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THE MEANING OF TASTE FOR WEALTHY PHILADELPHIANS, 1750-1800.

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE (WINTERTHUR PROGRAM),

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THE MEANING OF TASTE FOR WEALTHY
PHILADELPHIANS, 1750-1800

By

David Lawrence Barquist

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Early American Culture.

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PHILADELPHIANS, 1750-1800

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INTRODUCTION

Taste was one of the most important topics in Anglo-American aesthetics of the eighteenth century. A large number of books were devoted to the subject, and their authors included leading philosophers, artists, and literary men. Interest in taste also went beyond the elite level; in 1747 the Universal Spectator reported:

Of all our favourite Words lately, none has been more in Vogue, nor so long held its Esteem, as that of TASTE It has now introduced so much Politeness among us, that we have scarce a grave Matron at Covent-Garden, or a jolly Dame at Stocks-Market, but what is elelegant enough to have a Taste for things.¹

In fact, the topic was so popular that many modern studies have characterized the eighteenth century as the "rule of taste."² This identification is not always in a positive sense, however. For twentieth century readers, the phrase "good taste" usually calls to mind pleasant but uninteresting works of art, whose dullness results from an over dependence on rules. Taste has come to mean "the sense of what is proper, seemly, or least likely to give offence."³

It is very clear that the topic meant something far more exciting, or even controversial, to eighteenth century audiences. "'Tis taste that ruins whole kingdoms, 'tis taste that depopulates whole nations," one Englishman warned Josiah Quincy. ". . . Mr. Q., let your countrymen beware of taste in their buildings, equipage, and dress, as a deadly poison."⁴ In such a context, taste certainly was not

unlikely to give offence, nor did it mean "style" as when Thomas Chippendale advertised designs in "the Gothic, Chinese, and modern Taste."⁵ The purpose of this study is to determine precisely what meaning taste had in eighteenth century America. To accomplish this task, it will be necessary to analyze how the concept of taste was defined in the theoretical literature produced in England. The meaning these theoretical studies had for laymen in Philadelphia during the second half of the eighteenth century will then be explored.

The reasons for this geographical and temporal focus are two-fold. As the largest and wealthiest city in the American colonies, and one of the most important ports in the British Empire, Philadelphia supported a large number of people with sufficient means and leisure to consider aesthetic issues. As the seat of Congress during the War for Independence, and as the capital of the United States for the decade after 1790, Philadelphia was also a meeting-ground for most of America's intellectual leaders, a situation which many of them found exhilarating.⁶ The years from 1750 to 1800 in that city were especially important as the leaders debated all ideas in terms of their meaning for the new nation. Several historians also have pointed out that the second half of the eighteenth century marked a time when the American colonies were closer to England than they had been for the previous century, which suggests that English ideas received far greater attention than they had in the past.⁷ Moreover, as Neil Harris has demonstrated, it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that artistic matters were widely debated in England or America; in the seventeenth century,

wealthy Englishmen were as unfamiliar with art as their American counterparts.⁸

Taste received a tremendous amount of attention in the writings left behind by wealthy Philadelphians---their account books, correspondence, and diaries. Not surprisingly, both before and after the Revolution, the leading citizens were renowned for their cultivation. In 1783, Pierre Eugène du Simitière called Philadelphia "the Paris and the Hague of America, where the brilliancy of our beau monde and the sumptuosity and elegance of their entertainments rivals those of the old world."⁹ Sally McKean, who had attended a reception at President Washington's home, similarly spoke of the city's special refinement:

You could never have had such a drawing-room; it was brilliant beyond anything you could imagine; and though there was a good deal of extravagance, there was so much of Philadelphia taste in every thing that it must be confessed the most delightful occasion of the kind ever known in this country.¹⁰

Many writers clearly believed that Philadelphia had an unsurpassed understanding of taste. Such a significant part of the city's life will, therefore, furnish important information concerning the aesthetic interests of eighteenth century Americans.

CHAPTER 1

THE THEORETICAL DEFINITION OF TASTE

For eighteenth century writers concerned with aesthetic theory, "taste" denoted a faculty of the human mind. Thomas Jefferson used the word in this sense when discussing his interest in architecture: "How is a taste in this beautiful art to be formed in our countrymen?"¹ The word "taste" had been a metaphor for judgment since the Middle Ages, but the concept of taste as a mental faculty was part of the general upsurge of interest in aesthetics that affected England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. At that time, one of the most important trends in criticism was the new emphasis placed on the viewer's emotional reaction to works of art.² Taste was equally concerned with the viewer's perception; in fact, one of the earliest works to deal with the audience's importance, Joseph Addison's series of essays on "The Pleasures of the Imagination," also contained one of the earliest discussions of taste. Addison stressed the connection between the two when he noted that the faculty's name was selected for the "very great conformity between mental taste . . . and that sensitive taste which gives us a relish of every different flavour that affects the palate."³ His definition of taste itself as "that faculty of the soul, which discerns the beauties of an author with pleasure, and the imperfections with dislike," clearly depended on the theory that beauty was dependent

upon the viewer's reaction.⁴

This emphasis on the viewer, which accords so well with twentieth century aesthetics, is the aspect of taste that has interested most modern scholars. In the eighteenth century sources, however, the abstract standards inherited from antiquity were as important as emotional reactions as indicators of quality. Scholars have sought to explain this fact as either a "contradiction" which accounts for the "failure" of eighteenth century theoreticians to come to terms with their own feelings, or an indication that the eighteenth century was a "transition" between classical and modern aesthetics.⁵ However, as Donald Greene has pointed out, it is the desire to polarize different elements within the philosophy of the period that has created the interpretive difficulties, because it has set up distinctions that were not important in the eighteenth century.⁶ The unanimity of definitions of taste suggests that there was no "transition" taking place over time. Expanded to include the visual arts, Addison's conception of taste served every critic for the remainder of the century. Sir Joshua Reynolds stated in 1776, "We apply the term Taste to that act of mind by which we like or dislike, whatever be the subject."⁷ In 1790, Archibald Alison echoed these words when he wrote, "Taste is that Faculty of the human mind by which we perceive and enjoy, whatever is BEAUTIFUL or SUBLIME in the works of Nature or Art."⁸ Such continuity also indicates that the concept of taste was not a "failure," but was widely accepted.

