

SEPARATED BY  
THEIR SEX

WOMEN IN PUBLIC  
AND PRIVATE IN THE  
COLONIAL ATLANTIC WORLD

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## CHAPTER 4

### Women and Politics, Eighteenth Century–Style

In 1697, an anonymous pamphleteer published *A Letter to a Gentlewoman concerning Government*, directed to a possibly apocryphal elite female Protestant who still aligned herself with the deposed James II. Why, he asked, when “the best and wisest Statesmen” in England supported King William, did “Ladies, who generally know little or nothing of State Affairs,” support the ousted Stuart monarch? Flattering the addressee by terming her “very sensible,” he carefully laid out arguments for William and Mary’s claim to the throne and reasons to reject a strict hereditary succession, which would have favored the son born to James in 1688. If his discussion did not wholly convince her, the author reminded her that nevertheless “Silence becomes your Sex . . . especially in a matter so much above your Capacity and Reach.” Insisting that “the most commendable Quality of a Woman” was agreeing with her male relatives on political topics, he urged her and any female counterparts to keep their opinions to themselves, “never suffering your tongues to get the Mastery of you.” After all, as women, their circumstances were preferable to those of men, who had to swear formal allegiance to the new monarchs and who could lose their estates and positions if they failed to do so. He advised such women to keep negative opinions about the current succession to themselves and to appreciate their privileged position.<sup>1</sup>

Just thirty years earlier in Virginia, no one thought that politics was “above the Capacity and Reach” of Lady Frances Berkeley nor that she knew “little

or nothing of State Affairs." No one directed her to defer to her husband or suggested that she or her female contemporaries hold their tongues when political subjects were being discussed. Sarah Grendon had erred by speaking "foolish and indiscreet" words, but her situation was likened to, rather than differentiated from, that of her male contemporaries. Clearly, in the intervening years a marked change had occurred in attitudes toward elite Anglo-American women's role as state actors.

Although *Letter to a Gentlewoman* instructed the female gentry to defer to their better-informed husbands, brothers, and fathers in political affairs and denigrated their capacity to comprehend such subjects, the pamphlet's very existence acknowledged that elite women still had political opinions that mattered. Ever since ordinary English women had first petitioned Parliament in the 1640s, men had denied them the role of rightful political actors. Because status trumped gender in mid-seventeenth-century English political culture, high-ranking women did not at the time suffer from such an exclusion. Indeed, petitioners occasionally tried to claim high-status leaders in an attempt to add credibility to their appeals. The intended audience for the 1697 pamphlet revealed the persistent vestiges of that attitude. But over the course of the eighteenth century, recognition of high-ranking women's appropriate role as state actors largely disappeared from Anglo-American culture. It was replaced by satires and essays dismissing the possibility that women might legitimately work to advance a political agenda.

*Letter to a Gentlewoman* was apparently the last serious, freestanding English or American publication on the subject of government and politics aimed at a female readership until after 1800.<sup>2</sup> That the culture at large failed to acknowledge the legitimacy of high-ranking women as state actors did not mean that they—particularly English aristocrats—ceased all such endeavors. But it did mean that for the most part politically involved women pursued actions less directly linked to public affairs, especially in the 1740s and thereafter. Instead of formally petitioning Parliament or publishing statements describing their positions, English women covertly sought patronage for their relatives or hosted social gatherings with political overtones. Rather than publicly questioning the judgment of colonial courts, American women largely confined their opinions to diaries and correspondence. In such writings, female colonists signaled their understanding of a cultural precept that proscribed any feminine political activity.<sup>3</sup>

The immediate context for the onset of the change in attitudes toward women and public affairs was provided by the successive reigns of James II's two Protestant daughters, Mary II and Anne. The nominally joint monarch Mary, in an un-queen-like but feminine manner, deferred to her husband,

William, who had a lesser claim to the throne than she. Anne, though initially popular when John Dunton discussed her accession in 1702, attracted more and louder criticism in the years just before her death in 1714. A substantial share of that criticism revolved around her relationships with her successive female favorites, Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, and Abigail Masham. In a highly politicized era with ten parliamentary elections in as many years, the duchess allied herself with the Whigs and Masham with the Tories. Their bitter rivalry affected the public's image of the queen, for she came to be seen as weak and easily manipulated by the women of her bed-chamber. Both men and women were politicized by the widening division between the parties, and political rhetoric began to reflect gendered concerns. As Rachel Weil has observed, by the time of Anne's death, "negative perceptions of the queen were now connected to broader anxieties about the place of women in political life."<sup>4</sup>

The swiftness of the shift in attitudes can best be highlighted by contrasting two publications—one from 1692, the other from 1709, just seventeen years later. In the early 1690s, even as John Dunton was paying little attention in the *Athenian Mercury* to women and the public realm, his contemporary Nahum Tate, poet laureate and dramatist, insisted that many women "have exerted their useful Influence beyond the Sphere of their private Houses: They have many times been beneficial to States and Kingdoms, to their Country and mankind." This use of *sphere* in its novel meaning demarcating women's domestic role indicated that Tate had absorbed some of the same cultural currents that moved Dunton. At the same time, though, his tract—*A Present for the Ladies: Being an Historical Vindication of the Female Sex*—adopted the traditional view by asserting that women matched men in their political abilities. Tate listed familiar female heroines of the past—Deborah and Esther from the Old Testament, the Sabine women, Boadicea, and especially Queen Elizabeth—and asked his readers, "After such Illustrious Precedents of *Female Worth*, can it possibly be a Question, Whether Women are capable of *Government*?" To Tate, the answer was obvious: women could unquestionably rule as well as men.<sup>5</sup>

Yet when Bernard Mandeville in 1709 penned a series of dialogues between a maiden aunt and her niece which touched occasionally on public affairs, he revealed the altered climate by inserting an apology for portraying such politicized female characters. "I expect to be Censured for letting Women talk of Politicks," Mandeville commented. His fictional women not only discussed public matters but also conversed about the fact that they were doing so. In one dialogue, Antonia (the niece) observed that "every Cobler and Tinker talks Politicks," yet her aunt Lucinda would "never talk to me about State-Affairs."

Lucinda replied, "That is, because you are not fit for it, nor I neither." Subsequent dialogues made it clear that Lucinda believed she and Antonia were unfit to discuss "State-Affairs" because they had inadequate knowledge of political and military matters. So Lucinda asked her niece, "don't you see how little Politicks agrees with young Ladies, *Antonia?*" and the younger woman responded, "I must own, that much of 'em would soon tire me, and something that is more delightful, and requires less Attention, suits my Humour better." The notion that women preferred topics that did not require much attention and were "more delightful" than "State-Affairs" soon became deeply embedded in standard ways of thinking, in part because of the extraordinary cultural influence on both sides of the Atlantic of two early-eighteenth-century British periodicals.<sup>6</sup>

### The *Tatler* and the *Spectator*

Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, founders of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, were active to varying degrees in Whig politics throughout much of their adult lives. Both born in 1672, they first met and became friends when studying at the same school; they then attended Oxford more or less simultaneously, though at different colleges. Their paths diverged for a time as Steele failed to complete a degree and joined King William's army while Addison persisted in his studies, earning degrees and preparing for a diplomatic career. The two ended up in London early in Anne's reign, and both made names for themselves as writers of plays and Whiggish political essays. Addison contributed some articles to Steele's *Tatler* in 1709-10; subsequently, they together founded the immensely popular and influential *Spectator*, which appeared six days a week from March 1, 1711, to December 6, 1712, with a brief, unsuccessful revival in 1714.<sup>7</sup>

Steele's outspoken political essays in other venues enveloped him in controversies, especially when the Tories were in power. Thus the two men prudently and publicly disavowed partisanship in the *Spectator*, even while covertly continuing to advance a Whig agenda. Yet their evident neutrality in the partisan wars of the era did not and could not fully explain their aversion (especially evident in Addison's essays) to women's involvement in political matters, broadly defined. The authors maintained nominal neutrality in the Whig-Tory disputes but showed no similar neutrality toward whatever interest in public affairs their female readers might manifest.<sup>8</sup>

Like the *Athenian Mercury*, both journals defined their reading audience as partially female. Also like the *Mercury*, they defined topics other than politics as those relevant to "ladies."<sup>9</sup> In the first issue of the *Tatler* Richard Steele

made that exclusion explicit. He explained that even though he had chosen its title to honor women, his journal was "principally intended for the Use of Politick Persons, who are so publick-spirited as to neglect their own Affairs to look into Transactions of State." Then he added, "I resolve also to have something which may be of Entertainment to the Fair Sex."<sup>10</sup>

Steele thus assumed that women did not number among the "publick-spirited" people who interested themselves in "Transactions of State." To his mind, the "Fair Sex" needed to be "entertained," not informed. For the convenience of what he presumed would be two gender-differentiated sets of readers with diverse interests, he even announced that he would head his essays with the names of different coffeehouses to signal the subjects that followed: distinctive datelines would identify commentary on "Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment"; "Poetry"; "Learning"; "Foreign and Domestick News"; and a miscellaneous category. Thus women would not have to read pieces on the classics and politics in order to be entertained by accounts of pleasure and gallantry; and men could readily skip remarks on cultural subjects while focusing on the news. Only the heading "from my own Apartment," designated for the miscellany, would potentially draw readers of both sexes.

Twice in the *Tatler* Steele commented on the phenomenon of women's interest in widely publicized trials. When many female spectators crowded into the sensational impeachment trial of Dr. Henry Sacheverell before the House of Lords in February-March 1710, Steele drafted observations with tongue firmly in cheek. The ladies "at present employ their Time with great Assiduity in the Care of the Nation," he wrote; "it is not to be expressed how many cold Chickens the Fair Ones have eaten since this day Sevensight for the Good of their Country." The spectacle of women frequenting prosecutions for rape prompted more serious reflections. Isaac Bickerstaff, Steele's alter ego, proposed that half the jurors in rape cases should be female, since all-male juries in effect represented the accused criminals. Yet he also argued that until the day when female jurors were impaneled, women who chose to attend such trials violated their requisite modesty, a key attribute of womanhood. Whereas Steele began with a potentially revolutionary speculation about women's potential as jurors in one category of crimes, then, he ended with an assertion of the importance of maintaining a modest feminine stance.<sup>11</sup>

Further, Steele disdainfully dismissed any notion that women could think rationally about politics. In October 1710, Bickerstaff recounted observing an undoubtedly fictional debate between two women employing "a Jargon of Terms" they did not understand but which they believed were relevant to the current disputes between Whigs and Tories. Isaac was nonplussed when they purportedly asked him to explain the difference between "Circumcision"

and "Predestination." Before he could respond, Bickerstaff indicated, they resumed their quarrel, "lay[ing] open the whole State of Affairs, instead of the usual Topicks of Dress, Gallantry, and Scandal." These days, he reported, "the very silliest of the Women" were aligning themselves with the parties. Yet women could not win. Steele and other male cultural arbiters also excoriated them for spending too much time gossiping with each other about fashion and scandal. They were damned if they talked politics, and damned as well if they did not.<sup>12</sup>

Steele's writing partner, Joseph Addison, was even more outspoken on the subject of how ludicrous was the notion that women, including high-ranking ones, could reasonably be involved with politics and partisanship. In the *Spectator* he addressed the subject directly several times. In early May 1711, he introduced a lengthy discussion by alluding to a passage in *The Iliad*. Hector, he noted, had told his wife to "mind her Spinning" after she attempted to comment on an upcoming battle. Addison explained that thereby Homer insisted "that Men and Women ought to busie themselves in their proper Spheres, and on such Matters only as are suitable to their respective Sex." He warned women to avoid "Party Rage," which had recently come to occupy too much of their conversation. Excessive partisanship, a vice even for men, was "altogether repugnant to the Softness, Modesty, and those other endearing Qualities which are natural to the Fair Sex." Addison even contended at length that "there is nothing so bad for the Face as Party Zeal." Observing that he never knew a female partisan who retained her beauty for as long as a year, he advised his female readers to avoid all political disputes, "as they value their Complexions." Perhaps women accepted his message: a letter to the *Spectator* from "Helena" declared that "everybody" among her acquaintances "commended" the essay.<sup>13</sup>

Less than a month later, Addison tackled the subject again by mocking female attendees at the Haymarket Theatre who sat on different sides of the auditorium and wore face patches precisely placed to identify their partisan affiliations: "the Body of *Amazons* on my Right-Hand, were Whigs, and those on my Left, Tories." Referring to the Sabine women's success in persuading the Romans (their husbands) and the Sabines (their brothers and fathers) to establish peace, Addison recommended that British women follow that example instead of adopting men's partisanship. Reminding his readers that Roman women donated their jewelry to finance the nation's wartime defense, he developed an argument pointing up the relationship between women's exclusion from politics and their domestic role:

As our *English* Women excell those of all Nations in Beauty, they should endeavour to outshine them in all other Accomplishments

proper to the Sex, and to distinguish themselves as tender Mothers and faithful Wives, rather than as furious Partizans. Female Virtues are of a Domestick turn. The Family is the proper Province for Private Women to Shine in. If they must be showing their Zeal for the Publick, let it not be against those who are perhaps of the same Family, or at least of the same Religion or Nation, but against those who are the open, professed, undoubted Enemies of their Faith, Liberty, and Country.<sup>14</sup>

In that comprehensive passage Addison made it clear that the "Accomplishments proper to the Sex" were "Domestick" and excluded "furious" partisanship. The only political course available to women, whose "proper Province" was the family, was to support the nation against its external enemies. Women were, by definition, *private*; that is, they had no appropriate public role, except perhaps sacrificing their personal possessions for the common good, as Roman women had done when their country faced particular peril.

