“Taste is not to conform to the art, but the art to the taste”: aesthetic instrumentalism and the British body politic in the neoclassical age

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Abstract
The eighteenth century witnessed the historical change from aesthetic instrumentalism to aesthetic autonomy. Aesthetic research has often attempted to capture this change in teleological terms, wherein British aesthetic instrumentalism appears to contain the seeds of its own decline. The purpose of this article is to restore a balance between these two major historical modes of appreciating art, and to display the uniqueness of British aesthetic instrumentalism. During especially the first half of the eighteenth century, aesthetic instrumentalism was revitalised due to a new rationale for art in the reinforcement of a national body politic and in the strengthening of a British identity. In order to recognise the distinctiveness of aesthetic instrumentalism, as well as to acknowledge by what means it operated, I make essentially two claims: (1) aesthetic instrumentalism rediscovered its effective interaction with a national body politic by exploring a possible nexus between Britain and classical antiquity, and (2) although the philosophy of art advanced by Joseph Addison (1672–1719) frequently is held as a possible commencement of aesthetic autonomy, it was, first and foremost, characterised by a systematic aesthetic instrumentalism intended to reinforce the British body politic.

Keywords: aesthetic autonomy; aesthetic instrumentalism; Italian opera; Addison; Shaftesbury

The eighteenth century was the grand siècle in the history of aesthetics, a period where aesthetics was formed as a scientific discipline and where the primacy of the instrumental value of art was gradually replaced by a modern intrinsic value of art. It is fair to say that the transformation from what is anachronistically labelled aesthetic instrumentalism to aesthetic autonomy registers a historical truth that is central for our understanding of aesthetics.¹ In the following, I have no intention of questioning the legitimacy of such a narrative but, rather, would like to identify what we tend to overlook in our zeal to reproduce the self-evidence of the transformation. My focus is on British aesthetics, especially during the first half of the eighteenth century, a period where instrumentalism

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was not enervated so much as revitalised due to a new rationale for art in underpinning a national body politic and in strengthening a British identity. As I will argue, aesthetic instrumentalism rediscovered its effective interaction with a national body politic by exploring a possible nexus between Britain and classical antiquity. In the final part of the article, I will also re-evaluate the particularity of aesthetic instrumentalism by analysing the claims advanced by Joseph Addison (1672–1719) in the single-essay periodical *The Spectator*, published first between 1711 and 1712 and then again in 1714. Over the years, aesthetic research has disclosed a divided loyalty regarding the bearings of Addison’s writings, on the one hand proclaiming his criticism as the modern “ground-breaking channel for the discipline to follow,” and, on the other hand, denouncing it as philosophically insubstantial.2 It is fair to acknowledge that the latter stance is currently predominant, and I believe that one reason for this derives from the fact that Addison evolves certain instrumental claims aimed at reinforcing the British body politic, claims that do not tally with an aesthetic paradigm in which instrumentalism in the eighteenth century merely moulders away.

**AESTHETIC INSTRUMENTALISM AND AUTONOMY**

In “Aesthetic Instrumentalism” (1982), T. J. Diffey identifies aesthetic instrumentalism with the view that the “value of art consists in the fulfilment of a function or functions,” while aesthetic autonomy is the “rejection of instrumentalism.”3 The overall purpose of Diffey’s article is to demonstrate that the conflict between these two traditional positions is not as unambiguous as is commonly assumed. But along the way, Diffey also makes a passing comment regarding the origins of the disagreement between aesthetic instrumentalism and autonomy, a comment which I find productive when it comes to addressing British eighteenth-century aesthetics.

Diffey recognises that the conflict between instrumentalists and autonomists tends to demonstrate two general features. Firstly, the latter frown on the former because they appear to value art only for possessing a particular function, making our approbation of such art conditional on such a function being “wanted, needed or desired.” And, secondly, they argue, such an approach simply leads us to put our faith in art as the unmatched means for generating these types of function.4 These two features appear to demonstrate that instrumentalism is hypothesised according to certain contingencies which need to be attained and that, as a result, it generates an “[a]esthetic appreciation” which is “conditional in character.”5 Thus, the potential conflict between instrumentalism and autonomy concerns both contingencies and values: for instrumentalists the appreciation of art depends, it seems, on contingencies external to art itself, and the value of art hinges on whether or not such a value is requested.

Regarding contingencies, the instrumentalist might, as Diffey points out, argue that one possible “necessity” of art consists in its capacity to fulfil a universal human need (e.g. to satisfy the need for a private peace which is “wanted and valued by everyone”).6 From the instrumentalist’s point of view, a similar scenario is also present when we consider the autonomist’s position. The appreciation of art is essentially a concern for those with informed sense perceptions. We have no naked eye when we read and appreciate a poem, for instance. If we expand on Diffey’s line of thought, we might remind ourselves that in order to appreciate the intrinsic value of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667/1674), one had (and still has) to be able to read a complex seventeenth-century iambic pentameter. Furthermore, to only value the iambic rhythm of the poem would reduce an essential part of the poem’s merits, such as, for instance, Milton’s original take on Pagan and Greek mythology. Although we cannot claim knowledge of Graeco-Roman polytheism as mandatory for valuing the poem, it is fair to say that an uninformed reading of *Paradise Lost* would let pass numerous qualities of the poem and obscure a vital part of the poem’s intrinsic value. How come then, asks Diffey, “some contingencies, such as the possession of certain needs, [are] apparently inimical to aesthetic appreciation, while others, such as acute sensory discrimination and trained perception, are to be countenanced, indeed admitted as of the essence of aesthetic appreciation?”7

However, no reasonable autonomist would, as Diffey observes, deny that a certain set of contingencies are required in order to experience art.
But such an autonomist would also point out that we must discriminate between, on the one hand, the conditions that need to be satisfied in order to have an aesthetic experience, and, on the other hand, the outcome of such an experience. Furthermore, the reasonable autonomist would suggest that we distinguish between what makes art in general a valuable human activity (apologies for art) and what makes a specific artwork valuable (evaluations of a work of art). The instrumentalist tends to run apologies and evaluations together, and thus “what he values art for is what makes a particular work of art, if it is good, a good work of art.” If one makes apologies for art by believing, as Addison does in the early eighteenth century, that performances in general must aid the “Advancement of Morality, and [add] to the Reformation of the Age,” the evaluations of a particular play must accordingly confirm that the best play is the one that most successfully produces such a desired effect.

Diffey’s way of exploring the dichotomy between aesthetic instrumentalism and aesthetic autonomy serves his ends: the hyperbolic argumentation fortifies his wish to prove that in the end the conflict between instrumentalism and autonomy is not as clear cut as is generally (and initially) claimed. Nevertheless, Diffey’s valuable point is that while the autonomists would perhaps accuse the instrumentalists of failing to appreciate the intrinsic value of art, there is “nothing logically inconsistent, however, in instrumentalist evaluations of works of art.” What we encounter is rather the fact that aesthetic autonomy appears to motivate our expectations of art and criticism. While autonomists might argue that an instrumentalist theory of art fails to fully recognise the appropriate value of art, or runs together apologies and evaluations, such a consideration is, from the position of instrumentalists, not necessarily a failure at all. Thus, the question as to why instrumentalists might fail to notice the intrinsic merit of art is somewhat misdirected, since the “proper understanding of what is in dispute,” according to Diffey, is that the “commitment to aesthetic autonomy is something historically located, something manifest in attitudes to art that has been gaining in strength since the eighteenth century to a position of dominance today.”

