

The British Museum and the Royal Academy; cultural politics and the nation state in the eighteenth century

Sheila Watson*

Abstract

During the mid-eighteenth century the British Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts were established, the former by Parliament, the latter by artists under the patronage of the Crown. In their origins and their early development they illustrate and help shape ideas relating to the growth of the notion of Britishness and English national identity. They were the theatres in which ideas about the kind of political nation Britain imagined itself to be were played out between loyalists (supporters of a reformed monarchy, and later known as Tories) and Whigs (on occasion mistrustful of the Crown and jealous of the hard won rights of Parliament). Their foundation is all the more extraordinary because they developed at a time when some powerful politicians regarded national sponsorship and support of the arts with great suspicion. Indeed a strong lobby regarded the arts and culture as something that could only flourish with free enterprise. At the same time their early history illustrates the development of the idea that appreciation of the arts and an understanding of knowledge could and should be moved from the private concerns of the educated, privileged few to the wider public sphere. Though this enthusiasm for the education and edification of the general populace has been over exaggerated and the notion of the public was still a very restricted one, nevertheless these foundations illustrate the growing understanding of the role of the arts and museums in the forging and maintenance of popular support for the nation state and its political construction.

This paper seeks to re-examine the origins of these two key national cultural institutions. It considers their political significance and suggests that this has been somewhat downplayed by those who focus on their development within cultural historical contexts. While not dismissing the importance of the international and national cultural arenas in which these institutions were imagined and forged, particularly the role of the Enlightenment, the paper suggests that they can only be fully understood within the context of a nation still exploring and developing a constitutional monarchical system of government. This political system appeared less secure to those for whom the community memories of the Civil Wars of the mid-sixteenth century and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 were still important, than it perhaps does to us who can see the progress of monarchical constitutional democracy over the perspective of more than three centuries. For those living in the mid-eighteenth century these conflicts and contested ideas of nationhood were still a significant communal memory, refreshed by the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion. Just as the two World Wars have shaped British notions of identity in the twentieth century and continue to do so in the twenty first, so these constitutional struggles between Monarch and Parliament exercised a dominant influence not only how the nation should be governed and by whom but what sort of nation England and latterly Britain should be. Within this context it can be suggested that the role of these institutions in memorializing and reminding people of the struggle for the constitution has been overlooked. This paper also suggests that it is helpful to see

these two institutions not only existing with, and being themselves products of, this shared political inheritance, but also suggests that both affected the other so that a comparison of their early development can provide insights into them both. At the same time this study offers an opportunity to deconstruct some notions of Britishness with which the British Museum, in particular has been associated, and suggest that its political meaning can be found rooted in English as well as British historical traditions.

Key words: British Museum, Royal Academy of Arts, Britishness, Englishness, national identity.

The nature of the constitution in the eighteenth century

The nature of the constitution and the role of the monarch remained debated and contested throughout the first half of the eighteenth century and well into George III's reign. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, with its comprehensive political acceptance of the sovereignty of Parliament and the principles of democracy, it is perhaps easy to overlook how unresolved notions of government remained during this period (Phillipson 1996: 211); not only the relationship of the king to Parliament but parliament to the people. The Civil War and its consequences dominated the relationships of the descendants and heirs of the main protagonists throughout this period. The two main political factions, the Whigs and the Tories (Thomas 2003: viii), which later evolved into political parties of a kind, regarded Parliament as an essential and natural partner in government. Certain totems such as Magna Carta were claimed as evidence of contracts formed between King and people that had been broken, reformed and were constantly under threat. For example, Algernon Sydney and his *Discourses Concerning Government*, a foundational piece of writing in 'the radical Whig republican tradition' (Ward 2004: 156), asserted that kings were created by the people and thus Parliament did not exist by virtue of royal 'grace' (156) but pre-existed it, and that fundamental laws as expressed through covenants such as Magna Carta, commanded the king (Ward 2004: 178). Few if any Whigs in the eighteenth century adopted a republican stance, but many regarded Magna Carta and other older Saxon documents as evidence of the relationship between monarch and people that relied on the approval of the latter for the former to be legitimate. Similarly many Tories, influenced by Bolingbroke, considered that the origins of English government lay in 'the age of Saxon liberty before the Norman conquest' (Ward 2000: 312).

