lawyer, Thomas Baker. Sadly, very little is known about Baker’s involvement in the production of the periodical other than the fact that he was beaten up after the *British Apollo* printed verses linking him to *Female Tatler* No. 24, which mocked a City Deputy and his daughters (Morgan viii). The likelihood of Manley’s involvement is much more apparent, especially through direct, textual and historical analysis of the periodical.

In considering Mrs. Crackenthorpe’s characterization as a kind of non-conforming observer it is possible to see the influence of Manley’s own values. Her most famous piece of (what would come to be known as) “scandal fiction” (Schellenberg 175) – or writing that made “scandalous suggestions about a character’s sexuality” for political impact (Mounsey

21) – was conceived in her popular political allegory, the *Secret Memoirs and Manners of several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes, from the New Atalantis, An Island in the Mediteranean*<sup>4</sup> [sic] (McDowell 20). More commonly known simply as the *New Atalantis*, it was first published in the same year as issue No. 1 of the *Female Tatler*, 1709. Paula McDowell asserts in *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* that the *New Atalantis*'s chief narrator, Lady Intelligence, is actually a self-conscious portrait of Manley's own views of her capacities as a political propagandist:

Manley's self-representation as a female intelligencer was an ingenious solution to her own doubly difficult situation as a female propagandist [...] It was also a conscious demonstration of new opportunities for British women to transform 'private intelligence' into public political currency by means of their new access to print (McDowell 20-21).

Historically, Manley was one of the first women in England to devote herself wholly to the production of written propaganda for income (McDowell 19). She struck-out conspicuously into a male-dominated public sphere of politics and literary production to become a transitional figure in the history of English women's political activity. She has been credited with using her writing to mediate "between an older, and more polemical political culture and a new, increasingly secular and 'polite' one" (McDowell 20). But most importantly, modern scholarship has shown her to have drawn on the oral traditions of women to shape both the content and form of her political fictions (McDowell 21). These facts combine to

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<sup>4</sup> Spelling of "Mediterranean" used by Paula McDowell in *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730*.

characterize Delarivier Manley as someone possessing the skill, style, ambition and daring to have produced the *Female Tatler*.

In attributing the *Female Tatler* to Delarivier Manley, the severity of the accusations made by Mrs. Crackenthorpe could be seen as uncharacteristic of Manley, who is known to have written the much more scandalous ones made by Lady Intelligence in the *New Atalantis*. Ruth Herman notes in “Enigmatic Gender in Delarivier Manley’s *New Atalantis*” that Manley regularly employed the use of gender reversals to characterize contemporary political figures alluded to in the *New Atalantis*. In one instance, by making the Earl of Sunderland’s character a woman, she indirectly suggested that he was homosexual – a highly overt, slanderous accusation. However, given that Manley was criticized, stigmatized and ultimately imprisoned and censored for her radical, though fictional, political works like the *New Atalantis*, the impolite, yet not necessarily completely uncivilized Phoebe Crackenthorpe more than likely afforded a more anonymous, less-criticized persona as she, and the *Female Tatler* itself, were less-typically “Manley-esque.” That is to say, that the *Female Tatler* likely provided Manley with an opportunity for income and a safe medium through which she could express her thoughts and feelings without her work gaining its usual controversial notoriety.

Manley’s “radicalism” mainly arises from the fact that she was a woman writing for self-profit at a time when women were expected to be unconcerned with matters of employment and politics outside of the home. Manley’s personal political agenda seems to have been far less radical than her critics would have liked it to be though. For example Herman argues that, as in the case of the Earl of Sunderland’s alleged homosexuality, Manley appeals to the natural, sexualized notion of gender by employing the concept that

ideal masculinity is synonymous with heterosexuality. Herman recounts how Manley openly criticized Sunderland's practice of cross-dressing on the pages of the *New Atalantis*, calling it an "irregularity of taste" (qtd. in Herman: 218). Thus Manley's values were largely in line with those of the conservative, Tory party that she supported, as the *New Atalantis* was careful to stress throughout: "that Tory gentlemen, whatever other vices they exhibit, are never 'unnatural' in the objects of their desire. [...] It is as though Manley is demonstrating, even through her satire on her own party, that Tory men, while often far from virtuous, are at least recognizably masculine..." (Herman 219). However, regardless of her insinuation that the sexuality of Whigs and Tories was inherently polarized, or the fact that one party generally valued modernity, the other traditionalism, both parties ultimately subscribed to the same natural, sexualized concept of gender differences. Public politics, especially party politics, are virtually completely absent in the *Female Tatler*. Therefore, Manley's authorship of the periodical speaks less to her Tory affiliations and more to her basic, conservative English identity, for it seems possible to argue that Whigs and Tories alike viewed civility as a social necessity, no matter how differently each chose to appreciate and navigate commercialized culture. What could be called the *Female Tatler's* slight deviancy from the bourgeois, male-dominated ideals of Addison and Steele, was consequently confined by both its author and her primarily female readers' frame of reference, and also the largely Whig-controlled government that reigned during the time of the periodical's publication. Manley's personal politics, which stemmed from her financial to intellectual independence, provided Phoebe Crackenthorpe with her characterization as – what Paula McDowell appropriately calls – "a female alternative intelligence agent of the public sphere" (20), making Mrs. Crackenthorpe – like Lady Intelligence – a form of self-portrait.