At this particular point Robert Stecker finds Diffey’s remark confusing, since the “reference to the historicity of AA [aesthetic autonomy]” does not change the fact that “art has aesthetic value.” But here Stecker misreads Diffey’s intentions. Diffey’s observation is not aimed at disputing claims concerning aesthetic value; rather, it reveals that the self-evidence of autonomy (“held in such wide esteem”) is historically founded, and that, if neglected, such a fact might very well affect our expectations and comprehensions of the values of art. However, in his reply to Diffey, Stecker advances a valuable point when addressing the role of the aesthetic experience of art (a point which makes the distinction between instrumentalism and autonomy even less clear cut than Diffey wishes to prove). Merely to see the qualities of an artwork, as Stecker points out, is not necessarily significant, either for autonomists or for instrumentalists. That is to say that artworks demand our emotional input, so that both autonomists and instrumentalists rely on the aesthetic experience of art, and without it the encounter with intrinsic or instrumental values would not even arise. The intrinsic and the instrumental values of art derive from different functions correlated by their mutual dependence on aesthetic experience, and when we “aesthetically experience different art forms we become acquainted with things that can have further importance in human life.” The aesthetic experience of art is just as significant for instrumentalists as it is for autonomists. As we will see in this article, with slight modifications, these remarks are also pertinent for understanding British eighteenth-century aesthetics: it is indeed through the experience of the right aesthetic value of art that art possesses, in the eyes of philosophers and critics, a good instrumental value, while art with the wrong aesthetic value possesses merely a negative instrumental value. We should note that while the aesthetic value of art is indeed accepted in both cases given here, Stecker fails to recognise that the accuracy of such a value—whether the aesthetic value is recognised to be the right or the wrong aesthetic value—alters due to cultural and historical conditions. Hence, Addison claims, “Taste is not to conform to the Art, but the Art to the Taste,” and he reminds the readers that “Italian Artists cannot agree with our English Musicians, in admiring Purcell’s Compositions” since “both Nations do not always express the same Passions by the same Sounds.” As we will see in the final...
section of this article, while music and opera certainly have aesthetic value, the right aesthetic value in Italy is not necessarily accepted as the right aesthetic value in Britain.

To summarise, I would like to emphasise three relevant claims: (1) the declining position of aesthetic instrumentalism and the growing authority of aesthetic autonomy are, as Diffeys suggests, set in the eighteenth century; (2) we should revise the feeling that instrumentalism “subvert[s] our customary expectations of criticism” and recognise the synchronic qualities of instrumentalism within the period;\(^\text{20}\) and (3) the distinction between instrumentalism and autonomy is not unambiguous, since both positions in fact rely on aesthetic experience, and while they both subscribe to the significance of the aesthetic value of art, the accuracy of such a value is, in British eighteenth-century aesthetics, frequently believed to be culturally and historically conditioned.

**INTERPRETING INSTRUMENTALISM AND AUTONOMY HISTORICALLY**

How has aesthetic research addressed the critical transformation from aesthetic instrumentalism to aesthetic autonomy? The declining authority of instrumentalism is frequently taken to coincide with the emergence of a modern conception of the fine arts. On the opening pages of “The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics” (1951), Paul Oskar Kristeller characteristically asks us to accept four general facts about the origin of the modern system of the arts in the eighteenth century. Apart from the fact that this was the century when aesthetics was established as a science, a new philosophy of art was invented, and the practice of evaluating diverse arts from common principles increased, Kristeller, more importantly, trusts us to agree that during this period, “dominating concepts [e.g. taste and sentiment] of modern aesthetics” received their “definite modern meaning,” and that the term “Art with a capital A and in its modern sense” emerged.\(^\text{21}\)

An initial clarification of the term modern appears to be required here and even precedes our acceptance of the facts that Kristeller himself wishes to take “for granted.”\(^\text{22}\) What do modern aesthetics, definite modern meaning, and modern sense signify in these statements? Questions, all of which are subcategories of the main question “What is in fact modern about the system of the arts?” Although Kristeller does not define the term modern, he nevertheless relates it to other vicissitudes in art and philosophy which, when taken as a whole, clearly disclose his perception of the modern. The “irreducible nucleus” of the modern system of the arts consists of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry.\(^\text{23}\) In order to distinguish such a modern system, the arts have to be assigned an autonomous realm, detached from “crafts, the sciences and other human activities.”\(^\text{24}\) Such a modern realm of aesthetics is to Kristeller irreconcilable with the classical period, where the Latin and Greek terms for art “do not specifically denote the ‘fine arts’ in the modern sense, but were applied to all kinds of human activities which we would call crafts or sciences.”\(^\text{25}\) Nor, according to Kristeller, does an aesthetic category such as beauty hold “specific modern connotations” during the classical period, since neither the Greek nor the Latin term for beauty was accurately separated from an ethical realm.\(^\text{26}\) Apart from his survey from the classical period to the eighteenth century, this is Kristeller’s key point: in the main, the modern system of the arts evolved in the eighteenth century, and as such it coincided with a new evaluation of the intrinsic properties of art.

Kristeller’s account of aesthetic autonomy is well established, to say the least.\(^\text{27}\) A number of influential scholars, such as Martha Woodmansee, wish to continue Kristeller’s historical account and the so-called discontinuity model that she endorses (in which the eighteenth century signifies a radical break in valuing art) is in many ways representative of the major turn that occurred within aesthetics during the last decades of the twentieth century.\(^\text{28}\) Paul Mattick, Jr. captured the essence of this turn when he observed that while history and the social disciplines gained strength from the “historical character of cultural objects and of the necessity, if they are to be understood, of viewing them within their complex social contexts,” aesthetics is “a major exception, remaining an academic field characterised by very little in the way of historical self-consciousness.”\(^\text{29}\) Arthur C. Danto expected Woodmansee’s discontinuity model (if right) to be able to replace a
continuity model, “which is the model tacit in the structure of history conceived of as dialogic.”

Given the historical scope countenanced by Woodmansee, as well as by Kristeller, it is accurate to identify the “cataclysmic” disposition of their accounts. However, behind Danto’s claim that the discontinuity model nevertheless bestows a problematic status on art lurks a question of more urgent relevance. Given that one considers instrumentalism to be substituted by a belief that art holds an intrinsic value, one nevertheless appears to apply a concept of art—although the evaluation of art itself might have changed—that subsists, in the words of Danto, “outside the history” itself. Accounts of transformations or even philosophical cataclysms always seem to require continuity and a common quality in the first place. Deprived of a dialogic structure, the discontinuity model becomes, it seems, merely insulated. Thus, if we narrow down Kristeller’s grandiose perspective and focus on the eighteenth century per se, the continuity of the discontinuity model becomes, I believe, even clearer. Many scholars (Woodmansee included) appear in fact to perceive the eighteenth century almost as a miniature of Kristeller’s grand narrative of aesthetics. In such diachronic accounts, the discontinuity model subscribes to an established tradition of continuity, where the exposure of the intrinsic value of art remains cumulative throughout the century, eventually causing the cessation of instrumentalism.