The writers on taste did not perceive a tension between feeling and reason because they saw the concept as a synthesis of these two aspects of human nature. Although slightly later than most of the sources in this study, one American magazine from 1810 summed up this attitude perfectly: "Taste . . . signifies feeling corrected, and at the same time heightened by that portion of philosophy which embraces the laws of criticism."⁹ The ability to make rational assessments of works of art became an important part of the pleasure found in them. Edmund Burke affirmed this dual nature of taste when he described it as "that faculty, or those faculties of mind, which are affected with, or which form a judgment of the works of the imagination and the elegant arts."¹⁰

This "traditional" insistence upon rational judgment also had as much immediate significance to the writers on taste as did the emphasis on audience response. Another movement in eighteenth century aesthetics was the effort to develop canons by which English artists and writers could create works rivaling those of the Continent. Lawrence Lipking has shown how such standards were an important part of most histories of English art produced at this time.¹¹ To a considerable extent, this interest in absolute standards was a reaction to the unfocused research and collecting practiced by the virtuosi of the preceding century.¹² Their wide-ranging curiosity had produced many of the scientific advances made during the Restoration, but to eighteenth century writers, they were too often men who were unable to judge quality. For most people, therefore, taste was significant as an

established system of discrimination. By giving equal importance to both his emotional and intellectual responses to a work of art, a man of taste was able to produce a balanced opinion that was more likely to be objectively "correct."

Writers on taste repeatedly advised their readers to be certain that their intellectual studies did not overpower their ability to respond emotionally to quality, a charge frequently levelled at the virtuosi. Alexander Pope numbered the latter among the antiheroes of The Dunciad for this very reason:

'Yet by some object ev'ry brain is stirr'd;
The dull may waken to a Humming-bird;
The most recluse, discreetly open'd, find
Congenial matter in the Cockle kind;
The mind, in metaphysics at a loss,
May wander in a wilderness of Moss
'O! would the sons of men once think their eyes
And Reason giv'n them but to study flies!
See Nature in some partial narrow shape,
And let the Author of the whole escape:
Learn but to trifle; or, who most observe,
To wonder at their Maker, not to serve!'¹³

The man of taste allowed his natural emotions to play as active a part in forming his opinions as his knowledge of rules. Addison observed:

The faculty [of taste] must in some degree be born with us One of the most eminent mathematicians of the age has assured me, that the greatest pleasure he took in reading Virgil, was in examining Aeneas' voyage by the map, as I question not but many a modern compiler of history would be delighted with little more in that divine author, than in the bare matters of fact.¹⁴

Equally necessary for the proper evaluation of a work of art were objective standards with which these emotional appreciations could be justified. "A legitimate and a just taste can neither be begotten,

made, conceived, or produced without the antecedent labour and pains of criticism," the Earl of Shaftesbury noted.¹⁵ Many of the virtuosi were seen as collectors and scholars for their own pleasure, with no interest in the intellectual importance of their activities. Samuel Johnson wrote:

It is never without grief, that I find a man capable of ratiocination or invention enlisting himself in this secondary class of learning; for when he has once discovered a method of gratifying his desire of eminence by expence rather than by labour, and known the sweets of a life blest at once with the ease of idleness, and the reputation of knowledge, he will not easily be brought to undergo again the toil of thinking¹⁶

The writers on taste, therefore, rejected the acquisition of experience for its own sake, and urged men of taste to make studies that would increase their sophistication. "This enlargement of taste," Alexander Gerard pointed out, "places one as it were upon an eminence, and not only enables him to take in a wider prospect; but also improves all the parts of it, by comparing or contrasting them together."¹⁷ As a result, men of taste had to be highly selective in their search for knowledge. Addison advised his readers to become familiar with the writings and conversation of only "polite and learned men;" Reynolds similarly observed, "The conversation of learned and ingenious men . . . is the best of all substitutes for those who have not the means or opportunities of deep study."¹⁸

The balance of emotion and reason reflected the fact that aesthetic evaluations in the eighteenth century were a synthetic process, which involved careful consideration of a work's positive and negative features. Lawrence Lipking has noted that the criticism of this time

tended to evaluate by a "balance sheet of plusses and minusses."¹⁹ The Romantics condemned this method, as it denied the organic unity and individuality of a work of art, but the eighteenth century took a different view of human endeavor. Gerard commented, "A person of true taste forms his judgment only from the surplus of merit, after an accurate comparison of the perfections and the faults."²⁰ In this connection, the earliest works on taste had great significance for the "new science of the connoisseur" outlined in Jonathan Richardson's Discourse of 1719. Echoing Addison's and Shaftesbury's insistence on balanced opinions, Richardson stated:

To be a good connoisseur a man must be as free from all kinds of prejudice as possible; he must moreover have a clear and exact way of thinking and reasoning; he must know how to take in, and manage just ideas; and throughout he must have not only a solid, but an unbiased judgment.²¹

The passage quoted from Richardson raises another point that was considered an essential part of taste, the proper attitude with which to judge a work of art. Virtuosi were seen as collectors or scholars for the selfish purpose of personal pleasure; one of the collectors in Samuel Foote's comedy Taste rushes into an auction crying, "But the Lots, the Lots, my dear Brush, where are they? I'm upon the Rack of Impatience till I see them, and in a Fever of Desire till I possess them."²² The writers on taste considered this self-absorption to be inimical to an aesthetic experience. As Jerome Stolnitz has pointed out, a unifying feature of the works on taste was an emphasis on disinterested perception.²³ Alison provided one of the clearest descriptions of this denial of self during an aesthetic encounter:

That state of mind, every man must have felt, is most favourable to the emotions of taste, in which the imagination is free and unembarrassed, or, in which the attention is so little occupied by any private or particular object or thought, as to leave us open to all the impressions which the objects that are before us can produce. It is upon the vacant and unemployed, accordingly, that the objects of taste make the strongest impression.²⁴

By disregarding the cares and desires of the moment, in which the conscious self operated, the man of taste was able to exercise those feelings which responded to the universal.

Both the balanced assessment and the disinterested attitude were the means of arriving at the ultimate purpose of taste, the ability to sense and appreciate perfect beauty. Eighteenth century critics did not consider taste to be variable, and rejected the Horatian epigram "de gustibus non disputandum est." Taste improved or declined, but it did not change. "What he admired at different times in these so different figures," wrote Edmund Burke, "is strictly the same; and though his knowledge is improved, his Taste is not altered."²⁵ Taste was a source of pleasure precisely because it allowed mankind to experience the absolute. Francis Hutcheson observed:

Let us compare our Satisfaction in such Discoveries, with the uneasy State of Mind in which we are, when we can only measure Lines, or Surfaces, by a Scale, or are making Experiments which we can reduce to no general Canon, but only heaping up a Multitude of particular incoherent Observations. Now each of these Trials discovers a new Truth, but with no Pleasure or Beauty, notwithstanding the Variety, till we can discover some sort of Unity²⁶

Taste was, therefore, a mental faculty which allowed individuals to discriminate between good and inferior art, provided that a balance

between emotion and intellect and a disinterested attitude were maintained. Critics considered good taste to be absolute rather than relative; perfect taste provided a fixed standard by which all future experience could be judged:

There is an Ideal Perfection in Poetry, Painting, and in all other Arts. The Mind may conceive a Work of Nature quite perfect, entirely without a Fault, in the same manner as Plato has conceived his Republic As the Idea might be the first Point of Perfection, the Value of all Works might be judged by their Degree of Similitude or Unlikeness to this Point.²⁷

The attainment of such a standard was the goal of everyone who aspired to cultivation. David Hume began his essay on taste by stating, "It is natural for us to seek a Standard of Taste; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another."²⁸ Far from finding taste the sum of all that was unobjectionable, eighteenth century critics considered it an essential faculty for gentlemen, and indeed all men, to acquire. "To question whether an improved taste be an advantage," John Donaldson wrote in The Elements of Beauty, "is in some measure to doubt whether it is better to be or not to be, to live or not to live."²⁹

CHAPTER 2

TASTE AND THE CULTURAL ASPIRATIONS OF PHILADELPHIANS

The congruity of the abstract definitions of taste did not exist among laymen's interpretations. A survey of wealthy Philadelphians' discussions of taste reveals that the concept had different meanings depending upon an individual's cultural aspirations. One group viewed taste as the distinguishing feature of cosmopolitan gentlemen. Another group rejected this idea of taste as undemocratic, and thus unsuited to the character of American society. Although they recognized taste's importance, their concept of it was determined by the special needs of Americans.