Addison continued to fulminate against women's involvement in public affairs after the *Spectator* ceased publication. In the *Freeholder*, a series of political essays first published in 1716 and reprinted repeatedly until 1790, he again addressed the topic. Although Addison patted himself on the back for paying unique attention to women as "Members of the Body Politick," he complained that "Coquette Logician[s]" did not know how to reason about public affairs. It was difficult to dispel the errors and biases in women's political thinking, he averred, because "Arguments . . . are of little use" with them. Any author who tried to use "strong Reasonings" in "State Controversies" with the "Fair Sex" was foolish. Instead, women had to be made to laugh at their own ridiculous political ideas. As an example, he recounted the same tale of alleged legal bigamy that had served as the basis for the 1646 pamphlet *The Parliament of Women*, the risible results of which—he claimed—had led Roman women to forgo political involvement thereafter. Convincing partisan English women of their inability to be state actors, he implied, would have similar consequences.<sup>15</sup>

Addison's skepticism about all female politicians became fully evident in those *Freeholder* articles that reiterated a theme of his *Spectator* essays: vocal partisanship rendered women "unamiable" and unattractive to men, especially when a "pretty Bosom [was] heaving with such Party-Rage." Following the logic of his *Spectator* statement that partisanship and the household were antithetical, he linked household disorder to a woman's interest in politics: "we may always observe that a Gossip in Politicks, is a Slattern in her Family." An "angry Stateswoman" who paid attention only to public affairs would inevitably neglect her children and produce a chaotic household. Therefore,





## THE DEVONSHIRE

Pub May 5. 1784 by M. Phai. N. 68 Holborns.

**FIGURE 4.1.** "The Devonshire Amusement," 1784. A satirical cartoon produced when Georgiana Spencer, Duchess of Devonshire, campaigned for Charles James Fox in the parliamentary election of 1784. The right-hand image shows the consequences predicted by Joseph Addison decades earlier: the duke is diapering a baby, exclaiming, "Ah William every one must be cursed that like thee, takes



## AMUSEMENT.

a Politic Mad Wife." The image is completed by the document dangling from his pocket, labeled "Letters to Married Women," and the picture of the cuckold hanging on the wall. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

women should adopt "perpetual Neutrality" in politics. He insisted that women's recent involvement with partisanship had led to both "the Ruin of good Huswifery" and the "visible Decay of the National Beauty." So, Addison concluded, a "States-woman is as ridiculous a Creature as a Cot-Quean [effeminate man]. Each of the Sexes should keep within its particular Bounds, and content themselves to excel within their respective Districts." He proposed that a female parliament devise rules for all women to observe, among them that "the Discoursing of Politicks shall be looked upon as dull as Talking on the Weather," and that "no Woman of any Party presume to influence the Legislature."<sup>16</sup>

Not all of Addison's contemporaries agreed with him; Bernard Mandeville, for one, filled the pages of the *Female Tatler* in 1709–10 with accounts of female worthies who had been "famous for Wisdom, Politics and Prudence in Government" in ancient times.<sup>17</sup> Yet on both sides of the Anglo-American Atlantic, Addison's view of women's political incapacity would prevail over Mandeville's opposite position. The ideas Joseph Addison forcefully expressed in his essays in the first two decades of the eighteenth century came to dominate Anglo-American thinking on the subject of women and politics. They can be summed up as follows: all women, high-ranking or not, should eschew involvement in politics. Engagement in political talk would render them unfeminine and ugly. Such women crossed gender boundaries in ways both ridiculous and dangerous—ridiculous, in that they could not reason properly about political subjects and so adopted absurd positions; dangerous, in that political passions led them to neglect their domestic responsibilities, causing chaos in their families. To maintain social order, all women had to focus on households, remaining neutral in politics while glorying in their freedom from responsibilities to the public. Men would handle such matters. Women needed only to be "amiable" and to cultivate those "Accomplishments proper to the Sex," to be "tender Mothers and faithful Wives, rather than . . . furious Partizans."<sup>18</sup>

When the young Benjamin Franklin, an aspiring writer in Boston in the early 1720s, chose a model for the essays he wrote at night after work in his brother's printing establishment, he picked the *Spectator*. He "read it over and over," he recalled, "and was much delighted with it," especially the writing style. After taking brief notes on an essay and mixing them up, he attempted to re-create the contents without reference to the original. "This was to teach me Method in the Arrangement of Thoughts," he explained. To improve his vocabulary and use of language, he practiced turning the essays into verse and several weeks later into prose again. By the end of the process,

Franklin began to think he "might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English Writer, of which I was extremely ambitious."<sup>19</sup>

The brilliant teenager studied the *Spectator* more intensively than most residents of North America, but others too found its prose attractive and entertaining. Information about its appeal in America at the time of initial publication is lacking, both because little correspondence survives from that period and because the only newspaper then being published in the colonies devoted itself almost exclusively to commercial topics. Yet by the middle decades of the century, increasingly prosperous Americans were using the *Spectator* as an unparalleled guide to proper behavior and genteel modes of living. Probably the most widely advertised publication in the colonies, it was owned, borrowed, and read by Americans from South Carolina to New England even after independence was won. Its sentiments would echo for years through the pages of those American newspapers whose contributors, like Franklin, sought to imitate its form, style, and content. The *Spectator* and the notions it expressed found eager colonial audiences everywhere in North America by the 1730s.<sup>20</sup>

Evidence of Addison and Steele's influence abounds in colonial sources. Almost as many southerners owned copies of the *Spectator* as owned the Bible, and editions of it outnumbered editions of Shakespeare in South Carolina book collections by three to one. More than one-third of all colonial libraries for which catalogs survive had copies of Addison's *Works*, which included the *Freeholder*, and 15 percent had independent editions of those political essays. The books did not simply sit on the shelves; they were read and remarked on by American readers. One woman, for instance, recommended the *Spectator* to her son (then a student at Princeton) as containing "an inexhaustible store of elegant instruction"; another willed a copy to her great-niece; and a young North Carolina lawyer penned a long entry in his journal defending Addison and Steele against the negative judgments of Henry Fielding. Addison, he insisted, was a far better writer than Fielding. Addison's "Genius, His Learning, the incomparable Grandeur and Sublimity of his Sentiments on the highest subjects," he remarked, "added to an unerring attention to the interests of Virtue, both in his Writings and his Conduct, certainly declare him to all unprejudiced Minds to have been one of the most respectable, amiable, and endearing Characters that ever lived!"<sup>21</sup>

Such British publications as the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, and the *Freeholder* were ubiquitous in the colonies because they filled a void for American readers, who had little locally written published material available to them.

The few colonial printers—not until midcentury was there even one in every province—devoted themselves primarily to producing official documents and printed forms and possibly a sermon or two. Newspapers were difficult for their editors to sustain for long; most survived only a few years before disappearing or merging with others. Accordingly, imported (or reprinted) English books and periodicals composed much of the reading material available to literate colonists throughout the century. Middling and elite Anglo-Americans sought to enhance their ties to the mother country by following its cultural trends closely; the *Spectator* and its later imitators set the tone for the “Anglicization” of the colonies, a process through which provincials did their best to replicate British life on American shores. That it sometimes took a decade or two for the trends to make their way to North America is hardly surprising, given the difficulties of travel and slow patterns of communication. But as time passed, colonial and metropolitan cultures tended to converge, in part because of the influence of British publications on the American audience.<sup>22</sup>

### **Wit and Misogyny in the *New-England Courant* and *New-York Weekly Journal***

The earliest American newspapers—the *Boston News-Letter*, *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia), and *Boston Gazette*, all begun before 1720—filled their pages with dispatches from Europe and commercial information. Aimed at a readership composed of the political and economic leaders of the northern and middle colonies, all three ignored the local news and commentary that elite men would have obtained from daily conversations with their peers in taverns, coffeehouses, and countinghouses, and on the docks or in the streets. Appearing weekly with news compiled by their editors from a variety of sources, such papers focused on the comings and goings of ships and reports of conditions in Britain or on the Continent that might affect the workings of commerce. They stressed practical matters to the exclusion of other topics.<sup>23</sup>

James Franklin’s *New-England Courant*, founded in August 1721, had different aims. Initiated to voice skepticism about the efficacy of smallpox inoculations in the midst of a controversy then raging in Boston at the same time as a major epidemic, the *Courant* also opened its pages to essayists and correspondents who imitated contemporary English authors. Franklin and a small group of other writers—eventually including Benjamin, his younger brother and apprentice—supplied articles and purported letters to the editor

on a variety of subjects. The most important contributors had been born or educated in Great Britain, and many had ties to the Church of England. They prided themselves on their sophisticated taste, attempting to amuse and entertain their fellow Bostonians with witty commentaries. Like his competitors, James Franklin published advertisements, current shipping information, and European news, but his emphasis was elsewhere. Perhaps the key indicator was the fact that the top left-hand column on the front page of the *Courant* was typically devoted to an essay by a local or an English author.<sup>24</sup>

The *Courant*, along with publishing satires on such topics as courtship, marriage, and female gossipers, became the first American newspaper to address the issue of women's public role, echoing themes in the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, and the *Freeholder*.<sup>25</sup> The earliest piece came from the pen of James Franklin, who adopted the pseudonym "Ichabod Henroost," surely mimicking Richard Steele's use of "Nathaniel Henroost" in a 1711 essay. Early in 1722, Ichabod complained about his wife, who had become "an Informer against the Anti-Inoculators" and was spending each day talking to the "vile Fellows of the Town." He feared her obsession with inoculation would ruin their home life. In her absence "the Management of Affairs in the House is left wholly to the Servants, who within this Three Weeks have broke Fourteen earthen Mugs and a Looking-Glass, melted Five Plates, and burnt Two good Brooms." Ichabod thus rendered concrete the warning that Joseph Addison had sounded in the *Freeholder* six years earlier: a woman's involvement in a major public controversy produced chaos in her household.<sup>26</sup>

Another parody mirrored Steele's account of female spectators at the Sacheverell trial. The Boston parallel was the prosecution of a group of pirates in the Court of Admiralty in mid-May 1724. "A Company of Ladies of the first Quality" attended the entire trial, reported a correspondent, "to the great Anoyance of his Majesty's good Subjects the Male Auditors, who were unmercifully squeez'd together upon that unusual Cry in a Court of Justice, *Make way for the Ladies*." After a humorous account of the women's huge hoop petticoats, the author expressed concern about the results if "the Trulls and Gossips of the vulgar Herd" imitated high-status women. "Should this [practice] of Women's attending Courts of Justice become general," he predicted, "a noisy Court" would be commonplace at any trial that drew public interest. He then supplied a lengthy interlocking dialogue in which he imagined what would occur on such occasions:

(This is a) *speak softly* (mighty pretty Lace of yours; what did it cost a Yard?) . . . *That's a pretty Man*, (Law, he'll hear ye) *he in Black there! I don't care if he* (Is your Sister) *does not I* (brought to Bed yet?) *No Madam,*

(Is that the Sheriff?) *but she looks every Day*, (Yes.) *Where's the* (how old is her) *Constable?* (youngest Child?) . . . *I wish every Body'd hold their Tongue*, (Aye perswade them to it,) *I'm sure I wou'd* (Do be quiet,) *if the rest wou'd.*<sup>27</sup>

With all the talk, the correspondent wrote, "my head begins to turn." His clever narrative left his readers with a verbal picture illustrating the inappropriateness of women's presence at such events. Women, he indicated, would not (could not?) concentrate on such serious matters as a trial that could lead to the execution of criminals. Rather, female spectators would devote their time to gossiping about men, clothes, and their families, disrupting the court with their idle chatter. Better, then, that women should simply stay away when men were administering justice—as Steele had, in effect, advised.

That other early colonial newspapers (four more were founded in mainland North America before the end of the decade) did not also stress the same theme and that it disappeared from the pages of the *Courant* as well for the remainder of its relatively brief existence suggest that the relationship of women and the public realm was not of pressing interest to male cultural arbiters in the colonies during the 1720s. But that was to change during the following decade when New Yorkers became enmeshed in a major political confrontation.