Thus the relationship between King and Parliament was potentially, in the eighteenth century, a contested one. Clark (2000: 240) has pointed out that the notion and nature of monarchy continued to be debated with passion at this time. Indeed during George III's early years he was suspected by some of devising a new absolutist model of monarchy (Clark 2000: 241). The first two Georges had relied on Whig ministers in Parliament. However, for George III, national unity could be achieved by their removal and the re-establishment of a royalist middle ground which depended a great deal on the royal prerogative (ibid). As a result the Whigs feared exclusion through the exercise of the royal veto (253).

Whatever their political differences, Whigs and Tories agreed on one thing - the importance of the history of the Saxon laws and the role of Magna Carta in (as they saw it) reasserting the people's rights over the monarchy. Debate on the extent of these legal constraints, the powers of ministers, the influence of factions and parties, were part of the political landscape of this period. Grotius pointed out how the separation of powers of monarch and Parliament was governed by neither constitutional principles nor by general consensus and resulted in a situation of the 'utmost confusion' (Grotius 1738: 71-2, cited in Phillipson 1996: 212). Nor were these ideas confined to a few academic minded politicians. By the early eighteenth century, newspapers, essay-journals devoted to politics, morals, religion and manners, and pamphlets had created a print culture that permeated the provinces and provided a huge audience for politics. Harris has estimated that by 1746 London had about twenty single sheet newspapers that circulated widely with many people reading them in taverns or having them read to them with a total readership of 500,000 (Harris 1987, cited in Phillipson 1996: 216). As Phillipson points out, the press opened up politics to those who had political opinions but not the vote (216). This discourse was essentially an English one, located within a communal political memory of an English struggle against monarchical tyranny, and it is the argument of this

paper that it was this that contributed to the motives for the foundation of the British Museum; a museum that, despite its name, owes its origins, in part at least, to an English anxiety about the nature of the constitution.

Britishness and Englishness

'According to Colley, whose seminal 1992 work *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 - 1837* has remained largely unchallenged, Britishness was constructed and contested after 1707 (when the Act of Union joined Scotland to England and Wales), mainly in response to overseas events' (Watson and Sawyer 2011: 103). In 1776, Britain lost its North American empire, and 'the predominantly Catholic countries of Europe, particularly Spain and France, became the threat against which Protestant Britain re-imagined itself as the champion of European freedoms both religious and political' (ibid). Meanwhile a new empire in the nineteenth century along with a range of other factors including pride in British democracy and Parliamentary freedoms led to a more established sense of Britishness at home.

Nations and national identity

Many historians understand the nation to be a relatively modern invention originating 'by general agreement' in Europe in the late eighteenth century (Delanty and Kumar 2006: 1). It is seen as a political structure manipulated and managed by elites to support forms of government for their own benefit (Hobsbawm 1990). In so doing, these political players often drew on ancient ideas of political sovereignty which, in the case of England, were situated in Anglo Saxon charters and Magna Carta, which were understood to justify Parliament's authority over the monarch. In turn this led to a form of identity with which this paper is concerned; national identity.

National identity is a complex term that can be used in a variety of ways. Here it is used to denote individual belonging to a particular nation. This sense of identity is described as being connected to 'a specific "world-image,"' in this case to the "national" image of the world' (Greenfeld and Eastwood 2009: 3). It is not the same as nationalism or nationality (Hogan 2009: 3) but, as Hogan suggests, it is composed of 'widely circulating discourses of national belonging' that make explicit what the nation is and is not, who belongs, and its character, history and what is important to it. It enables individuals to associate themselves with the actions of the state as something that is done for them and in their name. It is both internalized by individuals and expressed through rituals, institutions, as well as honour and attention allocated to individuals who represent or suffer for the nation in some way. This national image is promoted by governments through institutions (Bennett 1995) such as museums and is a form of imagining (Anderson 1991), enabling peoples to collaborate with each other for the greater good (or evil). While national identity can be performed through ceremonies, dress, food, and everyday social customs, it is often associated with a form of heritage that uses the past to explain the present. It constantly changes but often appears to be essentialised and unchanging. The British Museum's name suggests a fixed sense of identity, but was established at a time when the sense of Britishness was fluid and often conflated with Englishness. Its existence and its name no doubt was one of many institutions that contributed to a growing sense of confidence in the notion of the British nation state. However, as Colley has demonstrated, this idea of Britishness was an ongoing project rather than a final construction. In 1753, confidence in an ancient English identity rooted in a Saxon past played a key role in the Museum's foundation.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the period with which this paper is mainly concerned, the individual nations of Scotland and England continued to maintain different concepts of national identity related to language, religion, customs, laws, practices. However, it was the most populous nation, England, that became most dominant in the British state, and thus we find forms of English national identity sometimes conflated into Britishness (Langford 2003: 12; Mandler 2006: 16; Hogan 2009: 55). The story of the origins of the Museum outlined below act as a case study to demonstrate how English concerns and attitudes not only dominated the British state in the eighteenth century but also how such an institution, originally set up in part to promote and protect English national identity based on ideas of constitutional freedoms,

