



ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/vanq20

Architecture, Gender and the Polemic of Taste: 1730s–1750s

Chang He & Wanying Wang

To cite this article: Chang He & Wanying Wang (07 Jun 2024): Architecture, Gender and the Polemic of Taste: 1730s–1750s, ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews, DOI: [10.1080/0895769X.2024.2363836](https://doi.org/10.1080/0895769X.2024.2363836)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0895769X.2024.2363836>



Published online: 07 Jun 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Architecture, Gender and the Polemic of Taste: 1730s–1750s

Chang He^a and Wanying Wang^b

^aSchool of International Studies, Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, China; ^bSchool of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Between the 1730s and 1750s, the subject of what constituted “the Man of Taste” was widely debated. At the center of the polemic was Alexander Pope’s *Of Taste: An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington, Occasion’d by his Publishing Palladio’s Designs of the Baths, Arches, Theatres, &c. of Ancient Rome*,¹ a poem published in December 1731. The hero, Timon, epitomized ostentatious “false taste,” while his opposite, Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington, represented good taste. Shortly after *Epistle*, William Hogarth issued an etching entitled *The Man of Taste* or *Taste, or Burlington Gate* (1732) in *The Daily Journal*, satirizing Pope, who reputedly flattered Burlington’s architectural taste. (Figure 1) This was not the first time Hogarth had challenged Burlington’s admiration for the Palladian style. As early as 1724, he had already included Burlington Gate in a vista, complementing his satire on the bad taste of urban crowds in *Masquerades and Opera, Burlington Gate or the Bad Taste of the Town*. Following Hogarth’s *The Man of Taste*, James Bramston joined the polemic by publishing a poem entitled *The Man of Taste, Occasioned by an Epistle of Mr. Pope’s on that Subject* (1733), which was among the few works that endorsed for Pope. Bramston’s work, together with Pope’s influence, further inspired Thomas Newcomb, Joseph Dorman, and two other anonymous English poets to produce five additional poems centering on the subject of “taste.”² More importantly, Bramston shifted the polemic focus from the architecture field to that of gender.

This paper aims to re-contextualize this polemic of taste by interrelating six poems, two engravings, and various para-textual elements such as frontispieces and title pages. It also traces their textual connections, exploring how they respectively intervened in the complex cultural controversy between Ancients and Moderns³ in the fields of art and gender, and how such interventions foregrounded the eighteenth-century people’s concern for public subjects such as “Englishness” and “modern lady.” Through exploring the intentions of various authors, the generation of texts and the readers’ responses, this paper also intends to demonstrate the undeniable openness and inclusivity of the controversy between Ancients and Moderns.

Timon’s Villa and Burlington Gate: the architectural debate over “taste”

Originally intended as a preface of Burlington’s new book, Pope’s *Epistle to Burlington* led to a heated debate over architectural styles, serving as a vigorous endorsement for his patron Burlington’s promotion of Palladian architecture. The Palladian revival movement in England began in 1715, marked by the publication of the first volume of Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus* and Giacomo Leoni’s translation of Palladio’s *I Quattro Libri dell’Architettura*. This movement heralded the rise of English Neoclassicism in the field of architecture. Pope’s poem functioned as a significant hallmark of this movement. In this poem, Pope praised Palladio’s minimalism and severely attacked baroque ostentation, thus spreading Burlington’s artistic views and inspiring public debates on taste.

In the poem, Timon’s Villa represents the baroque architectural style. First, Pope utilizes “proud,” “grand,” and “stupendous” to depict the villa’s pompous exterior and criticizes its lack of visual harmony (Pope, *The Poems* 592). Then, he metonymically announces baroque style’s obsolescence with the image of the falling Palace of Versailles. Scholars relate Timon to James Brydges, 1st Duke of