No aesthetic concept represents such a cessation more effectively than the attempts to single out a particular kind of disinterested contemplation of objects which contain their own inner purpose, of which Kant’s attempt in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) is the paradigmatic example. Here, we should note that the concept of disinterestedness occupies a position in the debates on British eighteenth-century aesthetics largely because it appears to capture a *telos* of aesthetics, represented by the development of the intrinsic evaluation of art and present, most particularly, in the writings of Addison and the third earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713): a presence which slowly but surely grows towards the systematic German aesthetic tradition, and culminates in Kant’s claim concerning the autonomy of aesthetic judgments. In the words of Ernst Cassirer: “Von Shaftesbury stammt der Begriff des ‘interesselosen Wohlgefallens’, den die deutsche Ästhetik des 18. Jahrhunderts aufgenommen, den Mendelssohn weiter entwickelt und den Kant systematisch geklärt und vertieft hat.” As R.L. Brett put it, Kant not only owned the “formulation of the questions” but also in fact “built on the foundations they [Shaftesbury and Addison] had laid,” especially concerning the idea that the aesthetic judgment is disinterested. With particular reference to British theories of the sublime, a significant twentieth-century scholar like Samuel H. Monk advances a step further, by claiming that these ideas evolve towards an “unconscious goal,” in which the “confused seas of English theories” are destined to finally produce a perception where the aesthetic experience “seeks to discover no knowledge of the object” (i.e. to value the intrinsic qualities of art). A similar approach is defended by Robert C. Holub in “The Rise of Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century” (1978). Although he does not wish to perceive a “straightforward progression” of aesthetics “from neoclassicism to romanticism,” Holub nevertheless aims to display the “essence of a movement” in the period between Addison’s essays and Kant’s Third Critique, a “gradual process, whose realization [does] not become apparent until the process [is] completed,” and where someone like Addison “either consciously or unconsciously utilized current philosophical theories towards a greater understanding of the arts.” Along those lines, the modern idea that art possesses intrinsic value becomes the progressive climax of an unoriginal British aesthetics. Even Jerome Stolnitz, who wishes to steer clear from addressing aesthetic disinterestedness by “working backward from ethics,” cannot avoid wringing auton- mist claims out of instrumentalist arguments. Although Shaftesbury, according to Stolnitz, merely “opposes disinterestedness to the desire to possess or use the object,” Stolnitz nevertheless finds it appropriate to conclude that a “disregard for possession or use is only an inference from or a specification of the broader proposition that the aesthetic spectator does not relate the object to any purposes that outrun the act of perception itself.” Thus, it seems as if Shaftesbury is also in fact largely concerned with preparing the modern move from instrumentalism to autonomy.
I should claim little originality by acknowledging this kind of purposiveness in the historical reconstructions of aesthetics. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla must have the credit for initiating the imperative shift of perspective when they argued, in *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (1996), that while the disinterestedness proposed by Kant seeks to solve the “tension between self-interest and the interest of the subject,” British aesthetics demonstrated a “consistent refusal to relinquish the interconnections between aesthetic judgments and ethical conduct.” Ashfield’s and de Bolla’s wish to avoid an anachronistic reading of British aesthetic theory remains crucial to date for a number of reasons. Identifying the disadvantages of reconstructing a narrative where we relocate from instrumentalism to autonomy does not imply a denial of such relocation, nor does it challenge the significance of Kant’s account of the autonomous aesthetic judgment. The eighteenth century was indeed a transformational phase, where aesthetic instrumentalism was challenged by new perspectives on the intrinsic value of art. What we are able to pinpoint, however, by assessing such a transformation is an inherent weakness of the method of the teleological reconstruction as such. Given that we frequently equate, for instance, the notion of *pure disinterestedness* with, as Stolnitz suggests, the “origins of modern aesthetic theory,” we are, as it seems, likely to omit the instrumental claims disclosing the complexities of *interestedness*, and the significance of such a perspective could too easily be overlooked since it is not consistent with the autonomist position that is currently supported. Once again, we might benefit from Diffey’s claim that the evaluation of art needs to be addressed in historical terms, but also remind ourselves that when we accept the logic of such a claim and consider the synchronic expectations directing instrumentalism, we nevertheless tend to reduce significant instrumental claims to small elements in the diachronic narrative of autonomy. The “present standards” might then, as Preben Mortensen points out, “appear as the inevitable end-product of a long chain of development, and historical predecessors are understood as immature or incomplete forms of the present.”

Any attempts to expose the synchronic strength of eighteenth-century aesthetic instrumentalism, and to restore a balance between the two major historical modes of valuing art, are, I believe, imposed to clarify the causes behind such strength and to answer the interrelated question regarding the means by which instrumentalism remained persuasive. In my undertaking to answer these questions, I will, in this article, proceed as follows: First, I will argue that aesthetic instrumentalism was persistently topicalised due to its relevance for a rational British body politic. Such a body politic remained mandatory for the construction of a new sense of national identity, and instrumentalism rediscovered its effective interaction with the body politic by exploring a possible nexus between Britain and classical antiquity (i.e. Graeco-Roman antiquity). Although the presence of classical artistic values was real and dominating in eighteenth-century arts, philosophers and critics relied on the nexus as a trope, with the intention of reinforcing the principle that Britain constituted a superior and chosen nation set to form a moral and artistic paragon for the European continent. Secondly, I will demonstrate by what means instrumentalism functioned in the writings of Addison.

**NEOCLASSICISM AND THE BODY POLITIC**

Apart from its responsiveness to Semitic and Oriental cultures, post-Restoration philosophy and art revealed a strong commitment to ancient Greek and Roman values. The presence of what is anachronistically called the new classicism (neo-classicism) revealed a readiness to explore a nexus between Britain and especially ancient Greek culture, and thus to rediscover political and artistic parallels and a sense of national superiority. While such a Graecophilia is more known as the attribute of German neohumanists like Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), it was much present in British eighteenth-century aesthetics and played a part in the approaching prosperity of British poetic philhellenism, which reached a Byronic climax in the nineteenth century.