became over time transformed into promoting a new form of identity, that of a British rather than English state, as English 'liberties' became absorbed into the idea of what it meant to be British. At the same time, as anxieties about the constitutional role of the monarchy faded so the role of the museum shifted so that it became less concerned with the constitution and more a repository for objects acquired in part by imperial expansion and thus an encyclopaedia of the world.

Traditional readings of the British Museum

These English origins have not, however, been obvious to later commentators. After all, to all intents and purposes the British Museum appears to be unmistakably British in origin and intention and rooted in a continental Enlightenment tradition rather than a parochial English one. Sir Hans Sloane whose collections formed one of the cornerstones of the Museum, was of Scottish descent and from County Down, Ireland (Anon 2005), but spent much of his life in London as a physician. He became President of the Royal Society and was a dedicated collector of natural history specimens, books, antiquities, curiosities, pictures, medals and coins. He was a typical eighteenth century connoisseur and academic, and numbered amongst his acquaintances Voltaire, Handel, Queen Anne and Franklin (Wilson 1990:13). He retired from practice in 1721, and died in 1753 at the age of 93. His museum, according to his will, was to be offered to the nation for £20,000 as opposed to its value of £100,000 (Caygill 2002: 710). The offer was accepted by Parliament, George II having shown little enthusiasm for the project (Mordaunt Crook 1972: 48), and the Museum was founded by the British Museum Act of 1753, by which it was governed until a new Act in 1963. The British Museum was opened to the public in 1759 in Montagu House in Bloomsbury, its costs having been covered by a State Lottery.

Sloane was typical of charitable and civic minded professionals in the eighteenth century who supported the arts. The scope of his collections was vast and appeared to embrace an imperial vision, as many of his first specimens came from Jamaica where he had been physician to the governor of the island. He is regarded as one of the most important individuals in the Enlightenment in Britain (Porter 2001: 239). He encouraged the use of his collection by others, was generous with his knowledge and sought on his death to promote this through his bequest to the state. It is unsurprising that his significance is highlighted in the histories of the museum. His omnivorous pursuit of knowledge places him firmly within the context of the movement and the museum is often read as the product of his vision alone - a great encyclopaedia where objects are subject to a range of interpretations within the context of the desire for universal knowledge (Conlin 2006:47). David Wilson, writing as director in 1990, stated that:

The Museum was founded as a universal museum and has remained true to the ideas of its founders to this day. It is designed to present as complete and integrated a picture as possible of the development of different but related cultures through the ages (Wilson 1990: 115).

Of course Wilson was writing with particular political aims in mind, not least the need to present to the nation and the world an argument for the retention of collections, many of which had been acquired during a period of imperial expansion, some in dubious circumstances.

A collection of papers presented at a conference in 2002 to commemorate the British Museum's 250th anniversary was called, tellingly, *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, discovery and the museum in the eighteenth century* (Anderson et al eds 2003). In an postscript to the papers, Thomas concludes that the Museum 'was intended to be a visual and tangible encyclopaedia of human knowledge' (Thomas 2003: 185) but he also draws attention to other factors that influenced its foundation, including its original religious purpose, for the collections were seen to be testimony to the glory of God (ibid). However, the importance of the constitution is not mentioned.

The notion of the universal repository of all knowledge is still influential today - the product of an Enlightenment quest for truth continues to be embedded in the Museum's notion of what it was and is. In 2010 the website of the British Museum reiterated this clearly:

The Museum was based on the practical principle that the collection should be put to public use and be freely accessible. It was also grounded in the Enlightenment idea that human cultures can, despite their differences, understand one another through mutual engagement. The Museum was to be a place where this kind of humane cross-cultural investigation could happen. It still is.¹

In 2018 the British Museum continues to promote this mission with events such as a music festival 'Europe and the World' which focussed on world cultures.²