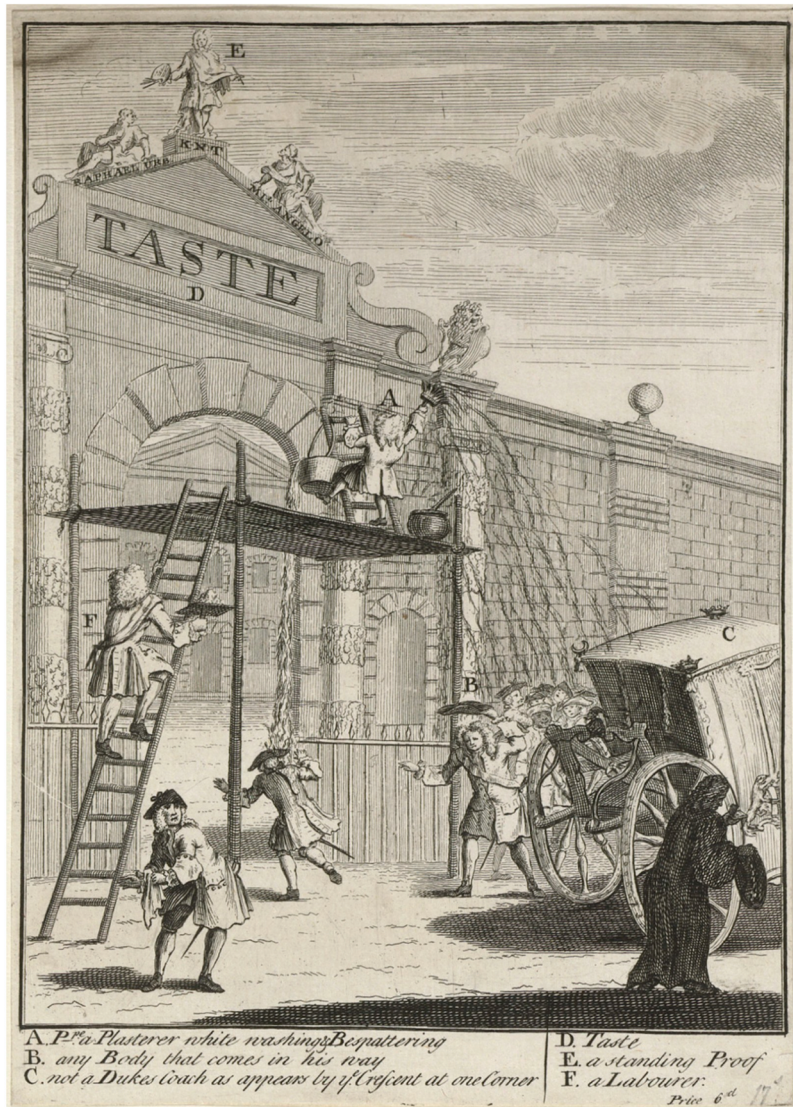


Figure 1. Engraving and etching on paper. British Museum.

Chandos, one of Pope's three patrons, whose house Cannons was a prime specimen of extravagant baroque architecture.⁴ Soon after the publication of *Epistle to Burlington*, it attracted scorn and sparked much speculation about Pope's relationship with his patrons. The poet retorted that the character of Timon represented a mixture of twenty various absurdities and improprieties and was "never the Picture of any one Human Creature" (Pope, *The Correspondence* 259). Pope's self-defense was true since his poem not only disparaged the baroque architecture like "Cannons" but also ridiculed the British imitators of Palladian architecture who, regardless of England's weather, ludicrously rebuilt the gates of English gardens into "Arcs of triumph" and airy "Venetian doors" even at the risk of catching a cold (Pope, *The Poems* 589). While deriding Timon and his imitators, Pope also elevates Burlington and his architectural taste. For instance, he lauded "STOW" (Stowe), which was largely designed by Burlington's architect William Kent in the 1730s, as "a Work to wonder at" (Pope, *The Poems* 590). Besides, in a September 19, 1732 letter, Pope hailed Burlington's Chiswick as "the finest thing this glorious Sun has shined upon" (*The Correspondence* 313). More importantly, in *Epistle*

to Burlington, Pope established an architectural lineage, “Burlington-Jones-Palladio-Vitruvius” (Liddy 96), first placing Burlington among the master architects of classicism.

Provoked by *Epistle to Burlington*, Hogarth offered his intervention in the debate in the form of his etching, *The Man of Taste*. It depicts Pope and Burlington busily brushing Burlington Gate, a piece of Palladian architecture inscribed with the word “TASTE,” on the top of which stands a statue of Kent as the spokesperson for “taste.” Standing on a scaffold, Pope is whirling his brush in a large arc and producing a shower of paint splatter from which Chandos, below the scaffold, protects himself with his hat. An anxious black, the image reinforcing the bitter irony, is shown running away from the falling torrent of paint for fear of being whitewashed. Trea Mary Liddy has attributed Hogarth’s hostility toward Burlington and Palladian architecture to his ill feelings toward his rival, Kent (116). However, Hogarth’s real purpose in joining the battle of taste should be contextualized in relation to the ongoing quarrels between Ancients and Moderns.