This plurality of opinion among the wealthiest citizens reinforces Robert Gough's contention that the "upper class" in eighteenth century Philadelphia was not cohesive, but a collection of individuals with allegiances to different social, religious, and kinship groups.¹ An individual's concept of taste certainly appears to have been the product of ideology rather than social or economic factors, since the distinctions drawn on the latter two levels could be very fine in eighteenth century Philadelphia. European travellers repeatedly commented that the distinctions Philadelphians sought to create among themselves were extremely subtle when compared to the hierarchical society of Europe. Philip Mazzei noted that among the grandest houses in

Philadelphia, "not one of them was any better than even the mediocre" houses of London.² At the same time, certain differences in lifestyle or intellectual attitude, no matter how invisible to outsiders, had great significance among wealthy Philadelphians. Homes and furnishings inconsistent with one group's conception of good taste could arouse considerable criticism, while eliciting admiration from another group. A focal point of controversy was William Bingham's "city mansion," one of the most elaborate residences in eighteenth century America. One visitor called it "the only house which deserved the name of a genteel or fashionable residence"³ The opposing viewpoint was summed up in the description of Bingham's house in Ann Warder's diary:

Walked to looked at Bingham's new house which cause much talk here being quite upon a new plan -- but very ungentleel I thinks much resembling some of our [English] heavy public Buildings -- bow windows in back & the Front very paltry with figures in Stocoea.⁴

The conception of taste held by the group of Philadelphians that included the Bingham's closely followed the writings of the English theorists. One prominent member of this group was Samuel Powel, who certainly must have considered taste among the most important qualities that an individual could possess; it was among the attributes immortalized on his tombstone:

He was the enemy of all exorbitant Powers/ and a sincere friend to the Liberties of his Country./ To all this was added a Taste for Science, for the Fine Arts/ and for the Improvements of Civil Life.⁵

Perfect taste required familiarity with the best, and with his friend John Morgan, Powel made a six-year tour of Europe, where they spent much of their time studying art treasures. The Grand Tour became a

standard experience for wealthy Philadelphians, who sought cultivation unavailable to them at home. Many theoreticians and laymen believed that taste could be improved and measured only by the "fine" arts largely absent from Colonial America: painting, sculpture, and architecture. When he had his portrait painted by Angelica Kauffmann in 1764, Powel adopted a traditional attribute of a man of taste, and was shown holding an elaborate architectural plan.⁶ Powel further advertised his cultivation by assembling a collection of paintings for his Philadelphia home. On a visit there in 1780, the Marquis de Chastellux reported, "What pleased me most . . . were fine prints and some very good copies of the best Italian paintings, for Mr. Powel has travelled in Europe . . . where he acquired a taste for the fine arts."⁷

Chastellux's emphasis on the pleasure he took in seeing Powel's collection is significant, for it reveals how men of taste viewed themselves as an intimate circle in which cultivation permitted enjoyable interaction. Taste functioned for them as a normative system of mutual recognition, whereby those who followed its principles could recognize each other as peers. E. H. Gombrich has traced the origin of this concept as far back as the medieval courts of Love, in which an individual's courtoisie was his or her primary qualification for admission into the inner circle.⁸ In the eighteenth century, men of taste adopted the name dilettanti precisely because it reflected the delight which came from their discussions of artistic matters among themselves.⁹ Thus John Morgan noted a shared understanding of art when he wrote to Joseph Shippen, Sr., "To tell you we are now at Naples is sufficient to remind

you of one of the finest Countries in ye world . . . rich in the monuments of Antiquity."¹⁰ In a letter thanking Robert Rutherford for sending Benjamin West's copies of Old Masters, Joseph Shippen, Jr., similarly referred to a sense of community among artistic circles in Philadelphia:

They all hang up at Mr. [James] Hamilton's Villa . . . and are excessively admired by every body. . . . The Care and Trouble you have taken in getting these Copies made . . . merit thanks to you from Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Allen as well as every other American who has any Taste in painting.¹¹

To reinforce this sense of community, taste also functioned as an agent of exclusion. Those who were ignorant of its principles and the need for self-cultivation could be classified as inferior, just as those who were aware could be recognized as equals. An important illustration of how these social dynamics reflected back upon the aesthetic issues was the use of the word "genteel" in the eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson's definition of the word associated it with "politeness" and other qualities which distinguished men of rank.¹² Benjamin Fuller used the word in this sense of exclusivity when he wrote, "I . . . am able to live genteelly, tho' not affluently. I can entertain and accommodate an agreeable friend, which is the ne plus ultra of my Ambition."¹³ Mark Girouard has pointed out that the hereditary nobility in England at this time chose to do away with formal community-sized entertainments in favor of small gatherings where compatible social equals intermingled.¹⁴ "Genteel" also indicated good taste, but almost always with the implication that this taste resulted from exclusive rank or education. Thus Ann Warder described her sister-in-law's

appearance: "Her Dress though gay dont convey or rather command that distance which the generality of our smart Brothers possess--It is what we should esteem rather Vulgar then genteel"15

This conception of taste as the dividing line between the cultivated and the vulgar was not original with the Philadelphians. The connection between good taste and high social status permeated the theoretical literature. In fact, most of these authors specifically wrote their books to improve the taste of gentlemen who already possessed a significant degree of cultivation. As Lawrence Lipking has observed, Horace Walpole wrote his Anecdotes of Painting in England as a reference guide for noble collectors, just as Reynolds preferred to think of literary and noble figures as the audience for his Discourses.16 One of the reasons that the leisured upper class had a theoretical advantage in acquiring taste was their ability to achieve a disinterested attitude. Almost every writer stated that the concerns of trade or business were detrimental to disinterested feelings. Alison observed:

The finest natural taste is seldom found able to withstand that narrowness and insensibility of mind, which is perhaps necessarily acquired by the minute and uninteresting details of the mechanical arts; and they who have been doomed, by their professions, to pass their earlier years in populous and commercial cities, and in the narrow and selfish pursuits, which prevail there, soon lose that sensibility

