

**Gender, Gentry, Petticoats, and Propriety:
Addison and Steele's Construction of the Implied Female
Reader in *The Spectator*.**

Daniel Carrigy

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Macquarie University

Department of English

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Abstract

This thesis examines the construction of the implied female reader in Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's eighteenth-century periodical *The Spectator*. It is informed by Wolfgang Iser's theory of the implied reader as well as Jurgen Habermas's examination of the development of a bourgeois public sphere in eighteenth-century England. Breaking the distinction between educating their readers and entertaining them, Addison and Steele sought to promote the idea of the polite society, in which the English public was defined by civility and propriety. *The Spectator* is recognised as one of the most prominent pieces of English periodical literature due to its profound transformative effect on its readership and emerging English middle class, especially women. An examination of Addison and Steele's paradigm of the implied female reader has not only been unaddressed, but is an important addition to academic knowledge concerning both the periodical itself, and the nature of female readership in early eighteenth-century England. This thesis argues that Addison and Steele's construction of the implied female reader is achieved through creating and subsequently manipulating taxonomies of femininity. In so doing, their modelling of ideal behaviour and critique of feminine vices subsequently allows Addison and Steele to influence their female readers' readership practices, fashion choices, and position in the public sphere.

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Introduction

Gender, Gentry, Petticoats and Propriety: Addison and Steele's Construction of the Implied Female Reader in The Spectator.

The Spectator's most significant legacy is its profound transformative influence on the emergence of the English middle classes, especially its role in shaping women to roles that accorded to the newly minted social milieu that emerged in the final years of the reign of Queen Anne. Addison and Steele's paradigm of the implied female reader, her private pursuits, public behaviour, dress and expression is a much needed addition to academic knowledge. Such research would not only contribute to a greater understanding of one of the "the greatest periodicals" in the eighteenth century, but furthermore illuminate academic understandings of female readership communities and practices at such an integral moment in history for the English woman. My research will focus on the construction of the implied female reader in Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *The Spectator* magazine.

The Spectator is one of the seminal texts of English periodical literature, and served as the model that the genre would follow for much of the eighteenth-century and beyond. Carefully woven with humour, wit, satire, critique and reflection, Addison and Steele sought to not only engage with their readers, but to influence them, creating a community of readership bound by the two authors' vision of a proper, polite and upstanding English society during Queen Anne's reign in early eighteenth-century England. *The Spectator* is defined by its desire to be a transformative text. Not content with simply being read, it set out to question, criticise and change its readers and by process the very society from which it emerged. A key feature of the periodical was its fictional narrator Mr. Spectator, through whom the two authors interrogate numerous vices and virtues of English society and culture. Addison and Steele's periodical became not only the arbiter of social morals, ideals and what constituted proper and preferred behaviour during its publication, but is ultimately indicative of the profound influence that literary texts have upon culture. From fashion to trade, to the opera and education, *The Spectator's* witty and satirical gaze transcended numerous boundaries in

its desire to mould its readership and construct an England built on propriety, manners and social order.

Whilst exact figures regarding the publication and readership of Addison and Steele's periodical are elusive, anecdotal evidence at the very least indicates it was both widely read and profoundly influential.¹ In *The Spectator No.10*, one of the periodical's earliest issues, Joseph Addison states that "My publisher tells me that there are already three thousand of them produced everyday: So that if I allow Twenty Readers to every Paper, which I look upon as a modest Computation, I may reckon about Threescore thousand Disciples in London and Westminster" (Sixty Thousand).² This is particularly significant given estimates of London's population at the time, meaning Addison and Steele's essays would have reached approximately one tenth of the London population.³ The periodical was often read aloud and disseminated in London's coffeehouses, reaching a much wider audience than the original purchaser of the paper. Coffeehouses were a cultural hub of debate and sociality, bringing Londoners together "where they might be rubbed and jostled together, smoothing rough edges and polishing manners",⁴ no doubt a perfect environment for a periodical which sought to refine its readers, imparting civility, politeness and virtue. *The Spectator's* influence was by no means restricted to the capital however; extending its influence beyond the British heartland of London it even achieved a trans-Atlantic readership in the American colonies. James Madison (who would become the fourth President of the United States) read the periodical avidly during his youth in the Virginia colonies.⁵

Addison and Steele were also aided by their existing literary success prior to *The Spectator*. The pair had worked together on the periodical *The Tatler* some months earlier in 1711. The title of this previous periodical was a direct appeal to a female readership,⁶ a demographic that would become vital to their efforts to create the polite society in *The Spectator*. When *The Tatler* was shut down, the poet John Gay recalled in his letters that fashionable

¹ It is estimated that *The Spectator* reached at least 60,000 readers per day. Chevalier, Tracy. *Encyclopedia of the Essay*. (London: Routledge Publishing, 2012). pg. 805.

² *The Spectator. No. 10*. March 12, 1711.

All references to *The Spectator* in this thesis are taken from Bond, Donald F (ed.). Introduction. *The Spectator*. By Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. 5 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

³ <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Population-history-of-london.jsp> Accessed 29th April, 2015.

⁴ Ellis, Markman. *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History*. (London: Hachette Publishing, 2011). 186.

⁵ Ketcham, Ralph. *James Madison, A Biography*. (New York: University of Virginia Press, 1971.) 40.

⁶ *The Tatler, No. 1*. April 12, 1709.

Londoners “bewailed” at its cessation, considering it to be a “general calamity.”⁷ Gay’s observation of their continued work in *The Spectator* sheds more light on the nature of its publication and readership. He wrote that rival periodicals in the market had been “quite swallowed up”⁸ by *The Spectator*, as it dominated the tea-tables and coffeehouses. Even when the price was doubled from one penny to twopence by the Stamp Act of 1712, large numbers of readers continued to subscribe, driving the less popular periodicals out of business.⁹

As English society moved to a commercially focused and permeable class system, *The Spectator* developed a significant relationship with the rising English middle class at the time.¹⁰ Furthermore, Terry Eagleton’s suggestion that “the main impulse” of Addison and Steele’s work was one of “class consolidation, a codifying of the norms and regulating of the practices”¹¹ points towards Addison and Steele’s continuing endeavour to regulate their audience’s behaviours and actions both public and private, and in turn mould the new middle class according to their vision.

Both modern and eighteenth century critics have written of the significance of *The Spectator*. Stephen Greenblatt maintains that Addison was “an agreeable modern Socrates”¹². Samuel Johnson famously urged budding writers “who wished to attain an English style...familiar...and elegant...must dedicate his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.”¹³ Perhaps in an effort to win over historians as well as literary scholars, Donald Bond argued that *The Spectator*’s modern relevance lies in its “vivid picture of ordinary life”¹⁴ in Queen Anne’s England. Edward and Lillian Bloom went so far as to characterise *The Spectator* as one of the two greatest periodicals of the eighteenth century (the other being

⁷ Gay, John. *The Present State of Wit, in a Letter to a Friend in the Country*. (1711. Rep., New York: Garland Press, 1970.) 11.

⁸ Gay. 18.

⁹ Newman, Donald. *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*. (Boston: Rosemont Publishing, 2005). 15.

¹⁰ Newman. 16.

¹¹ Eagleton, Terry, *The Function of Criticism*. (London: Verso Publishing, 1984). 10.

¹² Greenblatt, Stephen (Ed.). *The Norton Anthology of English Literature Volume C: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*. (London: Norton and Company, 2012). 2640.

¹³ In Greenblatt, Stephen (Ed.). *The Norton Anthology of English Literature Volume C: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*. (London: Norton and Company, 2012). 2641.

¹⁴ Bond, Donald. F. Introduction to *The Spectator*. 5 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

Steele's earlier *The Tatler*).¹⁵ The periodical has been consistently lauded for both its style and influence.

The most prominent criticism of *The Spectator* and the academic scholarship that surrounds it was produced by Brian McCreia at the end of the twentieth century. McCreia famously declared that "Addison and Steele are dead", referring not to the two authors' physical deaths, rather the decades long scholarly neglect their work in *The Spectator* has received by scholars. Once "the loudest voices of eighteenth century culture", the sharp decline in academic attention paid to Addison and Steele following World War II meant they were now, as McCreia put it, "entering the canon of eighteenth-century literature via the backdoor."¹⁶ Notably, McCreia did not criticise the importance or relevance of the early eighteenth-century text in modern literary studies, rather its demotion within said studies. McCreia's lamentation over the decline of *The Spectator's* once high place in the canon has been somewhat allayed by a small number of twenty-first-century studies on the periodical. The collection of essays in *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*, or Erin Mackie's *Market a La Mode* indicate not only *The Spectator's* continued and lasting importance within the academy, but furthermore a turn towards more modern re-examinations of the text.

The Spectator concerned itself with the proper conduct of its readers, simultaneously educating and entertaining them in order to create Addison and Steele's vision of a polite society built on manners, structure and propriety. *The Spectator's* didactic influence and commentary on the new middle class varied greatly in terms of how the periodical sought to shape it according to this vision of the polite society. It covered a range of topics such as preferred literary pursuits, trade and commerce, high and low entertainment, daily life in London, church attendance and even women's fashion and the ethics of stagecoach riding. Jurgen Habermas's thesis; *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which is influential in both philosophical and literary academic circles, singles out *The Spectator* as

¹⁵ Bloom, Edward., & Bloom., Lillian. *Joseph Addison and Richard Steele: The Cultural Heritage*. (New York: Routledge Publishing). Preface.

¹⁶ McCreia, Brian. *Addison and Steele are Dead: The English Department, its Canon and the Professionalisation of Literary Criticism*. (London: Associated University Press, 1990). 11.

being fundamentally important to the rise of the English middle class, their morals and behaviours as well as the emergence of both the public sphere and private realms.¹⁷

The Spectator's engagement with, and influence upon a specifically female audience defines the field of research covered in this thesis. Within the emerging middle class, Addison and Steele directly appealed to female readers at a time when female readership, authorship and overall literacy levels had risen exponentially from the previous decades.¹⁸ Determining the exact level of female literacy at the time of *The Spectator* is extremely difficult, but historians such as Rab Houston argue that the ability to sign is usually a reliable historical indicator.¹⁹ However, feminist historians such as Suzanne Hall and Caroline Lucas arrive at a slightly higher level of literacy than approximately fifty percent, examining not the ability to sign, but rather the number of books from the period dedicated to noblewomen or at least explicitly addressed to women.²⁰ Novels, especially romance novels, were increasingly popular at the turn of the eighteenth century, particularly amongst women of gentry. So much so that in 1710 (one year before the first essay of *The Spectator*) the Earl of Shaftsbury wrote in *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author* how he feared the rising popularity of the romance novel would corrupt female readers. Criticising their seduction of female readers, he labelled these novels as “poisonous fungi, edifying mushrooms, fancy clothes and fancy fictions.”²¹ Women in London could buy ballads and broadsides on the street inexpensively, and Belinda Jack argues that women’s reading in this period was first and foremost an urban phenomenon.²² Even for the illiterate woman, ‘passive reading’ presented opportunities for engagement with literature in a society where reading aloud was a common entertainment, whether at home or in public.²³

However, Addison and Steele’s efforts to influence the morals and behaviours of their female readers has consistently been interpreted as restrictive and even misogynistic by scholars.

¹⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger. (Boston: MIT Press, 1989). 43.

¹⁸ One in two female Londoners could write their signature by the 1690s. Wheale, Nigel. *Writing in Society*. (London: Routledge, 1999). 56.

¹⁹ Houston, Rab. *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*. (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2013.) 3.

²⁰ See Wilcox, Helen. *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*. (London: Cambridge University Press. 1996.). 148-9.

²¹ In Jack, Belinda. *Woman Reader*. (New York: Yale University Press. 2012). 189.

²² Jack. 153.

²³ Wilcox. 81.

Donald Newman argues *The Spectator* profoundly influenced the redefinition of the ‘domesticated woman’ at the time, suggesting that Steele in particular aimed to create a “unifying and unitary vision of the sign of woman in order to contain femininity.”²⁴

Katherine Shevelow points to Addison and Steele’s influence in creating a gender ideology that thrust patriarchal paradigms upon women, restricting their activities in the public sphere and controlling them in their private realms.²⁵ This thesis will align with Shevelow’s argument that Addison and Steele thrust paradigms upon their female readers, to restrict and control femininity. However, it will argue against Newman’s contention that the two authors created a “unifying and unitary vision” of woman in doing so. Instead, this thesis will argue that Addison and Steele acknowledge and address various categories of the English woman, and are careful to distinguish between them. I will contend that, in so doing, Addison and Steele provide a common blueprint for these women to engage with the text and adopt a set of behavioural codes in order to exhibit the characteristics of an ideal female reader. This thesis will also demonstrate that whilst this behavioural framework consists of a uniform set of social and cultural codes, the various categories of English women that Addison and Steele recognise and address are, and remain, consistently distinct feminine entities.

Modern research regarding *The Spectator* and its relationship with and attempts to influence its female readership, fall into one of two categories. Work such as Katherine Shevelow’s *Women and Print Culture*, examines female readership practices in Eighteenth Century England, in which *The Spectator* forms only a part of a much wider literary analysis. On the other hand, work such as Erin Mackie’s *Market a la Mode* whilst a rigorous study of *The Spectator*’s attempts to influence female fashion and dress, provides a specific scope of analysis. This latter group, whilst certainly thorough, focus only on one particular aspect of *The Spectator*’s relationship with its female readership (dress and fashion). As a result, a more complete picture of the *The Spectator*’s ambitions for its female readers has been left unaddressed.

The paradigm of the implied reader, is a phenomenon theorised in the twentieth century by Wolfgang Iser, but its utility as a tool for reading historical texts has been well established

²⁴ Newman, Donald. *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*. (Boston: Rosemont Publishing, 2005). 46.

²⁵ Shevelow, Katherine. *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical*. (London: Routledge, 1989). 93.

and it is particularly relevant and applicable to *The Spectator* and its attempts to influence its female audience. Addison and Steele's desire to refine their female readers' behaviours and ideals is often part of a complex literary fabric, in which critique, wit, satire and various other literary mechanisms deliberately mask any explicit notion of *The Spectator*'s designs for its female readership. The text instead relies upon carefully inferred arguments, encouraged ideals and modelled behaviour. The way the two authors instruct, critique and encourage various behaviours, pursuits and ideals is rarely explicit and therefore the uncovering of such is reliant upon a precise and thorough examination of text to decode meaning and understand Addison and Steele's intent for, and vision of their ideal female readers.