The controversy between Ancients and Moderns, which originated in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, has a complex genealogy and continues to have a lasting impact on European intellectual and cultural history. This debate initially occurred in Paris, focusing on the Homeric question and involving figures like Charles Perrault and Nicolas Boileau. Later, the conflict spread from Europe to London, primarily featuring the Ancients led by Sir William Temple and Jonathan Swift, against the Moderns represented by Gilbert Burnet, William Wotton, David Hume, and others. They debated ancient forms of government and democratic constitutions within the context of ancient and modern cultures (Liu Xiaofeng, 1–67). It is noteworthy that, in London, there was also a debate in the visual arts besides the literary arena. According to English painters such as Hogarth, true revival of English visual arts could only be achieved by mitigating the veneration for European classicism among the British public. Therefore, seemingly mocking Pope’s flattery of the Earl of Burlington, Hogarth’s *The Man of Taste* aims to satirize the pervading ancient European classicism and its irresistible influence on English Neoclassicism. His purpose becomes clearer when we relate *The Man of Taste* to his other artworks and discussions.

Hogarth’s critique of the English public’s admiration for European classicism was grounded in his earlier work, *Masquerades and Opera, Burlington Gate*. (Figure 2) This etching had mocked the shallow taste of city-dwellers, embodied by a contrast between their overwhelming interest in Italian masquerades and operas and their total disinterest in English literature: the Burlington Gate, decorated with a statue of Kent standing above the reclining figures of Michelangelo and Raphael in *The Man of Taste*, had also featured in this engraving. It serves as the pseudo-classical backdrop to a scene populated in the foreground by the masquerades’ hall and the theater. At the same time, a single woman pushes a wheelbarrow of waste paper that holds volumes of English dramatists like William Congreve, John Dryden, Thomas Otway, William Shakespeare and Joseph Addison. It is not hard to see, in this first delineation of Burlington Gate, that as early as 1724, Hogarth was already a self-consciously English artist. Moreover, the embedded caption at the bottom of the print also reveals his intention, as Hogarth pessimistically pleads to the ghosts of English playwrights like Shakespeare and Ben Jonson to witness how shamefully the English stage has been degraded. As a result, his print implicitly calls for the revival of the English stage.

Eleven years after the publication of *The Man of Taste*, Hogarth once again intervened in the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns through the etching entitled *The Battle of the Pictures* (1743) (Figure 3). Originally engraved as a bidder’s ticket for the auction of Hogarth’s paintings, it was further used to condemn English art dealers for belittling contemporary native works while overrating Renaissance and Baroque masters’ paintings. The painting, which intertextually connects both in title and theme with Jonathan Swift’s *The Battle of the Book* (1704), portrays two battling sides, with European classic masterpieces like *Penitent Mary Magdalen*, *Feast of the Gods* and *Aldobrandini Wedding*,⁵ in combat with modern paintings like Hogarth’s *The Harlot’s Progress*, *The Rake’s Progress* and his *Marriage à-la-Mode* series. Hogarth has ancient and modern paintings combating each other, visually echoing the war of words in Swift’s *Battle of the Books* and the clash of books in the library. The only difference is that Swift sides with the Ancients,



Figure 2. Etching and engraving. Victoria & Albert Museum.

while Hogarth aligns himself with the Moderns. Behind the difference lay economic incentives. Historian Linda Colley points out that in the early eighteenth-century auctions in London, at least half of the paintings priced over forty pounds came from Italian masters (165–66). Even forgeries of European classic paintings outsold English contemporary artists' works since art dealers in England determined to satisfy their contemporaries' taste for antiquaries and ancient classics. In addition to economic factors, Hogarth's modern stance was also politically motivated, although his partisan stance remains unclear from current research. As we know, Pope and Swift supported Tory politics and courtly aesthetics. They were inevitably influenced by European classicism and endorsed the Ancients. In contrast, Hogarth was more concerned with the political landscape of the lower and middle classes, attempting to present Englishness by encouraging national aesthetics. It's this aesthetic impulse that prompted him to usher a new battlefield to advocate the Moderns in the art domain.

This move is undoubtedly innovative. On the London battlefield, both the Ancients and the Moderns believed modern English art was not as good as the ancient. For example, William Wotton, the mainstay of the Moderns, outrightly expressed in *Reflections Upon Ancient and the Modern Learning* (1694) that "the Moderns have not gone beyond them (the Ancients)" in terms of "Poesie, Oratory, Architecture, Painting, and Statuary" (19). Hogarth, however, found it hard to agree with such arguments. In *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), he approached the issue from the psychological perspective, pointing out that the reason the English preferred the Ancients to the Moderns was not a matter of quality but rather familiarity (66). He also wittily quoted from the Ancients' advocate, Pope, to prove this viewpoint: "Authors like coins, grow dear as they grow old;/It is the rust we value, not the gold" (Britophil 385).⁶ Psychological dependence is akin to rust on metal, which does not confer real value to a work, and rust is precisely what needs to be removed when the metal is polished. Thus, Hogarth metaphorically argued that true English beholders should abandon rust and free themselves from classical aesthetics. Only then would they realize that "Grand Venus has not



Figure 3. Etching and engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Beauty enough for the Character of an English Cook-Maid" (Britophil 385). At least in art, Hogarth found that the argument "The Moderns have not surpassed the Ancients" is hardly self-sufficient.