Gentlemen not only had the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of taste, they also had the necessary cultivation to discover them in the first place. The theoreticians considered culture to exist only among the minority that travelled widely or attended universities; some went so far as to conceive of taste as a faculty "given" only to those who could

develop it properly. Hugh Blair wrote:

In the distribution of those [talents] which belong only to the ornamental part of life, she [Nature] hath bestowed her favours with more frugality. She hath both sown the seed more sparingly; and rendered a higher culture requisite for bringing them to perfection.¹⁸

This interest in taste as an agent of social distinction reflected an intense preoccupation with status that existed in eighteenth century Anglo-American society. Many historians have discussed how the British Empire's rapid expansion after 1700 resulted in a spectacular increase in wealth. This wealth in turn brought about a "consumer revolution," which stimulated the rise of urban merchants.¹⁹ A conflict quickly developed within the wealthy elite, as the merchants sought social equality with the landed, hereditary aristocracy. In a colonial society, the problem of status among the wealthy was even more intense than in England. Gough's study of Philadelphia revealed that the absence of a hereditary aristocracy, whose position was defined by legal privileges, left a vacuum at the top of society that was never adequately filled by another group. As with social alliances among the wealthy, rank became an individual matter rather than a group issue.²⁰

Many historians have observed that the leaders of Philadelphia did not envision an egalitarian society in their city, but one ruled by a "natural aristocracy" similar to the leadership of republican Rome. One prominent Federalist writer declared:

It is not a novel opinion, that men are by nature possessed of equal rights . . . but 'tis somewhat

doubtful whether every man should be permitted to do as he pleases. -- Such liberty, it may be said, is unsafe with men who are not perfect. -- A cosmopolite, to be sure, will not abuse it, because he loves all mankind in an equal degree: but the expediency of the general principle may be questioned²¹

Particularly after the War, many cultured Philadelphians formed a closely-knit circle which controlled both the local and national governments, a group which has been called the "Republican Court."²² Among its members were Samuel Powel, Edward Shippen, and William Bingham. Unapologetically elitist in character, these men repeatedly referred to the pleasures of exclusivity. In 1792, William Bingham reported to John Penn, "Philadelphia has become a much more pleasing residence than when you left it. There is greater resource in the numbers as well as the choice of society."²³ Samuel Breck's account of Robert Morris, another member of the Court, similarly referred to a selective, cultivated community:

Being at home in Philadelphia, he did the honors of the city by a profuse, incessant, and elegant hospitality. Our first American prelate, the Right Reverend Bishop White . . . was connected with Morris, who married his sister, a lady of refined and dignified manners, and suited in all respects for the centre of the fashionable circle in which she moved. . . . It was the pure and unalloyed which the Morrises sought to place before their friends²⁴

Because taste functioned as a means of selection for the elite, outward demonstrations of taste became extremely important. Whatever personal satisfaction good taste might provide, an individual had to show he possessed it if he wished to enjoy its social benefits. This encouraged an aesthetic with sharp distinctions between the areas of

the home which were furnished for the peer group's approval, and those where such displays were unnecessary.²⁵ Samuel Johnson's account of a fictitious visit paid to a nouveau riche by a former business associate captured the distinction made between areas of cultural interchange within a home, and those areas not intended for the pleasures of taste.

The best apartments were ostentatiously set open, that I might have a distant view of the magnificence which I was not permitted to approach; and my old friend receiving me with all the insolence of condescension at the top of the stairs, conducted me to a back room, where he told me he always breakfasted when he had not great company

. . . As I was pursuing an argument with some degree of earnestness, he started from his posture of attention, and ordered, that if Lord Lofty called on him that morning, he should be shewn into the best parlour.²⁶

The homes of Philadelphia's men of taste were all finished according to these standards of front and back spaces. John Dickinson directed the plasterer to finish the entrance hall and the downstairs room "very richly and elegantly."²⁷ Even so subtle a detail as the andirons depended upon whether or not a room was used for entertaining. In his house on Second Street, John Cadwalader placed andirons shaped like Corinthian columns, for which he paid twenty-five pounds, in the front parlor; in the rear parlor a "counter fluted" pair costing ten pounds were used; and in other chambers "plane fluted" or "plane" andirons worth between six and nine pounds were considered sufficient.²⁸ Such careful strategies were clearly successful. John Adams' impression of Benjamin Chew's townhouse, which he visited in 1774, was formed by the public areas: "We were shewn into a grand Entry and Stair Case, and into an elegant and most magnificent Chamber. . . . The Furniture

was all rich."²⁹ After visiting William Bingham's home, George Washington wrote similarly but more succinctly: "Dined and drank Tea at Mr. Bingham's, splendor shewn."³⁰

However, taste was not simply a matter of making a show, but of making the right kind of show. Gombrich has pointed out that when outward appearances become valued as signs of inner worth, the standards which must be met for approval by the elite become increasingly refined.³¹ Various strategies were developed in eighteenth century Philadelphia for separating men of true taste from the nouveau-riche who had means without refinement. One manifestation of good taste was a sense of what degree of display was appropriate. Thomas Sheraton advised his readers:

In furnishing a good house for a person of rank, it requires some taste and judgment When any gentleman is so vain and ambitious as to order the furnishing of his house in a style superior to his fortune and rank, it will be prudent in an upholsterer, by some gentle hints, to direct his choice to a more moderate plan.³²

The mutual pleasure generated by taste would result when both the designed or patron and his visitors recognized a common degree of cultivation. During Ann Bingham's first trip to Paris in 1784, Abigail Adams Smith noted, "Mrs. Bingham gains my love and admiration, more and more every time I see her She has a taste for show, but not above her circumstances."³³ Men of taste also were expected to appreciate esoteric references whose meaning would be unintelligible to all but the cultivated. In England, the great emblematic gardens such as Stowe and Stourhead were designed with this concept in mind.³⁴ Although

the scale of their projects and the sophistication of their audience were more restricted, a few Philadelphians seem to have imitated this example. William Hamilton's gardens at the Woodlands were filled with statuary whose meaning would have been apparent only to knowledgeable visitors. Joshua Francis Fisher later recalled, "I remember a little monument to Shenstone and I think there were memorials to others who gave practical examples of their taste in gardening or stimulated it by their poetry."³⁵ The mantelpiece carving in John Cadwalader's house represented the Choice of Hercules, the subject of ancient and modern aesthetic treatises.³⁶ This may have been intended as another reference point for cultivated visitors.