Wolfgang Iser developed the term "implied reader" during the 1970s as part of his work on reader-response criticism. "Implied reader" describes the interaction between text and reader whereby the reader is designated as an active participant in the reading process and process of meaning making.²⁶ Accounting for how readers make sense of texts, Iser postulated the presence of a "literary repertoire", a collection of cultural values and social norms the author and reader both share outside of the text. Iser argued that the implied reader is a figure that the text assumes embodies the "the "predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect—predispositions laid down, not by an empirical reality, but by the book itself."²⁷ Abbott writes that the implied reader is the intended recipient of the text.²⁸ In the case of *The Spectator*, the implied female reader is therefore the one Addison and Steele imply to be the intended recipient of their text. If this recipient does not already embody the necessary predispositions and values advocated by *The Spectator*, they are subsequently encouraged and instructed to do so. Addison and Steele attempt to influence, and mould the implied female reader according to their own design and vision for the polite society.

Raman Selden's explanation of the ramifications of Iser's study for scholars, fundamentally outlines how I intend to use Iser's work as a theoretical frame for my research on the implied female reader in *The Spectator*, and what my subsequent obligations are. Seldon explains:

²⁶ Selden, Raman. & Widdowson, Peter. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993). 55.

²⁷ Iser, Wolfgang. *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). pg. 34.

²⁸ Abbott, Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). 236.

In Iser's view the critic's task is to explain not the text as an object, but rather its effects on the reader. It is in the nature of texts to allow a spectrum of possible readings. The term 'reader' can be subdivided into 'implied reader' and 'actual reader'. The first is the reader whom the text creates for itself and amounts to 'a network of response-inviting structures' which predispose us to read in certain ways.²⁹

Essentially, my research will focus on the convergence between text and reader in *The Spectator*. I will examine how the text aims to have a transformative effect on the reader, and how the text interacts with readers and vice versa, either by Addison and Steele directly addressing them or including letters from readers. There is also an important distinction between implied reader and actual reader. In my first chapter on literary pursuits, I will explore the reality of female readership at the time of *The Spectator*'s publication as previously discussed in this introduction, as well as the periodical's construction of an implied female reader. In the first chapter I will also examine how Addison and Steele construct and subsequently enforce readership norms and practices on their female readers, and the extent to which the two author's construction and enforcing of these practices are consistent between them.

The intent of *The Spectator* to be a transformative text, to instil certain codes and values in its readers, albeit implicitly, is specifically congruent to theory surrounding the nature of the implied reader as a literary paradigm. Jane Tompkins ideally summarises the theoretical perspective of the critic Georges Poulet in regards to the implied reader. She writes that for Poulet, the meaning of a text is "never wholly dependent on the reader"³⁰, as the text still has a share of power in the process of meaning, however implicitly it might present certain values. However the text's "fate" or mode of existence does. The reader through reading, becomes "prisoner to the author's consciousness" the text is an object that allows "the interiority of one human being to play host to the interiority of another." Whilst the reader is therefore impelled by the text to relate to the values and ideals it imparts upon them, as

²⁹ Selden. 55.

³⁰ Tompkins, Jane P. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980). xiv.

Selden writes, “Only the reader can actualise the degree to which particular norms are rejected”³¹ or in the case of *The Spectator*, actualised and adopted.

In the case of *The Spectator* Addison and Steele infer in their essays that their female readers should already adhere to the behavioural and intellectual codes and norms that they argue in favour of. If not, then the reader is then urged to adopt these norms and codes in the best interests of not only themselves, but more importantly in the best interests of the ‘Polite Society’. I intend to answer the very question of what the complete picture of *The Spectator*’s ideal female reader looked like. Her ideal intellectual occupations and constitution, public propriety and behaviour, fashion and expression are illuminated by means of examining Addison and Steele’s careful construction of the implied female reader in essays from *The Spectator*.

It is at the crossroad between *The Spectator*’s attempts to influence and regulate its female readers as explored by the scholars such as Newman and Shevelow, and its role in the transformation of the Public Sphere as examined by Jurgen Habermas, that I aim to situate my research. Habermas’s *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is arguably the most seminal work on the public sphere, as well as Eighteenth-Century print culture. Habermas’s theorised that bourgeois public sphere developed out of the preexisting public sphere, which consisted of state apparatus such as the court, the church and educational institutions. The new (bourgeois) public sphere was an area or arena (such as a coffeehouse) where private individuals could come together to discuss and critique society at large. The development of the public sphere and widespread social and political debate was born largely in part of the evolution of the private realm (the home). Henceforth this thesis will refer to the bourgeois public sphere as simply the public sphere.

Habermas specifically identified *The Spectator* as a text that played a crucial role in the transformation of the public sphere. He argued that Addison and Steele’s periodical was crucial to the transformation of the public sphere largely because of the way it held up a “mirror”³² to its readership and society at large, allowing them to be critical, informed and self-reflexive. I will use Habermas’s model of the public sphere to explain how Addison and

³¹ Selden. 55.

³² Habermas. 43.

Steele sought to engage with and in turn influence their female readers, and to examine how they sought to construct their vision of an ideal female reader by enacting this mechanism of reflection upon its readership. I argue that Addison and Steele sought to interact with and influence their female readers' thoughts and pursuits in their private realms, and then by a process of reflection (praising ideal traits and behaviours whilst critiquing undesired ones) would transform their behaviour and actions in public.

What I intend to be clear and salient is that Addison and Steele sought to influence their female readers, both in regards to reading as an individual and operating within a wider community readership community. Lee Morrissey contends that Addison and Steele were at least aware of, and possibly even shared the belief that reading was intrinsically powerful, and even dangerous. Reading was seen as having the capability to be both intellectually and behaviourally transformative. In *The Spectator* No.230 Steele writes that he will show how "the most dangerous page in *Virgil* or *Homer* may be read ... in perfect safety."³³ Whilst Habermas argues that *The Spectator* greatly influenced the organisation and democratisation of critical thought in the public sphere,³⁴ for the female reader in the early eighteenth century, the reality was somewhat different. Coupled with widespread thought that inappropriate reading was dangerous for the female mind, women were not nearly as involved in public debates or discussions as men were. Whilst certainly a significant part of the readership community, Erin Mackie argues that "the record of women in English coffeehouses is scanty and does not include any representation of their participation in the debates there."³⁵ Consequently, *The Spectator* engaged with its female readers in more of an individual, intimate and private setting, than it did its male readers.³⁶ Their gender based exclusion from various aspects of the public sphere, meant that reaching them in their private realms and domestic spaces was of paramount importance.

The theoretical frame that I am using therefore, is an adaption of Habermas's model, informed by modern gender studies and critiques such as Mackie's which highlight women's exclusion from the public sphere and coffeehouse culture. Periodicals such as *The Spectator* were not only reliant on permeating domestic spaces and influencing their private pursuits,

³³ Morrissey, Lee. *The Constitution of Literature: Literacy, Democracy and Early English Literary Criticism*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). 90.

³⁴ Habermas. 41.

³⁵ Mackie, Erin. *Being Too Positive About the Public Sphere*. In *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*. 84.

³⁶ See *The Spectator*. No.46. (April 23rd, 1711) for an example of the way the periodical models the debates and discussions of its male readers in the coffeehouse setting.

but further re-enforced this gender-based social exclusion and control upon women. As aforementioned I will examine how the two authors specifically target their female readership through the English private sphere. Furthermore and crucially, I will argue that whilst the two authors certainly encourage their female readership to be informed, critical, knowledgeable readers and citizens, they are to be so only within the set boundaries that *The Spectator* regulates for them.

My analysis of this ‘complete picture’ of *The Spectator*’s implied female reader will be constructed according to several categories. The first chapter will examine Addison and Steele’s construction of the implied female reader’s literary habits and occupations. This will range from the manner in which they subtly instruct their female readership to engage with and interact with literature, to the selection of literature itself, as well as the manner in which they encourage women to discuss it in the home. The second chapter will be an analysis of the implied female reader’s dress and fashion, and how the periodical sought to influence and regulate it. In my third chapter, I will examine Addison and Steele’s designs for female behaviour and action in the public sphere, how Addison and Steele implicitly constructed ideals of how women should properly conduct themselves according to codes of societal propriety, whilst under a public and discerning male gaze. I plan to compare and contrast not only the literary mechanisms employed by the pair, but also their overall vision for *The Spectator*’s female readership.

Chapter One: Libraries, Ladies and Literary Habits

Addison and Steele's instruction on the reading process is complex and diverse, extending far beyond simply encouraging women to read the periodical. In their construction of implied female readership practices, they emphasise the importance of relying on *The Spectator* each day for the impartation of wisdom and virtue, recommend other appropriate literature for female readers, and in some instances, even encourage debate and discussion with men. By exploring different levels of readership as exhibited in *The Spectator* essays, this chapter will analyse how Addison and Steele represent female readership, and how their attitudes towards readership reveals underlying assumptions about reader engagement. These assumptions will subsequently provide a platform for constructing a view of their construction of the implied female reader.

The literary habits of their female readers is of paramount importance to both Addison and Steele, yet as will be seen in this chapter, their exact visions of this implied female reader are by no means cohesive. They ascribe significantly different levels of agency and independence to their female reader, and place various levels of importance on several aspects of the reading process. What I intend to be salient is that whilst there may be particular differences in their respective constructions, both visions are fundamentally underlaid by a desire to ground the female in domesticity. Each author encourages attentive, critical female readers; yet demonstrate an agenda of keeping their female readers and their female readers' literary habits, confined to the domestic space. The female reader of *The Spectator*, whilst attentive and critical, is always assigned to the domestic.

Addison and Steele both understood and appreciated the transformative power of reading, especially for a female audience, and, hence, sought to place limits upon its potentially deleterious effects by regulating the practice. Female readers were a new, emerging audience at the time, and *The Spectator's* direct engagement with women is indicative of the authors' efforts to exploit the phenomenon. Lee Morrissey examines this process closely, arguing that "women are to Addison and Steele what religious radicals were to the Restoration, because of

their similarly new access to print and to the press.”³⁷ Steele himself playfully acknowledges the common fears that reading, with its transformative capacity, was dangerous. In *The Spectator No.230* he claims he will reveal how “the most dangerous Page in *Virgil* or *Homer* may be read [...] in perfect safety”,³⁸ to ensure susceptible female readers would not be morally led astray or misinterpret such texts. Here Steele achieves two things. Firstly, he opens up an avenue in which women’s reading is not only legitimised but encouraged. Secondly, by delicately playing with ingrained cultural fears about the effects of reading (especially for women) upon English society, he establishes himself as the arbiter of the very process as a whole. It is via Steele’s intervention that female readers will be ‘safely’ and properly guided through literature and the reading process.

The first section of this discussion, then, seeks to establish how Addison and Steele use textual cues to frame a paradigm of female readership. In *No. 79*, Steele wholly encapsulates these two issues endemic to female readership when addressing a letter from a female reader.³⁹ He writes that due to their recent exposure to an increasing range of accessible print matter, women “Without disrespect to them, be accounted more liable to illusion.” Yet he also surmises that, “what is wanting among women, as well as men, is the love of laudable things.” Via those potent statements, Steele creates a precise framework for which reading for women is to be controlled. By claiming that “the love of laudable things” is desired in women as much as men, he establishes an argument that women ought to read and should be critical of literature and philosophy. Yet by prefacing such an invitation by conjuring cultural apprehensions of female readership, Steele plays upon existing cultural fears to effectively place restrictions upon female readership practices, and to justify positioning himself as regulator of such practices. The recent exposure of women to print and press at the time worked equally in the favour of Addison and Steele in influencing female readers themselves as they endeavoured to create the polite society. Morrissey contends, “some counter that at least Addison and Steele offered women something to read-and more important, a discussion of how and what it is that readers ought to read.”⁴⁰ However, what is clear, is that whilst Addison and Steele “at least” offered women something to read, they regulated, placed restrictions on and established themselves as arbiters of women’s reading.

³⁷ Morrissey, Lee. *The Constitution of Literature: Literacy, Democracy and Early English Literary Criticism*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). pg. 91

³⁸ *The Spectator*. No. 230. Friday, November 23, 1711.

³⁹ *The Spectator*. No. 79. Thursday, May 31st. 1711.

⁴⁰ Morrissey. 92.

The Spectator No.92 from June 15 1711 demonstrates how Addison and Steele encourage and construct behavioural norms for their female readers, stimulating critical readership practices amongst the journal's female readers. This particular essay demonstrates how *The Spectator* creates a two-way discourse with its readership, whilst also modelling ideal behaviours for female readers to adopt. It features an exchange between Mr. Spectator and one of one of the journal's female readers – Leonora – who writes for advice on choosing appropriate reading material. In his response, Mr. Spectator outlines advice about several texts for his female readers to peruse, though the value of his recommendations are deliberately undermined by their nature and by Mr Spectator's reflections upon the dangers of following partial advice. The mechanisms for reflection are both implicitly and explicitly coded in the text of the essay. First, Addison ironically represents the self-interestedness of entities who might seek to influence a woman's reading habits (publishers, husbands, and other ladies), and explicitly spells out the dangers of soliciting advice from self-interested parties, pointing, for example, to recommendations from booksellers "who every one of them mention with Respect the Authors they have printed, and consequently have an Eye to their own Advantage more than to that of the Ladies." Equally important to the essay's project, though less explicit, each recommendation presented in the lists of advice offers limited or no value, as titles such as *Dalton's Country Justice* and *The Complete Jockey* would be difficult to justify as decorous or useful for female readers of the time (the former being a century-old handbook outlining legal duties for a Justice of the Peace, the latter a veterinary manual from the 1680s).

These recommendations, whilst absurd, are fundamentally important in understanding how *The Spectator* sets a precedent for the type of reading it encourages for women. Mr. Spectator's recommendation of these illogical and irrelevant texts essentially establishes a scenario in which Leonora is being tested. Addison (through the persona of Mr. Spectator) is examining whether she is critical and sophisticated enough to read the true message that lies under the ironical presentation, that Leonora should be wary of self-interested advice. Even more ironically, such advice could well include *The Spectator*, due to Addison's absurd recommendations. The underlying didactic lesson is that the female reader should critically weigh up all advice on the matter of reading, (even those presented by men as distinguished as Addison) and demonstrate rational judgement. At the same time however, such a lesson provides his female readers with a model for how to read *The Spectator*. The inclusion of

Leonora's letter is in itself a commendation of her reliance upon the periodical for advice and issues of taste, yet Addison's deliberately unreasonable recommendations of texts demonstrates that such a close relationship with the periodical should by no means indicate that the text is taken at face value. Just as when reading other texts, the female reader is strongly encouraged to be critically engaged and aware.