From Timon's Villa to Burlington Gate, this polemic of taste gradually evolved into an inter-media battle incorporating architecture, painting, and poetry. Initially, Pope's epistle pushed the topic of taste into the public sphere amidst widespread condemnation of his ingratitude. Subsequently, Hogarth's response successfully integrated this topic into the controversy between Ancients and Moderns from an artistic standpoint. It is noteworthy that Hogarth's involvement in the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns foreshadowed the debate over poetic taste between the second-generation Romantic poets of the Cockney School⁷ and the conservative neoclassicists in the early nineteenth century. The crux of their dispute remained the issue of taste, especially the taste of English poetry. The Cockney School includes poets like John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron, as well as critics represented by William Hazlitt. Hazlitt was well acquainted with Hogarth's works, and his comments established the latter's importance in English art history. Thus, he is very likely aware of the textual battles over taste between Hogarth and Pope. In other words, from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, though rooted in different fields, these polemics of taste in England were both continuations and extensions of the quarrels of Ancients and Moderns inspired by Sir William Temple. However, neither Pope nor Hogarth could have foreseen that Bramston would accidentally move the debate in a new direction with his poem *The Man of Taste* (1733), which introduced a gender dimension to the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns.

Female philosopher, Amazon and modern lady: The battle of gender over "taste"

As mentioned, Bramston's poem directly responds to Pope's *Epistle to Burlington*. The poem's title character regards "taste" as sensual enjoyment, even more resembling a tasteless "magnate" than Timon himself (Lock vi). Confident as Timon, he believes himself well-qualified to establish the "laws

of Taste,” dismissing anyone who opposes as a “blockhead, coxcomb, puppy, fool and sot” (Gilmore 102). The title character presents a highly personalized reading list of tastes, excluding contemporary popular writers like Swift, Milton and James Thompson (Gilmore 90–91). More interestingly, while he freely mocks Pope and his associates from the Scriblerus Club like Swift, he actively praises Pope’s adversaries like Richard Blackmore, Richard Bently, Colley Cibber, and the pirate publisher Edmund Curll.⁸ This list is partisan and unreliable. By presenting such a subjective list, coupled with a mocking, inconsistent tone, Bramston ingeniously shapes the narrator as unreliable, guiding his readers to doubt the rules of taste and align with the objects of his ridicule – Pope’s camp. Therefore, within the polemic of taste inspired by *Epistle to Burlington*, this poem is considered one of the few works supporting Pope.

Critics have ignored that Bramston not only wrote to support Pope but also to explore the complexities inherent in the concept of “taste,” thereby overlooking the gender perspective ingrained in his *The Man of Taste*. Starting his poem with “Strife still subsists, which yields the better gout,” the poet argues that taste is a public topic whose richness is derived from its controversial nature (Gilmore 88–90). To support this point, the narrator successively employs three sets of contrasts. For instance, the upper English class who toured Europe admired French “courtly” taste, whereas the ordinary English populace, who had never been abroad, only applauded English taste (Gilmore 88). The narrator, despite collecting “old coins and medals,” prefers the “modern” to the “antique” (Gilmore 95). Though a playboy, he could be more “effeminate” than “Belles” (Gilmore 99). These three categories not only blur class and gender differences but also break the boundaries between classical and modern tastes.

More importantly, Bramston’s mocking of the “effeminate” man inadvertently shifts this debate from the realm of architecture to that of gender. Surprised by the cross-gender portrayal of “the man of taste,” his contemporary readers began to wonder about and probe into the corresponding “woman of taste.” Subsequently, four English poets joined the textual debate of female taste by focusing on “what is a modern lady.” In their conversations, images of “modern ladies” and ancient erudite women in the Greek and Roman tradition were constantly juxtaposed to endow the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns with a gender perspective.