The original purpose of the British Museum

This notion of the unchanging purpose of the museum appears uncontested. Most histories of the museum focus primarily on Sloane, omitting to mention other collections named in the founding Act of Parliament as part of the original museum, or mentioning them merely in passing. However, the title of the Act makes it clear that Sloane's collections were only one of two to be purchased (the other being the Harleian collection) and that the future Museum was also to house another (the Cotton collection of manuscripts) which was already owned by the state. The British Museum was in effect a solution to a problem that had exercised the minds of MPs for many years - where to keep the Cottonian library and make it more accessible. As early as 1700, an Act of Parliament was laid down that this library 'should be kept for public advantage' (Miller 1973: 32). At that time it was to be kept in Sir John Cotton's house, whilst his heirs were to have use of the rest of the residence. The gift by Sir John Cotton of his grandfather's manuscript and book collection prompted an Act of Parliament which stated that:

Sir Robert Cotton late of Connington in the County of Huntingdon Baronett did at his own great Charge and Expense and by the Assistance of the most learned Antiquaries of his Time collect and purchase the most useful Manuscripts Written Books Papers Parchments [Records] and other Memorials in most Languages of great Use and Service for the Knowledge and Preservation of our Constitution both in Church and State (McKitterick 2003: 41).

A fire at the house in 1737 had damaged the books and manuscripts, and they had suffered other damage; Parliament had been aware since the fire that new premises were needed to house them.

The fact that the two other founding collections (Cottonian and Harleian) were composed mainly of books and manuscripts has led museum historians to leave these to librarians and archivists to comment upon. At the time of the Museum's foundation the notion of the institution was evolving. Jenkins points out

its foundation in 1753 was not announced with any grand declaration of museological doctrine but as a matter of expediency to provide a repository for the collection of Sir Hans Sloane and also for the valuable manuscript library of the Cotton family which had become public property through an Act of Parliament as early as 1700 (Jenkins 1992: 16).

He also notes that the founding of the Museum was seen as an opportunity to purchase the Harleian collection. Jenkins is unusual in his acknowledgement of the importance of these manuscript and book collections though he does not explore their significance to the nation state. The word 'museum' in the seventeenth century did not necessarily refer to a collection of objects but to a scholar's library (Yeo, 2003: 29). We should consider these libraries and archives to be as important as Sloane's collections, perhaps more so, to the founders of the British Museum. The first members of staff were librarians, not curators. Moreover, many of these manuscripts and books were exhibited. They were treated as objects rather than archives to be read by individuals. Caygill (2003) has pieced together the first layouts of the Museum from contemporary descriptions and guidebooks. Certainly the visitors encountered weapons, stuffed animals, skeletons and similar items, but they also had guided tours through rooms in which the books and manuscripts were laid out. When the first tours were established, visitors

spent two out of three hours being shown manuscripts and books. Pride of place was reserved for Magna Carta, displayed in its own glass case.

Evidence of the importance of the books and manuscripts can also be found in the minutes of the Board of Trustees. During the first few years of the Museum's existence, the Trustees met regularly. The significance of the composition of the body of Trustees indicates the importance of the new Museum to the nation-state. At the first meeting on 11 December 1753 the following were present: the Lord Chancellor, The Speaker of the House of Commons, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Secretaries of State, the Master of the Rolls, the Lord Chief Justice, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Presidents of the Royal Society and the College of Physicians, one duke, three earls, Lord Cadogan and Mr Thomas Hart (Wilson 2002: 21). The Speaker of the House of Commons, the Lord Chief Justice and the Archbishop of Canterbury were the Principal Trustees and took their roles seriously enough to attend regularly. It is significant that such busy and important individuals spent so much time on this project. Were they only motivated by a desire to see a repository of universal knowledge set up in the capital? Or were their actions motivated as much by politics as by cultural concerns? While there was great interest shown in the Sloane collection, equal if not more attention was paid to investigating the state of the Cottonian and the Harleian libraries, and managing the indexing, cataloguing and cases for their display and archiving. By 9 April 1757, a Catalogue of the Harleian manuscripts had been created, and permission was given for named readers to be given access. At the same time, the Museum was understood to be a general repository for all national records, not just those in the aforementioned foundation libraries.

It was reported that fifty eight volumes of records were received and added to the Harleian collection³. The same report outlined manuscripts that the officers employed by the Trustees thought would be of interest to them. These included a 'manuscript life of Cardinal Wolsey...an original factum of Oliver Cromwell'⁴ along with various papers relating to individual aristocratic families. A further report on the Cottonian collection 'those precious relics'⁵ selected as being of the 'first rank' in importance: 'King John's famous grant of pivilidges (sic)...Robert De Bruce's claim to the crown of Scotland, as laid before Edward I in 1297'⁶.