In August 1732, New York acquired a new governor, William Cosby, whose wife, Grace Montagu, was an English aristocrat—first cousin of the Duke of Newcastle, sister of the Earl of Halifax. Accustomed in England to the continued political involvements of female contemporaries with similar high standing even at that late date, she behaved in Manhattan as she undoubtedly would have in London. In some ways her actions mimicked those of Lady Frances Berkeley over fifty years earlier. One contemporary even went so far as to claim that she had "the Intire management of that weak madman her husband." In reaction, male New Yorkers not only penned parodies resembling those in the *New-England Courant* in the preceding decade, but also produced a definitive statement asserting women's incapacity for public affairs, the first such essay authored in North America.<sup>28</sup>

Governor Cosby quickly aroused controversy by becoming involved in a lawsuit over salary arrears with a local man of Dutch descent who had served as interim governor before Cosby's arrival. Lewis Morris, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, refused to back Cosby, who suspended and replaced him with James DeLancey, previously an associate justice. Morris then assumed the role of opposition leader, as New York's politicians lined up for or against Cosby. By late 1733, the province was deeply divided into partisan camps

and the opposition had started to publish a newspaper, the *New-York Weekly Journal*, printed by John Peter Zenger; both parties vigorously worked to recruit adherents.

That Grace Cosby, like Lady Frances Berkeley, wielded hospitality as a political weapon becomes clear in the letters Abigaill Levy Franks, the wife of a wealthy Jewish merchant in Manhattan, wrote to her son in London during Governor Cosby's tenure. Having read Addison, Abigaill followed his advice and informed her son that although she privately favored the opposition, she publicly remained neutral in the "Perfect war" that had engulfed the town. The governor and his wife were "Very much disliked," she reported, but the governor was attempting to win allies "by being Affable & Courteous." The Cosbys hosted frequent dinner parties at their residence in Fort George with guest lists largely composed of merchants of Dutch heritage. Grace Cosby, for her part, held weekly visiting days for such men's wives. Abigaill disclosed that she had often been invited to the fort for afternoons or evenings but that she had never accepted, "for I desire noe more honour then the rest of my fellow Cit[izen]s." She described Grace's "Agreeable Courtly Method," which the governor's wife had employed to flatter a member of the assembly so successfully that it put him into an "Extacy" of pleasure. Abigaill recounted that one woman who called daily on the Cosbys had become an object of spiteful mockery; she rode in the governor's coach so often, some people joked, "She has Allmost forgot to walk a foot."<sup>29</sup>

In the midst of her account, Abigaill commented, "As You will observe, the Jounalls are Very merry upon These feasts." She was referring to a parody of the governor's hospitality campaign that appeared in Zenger's *Weekly Journal*. On January 21, 1733/4, the "Widows of this City" complained that although they were "House keepers, Pay our Taxes, carry on Trade," the governor had neglected them. "The Husbands that live in our Neighbourhood are daily invited to Dine at Court," they observed, insisting that they could be just as "Entertaining" as the men. Why, then, were they being excluded? was their implicit question. "Tho' we don't understand the Law, we do the Gospels," the "widows" concluded, citing Proverbs 23:1-7, verses "lately put up near the Markett Place." That passage made the author's point crystal clear: "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee. . . . Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat. . . . Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee."<sup>30</sup>

Anyone reading the article who failed either to recall or to look up the contents of Proverbs 23:1-7 in the Bible would have missed the most pointed part of the satire. Had those verses actually been posted "near the Markett Place"? It is impossible to know for certain in the absence of other



contemporary sources. But the "petition" cleverly cited relevant scriptures to attack the governor, who must have been incensed at the implication of such phrases as "deceitful meat," yet would surely have felt himself unable to challenge publicly a passing reference to an Old Testament passage. Further, the use of "widows" as spokespeople for the governor's critics was inspired. Had the author chosen instead to represent the purported petitioners as an anonymous group of men, their exclusion from gubernatorial entertainments could have been (mis)interpreted by readers as whiny complaints coming from some merchants who were not in the Cosbys' inner circle. That widows were the nominal authors exposed the covert political aims of the governor's seemingly generous hospitality. All that differentiated the female traders and housekeepers (who were not invited to the fort) from the neighboring men (who were welcomed there as guests) was one factor: the men were voters and state actors; the women were not. Any careful reader of the *New-York Weekly Journal* could easily reach the conclusion that the governor was engaged in a "deceitful" campaign to woo New York's political leaders.

As the "Party rage" and the "Vast deall of Polliticall Dissentions" (in Abigail Franks's words) persisted and the anti-Cosby critiques in Zenger's paper became more pointed and less amusing, the governor charged Zenger with seditious libel. Several issues of the *New-York Weekly Journal* were publicly burned; the affair culminated in Zenger's famous libel trial and acquittal in August 1735. The ongoing discord led to a "most dreadful breach" between Grace Cosby and some of her female acolytes, one male observer reported, but he gave no specifics as to the cause.<sup>31</sup>

Grace continued her politicking, and when her husband fell seriously ill in late 1735, she, like Lady Frances Berkeley during the illness of *her* husband in 1677, began to take actions on his behalf. Grace Cosby's meddling outraged others, including the governor himself. "It is whisper'd," remarked Daniel Horsmanden, a New York attorney, "that he upbraided Madams Conduct in Such Lively Colours, that She fell in a Swoon."<sup>32</sup> Grace had opened and read a packet of letters that arrived from London addressed to her husband at a time when he was too sick to act. Among them was a missive from several members of the Board of Trade indicating that they intended to remove his opponents from the colony's council, thus suggesting that he had won a clear victory in New York's partisan conflict. The removal was not yet final, but Grace reported it as having been completed.

Just as Frances Berkeley had spread negative information about Nathaniel Bacon, so Grace Cosby gossiped about the ousting of her husband's adversaries from their official positions. Furthermore, she did so long before the governor himself had read the letter in question. Horsmanden, who noted

that the letter "was Shown about to a great many," including himself, termed Mrs. Cosby and those who believed her "Novices in polliticks" who had to be "undeceive'd" about its contents. But surely Grace, who was no political novice despite Horsmanden's characterization, knew exactly what she was doing. She and Frances Berkeley—who was similarly called to account for her gossip mongering—both used talk as a mechanism for supporting their husbands. The difference was that Governor Cosby himself "upbraided" his wife more or less publicly whereas Governor Berkeley probably covertly colluded in his wife's actions, at least until they became a public embarrassment after Bacon demanded a formal explanation and apology.

In this context of partisan confrontation and Grace Cosby's political activism, Zenger's *New-York Weekly Journal* published the first American essay that did not just satirize women's involvement with politics but asserted explicitly that women should not be state actors.<sup>33</sup> The untitled, unsigned article appeared in August 1734, in the midst of the issues of the *Weekly Journal* that led to Zenger's prosecution. After an ungendered epigraph, "Study thy self, learn in what Rank and State / The wise Creator has ordain'd thy Fate," the author directly addressed the newspaper's female readers. He hoped he would not offend them by asserting that "Poli[tic]ks is what does not become them; the Governing Kingdoms and Ruling Provinces are Things too difficult and knotty for the fair Sex, it will render them grave and serious, and take off those agreeable Smiles that should always accompany them." The author's initial stress on "Governing Kingdoms" and "Ruling Provinces" was not coincidental; Grace Cosby had brought to New York an aristocratic woman's traditionally activist style, which was unusual in mid-eighteenth-century North America and clearly had aroused considerable antagonism in the colony.

The essayist then recounted two anecdotes, neither of which pertained to female rule or governance and the first of which strongly resembled the story Steele told in the *Tatler* of encountering two women having an animated argument about public affairs. After expressing deep concern about every day hearing "Numbers of fair Ladies contending about some abstruce Point in Politicks, and running into the greatest Heats about they know not what," he described a meeting with two women who were arguing about politics over tea. They were so incensed that he barely escaped "without being scalded," he reported. The second tale pertained to women "shewing their Resentments in the publick Streets"; his target was a woman who instructed her children not to show any signs of respect when they walked past the house of a member of the party she opposed. Once she arrived home, she purportedly "could not help exulting at . . . how pretty the Children had behaved"

in following her directions. While admitting that men should "shew a just Disregard for all those Tools of Power that endeavour to contribute to their Slavery," and that women should always be contemptuous of "any Man that appear'd a Tool," the author nevertheless insisted that women should not follow her example.

Hastening to add that female readers should continue to peruse the *Weekly Journal*, the author advised them to teach their children "the Principles of Liberty"—but also "good Manners," as the mother in his second story had not. "I think a Woman never appears more agreeable then when she is discharging the Duties incumbent upon a Mistriss of a Family, when through her Management her Friends partake of a Genteel Frugality," he asserted. Such behavior "will redound much more to their Honour than by Discommoding their pretty Faces with Passion and Resentment."

The themes of the essay thus bore a striking resemblance to the earlier arguments of Joseph Addison. Like Addison, the New Yorker declared that "the fair Sex" could not understand the "abstruce" points of politics, which were "too difficult and knotty" for them; that they should avoid partisan "Heats"; that their "pretty Faces" would be ruined if they became too "grave and serious," talking with "Passion and Resentment" and thus losing their "agreeable Smiles"; and that they would be much better off if they focused on "discharging the Duties incumbent upon a Mistriss of a Family."

Such points were then driven home by other publications in the *Weekly Journal*. A month later a reader signing himself "A.B." submitted to Zenger a poem by the Englishman George Lyttelton, "Advice to a Lady." Among other words of wisdom, the poet told "Belinda," whom he was addressing:

Seek to be good, but aim not to be great;  
 A Woman's noblest Station is Retreat;  
 Her fairest Virtues fly from publick Sight,  
 Domestick Worth! That shuns too strong a Light.  
 To rougher Man Ambition's Task resign,  
 'Tis ours in Senates and in Courts to shine  
 . . . . .  
 One only Care your gentle Breasts should move,  
 The important Business of your Life is Love.<sup>34</sup>

A few months later, a correspondent claiming to be a woman apologized for writing for publication, then complained of men "setting up for Politicians." In women's presence, she remarked, "instead of saying those pretty Things that I think we deserve, they are talking of Deeds, Property, Lawyers,

Courts, and Judges... that we poor Girls can't comprehend." Such men, she declared, were "mere *Woman-Haters*,... cold and indifferent." Men—as the August essayist had argued—should of course defend New Yorkers' privileges, but they should do it "in the proper Places and not fill our Ears with... the Lord knows what." Men who talked to women about current political affairs, she averred, would be far more congenial if they discoursed instead about "the Beauties of a married State, and all the Pleasures and Happiness that attend it." She ended her untitled article with a long poem celebrating women's and men's mutual positive influence on each other, to the benefit of all concerned.<sup>35</sup>

The message to Zenger's female readers was unmistakable. It was, indeed, the same message conveyed nearly two decades earlier by Joseph Addison: women should stay out of partisan disputes and even political discussions, which were appropriately the sole province of men. Instead, they should focus on their domestic responsibilities and glory in their roles as sweethearts, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families. In the 1730s, American women and men clearly grasped that message. In May 1736, shortly after Governor Cosby's death, Cadwallader Colden, a New York councillor, praised his wife, Alice, for her nonpartisan socializing: "I am pleas'd that you know nothing of parties but visit & converse without any regard to them." Soon thereafter he likewise advised his daughter, Elizabeth DeLancey, to avoid "being a party Woman A Lady never looks more re[di]culous to men of Sense than when she sets up for a Politicean & never more betrays her Judgement than on such Occasions."<sup>36</sup>

### The Anglo-American Debate over Women's Political Role

In early-1720s Boston and mid-1730s New York, such misogynist publications questioning women's capacity for politics went unanswered. By contrast, the late 1730s and early 1740s brought a flurry of publications in England and America debating the issue. In each case, the dialogue began with an essay attacking some aspect of women's claim to a public role, and now those essays occasionally—though not always—elicited responses, all of which came from authors claiming to be female. Much more is said about the contours of this device, *rhetorical femininity*, in the next chapter; here it is sufficient to observe that nearly every defense of women's political acumen appearing in the middle of the century employed it. That contrasts sharply with similar publications of three to five decades earlier. Men such

as Nahum Tate and Bernard Mandeville readily revealed themselves as men in the text even if they published their works anonymously. That by the late 1730s support for women's claim to a public role came primarily from nominal women speaks volumes about the growing gender divide in Anglo-American society.<sup>37</sup>

In September 1737, an anonymous contributor to *Common Sense, or the Englishman's Journal*, a periodical series reprinted in part in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and later appearing as a separate two-volume set, published essays on the theme of affectation in men and women. The latter focused in large part on delineating the "natural" role of women in such a way as to exclude them from the public realm. Both essays were eventually republished in the American press, so colonial editors clearly believed that the sentiments expressed would interest their readers.<sup>38</sup>

In the first essay, the author roundly attacked those men he termed "self-created" coxcombs, or men who pretended to have talents they in fact lacked, offering prose portraits of men to whom he gave such names as Fatuus and Ponderosus. Fatuus, he declared, had the "Post of Honour" among the others; one key fault was that "he talks Politicks to his Women." That foreshadowed the major theme of the second essay, which criticized women who failed to recognize that "each Sex has its distinguishing Characteristick" and that women should not abandon "their natural Characters" to act like men. His descriptions of women included Agrippina, who read just enough to talk "absurdly" on any subject; and Canidia, who "talks Politicks and Metaphysicks, mangles the Terms of each, and, if there be Sense in either, most infallibly puzzles it."