The majority of this essay's opening is given over to a verbatim presentation of Leonora's letter. By minimising Mr. Spectator's contributions at this stage, Addison gives greater emphasis to the meaning making potential of his female correspondent. Addison's embedding of discourse from another text in the form of Leonora's letter by process establishes an intertextual relationship between the letter and *The Spectator*. The use of intertextuality to form the overall essence of the essay means that Addison's reader becomes dependent upon Leonora's letter for meaning and understanding. This dependence is ultimately indicative of Addison's tacit approval of what Leonora's letter contains. Katherine Shevelow argues that such a profound dependence on letters was a key feature of *The Spectator*, and especially in regards to Leonora's letter, performs (in addition to Addison) a "similarly illustrative and regulatory function" becoming "additional moral voices of the periodical."⁴¹ The use of Leonora's letter strengthens Addison's argument within the essay, in that it provides, as Shevelow argues, another moral voice, but also provides a tangible blueprint for how the text expects its readers to operate. Whilst not didactic itself, Leonora's letter is used by Addison to model behaviour and stage a lesson for female readers. Its content is exploited by Addison for didactic purposes despite it being supplicatory in tone. The didacticism embedded in this essay serves as a paradigm for author-reader relations in *The Spectator*, whereby Addison and Steele are established as the arbiters and educators of taste and virtue, with their readers acting as students and disciples. Such a relationship creates a distinct imbalance of power, situating the authors in a position of authority as *The Spectator* edifies its readers. Furthermore, because such use of intertextuality reflects a direct discourse between author and reader, Addison is able to use Leonora's letter to outline how he expects other such readers to act when engaging with *The Spectator*.

⁴¹ Shevelow, Katherine. *Women and Print Culture. Construction of Gender in the Early Periodical*. (London: Routledge, 1989). 114.

Such a dependence upon Leonora's letter is a subtle indication of Addison's recognition of the potency his correspondence with Leonora (and her own writing) has, and the extent to which it can, in turn, influence his other female readers. Leonora's letter reads:

Mr. Spectator,

'Your Paper is a Part of my Tea-Equipage; and my Servant knows my Humour so well, that calling for my Breakfast this Morning (it being past my usual Hour) she answer'd, the Spectator was not yet come in; but that the Tea-Kettle boiled, and she expected it every Moment. Having thus in part signified to you the Esteem and Veneration which I have for you, I must put you in mind of the Catalogue of Books which you have promised to recommend to our Sex; for I have deferred furnishing my Closet with Authors, 'till I receive your Advice in this Particular, being your daily Disciple and humble Servant,

Leonora.

Whilst Leonora's letter is short, there are multiple layers within it that exemplify *The Spectator's* designs for its female readers' literary habits. Firstly, there is a direct link between Leonora's letter and one of the very first *The Spectator* essays. In *The Spectator No.10* (published three months earlier) Addison recommends that his readers "set apart an hour in every morning for tea, bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their Good to order this Paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a Part of the Tea Equipage." In *The Spectator No.92*, Leonora is seen to have taken heed of the periodical's prior advice, so literally adopting its recommendations that breakfast and *The Spectator* have become synonymous. When calling for breakfast, her servant replies that "the Spectator was not yet come in". *The Spectator* is figured as vital to her daily functioning as her tea and bread. Leonora's day cannot start without reading from *The Spectator*, no matter how prepared other parts of her breakfast may be. Whereas breakfast feeds and energises her body, *The Spectator* feeds and energises her mind. In addition, the act of breakfasting at home with *The Spectator* itself re-enforces the boundaries of domesticity upon the female reader. Stephen Copley argues that "*The Spectator* writers have a considerable investment in

confining female concerns to those of domestic consumption.”⁴² In Leonora’s case, domestic consumption has a double meaning. She consumes her breakfast as she ‘consumes’ the pages of *The Spectator*. Linking the reading of the periodical to a daily domestic activity, ultimately tethers the act of reading to the home environment for the female.

Whilst such a link is never explicitly acknowledged by Leonora or Mr. Spectator, the attentive reader is given the opportunity to recognise the relationship between Leonora’s letter and one of the first and most popular essays from *The Spectator*. Such a recognition however, carries with it two implicitly encouraged codes of behaviour. The first is self-fulfilling, that by recognising the relationship the reader demonstrates that they are attentive and critical, and have followed closely along with Addison and Steele since the periodical’s publication. The second code of behaviour, (which due to Leonora’s letter is gendered as a female behavioural code) is that they too like Leonora are as attentive and faithful to *The Spectator* as they are presumed to be, and should also have made the paper part of their own tea-equipage.

Adding weight to the previous example, after including her letter, Addison refers to Leonora as “my fair disciple, whom I am very proud of”, the word disciple by Addison carries as much importance as does his approval of her established habit of making *The Spectator* synonymous with her breakfast. Not only is at an echo of her own use of “disciple” but the use of the word is also relevant to the female reader engaging with the text. A disciple follows devoutly, such as the attentive reader who would have recognised the link to the previous *Spectator* essay in which Addison recommends the behaviour Leonora puts into practice. It also serves as a subtle recognition to any female reader who would have identified the link, that their engagement with *The Spectator* is exactly as Addison intends, that of a disciplined disciple. This notion of discipleship further reinforces how the paradigm of didacticism embedded in this essay is indicative of the power hierarchy in *The Spectator*. This hierarchy positions Addison and Steele in the role of arbiters and educators, elevating them to a position of power over their readers. The reader as a disciple is edified and disciplined to adopt behavioural codes by Addison and Steele. The disciple is one who not only knows and follows the text closely, but can understand and apply its instructions directly

⁴² Copley, Stephen. “Commerce, Conversation and Politeness in the Early Eighteenth Century Periodical.” *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*. Vol. 18. Issue 1. 1995.

to her own life. Leonora's letter, and the subsequent inclusion of such by Addison, sets a precedent for female readers to adhere to.

In establishing behavioural codes through Leonora however, the image of the ideal female reader presented in this essay, is one that is inherently paradoxical. Whilst she is expected to exhibit devotion and discipline, she is also expected to display agency and critical thinking, and is even encouraged to question the duplicitous advice of Addison and other parties. There are, however, limits to the degree in which such behaviour translates to the journal's ideal female readership, and those limits help us further appreciate significant characteristics that must complement the behaviours exhibited in Leonora's letter. Of particular concern is Leonora's apparent slavish dependence upon the opinions of others. She reports that she has become so dependent upon Addison's recommendations for literature, that she cannot continue reading without advice, "defer[ing to] furnishing my Closet with Authors, 'till I receive your Advice in this Particular, being your daily Disciple and Humble Servant." The connection between such an approach and the mindless "blanks of society" identified in *The Spectator No. 10* has the effect of painting Leonora as comically absurd in her devotion to Addison, and his proffering of spurious advice serves to demand that she become capable of exhibiting judgement and initiative to offset the pitfalls of slavish devotion. This is no doubt what prompts Addison's equally absurd response to recommend such illogical texts to her. Yet the comic and somewhat teasing nature of her letter does reveal an admiration of *The Spectator*, and reliance upon it for entertainment and humour, as well as critical discussion.

Yet despite comical incidences, Addison's choice to include Leonora's letter in whole, rather than simply acknowledge it, further demonstrates his employment of intertextuality to model behaviour. Not only is she waiting patiently for his opinion on appropriate literature for a lady's library, she is a "daily disciple and humble servant." Whilst humorous, there is an element of seriousness about the modelled behaviour between reader and text. Each day Leonora is engaging with *The Spectator*, to the point it has become synonymous with (even transcendently more important than) breakfast itself.

Such a relationship however, does exhibit a particular balance of power on the side of the periodical. Whilst playfully humorous, Leonora closely follows the advice of the periodical (or at least pretends to), to the point where she will not act if Addison has not yet written his advice. As a servant, she is there to further the ideologies presented in *The Spectator*. When

Addison responds “to my fair disciple, whom I am very proud of” it further reinforces the power dynamic *The Spectator* (and Addison himself) holds over its female readers, influencing not just what they read, but the very manner in which the act of reading is incorporated into their lives. Addison is ultimately the arbiter for how and what women read.

Despite this, Addison and Steele were known for writing these letters from ‘readers’ themselves as a way of perfectly encapsulating the behaviour they wish to model to their readership. Stearns notes that “Arguments for the better instruction of women were often set forth in the paper by means of letters purporting to come from interested readers.”⁴³ Whilst Addison and Steele did indeed enjoy an organic correspondence with many readers, the almost perfect way in which Leonora personifies Addison’s idea of a disciple at the very least suggests this essay could be a deliberate ploy by Addison to build and display his paradigm of what *The Spectator*’s female readership should look like.

A substantially different model for presenting ideal female behaviour is conveyed in Steele’s essay in *The Spectator No.11*. However in that essay, Steele’s construction of the implied female reader using modelled behaviour is significantly different to Addison’s, and as a result a noticeable incoherency emerges between the two authors and their respective vision for, and subsequent construction of implied female readership. Steele’s essay presents a model of feminine behaviour that stands in contrast to the ‘devoted disciple’ of Leonora presented in *The Spectator* 92. Steele’s essay recounts Mr. Spectator’s visit to the home of a female acquaintance Arietta. Entering her home, Mr. Spectator observes her debate with another male guest on the topic of “constancy in love”, and the vices of men and women alike. Arietta’s debate with this other male guest serves to set her apart from the passive character presented in Addison’s essay. Rather than constructing an explicit behavioural code for female readers of *The Spectator* to follow as Addison does, Steele uses the character of Arietta to subtly create a vision of an ideal female reader that is more at liberty than Addison’s. Steele’s implied female reader is not directly linked to and dependent upon *The Spectator*; rather, Steele creates an overarching concept of female readership and literary habits as a whole. His vision is more concerned with knowledge, intellect and expression than behaviour and regulation as is Addison’s. What follows is an essay that has been

⁴³ Stearns, Bertha Monica. ‘Early English Periodicals for Ladies’. *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*. Vol. 38, 1933.

interpreted by several modern scholars as being profoundly feminist when compared to Addison's work.

Steele's initial characterisation of Arietta at the start of this essay serves to foreground his use of modelled behaviour. Whilst the pattern of behaviour exhibited by Arietta is noticeably different compared to Leonora, the use of modelled behaviour by Steele remains part of his paradigm for the implied female reader. Despite her proclivity for entering into a masculine-gendered practice of intellectual debate, Arietta remains a paradigm of feminine virtue and the essay focuses upon her possession of a set of ideal female characteristics. She is "neither affected with the follies of youth nor the infirmities of age", seemingly at a perfect, undefined medium. She is "agreeable to the young and old", of respectable behaviour and ambition and able to converse intelligently with men. She even resists the urge to interrupt the man she debates with, despite him having "repeated and murdered the celebrated story of the *Ephesian Matron*." In his efforts to "distinguish himself before a woman of Arietta's taste and understanding" the gentleman had demonstrated a profound ignorance of classical literature in his "murder" of the *Ephesian Matron*, arguing about the general follies of the female sex. Steele's deliberate use of contrasting characterisations of the two characters at the beginning of this essay has a twofold effect. Firstly, it provides the framework that allows Steele to critique male vices, whilst praising ideal female qualities throughout the essay. Secondly and more importantly, characterising Arietta as a type of female ideal means that what she subsequently says or how she behaves is therefore also ideal.

The deliberate use of intertextuality by Steele in this essay, is indicative of his belief that an intelligent, virtuous and accomplished female reader should be well acquainted with both Classical and modern literature. Arietta delivers a rebuttal to her male counterpart based upon an understanding of Classical literature. She combats his argument on the basis of her own knowledge of Classical literature, her understanding of such being crucial to her success in the debate. Arietta's sophisticated rebuttal is only made possible by her already substantial understanding of Classical literature. She is well read and knowledgeable, and embodies a woman who is not only capable of critiquing and understanding higher literature, but can also use it to successfully debate and defeat the man across from her. It is only through her understanding of the classics, argues Horejsi, that Arietta is able to dispel "the misogyny of

the classical tradition and the translation of antifeminist elements into modern contexts”⁴⁴ as seen by her opponent’s “murder” of the *Ephesian Matron*.

Furthermore, Arietta’s subsequent use of the *Inkle and Yarico* tale in her rebuttal is indicative of how Steele sees an accomplished and critical reader as one who can seamlessly interpret and understand Classical and modern and Classical literature. Arietta does not counter the paradigm supplied via the *Ephesian Matron* with another Classical model; rather she interprets it, critiques it, and counters with a moral from a modern narrative devolving from Europe’s encounters with the New World. In so doing, Steele, through Arietta, establishes a hierarchy for Classical and modern literature and the way each communicates values to modern readers. Classical literature whilst informative, is philosophical, and because of its age less applicable to the eighteenth-century woman. Modern literature however, is more practical, and often as in the case of *Inkle and Yarico* expands upon paradigms presented in Classical literature with tangible examples and scenarios, such as the Indian woman being sold into slavery, losing her liberty because of her love. Steele sees an accomplished and critical reader as one who can seamlessly interpret and understand Classical and modern, and Arietta fundamentally demonstrates this. Her superior understanding of Classical literature to her male counterpart (demonstrated in her critique of his use of the *Ephesian Matron*) combined with her subsequent use of the *Inkle and Yarico*, indicates the extent to which she personifies Steele’s notion of an ideal female reader.

Steele interweaves intertextuality, and disrupts the narrative frame through Arietta’s recount of the *Ephesian Matron* narrative in his text to further his implicit construction of the female reader. The inclusion of the character of Yarico, allows Steele to complement the modelled behaviour already exhibited in Arietta. Whilst Arietta exhibits the intellectual aspect of the female reader, Yarico serves to ground her in the domestic sphere. The female reader is encouraged by Arietta’s example to be critical and well-read, but is reminded of her place in and duty to the domestic by Yarico. Whilst a savage (albeit a noble one), Shevelow argues that Yarico “behaves very much like the virtuous and domestic English middle class wife.”⁴⁵ Her primary occupation is that of Inkle’s carer and lover; he is her primary concern.

⁴⁴ Horejsi, Nicole. “A Counterpart to the Ephesian Matron: Steele’s “Inkle and Yarico” and a Feminist Critique of the Classics.” *Eighteenth Century Studies*. Vol. 39. Issue 2. (2006) pg. 217.

⁴⁵ Shevelow, Katherine. *Women and Print Culture. Construction of Gender in the Early Periodical*. (London: Routledge, 1989). 144.

Furthermore, her natural goodness and tenderness in the improvised domestic space of the cave “reveal an impulse toward domestication” according to Shevelov, and it is through the opposite yet complementary characters of Arietta and Yarico that Steele constructs an idealised woman that is critically engaged with literature, yet firmly attached to and concerned with the home.