Much as in German philhellenism, political liberty and the body politic in general among British eighteenth-century philosophers and artists were believed to interact with national artistic merits (and no political liberty and body politic...
were more exemplary than the Greek *polis*). 49

As Addison points out, it does not matter if a prince encourages the arts, as long as the nation holds an autocratic government. Degeneracy always ensues from tyranny, and Addison challenges the reader to “Look upon *Greece* under its free States, and you would think its Inhabitants lived in different Climates, and under different Heavens, from those at present; so different are the Genius’s which are formed under *Turkish Slavery*, and *Grecian Liberty*. “50 In a society with a prosperous liberty such as Greece, “learning and all the liberal arts will immediately lift up their heads and flourish,” 51 or, as Addison’s versifier Mark Akenside (1721–1770) stated, in his ode to the tenth Earl of Huntingdon in 1748, while seeking a tangent place between his own Whig patriotism and the paradigmatic classical patriotism of Pindar (522–443 B.C.), “great *Poetical Talents*, and high *Sentiments of Liberty*, do reciprocally produce and assist each other.” 52 Unlike the German philhellenic belief that modern society was forsaking the beauty and knowledge of classical Greek culture, 53 British neoclassicism did not generally wish to reconcile possible differences between a body politic, art, and the classical age. Rather, philosophers and critics resorted to classical ideals in order to fortify and confirm the destiny of the British arts and thus reinforce a rational body politic.

An illustrative voice in such a context belongs to Shaftesbury. Despite the fact that he criticised British art, Shaftesbury drew heavily on the idea that Britain related to a glorious classical history and that the nation was on the verge of a new critical age after the Revolution, an age which due to a prospering liberty and national superiority would allow Britain to establish a paragon of ethics, arts, and taste. Shaftesbury associated future Britain with an original ancient Greek culture where “music, poetry and the rest came to receive some kind of shape and be distinguished into their several orders and degrees.” 54 One such point of departure is Shaftesbury’s claim in *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author* (1710) that Britain is about to reap the harvest of a ferocious past in which national liberty was secured: “[W]e are still in this moment expanding both our Blood and Treasure, to secure to our-selves this inestimable Purchase of our *Free Government* and *National Constitution*. “55 Although their war enemy, Catholic France, “threaten’d the World with a Universal Monarchy, and a new Abyss of Ignorance and Superstition,” and the “*BRITISH MUSES*, in this Dinn of Arms, may well lie abject and obscure; especially being as yet in their mere Infant-State;” the prospect for British art remains optimistic. 56 The “natural Genius [of Britain] shines above that airy neighbouring Nation [France],” and the advantage stems, according to Shaftesbury, from the consequences which “establish’d Liberty will produce in every thing that relates to *Art*; when *Peace* returns to us on these happy Conditions.” 57 Roman civilisation had “scarce an intermediate Age, or single Period of Time, between the Rise of Arts and Fall of Liberty.” 58 According to Shaftesbury, “No sooner had that Nation begun to lose the Roughness and Barbarity of their Manners, and learn of GREECE to form their *Heroes*, their *Orators* and *Poets* on a right Model, than by their unjust Attempt upon the Liberty they lost not only their Force of Eloquence, but even their Stile and Language it-self.” 59

In order to identify the present and the future values of British society and arts, Shaftesbury falls back on the history of classical Greek art. Winckelmann’s belief that proper taste had its origins under the Grecian sky 60 would have befitted Shaftesbury’s conviction that ancient Greek culture was truly “*Original in Art*” and poetry was “*self-form’d*, wrought out of Nature, and drawn from the necessary Operation and Course of things, working, as it were, of their own accord, and proper inclination.” 61 What emerged in ancient Greece was then a “natural Growth of Arts.” 62 Strongly “animated by that social, publick and *free Spirit*,” the Greeks pursued an ideal language, which stimulated other arts. 63 In an initial historical phase of language, the “*Lofty, the Sublime, the Astonishing and Amazing* wou’d be the most in fashion.” 64 Even in the “Commonwealth it-self, and in the Affairs of Government,” the “*High-Poetick and the Figurative Way* began to prevail,” according to Shaftesbury. 65 But as the “*Taste of GREECE was ... polishing*,” a “better Judgment was soon form’d,” and “in all the principal Works of *Ingenuity* and *Art*, *SIMPPLICITY* and *NATURE* began chiefly to be sought,” a taste was firmly established “which lasted thro so many Ages, till the Ruin of all things, under a Universal Monarchy [i.e. the reign
of Alexander III of Macedonia (356–323 B.C.)," A nexus between this ancient progress and the conditions in Britain is suggested by Shaftesbury himself: “If the Reader shou’d per-adventure be led by his Curiosity to seek some kind of Comparison between this antient Growth of TASTE, and that which we have experience’d in modern days, and within our own Nation; he may look back to the Speeches of our Ancestors in Parliament.” On the one hand, Shaftesbury was, as Lawrence E. Klein points out, “arguing for British cultural superiority on the basis of British genius and British politics,” and thought that the “British had already begun to imitate ancient Hellenic experience”; on the other hand, he “recognized the deficiencies of British culture.”

While Shaftesbury remains ambivalent over the current state of art and taste, he is clear about the chain of progress, in which Britain might realise its unique historical potential. Britain is enjoying a new sense of freedom—“LIBERTY is once again in its Ascendant”—and, given the new sense of self-determination, the nation is also able to set the standard for the European continent, and “by our Greatness and Power give Life and Vigour to it abroad; and [is] the Head and Chief of the EUROPEAN League, founded on this common Cause.”

Why is Shaftesbury so keen to identify a possible historical continuum between classical antiquity and current Britain, and to isolate a provincial distinctiveness in relation to Europe? In order to recognise the connotations of the arguments made by neoclassical philosophers and critics, we ought to recall that the body politic was believed to be pieced together by civic virtues. The “ideal was,” as James William Johnson stressed more than four decades ago, the “complete correspondence between the public and private self in a society where public and personal benefit were identical, where the single man was a microcosm of the body politic.” Given that the fate of the individual was proportionate to the fate of the body politic itself, the destiny of a private taste was also the destiny of a public taste. Consequently, one gave prominence to the specific moral qualities of arts, and naturally merged such qualities with the artistic merits of the artworks. Whenever artworks were deficient in such qualities and merits, civic virtues and the public spirit, which ultimately structured the body politic itself, were endangered. As John Dennis (1658–1734) argued in An Essay on the Opera’s after the Italian Manner (1706), since Italian opera was “soothing the Senses” and made man too self-interested—“too much in love with himself”—it was also “emasculating and dissolving the Mind” and subverting the British “publick Spirit.”

In his attempt to rescue the “British Muse” by “timely Prevention” of the effeminate sensual pleasures flowing in from the European continent, Dennis claimed to protect the “real Interests” (i.e. rationality, public virtue, and national liberty) of the British nation. After all, Britain was, according to Dennis, not that different from classical antiquity, and when cautioning his compatriots as to the political consequences of acquiescing to Italian opera, it was natural for Dennis to remind his readers that “Declension of Poetry in Greece and antient Rome, was soon follow’d by that of Liberty and Empire.” A proper aesthetic experience was thus a source for inclusive national public interests. If one assumed, as did Henry Home (Lord Kames) (1696–1782) in Elements of Criticism (1765), that a “taste in the fine arts” was “nearly allied” to a moral sense, and that the fine arts themselves, like morals, held the promise of becoming a “rational science,” one easily segued into matters concerning the national body politic. Accordingly, Kames stresses that to “promote the fine arts in Britain, has become of greater importance than is generally imagined,” the reason being that immorality—the corrupted end result (selfishness) of a thriving commerce and opulence—“extinguishes the amor patriae, and every spark of public spirit.” Thus, in order to prevent private vices from infecting public virtues, and to avoid corrupting the British body politic, one must, according to Kames, reinforce the position of the arts. After all, Kames asks rhetorically, in view of the fact that “ancient Greece furnishes one shining instance” of such reinforcement, “why should we despair of another in Britain?”