The author declared that he intended to "advise and reform" his female readers rather than offend them. But, he insisted, "their Sphere of Action is more bounded and circumscrib'd" than "Men's Province," which was "universal, and comprehends every Thing, from the Culture of the Earth, to the Government of it." His aim, he declared, was to convince women to "act their own natural Parts, and not other Peoples." And he clearly outlined women's "natural" role: "Women are not form'd for great Cares, themselves, but to sooth and soften ours"; they provided men with a "desirable Retreat from Study and Business. They are confined within the narrow Limits of Domestick Offices and when they stray beyond them, they move excentrically, and consequently without grace."<sup>39</sup>

Just how "excentrically" such graceless women moved, in the opinion of the author, became obvious when he began to discuss women in myth and history who "have made very considerable Figures in the most heroick and manly Parts of Life." In most such cases, he averred, the tales of their exploits

were "so mix't up with Fables, one is at Liberty to question either the Facts or the Sex." Strikingly, he then went on to question not the facts but the sex. Citing a purported treatise on hermaphrodites, he insisted that its author had proved definitively that "all the reputed Female Heroes of Antiquity were of this Epicene Gender," although in deference to his female readers' modesty he would refrain from detailing the evidence for that assertion. He also gave two more recent examples: Queen Christina of Sweden, for whom "the Masculine was so predominant" that she even adopted man's dress; and, most significantly, Queen Elizabeth, "of whose Sex we have abundant Reason to doubt, History furnishing us with many Instances of the Manhood of that Princess, without leaving us one single Symptom or Indication of the Woman." Women who insisted on "going beyond the Bounds allotted to their Sex," he declared, should publicly admit that they were hermaphrodites, and until they did so he would not permit them to "confound Politicks."<sup>40</sup>

Such extraordinary language was deliberately intended to shock his reading audience. Women who dared to venture into the public realm were literally unsexed; by stepping outside the "natural" and "narrow" boundaries of the domestic sphere into the broadly expansive province of men, they violated not just cultural and social but biological norms. The contrast to the woman who knew her proper place could not have been sharper. She displayed "native Female Softness" and had "a natural Chearfulness of Mind, Tenderness and Benignity of Heart." His ideal woman, Flavia, bore little resemblance to the earlier negative pictures. She was superior to others but concealed that superiority carefully, adapting readily to any company or circumstances. "Tho' she thinks and speaks as a Man would do, still it is as a Woman should do; she effeminates (if I may use the Expression) whatever she says, & gives all the Graces of her own Sex to the Strength of ours." Women, in sum, "should content themselves with the private Care and Oeconomy of their Families, and the diligent Discharge of Domestick Duties."

Given the heavy-handed argument in the *Common Sense* essay, it is unsurprising that no one in America (and seemingly no one in England either) dared to challenge it publicly. Any woman who penned and published a response would have left herself open to the charge of hermaphroditism, for the mere act of contradicting the author in print would have moved a woman beyond the limits of "domestick offices" and into sexually uncharted territory, or so the author would assert. A man coming to women's defense might well have found himself branded a "Cott-Queen," also a target of the anonymous author, who warned men against intruding on "Female Detail."

Yet a 1739 essay in the same series, which was reprinted in New York the following year, elicited replies from English and American authors adopting

a pose of rhetorical femininity. *Common Sense* 135 reflected on the wisdom of Roman law, "by which Women were kept under the Power of Guardians all the Days of their Lives." Women were so fickle, ignorant, and flighty that they could destroy marriages and families if given too much freedom; they were unable to govern themselves. "The right Use of full Liberty is only known to Men," the author insisted. Women were most appropriately confined to the household: a woman's "true Eclat is a private Life, and the Oeconomy of a Family her solid Glory—Women risque too much to go out of that little Circle of Action to which Decency has confined them." Moreover, if men ever admit that women are our equals, he warned, "they will immediately want to become our Mistresses," which would lead to disaster.<sup>41</sup>

*Common Sense* 135 addressed women's public role only implicitly, by its emphasis instead on women's appropriately restricted "private Life." The "constant female reader" of Zenger's *New-York Weekly Journal* who replied to the essay adopted the same approach. She challenged the author's negative characterization of women, argued that men too often made poor decisions, and asserted that "there are bad Husbands who destroy the Happiness of the Matrimonial state, as well as bad Wives." She therefore accepted the terms of the debate as the *Common Sense* author stated them.<sup>42</sup>

An English author who responded to the same essay took a very different tack, going beyond asserting that women were capable of governing themselves to contend that they were also capable of ruling others. In thus broadening her focus, she revealed the linkage between the two seemingly diverse roles: confining a woman to "a private Life" necessarily involved preventing her from exercising her talents in the public realm. And *that* she wanted to challenge.

Sophia, "a person of quality," cited *Common Sense* 135 several times in her 1739 pamphlet, *Woman Not Inferior to Man*, which is widely regarded as the most important English predecessor of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Sophia's identity remains a mystery. She presented a frontal challenge to the author of *Common Sense* 135 and other misogynists of the mid-eighteenth century, and did so with sweeping claims of women's competence in many fields of endeavor. Whoever Sophia was, she had a copy of François Poulain de la Barre's 1677 tract, *The Woman as Good as the Man*, in front of her as she wrote, but she was not wholly dependent on its contents.<sup>43</sup>

Sophia divided her work into seven chapters, three of which explicitly addressed the question of women's political abilities: "Whether the Men are better qualified to govern than Women, or not"; "Whether the Women are fit for public Offices, or not"; and, unusually, "Whether Women are naturally

qualified for military offices, or not." In these chapters Sophia argued that women were "as much qualified . . . by nature" to hold public office as "the ablest of *Men*." She exposed what she termed the "very great absurdity" of men's circular reasoning on the subject of women's education: "Why is *learning* useless to us? Because we have no share in public offices. And why have we no share in public offices? Because we have no *learning*." Since England has had "glorious" queens, she contended, could women not also fill "the subordinate offices of ministers of state, vice-queens, governesses, secretaries, privy-counsellors, and treasurers?"<sup>44</sup>

Men, Sophia argued, excluded women from public positions only because of "custom and prejudice," and because women did not engage in the same "violence, shameless injustice, and lawless oppression" as they did. Freed from "the disadvantages imposed upon them by the unjust usurpation and tyranny of the *Men*," women would be fully capable of serving the public in civil or military affairs. The most radical part of Sophia's argument, a section that drew on Poulain de la Barre, pertained to women's capacity for military leadership. Why, she asked, should it be more surprising "to see [a woman] preside in a council of war, than in a council of state"? Surely, she declared, "the military art has no mystery in it beyond others, which *Women* cannot attain to." All men were not sufficiently strong to endure the hardships of a campaign, nor were all women too weak to participate in military operations. Moreover, most women were naturally as courageous as most men. She concluded that only men's "brutal strength" gave them a superior position in the world, and that did not entitle them to "engross all *power* and *prerogative* to themselves."<sup>45</sup>

"A Gentleman" replied to Sophia in *Man Superior to Woman*, published later that same year. In misogynist prose, he cited "all the greatest Sages of Antiquity," who had seen women as "less noble, less perfect, and consequently inferior to *Men*." Analogizing between household and polity, he observed that "those poor pretty Creatures must make a very sorry Figure in Government and publick Offices, who appear so universally unqualified for the Administration of private Oeconomy." As for holding military rank, that was wholly "unnatural and out of Character" for women. In reasoning echoing that in the 1737 *Common Sense* essay, he implied that any woman who sought military office would unsex herself. "It is no Praise then, but rather a Disgrace, to any of that soft Sex to be qualified for military Offices."<sup>46</sup>

Sophia did not let the attack go unanswered, replying in yet another publication, *Woman's Superior Excellence over Man*, which restated and partially modified her earlier position. When she began her writing project, she explained, she had expected to find "the sphere which *Women* are capable of



acting in very narrow," but she had soon realized her mistake and had drafted *Woman Not Inferior to Man* to show what she had learned. Sophia declared firmly, "I am resolved to shew my adversary, and all his sex, that there is at least one *Woman* capable of preferring truth to flattery, sense to sound, and who dares assert her right in the face of usurpation, tho' harden'd by custom into tyranny." She disdainfully rejected the "impotent endeavours" of her opponent, crowing that his "weak defence" had made "a bad cause worse." Characterizing his argument as "an idle collection of foul-mouth'd scurrilities from the Ancients," Sophia boldly turned her opponent's household-polity analogy back on himself. If he insisted that all women were unfit for rule because certain women could not manage their households properly, she could just as well contend that because of some men's "indiscretion in private life . . . all his sex are disqualified from public government." She did, though, modify her comments on women and military leadership. She did not intend to imply that women should actually participate in the military, she declared, but rather only to reveal "the excessive silliness" of men's arguments that all women were "naturally cowards."<sup>47</sup>

It is telling that the one position from which Sophia retreated in her second pamphlet was the most unusual assertion in the first, and that which was most dependent on her seventeenth-century predecessor, Poulain de la Barre. Was she accurately describing her original intention? The answer is not clear. But what is clear is that for all her insistence on women's capacity for assuming civic responsibility and their intellectual equality, Sophia also accepted eighteenth-century notions of sexual difference. Her ultimate goal, she declared in her conclusion to *Woman's Superior Excellence*, was to show other women "that if the *Men* have by fraud and violence gain'd a superiority of power over us; we still retain our original superiority of sense and virtue over them." Honest men, she averred, had to admit that they could not equal women's "perfections of soul" or their "charm of personal beauty and graces."<sup>48</sup>

The 1751 one-volume republication of the three Sophia pamphlets, titled *Beauty's Triumph*, was advertised for sale three times in Boston a decade later.<sup>49</sup> Those advertisements constitute the only evidence that colonists had access to the terms of the Sophia debate. But American newspapers carried other opinion pieces reprinted from English sources that addressed the subject of whether women had an appropriate role in the public realm and, if so, what the contours of that role might be. America produced no local Sophia to champion women's ability to participate in public affairs. Instead, the authors whose works were later published in the colonies were unanimous in their

opinion: either women should stay out of politics altogether or they should participate only in an appropriately feminine manner.

The writers who advocated women's total exclusion from the public realm took several different approaches, many of them mocking. One wit offered a description of a "political Ballance" that would accurately weigh the abilities of various public figures; he placed 999 women on the scale at once, yet "they were all found *wanting*; except one and her I found dead in the Scale." A misogynistic poet translated into verse Joseph Addison's calumny about women's uncomprehending use of political terminology: "her arguments directly tend / Against the side she would defend / ... And, to defend the whiggish cause, / Her topicks from the tories draws." Another author turned the absence of a law preventing women from taking the English throne into a satirical petition from "Dame Catherine High-Blood" and others contending that they "may be no more shut out from private than publick Power" and outlining the circumstances under which women should be entitled to "wear the Breeches" in a variety of families.<sup>50</sup>

Others took the matter more seriously. One tack was to discuss various female rulers but not to mention their skill at governance, focusing instead on other aspects of their lives, such as their learning or—as when Caroline, George II's politically astute queen, died in 1737—to celebrate only their "prudent Family Government."<sup>51</sup> Another was to denigrate the political roles of the wives or mistresses of powerful men. An English essay reprinted in the *New-York Weekly Journal* in early 1751, for example, contended that "the greatest Ministers never had Wives," because wives could not keep secrets and employed manipulative wiles behind the scenes. "There is no Enemy so dangerous as a Woman," the author warned; a determined female could entice men into "Snares" that belied their "pretended Strength and Resolution." As an example, he cited Mark Antony's passion for Cleopatra, which had led to "the depth of Misfortunes." Insisting that a government wholly excluding feminine influence would be best, he failed to mention that Cleopatra was a powerful ruler in her own right.<sup>52</sup>

Those who foresaw that women could be a positive force in the public realm sharply restricted the scope of such activism. An English essay republished in Boston in 1739 advised contemporary women to look to heroines of the past to learn how to be "useful Subjects" and lauded those ancient "Female Patriots" who had sacrificed their personal interests for their country's good. Yet the author's main point was that times had changed. Queens had once led conquering forces, but "our modern polite Ladies" had no need of "Military Virtues." Long ago, governments had called on "Female Power."

Now, though, women would fulfill their patriotic obligations not as "Warriors and Heroines" but instead as "Wives, Mothers, Sisters, and Daughters" who knew how to sew and cook and who purchased "the Manufactures of [their] Country" instead of imported goods.<sup>53</sup>

A similar call for women to devote themselves to domesticity and frugality for patriotic reasons dominated a pamphlet first published anonymously in London in 1746 and thereafter reprinted several times before the end of the decade in Britain and America. James Burgh's *Britain's Remembrancer* appeared in America in the year of its initial publication under the title *A Serious and Earnest Address to the Gentry, Clergy, and the Other Inhabitants of the British Nation. Also a Faithful and Pathetick Expostulation to the Women...* Burgh, writing in the immediate aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 and in the middle of the War of the Austrian Succession, argued that British society needed thorough reformation. As the American title suggested, he admonished clergymen and magistrates, then addressed "my fair Countrywomen." He accused women of devoting too much attention to the "Pleasures of Theatrical and Musical Entertainments, to the Neglect not only of all that is spiritual and sacred, but also of those domestic Cares which are your proper Province." Pursuing even seemingly innocent diversions would remove women from their "only natural Sphere... originally intended by the Ordination of Heaven"—in short, their familial and household responsibilities. To be anything other than "dutiful Daughters, loving Wives, tender Mothers, prudent Mistresses of Families, faithful Friends, and pious Christians" would be "quite out of Nature," Burgh insisted. So how could women best help themselves and the nation? Quite simply, they had the power to reform men.