Despite her virtues, Yarico’s fate and eventual enslavement serves as a warning to Steele’s female readers. Upon returning to England, Mr. Inkle sells Yarico into slavery even after having professed his love to her back in the West Indies when shipwrecked. Just as Addison encouraged Leonora to be critical, even of his own advice in *The Spectator No.92*, so too does Steele implicitly encourage the same. Addison’s recommendation of nonsensical texts to test Leonora, serves the purpose of tempering her devotion, that she should at all times remain a critically minded individual, even when receiving advice from someone as distinguished as Addison. In the case of Yarico, her enslavement at the hands of her former lover Mr. Inkle provides a confronting deterrent to Steele’s female readers. As Addison’s advice disciplines Leonora to not be slavishly dependent upon the opinions of others, Yarico’s demise has her being literally enslaved because of her unquestionable devotion to Mr. Inkle. In a much more implicit, yet more confronting fashion than Addison, Steele advocates for critical thinking and cognisance in his female readers, whilst still situating the female in the domestic space.

Despite the ‘Inkle and Yarico’ intertext enforcing domestic responsibilities onto the female, Arietta’s successful rebuttal in the debate significantly empowers the female reader in another way. Steele writes of Arietta reciting the fable of “The Lion and the Man”. In so doing, Steele creates a powerful metaphor for which his female readers are invited to be critical, questioning readers. Arietta tells of the fable in which a man shows a Lion a picture of a man killing a lion. Arietta tells of the lion’s reply “We Lions are none of us painters, else we could show a hundred men ruled by Lions, for one Lion killed by Man.” The fable serves as a potent metaphor for female readership. Whilst men are often the privileged critics, and as authors, enjoy the dominant portion of the power hierarchy between male author and female reader, Steele encourages female criticism and critical thought. Female readers, like Arietta, through a proper understanding of literature can manifest their intellect as lions. Like the lion, they do not hold the privileged position of expression, but are just as capable of doing so, and are able to challenge men in matters of knowledge and literature.

Whilst confined spatially to the domestic, Steele's female reader is very much equal to or greater than her male counterpart. Mr. Spectator even becomes an unreliable narrator in the conclusion of the essay, "I left the room with tears in my eyes, which a woman of Arietta's good sense I am sure, take for...applause." Not only does Steele deliberately enforce his own emotion onto the reader to convince them of Arietta's success, but his self-assurance that she non-verbally understood his tears as compliment, furthers his construction of an intelligent and virtuous female reader. Arietta is able to construct a successful and sophisticated rebuttal to her male counterpart with a firm understanding of modern and classical literature. Intellectually, she is by no means inferior to the male guest, she is limited only by the social convention that dictates she must be grounded in domesticity. It is in this sense that the female reader is almost a subset of the male reader. She is equal in intellectual capacity, but ultimately separated by both her restriction to the domestic space, and the way her practice of readership is built upon a model of discipleship.

Although Addison and Steele differ in their methods for proffering models that construct an implied female reader, their respective visions of ideal female readership are complementary. The unifying factor between the two authors, the assumptions they make about female readership and how they situate their female readers is ultimately grounded in domesticity. Whilst in different ways the two men invite and encourage women to be part of a community of readership and to think critically (in varying degrees), their domestication of women is always a fundamental concern. Addison is more obtuse than Steele, enforcing a behavioural code in which the periodical is synonymous with (and just as important as) breakfast. Conversely, Steele uses intertextuality and exploitation of the narrative frame to subtly impart an agenda that whilst in praise of female kind, is always concerned with situating the female in the home and domestic space.

Ultimately, the way *The Spectator* engages with and situates its female readers in the issues examined in this chapter, is thoroughly consistent with Erin Mackie's criticism of, and subsequent amendment to Habermas's theory. Examining the emergence of the public sphere, Mackie notes the frequent exclusion women faced in the arena, arguing that "the record of women in English coffeehouses is scanty and does not include any representation of their participation in the debates there."⁴⁶ The women, both Leonora, and Arietta, are

⁴⁶ Mackie, Erin. *Being Too Positive About the Public Sphere*. In *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*. 84.

confined to the domestic space. Arietta is particularly indicative of this phenomena. She, along with the men, debates and discusses literature, and behaves as if such an interaction took place in a coffeehouse, but as Arietta is a woman, such a discussion must take place in the home. Despite even Habermas's acknowledgement of the role *The Spectator* played in influencing coffeehouse culture,⁴⁷ Steele firmly establishes the code that a woman's place is in the home, by situating a coffee-house like debate in Arietta's house. Steele by no means enforces boundaries on her intellect, but certainly on the environment in which she nurtures and expresses it. As Markman Ellis argues "It was assumed that no woman who wished to be considered virtuous and proper would want to be seen in a coffeehouse. Women certainly drank coffee at home, in private."⁴⁸

Conclusively, both Addison and Steele's individual paradigms of the implied female reader's reading habits and literary pursuits are complementary and consistent in creating a uniform vision for *The Spectator*'s female readers to aspire to. However, as can be seen from the examples discussed in this chapter, the authors proceed towards the same vision via contrasting methodologies. Both utilise modelled behaviour to impart values to their female readers in the form of Addison's "disciple" Leonora, and Steele's acquaintance Arietta, yet the characters of both these women are utilised and portrayed differently. Using irony and comical discourse with Leonora, Addison sets about creating a framework for an attentive, critical female reader by suggesting non-sensical texts for her to read, as a way of assessing her intellect and judgement to see through such recommendations. Conversely, Steele holds up Arietta to his readers as a type of quintessential female reader, a woman with a keen understanding of modern and Classical literature, able to skilfully and critically debate with male counterparts. Whereas Steele disrupts the narrative frame to illustrate Arietta's profound understanding of literature and the values within, and even becomes an unreliable narrator in his efforts to construct her as an ideal female reader, Such a method is in stark contrast to Addison, playfully examines Leonora's judgement and reason. Just as Arietta displays her understanding of literature through debate, Leonora is assessed on such understandings of literature through Addison's suggesting of completely illogical texts. In both cases, the implied (and ideal) female reader is established as one that is attentive, critical, nuanced and possessing a thorough understanding of literature.

⁴⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger. (Boston: MIT Press, 1989). 41.

⁴⁸ Ellis, Markman. *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History*. (London: Phoenix Publishing, 2004). 66.

The significance of this examination, is that it demonstrates the symbiotic nature of both Addison and Steele's work in *The Spectator* to achieve a collective goal, the implied female reader's literary habits and pursuits. The creation of such is representative of their ability create a consistent ideology of readership whilst using varying and differed mechanisms. It is a theme that will repeat itself in the following chapter concerning dress and fashion, particularly because of the way Addison and Steele attempt to link the aesthetic with the mind and intellect. Both authors critique and regulate dress in similar ways to how they critique and regulate reading practices, but in doing so, deploy different mechanisms and techniques than each other to achieve the same goal.

Thesis Chapter Two: Dress, Distress, Fashion, and Folly.

Arietta's recalling of the fable of the Lion and the Man in *The Spectator No.11* not only serves to illustrate the privileged position of men over women in the literary sphere (as was established in the previous chapter), but, further, emphasizes the limited avenues for feminine self-expression in eighteenth-century social life. However, as the prior discussion has established, a woman's ability to exercise and display judgement and independence are key attributes of the ideal female reader of *The Spectator*. Hence, the authors of *The Spectator* exhibited great interest in other areas related to a woman's potential for self-expression where judgement and independence hold sway, leading the journal to place great emphasis upon the notoriously frivolous world of fashion, which traditionally sat (as of now) within the frivolous and feminized domain of luxury and extravagance.

Fashion became a key medium through which the eighteenth-century English woman was able to express herself in a patriarchal society that suppressed feminine self-expression.⁴⁹ Strict policing of women's abilities to participate in other modes of self-expression served to emphasize those communicative modes that could not be closed off, and a woman's dress became a prime medium for demonstrating agency, not only allowing room for rudimentary display, but also for more nuanced forms of social and political expression: engaging with the subtleties of class, for instance, or for political expression. Female beauty, dress and fashion, therefore, become matters of supreme interest to Addison and Steele, as engagement with those subjects provide a mechanism for regulating or suppressing facets of behaviour that do not fit with the ideologies of the polite English society that they wished to promote.

Whilst their encouragement of select literary habits and pursuits is often dependent upon, and therefore encourages, a critical, alert and informed female reader, Addison and Steele's critique of fashion is far more overt. Both authors' arguments concerning literary pursuits make use of devices such as disrupting the narrative frame, establishing direct discourse with readers and demonstrations of sustained critical readership. However in regards to fashion, the authors of *The Spectator* offer a different range of regulative practices: supplying sharp critiques of societal trends, brutally confronting allegories and advancing witty, yet merciless

⁴⁹ Tague, Ingrid H. *Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690-1760*. (London: Boydell Press, 2002). pgs. 24, 98 & 140.

anecdotes at the expense of female fashionistas. In addressing their female readers, Addison and Steele employ what Merritt has identified as “taxonomies” of women, and the broad categories generated by that strategy become models that inform critical attention to the journal’s ideal female readership.⁵⁰ These different taxonomies of women are sorted into broad categories by *The Spectator* to be emulated or shunned by its female readers, and this particular phenomenon will be explored in depth. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how such mechanisms are employed by *The Spectator* to expand upon the existing behavioural model for the implied female reader to include fashion and dress.

As will be seen from several essays examined in this chapter, Addison and Steele argue that overindulgence and ignorance in the vices of fashion and fabric has a negative and deteriorating effect on the mind, intelligence and intellect. By linking the realm of fashion to the areas of their primary concern, (matters of intellect of critical well-informed readers) the pair are therefore able to position themselves in relation to that realm and exert control and regulation over their readers in regards to it.

In *The Spectator*’s efforts to create and maintain an ordered, functioning, polite society, female dress and fashion presented an avenue through which women could not only demonstrate agency, but in many ways threaten the sanctity of Addison and Steele’s vision. Addison and Steele’s privileged position as writers meant that they could easily (and sometimes arbitrarily, as seen in the previous chapter) enforce social and cultural codes that related to women’s reading, exploiting their position in the literary sphere to do so. The level to which fashion could operate somewhat independently of the literary sphere is perhaps indicative of the heightened level of criticism and critique the two authors offer in regards to the issue compared to literary pursuits. Jennie Batchelor outlines that dress and fashion in early eighteenth century England, was often seen as “irrational, feminine and unrestrained”⁵¹ and ultimately antithetical to Addison and Steele’s vision of the polite bourgeois society. As a result, she argues that Addison and Steele “recognised an opportunity to reform their readers through a reformation of fashion in the periodicals pages.” In order to do so, Addison and

⁵⁰ Merritt, Juliette. “Originals, Copies and the Iconography of Femininity.” In Newman, Donald. *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*. (Boston: Rosemont Publishing, 2005). pg. 44.

⁵¹ Batchelor, Jennie. *Dress, Distress and Desire*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). pg. 89.

Steele can be seen to make an explicit link between fashion and the mind, between dress and virtue.

The Spectator No.10 is particularly indicative of how the two authors attempt to link fashion and dress with the mind and intellect, and, in so doing to establish a paradigm of ideal practice for their own female readers' in regards to fashion. In this number, Addison employs the use of parallelism to construct a damning critique of undesirable dress and beauty routines whilst simultaneously making potent assumptions about the fashion and beauty habits of *The Spectator's* female readers. The nature of Addison's critique is to expose feminine traits to judgement under a rubric constructed upon masculine values. Addison ridicules the behaviour of ordinary women by critiquing their daily routines as though they were businessmen or workers, "The Toilet is their great scene of business [...] the right adjusting of their hair their principal employment", and, "the sorting of a suit of ribbons is reckoned a very good mornings work." Here, Addison uses schema from the worlds of "business" and "employment" ('proper' masculine pursuits) to interrogate and undermine the integrity of feminine activities. It highlights the folly of believing that the sorting ribbons is a substantial achievement, depicting women who are so obsessed with fashion that they lack critical thought. More importantly, the use of this schema suggests that such behaviour is of no benefit to wider society, as normal "scenes of business" or employment would be, ridiculing their behaviour and intellectual capacity when believing sorting ribbons is a significant accomplishment. In this instance, according to Addison, obsession with beauty, fabric and lace meddles with the mind. Not only does it provide no contribution to wider English society, but leads those who obsess over it to think it is of fundamental importance to their daily lives.

Having used a schema of business to ridicule these women's obsession with fashion, Addison furthers his argument through the use of parallelism to assume that his own female readers are positioned antithetically in relation to such "ordinary women." Addison's claim, "I know there are multitudes of those of a more elevated Life and Conversation, that move in an exalted Sphere of Knowledge and Virtue", makes a tangible distinction between the women he derides and the actual addressees of his essay, *The Spectator's* female readership. Those readers, Addison suggests, are persons of intellect and integrity, occupying an exalted "Sphere of Knowledge and Virtue." Whilst by no means unattractive to the male gaze, these women have mastered the balance between fashionable pursuits and intellectual ones. They

“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.” The link between fashion and one’s intellectual state is again reinforced here by Addison. Too much of the latter deteriorates the former, while the ideal woman maintains the balance.

The key moment in Addison’s argument is when he subtly links these ideal traits to his female readers. After praising these types of women Addison writes “I hope to increase the numbers of these by publishing this paper daily”. Whilst brief, this sentence fundamentally outlines Addison’s purpose for his own readers in regards to fashion, but further characterises his argument as a whole. If the reading of his paper is said to transform the female reader into these types of women, then the fundamental underlying assumption made by Addison is that the woman who is reading the essay already personifies these values, or if not, desires or at least is open to transformation. With one simple sentence, Addison creates a subtle, sequenced thread to construct his implied female reader as an ideal woman, of intellect and virtue, balancing virtuous internal qualities with an external elegance that can be marked by appropriate forms of fashionable expression. Because of *The Spectator’s* fundamentally transformative power according to Addison, the female reader cannot be unchanged by engaging with the text (unless she already exemplifies the values being promoted). *The Spectator* creates female identity as much as it targets a specific type of woman. The only type is the one the text creates for itself, the one befitting the polite society. The female reader is moulded into this figure, respectable, intellectual and unaffected by the follies and distractions of beauty and dress.