Why were the Cottonian and Harleian collections the subject of such interest? Both had significance for a type of English national identity. The Harleian collection contained a range of European manuscripts, but also some very important documents relating to English history, such as Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, including the Book of Nunnaminster, the Ramsey Psalter, the Bury St Edmunds Gospels and a copy of the Life of St Edmund made for King Henry VI. The Cottonian Library was the original collection of Robert Cotton who was 'an advisor to King James I of England and VI of Scotland. He was also one of the early members of the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries'⁷ (Anon 2010). Cotton himself was a staunch upholder of English liberties as defended by Parliament against the monarchy. Many of his documents were particularly concerned with development of the English state. For example they include two of the earliest copies of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, and five manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. During Cotton's lifetime the authorities began to fear the uses being made of his library to support parliamentary arguments: in 1629 King Charles I ordered his library to be closed⁸ and Cotton was imprisoned 'for allowing his collections to be used for the production of arguments and precedents deemed detrimental to royal interests' (Handley 2011).

Most important of all, Cotton had collected two of the four extant copies of Magna Carta (Caygill 2002: 11) and this manuscript has been an important object for public display ever since the foundation of the Museum (Goldgar 2000: 222). Magna Carta, originally a list of baronial demands against King John, had become by this time an enduring symbol of English liberties and a defence against the Crown and its perceived despotic tendencies (Turner 2014). One copy was placed on display in the new museum amongst other significant Cotton manuscripts (Goldgar 2000). To obtain a sense of what this meant to the political class in the eighteenth century one only has to think of Horace Walpole, youngest son of the first British Prime Minister Robert Walpole. Horace had both a copy of Magna Carta and of the death warrant of Charles I on display by his bed. The latter was to remind him that the former would not have been of any use had Charles I not been executed (Hoock 2005: 159). His reverence for the document was not untypical. It was to Magna Carta that politicians turned when in dispute with any monarch (Lock 2018). In 1780 the opposition in Parliament achieved a motion that 'the

influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished' (Ditchfield 2002: 69, Cannon 2006). Horace Walpole summed up the views of many members when he commented that this was a written 'codicil to Magna Carta' (Blanning 2002: 337). The struggle between George III to keep ministers in whom his Parliament had lost confidence was a long drawn out one but one the King lost (Blanning 2002: 343), in part because Parliamentary liberties were so well 'remembered'.

The display of Magna Carta was thus a political act of great significance to all educated English people in the eighteenth century. By housing it in a new institution, a public museum for all to access, Parliament had secured a visible reminder of its victorious long struggle against the powers of the Crown. The early British Museum can thus be understood as a repository of English history and a public assertion of a form of history that commemorated the struggle for English liberties. Thus, according to Goldgar (2000) we can see the British Museum as a Whig project. It became the guardian of manuscripts and objects that were used to illustrate a certain type of English history which espoused a popular version of the national story – one that placed royalty within the confines of Parliamentary control, a Parliament that had 'won back' the ancient liberties of the English people from despotic monarchs (Weston 1991, Ward 2010: 312). This was a version of the story MPs liked to tell themselves in the eighteenth century which placed themselves and their forebears as the champions of English liberties that could be traced back to the early Middle Ages, if not to Saxon times (ibid). We can see this articulated in the Act to found the British Museum which was also the Act 'for the Purchase of the ... Cottonian Library...for *the Knowledge and Preservation of our Constitution both in Church and State*' (cited McKitterick 2003: 41, own emphasis). Long after its foundation the Museum continued to prioritize national archives. In 1807, the first purchase made by the Museum with a grant of £5,000 was the Lansdowne collection, which contained the Burghley papers and other materials relating to English history (Shelley 1911: 78).