Upon the whole, if you will resolve to retrench your Extravagancies, to employ your Time at home in the Works of domestick Oeconomy, Charity, Virtue, and Piety, and filling up the Place you hold with regard to your Friends, your Relations, and your God: you will contribute what is properly in your Power toward the Reformation, and consequently the saving of your unhappy Country.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, for James Burgh, women's most appropriate public role in the end came down to this: fulfilling their domestic responsibilities and reforming men through their own virtuous conduct. The boundaries of women's sphere, natural and ordained by God, confined them so tightly to the family that only through personal relationships with husbands, children, and others could they contribute to public well-being. By the late 1740s, through such

works as these, all women were being theoretically excluded from the realm of public affairs.

That Burgh's argument must have carried particular resonance in North America is suggested by the fact that his work was reprinted nearly as often in the colonies as in Great Britain. Even though a good part of the content (for example, complaints about women's frequenting the Covent Garden theater or the Ranelagh pleasure garden) bore little relevance to life in Boston, New York, Williamsburg, or Philadelphia, printers in those towns produced new editions of his pamphlet, presumably because local readers wanted to purchase them or because the printers thought a local audience would find them appealing.<sup>55</sup>

No American Sophia challenged the new gender-role strictures in print. After the departure of Grace Cosby, only one woman in the colonies, the prominent Pennsylvania Quaker Susanna Wright, is recorded as engaging in open politicking. During a heated contest for Lancaster's seat in the colonial assembly in 1742, she reportedly helped to write a political pamphlet and then distributed not only it but also "Lies & Tickets [marked ballots]" from a tavern on election day. She thus earned a critic's complaint about her "unbecoming" and "unfemale" political activities.<sup>56</sup>

Susanna Wright's actions stood out dramatically because other colonial women in the middle decades of the century confined their reflections about political matters to their diaries and correspondence, or to personal conversations with close friends and family members. Even if they therefore failed to avoid discussing politics entirely (as Joseph Addison would have preferred), they expressed their interest in muted tones and did not translate that interest into action. Moreover, their language revealed that they were well aware that political topics were "out of their sphere."<sup>57</sup>

### Colonial Women on War and Politics

For several reasons, surviving letters penned by colonial women during the decades before the American Revolution are relatively scarce. Fewer women than men could write, especially early in the century; paper was scarce and expensive; and the difficulty of dispatching correspondence meant that people wrote letters primarily when they were separated from loved ones for months at a time at a considerable distance. Such lengthy separations were relatively rare in the years before the Revolutionary War. Diary keeping by women was even more rare, for the act of writing to oneself (as a diary is, in effect) demanded a high level of literacy and the availability of time for reflection.

Accordingly, written evidence of colonial women's reactions to political and military affairs is exceptionally sparse and scattered before the 1740s. But then the onset of near-continuous warfare between 1739 and 1763, and the subsequent beginnings of the resistance movement that culminated in the struggle for independence, impinged directly on women as well as men.<sup>58</sup>

Some women, the New Yorkers Abigaill Franks and Alice Colden among them, avidly read colonial and English newspapers and reported what they learned to distant correspondents or, conversely, thanked those correspondents for sending newspapers. When they had additional news gleaned from other sources that would supplement the "prints," they passed that on too.<sup>59</sup>

Those who lived in places where papers were harder to acquire eagerly sought information from friends and tried to separate rumor from fact. One such consumer of news was Esther Edwards Burr, a resident of Princeton, New Jersey, who during the Seven Years' War was deeply concerned about the fate of her parents, then living on the frontier in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Esther filled the long journal-letter she wrote seriatim to her close friend in Boston, Sarah Prince, with information about the war she learned from her husband and others. After an Albany resident told her bluntly in September 1754 that the Indians wanted "to kill all the people in Stockbridge," she exclaimed, "I am almost out of my witts! What will become of my Dear father and his afflicted family!" The defeat of General Edward Braddock in July 1755 caused her confusion, for she had "many different accounts" on successive days. She first heard that Braddock had been killed and the army routed, then that he had not died though he had been defeated, and finally the "sertain News" that the initial report had been correct after all.<sup>60</sup>

Female correspondents and diarists most often simply recorded the military or (less frequently) political news, but sometimes they also offered their opinions. Abigaill Franks in 1742 advocated forcing Sir Robert Walpole to "Answer for his past Conduct" and "Suffer, for his Mismanagement." For her part, the Philadelphia Quaker and pacifist Hannah Callender lamented in her diary the "Wickedness . . . perpetrated by our Army" during the Seven Years' War. One especially outspoken commentator was Eliza Lucas Pinckney of South Carolina, who was educated in Great Britain and also spent part of the 1750s there, as a widow overseeing the education of her young sons. When she returned to America late in that decade, she continued to correspond with her friends in England, and she frequently assessed the political and military abilities of her colony's leaders as they fought the neighboring Cherokees. Most notably, she approved of the governor's actions (though others criticized him), asserting that he demonstrated "courage" and "great spirit" and "gained much honour" from a campaign against the Indians. As

victory in North America neared in summer 1760, she presciently warned her English friends that in seeking "new conquests in America" the British should not "neglect the protection of their old Colonys."<sup>61</sup>

Yet even while they were writing about public affairs, colonial women were acutely aware that they were violating cultural norms in doing so. Both Hannah Callender and Esther Burr signaled that awareness in the 1750s. After detailing a conversation she and her mother had in 1758 with three other women on "the universal Topic of the Town now"—a French frigate that was lying just off the coast and capturing American merchant vessels sailing from New York and Philadelphia—Hannah explained to herself, "Women either by connections of Husband or Father &c cant help interesting themselves in Politics." Then she added, whether she believed it or not: "I woud always avoid it, and think that the duties of our Station would be much more agreeable Conversation." Esther Burr was more forthright. In December 1755, she indicated her unwillingness to assume that men always knew best:

I am perplexed about our publick affairs. The Men say (tho' not Mr Burr he is not one of that sort) that Women have no business to concern themselves about em but trust to those that know better and be content to be destroyed because that they did all for the best—Indeed if I was convinced that our great men did act as they realy thought was for the Glory of God and the good of the Country it would go a great ways to meke me easy.<sup>62</sup>

Although women before the 1760s thus did not ignore public events in their personal writings, three striking aspects of their remarks need to be highlighted: first, most of them recorded events without giving their own viewpoints. In so doing, they were, in effect, imitating the newspapers they read. Second, if they did offer opinions, like Esther Burr they tended to focus on the implications of the news for their own families and friends rather than presenting more disinterested commentary. And third, although they followed the progress of the Anglo-American armies in the field, they usually did not remark on the colonial or British policymakers whose decisions had shaped those army movements. Only rarely did women reveal interest in, or knowledge of, the political maneuvers that lay behind the events they reported.<sup>63</sup>

Soon after the end of the Seven Years' War, British policy toward the colonies changed in ways that began to politicize the entire American populace, including women, regardless of whether they reacted positively or

negatively to the resistance movement. In the early years of revolutionary agitation, women responded as might be anticipated in light of prevailing mid-eighteenth-century notions of women's restricted sphere. They either eschewed the discussion of politics, explicitly stating that they did so because women were not supposed to deal with such matters; or they offered political opinions but then made the same disclaimer. Take, for example, the following excerpts from correspondence of the period:

This is my Private opinion, but how I came to give it is a Mistry, for Politicks is a puddle I never choose to dabble in. (1769) [concluding a conservative analysis of events in Boston]

Let me see what is the present Reigning Topick amongst us— Politicks—Avaunt, Ill have nothing to do with such things, as they are not only out of my Sphere, but above my ability. (1772) [a woman who failed to discuss politics]

The management of our publick affairs is in very good hands, and all that is requir'd of you is your Prayers and exhortations for a general reformation. It is not my province to enter into politicks, but sure I am that it is not your Duty to do or say any thing that shall tend to distroy your usefulness. (1774) [from a female revolutionary sympathizer to her loyalist-leaning male cousin]<sup>64</sup>

John and Abigail Adams, so deeply involved in politics in the 1760s and 1770s, and also so influenced by the conventional wisdom that accepted a sharp division between the public realm of men and the familial province of women, epitomized such trends. Among other similar statements, Abigail's double apology in one letter stands out. When she drafted a political letter to a member of the Continental Congress in 1779 while John was abroad, she wrote that she thought it important to convey certain political news from Massachusetts, remarking, "I intreat your pardon for touching upon a subject more properly belonging to your sex." At the end she appended an additional justification: "the absence of a very near and dear Friend I must plead as a further Excuse for addressing any other gentleman upon a subject which may be considerd as foreign to my sex." That even Abigail Adams felt the need to explain herself not just once but twice when she dared to broach political subjects in correspondence with a man not her husband underscores the impact of the eighteenth-century belief that women should be excluded from the public realm.<sup>65</sup>

Likewise, when in 1776 John Adams seemingly endorsed women's engagement with politics, he in fact adopted a position that echoed Addison's in some respects: "The Ladies I think are the greatest Politicians that I have

the Honour to be acquainted with, not only because they act upon the Sublimest of all the Principles of Policy, viz., that Honesty is the best Policy, but because they consider Questions more coolly than those who are heated with Party Zeal and inflamed with the bitter Contentions of active public Life."<sup>66</sup> Women were good "politicians," then, in Adams's opinion, precisely because—just as Addison had advocated—they were not "heated with Party Zeal" and had no involvement with "the bitter Contentions of active public Life." Addison would not have approved of Adams's alteration of his ideas, because the American ultimately praised female politicians. But that Adams viewed women's gender identity as distancing them from partisanship revealed his debt to Addison's arguments.

Even for this most political of families—and for a man accustomed to his wife's interest in and knowledge of current events—women's proper place was therefore to be positioned somewhat apart from the public realm. Instead, women should focus their attention on household and family—newly dubbed "private" in the eighteenth century, though not previously designated by that term. The long-standing multiple oppositions expressed by the dichotomy public/private were acquiring a new and enduring meaning by midcentury, one that is explored in the next chapter.



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## *Lady Chatham and Her Correspondents, 1740s–1760s*

Few if any eighteenth-century women in Britain or America could claim better political connections than Hester Grenville Pitt. Born in 1720 and married in 1754, she was the sister of one prime minister (George Grenville), wife of another (William Pitt the elder, Lord Chatham), and mother of a third (William Pitt the younger). She grew up surrounded by politics; her oldest brother, Richard, later Earl Temple, entered Parliament when she was just fourteen. Her brothers Richard and George and her husband-to-be, William Pitt, who was first elected to Parliament in 1735, were avid critics of Sir Robert Walpole during the 1730s and early 1740s, and after Walpole's ouster in 1742 they moved into (and out of) various leadership positions in successive governments through the 1760s and into the 1770s. If anyone might have been expected to be a British version of Abigail Adams, it would accordingly be Hester Pitt, her somewhat older contemporary.<sup>1</sup>

But she was not, and the reason for that most likely lies in the fact that she *was* older. Her worldview formed in her young adulthood in the 1740s and 1750s, before the revolutionary agitation that turned Abigail Adams into a political commentator in her own right. Hester Pitt saw her role differently, more in accordance with the prescriptions laid down by Joseph Addison and his successors. She was certainly knowledgeable about politics, but her primary role in public affairs was to act as her husband's adjunct and secretary during his repeated bouts of illness and depression. She offered few of her own political opinions in the letters she wrote to her husband, her brothers, or her female friends. Her male relatives kept Hester informed of current events when she was in the country and they in London, yet she rarely responded with comments about public affairs.