By demonstrating his taste, an individual not only achieved high social status, he also fulfilled one of the responsibilities of such a position. A member of the aristocracy, whether "natural" or not, was expected to put the interests of the nation before those of self-aggrandisement. Just as the ownership of land gave them an interest in the nation's future, so men who had arrived at an understanding of perfect taste had an "interest" in the direction of national culture, and were the most logical leaders for cultural affairs. Taste became, in effect, a variety of noblesse oblige. Jonathan Richardson declared:

If gentlemen were lovers of painting, and connoisseurs, it would be of great advantage to the public, in First, The reformation of our manners. Second, The improvement of our people. Third, The increase of our wealth, and with all these, of our honour, and power.³⁷

The emphasis on good taste as a necessary accomplishment of gentlemen was justified by their position as exemplars. "This is the Progress of

Taste," wrote one author. "By little and little the Publick are caught by Examples. By seeing, they (even without taking notice of it) insensibly form themselves upon what they have seen."³⁸

Moreover, the elite's attention to taste provided financial support for worthy enterprises even as it improved the public. Josiah Wedgewood, whose success owed much to the royal and aristocratic commissions he received, stated in one of his catalogues:

The progress of the arts . . . depends chiefly upon the encouragement they receive from those who by their rank and affluence are legislators in taste, and who are alone capable of bestowing rewards upon the labours of industry, or the exertions of genius.³⁹

Such patronage was viewed ultimately as nothing less than an affirmation of the greatness of British civilization. Pope put forward this idea while praising the Earl of Burlington's architectural projects:

You too proceed! make falling Arts your care,
Erect new wonders, and the old repair,
Jones and Palladio to themselves restore,
And be whate'er Vitruvius was before:
Till Kings call forth th'Idea's of your mind,
Proud to accomplish what such hands designed,
Bid Harbours open, public Ways extend,
Bid Temples, worthier of the God, ascend . . .
These Honours, Peace to happy Britain brings,
These are Imperial Works, and worthy Kings.⁴⁰

The leaders of Philadelphia society were equally conscious of their exemplary position. William Hamilton noted that the plans for his emblematic garden would "introduce many conveniencies and improvements that will be useful to my country as well as myself."⁴¹ When sending President Washington some objects purchased in Paris for the Executive Mansion, Gouverneur Morris explained why he had spent more

than requested: "I think it of very great importance to fix the taste of our country properly, and I think your example will go very far in that respect."⁴² As Morris' letter reveals, many of the Republican Court imported their household furnishings from Europe; at the same time, they clearly felt it was their duty to patronize and promote local craftsmen. William Bingham, whose home was filled with foreign decorations, nevertheless noted proudly that the portrait of Washington he sent to the Earl of Lansdowne was "executed by Stewart [sic] . . . in his best Manner, & does great Credit to the American Artist. . . . The Frame that accompanies it, is manufactured in Philada. [sic] with much Taste & Elegance."⁴³

Despite these professions of working for the common good, it is clear that the elite expected most mimicry to take place on their own level, which further reinforced their cohesiveness as a group. In writing to Gouverneur Morris for the French table decorations, Washington declared, "If I am defective recur to what you have seen on Mr. Robert Morris's table for my ideas generally."⁴⁴ It might be argued that Washington was selecting a convenient reference, but this in itself suggests a common bond that existed between exemplar, imitator, and supplier. Bingham similarly wrote to a friend in Paris for "twenty-four small coffee cups, with a design similar to those used by the Queen & the Duke d'Angoulême."⁴⁵ Such discussions indicated that this group was extremely cautious about whose furnishings they imitated, since this implied that they were part of the same circle. When Washington ordered a plateau for his table, his secretary commented on how exclusive such

a decoration was: "Mr. Morris & Mr. Bingham have them, and the French & Spanish Ministers here, but I know of no one else who has."⁴⁶

Throughout their discussions of taste, this group of Philadelphians raised the fact that their cultivation followed the example set in Europe. Because of the absolute character of taste, they considered any deviation from the English norm as an undesirable compromise. When criticized by Jefferson for spending so much time abroad, Ann Bingham replied:

The agreeable resources of Paris must certainly please and instruct every Class of Characters. The Arts of Elegance are there considered essential, and are carried to a state of Perfection; the Mind is continually gratified with the admiration of Works of Taste.⁴⁷

It is particularly important for Americans to keep up with European developments, since their distance from the centers of taste might cause degeneration. In his proposal for the founding of the American Philosophical Society, Franklin commented, "Men of speculation . . . are widely separated, and seldom can see or converse or be acquainted with each other, so that many useful particulars remain uncommunicated, die with the discoverers, and are lost to mankind."⁴⁸

This conviction was reinforced by the traditional theory of translatio studii, which contended that the arts achieved greater perfection as they moved westward, as from Greece to Rome. Many saw this process taking place between Europe and America; both Englishmen and Americans considered the New World to be the culmination of British civilization.⁴⁹ "The next Augustan age will dawn on the other side of

the Atlantic," Horace Walpole declared. "There will perhaps be a Thucydides at Boston, a Xenophon at New York, and, in time a Virgil at Mexico, and a Newton at Peru."⁵⁰ Such Philadelphia-born artists as Benjamin West, who rose to great prominence in London, as well as such well-known English painters as Robert Edge Pine, who travelled to Philadelphia, were viewed as certain indications of the international character of American culture.⁵¹

Not all wealthy Philadelphians shared this vision of their cultural destiny, however. People who found the arts an inappropriate pastime for Americans had reservations concerning the necessity of acquiring taste. In fact, this group saw taste as a potential source of corruption rather than refinement. This was partly because of the degree of self-absorption which the study of taste required. One Philadelphian observed in his diary, "We know that virtues carried to excess border on their kindred vices & that society when exalted to the highest pitch of refinement, if pushed beyond that must degenerate into licentiousness."⁵² The selfish nature of many men of taste caused a few to reject it outright, rather than risk moral decay. "'Tis a Happiness to be delivered from a Curious Mind, as well as from a Dainty Palate," William Penn cautioned his followers. "For it is not only a Troublesome but a Slavish Thing to be Nice."⁵³ Many Philadelphia Friends maintained this aversion to attempts at refinement. Ann Warder recorded in her diary a sermon in which the minister condemned "the pride of Dress & high mindedness that had got in amongst us, with a Query what it must lead too in the end -- wether we could expect the reward."⁵⁴ Yet Quakers

were not the only group to question the morality or validity of the search for perfect taste. David Humphries of Connecticut attacked the extravagance of wealthy Philadelphians for similar reasons:

Such are the joys that fill thy constant round
 Oh Philadelphia, 'midst the rage of War!
 Thy pride exults, as thundring o'er the ground,
 Roll the swift wheels of pleasures gilded Car!
 How chang'd oh beautiful Town thy simple lot,
 For lo! thy sons with alter'd manners gay,
 (Thy sapient founder's sober plans forgot)
 Change Nature's laws, & turn the night to day.

 But can the revel of nocturnal sports,
 The charms of Music, or the pride of show,
 Drive hostile Navies from your guarded ports,
 Or shield your Country, from the barb'rous foe?
 Is this a time for feasts & flowing Bowls,
 Or can ye sleep! -- while yet your Country bleeds. . . .⁵⁵

For most, however, taste was less of a corrupting influence in its own right than something put to base purposes by corrupt individuals. Many people feared that it was a means by which the elite could set themselves up as the aristocracy of a supposedly democratic society. Isaac Weld, as English visitor, connected the lavish lifestyles of prominent Federalists with precisely this goal.