The desired nexus between Britain and classical antiquity also coalesced with a propensity to isolate the provincial nature of arts and society. Originality arose from the reproduction of a classical paradigm. To become inimitable (unnachahmlich), one had to advance, as Winckelmann observed, from the imitation (die Nachahmung) of the ancients. Inimitability could only originate from
the imitation of originality. If, as Townsend points out, “native Britain was to compete with classical Greece and Rome, it was felt that it must have its own classical age.”

But how could one be self-determining and sovereign without compromising the historical sustainability of one’s views over a wider time frame? In order to answer such a question, we must recognise the relational quality of national identity and nationalism, and that, as Mark A. Cheetham demonstrates in *Arterwriting, Nation, and Cosmopolitanism in Britain* (2012), the native evaluations of art did not merely turn to the European continent in order to obtain fresh artistic ideas but, rather, to “assert the superiority of their native Englishness.”

The strategies for separating British arts and body politic from the conditions on the continent took various forms and evolved on numerous societal levels. While the Counter-Reformation was proceeding on the continent, the Protestant Reformation was, as Linda Colley argues, still developing in Britain, and although the legal system cruelly reduced the impact and liberty of Catholics in civil society and Parliament, Protestantism was frequently believed to be vulnerable to a threatening Catholicism. As Colley argues, the “emerging sense of Britishness” did not only advance from “consensus or homogeneity or centralisation at home.” Rather, “the essential cement” proved to be a “strong sense of dissimilarity from those without.” We should neither underestimate the constant presence of real internal discrepancies in religion and culture during the time of the Act of Union, nor misjudge the fact that the sense of nationhood was at the time, as Frank O’Gorman points out, “not a theoretical construct but an active and practical catalyst for the creation and definition of people’s identities.”

Early eighteenth-century Britain can indeed, as O’Gorman remarked, “be described as an increasingly centralized body politic,” where a new sense of a national distinctiveness was gradually formed. An essential part of such a formation consisted, as Colley claims, in identifying the Other, such as, for instance, France, the Catholic haven for the forced abdication of James II, representing, as we have observed from Shaftesbury’s horizon, an Absolute body politic in poor health.

The oscillation between provinciality (othering cultures and pursuing cultural difference) and a transcultural quality (pursuing a cultural and historical continuum) might appear contradictory, but they share the same end result: a separation of the national features from an undesirable cultural characteristic, thus posing a promise of superiority and a vision of a moral and artistic paragon. I concur with Alok Yadav’s claim that British neoclassicism advanced imperial interests and a nationalistic ethos. However, while Yadav does not wish to accord metropolitan centrality to neoclassicism and instead acknowledges it in terms of provincial anxiety, he pushes the sense of historical continuum into the background. Yadav addresses classicism primarily in terms of (Aristotelian) poetic rules, which then causes him to claim, in the main, that national particularities arose from the rejection of such poetics.

My point is that neoclassicism did not merely problematise and reject the classical rules of poetry in order to claim cultural autonomy: in fact, it relied and drew on a general image ascribed to classical antiquity (even if this was in an arbitrary and associative manner), in order to facilitate the elucidation of its own national ethos. Thus, the British body politic gained strength from being radically provincial in othering continental cultures (e.g. Shaftesbury’s condemnation of France or Dennis’s critique of Italian opera), as well as from mounting a discriminatory transcultural bond to classical antiquity (e.g. Shaftesbury’s endorsement of Greek culture).

In the same manner in which the presence of Trojan or Teutonic myths in philosophy and the arts served the formation of a self-image which claimed analogies between Britain and a godly past, the nexus between Britain and classical antiquity offered a possibility to position oneself and others in time and space, and give worth to one’s moral being and the body politic itself. Whether such a disposition tallied with reality was not the issue. What mattered was, as Krishan Kumar demonstrates in a recent article, that the “joint parents of European civilization, Greece and Rome, could be treated heuristically” and as such detached from “their actual, messy, reality.” Thus, classical Greece and Rome were frequently applied as “tropes, figurative and metaphorical symbols.”

Accordingly, it should come as no surprise when Shaftesbury resorts to the device of associating the rivalry between Greek city-states and
the Persian Empire with the antagonism between a Protestant Britain and a Catholic France, and points out the exclusive position of the former: like “antient GREECE,” Britain “shou’d for succeeding Ages be contending with a foreign Power, and endeavouring to reduce the Exorbitancy of a Grand Monarch.” From this it then follows, according to Shaftesbury, that “those Arts have been deliver’d to us in such Perfection, by Free Nations; who from the Nature of their Government, as from a proper Soil, produc’d the generous Plants,” ancient Greece being, of course, “that sole polite, most civiliz’d, and learned of all Nations.” The kind of historical continuum and provinciality explored by Shaftesbury was gradually intensified throughout the century, and by the time the architect of the King’s Works, Robert Adam (1728–1792), published his Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia (1764), he merely presupposed the validity of the opinion that this was indeed the “time when the admiration of the Grecian and Roman Architecture [had] risen to such a height in Britain, as to banish in a great measure all fantastic and frivolous tastes.” For Adam, eighteenth-century Britons were simply witnessing the signs of an “Æra no less remarkable than that of PERICLES, AUGUSTUS, or the MEDICIS.”

Britain’s first weighty theoretician of painting, Jonathan Richardson (1665–1745), allows the sense of historical continuum and provinciality to seep into the main arguments advanced in An Essay on the Theory of Painting (1725). For Richardson, it is evident that there is a concord between valuing a painting aesthetically and instrumentally. The accurate instrumental value arises naturally from the aesthetic experience of a good painting, a value that is culturally as well as historically conditioned in that it affects the destiny of the current nation. Apart from being “useful to Improve and Instruct us,” painting is “greatly instrumental to excite proper Sentiments and Reflections,” and a good painting is much like a “History, a Poem, a Book of Ethicks, or Divinity,” since “they mutually assist one another.” When man experiences such a painting, he will add to the vigor of the body politic by naturally advancing “more Love to his Country, more moral Virtue, more Faith, more Piety and Devotion.” Art in general, has, from Richardson’s perspective, the power of fortifying the body politic by reinforcing the virtuosity of each (male) individual body, thus allowing the public to rise as one man and facilitate the true values of art. To make his point, Richardson relates an anecdote about a performance of an ancient tragedy by Aeschylus. In the performance a short approval of impiety occurs, causing a strong moral reaction from the audience, who has verified their virtuosity in the past when defending their country in the Graeco-Persian wars and preserved Greek liberty. When, according to Richardson, “Amyntias ... [Aeschylus'] Brother immediately leap'd upon the Stage, and produced his Shoulder from whence he had lost his Arm at the Battle of Salamis,” the audience naturally “condemn’d Aeschylos, but gave his [the audience’s] Life to his Brother Amyntias.” Here, Richardson cannot restrain from claiming, “These were Greeks! These were the People who shortly after carry’d Painting, and Sculpture to so great a Height.” Thus, while Aeschylus’ performance is sent off course, it is put right by a virtuous and united audience. Given that Aeschylus himself had participated in the infantry ranks in the battle of Marathon as well as in the battle of Salamis, the relevance of the audience’s reaction becomes, for Richardson, utterly rational. The moral strength of each being structures the power of the audience, which then amends the value of the performance. The analogy between the anecdote and the current situation in Britain is not long in coming: British art is finally ready to answer its critical purpose since, according to Richardson, “[n]o Nation under Heaven so nearly resembles the Ancient Greeks, and Romans as We [Britons].” The reasons for the resemblance are naturally expected to arise from a free association with the anecdote retold earlier, since “[t]here is a Haughty Courage, an Elevation of Thought, a Greatness of Taste, a Love of Liberty, a Simplicity, and Honesty amongst us, which we inherit from our Ancestors, and which belong to us as Englishmen; and ’tis in These this Resemblance consists.”