Inspired by Bramston, Thomas Newcomb authored *The Woman of Taste, Occasioned by a late poem, entitled The Man of Taste* (1733), which consisted of two epistolary poems from Clelia, a town girl, to Sappho, a country girl. The former is portrayed as a replica of the rake under the pen of Bramston. In the letters, Clelia entreats Sappho to live a “life of taste” in the city as a “woman of taste.” She imagines a future for the country girl Sappho, believing she would also enjoy all-night card games, dancing, and sex. Newcomb’s modern lady deems the debauchery of city life as the essence of female “taste.” They indulge in a tasteful life but often fall into inexplicable “spleen;” they consume foreign goods but are ignorant about European culture; they pile up debts but worry little about them, considering this the rule of modern life. The poem repeatedly employs the word “modern” to imply that the modern female taste is nothing but the modern illness caused by urban civilization. Simultaneously, Newcomb deliberately uses the name of the ancient Greek poetess Sappho to name the country girl, and thus successfully depicts an ancient erudite woman’s modern urban journey. By such means, Newcomb subtly places the above discussion of female taste within the tension between Ancients and Moderns.

Two years later, Joseph Dorman joined in the debate over the “modern lady” from the perspective of female taste with his satirical work, *The Female Rake, or, Modern Fine Lady. An Epistle from Libertina to Sylvia. In Which is Contain’d, the A-La-Mode System* (1735). Dorman creates two distinct female images, including a rakish girl, Libertina and a philosophical woman, Sylvia. Sylvia views everything through “Philosophic Eyes,” pursuing rational taste (Dorman 1), while Libertina, like Newcomb’s Clelia, advocates taste as sensual enjoyment. However, Libertina recognizes the importance of rational judgment, believing that bittersweet emotions resulting from the pain of judging will make people more susceptible to tasteful experiences. Therefore, Libertina asserts herself as a “prudent” (Dorman 14) female rake. Nevertheless, Libertina’s definition of “prudence” is not

genuine rationality but the ability to exercise timely “moderation” (Dorman 5). According to *Libertina*, women are inherently adept at playing different roles based on different scenarios: “some play below, some over-act their part,” only those with “care and art” could know how to conceal themselves (Dorman 5). Those with “care and art” are the adaptable “modern lady,” as described by *Libertina*. They represent the “modern pattern” of women, and only they can adapt to and represent “the a-la-mode system,” the modern system, which Dorman satirically refers to on the poem’s title page (5). Regrettably, Dorman’s treatment of Sylvia’s rational taste is not given much depth in the poem.

However, the above regrets were immediately addressed in the same year. Dorman’s *Libertina* was refuted by an anonymous author using the mouthpiece of Sylvia in a poem entitled *True Taste, or Female Philosophy* (1735). Here, Sylvia extols knowledge and intellectual taste, advocating that women refrain from sensory pleasures. It is worth noting that the frontispiece of the poem, which synoptically captures Sylvia writing letters in a room with large bookshelves instead of busying herself in the kitchen, sitting room, dancing hall, or at a masquerade, further develops paratextually the above argument. The names of the authors added to the bookshelves reveal Sylvia’s reading preferences, which include ancient classical philosophers such as Plato and Seneca.⁹ In addition to her pursuit of rational interest, Sylvia also focuses on the issue of women’s citizenship. She believes women should engage in public life and possess the “free will” to govern society (*True Taste* 13). Because of this, she borrows the abbreviation “W—’s” to refer to Robert Walpole (1676–1745), the leader of the Whig Party in England at that time, suggesting that the government’s corrupt policies are responsible for its citizens’ immoral behaviors.¹⁰ To some extent, Sylvia represents a modern female image distinct from *Libertina*, inheriting and developing the tradition of female philosophers in English literature.¹¹ It is also noteworthy that despite Dorman and the anonymous poet’s contrasting viewpoints, their works share common ground: ancient classics such as works created by Plato and Seneca, or ancient figures such as Sappho are used for reference when they portray their modern ladies, considering classical philosophy and literature as the origins of modern taste.

Interestingly, Sylvia’s reply did not put an end to the debate of female taste. Twenty years later, the topic of “modern lady” was re-addressed with the anonymous publication of *Female Taste: A Satire in Two Epistles inscribed to a Modern Polite Lady*. On the title page of the poem, the poet introduces himself as a barrister of the Middle Temple, thereby legitimizing his authority in judging the rules of taste. Taking “taste” as an entry point, he attempts to respond to the previous debate between *Libertina* and Sylvia. The poem’s first part presents a female figure like Dorman’s *Libertina*. She “excelled in modern forms” and boasted “a richer taste” in “a goose from Paris” or “a Gallic Frog,” whereas she prized “nothing that in England grows” (*Female Taste* 15). Thus, she is crowned as a “nymph of taste” or “judge of taste” (*Female Taste* 11). Ironically, such a modern lady, who fully indulged herself in sensuality, suffered from “vapours” twice a day, lost all “senses,” and nearly succumbed to melancholy (*Female Taste* 11–12). Then the narrative takes an unexpected gothic turn and moves on to the second part: the “modern lady” is awakened by the Muse and reborn as “an Amazon scarce four feet high” (*Female Taste* 29). Sometimes she “slautered the horse astride in manly buskins,” and sometimes, she appeared like a “grenadier” or “a highway lass,” bringing two pistols with her (*Female Taste* 27). It is well-known that “Amazon” was originally used to describe “an ancient tribe of warlike women who fought men, dominated men, or lived entirely without men” in Greek mythology (Mayor 24). As a cultural image of gender, the variants of “Amazon” persistently appear in literature, forming a narrative tradition that showcases the history of female strength. For instance, under the pen of the anonymous poet, this modern lady afflicted with various “modern diseases” experiences a rebirth in ancient Greek culture as an Amazon, thus creating historical tensions between Ancients and Moderns which invites a rethink of the poet’s intention. More importantly, the female taste epitomized by Amazon extends beyond sensual pleasure or rational judgment, embodying a liberated spirit that transcends gender, akin to the “free will” that Sylvia refers to in the poem *The True Taste*. Therefore, the barrister-poet concludes, “Whether a widow, maid or wife/Ne’er fail to make you blest for life . . . The court will own, they all are just” (32). To put it another way, the law acknowledges the modern