Like Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator, Mrs. Crackenthorpe uses her characterization as an intelligence agent of both gender spheres to represent tasteful and distasteful examples of the period's natural, sexualized notion of gender. However, unlike the *Tatler* and *Spectator* which most often utilized highly generalized human types to categorize "good" and "bad" taste, the *Female Tatler* provided a unique level of intimacy – both from the reader's perspective and Phoebe Crackenthorpe's. By including creatively descriptive names for the figures she deems to be acceptably or unacceptably gendered, subjects are made into kinds of caricatures. For instance, in *Female Tatler* No. 29 she names the undesirable virtues of Mrs. Everchat – who, not ironically, is "a lady that shows her youth [...] by her discourse," seeming that she "never asks a question, but she makes a reply to it herself, before you can give her an answer." Mrs. Everchat's overt personification makes her identifiable, forcing Mrs. Crackenthorpe's readers to reflect on their own "ever-chatiness" and/or that of their peers. Likewise, the Bustle sisters of *Female Tatler* No. 24, who in being the daughters of the local deputy, serve to characterize the pitfalls of presumptive snobbishness – or, inappropriate social "bustling":

These bacon beauties have for many years been the ridicule of Leaden-Hall Street, they are the reverse of every thing [sic] that's well bred, the burlesque of every new fashion, and the gaze of ev'ry body [sic] that knows what's decent and regular, yet they pretend to wit, having perus'd the covering of several band-boxes,<sup>5</sup> and talk of plays and operas, when 'twould be more commendable in 'em to study weights and scales, debtor and creditor, and

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<sup>5</sup> According to Morgan's edition of the *Female Tatler*, "band-boxes" were hat boxes which were often covered with attractive fabrics.

manage their father's shop, with an obliging and submissive carriage to his customers.

Even a man by the name of Tom Careless who appears in *Female Tatler* No. 22, and whom Mrs. Crackenthorpe claims as a friend, comes to define the moral “that the greatest wits are generally the greatest fools.” For though “an ingenious man and fit for business, ([he] has no estate, nor ever like to any” because “His head is always full of chimerical<sup>6</sup> ideas of merit” that cause him to blame his fortune, curse his stars and rail “at the degeneracy of mankind” (*Female Tatler* No. 22). Essentially, Tom Careless is careless – irresponsible.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the standards that relegated characters like Mrs. Everchat, the Bustle sisters and Tom Careless to specific social categories, also served to relegate individuals to specific sexual categories for the purpose of organizing the new, unfamiliar effects of the period's increasingly commercialized culture. Tom Careless's inability to function productively within the business-world makes his masculinity undesirable because he is deemed incapable of appropriately providing for a respectable family. Similarly, the femininity of the Miss Bustles and Mrs. Everchat is deemed undesirable because it detracts from their attractiveness – or their ability to literally *attract* a positive reception. Therefore, the Bustle sisters need to *attract* a good suitor or else learn a trade for economic survival. And as for Mrs. Everchat, who is already married, listening more and talking less stands to not only make her more socially favorable, but also preserve her husband's attraction to her; a necessity considering that he is her economic provider.

To Mrs. Crackenthorpe, positive femininity, or feminine desirability, is ultimately founded on the natural association of masculinity with production and femininity with

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<sup>6</sup> “Chimerical” is defined by Morgan's edition of the *Female Tatler* as “fanciful.”



reception. Under this concept, as the characterizations of Mrs. Everchat, the Bustle sisters, and even Mrs. Crackenthorpe demonstrate, femininity is objectified as a *thing* that becomes subject to the masculine marketplace, both positively as well as negatively. The poor, abused fate of Clarissa – the young woman characterized in *Female Tatler* No. 14 as having been “contracted” by her parents to a rich old man fittingly named Senioro – is considered by Mrs. Crackenthorpe to be the young woman’s destiny. She is first treated as a commodity – her virginity having been auctioned off to the highest bidder. Then, after enduring years of abuse under Senioro, when he dies she is still denied the opportunity for true love and happiness when she foolishly gives her heart, her hand, and her newly inherited fortune to Mr. Rant, “a young debauchée [sic], who by a series of prodigalities [sic] had consum’d a fair estate at the Groom Porters<sup>7</sup>, the play-house and the tavern” (*Female Tatler* No. 14). Mr. Rant, being financially successful is more attractive to Clarissa than Cynthio, another man who, though less successful, has always treated her honorably. Mrs. Crackenthorpe describes Clarissa as “with a beauty if possible more dangerous than ever” after Senioro dies; she is empowered - sexually experienced, wealthy and therefore extremely desirable. But Clarissa is nevertheless doomed, because she is seduced by materialism. Her new husband, Mr. Rant, replacing Senioro as controller of all of her “goods,” may proceed in “consuming her substance” until he has left her with absolutely nothing (*Female Tatler* No. 14). Hence, the *Female Tatler* acknowledges that femininity is inherently vulnerable to the market, because in it women are subjected to, but also make, life-altering decisions based on economic necessity.