From the 1740s (before her marriage) through the 1760s, Hester wrote to her brother, George, exclusively about such topics as mutual friends and the health of family members. When once, in June 1760, she passed on some news from the Quebec campaign, then nearing its climax, she added, "Mr. Pitt has desired I wou'd send you this account." In light of the breach that opened between her husband and her brother when Pitt resigned from the government in 1761 while Grenville continued to serve George III, her

political missives to her brother after that point could be interpreted primarily as an attempt to maintain family ties in spite of political divisions. That her earlier letters had similar content, though, suggests that her avoidance of political topics did not stem solely from such motives. There is little indication that George wrote to her about political topics; perhaps she primarily let him take the lead on the contents of their exchanges.<sup>2</sup>

Her other brothers, Richard and James, by contrast, shared political commentary with her. They, unlike George, initially remained her husband's allies. In a letter to Hester in early 1764, Richard sarcastically termed George "this great minister" and accused him of "haranguing half an hour with great indecency, fallacy, &c. &c" in the Commons; he was "not only unsupported, but deserted by the whole House," Earl Temple told her with evident satisfaction. Hester's husband, too, wrote to her about politics, keeping her up-to-date on war news while the Seven Years' War continued, and informing her triumphantly of the repeal of the Stamp Act in early 1766. "Joy to you, my dear love," she replied in a similar vein. "The joy of thousands is yours, under Heaven, who has crowned your endeavours with such happy success." Venturing a rare political opinion of her own while tying it to a personal observation, she added, "All my feelings tell me that I hate oppression, and that I love zealously the honour of my dear husband."<sup>3</sup>

By then, Earl Temple had reconciled with his younger brother, George, and he did not follow Pitt's lead in calling for repeal of the act the colonists had protested. The breach between Richard and Hester was evident from their correspondence in January 1766. "I refer myself only to your recollection of what has passed betwixt you & me in many unreserved conversations," he told her, explaining that he would not comment on events after "the Day of my Dissent from Mr. Pitt." Although he regretted the "family Disunion," Richard declared, "I know the Purity of my own Intentions, sufficient to vindicate me to myself."<sup>4</sup>

In mid-1766, after Earl Temple refused to join the ministry when Pitt (now Lord Chatham) again became leader of the government, the breach widened. Hester wrote first, expressing her satisfaction that Richard had behaved "with the greatest kindness and friendship imaginable" to her husband even while rejecting his invitation for a political alliance. But her brother was not appeased, responding that he found it "indispensably necessary" to inform her of his "indignation" at having been asked to join a ministry surrounded by "cyphers, all named by Mr. Pitt, of a different complexion for me, with some of whom I had so essentially differed on many accounts." He canceled their planned "reciprocal country visits" while still assuring her of his "warmest affection," and if letters passed between them over the next

twenty months, they have not survived. The political division that led to "family Disunion" was not healed until the fall of 1768, nor did their regular correspondence resume until the winter of 1768-69.<sup>5</sup>

Notably, nothing in the surviving letters suggests that Hester felt herself to be directly involved in the political rupture between her husband and her brother. Although she always allied herself politically with her husband, she—in accordance with Addison's counsel to women in such instances—attempted to heal the schism rather than take part in the family quarrel.

When William Pitt fell ill, which happened with increasing frequency in the 1760s and 1770s, Hester acted as his secretary and surrogate correspondent. She wrote political letters on her husband's behalf and received others in return, some addressed directly to her rather than to him. Presumably at her husband's dictation, in spring 1770 she drafted a petition that was presented to George III on behalf of John Wilkes, the radical who had been refused a seat in Parliament despite his election from the City of London. Although she was thus an active participant in political dialogues, the surviving correspondence only occasionally provides clues to what she herself thought about public events. In one undated letter to William, probably from the early 1770s, she wrote, "I can express nothing about the scene which our patch'd ministry treat the public with. Sure it is too gross!" Another undated letter to him, probably from 1775, offered the following inaccurate prediction about Lord North, then the prime minister: "I think the Doubts he has betray'd as to the Line of Conduct he pursues, together with the wretched Figure he has made, will induce his being removed, or removing himself." And always she gloried in any praise for her husband and his "Artfull Arguments" in Parliament. She was pleased by the "Publick Joy" about his presence in the House of Lords, she wrote in another undated missive to him; "all are *Chatham*, and no Hope *without* him," one man had reported.<sup>6</sup>

So if Hester Pitt did not for the most part comment about politics, what did occupy her thoughts and fill her correspondence? Just as eighteenth-century essayists advised, she appears to have focused her major efforts on her household and social life. In letters to her husband, the health of their children and household affairs in general took center stage—as did the same subjects in letters he wrote to her.<sup>7</sup>

Surviving letters that Lady Chatham exchanged with a close personal friend and near contemporary, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, confirm that her interests were largely apolitical. Elizabeth, a wealthy author and well-known hostess, was the wife of a member of Parliament during the period they associated with one another, but neither woman discussed political matters in their correspondence. Instead, their letters revolved around their social

interactions and mutual interests. Elizabeth—whose only child, a son, had died as a toddler—showed great affection for Hester's children. She took them to the theater and on other excursions in London; in 1774, Hester told her, "it is impossible to say, my Dear Madam, whom you have made the proudest, or the happiest, ourselves, or our Adventurous Youths. All of us are especially sensible of the honor it was to such *Youngsters* to be *so* invited, and mix'd in such a society." For her part, Elizabeth expressed concerns about Lord Chatham's health, either hosted or visited the Chathams regularly, and passed on books she thought would interest Hester. She once sent a copy of a new play by Voltaire, but remarked that the leaves were "uncut, & by her unread." It was unfortunate, she remarked, "to think a man of great & universal genius should have addicted himself to such a manner of writing that one cannot venture to read any of his works till one has been assured by some person of daring curiosity that they are not shocking to religion & morals." Elizabeth clearly had not been that "person of daring curiosity," but perhaps she thought that Lord or Lady Chatham might be.<sup>8</sup>

A letter Lady Chatham addressed to Earl Temple in October 1777 best summed up her attitude toward her own political role and illustrated her essential affinity for the position advanced by Addison early in the century. By the time she wrote, her husband and her brother had once again developed political disagreements over American policy. "Let me Lament that my Lord and you meaning the same great object of public happiness, shou'd think the road to it so different," she wrote, as they awaited news from America of Burgoyne's campaign in northern New York. William hoped that afterward reconciliation would still be possible whereas Richard wanted to see America "reduced . . . into a beaten Enemy." She added that "as you will allow a Lady ought, [I] wish Peace and good will among all Men," including the two of them, expressing the hope that the news, when it arrived, would find them in agreement over the results. Having adopted the stance of a disinterested observer, appropriate for a woman who formally eschewed partisan politics, she then appended the standard disclaimer: "When I set down to write I never propos'd the saying a Syllable on the Subject that I have gone on upon. . . . You will forgive me I am sure for letting my Pen follow my Thoughts."<sup>9</sup>

More commonly, Lady Chatham's thoughts led her to household and family. And the same was true of other eighteenth-century women in the colonies before the American Revolution. As the notion of women's private sphere gained credence over the course of the first half of the century, it came to dominate women's lives in wide-ranging ways.



(18). A similar search in AHN likewise showed a dramatic jump in the usage of the term in the 1760s, from 21 (1720s) to 205 (1760s). Not every colonial newspaper is available on series 1 of AHN, and the AHN search engine occasionally produces incorrect hits, both missing some and creating false positives. I did not check each of the 1760s results. The point is the relative incidence of use of the phrase, not the specific numbers.

#### 4. Women and Politics, Eighteenth Century–Style

1. *A Letter to a Gentlewoman concerning Government* (London: E. Whitlocke, 1697), 2, 3, 27, and *passim*. By contrast, in Virginia in 1661, Quaker women were included in Governor William Berkeley's order to take an oath of allegiance or be jailed, an indication of changed attitudes by the 1690s; see Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 144.

2. That *Letter to a Gentlewoman* is seemingly the last such publication is suggested by the lack of relevant results to keyword title searches on women, government, and politics (and variants) on ECCO and EAI.

3. For various sorts of indirect political activity by wealthy women, see Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c. 1754–1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); John G. Kolp and Terri L. Snyder, "Women and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Virginia: Gender, Property Law, and Voting Rights," in *The Many Legalities of Early America*, ed. Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce H. Mann (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 272–92; Sarah Fotherly, *Gentlewomen and Learned Ladies: Women and Elite Formation in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 2008), 133–57; and Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 181–210. A brief, astute commentary is Kathleen Wilson, *This Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 40–43. See also Robert Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London: Longman, 1998), 227–32; and Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 190–95.

4. See Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England, 1680–1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), chaps. 7 and 8 *passim* (quotation, 162); and, in general, Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne*, rev. ed. (London: Hambledon Press, 1987); and Frances Harris, *A Passion for Government: The Life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

5. Nahum Tate, *A Present for the Ladies: Being an Historical Vindication of the Female Sex* (London: Francis Saunders, 1692), 87–100 *passim* (quotation, 96). Tate's employment of *sphere* in the household context is the earliest I have located using the full-text search function of EEBO. Although Tate did not refer to her, another exemplar of female political competence frequently cited by seventeenth-century authors was Queen Christina of Sweden; see, e.g., Joad Raymond, ed., *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England, 1641–1660* (Moreton-in-Marsh, U.K.: Windrush Press, 1993), 141–48.

6. Bernard Mandeville, *The Virgin Unmask'd: or, Female Dialogues Betwixt an Elderly Maiden Lady, and her Niece*... (London: J. Morphew, 1709), unpaginated preface, 132–33, 173–74 (see also 132–40 passim). Mandeville in his own person later defended women's political abilities; see Bernard Mandeville, *By a Society of Ladies: Essays in The Female Tatler*, ed. M. M. Goldsmith (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999), 31–32 and passim. See, on Mandeville's writings on women, E. J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce, and Luxury* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 60–73. Mandeville's 1709 apologia is one of two such statements that year located by ECCO full-text search functions (accessed December 2008–January 2009). The other was a brief remark in a play: Mary Pix, *The Adventures in Madrid: A Comedy*... (London: [no pub.] 1709), 12. No earlier statements of the sort were located by either ECCO or EEBO full-text searches (accessed January 2009); *Letter to a Gentlewoman* is not yet included in EEBO.

7. See Calhoun Winton, "Steele, Sir Richard," *ODNB* 52:358–64; and Pat Rogers, "Addison, Joseph," *ODNB* 1:321–24.

8. A statement about observing "an exact Neutrality between the Whigs and Tories" appeared in the first *Spectator* essay, 1 March 1711; see Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 1:5. An insightful analysis of Addison and Steele's deliberately muted Whiggery is Brian Cowan, "Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37 (2004): 345–66.

9. One key indication of such definitions was their lack of attention to exemplary female public figures. No issue of either periodical extolled Queen Elizabeth; even Queen Anne was seldom the subject of *Tatler* or *Spectator* essays. Most references to Elizabeth or Anne in the two periodicals were casual and brief; see, e.g., Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Tatler*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 2:336, 3:304; and Bond, *Spectator*, 1:424, 2:214, 216, 380; 5:44. The one long passage praising Anne (Bond, *Spectator*, 3:444), summarized the sermon at her accession to the throne. By contrast, Mandeville discoursed at length about Elizabeth when he defended women's political and military abilities in 1710 (*By a Society of Ladies*, 173–74). The absence of any comment about Queen Elizabeth in journals aimed partly at a female audience was telling. See John Watkins, *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England: Literature, History, Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). (I owe this reference to Paulina Kewes.)

10. These quotations and those in the next paragraph are from Bond, *Tatler*, 1:15.

11. *Ibid.*, 2:310–11 (no. 142), 32–33 (no. 84). On the complex issues involved in Sacheverell's impeachment and on the crowds that attended the trial, see W. A. Speck, "Sacheverell, Henry," *ODNB* 48:520–23.

12. Bond, *Tatler*, 3:202 (no. 232). See also two other essays by Steele that dealt with women's political talk: Bond, *Spectator*, 2:194–96, 3:73.

13. Bond, *Spectator*, 1:241–43 (no. 57); 2:247n2.

14. *Ibid.*, 1:347, 349 (no. 81).

15. Joseph Addison, *The Freeholder*, ed. James Leheny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 182–83. In some early *Freeholder* essays, Addison praised Whig "Female-Patriots," though humorously, but soon replaced that theme with the contention that women should remain out of politics. See *ibid.*, 52–54, 71–74, 87–90, 103–6. The English Short Title Catalogue lists twenty-four editions of *The Freeholder* published in London, Glasgow, and Dublin between 1716 and 1790. These were occasionally

advertised for sale in the colonies, but less often than *Tatler* or *Spectator* (see n. 20, below).

16. Addison, *Freeholder*, 135–38, 146–47, 204–7 (quotations 137, 146–47, 205–7).

17. Mandeville, *By a Society of Ladies*, 116 (quotation). For accounts of female worthies, see 164–92, 198–202, and the editor's introduction, 54–62. The *Female Tatler*, as the title suggests, imitated Steele's *Tatler* and aimed solely at a female audience. Scholars disagree on the originator of that periodical, but it was later taken over by Mandeville and other (still anonymous) writers. See the discussion in editor's introduction to Mandeville, *By a Society of Ladies*, 33–48; Clery, *Feminization Debate*, 60–66; and Tedra Oseil, "Tatling Women in the Public Sphere: Rhetorical Femininity and the English Essay Periodical," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (2005): 283–99.

18. For a discussion of similar positions advanced later in the century by Jean Jacques Rousseau, see Dena Goodman, "Difference: An Enlightenment Concept," in *What's Left of Enlightenment? A Post-modern Question*, ed. Keith Baker and Peter Hanns Reill (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 129–47, esp. 140–41.

19. Leonard W. Labaree et al., eds., *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), 62. That Franklin absorbed the contents as well as the style of Addison's essays was suggested by his June 1758 comment to his wife: "You are very prudent not to engage in Party Disputes. Women should never meddle with them except in Endeavours to reconcile their Husbands, Brothers, and Friends who happen to be on contrary Sides"; see Labaree et al., eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 39 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959–), 8:92.