lady's freedom to pursue happiness, which is their true rule of taste. The epigraph on the title page also evidences this argument paratextually. The poet quotes his contemporary Poet Laureate Edward Young's poem, *The Universal Passion. Satire VI. On Women. Inscib'd to the Right Honourable the Lady Elizabeth Germain* (1728). The inscription dedicates the poem to Lady Elizabeth Germain, a wealthy English aristocrat and vocal Whig. When the Whig liberal John Wilkes¹² was in prison, Lady Elizabeth Germain generously supported him, which testified to her advocacy for freedom. Politically engaged and intellectually independent, Lady Elizabeth Germain symbolized an eighteenth-century Amazon.

Seen diachronically from *The Man of Taste* in 1733 to *Female Taste* in 1755, the definition and redefinition of "modern lady" became crucial issues in this polemic of taste. A consensus emerged during the polemic, suggesting that a truly modern "woman of taste" should balance sense and sensibility, freely enjoying the pleasures brought by knowledge and public life. It is essential to note that in the above debate, the poets' repeated allusions to the classical tradition not only serve as a contrast to the so-called modern fine lady and their a-la-mode system in a satirical way but also place this battle of female taste within the context of the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns. In retrospect, such a battlefield of gender was not a unique innovation. As Joan Dejean has noted, "the querelle des femmes" continually expands its territory by crossing boundaries, so the Quarrel of Ancients and Moderns can also be considered as another version of the Quarrel about women (31–77, 167). It has already been pointed out that in the seventeenth-century French debates between Charles Perrault and Nicolas Boileau, as an example, there was no shortage of discussions about gender.

In addition to *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1688–1697), Perrault also contributed to the French literary battlefield with his poem *Apologie des Femmes* (1694). In the poem, he not only ardently praises novels, which were considered salon feminine literature at that time, but also repeatedly emphasizes female writers' influence upon modern taste, thereby responding to Boileau's mockery and satire of women in *Satire X* (1666). Perrault not only thwarted the Ancients endorsed by Boileau but also gained numerous female supporters for the Moderns. Simultaneously, Perrault's niece, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon (1664–1734), published a short essay, *Le Triomphe de Madame DesHoulières, receue dixieme muse au Parnasse* (1673), in support of Perrault. In her essay, L'Héritier regards the French poetess Antoinette Des-Houlières as the tenth Muse, elevating her to Mount Parnassus, the residence of Apollo and the nine Muses. Furthermore, L'Héritier depicts a scene of poets gathering under two Arcs de Triomphe for the parade: "a first Arc de Triomphe where erudite women of antiquity are represented" and "a second arch behind it, representing modern erudite women, including Christine de Pisan and Catherine de Villedieu" (Raynard 123). By juxtaposing modern female scholars with classical writers, L'Héritier not only delineates the lineage of female writers from the Ancients to the Moderns but also highlights feminine contributions to literary and philosophical traditions. In this sense, Dorman's female philosopher Sylvia, though born a century later than L'Héritier's tenth muse, is tantamount to a rebirth of the latter in the eighteenth century. In a word, the gender issue has become one of the topics of Ancient-Modern controversy since women's active engagement in the literary public space of the seventeenth century. Interestingly, whether in France or England, writers largely employ a narrative strategy of juxtaposing the Ancients with the Moderns to construct the ideal image of the modern lady, which differs from the textual battles that occurred in the realm of art.