Richardson avoids suggesting a national painter of dignity (although he remarks that the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), when knighted and included in the court circles of Charles I, “brought Face-Painting to Us,” and that since then “England has excell’d all the World
in that great Branch of the Art,"106 for the simple reason that “National Virtues sprout up first in Lesser Excellencies, and proceed by an Easy Gradation.”107 But he reminds his reader that “Greece, and Rome had not Painting and Sculpture in their Perfection till after they had exerted their Natural Vigour in Lesser Instances,” before he concludes that when the “Ancient Great, and Beautiful Taste in Painting revives it will be in England.”108

ADDISON, AESTHETIC INSTRUMENTALISM, AND THE BODY POLITIC

Let us now consider by what means aesthetic instrumentalism operates in the writings of Addison. Alongside Virgil, Homer shared the determination to write, in the words of Addison, poetry “founded upon some important Precept of Morality, adapted to the Constitution of the Country.”109 Homer and Virgil “celebrate Persons and Actions which do Honour to their Country.”110 As paradigmatic poets, they share a responsibility to unite a divided national body politic, and that, accompanied by other qualities, makes them and classical antiquity a natural fountainhead of British poetry. Like Shaftesbury and Richardson, Addison recognises the present as an opportunity for British artists to achieve their true potential, although he remains unsettled about their capacity to seize this historic moment. Art occasionally possesses too significant a value to be allowed to slip out of the hands of the artists, and Addison frequently urges artists and critics to remember the gravity of the instrumental value of art. For instance, in a fierce attack on the British stage, Addison claims that “[w]ere our English Stage but half so virtuous as that of the Greeks or Roman, we should quickly see the Influence of it in the Behaviour of all the Politer Part of Mankind.”111 Arising from the desirable moral qualities embraced by the artist in his work—qualities of art that are expected to intersect with a glorious ancient past—the body politic will naturally obtain a certain dynamism. An element of drawing on the nexus between Britain and an ancient past consisted precisely in the belief that the consequences of art might transcend time and space, and provided that the “English Stage were under the same Regulations the Athenian was formerly, it would have the same Effect that had, in recommending the Religion, the Government, and Publick Worship of its Country.”112

Nowhere is the acuteness of the instrumental value of art as urgent as when Addison seeks to bring Italian opera in contact with utility and national body politic. Although, during the second half of the seventeenth century, a play including songs had occasionally been given the name “opera,” the arrival of the continental Italian form marked a new step in the British history of music performance.113 As such, it was challenging because it brought the very nature of a national musico-dramatic idiom and its value to the fore, a pressing matter gaining further momentum due to the popularity of Italian opera.

Addison addresses the sensuous and irrational representations present in Italian opera. Commonsensical qualities are absent, the sole purpose of the mise-en-scène “is to gratify the Senses,” and as such it collides with the “Common Sense” of the spectator, which objects to anything “Childish and Absurd.”114 One should, according to Addison, avoid the synthesis of “Shadows and Realities” in the “same Piece,” and “Representations of Nature, should be filled with Resemblances, and not with the Things themselves.”115 The straightforward problem here revolves around the collision of “partly Real and partly Imaginary” elements, but, interestingly enough, Addison brackets such a problem together with a racial-ethnic collision as well.116 After his successful Italian visit in 1710, Handel (1685–1759) became Kapellmeister to the elector of Hanover. The impresario and versifier Aaron Hill (1685–1750), manager of the Haymarket Theatre, prepared the English version of Rinaldo (1711), which was then put into Italian verse by the Italian librettist Giacomo Rossi. Given this cross-cultural feature of Handel’s great Haymarket success, Addison felt a need to remark that Rinaldo involved two different ethnic temperaments, “contrived by two Poets of different Nations.”117 The two poetic spirits surfaced in the scenes “raised by two Magicians of different Sexes”: when the libretto specified that Armida (the Amazonian Enchantress) should be a role sung by an Italian soprano “versed in the Black Art,” and that Mago Christina, a role sung by an Italian alto castrato, should “deal with the Devil” (even though he was a “good Christian”), Addison remained unmoved.

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precisely because of these incongruities.\textsuperscript{118} Like Dennis, Addison is concerned with the normative taste to which audiences “conform [them]selves.”\textsuperscript{119} Italian poets—“Modern Italians”—are in this case below the classical standard.\textsuperscript{120} They “express themselves in such a florid form of Words, and such tedious Circumlocutions, as are used by none but Pedants in our own Country,” and “fill their Writings with … poor Imaginations and Conceits” which, according to Addison, would embarrass even a young English academic.\textsuperscript{121} The artistic difference between Italian poets and British poets does not refer to a “difference of Genius,” because Addison did not believe that classical “old Italians” such as Cicero and Virgil had much resemblance to modern Italian poets.\textsuperscript{122} Dennis had observed that although the “modern Italians have the very same Sun and Soil which the antient Romans had … their Manners [are] directly opposite; their Men are neither Vertuous, nor Wise, nor Valiant.”\textsuperscript{123} It was, Dennis complained, “impossible to give any reasons of so great a Difference between antient Romans, and the modern Italians, but only Luxury; and the reigning Luxury of modern Italy, is that soft and effeminate Musick which abounds in the Italian Opera.”\textsuperscript{124} To some extent, Addison follows a similar line of reasoning when he claims that it is in fact the English poets who reason in accordance with a classical past and the qualities of Cicero and Virgil, and thus “resemble those Authors much more than the Modern Italians pretend to do.”\textsuperscript{125}

Here, we might conclude, then, that Italian opera does not appear to possess any aesthetic value whatsoever. But Addison is occasionally overcome by his own melodramatic flair. A more reasonable reading of Addison’s line of thinking is that the arts (which, to Addison, essentially comprise music, architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, and oratory) possess aesthetic value, but such a value can occasionally be either challenging to assimilate or even undesirable to experience. Addison suggests, in \textit{A Discourse on Ancient and Modern Learning} (posth. 1739), several plausible causes for the fact that “different Nations have different Tastes”: the climatological premises affecting sense perception, for instance, or the contingency that we are in fact inflicted with a “national Prejudice” which “makes every thing appear odd to us that is new and uncommon.”\textsuperscript{126} Thus, in a perceptive manner, Addison gives weight to the argument that modern British listeners and readers (the argument is valid also for the addressees of poetry) might, due to their preconceptions, sometimes be inhibited in the experience of foreign art. Addison does not enter deeply into this question before he concludes that “we find by certain Experience, that what is tuneful in one Country, is harsh and ungrateful in another.”\textsuperscript{127} Nevertheless, this is an admonition which helps us to acknowledge that although the aesthetic value of art may alter due to cultural and historical conditions, it does not follow that the substructure of aesthetic instrumentalism was merely a vulgar premeditated stratagem to gain cultural power, even though, as we have observed, it often had such a consequence. We should try to bear in mind then that Addison occasionally remains sensitive to the problem of culturally biased customs, although he does not know how to evade the conundrum.