Amongst the uppermost circles in Philadelphia, pride, haughtiness, and ostentation are conspicuous; and it seems as if nothing could make them happier than that an order of nobility should be established, by which they might be exalted above their fellow citizens as much as they are in their own conceit.⁵⁶

The knowledge of art which brought men of taste together was seen as a means of excluding less sophisticated citizens from the circles of economic and political power. Samuel Breck perceived such a built-in selection factor in the furnishings of William Bingham's mansion, the scene of much political intrigue:

The forms at his house were not suited to our manners. . . . In this drawing-room the furniture was superb Gobelin, and the folding doors were covered with mirrors, which reflected the figures of the company, so as to deceive an untravelled countryman, who, having been paraded up the marble stairway amid the echoes of his name -- oftentimes made very ridiculous by the queer manner in which the servants pronounced it -- would enter the brilliant apartment and salute the looking-glasses instead of the master and mistress of the house and their guests.⁵⁷

A few of the self-styled men of taste suffered for their elitist attitudes. William Hamilton was suspected of Tory sympathies because of his frequent trips to England, and almost lost both his life and property during the War.⁵⁸

Another reason for suspecting taste to be the tool of elitist elements was the idea that certain wealthy citizens wanted a reputation as men of taste because it entitled them to respect they could not otherwise command. One Philadelphian noted scornfully that an empty-headed young socialite "held forth at a great rate & gave his jumbled opinions of taste rural sentiments & c."⁵⁹ A reputation for taste might allow individuals with base motives to appear as important citizens with an appreciation for ideal principles. The most notorious "man of taste" in this regard was undoubtedly Bingham, whose enemies were convinced that he had acquired his fortune illicitly and would stop at nothing to advance himself further. William Maclay, Bingham's fellow-Senator from Pennsylvania, observed:

There is a propriety, a neatness, a cleanliness that adds to the splendor of his costly furniture and elegant apartments. . . . He opposes me . . . as the object that stands in the way of his wishes, and the dictates of his ambitions, and on this principle he would oppose perfection itself.⁶⁰

Peter Markoe put similar thoughts into verse:

What tho' the pomp of wealth, the pride of power
Swell thy mean heart, and gild thy present hour;
Tho' Luxury attract the worldly wife,
Who, when they most caress thee most despise,
Tho' to thy mansion wits and fops repair,
To game, to feast, to saunter and to stare,
Thine eyes amid the croud who fawn and bend,
View many a parasite, but not one friend.
Virtue and sense indignant stand aloof,
Whilst each knave's friendship is a keen reproof.⁶¹

Although there was considerable suspicion concerning the corrupting influence of taste, most of the Philadelphians who rejected the Republican Court's lifestyle also saw taste as the very means by which such corruption could be avoided. In theory, at least, the principles of taste could be applied to moral as well as aesthetic problems, since the search for an ideal aesthetic standard was analogous to the search for an immutable set of rules for social behavior. Lord Shaftesbury wrote:

'Tis not wit merely, but a temper which must form the well-bred man. In the same manner, 'tis not a head merely, but a heart and resolution which must complete the real philosopher. Both characters aim at what is excellent, aspire to a just taste, and carry in view the model of what is beautiful and becoming.⁶²

An individual who was able to perfect his taste would be expected to perfect his morals, and vice versa. Reynolds stated in his Discourses:

The good and virtuous man alone can acquire this true or just relish even of works of art. . . . The same disposition, the same desire to find something steady, substantial, and durable, on which the mind can lean as it were, and rest with safety, actuates us in both cases.⁶³

A number of critics took this idea further, and declared that the immutable principles of taste had been divinely established as a means of

perceiving the order behind every aspect of existence. Cooper wrote:

Those uncommon Emotions of Pleasure, which arise in your Breast upon the Observation of moral or natural Elegance, were caused by a more ready and intimate Perception of that universal TRUTH, which the all-perfect CREATOR of this harmonious System ordained to be the VENUS of every Object⁶⁴

Because taste provided an understanding of the ideal, it followed that works of art which adhered to its principles were conduits through which perfection might be experienced. Their influence on the viewer was ennobling rather than corrupting. The poet John Trumbull stated:

I appeal to all persons to judgment, whether they can rise from reading a fine Poem, viewing any masterly work of Genius, or hearing an harmonious concert of Music, without feeling an openness of heart, and an elevation of mind, without being more sensible of the dignity of human nature, and despising whatever tends to debase and degrade it?⁶⁵

When Benjamin West first began to paint, the Quaker community in Philadelphia debated the propriety of a calling that was condemned by their religion; the elders concluded, however, that such natural talent was clearly intended by God for a moral purpose, and that it should be encouraged.⁶⁶ Thus not only the act of creation, but the patronage of art could be seen as a moral act. In praising a virtuous man, Henry Fielding connected his benevolence with his exercise of taste:

. . . He had expended one part of the income of this fortune in discovering a taste superior to most by works where the highest dignity was united with the purest simplicity, and another part in displaying a degree of goodness superior to all men by acts of charity to objects whose only recommendations were their merits or their wants.⁶⁷

For those Philadelphians who approved of taste as a means of discovering the ideal, anything that hindered the process could not be in good taste. Specifically, the pursuit of fashion was seen as diametrically opposed to this end. The essence of fashion was change, which required neither intellectual quests nor permanent standards.

Hogarth made this point in The Analysis of Beauty:

How gradually does the eye grow reconciled even to a disagreeable dress, as it becomes more and more the fashion, and how soon return to its dislike of it, when it is left off, and a new one has taken possession of the mind? -- so vague is taste, when it has no solid principles for its foundation!⁶⁸

As Abigail Adams Smith's comments on Mrs. Bingham indicated, an attention to fashion was always at the expense of those qualities required for perfect taste.

[She] has a great share of grace, united with a vivacity that is enchanting, but without much dignity; grace depends upon the person, actions, and manners; dignity is placed in the mind; the latter she has not; she is, nevertheless, a charming woman.⁶⁹

Frequent charges of "dishonesty" were levelled at the fashion-conscious for attempting to give their frivolous pursuits a higher tone. Such an action was condemned because it ultimately worked against the public's acquisition of taste. James Usher noted:

It is the admission of those casual adjuncts, amongst which are comprehended dress, ceremonies, and furniture, into the same class with things permanently agreeable; and the confusion of them, that have given foundation to objections, and furnished examples against the absolute nature of beauty, and universal unchangeable taste.⁷⁰

The group opposed to display took taste very seriously, not only as a means of understanding God, but as an improving experience in its

own right. Because the exercise of taste required a disinterested attitude, men of taste were forced to overcome their naturally selfish natures, and concentrate on higher qualities. For this reason, George Berkeley found taste to be a source of "real" pleasure, as opposed to the "imaginary" pleasure of selfish possession.