Conclusion

In summary, Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* inspired a series of textual battles in the realms of art and gender. Though seemingly unrelated, the debates in both fields focus on taste in common and are intimately connected to the intellectual context of quarrels between Ancients and Moderns. If we place this polemic of taste, which lasted from the 1730s to the 1750s, within the broader context of the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns, we will find that it is not an isolated event of literature. Preceded by seventeenth-century debates in the French literary sphere and succeeded by

discussions among the English Romantics in nineteenth-century poetry, this public debate inspired by Pope functions and emerges as a pivotal thread in the tapestry of the above-mentioned intellectual interaction between Ancients and Moderns. Meanwhile, the complexity of the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns is subtly unveiled through the lens of the polemic of taste. Hogarth's preference for the Moderns is evident, while Newcomb, Dorman, and other poets' promotion of the Ancients are equally obvious. They seem different yet converge in their intentions. The former aims to form modern English art aligned with the spirit of the times, while the latter seeks to construct the new femininity that conforms to the era's trends. Both discuss the past in the context of the present and for the sake of the present. In other words, their positions in the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns are relative. This relativity not only sustains these quarrels' relevance to various fields but also assimilates different perspectives into it, thus fostering persistent vitality across time. As a historical event, the quarrels between Ancients and Moderns have long ended, but as an intellectual event, they have never truly finished and remain far from conclusion.

Notes

1. The first edition of Pope's poem bore the half-title "Of Taste." The second edition, published 4–6 January 1732, changed this half-title to "Of False Taste." After 1735, this poem was more commonly known as *Epistle to Burlington*. See Trea Mary Liddy, *Alexander Pope and His Patrons*, 2000, U College London, PhD dissertation, pp. 107–111.
2. Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* provoked a remarkable outpouring of poems, pamphlets, and other productions reflecting a range of personal, literary, and political urgencies. In addition to the six works discussed in this paper, other works inspired by Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* include Gilbert West's poem *Stowe, the Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard Lord Viscount Cobham* (1732), two pamphlets *Mr Taste's Tour from the Island of Politeness, to that of Dullness and Scandal* and *Ingratitude: To Mr Pope*, and two comedies *Mr Taste, The Poetical Fop: Or, the Modes of the Court* and *The Man of Taste* written by James Miller. See James Noggle, "Literature and Taste, 1700–1800," *Oxford Handbook Topics in Literature*, online edition, Oxford Academic, 16 Dec. 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.013.108>. Accessed 7 Feb. 2023.
3. From Petrarch onwards, "Ancients" and "Moderns" have been eagerly used to debate the literary and artistic value of the Ancients and the Moderns. After Charles Perrault published *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, the debate became known as Quarrels between Ancients and Moderns due to the interchangeability of the terms "parallèle" and "querelle" in the title of the article.
4. Apart from Chandos' Cannons, some critics related Timon's villa to Walpole's Houghton, Chatsworth, the Duke of Marlborough's estate at Blenheim, etc. See Jame R. Aubrey, "Timon's Villa: Pope's Composite Picture," *Studies in Philology*, vol. 80, no. 3, 1983, pp. 325–326.
5. *Penitent Mary Magdalen* (1565) is an oil painting by Titian. *Feast of the Gods* (1514) is an oil painting by the Italian Renaissance master Giovanni Bellini, with alterations to the landscape by Dosso Dossi and Titian. *Aldobrandini Wedding* is an influential ancient Roman painting from the first century BCE.
6. Hogarth had written under the pseudonym Britophil in *St. James's Evening Post* of July 7, 1737.
7. The term "Cockney" literally means "cock's egg." Since the seventeenth century, it refers to the common people born in London. The Neoclassical conservatives used the term "Cockney" to label the second-generation Romantic poets like Keats, Shelley, and Byron, aiming to mock certain poets among them who hailed from London's common folk, lacked a university education, and were unfamiliar with classical literature. In their view, the Cockney poets' language was crude, their use of allusions and rhymes violated Neoclassical norms, and even their English pronunciation became problematic. See Chen Jun, "Another Debate of the Quarrels between Ancients and Moderns: Cockney School and Englishness in the Neoclassical Debate," *Foreign Literature Review*, no. 4, 2020, pp. 140–155.
8. Pope satirized Blackmore, Bently, Cibber, and Curll in *The Dunciad* (1728). See David Nokes, "Pope's Friends and Enemies: Fighting with Shadows," in Pat Rogers (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008; Thomas Jemielity, "A mock-biblical controversy: Sir Richard Blackmore in the *Dunciad*," *Philological Quarterly*, no. 3, vol. 74, 1995, p. 249; Mark Rose, "The Author in Court: Pope v. Curll (1741)," *Cultural Critique*, no. 21, 1992, pp. 197–217.
9. In a certain sense, *True Taste's* frontispiece dialogues with *The Female Rake's*. In the latter, Libertina writes a letter to Sylvia as a shadow behind her points his finger forward, murmuring: "Reason's a pure unerring innate light? by Heav'n dispens'd to guide our steps aright." The correspondence between these two frontispieces thematically and para-textually reinforces the debate of female taste between Libertine and Sylvia.