An additional dimension of *The Spectator’s* discussion of the relationship between fashion and the mind appears in the models of female behaviour studied by the protagonists of Steele’s essay appearing in *The Spectator No 4*. Similarly to Steele’s essay on the Inkle and Yarico tale told by Arietta, *The Spectator No.4*. sees Steele employ the device of modelled behaviour for his female readers. The essay finds Mr. Spectator and his friend Mr. Honeycomb at the theatre, where they scrutinise and compare the women around them according to their dress sense. Mr. Honeycomb criticises one woman’s lack of originality on the grounds that it is culpably imitative: “If she has stolen the colour of her ribbands from another... I would not allow her the praise of dress any more than I would call a plagiarist an author.” The comparison between fashion and literary plagiarism brings a certain level of nuance to how the two men wish women to dress, and thus, as a result, judge them. More

importantly, by equating the two, Steele is able to pull female fashion into the literary realm, a realm in which he acts as an arbiter of taste. As we have previously seen in the first chapter, Addison and Steele can mould and influence their readers' literary habits because of their privileged positions in the literary sphere. Equating dress to literature creates an avenue through which Steele is able to influence, and regulate women's fashion as well.

Like Addison in *The Spectator No.10*, Steele subsequently uses parallelism to communicate a paradigm for modelled behaviour to his readers. Again, Steele attempts to strike a balance between intellectualism and moderate, yet tasteful, outward beauty in his construction of the implied female reader. Mr. Honeycomb and Mr. Spectator turn their gaze to another woman at the theatre who seems to personify all that the pair value in a woman, and who as Juliette Merritt argues: "embodies a match between inner form and outward appearance".⁵² Mr. Honeycomb's exclamation: "Behold the beauty of her person chastised by the innocence of her thoughts. How is the whole woman expressed in her appearance!" introduces a new category into *The Spectator's* taxonomical list, the "whole woman," a figure identified by Ketcham as representing the "inward disposition of the mind made visible."⁵³ Here we see *The Spectator* create taxonomies of women. Merritt writes that in regards to these taxonomies "the exemplary are to be copied by his female readers, and those deformed by vanity and pride are to be shunned."⁵⁴ The implied female reader is constructed according to these taxonomies, she is to be intelligent and intellectual, have beauty in both mind and body. Whilst she can engage in fashion she is to do so tastefully. Steele's examination of how outward form can reflect the inner constitution, is an argument for this. It warns against vanity and superficiality in women. Steele is building an agenda for both female readership and womanhood at large, one in which women must not neglect their minds, as such neglect will be obvious to observers. In this sense, Steele argues that a sound intellect can have as much an influence on outward appearance as the choice of ribbons.

Steele's construction of gendered taxonomies of femininity is ultimately representative of the inner mechanisms of the polite society that he and Addison build around, and attempt to fit

⁵² Merritt. 43.

⁵³ Ketcham, Michael G. *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance and Form in The Spectator Papers*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985). 30.

⁵⁴ Merritt. 44.

women into. Understanding the polite society through these taxonomies ultimately reveals more about Steele's intentions for his female readers beyond mere fashionable appearances. Merritt writes that Steele's representations of women in *The Spectator No.4*, (both the plagiary and the "whole woman") "act as a yardstick or barometer, by which we can measure...the objects of cultural worry"⁵⁵, that is women. Laura Mandell too argues that "representations that inspire [...] disgust with the female body, provide a place for people to work out changes in economic and social structure."⁵⁶ For *The Spectator*, these taxonomies provide illustrations for its female readership, examples to emulate, and examples to avoid when it comes to fashion.

Steele's construction of the implied female reader, and subsequent taxonomies of femininity are equally revealing about the social environment surrounding the object (women) as it is of women themselves. Firstly, the examination of the women in the theatre by Mr. Spectator and Mr. Honeycomb is not only a powerful literalisation of the periodical itself (the pair themselves are spectators) but it is an attempt to analyse women according to a set of social, cultural and ethical codes. Such a position is in accord with Straub's observations that "the gendering of the spectator as male and the spectacle as female seems to emerge [...] in the eighteenth century", an idea that strengthens my contention that a sexualised, feminised and objectified female begins to have the power of the spectator (male) exerted over her.⁵⁷ The two men's observation of women serves to reinforce the naturalization of the experience of women being observed and critiqued, and the scene at the opera serves as a microcosm for English society at large. What this microcosm essentially implies is that the polite society is reflexive and self-conscious, constantly attempting to advance and maintain itself through observation, critique and reflexive adjustment just as Mr. Spectator and Mr. Honeycomb observe and critique the women at the opera. Furthermore, Mr. Honeycomb and Mr. Spectator are simultaneously able to negotiate a position that models reflection and adjustment for males as well as females. Such a position constructed via the societal microcosm of the opera places the male in a position of observational power and authority over the female, the object of such observation. Addison and Steele's stipulation that the

⁵⁵ Merritt. 46.

⁵⁶ Mendell, Laura. *Misogynistic Economies: The Business of Literature in Eighteenth Century Britain*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1999). pg.2.

⁵⁷ Straub, Kristina. *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth Century Players and Sexual Ideology*. (New York: Princeton University Press, 1991). pg.19

female is constantly observed in polite society, intrinsically encourages critical thinking and sound judgement in their female readers. Such judgement is of paramount importance in the issue of dress, with the knowledge that the regulatory male gaze serves to critique and interrogate female fashion choices.

Furthermore, the critique of female dress in this issue is reflective of *The Spectator*'s efforts to regulate a social arena where women do experience an extended sense of expression and autonomy. Such expression, however, means that challenges to Steele's taxonomies eventually arise. The way that women express their own representations of selfhood and identity threaten *The Spectator*'s own vision. In polite English society, but also in eighteenth-century England as a whole, femininity is a construct that is created by men to classify and contain women according to social structures. The moment that women are given the avenue to express femininity for themselves through fashion, they are subjected to masculine scrutiny, with male spectators operating as regulators of taste in the manner presented in Steele's essay. Merritt supplies a suggestive framework for interpreting the paradigm's function, arguing that, "Steele appears uneasy"⁵⁸ about the potential for women to define femininity themselves rather than simply accept the male enforced definition. The opera, through its focus on appearance and dress, creates a social arena whereby "the conditions for multiplying the meanings of femininity are created."⁵⁹ Of course this idea becomes problematic when considering Steele's philosophy concerning the idea of a "whole woman", a woman who personifies the feminine virtues extolled in *The Spectator*.

However, Steele's desire is not to create a single unitary vision that is this "whole woman". Rather, the 'whole woman' is a concept that unites all virtuous and desirable feminine qualities and, hence, excludes other categories of woman that are corrupt in any way. Such a process in itself creates multiple meanings for femininity, it just directs which aspects should be fostered and which controlled, such as fostering a balance between inward and outward beauty and innocence of thought, or restricting unoriginality and superficiality. The opera as a public space becomes dangerous in this sense for Steele, because as an environment it creates the conditions through which multiple meanings of femininity can be created. This ultimately shifts the balance of power from Steele, who wishes to control femininity and

⁵⁸ Merritt. 46.

⁵⁹ Merritt. 43.

expression, to women, who use fashion to create these definitions and taxonomies. As a result, Mr. Spectator and Mr. Honeycomb act as critical observers in the opera environment; they regulate and control what visions of femininity are praised and which ones are undermined. The pair exert power over a space that has the potential to challenge the eighteenth-century phenomena of males creating femininity to classify and contain women, because the space hands said power of creation to women through fashion.

From the evidence presented in his essay, we may infer that Steele's implied female reader is a woman who is both able and willing to adopt and select appropriately from Steele's own taxonomies of femininity. She is able to balance mind and body and conform to Steele's own vision of the 'whole woman' that he creates, without being unoriginal in her conformity, so as to avoid being subject to Will Honeycomb's observations about "plagiarist" women. Further, we can deduce that Steele's female reader is to be critical and alert in her fashion choices just as she is in her literary ones, she is to conform to the unitary vision of womanhood whilst still retaining a semblance of independent thought, but not so much as to challenge the very taxonomy created and imposed on her by male arbiters.

Anxieties regarding fashion as an avenue for female expression are consistent throughout *The Spectator*, and other examples amplify not only Steele's observations regarding female fashion, but help strengthen our understanding of the journal's broader female readership. Also set during an evening at the opera, *The Spectator* No.81 has Addison critique and ridicule women who use fashion as a means of political expression. Here Addison continues the previous argument presented by Steele regarding overzealousness in ladies' fashion, and how obsession with appearances fundamentally undermines a woman's inner beauty and intellectual capacity. This initial criticism and ridicule serves as a foundation from which Addison then later proceeds to address his female readers in response to the anecdote, making overt assumptions about the contrary nature of his own female readers in comparison to the women he critiques.

In exploring the presentation of the ideal female reader in this issue, it will be useful to summarize the discussion within so as to sufficiently illustrate the several and varying arguments Addison makes against feminine superficiality and vanity. Taking the form of an allegory, the essay is presented in the person of Mr. Spectator, who gives an account of his observation of the relationship between dress and political opinion displayed by women attending the opera. In the course of his observations, Mr. Spectator becomes critical of women

who employ make-up as a means of expressing political affinities, and sets out to demonstrate the absurdity of their efforts. The decoration of their faces he writes, “is done so as to appeal to a man depending on which side of the political spectrum he sits, the Men, whose Hearts are aimed at, are very often the Occasions that one Part of the Face is thus dishonoured [...] the Patches turn to the Right or to the Left, according to the Principles of the Man who is most in Favour.” These women, Addison maintains, have no interest whatsoever in the opera being performed, but are so singularly concerned with their outward appearance, desperately attempting to woo men to the point that they will change and transform their make-up accordingly, and demonstrate the shallowness of their own personal convictions in doing so. Furthermore, Addison recalls two particular women who have the unfortunate circumstance of having a mole on the opposite side of their faces to which they would normally patch themselves, and have thus “occasioned many mistakes”. Whilst this latter group of women, he maintains, have consistent notions of government, the misinterpretation of their allegiance according to their make-up allows Addison to satirise the superficial interpretation of signs and outward appearances.

Furthermore, the women’s obsession with their appearances rather than the operatic performance before them demonstrates a neglect of the mind, and the arts. These women have become so obsessed with the superficial that even opera, which Erin Mackie argues Addison and Steele often portrayed as something that “occupies a lower rung”⁶⁰ in the hierarchy of entertainment forms, is too much for them. In this initial criticism, Addison does not acknowledge and makes no mention of his female readers. However, his critique of the women at the opera is crucial because it personifies the antithesis of *The Spectator*’s female readers, readers who are critically minded and not swayed by the superficial. This critique serves as another instance of modelled behaviour, but in this instance, behaviour to be ridiculed and avoided, not imitated.

Addison overtly compares his female readers to the women he criticises, but in so doing powerfully returns to *The Spectator*’s previous attempts to domesticate its female readers. Arguing that English women are the most beautiful in the world, Addison advises them not to spoil those virtues with which “nature has endowed them”. He argues that the English woman is ultimately defined not by her superficiality, but rather her tenderness and faithfulness as

⁶⁰ Mackie, Erin. *Market a la Mode*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997). pg.214.

mother and wife, and that female virtues “are of a domestic turn.” Recalling how Roman women would sacrifice their jewellery to the government in times of war to help their menfolk, Addison defines the role and beauty of the female as being in service to the man, to not distract him or “aggravate the hatreds and animosities that reign among men.” Ideas and obsessions with the superficial are to be sacrificed like the jewellery for a common good. Just as Roman women put their beauty and dress second to the needs of the state, so too are Addison’s readers expected to surrender vanity and superficiality for the good of the polite society. Addison’s admiration for ancient Rome was well documented, in 1713 he brought the play *Cato* to London stages. His vision was for the play to demonstrate “public and private virtue.”⁶¹ Such a vision is reflected here, encouraging the English woman’s virtue in a “domestic turn” whilst still promoting a sense of feminine public duty. An intertextual reference to the funeral oration of *Pericles* that appears at the essay’s conclusion furthers the connection between English women and classical virtues. Women are urged to “follow [their] natural modesty”, a natural modesty that for Addison and Steele lies in not overindulging in appearances, but rather attending to the whole woman, body and mind.

Having previously examined how Addison and Steele create certain taxonomies of women, it is clear that *The Spectator*’s implied female reader is defined by dual processes of inclusion and exclusion. To reiterate Merritt’s argument regarding the creation of female taxonomies, “the exemplary are to be copied by his female readers, and those deformed by vanity and pride are to be shunned.” It is in this sense that when Addison and Steele examine and critique unideal behaviours amongst women, their own readers are defined in opposition to such criticism. *The Spectator* operates under the assumption that its readers will be able to recognise and understand the authors’ criticisms of various issues, in this case fashion *faux pas*. That their readers will subsequently behave and construct a sense of selfhood that is in direct opposition to the very behaviours the periodical criticises.

The Spectator No.281 provides a distinct example of the journal’s interest in showing the corruptive effects of vanity and pride and makes plain its aims to discipline readers away from such vices. Addison provides his readers with a disturbing allegory of the effects of superficiality in his anecdote about a doctor’s autopsy of a “coquet”. Although it is clearly a

⁶¹ Bastos da Silva, Jorge. “Cato’s Ghosts: Pope, Addison, and Oppositional Cultural Politics.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination*. Vol. 38, Issue 1. Spring, 2005. pg.99.

blackly humorous performance, the grotesque details supplied about the horrid deformities of the coquet's organs do serve the essay's didactic purpose. Of particular interest in the case is the dehumanizing metaphoric structure that sits at the foundational crux of the essay's argument. There, the surgeon's description of the difficulties of accessing "the many labyrinths and recesses" of the coquet's heart is crowned with the view that it is incomparable to "the heart of any other animal." This dehumanising metaphor is the essence of the essay's argument. Superficiality and loquaciousness, as often found in coquets and coxcombs, are degrading characteristics and dangerous vices. The coquet's obsession with flirtatiousness and appearances have caused her heart to become cold and hollow. She has lost not only that which makes her human, but more so, what marks her feminine character, as the heart is the seat of women's emotions and affections. The surgeon referring to her as an animal, reinforces the theme of dehumanisation as well, the labyrinths of her heart demonstrating shallow character.

The allegory serves as a cautionary tale for female readers, suggesting that they, too, will become hollow and deformed if they chase after ribbon and lace. The moral implication is that they should, as good devoted disciples of *The Spectator*, follow closely the advice of the two authors and thus should behave and act in opposition to the feminine vices that Addison and Steele critique. The implications for our understanding of the essay's implied female reader are she is an individual who tempers her emotions and interactions with the male sex. In so doing, she protects her heart, that which is the centre of her feminine identity from corruption and decay. She is not governed by vanity and pride, but instead is informed and humble.