Addison honoured the first Italian opera star on the London stage and the singer of the role of Rinaldo, the Neapolitan contralto Nicola Grimaldi (“Nicolini”) (1673–1732),\textsuperscript{128} precisely because he succeeded in transforming the “forced Thoughts, cold Conceits, and unnatural Expressions of an Italian Opera.”\textsuperscript{129} Nicolini sublimated a number of his national qualities by coordinating them with a new national culture which contained stronger bonds to the classical age. The modern era is not always addressed with plain enthusiasm by Addison. Indeed, he claims that although we might surpass the “First Ages of the World” in “all the trivial Arts,” “we fall short at present of the Ancients in Poetry, Painting, Oratory, History, Architecture, and all the noble Arts and Sciences which depend more upon Genius than Experience.”\textsuperscript{130} Following Addison, one occasionally “meet[s] with more Raillery among the Moderns, but more Good Sense among the Ancients.”\textsuperscript{131} But nevertheless, British art in general is taken to be on the verge of entering a new modern phase, which pledges a fresh nexus between Britain and classical antiquity, and it is by drawing on such a stage that a national opera may attain its true value. While Addison recognizes that religious music mends the mind, and “fills it with great conceptions” and “strengthens devotion,” the musico-dramatic idiom of the opera is intended to strengthen human nature.\textsuperscript{132}
But cultural and technical problems of translation impede the proper functioning of Italian opera. The wish to “make the Numbers of the English Verse answer to those of the Italian,” and thus retain the original music, caused the native poets to make up new words, which frequently confounded the meaning of the verse.\(^{135}\) And when “Sense was rightly translated, the necessary Transposition of Words which were drawn out of the Phrase of one Tongue into that of another, made the Musick appear very absurd in one Tongue that was very natural in the other.”\(^{134}\) The completion of the musico-dramatic idiom (the match of music and words) appears almost unattainable. Furthermore, Italian actors sang their parts in Italian, and given that they frequently attained the leading roles of kings and heroes, and the native English actors sang the roles of slaves in English, the performances on the stage were, according to Addison, politically biased. These technical problems had consequences for the perception and evaluation of opera, and since the British audience merely comprehended half of the scenario, they unfortunately began to “ease themselves intirely of the Fatigue of Thinking.”\(^{135}\) Eventually, Addison remarked acrimoniously, the entire opera was performed in a foreign musico-dramatic idiom.\(^{136}\) Evidently, there was no need to mince matters here: Italian opera, performed under these conditions in Britain, was simply a “monstrous Practice.”\(^{137}\)

The kind of aesthetic instrumentalism advocated in this passage relies on the value of the aesthetic experience, and the source for the instrumental value is critically dependent on the appropriate aesthetic value, which is culturally conditioned. To be subjected to a “monstrous Practice” is clearly to have an inferior aesthetic experience, which then endangers the minds and private virtues of the British people. Italian artists might very well have a “Genius for Musick above the English,” but the “English have a Genius for other Performances of a much higher Nature, and capable of giving the Mind a much nobler Entertainment.”\(^{138}\) One cannot allow this kind of music to “take the entire Possession of our Ears” if it hinders us from “hearing Sense, [and] if it would exclude Arts that have a much greater Tendency to the Refinement of human Nature.”\(^{139}\) In such a situation, Addison simply claims an alignment with Plato of the Republic when the latter expels such deleterious art from “his Commonwealth.”\(^{140}\)

To conclude, Addison advances a normative concept of art: Art has aesthetic value. But to make sense of the properties of such a value, we must accept that the rightness and wrongness of the aesthetic value alters due to cultural and historical expectations. Addison is simply troubled by the fact that the “right” (British) value of art might, in some circumstances, be compromised. And a compromised value might then destabilise the national body politic. For him, the current state of national music requires commonsensical reflection rather than instant sensual pleasures, particularly since national taste is in its infancy: “At present, our Notions of Musick are so very uncertain, that we do not know what it is we like; only, in general, we are transported with any thing that is not English.”\(^{141}\) A vigorous body politic resembles a musical arrangement, and each nation, according to Addison, holds a unique tone and expresses passions by different sounds. Hence the problems with Recitativo in opera: “To go to the Bottom of this Matter, I must observe, that the Tone, or (as the French call it) the Accent of every Nation in their ordinary Speech is altogether different from that of every other People.”\(^{142}\) Music is of a “Relative Nature.”\(^{143}\) Artists must pay attention to such relativity in order to explore the proper instrumental value of art: “A Composer should fit his Musick to the Genius of the People, and consider that the Delicacy of Hearing, and Taste of Harmony, has been formed upon those Sounds which every Country abounds with.”\(^{144}\) Music, along with architecture, painting, poetry, and oratory, must simply “deduce their Laws and Rules from the general Sense and Taste of Mankind, and not from the Principles of those Arts themselves.”\(^{145}\)

Notes

1. For the anachronistic application of the term “aesthetics,” see Dabney Townsend, “Introduction: Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century,” Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics, ed. Dabney Townsend (Amityville, NY: Baywood, 1999), 1–2. In a British context, the term “aesthetics” is not used before the 1830s.