20. A keyword search on advertisements in AHN, conducted 27 January 2009, located more than six hundred advertisements for the *Spectator*, along with another three hundred-plus for the *Tatler*. On the importance of *Tatler* and *Spectator* in eighteenth-century Virginia, see Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 46, 62. John Hook, a storekeeper in backcountry Virginia, in 1772 imported two eight-volume sets of *Spectator* and one four-volume set of *Tatler*; see Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), table 3.10, pp. 86–88. Probate inventories in the New York Public Library also reveal ownership of *Spectator* volumes; see Schuyler Papers, box 38, and Livingston Family Papers, estate of Henry Livingston.

21. Specific examples: Sarah Gibbes to John Gibbes, 10 September 1783, Gibbes Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston; Susanna Atkinson, will, 28 April 1794, Freeman Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord; James Iredell, Journal, 26 January 1773, in *The Papers of James Iredell*, 3 vols., ed. Don Higginbotham (Raleigh, N.C.: Division of Archives and History, 1976), 1:212–13. For the general patterns, see Richard Beale Davis, *A Southern Colonial Bookshelf: Reading in the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 113–15, 128; and David Lundberg and Henry F. May, "The Enlightened Reader in America," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 273–74. A study of books listed in 438 probate inventories in South Carolina before 1776 found 77 copies of *Spectator*, 30 copies of *Tatler*, and 15 copies of Addison's *Works*. See Walter B. Edgar, "Some Popular Books in Colonial South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 72 (1971): 178.

22. See Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675–1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). On transatlantic

print culture, see Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, vol. 1 of *A History of the Book in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), esp. 349 (on the influence of Addison and Steele). See also Paul Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English: American Literature and the British Diaspora, 1750–1850* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007). Jack P. Greene discusses Anglicization generally in “Search for Identity: An Interpretation of the Meaning of Selected Patterns of Social Response in Eighteenth-Century America,” *Journal of Social History* 3 (1969): 189–220, esp. 205–18.

23. On these early papers, see Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665–1740* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 77–83, 114–19. The *News-Letter* was founded in 1704, the other two in 1719.

24. Clark, *Public Prints*, 123–40 passim. See also Carla Mulford, “Pox and ‘Hell-Fire’: Boston’s Smallpox Controversy, the New Science, and Early Modern Liberalism,” in *Periodical Literature in Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. Mark L. Kamrath and Sharon M. Harris (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 7–27.

25. For satires on marriage and the like in the *Courant* (hereafter *NEC*), see, for example, issues: 5, 22 March 1721/2; 2 April 1722. That its authors were attuned to contemporary English terminology is shown by their frequent and still-novel use of “fair sex” in their essays; see “Ben Treackle,” 9 April 1722; and “Cornelius Easy,” 28 October 1723, among others.

26. *Ibid.*, 15 January 1721/2. For Steele as “Henroost,” see Bond, *Spectator*, 2:194. The authors of some of the early *NEC* essays were identified by Benjamin Franklin in a document now in the BL; see Worthington Chauncey Ford, “Franklin’s New England Courant,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 57 (1923–24): 336–53, esp. 352.

27. *NEC*, 18 May 1724, from “Kitchen Stuff.”

28. The best general accounts of the controversial Cosby administration, which inform my discussion in the next five paragraphs, are Stanley Nider Katz, *Newcastle’s New York: Anglo-American Politics, 1732–1753* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), chap. 4; and Patricia U. Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), chap. 4. Neither devotes much attention to Grace Cosby, but the quotation (from Lewis Morris) is in *Newcastle’s New York*, 78.

29. Edith B. Gelles, ed., *The Letters of Abigail Levy Franks, 1733–1748* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 17, 24–26; see the introduction, xv–xlii, for a biography of Abigail Franks (xxxii on her reading). When the wife and daughter of Cadwallader Colden, a council member, first met Mrs. Cosby, she received them “very handsomly and kindly” in her husband’s absence; see *Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, vol. 2, in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society* 51 (1918): 90 (hereafter *NYHS Colls*).

30. Gelles, *Letters of Franks*, 24–25; *New-York Weekly Journal*, 21 January 1733/4 (hereafter *NYWJ*); quotations from verses 1, 3, and 7 of Proverbs 23 in the King James Bible. Serena Zabin, “Women’s Trading Networks and Dangerous Economies in Eighteenth-Century New York City,” *Early American Studies* 4 (2006): 313, recognizes that the “widows’ petition” was a parody linked to the controversy; other historians



of women have quoted it as genuine. A week later, New York's "maids" continued the parody in a more traditional manner by adding a pouting complaint: "the young Gentlemen are so taken up with Politics, that we hardly get one pretty Thing said to us in a Month" (*NYWJ*, 28 January 1733/4).

31. Gelles, *Letters of Franks*, 41, 45 (see also 36); *Letters and Papers of Colden* 2, in *NYHS Colls* 51 (1918): 143. On the Zenger trial, see James Alexander, *A Brief Narrative of the Case and Trial of John Peter Zenger*, ed. Stanley Nider Katz (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963); Stephen Botein, ed., "Mr. Zenger's Malice and Falsehood": *Six Issues of the New-York Weekly Journal, 1733-34* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1985). The trial did not involve the issue of 21 January 1733/4. See also Alison Gilbert Olson, "The Zenger Case Revisited: Satire, Sedition, and Political Debate in Eighteenth-Century America," *Early American Literature* 35 (2000): 223-45; Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 49-63.

32. Quotations in this paragraph and the next from *Letters and Papers of Colden* 2, in *NYHS Colls* 51 (1918): 144. William Cosby died in spring 1736. For additional political statements and actions by Grace Cosby, see *ibid.*, 153; and William Smith, Jr., *The History of the Province of New-York*, 2 vols., ed. Michael Kammen (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 2:10, 24. She also was reportedly involved in elaborate machinations that successfully married off the Cosbys' daughter to the son of the duke of Grafton; see *ibid.*, 2:23, and Gelles, ed., *Letters of Franks*, 22.

33. This paragraph and the next two are based on the essay appearing on page 1 of the 19 August 1734 issue of *NYWJ*. It is telling that the rival, semiofficial *New York Gazette* published nothing similar, thus underscoring the relationship of this essay to the opposition to Governor Cosby and his wife.

34. *NYWJ*, 30 September 1734. "A.B." claimed that the poem had never before been published and he did not give the author's name, but this is a well-known poem written by Lyttelton in his youth. Zabin also connects the publication of the poem to the satirical statements by the "widows" and "maids," but she does not mention the August 1734 essay on women and politics. See "Women's Trading Networks," 313.

35. Francis Ready, untitled, *NYWJ*, 12 May 1735. See also the letter from Andrew Merrill to Zenger, *ibid.*, 15 March 1735/6. "Merrill" claimed to be a visitor to New York who was surprised by the fierce partisanship of local men, so he sought out women, only to find them "warmer than the Men." Yet he praised them for treating "their Antagonists, with pretty good Manners," and he did encounter some "no party Women." This letter was reprinted in the *Boston Evening Post*, 4 April 1736. None of the other essays discussed previously seem to have been published in other colonial newspapers.

36. *Letters and Papers of Colden* 8, in *NYHS Colls* 67 (1934): 240; Colden to Elizabeth DeLancey, c. 1739, DeLancey Papers, Museum of the City of New York. The message was received outside Manhattan too; on 26 March 1734, when Deborah Norris of Philadelphia reported some political news to her brother Isaac, then in London, she added: "when I first begun I Resolved not to meddle with politick but find I have been Involuntary Led in to say what I have," thus excusing her temerity in broaching a subject she knew would interest him but which she understood was

inappropriate for her to discuss. See Norris Family Papers, 1:23, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

37. See Osell, "Tatling Women," passim, for a useful discussion of rhetorical femininity. An ECCO keyword search produced only one result of a man who offered even a low-key defense of women's political capacity between 1730 and 1750, and then not as part of an exchange with another author; see *The Constitution and Government of the Germanic Body...* (London, 1745), 75-79.

38. The essays, no. 31 (on men) and no. 32 (on women), quoted in the next five paragraphs, were originally published on 3 and 10 September 1737 and appeared, slightly abridged, in *Gentleman's Magazine* 7 (1737): 549-55. They were reprinted in *Common Sense: or, the Englishman's Journal...*, 2 vols. (London: J. Purser & G. Hawkins, 1738-39), with no. 32 in 1:224-30. Lord Chesterfield, George Lyttelton, Henry Fielding, and even Oliver Goldsmith (who was too young) have all at various times been identified as the author of these two essays. They appeared in *New England Weekly Journal* (hereafter *NEWJ*), 7 and 14 February 1737/8, respectively, under the titles, "On Affectation, particularly in Men," and "Of Affectation, in Women." The second was printed again, with the title "Animadversions on the Affectation of ill-suited Characters among the Female Sex," in *American Magazine and Historical Chronicle* (hereafter *AMHC*) 2 (July 1745): 302-4. The editors of these two publications were Boston rivals; see Clark, *Public Prints*, 144-46, 157-61. Not every paragraph of the original was included in the American publications, which also did not entirely duplicate each other. The essays can conveniently be consulted in their entirety in Ioan Williams, ed., *The Criticism of Henry Fielding* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), appendix 3, 325-29.

39. The quoted phrases in this paragraph referring to women's sphere and man's province were not published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* or either American reprinting; the other quotations were included in both colonial versions of the essay.

40. *NEWJ* but not *AMHC* printed the paragraph in which Elizabeth and Christina were identified as undoubted hermaphrodites. Both published a reference to a mythical treatise titled *De Hermaphroditis*, by "Conrad Wolfgang Laboriosus Nugatorius."

41. *Common Sense* 135, 1 September 1739, as reprinted in *NYWJ*, 8 September and 22 September 1740. The author claimed that he was summarizing an ancient viewpoint, but his language made it clear that he concurred with the argument. For information on the original publication, see François Poulain de La Barre, *The Woman as Good as the Man; or, the Equality of Both Sexes*, trans. A.L., ed. Gerald M. MacLean (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 26-27. A useful discussion of Poulain de la Barre is Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1850: A Political History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 34-35, 44-45.

42. "One of your constant Female Readers" to Mr. Zenger, *NYWJ*, 27 July 1741.

43. The full title: *Sophia, A Person of Quality, Woman Not Inferior to Man: or, a Short and Modest Vindication of the Natural Right of the Fair-Sex to a Perfect Equality of Power, Dignity and Esteem, with the Men* (London: John Hawkins, 1739). It is possible that Sophia had access to the original French version, *De l'Egalité des Deux Sexes* (Paris, 1673); rather than A.L.'s English translation, published in 1677. Gerald MacLean, in his edition of Poulain de la Barre's tract, cited in n. 41, above, claims, 28, that parts of *Woman as Good as the Man* "appear wholesale" in Sophia's pamphlet. Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750*

(Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 8, goes further and contends that the Sophia pamphlets (there were two; see below for the second) were in fact translations of the French work. Yet a comparison of the texts shows that such claims are overstated. A later pamphlet by "A Lady," *Female Rights Vindicated: or the Equality of the Sexes Morally and Physically Proved* (London: printed for G. Burnet, 1758), resembles Poulain de la Barre's work more closely, though it is an updated revision coupled with a new introduction. (It does not mirror the Sophia pamphlets as fully.) See also Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, "Sophia: British Feminism in the Mid Eighteenth Century," paper delivered at the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, 1980, available at <http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/biblio/sophia2.html>, which addresses the question of Sophia's identity and rejects such authorial possibilities as Eliza Haywood and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. My thanks to Margaret Hunt for this reference.

44. Sophia, *Woman Not Inferior*, 45, 27, 48. Sophia admitted, 45, that "a positive law of God" prevented women from assuming religious leadership, but she cleverly argued that God might have favored men in this regard because their general irreligion meant they needed his extra attention. The last quotation in the paragraph mirrored one in Poulain de la Barre, *Woman as Good*, 123, but her statement calling the circular reasoning into question had no parallel in the earlier work, nor did her comment about women and religious leadership, which adopted the eighteenth-century stance that women had a "natural propensity" for "virtue and religion," a notion alien in the previous century.

45. Quotations: Sophia, *Woman Not Inferior*, 35-37, 49, 55. Even though her treatment of this topic is more heavily dependent than most of her prose on Poulain de la Barre, many of the paragraphs differ; cf. *Woman as Good*, 123-24, 133-34, and *Woman Not Inferior*, 49-56 passim.

46. [A Gentleman], *Man Superior to Woman: or, the Natural Right of the Men to Sovereign Authority over the Women...* (1739), as reprinted in *Beauty's Triumph; or the Superiority of the Fair Sex Invincibly Proved* (London: J. Robinson, 1751), 27-28, 38, 55, and passim. In the course of explaining why women could not keep secrets (and therefore could not be rulers), he cited, 31, the Roman tale that formed the basis of 1646's *Parliament of Women* and other subsequent opinion pieces about women's incapacity for government. Some have argued that Sophia herself wrote *Man Superior to Woman*, to set up an easily refuted straw-man "opponent."