As this autopsy allegory is explored further, Addison adds a powerful gravitas to his critique of how the deceased female lived her life, demonstrating the detrimental effects of style over substance. The doctor finds her heart to be cold and filled with tunnels, discovering that "Nerves in the Heart which are affected by the Sentiments of Love, Hatred, and other Passions, did not descend...from the Brain, but from... the Eye." The coquet is the antithesis of the type of women Addison and Steele typically hold up to their readers as idealised archetypes. For example, Steele's Arietta in *The Spectator No.11* is a woman who demonstrates a multi-layered femininity and intellect, evident both in her ability to debate and recite Classical literature, and in her passionate defence of her sex which moves Mr. Spectator to tears. In this later essay, however, the coquet being dissected before Mr.

Spectator has flirted to the point that her heart has become hollow. Her eye, rather than her mind, is what produces her sentiments. She is obsessed with appearances to the point her brain is a dormant, unnecessary organ as the woman has abandoned any sense of critical thinking. Addison's argument here, is that one becomes what they consume and obsesses over. Just as Steele advocates for moderation in dress at the opera in his essay, so too does Addison in his autopsy allegory. Addison also makes a reference to a similar essay of his, where another autopsy is performed on a Beau whose brain is found to be missing from his skull, replaced by various ribbons and lace. Addison's contention that an individual becomes what they obsess over is furthered in that instance as well. As Erin Mackie argues, "As they internalise the objects of their consuming passions, people are at risk of falsifying their desires and their values but also of losing their identities."⁶² Laura Brown also contends that "the female figure... is subsumed by the materials with which she is dressed."⁶³ The implied female reader is defined in opposition to the empty Beau and coquet. As the female reader consumes the periodical, she becomes, as was seen in the first chapter of this thesis, a "fair disciple" of Addison and Steele. Conversely, the coquet's consumption of fashion trends and incessant flirtatiousness have eroded her intellect and basic humanity.

It can be seen that the overarching lesson in taste and fashion for Addison and Steele's female readers is a reiteration of Addison's argument in *The Spectator No.10*, that various objects and pursuits in society have transformative effects and thus must be engaged with wisely. As Addison argued in that essay, *The Spectator* is a transformative text. When Addison writes that "I hope to increase the numbers of these by publishing this paper daily" (elevated women) Addison is arguing that by reading *The Spectator*, the female reader can transform into an elevated woman. Addison's crucial assumption is that the woman who is reading the issue already exhibits these ideal characteristics and virtues. If not, the hope is that she is undergoing a state of transformation to do so because of her reading of the periodical. Because of *The Spectator's* fundamentally transformative power according to Addison, the female reader cannot be unchanged by engaging with the text. Whereas Addison and Steele's periodical is powerfully transformative, so too is an obsession with fashion and appearance. Too much indulgence leads to a vanity betraying style over substance, the female

⁶² Mackie, Erin. *Market a la Mode*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997). pg 66.

⁶³ Brown, Laura. *Ends of Empire*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993). pg. 177.

in Addison and Steele's polite society is directly formed out of what elements of society she engages with.

In addition, Addison and Steele's varied literary mechanisms in the essays discussed in this chapter work to overpower the threat posed by the influence of fashion and consumption culture upon women. For example, Addison's use of parallelism in *The Spectator No.10* to define his own readers in opposition to women obsessed with appearances, elevates the former above the latter when he describes them as being of a "more elevated life and conversation". This elevation serves to guard against the dangerous obsessions of appearance by portraying it as culturally inferior to reading and critical thinking. Combined with the utilisation of a business schema, Addison ridicules ideas of fashion and consumption when he claims that these superficial women reckon "the sorting of ribbons a very good mornings work" and such ridicule is seen again in his observation of Tory and Whig women at the opera. Steele also constructs a guard against these feminine vices, and in several instances employs similar techniques to Addison. Observing women at the opera with Mr. Honeycomb, the paradigm of the male gaze, and the female as object, establishes a precedent whereby women are to be observed and critiqued by men. Steele like Addison, uses parallelism to create varying taxonomies of woman, encouraging his readers to adopt the exemplary and shun those defined by the vices of vanity and superficiality. Lastly, Addison's autopsy allegory is the most confronting of the devices employed in *The Spectator* to guard against the threat of fashion and consumption. Serving as a cautionary tale to ward off those who would be seduced by these vices, the potent nature of this allegory and its depiction of the coquette's heart as deformed and tainted, positions the essay as a powerful bastion against cultural corruptions.

Thus when Addison and Steele give examples of women that they disapprove of, either through sharp critiques, societal microcosms or confronting allegories, they trace such criticisms back to the root cause of these women's behaviours and choices. In these instances, such origins are consistently an obsession with appearances and the material, a paradigm that runs in direct opposition to the ideal type of reader Addison and Steele both target and create through their publication. The implied female reader, as a literary construct, is ultimately defined in opposition to what Addison and Steele criticise regarding fashion and beauty. She is not vain, or superficial and does not neglect her mind. She is the whole woman,

personifying what she concerns her mental fortitude with, that being a devoted disciple of Addison and Steele as the arbiters of good taste in matters both literary and fashionable.

Chapter Three: Coffee, Culture, Propriety and the Public.

Issues of public propriety and civility are central to Addison's and Steele's efforts to construct a virtuous England and similarly, therefore, lie at the heart of how *The Spectator* constructs notions of female reading and readership and regulates fashion, both of which have been fundamentally tethered to the ideology that women are, and should naturally be connected with domestic spaces. However, whilst Addison and Steele's interactions with private women are certainly influential, their desire to regulate fashion (especially their critique of female attire at the opera) demonstrates that *The Spectator's* female readers, and women in general in the early eighteenth century were by no means wholly confined to the home. The consequence is that Addison and Steele's 'polite' ideology hinges more on the types of public activities, engagements, interactions and behaviours that connect Englishmen and women than their private affairs. The public arena is where the polite society manifests itself, where its virtues (and vices) are on display. Therefore, Addison and Steele must inevitably address issues of public propriety for their female readership. In my introduction I briefly discussed how Jurgen Habermas's theory of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* singles out *The Spectator* as being crucial to the creation of the English public sphere in the early eighteenth century. In this chapter, I will analyse how Addison and Steele develop notions of implied female readership in addressing issues of public propriety, manners and politeness. In addition I will employ Habermas's theory as well as subsequent criticisms of the theory, to examine how *The Spectator's* female readers were encouraged to operate in this emerging public sphere.

In this thesis, my conception of the English public sphere is highly indebted to Habermas, especially in his formulation of eighteenth-century English society and print culture as propounded in his seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1968). Habermas theorised that the public sphere was an arena (such as a coffeehouse) where private individuals could come together to discuss and critique the bourgeois public sphere. The bourgeois public sphere was a different and distinct entity from earlier versions of public culture that Habermas identified such as the Church or the Court, in that it took in non-centralised institutions such as coffeehouses and took an interest in "the realm of commodity

exchange and labor”⁶⁴ and, “through the vehicle of public opinion [...] put the state in touch with the needs of society”⁶⁵. Crucial to such a discussion, was the presence of print media and periodicals. Habermas himself identifies *The Spectator* as a text which played a crucial role in this phenomenon, largely because of the way it held up a “mirror”⁶⁶ to its readership and to society and large, allowing its audience to be critical, informed and self-reflexive. Utilising Habermas’s paradigm, in this chapter I will examine how Addison and Steele use this process of reflection upon their female readership in regards to issues of public propriety and the maintenance of the polite society.

In adopting Habermas’s framework, however, I also mean to address specific weaknesses that have emerged under the scrutiny applied by subsequent criticisms of his work. The reason for the implementation of such criticisms into my research is perhaps best articulated by Anthony Pollock. Whilst Pollock maintains that Habermas’s argument “remains an unavoidable starting point for studies of early eighteenth-century print culture”⁶⁷, he points out that the model advanced has been criticised for its “blind spots [...] especially regarding issues of gender.” Habermas maintained that *The Spectator* greatly influenced the organisation and democratisation of critical thought in the public sphere, in which English coffeehouses served as integral environments and catalysts for this development.⁶⁸ However for English women in the early eighteenth century, these ideals of freedom, dialogue and debate were quite restricted. Coupled with widespread thought that inappropriate reading was dangerous for the female mind,⁶⁹ women were not nearly as involved in public debates or discussions as men were.

In addressing *The Spectator*’s address to an implied female readership, this thesis seeks to reconcile Habermas’s claims about the importance of the public sphere with other scholarly claims that acknowledge the significance of gender when considering eighteenth-century public culture in Britain. In taking up that that issue, I follow the lead of scholars such as Erin

⁶⁴ Habermas, Jurgen. *The Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1989). pg. 30.

⁶⁵ Habermas. 31.

⁶⁶ Habermas. 43.

⁶⁷ Pollock, Anthony. “Neutering Addison and Steele: Aesthetic Failure and the Spectatorial Public Sphere.” *English Literary History*. Volume 74. Issue 3. 2007.

⁶⁸ Habermas. 41.

⁶⁹ For the Earl of Shaftsbury’s criticism of women reading novels see Jack, Belinda. *Woman Reader*. (New York: Yale University Press. 2012). 189.

Mackie, whose discussion provides a comprehensive mechanism for approaching the issue of Habermas's public sphere while compensating for its lack of attention to gender issues. Chiefly, Mackie argues that "the record of women in English coffeehouses is scanty and does not include any representation of their participation in the debates there",⁷⁰ articulating a key limitation linked to approaches from the earlier models of Habermas and his followers. The consequence is that when *The Spectator* seeks to directly engage with its female readers, it addresses them far more often in the individual, intimate and private setting of the home, than it did its male readers.⁷¹

Whilst *The Spectator* did at times address men at home as well as in public sphere venues, there is not the same level diversity for the periodical's female addressees. We have seen this phenomenon already in several issues. For example, *The Spectator No. 92*. situates its female correspondent, Leonora, in a domestic space that is a sign of femininity and the private realm. In *The Spectator No. 11* when Mr Spectator praises Arietta's aptitude for debate and criticism in developing a model for feminine virtue, the setting is a salon or private party, situated in her own home rather than the coffeehouse environment that might typically have framed such activities if linked to a model of polite masculine behaviour. Because a woman is involved in the discussion, the debate must therefore be held in the domestic sphere, not the coffeehouse as is the norm. Essentially, this reconstitutes the nature of such a domestic space as well as those who participate in the discussion. The practice of debate in Arietta's home mimics that which would take place in the coffeehouse, and the act alone transforms the space from private to public. Furthermore, in so doing, Arietta takes on a more dominant and masculine role in the debate itself. Ultimately, women's freedom of movement and association in the public sphere, as well as the limited extent to which they were able to express themselves in critical debate in this arena becomes a key issue.

The Spectator No. 155. by Steele provides a forum for exploring the effects of constructing the coffeehouse (and, by a process of metonymy, the broader public sphere) as masculine, serving to clearly illustrate how its exclusionary basis presents complications for Addison and Steele's female readers. Mr. Spectator starts this number by explaining how often he overhears inappropriate conversations in public, or an "indecent license taken in discourse",

⁷⁰ Mackie, Erin. *Being Too Positive About the Public Sphere*. In *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*. 84.

⁷¹ See *The Spectator No. 46*. April 23rd, 1711. for an example of the way the periodical models the debates and discussions of its male readers in the coffeehouse setting.

happening when “travelling together in the same hired coach, sitting near each other in any publick Assembly, or the like.” Most importantly, he explains how these conversations are often conducted by vain and conceited men (referred to as “coxcombs”) at the expense of any woman nearby, and has been frequented with letters of complaint from his female readers regarding such an issue.

The issue of impropriety in male-female relations becomes the central theme of Steele’s essay. To further demonstrate such a calamity of impoliteness, the essay includes a letter from a female coffee-house owner, whose experience of ownership further reveals these certain gender complications regarding the public sphere and coffeehouse environment. The woman constantly overhears her male customers, describing “the improper discourses they are pleased to entertain me with”, striving to say “the most immodest things in my hearing” whilst “at the same time half a dozen of them loll at the bar staring just in my face, ready to interpret my Looks and Gestures according to their own Imaginations.” The confronting nature of the male customers in speech and action, demonstrates the extent to which the female in the public sphere is viewed as the other. The way the men make fun of Steele’s correspondent in her own coffeehouse is indicative of how coffeehouses are constructed as masculine environments, to the point that despite her ownership of the property they exhibit immodest, misogynistic behaviour in an attempt to exert control over the space of the coffeehouse traditionally seen as a men’s environment.

Historical studies confirm that women had limited participation in coffeehouse culture, but even limited forms of engagement provide complications for an elitist masculine culture that operates upon a basis of excluding women. Complementing the claims advanced by Erin Mackie, Edward Bramah maintains that women were forbidden (not explicitly) from partaking in the masculine coffeehouse culture.⁷² Brian Cowan argues that this was chiefly due to the fact that the themes that dominated discussion and debate (such as business and politics) were often male centred and therefore female discussion and participation was unnecessary. In particular, Cowan refutes Paula McDowell’s assertion that female news hawkers (who would show up in coffeehouses to sell their wares) were powerful agents of political discourse and “were not merely the producers and distributors of others peoples’

⁷² Bramah, Edward. *Tea and Coffee: A Modern View of Three Hundred Years of Tradition*. (Essex: Hutchinson & Co, 1972). pg. 47.

political ideas.”⁷³ Cowan asserts that these hawkers “can hardly be considered full-fledged participants in the masculine public sphere to whose needs they catered” and that “these poor and illiterate women may have made their way into the coffeehouses, but were not considered to be a legitimate part of it.”⁷⁴ The coffeehouse was predominantly a masculine environment, and even as the proprietor of the establishment, the woman in this essay is isolated. This scenario, as well as her treatment at the hands of her male customers, presents a unique problem for *The Spectator*’s female readership: that is, how a woman can maintain her civility and propriety when surrounded by dominant masculine incivility and exclusion of the female sex in the coffeehouse environment.

In addition to the complexity of being isolated females in a dominantly masculine environment, Cowan highlights how social perceptions of female coffeehouse owners further contributed to the incivility they experienced from their male patrons. Cowan points to female owners of coffee houses as the only tangible example of female presence in the environment. These “coffee-women” made up approximately twenty percent of coffeehouse owners in 1692.⁷⁵ However they were considered “suspect figures”, and Cowan writes that “the low social status of the coffee-house keeper only accentuated the coffee-woman’s vulnerability to the solicitations of her customers.”⁷⁶ The coffee-woman in this essay is certainly indicative of this historical phenomenon. She is the only woman in a masculine environment and from the way the male customers stare at her in her own bar, the woman is almost like an exotic animal at a zoo. The traditionally masculine nature of the coffeehouse renders her as foreign and as the other.