2. On the dual perspective in the reception of Addison’s essays, see Karl Axelson, “Joseph Addison
and General Education: Moral Didactics in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics* 46 (2009): 144–166.
3. T. J. Diffey, “Aesthetic Instrumentalism,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 22 (1982): 337.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 339.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 341.
10. Ibid., 343.
11. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), IV: 123.
12. Diffey, “Aesthetic Instrumentalism,” 344.
13. Ibid., 345.
14. Robert Stecker, “Aesthetic Instrumentalism and Aesthetic Autonomy,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 24 (1984): 162.
15. Diffey, “Aesthetic Instrumentalism,” 337.
16. See also Robert Stecker, *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 251–258.
17. Stecker, “Aesthetic Instrumentalism and Aesthetic Autonomy,” 165.
18. Addison, *The Spectator*, I: 123.
19. Ibid., 121. See also Maria Semi, *Music as a Science of Mankind in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 49.
20. Diffey, “Aesthetic Instrumentalism,” 344.
21. Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951): 497.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 498.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 499.
27. See James I. Porter, “Is Art Modern? Kristeller’s ‘Modern System of the Arts’ Reconsidered,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49 (2009): 2.
28. Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 2–7.
29. Paul Mattick, Jr., “Introduction,” in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick, Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2. For further paradigmatic examples of this turn in aesthetics, see e.g. Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market*; Preben Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order: The Making of the Modern Conception of Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
30. Arthur C. Danto, “Foreword,” in Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market*, xi.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., xv.
33. Ernst Cassirer, *Die platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1932). See also Daniel Herwitz, *Aesthetics: Key Concepts in Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2008), 31–32.
34. R. L. Brett, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1951), 139.
35. Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1935), 6.
36. Robert C. Holub, “The Rise of Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 15 (1978): 273.
37. Ibid., 271.
38. Ibid., 272.
39. Jerome Stolnitz, “On the Origins of ‘Aesthetic Disinterestedness’,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 133.
40. Ibid., 134.
41. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, “Introduction,” in *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.
42. Stolnitz, “On the Origins of ‘Aesthetic Disinterestedness’,” 131.
43. Mortensen, *Art in the Social Order*, 50.
44. I employ the term nation in a manner similar to Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (1992; 2nd ed., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 5. She does not, however, address the concept of the nation as a “historic phenomenon characterised by cultural and ethnic homogeneity.” Rather, Colley refers to nations as “culturally and ethnically diverse, problematic, protean and artificial constructs.” This is a definition of nation referring back to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; 2nd ed., London: Verso, 1991), 5–6.
45. See e.g. James William Johnson, *What Was Neo-classicism?* *Journal of British Studies* 9 (1969): 52.
46. See Hugh Honour, *Neo-classicism* (1968; 2nd ed., London: Penguin, 1977), 14. Honour stresses that the term “neoclassicism” was “invented in the mid nineteenth century as a pejorative term.”
47. See Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
48. See Terence Spencer, *Fair Greece Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1954).
49. For a comment, see Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 9.
50. Addison, *The Spectator*, III: 22.
51. Ibid., 21.
52. Mark Akenside, *An Ode to the Right Honourable the Earl of Huntington* (London: R. Dodsley, 1748), 25.
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53. See Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 9.
54. Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Miscellaneous Reflections*, Standard Edition (henceforth SE) I.2, ed. Wolfram Benda, Gerd Hemmerich, Wolfgang Lottes, and Erwin Wolff (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1989), 168.
55. Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*, SE I.1, 122. *Soliloquy* was originally published in 1710, before it was slightly revised and included in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, published in 1711. References here are to the 1711 edition.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 124, 126.
58. Ibid., 126.
59. Ibid.
60. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, “Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst,” in *Kunsthistorische Schriften* I (Baden-Baden: Heitz GmbH, 1962), Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte, Band 330, 1: “Der gute Geschmack, welcher sich mehr und mehr durch die Welt ausbreitet, hat sich angefangen zuerst unter dem griechischen Himmel zu bilden.”
61. Shaftesbury, *Miscellaneous Reflections*, SE I.2, 170.
62. Ibid., 172.
63. Ibid., 170.
64. Ibid., 172.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 208–209.
69. Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*, SE I.1, 130.
70. Johnson, “What Was Neo-Classicism?” 52.
71. John Dennis, “An Essay on the Opera’s after the Italian Manner, which are about to be Establish’d on the English Stage: With Some Reflections on the Damage which they may Bring to the Publick,” *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), I: 389.
72. Ibid., 386.
73. Ibid., 385.
74. Ibid., 390.
75. Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: A Millar, London, and A. Kincaid & J. Bell, Edinburgh, 1765), I: 5.
76. Ibid., 6.
77. Ibid., vii.
78. Ibid.
79. Winckelmann, “Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst,” 3.
80. Townsend, “Introduction: Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century,” 6. Townsend makes his remark with reference to the Ossian imposture.
81. Mark A. Cheetham, *Artswriting, Nation, and Cosmopolitanism in Britain: The ‘Englishness’ of English Art Theory since the Eighteenth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 15–16.
82. Colley, *Britons*, 23.
83. Ibid., 19.
84. Ibid., 17.
85. Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688–1832* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1997), 62. Needless to say, O’Gorman is not suggesting that the developing nation did not contain a great deal of political and religious friction. See also Colin Kidd, “Protestantism, Constitutionalism and British Identity under the Later Stuarts,” *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707*, ed. Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 321–342.
86. Ibid., 62.
87. Colley, *Britons*, 17.
88. Alok Yadav, *Before the Empire of English: Literature, Provinciality, and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 159. Here, Yadav is referring to Addison.
89. Ibid., 2–3.
90. Ibid., e.g. 136–153.
91. Ibid., e.g. 139–142.
92. On the dominating myths in English history (Trojan/Arthurian myths, and Teutonic/Anglo-Saxon myths), see Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982). On the analogies exploited between Britain and a godly past, see Colley, *Britons*, 30–43. On the bearing of the myths in the arts, see Ken McLeod, “Ideology and Racial Myth in Purcell’s *King Arthur* and Arne’s *Alfred,*” *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700* 34 (2010): 83–102.
93. Krishan Kumar, “Greece and Rome in the British Empire: Contrasting Role Models,” *Journal of British Studies* 51 (2012), 82.
94. Ibid.
95. Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*, SE I.1, 130.
96. Ibid., 152.
97. Shaftesbury, *Miscellaneous Reflections*, SE I.2, 168.
98. Robert Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (London, 1764), 4.
99. Ibid., iv. See also David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 72.
100. Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, 2nd ed. (London: A. C. sold by Bettesworth, 1725), 11.
101. Ibid., 13.
102. Ibid., 220.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid., 222–223.
105. Ibid., 223. Cf. Anthony D. Smith, National Identity (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 85.
106. Ibid., 39.
107. Ibid., 224.
108. Ibid.
109. Addison, The Spectator, I: 299.
110. Ibid., I: 300.
111. Ibid., IV: 66.
112. Ibid.
113. Henrik Knif, Gentlemen and Spectators: Studies in Journals, Opera and the Social Scene in Late Stuart London (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1995), 40–43.
114. Addison, The Spectator, I: 22–23.
115. Ibid., 23.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid., 25.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid., 26.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid. Purcell was often referred to in patriotic terms. See William Weber, The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual, and Ideology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 93–102.
122. Ibid.
123. Dennis, “An Essay on the Opera’s,” 384.
124. Ibid.
125. Addison, The Spectator, I: 26.
126. Addison, A Discourse on Ancient and Modern Learning (London: T. Osborne, 1739), 20.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid., III: 513–514. On the celebrity of Nicolini, see Joseph R. Roach, “Cavaliere Nicolini: London’s First Opera Star,” Educational Theatre Journal 28 (1976): 189–205.
129. Addison, The Spectator, I: 59.
130. Ibid., II: 467.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid., III: 516.
133. Ibid., I: 79.
134. Ibid., I: 80.
135. Ibid., I: 81.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid., 81–82.
140. Ibid., 82.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid., 120.
143. Ibid., 122.
144. Ibid.
145. Ibid., 123.