When I walk the streets, I use the foregoing natural maxim (viz. That he is the true possessor of a thing who enjoys it, and not he that owns it without the enjoyment of it) A gallery of pictures, a cabinet or library that I have free access to I think my own. In a word all that I desire is the use of things, let who will have the keeping of them.⁷¹

Furthermore, as Gombrich has demonstrated, the connection between good morals and good taste was based on acceptance of restraint as a primary virtue in both spheres.⁷² The exercise of taste, therefore, had to involve an element of self-denial, as when Rebecca Shoemaker advised her daughter to purchase furniture that was "all mahogany and the chairs plain, even if carved were the same price."⁷³ This group of Philadelphians saw taste in the ability to refrain from display, in the same way that the other group sought to proclaim its cultivation by lavish patronage.

One of the most important indications of restraint was an observance of the requirements of utility. Commenting on the vagaries of fashion in 1787, the American Magazine noted, "The best proportioned shoe will always keep upon the foot, and the best proportioned buckle will always sit easy. True taste never deviates from these proportions."⁷⁴ To be in good taste, ornament had to be subordinated to practical purposes; a man of taste would know whether it was appropriate

or not. In this context, it is not surprising that Franklin took such pains to justify his decision to begin ornamental plantings around his house. "Considering our well-furnished, plentiful market as the best of gardens," he wrote to a friend, "I am turning mine . . . into grass plots and gravel walks, with trees and flowering shrubs."⁷⁵ Such justification would have been unnecessary among those who advocated display as the means of demonstrating taste, but was probably necessary for the approval of those who admired restraint. Ann Warder, who had found Bingham's showy mansion "ungenteel," left an enthusiastic account of a Moravian farmhouse, in which the Master's room "reminded me of a Hermits cell & convinced of his being a truly good Man or in this World of Splendour and Ellagance he could not find contentment with so little."⁷⁶

This emphasis on restraint and utility widened the gap between good taste and high fashion that already existed among this group of Philadelphians. By their standards, an outmoded form could be in better taste than a current style, since its very survival proved that it was useful. A poem written on Hogarth's Marriage à la Mode made this point in describing the merchant's attire:

His Garb old-fashion'd was and plain,
Made in the End of Anna's Reign,
When he gave his first City feast
Yet still it held out as his best:
His faithful Wig, made the same Time,
Accompanied his Coat in Prime;
And by the Mode's revolving Rout
Had thrice in Fashion been, thrice out.⁷⁷

The styles of "Anna's reign" remained equally popular among wealthy Philadelphians. One inventory from 1788 included "five Leathern back

chairs" and "seven Cane back chairs," which were almost certainly in the late Baroque style of the early eighteenth century. As Nancy Goyne Evans has observed, their Quaker owner probably was unwilling to dispose of serviceable furniture.⁷⁸ There certainly would have been aesthetic justifications for not doing so; yet the decision to retain outmoded forms went beyond practical necessity or a simple preference for restrained styles. As the following passage from John Woolman's Journal makes clear, fashionable objects could be detrimental to morality:

Through the Mercies of the Almighty I had in a good degree learned to be content with a plain way of living. . . . It had generally been my practice to buy and sell things really usefull. Things that served chiefly to please the vain mind in people, I was not easie to trade in; seldom did it, and whenever I did, I found it weaken me as a Christian.⁷⁹

In these frequently quoted lines from the Autobiography, Franklin similarly revealed a conviction that only selfish competition required the use of costly, fashionable objects, whereas simpler forms corresponded more closely to his personal ideals:

My breakfast was a long time bread and milk (no tea), and I ate it out of a twopenny earthen porringer, with a pewter spoon. But mark how luxury will enter families, and make a progress, in spite of principle: being call'd one morning to breakfast, I found it in a China bowl, with a spoon of silver! They had been bought for me without my knowledge by my wife, and had cost her the enormous sum of three-and-twenty shillings, for which she had no other excuse or apology to make, but that she thought her husband deserv'd a silver spoon and China bowl as well as any of his neighbors.⁸⁰

In contrast to the fashion-conscious group, the consciously plain Philadelphians did not consider their taste to be an agent of social cohesion or exclusion. Instead, they used taste as a means of

avoiding practices which they held to be immoral; they may have adopted restraint to avoid the notoriety enjoyed by people of fashion. A friend writing to David Humphries noted,

The inhabitants here . . . have been half mad ever since this city became the seat of government; and there is no limit to their prodigality Among your more particular friends there is more quiet and comfort, and it is not impossible that the most truly respectable people are the least heard of.⁸¹

At the same time, restraint provided a private as well as a public reward. Robert Barclay, a prominent Quaker theologian, stated:

If a man be clothed soberly, and without superfluity, though they may be finer than that which his servant is clothed with, we shall not blame him for it, the abstaining from superfluities, which his condition and education have accustomed him to, may be in him a greater act of mortification than the abstaining from finer clothes in the servant, who was never accustomed to them.⁸²

For those who saw good taste embodied in values of restraint and utility, the importance of these qualities went beyond their personal significance. Particularly after the War for Independence, they were extolled as values needed by the American nation as a whole. An article in The American Museum for 1790 concluded that the taste for restraint should be second nature to Americans:

In this country, we are less confused in our ideas of propriety, in general, than are the inhabitants of any other country on the globe. We recur to first principles with ease, because our customs, tastes, and refinements, are less artificial than those of other countries, and because we act more from the impulse of an enlightened nature, than from the coercion of the fashions, imposed tyrannically by that immense opulence which in Europe trifles with nature, and draws its pleasures from the more inaccessible reservoirs of art.⁸³

Because of this contrast between the morality of the new nation, and the decadence of the Old World, good taste became a matter of patriotism. This sentiment was shared by the writers who were convinced that the introduction of European fashions would ultimately lead to an American aristocracy. Only by rejecting foreign influences could Americans properly develop a national culture, inspired by their unique political system. Trumbull declared:

The heroic love of Liberty, the manly fortitude, the generosity of sentiment, for which we have been so justly celebrated, seem to promise the future advancement and established duration of our glory. . . . They have awakened the spirit of freedom; they have rectified the manners of the times; they have made us acquainted with the rights of mankind; recalled to our minds the glorious independance [sic] of former ages, fired us with views of fame, and by filling our thoughts with contempt of the imported articles of luxury, have raised an opposition, not only to illegal power, but to the effeminate manners of Britain.⁸⁴

As Trumbull's comments suggest, the rejection of Europe was also important for the more practical purpose of encouraging America's economic self-sufficiency. Because good taste caused Americans to spurn European fashions, its principles could be answered by the simpler products of American industry. In 1783, one Philadelphia merchant had complained, "There is still a great demand (& it seems to increase) for divers Kinds of British Manufactures, which mostly have the Preference; but our Cash is going fast away to pay for them."⁸⁵ The promoters of restraint, therefore, added an economic appeal to their vision of good taste. One critic of imported fashions wrote in the American Magazine:

