

Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.)

Taste and the Senses
in the Eighteenth Century

LANDAU-PARIS STUDIES ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
LAPASEC

Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.)

Vol. 3

Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.)

**Taste and the Senses
in the Eighteenth Century**

 Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Taste and the Senses in the Eighteenth Century /

Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.).-

Trier : WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011

(LAPASEC, Vol. 3)

ISBN 978-3-86821-343-0

Cover illustration:

William Hogarth, *Marriage A-la-Mode*. Second Scene. 1743-45.

Oil on canvas. National Gallery, London.

Cover design: Brigitta Disseldorf

© WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011

ISBN 978-3-86821-343-0

No part of this book, covered by the copyright hereon,
may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means
without prior permission of the publisher.

WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier

Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier

Tel.: (0651) 41503, Fax: 41504

Internet: <http://www.wvttrier.de>

E-Mail: wvt@wvttrier.de

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our gratitude to the Deutsch-Französische Hochschule / Université Franco-allemande whose generous support of several LAPASEC conferences on taste and the senses enabled us to put together a selection of the best papers now assembled in this volume. The conferences in Landau were also kindly supported by the President of Universität Koblenz-Landau, Professor Roman Heiligenthal.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée

Part I: Sight

Joseph Addison and the Contemplation of Colours:
Æsthetic Attraction and Control in the Periodical Essays 27
Amélie Junqua

"True and Real Colour": Sensing, Feeling,
and the Pseudo-Empiricist Theory of Taste 35
Oscar Kenshur

The Modern Taste "after the Chinese manner": The Aesthetics
of the Anglo-Chinese Taste in the Eighteenth Century 49
Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding

China and the Invention of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England 65
David Porter

Taste, the Auction House, and the Education of the Eye
in Eighteenth-Century Britain 79
Bénédicte Miyamoto-Pavot

The Business of Taste: Samuel Foote, David Garrick and William Hogarth 93
Jeffrey Hopes

Part II: Hearing

David Hartley and the Sense of Hearing: from Vibrations to Taste 111

Pierre Dubois

L'un veut du vif, l'autre veut du languissant:
Hearing and Taste in the *Querelle des Bouffons* 121

Downing A. Thomas

The Proudest of the Senses: Musicality and Morality in the *Querelle d'Homère* 133

Oscar Kenshur

Horrid Howling or Sublime Sensation? Primitivism, Romanticism,
Gothic Horror and Eighteenth-Century Taste in Music:
The Case of the Great Highland Bagpipes 145

Christoph Heyl

The Senses in Mozart's da Ponte Operas 165

Laurel E. Zeiss

Uniformity Versus Plurality: Prescribing Taste in Spoken English 185

Jeffrey Hopes

Artful Improvement or Corruption of the Mother Tongue?
The Morality of Eighteenth-Century Hearing and Aaron Hill's Campaign for
Improving Sound on the English Stage 195

Anja Müller

Deafness as *conditio humana* in Eighteenth-Century Writings:
The Case of Duncan Campbell 207

Isabel Karremann

Listening to the Jungle or Life as Sound: Alexander von Humboldt's
"Nocturnal Animal Life in the Jungle" and the Humboldt Effect 221

Ottmar Ette

Part III: Smelling

What's in a Sunflower? Eighteenth-Century Novels
and the Censorship of the Sensorium239
Madeleine Descargues-Grant

The Politics of Smell251
Christoph Houswitschka

Jonathan Swift's Olfactory Misogyny259
Louise Barnett

*Ungrateful Odours, Sullyng Touch: Tasteful Excursions
into the Dubious Realms of Trivia and Cloacina*269
Christoph Heyl

Part IV: Tasting and Touching

Taste as the Ultimate Refinement of London Club Culture and Sociability285
Valérie Capdeville

Taste and Toasts in Early Eighteenth-Century Club Culture299
Judith Hawley

The Taste for Snuff in Eighteenth-Century Britain319
Jeffrey Hopes

Le goût du vin chez Marivaux: De la saveur au goût des mots331
Catherine Gallouët

"Sweet Pictures" – Raising the Tasteful Child
in Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature345
Anja Müller

Part V: Distaste and the Obscene

The Displeasures of the Imagination: Manliness, Distaste, and Paranoia
in Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*361
Isabel Karremann

Anti-Taste: Hogarth and the Obscene381
Peter Wagner

Notes on Contributors397

Index401

Introduction: "Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste" – The Case of William Hogarth

The essays in this volume are concerned with the issue of taste in the long eighteenth century in England. A selection of the best papers originally presented in a series of conferences held in Landau and Paris between 2007 and 2009, they address the five human senses in the context of the Enlightenment discussions of the aesthetics of taste.