Steele’s inclusion of her letter, and his sympathy towards her “melancholy circumstance” at the hands of the male “rogues” serves to illustrate the alarming complications women face due to masculine dominance in the coffeehouse and public sphere at large, and the subsequent implications of such. However, such implications are for the most part, a result of the behaviour of impolite and improper men in the public space, behaviour which as a result dictates how women should in turn act. Steele writes that her dilemma is not unique, having

⁷³ McDowell, Paula. *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998). pg. 31.

⁷⁴ Cowan, Brian. *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). pg. 251.

⁷⁵ Cowan. 251.

⁷⁶ Cowan. 251.

received “innumerable messages” from his female readers regarding such an issue. As the public sphere transformed, so too did English commerce. Habermas’s examination of emerging debate and criticism is that commerce was linked to England’s ability to produce and disperse periodicals such as *The Spectator* at a high rate. There was an inextricable link between commerce and publicity and print culture and debate.⁷⁷ A significant problem for women at this time of social and economic transformation, was that in a public sphere mostly ruled and occupied by men they were often viewed as goods themselves, commodified by male observers. News hawkers who catered to the needs of the masculine public sphere and female owners of coffeehouses were often associated by men with “some form of sexual immorality”, particularly prostitution.⁷⁸ We see this phenomena discussed by Steele in response to the coffee-shop owners letter, as the woman in Steele’s essay is certainly viewed as a sexual object and as something that can be purchased. Steele writes:

They tell me that a young Fop cannot buy a Pair of Gloves, but he is at the same time straining for some Ingenious Ribaldry to say to the young Woman who helps them on. It is no small Addition to the Calamity, that the Rogues buy as hard as the plainest and modestest Customers they have; besides which, they loll upon their Counters half an Hour longer than they need, to drive away other Customers.

The “young fop” (also beau, a man excessively obsessed with his appearance⁷⁹) mentioned by Steele, is just as interested in the woman selling him the gloves as he is in the gloves themselves. She, too, is seen by the customer as being indistinguishable from the goods she sells, and so determined are men such as these to acquaint themselves with women shopkeepers that they loiter in the stores to “drive away other customers.” Women in the public sphere were often seen as “sexually vulnerable, even available”, argues Will Pritchard, and that “inevitably, women who sold were suspected of being themselves for sale.”⁸⁰ Even the French philosopher Samuel de Sorbiere remarked that there were “to be had...fine shop women”⁸¹ in London, implying that women in the public sphere were like consumer goods, to be looked at, inspected, even bought. The coffeehouse owner’s anxieties are confirmed by

⁷⁷ Zaret, David. *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). pg. 35.

⁷⁸ Cowan. 253.

⁷⁹ Cohen, Michele. *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century*. (London: Routledge Publishing 1996). pp. 37-41.

⁸⁰ Pritchard, Will. *Outward Appearances: The Female Exterior in Restoration London*. pg. 163.

⁸¹ In ‘The European Magazine, and London Review’ *Philological Society of London*. 1815 Vol. 16 pg. 122.

Steele when he writes that the “very excellencies and personal perfections” of women such as her, subject them to be treated by men “as if they stood there to sell their Persons to Prostitution.” This notion put forth by de Sorbiere further reinforces perceptions of female coffeehouse owners as prostitutes, if not commodities.

Furthermore, the use of the feminized “young fop” by Steele further reinforces the gendering of public spaces. His focus on fashion and shopping for clothes undermines his masculinity as he is partaking in an activity that is usually reserved for women. Certain activities it can be seen, enforce or undermine gender norms and expectations. On the one hand, this man is portrayed as less masculine due to his shopping for clothes (an entirely different and far less masculine economic activity than trade and commerce) and the shop environment is far more intimate and far less public than the coffeehouse or royal exchange (a more common, and masculine scene of business portrayed in *The Spectator No. 69.*). On the other hand, Arietta in *The Spectator No. 11.* is seen as more masculine and dominant because of her partaking in the traditionally masculine pursuit of cultural and political debate and discussion, and as such her home becomes a much more open public setting than it would normally be.

The question at the crux of this cultural issue for Steele’s female readers, is how to act in response to such implications, and Steele subsequently uses analogy to define and defend them against such male behaviours. Steele’s use of analogy to compare women in the public sphere to prostitutes is termed by Will Pritchard as “usefully imperfect.”⁸² Pritchard argues that Steele’s use of the analogy to draw an absurd comparison to prostitution effectively defends women and sets a precedent for which “legitimate female economic activity” is established. In the first place, the effect of Steele’s analogy is to legitimise the presence and activity of women in the public sphere, providing a new model for their proper entry into public sphere affairs. Whilst the shopkeeper is just one type of female reader of *The Spectator*, her letter itself is representative of *The Spectator’s* female readership as a whole. It is therefore assumed that the concerns and anxieties presented within her letter are shared by other female readers, especially when Mr. Spectator writes that he often receives letters on such a topic. For the female readers that associate with such concerns, Steele is encouraging them to partake in public sphere activity as they do so already, be they coffeehouse owners, shopkeepers, news hawkers or otherwise. Steele does not provide them with a behavioural

⁸² Pritchard. 164.

taxonomy to do so as he does in regards to other issues (such as fashion), but instead chooses to use analogy and absurdity against men who would seek to undermine their activities in public life

The masculine dominance of the public sphere presents *The Spectator*'s female readers with an object that, whilst inevitably unavoidable, must be overcome. Jon Mee examines how Steele's essay places its female readership in relation to the male dominated public sphere. Mee examines how through the use of the shopkeeper's letter and Steele's critique of male behaviour, *The Spectator* provides a new model for women to enter the masculine public sphere, placing them in a specific constructed position. Mee highlights the essential problem in the public sphere, male dominance alongside "predatory male sexuality" which acts as a "diversion from this smooth system"⁸³, that is politeness, propriety and eloquent conversation that *The Spectator* promotes. Mee argues that Steele does not use the misogyny and male dominance of the public sphere "as a reason to exclude women from the conversable world, but their role is a passive one, and depends upon men regulating their desires into a polite circuit of trade." Furthermore, Mee points to Steele's argument that, "A woman is naturally more helpless than the other sex, and a man of honour and sense should have this in his view, in all manner of commerce with her" and suggests that while Steele is encouraging his female readers to participate and engage in English public life, any participation must be grounded with an understanding of the male dominance of the arena and their proper function and position within it.

Such an understanding of the masculine dominance of the public sphere leads Steele in this essay to even target his male readers, and in so doing creates a symbiotic relationship between men and women in the public sphere. Men, as the dominant sex, are constructed as the regulators. The behaviour and actions of men determine whether such exchanges between the sexes are misogynistic and in poor taste or are compassed by what Mee terms "a polite circuit of trade."⁸⁴ Such is the importance and role of men in empowering female agency that Steele encourages men to exhibit notions of idealised masculine virtue so as to support and enable women. He states that "a man of honour and sense" should have in mind the state of women when interacting with them, and therefore demonstrate respect and politeness. That

⁸³ Mee, Jon. *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830*. (London: Oxford University Press, 2011). pg. 53.

⁸⁴ Mee. 53.

said, the terming of women as “helpless” creates a ‘damsel in distress’ paradigm. Consequently, women are so reliant upon men to regulate gender interactions, that when the very little agency and freedom they experience in the public sphere is under threat, they must consult another more significant man in Steele for assistance. Steele, who as the arbiter of politeness and taste, acts as a mediator between them and such men. For *The Spectator*’s implied female reader, the realisation is that all public sphere activity - even when legitimate - will be regulated and impacted upon by men both negatively (as demonstrated in the behaviours of the coffeehouse customers) and positively (in models of propriety exemplified by Mr. Spectator or the ‘virtuous’ men that Steele deploys). The female reader here is ultimately left to make her own choices about how she is expected to act in the public sphere when encountering men. Either she must endeavour to surround herself with good men of “honour and sense” (an impossibility for the shopkeeper who relies on customers, be they polite or not) or when a situation arises in which she feels undermined or disrespected by men in the male dominated arena, she cannot speak for herself, but rather seek out a man of “honour and sense” to rectify the situation on her behalf.

The Spectator No. 336 provides a different, yet appropriate point for an examination of Addison and Steele’s efforts to mould their female readers’ actions in the public sphere. This issue outlines female to female relations in the public sphere as opposed to male and female relations that were considered in No.155, yet still relies on familiar literary devices. Steele employs a direct reader-to-author discourse, which exemplifies a modelled, implied and ideal form of relationship between author and reader, promoting a broad vision of ideal readership that has an intimate reliance on *The Spectator*, similar to Leonora’s connection to the periodical as a “fair disciple” in *The Spectator* No. 92. This essay features no argument from Steele, but directly quotes the letter written by one of his female readers. In No.92 Addison, whilst quoting Leonora’s letter, still offers his own argument, yet Steele does not do the same in No. 336. Subsequently Steele’s argument is constructed solely via the letter of one “Rebecca the distress’d”. Whilst the essay starts on an unrelated issue of young men respecting their elders, with Steele including an epigraph quoting Horace on the matter as well as a male reader’s letter, Steele includes no words or argumentation of his own on the issue that Rebecca presents in her letter. Steele’s action here amplifies the effect created by Addison’s action in No 92. By including Rebecca’s letter with no words of his own or other related material (be they other letters or classical quotes), Steele places the impartation of meaning from text to reader directly on the woman who is writing in to Steele. The

fundamental reliance on Rebecca's letter means that Steele's reader has no indication of what argument will be presented within, but more importantly, the reader becomes ultimately dependent upon her letter for meaning and understanding. As Shevelow argues regarding this mechanism, the use of and reliance upon Rebecca's letter, highlights how Steele uses it to serve an "illustrative and regulatory function" becoming an "additional moral voice" in the argument.⁸⁵

Steele's reliance on the letter creates a framework for his readers to examine and imitate the behaviour exhibited by Rebecca within. Rebecca becomes an additional didactic voice, the underlying implication being that by including her letter, Steele is providing an illustration of how he expects his female audience to operate in the public sphere. The inclusion of her letter without any words of Steele's is suggestive of a tacit approval of her own behaviour. Steele's approval of her behaviour is not just how she operates in relation to *The Spectator*, but more importantly, how she carries herself in public and transmits the ideals and values within the periodical into public life. Demonstrating her behaviour without providing any words of his own is Steele's approbation of her behaviour, it takes precedent in that issue's argumentative hierarchy. Furthermore, it is Steele's way of implicitly declaring he expects other readers to do so as well.

The idealised reader/author of *The Spectator No.336*. exhibits ideal types of public behaviour, and in so doing lays a foundation for an exemplary model for other female readers. Besides "waiting patiently" for Mr. Spectator's papers, a virtue she has in common with Leonora in *The Spectator No.92*, Rebecca is a china merchant, who receives "as fine Company as any o' this end of the Town." Rebecca certainly seems a devoted reader of *The Spectator*, and a woman of fine taste; yet it is Rebecca's actions in treating the female rakes that elevates her character and serves as a model for Steele's female readers. She is patient with her frustrating customers and adopts an attitude of servitude and restraint, the latter of which is particularly important. Rebecca's patience and politeness are crucial ideal virtues for conduct in the social situation, as Lawrence Klein argues that politeness in early eighteenth-century England served as a "normative framework for human relations, since its conventions relied on

⁸⁵ Shevelow, Katherine. *Women and Print Culture. Construction of Gender in the Early Periodical*. (London: Routledge, 1989). 114.

freedom, equality, activity and restraint.”⁸⁶ Restraint, alongside respecting the freedom and (albeit intolerable) activities of the rakish women is how Rebecca’s politeness is manifested. Furthermore, despite “not being a shilling better for it” Rebecca does not compromise her integrity in order to make a sale by cheapening her tea. The behavioural combination of devout readership combined with politeness is the framework for the implied female reader, upon whom Steele aims to program these behaviours. Anthony Pollock argues that the programming of *The Spectator*’s female readers such as in this issue is based upon the illumination of certain identities within the text to be imitated. The illumination of Rebecca’s identity aligns with what Pollock describes as behavioural habits based upon “repetitively consuming periodicals and identifying with those who “look like themselves” in the scenes” in the hope that such habits “take root, automatically, unconsciously”⁸⁷ in the reader. A study of Rebecca therefore, is a study of the implied female reader.

Crucially, Rebecca is of a notably higher class than the female coffeehouse owner in *No.92*, and this distinction in class serves to highlight the diversity of Addison and Steele’s female readership⁸⁸. Furthermore it means that the construction of the implied female reader is not dependent upon class, creed or socioeconomic distinctions, but instead deals with unifying characteristics such as politeness, patience and propriety that transcends social and class boundaries. Just as inside the masculine coffeehouse male customers were “Like Noah’s ark, every kind of creature, in every walk of life...town wit, grave citizen, a worthy lawyer...voluble sailor”⁸⁹ so too did *The Spectator* transcend social and class boundaries to unite its varied female readers in a common quest for civility.

Another device that reveals a different aspect of Steele’s project for constructing an ideal feminine reader lies in the deferential signature with which the paper concludes. Rebecca ends her correspondence by describing herself as “your constant reader, and very humble servant”. In concluding, Rebecca also mentions her young son acting as her secretary in the business, and these last few details have several ramifications in providing an illustration of

⁸⁶ Klein, Lawrence "Enlightenment as Conversation," in *What's Left of Enlightenment?: A Postmodern Question*, ed. Keith Michael Baker and Peter Hanns Reill (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001), 158.

⁸⁷ Pollock, Anthony. “Neutering Addison and Steele: Aesthetic Failure and the Spectatorial Public Sphere”. *English Literary History*. Vol. 7 Issue 3. 2007.

⁸⁸ Coffeehouse owners were of lower social status than not only other women of trade such as china merchants like Rebecca, but often their male patrons who extended inappropriate solicitations. See Cowan. 251.

⁸⁹ Ellis, Aytoun. *The Penny Universities; A History of the Coffee-houses*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956) pg. 46

the implied female reader's behaviour in public. As a humble servant of the periodical, she is an agent of the polite society, she like Addison and Steele's readers, advances this ideology in the public space, and this is particularly evident through her own behaviour. Like the shopkeeper, a woman in public is to be patient and humble. Her public persona does not override her 'natural' feminine function, so she remains, first and foremost, a domestic creature, a fact reinforced by the mention of her son, which underlines her motherly and familial duties. She is unavoidably going to be an object of the human gaze (predominantly male), as seen by *The Spectator's* critique of female fashion at the opera, where the "whole woman" is on display. Just as women should preserve their integrity by making proper choices about fashion, so they should persevere in resolutely proper actions, as Rebecca refuses to do by cheapening her tea.