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<sup>7</sup> According to Morgan’s edition of the *Female Tatler*, “Groom Porters” was a gaming club.

In considering that “Men and Women were made as Counterparts to one another” as the *Spectator* suggests, the commodification of femininity is ideally complementary, yet fundamentally heterosexual in relation to masculinity. As Mrs. Crackenthorpe asserts in *Female Tatler* No. 17, “extravagance in men of distinction, to outvie [sic] in dress, equipage, and luxurious entertainments, discover an empty pride and groundless ostentation.” Such overly effeminized characteristics in a man makes him unnatural and thus unable to attain his full, productive potential in relation to, and for the beautiful, virtuous, knowledgeable ideal woman. Established by the *Tatler* and *Spectator* and then copied by the *Female Tatler*, the use of character types helped to create this distinction between emulative and non-emulative forms of civility – or productive sexual harmony – by personifying, and making identifiable the standards of subjectivity promoted on the pages of all three periodicals. Essentially, character types directly represent the distinction between a civil and uncivilized society that is informed by the outward characteristics of fashion – getting and spending.

## CONCLUSION

After only 51 issues and four months of publication, Mrs. Phoebe Crackenthorpe left the *Female Tatler* to “a society of modest ladies, who in their turns will oblige the public with what ever [sic] they shall meet with that will be diverting, innocent, or instructive” (*Female Tatler* No. 51). The reforming and informing of manners and morals accomplished during such a short time was, nevertheless significant given the periodical’s immediate popularity. Riding on the coat-tails of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, it did more than simply exploit the *Tatler*’s name. The *Female Tatler* exploited the *Tatler* and *Spectator*’s goal of civilizing the middle class, and in doing so, also exploited its strategy in order to survive within the male-dominated literary marketplace. That is not to say that Mrs. Crackenthorpe necessarily demonstrated the same refinement in her person or rhetoric as Isaac Bickerstaff or Mr. Spectator. She did however, similarly associate refinement with a particular set of tastes that link fashion with sexuality. Civility, as it came to be defined by the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, and then reinforced by the *Female Tatler*, entailed the delegation of men and women to separate spheres of activity.

Strategically, the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Female Tatler* employed a rhetoric that constructed men and women – masculinity and femininity – as inherently oppositional, at once reflecting and shaping gender norms characteristic of the eighteenth-century. To do so all three periodicals employed a “rhetoric of sexual difference” founded in deliberate language that connected the period’s increasingly commercialized culture to its emerging concept of naturalized gender. Character models formulated and exemplified by the narrative personae of each, succeeded in representing a series of manners and morals

necessary to the cultivation of a productive, civilized society. And given that the same values that drove the marketplace were routinely projected across English culture during this transitional period, the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Female Spectator* characterize these models according to commercialized rhetoric and tastes that assigned men and women to opposite realms of identification. An individual's identity, being founded in their sexuality, was suggested to be inherently tied to that of their potential economic prowess – their natural ability to navigate the public sphere. Men, who innately possessed the physical strength and mental capacity to best benefit from and contribute to the public world of commerce and exchange, were characterized as having to be routinely refocused on stabilizing ethics opposite of materialism. Women, who possessed the sensibility and desirability to accomplish such refocusing, were characterized as benefiting best from realization and protection of this inherent power. Therefore, in envisioning the most productive, civilized society possible, all three periodicals used models to identify the emulative and non-emulative aspects of fashionable culture that served to characterize these ideally gendered individuals. Complementary, heterosexual relationships between men and women were positively depicted as essential to the advancement of both sexes – founding the economic principles essential to the following, nineteenth century's "Angel in the House."

From its conception the *Female Tatler* attempted to balance the demands of business with the need to entertain its readers, and a desire to reform them. In so doing, it delivered a conception of masculinity and femininity conscious of the limitations created by the fact that it was a female-oriented periodical being written primarily by a woman and through the voice of a woman within a male-dominated literary marketplace. The *Female Tatler*'s "rhetoric of sexual difference" was consequently clouded, or overshadowed, by this position. For while

the language and principle narrative persona deviate from the precedence of the ultra-popular, more male-centered *Tatler* and *Spectator*, the use of identifiable models that ultimately project the same, fundamentally conservative sexual norms prescribed by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, made the *Female Tatler* overwhelmingly complementary – overwhelmingly, more “pro-*Tatler*” than “anti.”

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