47. [Sophia], *Woman's Superior Excellence over Man...* (1740), as reprinted in *Beauty's Triumph*, 1, 4, 5, 97, 58, 91 (separately paginated from *Man Superior...*).

48. *Ibid.*, 111.

49. In both the *Boston Gazette* (twice in November 1761) and *Boston Post-Boy* (once in December 1761); search results from *AHN*.

50. "An Account of a Political Ballance," *New-York Evening Post*, 21 January 1744/5 (from *London Magazine* [April 1744], 195-96; also printed in *Pennsylvania Journal*, 29 December 1744); Jonathan Swift, "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind," *AMHC* 2 (June 1745): 226; "from the Champion, Publish'd by Hercules Vinegar, June 24, 1740," *American Weekly Mercury*, 18 December 1740. All these had an English origin, but see also the roughly contemporary unpublished American satire of the "genearchy" that overwhelmed the normally all-male Tuesday Club of Annapolis, in Alexander Hamilton, *The History of the Ancient and Honorable Tuesday Club*, 3 vols., ed.

Robert Micklus (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 2:323-28, 334-36, 379-83.

51. Quotation: "The Character of her late Majesty," *NEHJ*, 9 May 1738 (from *Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1737). According to Stephen Taylor, "Caroline (1683-1737)," *ODNB* 10:202-7, Caroline was an adept political operator, but one would never know that from such tributes. See also, e.g., "An Extract ... concerning the illustrious Women, who had excell'd in polite literature," *AMHC* 2 (June 1745): 244-48, which mentions such learned queens as Margaret of Valois and Catherine of Aragon, but not as rulers. References to Queen Elizabeth are rare in colonial newspapers; *AHN*, accessed 18 July 2007, produced only nineteen hits, and most of those were brief. Two extended treatments, untitled essays signed "Z," in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 8 April and 10 June 1736, celebrated her political skill but did not analogize from thence to conclude that other women were qualified to engage in politics.

52. "Of Ministers, and the Influence of the Fair Sex in the Government of States," *NYHJ*, 14 January 1751 (from "a late magazine," unidentified).

53. Untitled, unsigned essay headed "from the Craftsman, 21 July 1739," in *Boston Evening Post*, 15 October 1739. Another essay from 1739 made a similar point about clothing purchases; see Britannicus, "To the Ladies of Great-Britain," printed in *ibid.*, 12 March 1738/9, and *Virginia Gazette*, 23 March 1738/9.

54. *A Serious and Earnest Address to the Gentry, Clergy, and the Other Inhabitants of the British Nation...* (Boston: Rogers & Fowle, 1746), 11, 12, 15. Originally published as [James Burgh,] *Britain's Remembrancer: or, the Danger Not Over...* (London: George Frier, 1746). See also a similar argument that does not, however, stress the patriotic and public goals of personal reformation as strongly: "The Power of Beauty, and the Influence the Fair Sex might have in reforming the Manners of the World," *AMHC* 2 (September 1745): 400-403.

55. The English Short Title Catalogue identifies seven London printings and one in Edinburgh through the end of the 1740s, along with two in Philadelphia, one in Williamsburg, one in New York, and one in Boston. Additional reprints followed in the 1750s on both sides of the Atlantic. Sophia Hume, *An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the Province of South Carolina* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1748), 122-24, also included a lengthy excerpt from *Britain's Remembrancer* that focused on women's need to reform themselves and thus the nation.

56. As reported in Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, 17 November 1742, Richard Peters Letterbooks, 29:132, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, quoted in Wulf, *Not All Hives*, 194-95. Wright appears unique in assuming a role as a state actor at the time. See Frederick B. Tolles, "Wright, Susanna," in *NAM* 3:688-90.

57. When William Byrd returned to Virginia after a long stay in London, he recorded in his diary numerous conversations with men about politics, but only once did he even hint that a woman was included in those meetings; see Louis B. Wright and Marion Tirling, eds., *William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 371, 375-76, 454 (the woman), 477, and *passim*. See also a letter to Byrd in 1741 from an English female relative about women's participation in political conversations, "understand them or not" (Marion Tirling, ed., *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776*, 2 vols. [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977], 2:589). The Scots physician Alexander Hamilton, traveling in 1744, reported two political

conversations in which women participated; see Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 5, 46.

58. King George's War (1739-48) was followed closely by the Seven Years' War (1754-63). On colonial literacy in general, see E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005); and on letter writing, Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). See also Joel Perlmann and Dennis Shirley, "When Did New England Women Acquire Literacy?" *WMQ*, 3rd ser., 48 (1991): 50-67, and comment by Mary Beth Norton with reply by Perlmann, *ibid.*, 639-48. On early American women's diaries, real and fake, see Norton, "Hetty Shepard, Dorothy Dudley, and Other Fictional Colonial Women I Have Come to Know Altogether Too Well," *Journal of Women's History* 10 (Autumn 1998): 141-54. A useful discussion of women's diaries is Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*, chap. 7.

59. See, e.g., Gelles, *Letters of Franks*, 51, 78; and *Letters and Papers of Colden* 3, in *NYHS Colls* 52 (1920): 277-78, 389, 401; *ibid.*, 8, in *NYHS Colls* 67 (1934): 250, 255, 297, 307, 344. (The Colden correspondence consists primarily of letters from Cadwalader to Alice, rather than the reverse, but the contents show that he was regularly sending her newspapers, which he clearly expected her to read.) Eliza Lucas often included political and military news from South Carolina in letters to her father in Antigua; see Elise Pinckney, ed., *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney, 1739-1762* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997 [orig. pub. 1972]), 9, 16, 22, 50, 54-57, 59.

60. Carol F. Karlsen and Laurie Crumpacker, eds., *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), 60-61, 137, 140 (see 136-40 for the Braddock reports). Esther occasionally commented on politics; see *ibid.*, 171. Abigail Dwight of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, followed the war news closely while her husband was serving in the army in 1756; see her letters to him in Sedgwick Papers II, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

61. Gelles, *Letters of Franks*, 81, 109; Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf, eds., *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom, 1758-1788: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 79; Pinckney, *Letterbook of Pinckney*, 128, 138, 155, and *passim*. Unusually, Pinckney sent political and military news to both men and women; women most often included such information in letters to men only. See also the letters to William Byrd III from his mother and estranged wife, which give war news but offer no opinions: Tinling, *Correspondence of the Byrds*, 2:629, 632, 679-80, 685.

62. Klepp and Wulf, *Diary of Sansom*, 77; Karlsen and Crumpacker, *Journal of Burr*, 178.

63. For rare examples of such analyses, see Pinckney, *Letterbook of Pinckney*, 89; Karlsen and Crumpacker, *Journal of Burr*, 96; and Gelles, *Letters of Franks*, 111.

64. Christian Barnes to Elizabeth Murray Smith, 20 November 1769, in *Letters of James Murray, Loyalist*, ed. Dorothy Forbes (Boston: privately printed, 1901), 122; Frances Tucker to St. George Tucker, 19 May 1772, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.; Mary Cranch to Isaac Smith Jr., 15 October 1774, in Lyman H. Butterfield et al., eds., *Adams Family Correspondence*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 1:171.

65. Abigail Adams to [unknown congressman], draft, c. January 1779, Butterfield et al., *Adams Family Correspondence*, 3:158. She may never have sent the letter. See also *ibid.*, John to Abigail, 3:170, 183 (both February 1779), for his extended comments about why it would be viewed as "folly" for him to write to her about politics.

66. John Adams to Mercy Warren, 16 April 1776, in *Warren-Adams Letters . . . , 1743-1814*, in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 72 (1917): 221.

#### Lady Chatham and Her Correspondents, 1740s-1760s

1. See Marie Peters, "Pitt, William, first earl of Chatham [Pitt the elder]," *ODNB* 44:452-70, esp. on Hester, 456-57; Leland J. Bellot, "Grenville, Richard, second Earl Temple," *ODNB* 23:739-42; and J. V. Beckett and Peter D. G. Thomas, "Grenville, George," *ODNB* 23:722-27. There is no biography in the *ODNB* of Hester Grenville Pitt. Information from these essays informs the discussion below.

2. These observations are based generally on correspondence from Hester Grenville, later Pitt, to George Grenville, from the late 1740s through the 1760s, in Stowe (Grenville) Papers, HEHL, HM 31550-576. The quotation is from a letter of 19 June 1760, HM 31564. Grenville's letters to the Pitts are in Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8, 34, TNA; the correspondence largely ceases in the 1760s.

3. William Stanhope Taylor and John Henry Pringle, eds., *Correspondence of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, 4 vols. (London: John Murray, 1838), 2:279 (Earl Temple to Hester Pitt); 1-9, 45, 54-55, 363-70 (William Pitt to Hester Pitt); 391-92 (Hester Pitt to William Pitt). See also letters to her from Richard and James Grenville, *ibid.*, 192-94, 272-77, 281-83, 307-10, 414-15.

4. Earl Temple to Hester Pitt, 20, 24 January 1766, Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8, 62, ff. 111, 113.

5. Lady Chatham to Earl Temple, 22 July 1766, Grenville Papers, Add. MSS 42084, f. 112 BL; Earl Temple to Lady Chatham, 27 July 1766, Taylor and Pringle, *Correspondence of Pitt* 2:468-70 (draft in Add. MSS 42084, f. 116). For several awkward and prickly letters that passed between brother and sister in April-May 1768, see Grenville Papers, Add. MSS 42086, ff. 23-25, 32-33. In the last of these, 8 May, he told her, "The proper time for our meeting again is certainly not the present for many many reasons." The next letter from him to her in the Chatham Papers is dated 3 December 1768 (PRO 30/8, 62, f. 133). Finally, in February 1769, he again sent her a letter filled with both political news and statements of affection; see Taylor and Pringle, *Correspondence of Pitt*, 3:249-50.

6. Lady Chatham to her husband, n.d., PRO 30/8, 9, ff. 44, 209, 58. See also *ibid.*, f. 88. For the petition on behalf of Wilkes, see HM 31583, Stowe Papers, HEHL. For examples of her acting as his secretary or surrogate, see Hester Pitt to Duke of Newcastle, five letters from February-March 1764, Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS 32596, BL; Lady Chatham to John Calcraft Sr., letters from November 1769 through April 1770, Calcraft Papers, Add. MSS 43771, BL, ff. 24, 28, 30, 34, 45 et seq. Volumes 3 and 4 of Taylor and Pringle, *Correspondence of Pitt*, contain numerous examples of her acting as his surrogate; see esp. 3:279 ff.

7. These letters are primarily in Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8; see vols. 5 (William to Hester), 7, 8, 9 (Hester to William). In addition, some letters that passed between them are printed in Taylor and Pringle, *Correspondence of Pitt*, vols. 2-4.

8. Quotations: Lady Chatham to Elizabeth Montagu, 21 May [1774], Montagu Papers, HEHL, MO 4131; Elizabeth Montagu to Lady Chatham, n.d. but 1770s, Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8, 50, ff. 81–82. See generally the letters in Montagu Papers, MO 4129–35; and in Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8, 50. On Montagu, a leader of the London bluestocking circle, see Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, "Montagu, Elizabeth," *ODNB* 38:720–25.

9. Hester Chatham to Earl Temple, 17 October 1777, Grenville Papers, Add. MSS 42087, f. 189.

### 5. Consolidating the Feminine Private

1. Why the young apprentice chose a female persona for his anonymous authorial debut is uncertain, but his brother James and associates often used feminine pseudonyms in satirical pieces; see n. 32, below, for such satirical *New-England Courant* essays.

2. *New-England Courant* (hereafter *NEC*), 2, 16 April 1722. The fourteen Silence Dogood papers are reprinted in Leonard W. Labaree et al., eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 39 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959–), 1:8–45. Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 82–87, elides the implications of Silence's female persona in an otherwise insightful discussion. Franklin possibly modeled Silence on Mistress Sarah Kemble Knight, a similarly well educated, widowed household head, whom he would probably have known (or known of) in his Boston childhood. Silence's name has been interpreted as a sly riff on the sermons of the Reverend Cotton Mather, opposed by the *NEC* in the 1721 inoculation controversy.

3. Ioan Williams, ed., *The Criticism of Henry Fielding* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 329. For a full discussion of this source, see chapter 4, n. 38. On rhetorical femininity, see Tedra Osell, "Tatling Women in the Public Sphere: Rhetorical Femininity and the English Essay Periodical," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (2005): 283–99.

4. *NEC*, 14, 28 May 1722. Ephraim Censorious could well have represented a restatement of objections to the subject of Silence's essay Franklin had heard in the print shop. An *NEC* predecessor for Silence was a nominal Rhode Island spinster who complained about younger women misbehaving in church, in *ibid.*, 16 October 1721.

5. Of the fourteen essays, which appeared at intervals through 8 October 1722, three addressed ungendered subject matter and four others commented briefly on women. The essay criticizing female pride, which Ephraim requested, was published on 11 June.

6. Jenny Distaff first appeared in the tenth *Tatler* essay, and she reappeared periodically thereafter; see Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Tatler*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1:87 et seq.

7. See primarily G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).