As a 'Spectator' herself, Rebecca's gaze upon these customers reveals their rakish qualities, and the ridiculousness of their going about town to keep up appearances, but the reader's gaze upon Rebecca reveals the constitution of her own character. Patient, aware of her domestic duties, uncompromising in her ideals, a woman in public should never seek out attention, but let her "whole woman" speak for her. Her role as a 'Spectator' also brings her into alignment with the other members of "The Spectator Club" such as Mr. Spectator and his friend Will Honeycomb. Furthermore, such an alignment affects the gendered nature of her presentation because it applies a type of masculine power and privilege to her as a 'Spectator' that the public sphere would prohibit, but with which Steele empowers her. Despite such empowerment, Rebecca is still defined by her virtues of humility, patience and politeness. Lawrence Klein highlights how this particular importance on politeness in the face social faux pas was an integral part of both *The Spectator's* didacticism and eighteenth century England in general, arguing that, "politeness was sometimes viewed as the necessary means for bringing out the best in oneself and in others. By being agreeable, it was said, social actors establish a trust that allows them then to tell the truth, to criticize, and to urge reforms on others without offending them."⁹⁰ Rebecca as a social actor, is able to firstly tolerate these women through politeness, but more importantly is able to initiate a discourse with *The Spectator* in her attempt to facilitate the paper's project in reforming inappropriate behaviour. As a model, her actions create crucial implications of this issue for Steele's female readers in public life. The female reader of *The Spectator* is to be defined by politeness, to not make a

⁹⁰ Klein. 857.

scene in protest to these women and thus be hypocritical, but to use such a definition of her own character to attempt to reform those around her as an agent of change for Addison and Steele. The female reader must maintain order and politeness in the face of impoliteness and disorder in the public sphere.

Rebecca's example, emphasized through the absence of any contextualising discussion from Mr. Spectator himself, demonstrates what Terry Eagleton terms as *The Spectator's* "substantive social function" as criticism. The use of Rebecca's letter to demonstrate a type of taxonomy of public propriety demonstrates Steele's efforts of "codifying norms" and "regulating practices"⁹¹. Steele's use of her letter (whether an authentic original or Steele's own fabrication) to demonstrate the scene within rather than constructing his own authorial argument implies that such behaviours are already being exhibited and should be normalised and imitated. This process can be seen to be a more potent social criticism and argument for politeness than an issue constructed solely upon an argument from Steele as by displaying Rebecca's behaviour Steele illustrates ideal habits in action, providing him with an existing example that (at least in appearance) does not need to be constructed artificially. Rebecca's letter helps serve the social function of *The Spectator*, because it allows, as Habermas has argued, the magazine to hold up a "mirror"⁹² to both its readers and English society at large.

This essay also sees Steele constructing characterisation via juxtaposition, criticising improper behaviour in women so as to define his own female readers in opposition to them. As complainant about improper behaviour, Rebecca is presented as a laudable model for public propriety whose example is contrasted to that of the "female rakes" who frequent her shop. The actions of the female rakes are criticised on grounds that indicate Steele's view of the polar opposite of feminine virtue, entering the store "twice or thrice a day", requesting China to be brought down from shelves to be inspected, requesting tea to be cheapened, inspecting all manner of goods, yet buying nothing. These "No-Customers" never buy any goods, but rather rearrange her entire store in their fuss. "These rakes" she explains are "your idle Ladies of Fashion" no doubt a reference to Steele's criticism of fashion at the opera, in which these superficial women are more concerned with their appearances than their character. "Having nothing to do, employ themselves in tumbling over my ware." These

⁹¹ Eagleton, Terry. *The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), 10.

⁹² Habermas. 27.

women are the very antithesis of what Addison and Steele seek to create. In *The Spectator* No.10 Addison tasks himself with “finding fair diversions for the fair ones” and we have already seen their criticism of women who are vain and superficial. These customers, are women whose vanity and superficiality are direct results of improper employment. They have no proper, appropriate diversions. They embarrass themselves by rummaging through the shop repeatedly without buying, and by requesting the tea to be cheapened they compromise their integrity.

Another facet of Steele’s method for developing the parameters of his ideal female reader lies in his employment of stereotypical models in his characterization of women. The women rummaging through the store are destructive to the polite society. Termed “Day-Goblins” by Rebecca, they strongly resemble the faerie-like creatures in their behaviour, and this a key characterisation as they rummage through the shop like goblins rummage through mines and tunnels. David Morrill has explored cultural perceptions of faeries and goblins in the eighteenth century, and makes the case that in that particular era goblins were often seen as vampiric rather than faerie-like.⁹³ The women leech of the virtue and politeness of Rebecca to sustain their self-aggrandisement. They are parasites that threaten the sanctity of Addison and Steele’s polite society in the same way they upturn the sanctity of Rebecca’s china shop. These women embody the attitudes and vices that Steele sees as being destructive to the polite society; superficiality, a desire for attention and self-aggrandisement. The dehumanisation of these women through the term “goblins” creates a potent taxonomy for the implied female reader to define themselves in opposition. Furthermore, as a symbol of order, politeness and English-ness, the China shop represents a range of virtues that that Addison and Steele value in polite society, and in Rebecca as an agent of *The Spectator*. In this sense, Rebecca’s China shop serves as a broader societal microcosm for polite society. An ordered and structured environment, which, through Rebecca’s ownership and maintenance is defined by politeness, patience, humility.

However, the way *The Spectator* encourages its female readers to embody public propriety varies in regards to whether she is interacting with men or women. *The Spectator* No.336 seeks to make its female readers agents of politeness and propriety in the public sphere. The

⁹³ Morrill, David S. (spring 1990), 'Twilight is not good for maidens': Uncle Polidori and the Psychodynamics of Vampirism in Goblin Market.' *Victorian Poetry* 28:1. pp1-2.

shop serves as a microcosm for broader English society, and Steele uses the shop-owner, Rebecca, as an example of modelled behaviour for his readers, but also characterises ideal behavioural traits in juxtaposition to the actions of the female rakes who visit the store. Rebecca serves as a beacon of civility in the shop, who by exhibiting ideal characteristics and personifying *The Spectator's* polite society she becomes an agent for it, that in a complex process of osmosis she might be able to influence the lives and actions of the women around her.

Yet we see Steele take a very different approach in *The Spectator* 155. Like Rebecca, the female coffeehouse owner struggles in the face of rudeness and incivility, yet this time the breaches in propriety originate from male customers. Rather than be encouraged as an agent of change, the owner must rely on Steele to act as an intermediary. Due to the patriarchal nature of the public sphere, she cannot directly challenge or stand up to these men. She is, in this way, a significantly different individual to the figure of Arietta from *The Spectator* No. 11 (whose character was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis). Situated outside of the feminine domestic space (an arena in which Arietta could indeed challenge and debate male counterparts), the inherent patriarchy and misogyny found in the public sphere, and more specifically the coffeehouse despite her ownership of it, means that Rebecca takes on a far more submissive role, relying on Steele to act on her behalf. Using an analogy of men waiting upon prostitutes, Steele highlights the absurdity of gender relations in the coffeehouse, but also defends women who find themselves in such situations and legitimize their social and economic activity in the public sphere as a whole.

From the two issues of *The Spectator* discussed in this chapter, we can draw a set of conclusions that are indicative of how Addison's and Steele's implied female reader is defined by their public sphere relationships. *The Spectator's* implied female reader is defined by politeness, civility and even submissiveness in the public sphere. The only instance in which she is afforded a significant sense of agency is when she interacts with other females. In that scenario, the female reader is encouraged to act as an agent of change and politeness amongst peers of her sex. Amongst men however, it is assumed that such women cannot stand up to and defend themselves against the misogyny of the public sphere. As a result, women such as the coffeehouse owner, must use men of "honour and sense" to act as an intermediary. For *The Spectator's* implied female reader, the realization is that their activity in the public sphere whilst certainly legitimate, is one that will always be regulated and

impacted upon by men both negatively (coffeehouse customers) and positively (Steele). The subsequent ramification is that male dominance in public and coffeehouse culture, means firstly that women will inevitably have to encounter and interact with men. Secondly, that women must absolutely associate themselves with upstanding and honourable men so as to be protected and honoured herself. She is afforded power and agency only to the extent in which she is around women only. Upon encountering men, such power and agency is subsequently shifted to males: either in males who use such power to suppress her, or those of “honour and sense” who act on her behalf against such undesirable men. Such is the nature of the woman’s position in English society at the time, that her very freedom of movement and economic activity in a male dominated public sphere, is one that *The Spectator* defines as being inevitably dependent upon men.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to examine Addison and Steele's construction of the implied female reader in *The Spectator*, focusing on the two authors' vision for their female readers in regards to their readership practices, fashion habits, and behaviour and position in the public sphere. In the introduction to this thesis, I argued that such an examination would make a valuable contribution to academic knowledge concerning *The Spectator*, particularly because of the gap it fills in existing research regarding both Addison and Steele's periodical and early eighteenth-century female readership. Key to this thesis, has been the theoretical frame provided by Iser's theory on the implied reader, in which a text makes particular assumptions about the nature of, and social and cultural predispositions possessed by the reader as its intended recipient. In regards to *The Spectator*, if this recipient does not already embody the necessary predispositions and values advocated by Addison and Steele, they are subsequently encouraged and instructed to do so.

Most importantly, I asserted that the argument of this thesis would be that whilst Addison and Steele enforce specific paradigms upon their readers to restrict and control femininity, the result of such a phenomenon is not, as Donald Newman has argued, the creation of a singular, "unitary" vision of woman.⁹⁴ Rather, I contend that *The Spectator* acknowledges and addresses various categories of the English woman, and is careful to distinguish between them. This can be seen in the variety of female readers evident in *The Spectator* essays, from Leonora and Arietta, to the unnamed coffeeshop owner, or Rebecca the china merchant, and the subsequent way Addison and Steele construct behavioural and cultural codes for and from these different women. As a result of acknowledging and addressing these numerous types of women, the virtues and ideals exhibited by *The Spectator* provides a common ground for these women to engage with the text and adopt a set of behavioural codes in order to exhibit the characteristics of an ideal female reader. Addison and Steele encourage in these varied types of women virtues such as intelligence, critical self awareness, politeness, patience, discipleship, and discipline, as well as agency and autonomy. These traits are universally consistent throughout *The Spectator*, and demonstrated in fundamentally different categories of woman. For example, both Arietta and Rebecca are used to model patience and politeness, whether it be in response to the man Arietta debates literature with in her home, or to the impolite women that plague Rebecca's shop. Such common virtues essentially collapse the

⁹⁴ Newman, Donald. *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*. (Boston: Rosemont Publishing, 2005). 46.

differences regarding visions of ideal female readerships, whilst still recognising the distinctions between Addison and Steele's actual various female readers. *The Spectator's* implied female reader is not one single unitary vision of woman. Instead, the implied female reader serves as a paradigm of codes and norms for multiple and varied types of English women to aspire to.

The fundamental revelation of this thesis has been how Addison and Steele's construction of the implied female reader is ultimately indicative of *The Spectator's* vision for the role and function of women in polite society. Using contrasting methodologies, Addison and Steele construct a vision of an implied female reader whose readership practice is defined by critical thinking and intellectual awareness, yet ultimately grounded in domesticity. Addison's use of irony and comical discourse with Leonora, compared with Steele's use of intertextuality and disruption of the narrative frame, creates a paradigm of a critical female reader, well versed in modern and classical literature, who can debate and discuss with her male counterparts. Despite these virtues however, this female reader is constantly positioned in the domestic space, whether it be in Leonora's reading of *The Spectator* at her breakfast table or Arietta's discussion having to take place in the home rather than the coffeehouse. The positioning of female readers in the domestic, is indicative of the way Addison and Steele thrust patriarchal paradigms upon their female readers to control femininity.

Such a process of control is also evident in Addison and Steele's attempt to regulate fashion. We have seen Addison and Steele's creation of negative taxonomies of woman, such as the women in *The Spectator No.10*, to who, "the sorting of a suit ribbons is reckoned a very good mornings work", or the coquet in *The Spectator No.281* whose brain has become filled with lace and ribbons. Addison and Steele's use of these negative examples to define their own readers in opposition to, demonstrates the way the two authors control femininity, and manipulate feminine taxonomies to instil ideal virtues in their female readers. The observation of the women at the opera by Mr. Spectator and Mr. Honeycomb in *The Spectator No.4*, powerfully illustrates how *The Spectator* observes, critiques and regulates femininity. In so doing, it establishes a framework for its female readers to aspire to, to be critically minded just as they are encouraged to do when reading, to be innocent of thought and not seduced by the vanity and superficiality of fashion, which erodes and disintegrates ideal feminine qualities.

Whilst it is clear that whilst Addison and Steele restrict and control femininity, *The Spectator*'s construction of an implied female reader's behaviour and of her place in the public sphere, is both complicated and complex. The patriarchal nature of the public sphere has significant ramifications for the English woman in public, as she finds herself outside of and removed from the domestic space that conventionally serves to constrain and encompass her actions. The underlying crux of this issue, is that *The Spectator* seeks to create in its female readers a culture and taxonomy of politeness and courtesy in the face of impoliteness and discourtesy. At all times, they are encouraged to embody such politeness and courtesy, and even in some circumstances, to couple it with submissiveness. When faced with impoliteness, the method in which women are permitted to respond is dependent upon whether the source of said impoliteness is male or female. It is at this point, that women such as the female coffeehouse owner in *The Spectator No.155* must rely on men such as Steele to act as an intermediary between them and masculine incivility. The female coffeehouse owner cannot engage and interact with men in the same way Arietta is able to do in the domestic space, and we see these two different individuals act as models of different behaviour. On the one hand, cognitive awareness, on the other, politeness and civility.

What is clear and salient, is that there is no single, unitary vision of woman. Whilst Addison and Steele do enforce restrictions on their female readership, they provide a common social, cultural and behavioural framework for which varied English women can aspire to. The contrast that is evident in this process, is that whilst these female readers are encouraged to abide by a uniform set of codes, they are acknowledged as, and remain, distinct, separate feminine entities. Such codes however, are fundamentally indicative of the values and ideals Addison and Steele wish to impart to their broad female readership. Addison and Steele endeavour to create a female readership that whilst dependent upon *The Spectator* as an arbiter of taste, are critically minded, engaged with and knowledgeable of both modern and classical literature. Employing such acuteness of the mind, these readers are to resist the superficiality and vanity of appearance and fashion, remaining innocent in thought, whilst polite, civil, and where the need arises, submissive in the public sphere.

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