It is perfectly right, in manufacturing countries, for Ladies to draw fifty or a hundred thousand yards of silk

upon the ground; for the destruction of it is a public benefit. But it betrays a total want of taste and elegance in dress; and when the American Ladies adopted the fashion, they paid fifteen or twenty thousand pounds to foreign nations, for the trouble of being very inelegantly dressed.⁸⁶

By uniting taste with economic reality, this appeal for native goods took on a moral dimension as well. There was widespread concern that Americans needed to undergo a cultural revolution to properly deserve their liberty, rejecting imported trappings for native virtue.⁸⁷ In 1774, Congress adopted a resolution which simultaneously promoted the "agriculture, arts, and the manufactures of this country," while discouraging "every species of extravagance and dissipation."⁸⁸ Such a mood clearly inspired Ann Warder's great delight at seeing a friend wearing a dress which she had made for herself. "Industry only can save this Country it is therefore pleasing to see it," Warder commented. "We met with several in this Country who never had a Coat or some other things but what was spun at home."⁸⁹

The concept of taste as defined by English theorists held considerable interest for wealthy Philadelphians during the second half of the eighteenth century. No less than their English counterparts, Americans wished to be known as men of taste. It is equally clear, however, that they did not blindly accept English theories, as some historians have contended.⁹⁰ Wealthy Philadelphians viewed taste as an issue with profound implications for their nation's cultural destiny. One group felt it imperative for Americans to display a European level of refinement, to indicate America's equality with other cultivated nations. Another, dissatisfied with the political and moral decay found

abroad, sought to direct American aesthetics inward, producing thereby a distinctly superior culture. For both of these groups, taste played the vital role of distinguishing between right and wrong aesthetic decisions, which could mean the difference between social respectability or vulgarity, moral purity or depravity. Taste was clearly no mere sense of what was seemly, but an issue at the center of aesthetic debates of its time.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

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Chapter 1

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- ²⁷The Polite Arts: or, a Dissertation on Poetry, Painting, Musick, Architecture, and Eloquence (London: J. Osborn, 1749), pp. 42-3.
- ²⁸David Hume, "On the Standard of Taste," in The Five-Foot Shelf of Books, 50 vols., ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909), 27: 217.
- ²⁹John Donaldson, The Elements of Beauty. (Edinburgh, 1780; rpt. New York: Garland, 1970), pp. 84-5.

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⁵Quoted in George B. Tatum, Philadelphia Georgian: The City House of Samuel Powel and Some of Its Eighteenth Century Neighbors (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), p. 24.

⁶Tatum, p. 13.

⁷Francois-Jean, Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1787, trans. Howard C. Rice, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 1: 136n.

⁸E. H. Gombrich, "Visual Metaphors of Value in Art," in Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art (London: Phaidon, 1963), pp. 27-8.

⁹Girouard, p. 178.

¹⁰John Morgan to Joseph Shippen, Sr., May 12, 1765, Shippen-Balch Papers, HSP, 1: 127.

¹¹Joseph Shippen, Jr., to Robert Rutherford, June 28, 1764, Shippen-Balch Papers, HSP, 1: 80.

¹²Samuel Johnson, "Genteel," A Dictionary of the English Language (London, 1755; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1979).

¹³Benjamin Fuller, Letter to Solomon Watson, July 8, 1769, Letter Book, 1762-81, HSP, p. 16. Emphasis added.

¹⁴Girouard, pp. 189-90.

¹⁵Warder, entry for May 30, 1786.

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¹⁷Alison, pp. 62-3.

¹⁸Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (London, 1785; rpt. New York: Garland, 1970), 1: 23-4.

¹⁹Fernand Braudel, Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800, trans. Miriam Kochan (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

²⁰Gough, pp. 603-23.

²¹David Daggett, Sun-Beams May Be Extracted from Cucumbers, But the Process is Tedious, in Wood, pp. 181-2.

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²³William Bingham to John Penn, January 19, 1792, as quoted in Gough, p. 402.

²⁴Samuel Breck, Recollections of Samuel Breck with Passages from his Note-Books, ed. H. E. Scudder (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1877), p. 203.

²⁵See Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1959), pp. 106-40, for a discussion of "front" and "back" spaces within the home.

²⁶Johnson, Rambler, 3: 278-9.

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³⁴Ronald Paulson, Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), pp. 19-31.

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³⁶Wainwright, p. 22.

³⁷Richardson, pp. 267-8.

³⁸Polite Arts, p. 4.

³⁹Josiah Wedgwood, Catalogue of Cameos, Intaglios, Medals, Bas-Reliefs, Busts, and Small Statues (6th ed., Etruria, 1787; rpt. London: Bell and Daldy, 1873), p. 1.

⁴⁰Pope, "Epistle IV: To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington," p. 199, ll. 191-8, 203-4.

⁴¹Quoted in Heintzelman, p. 14.

⁴²Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, January 14, 1790, as quoted in The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris, ed. Anne Cary Morris, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 1: 270-1.

⁴³William Bingham to Rufus King, November 29, 1796, as quoted in Margaret L. Brown, "Mr. and Mrs. William Bingham: Rulers of the Republican Court," PMHB 61 (July, 1937), 300.

⁴⁴George Washington to Gouverneur Morris, October, 1789, as quoted in Kathryn C. Buhler, Mount Vernon Silver (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union, 1957), p. 50.

⁴⁵William Bingham to Pierre Richard, November 20, 1791, as quoted in Brown, p. 309.

⁴⁶Tobias Lear to Clement Biddle, June, 1789, as quoted in Buhler, p. 49.

⁴⁷Ann Willing Bingham to Thomas Jefferson, June 1, 1787, Boyd, 11: 393.

⁴⁸Benjamin Franklin, "A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America," in The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, ed. Albert Henry Smyth, 10 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 2: 228-9.

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- ⁵²"Leander" [Identity undetermined], Journal, 1786-7, HSP, p. 186.
- ⁵³William Penn, More Fruits of Solitude, in Eliot, 1: 402.
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- ⁶⁰William Maclay, The Journal of William Maclay, intro. Charles A. Beard (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927), p. 355.
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- ⁶²Shaftesbury, p. 255.
- ⁶³Reynolds, p. 134.
- ⁶⁴John Gilbert Cooper, Letters Concerning Taste (3rd. ed., London, 1757; rpt. New York: Garland, 1970), p. 2.
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- ⁶⁸William Hogarth, The Analysis of Beauty, ed. Joseph Burke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 26.
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- ⁷⁰James Usher, Clio: or, a Discourse on Taste (2nd ed. London, 1769; rpt. New York: Garland, 1970), p. 25.

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⁷³Rebecca Shoemaker to Anna Rawle, June 4, 1783, as quoted in Gough, p. 391.

⁷⁴"Titus Blunt," Letter, The American Magazine 1 (December, 1787), 39.

⁷⁵Benjamin Franklin to Mary Hewson, May 6, 1786, Smyth, 9: 510.

⁷⁶Warder, entry for August 19, 1786.

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⁸⁵Robert Proud to John Proud, October 16, 1783, Proud Papers, HSP, p. 46r.

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