10. Walpole's corrupt private life led to constant criticisms of his cabinet due to corruption issues. See Andrew McInnes, *Mary Wollstonecraft's Ghost: The Fate of the Female Philosopher in the Romantic Period*, Routledge, 2017, p. 10; James M. Osborn, "Pope, the Byzantine Empress, and Walpole's Whore," *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 24, no. 6, 1955, pp. 376–377.
11. The English term "female philosopher" represents a progressive, rational female interlocutor and the female intellectual tradition behind her. It has its roots in the French Enlightenment's "femme philosophe," whose connotations span from a Parisian salonnière to the philosopher whore of French pornography. Thus, the French phrase also embodies male anxieties about female sexuality. The image of the female philosopher is scattered throughout eighteenth-century writing, appearing in novels, poems and plays, as well as biographical, historical and political texts, including educational pamphlets and religious debate. See Andrew McInnes, *Mary Wollstonecraft's Ghost: The Fate of the Female Philosopher in the Romantic Period*, Routledge, 2017, pp. 6–7.
12. John Wilkes (1725–1797) was a champion of liberty who defended the liberty of the press and was repeatedly expelled from Parliament on accusations of seditious libel. He was imprisoned in the King's Bench Prison on May 10, 1768, during which Elizabeth Germain gave him a present of £100.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was co-supported by the Major Program of the National Social Science Fund of China, "Euro-Asian Encounters in the Literary Cultures of the 18th Century" [21&ZD278], and the Annual Program of the National Social Science Fund of China, "The Study of Public Spirit in English Literature from 17th century to 18th Century" [22AWW007].

Works cited

- Female Taste: A Satire. In Two Epistles. Inscribed to a Modern Polite Lady*, edited by S. Crowder and H. Woodgate 1755. *True Taste, or Female Philosophy. Being an Epistle from Sylvia to Libertina*. Printed and Sold by Mrs Nutt, Mrs Cook, Mrs Charlton, Mrs Dodd, Mr Slow and Mr Taylor, 1735.
- Britophil. "Weekly Essays in July, 1737." *London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer*, vol. 6, 1737, pp. 385–86.
- Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*. Yale UP, 2009.
- Dejean, Joan. *Ancients Against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siecle*. U of Chicago P, 1997.
- Dorman, Joseph. "The Female Rake, Or, Modern Fine Lady. An Epistle from Libertina to Sylvia." *Which Is Contain'd, the A-la-Mode System*, edited by J. Wilford, 1735.
- Dryden, John. "Prologue. Spoken at the Opening of the New House, March 26, 1674." *The Works of John Dryden, in Verse and Prose, with a Life, By Rev. John Mitford*, edited by John Dryden and John Mitford, vol. 1. Harper and Brothers, 1837, p. 155.
- Gilmore, Thomas. *Early Eighteenth-Century Essays on Taste*. Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1972.
- Maygar, William. J Reeves, Printed by. *The Analysis of Beauty: Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste*, 1753.
- Levine, Joseph M. "Giambattista Vico and the Quarrel Between the Ancients and the Moderns." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 52, no. 1, 1991, pp. 55–79. doi:[10.2307/2709582](https://doi.org/10.2307/2709582).
- Liddy, Trea Mary. "Alexander Pope and His Patrons." PhD dissertation, U College London, 2000.
- Liu, Xiaofeng. *Classical Studies and the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns*. Huaxia P, 2017.
- Lock, F. P. "Introduction." *The Man of Taste*, edited by James Bramston, U of California, 1975, pp. i–viii.
- Mayor, Adrienne. *The Amazons: Lives & Legends of Warrior Women Across the Ancient World*. Princeton UP, 2014.
- Pope, Alexander. *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, edited by George Sherburn, vol. 3, pp. 1729–35. Clarendon P, 1956.
- . *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations*, edited by John Butt, Routledge, 1965.
- Ryanard, Sophie. "Ancients Vs. Moderns: The Women's Riposte." *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2019, pp. 116–39. doi:[10.13110/marveltales.33.1.0116](https://doi.org/10.13110/marveltales.33.1.0116).
- Addison, Joseph, and Richard Steele. *The Spectator*. vol. 1, edited by Bond D F. Clarendon P, 1987.
- Wotton, William. "Reflections Upon Ancient and Modern Learning." Printed by J. Leake for Peter Buck, 1694.