In the wake of the study of moral psychology inspired by Locke and Shaftesbury, the critical Enlightenment debate was concerned with the way in which art affects our emotions. After Addison's seminal essays on "the pleasures of the imagination" in *The Spectator* (nos. 411-42) of June 1712, Jean-Baptiste Dubos, in *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* (1719), defines taste as a sixth sense. Francis Hutcheson (in *Inquiry Into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 1725) follows Shaftesbury when he regards taste as an internal sense concerned with both morals and art, and Montesquieu (in *De l'esprit des lois*, 1748, translated in 1777) sees it in connection with climate as an organ of the "body machine." Many writers of the Enlightenment agreed that good taste is based on universally valid principles: Hume (1742) and Voltaire (1753), was, typically, preoccupied with redefining taste for a new middle-class audience.¹

A more relativist viewpoint emerged in the second part of the eighteenth century when Alexander Gerard (1759) defined the term as a responsive faculty of the imagination complementing the effort of the artist – taste is to the critic what genius is to the artist. Kant, in the context of discussing the sublime, insists on the varying notions of taste championed in different periods.

Clearly, then, taste is an issue relating to aesthetics, philosophy, art history, literature and literary criticism, but also to social history, class distinctions, and gender. For much of the discussion briefly outlined above often turned out to be, implicitly at least, a defence of the attitudes (the *habitat*, in Bourdieu's terminology: see Bourdieu 1991) of a self-defined, wealthy, educated, male, leisured, and exclusive elite. It is not least because the (male) champions of the new rising middle class (Addison and Steele in journalism; Defoe and Richardson in fiction; Hogarth in art) used taste as a weapon and mark of distinction that one of the central aims of this book is the exploration of

1 See especially Montesquieu's "Of Laws in Relation to the Nature of the Climate", in his *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), transl. Thomas Nugent: *The Spirit of the Laws* (London: J. Nourse, 1777); David Hume's essay "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion" in Part I of his *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (1742), ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987); and Voltaire's condemnation of the Jesuit baroque style in his "Essay on Taste", supplement to Alexander Gerard's *Essay on Taste* (London: A. Millar, 1759).

For a discussion of the central figures in the development of the modern philosophy of art in this context, from Francis Hutcheson through Gerard, Alison, Hume, and Kant, see George Dickie 1996.

the politics and ideologies of taste. From Francis Hutcheson, quoted above, to Archibald Alison, at the century's end (see his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, 1790), taste occupied artists and philosophers (who, more often than not, also proved guardians of morality), writers and journalists – so much so that the term became rather vague and ambiguous², the *Connoisseur* arguing in a vitriolic article, published in May 1756,

Taste is at present the darling idol of the polite world and the world of letters; and, indeed, seems to be considered as the quintessence of almost all the arts and sciences. The fine ladies and gentlemen dress with Taste; the architects, whether *Gothic* or *Chinese*, build with Taste; the painters paint with Taste; critics read with Taste; and in short, fiddlers, players, singers, dancers and mechanics themselves are all the sons and daughters of Taste. Yet in this amazing superabundance of Taste, few can say what it really signifies. (Coleman, *The Connoisseur*, no. 120, 1756)

The cultural debate on taste took place in a newly charged atmosphere as more commentators from the middle class joined the fray and Britain developed into a consumer society.³ Definitions of taste, as the above quote demonstrates, were "implicated in wider cultural changes, as participants in theoretical debate sought to establish positions inflected by the nuances of class position and the uncertainties of gender roles" (Jones 1998: vii).

One (self-defined) expert who thought he knew all about it was William Hogarth. What better commentator than this unique English artist on the aspects addressed in this volume – and, indeed, what better source when one inquires into the ways taste changed from, say, the 1720s to the second part of the eighteenth century? For not only did Hogarth witness the impact of a new, rising, class on taste in art and literature in England, he also lived through and participated in the concomitant war of ideologies while taking part in what Linda Colley has so aptly described as "forging a nation" (and classes, one might add: see Colley 1994). As Mark Hallett has noted, Hogarth, in his life as well as in his art, was someone who knew the transgression of class barriers and "whose brilliance in depicting the rituals of high and low culture was sharpened by his personal experience of both" (Hallett 2000: 7). In addition, Hogarth's case is all the more interesting precisely because he reinforced an already strongly gendered discourse on taste.⁴ The forging of the nation was thus accompanied by formations of taste⁵ also affected by constant political and aesthetic friction with France, England's

2 For a discussion of this ambiguity, see Jones 1998: 8-16.

3 On the cultural consequences of this development, see especially McKendrick, Brewer, Plumb 1985; Porter 1982 and 2000; Brewer and Porter 1994; Brewer 1997; and Bermingham and Brewer 1997. For the more political consequences of this rise of middle-class expression on the notion of taste, particularly in the debates leading to the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768, see Barrell 1986.

4 Jones has argued convincingly that the aristocratic view of the emerging middle-class taste was seen in a gendered discourse marking it as the "work of weak, unregulated passions, womanly cravings after fripperies, fancies and all manner of Chinese trash" (1998: 5). Hogarth's representation of the Countess in his *Marriage* series fully confirms this view, as does his strongly feminized ideal of beauty, the (female) S-line, implying seduction, wantonness, attraction, and beauty simultaneously.

5 The plural here is important, the aesthetic expression of what J. G. A. Pocock and Roy Porter have presented as "Enlightenments": see J. G. A. Pocock 2001; and Roy Porter 2001.