The British Museum thus represented and helped formulate an idea of the English nation that had very ancient origins, one that was understood within a master narrative of a struggle between Saxon liberties and absolutist monarchist tendencies, and that was played out within a framework of a Protestant struggle for survival against Roman Catholic despotism. The English, it has been suggested, had a 'historical sense of the national past', one that expressed itself through a range of practices, commemorations, written and oral media and antiquarianism, and one that developed from about 1500 onwards (Woolf 2005: 12-13). Such historical sense came to depend less on oral traditions and more on written texts – hence, we may deduce, the enthusiasm for the preservation and display of manuscripts and books as a means of telling the story of the struggle for English rights and liberties in the early British Museum. Those who focus on the notion of the universal encyclopaedia of knowledge have ignored this more complex purpose, a purpose that is implicit in the actions of Parliament, the Trustees and the early years of the Museum itself. Of course this does not mean that it did not receive support and patronage of the monarch. The restoration of the monarchy and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had established a constitutional monarchy (Vallance 2007), and sensible monarchs respected the rights of parliament while loyal parliamentarians upheld the rights and privileges of the King (Dickinson 2002: 12). Thus this notion of the British Museum as a repository of constitutional documents that explore the history of the struggle of Parliament against the King should not imply that the monarch and his supporters would in any way dislike or oppose such institution. Indeed loyal monarchists respected and supported the role of Parliament in government and in securing the liberties, religious freedoms and property rights that they enjoyed (Dickinson 2002). Disputes between factions during this period often focussed around who had access to patronage and who was to be a minister of the crown (Dickinson 2002: 12). Both George II and George III donated collections to the British Museum and these illustrate this somewhat strange relationship between monarchy and the history of the struggle for the constitution, (as the events in the seventeenth century were often described). Royal gifts included the Thomason tracts, some 30,000 printed ephemera concerning the English Civil War, which were purchased for £300. This collection containing anti-royalist material⁸ along with much else can, perhaps, be seen to demonstrate the monarch's acknowledgement of the dire consequences in the past of monarchical dictatorship and his acceptance that the Crown and Parliament were now conjoined in a mutually beneficial constitutional arrangement.

Indeed, the support of the monarch and his donations to this essentially parliamentary project to promote an understanding of the traditional liberties of England (that existed independent of the Crown) illustrate the complex balancing act of the notion of monarchy and constitution that had evolved in Britain in the eighteenth century.

By the end of the eighteenth century, George III had been reinvented in the face of the threat from France and the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815). His honesty, decency and common sense ceased to be so virulently satirized and, despite his mental fragility, he became a symbol of all that was best in a nation struggling for survival (Evans 1995: 223). This, along with the growing confidence of Parliament and the gradual distancing in time of the nation from the Jacobite threat, resulted in a more relaxed attitude to royal interest in the arts and culture. However, patriots still devoted a great deal of time and attention to English liberties. These became the focus of national pride that was quintessentially English. Blanning cites the German visitor who described the nation thus:

The national pride of the English is a natural consequence of a political constitution, by which every citizen is exempted from any other dependence than that imposed by the laws. This pride is carried among them to a great length. Indeed how is it possible to know and to feel all the merit of such a system of liberty, without attaching an uncommon value to it? (von Archenholz 1790: 7, 32 cited Blanning 2002: 355).

The so called Norman Yoke, the dispossessing of Saxons by Normans and the loss of English freedoms, was blamed not only on the monarchy but also the landowners and the ruling elite (Hill 1969). Thus certain politicians and popular rhetoric periodically maintained that Magna Carta was under threat (Evans 1995: 231). The British Museum, guardian of two original copies of this document, performed a key role as the repository of the memory of the English nation.

Parliamentary championing of liberties against the crown was a key element in English identity at the time (Dickinson 2002: 5). According to Darby there were two competing versions of England in the eighteenth century – a nation that had its origins in the Anglo Saxon settlements and which looked to tradition and old liberties that were supposed to have been lost under the Norman Yoke, and the new idea of an England synonymous with Britain, one that was progressive, urban, centralising and industrial (Darby 2000: 74). The Museum can be seen as representing an element of the former through its focus on Anglo Saxon charters while, at the same time, encompassing the idea of the British State as an agent for progressive cultural dissemination through its displays of Sloane's objects and its policy of free entry by ticket holders. Indeed by the end of the eighteenth century many English symbols of identity were adopted and adapted by the British state. Cartoons such as Thomas Rowlandson's *The Contrast* (1793) shows Britannia holding the scales of Justice in one hand and Magna Carta in the other (cited Evans 1995: 225). Thus the very existence of English symbols and historical documents within the British Museum helped create the synonymous identification of England with Britain. The display of England assisted its submergence within Britain.

Perhaps the idea of the British Museum as a repository of an English history narrative has been ignored, in part, because this story has not been told in objects. However, there was no understanding at the time of its foundation as to how this could be done. Unsurprisingly, therefore the Museum was not interested in collecting the antiquities of the British Isles, nor in telling a history of England or Britain for some time after its foundation. That function was undertaken by the Society of Antiquaries of London, founded in 1707 and to which Sloane belonged. It was this society with its excavations, collections and illustrations that helped develop the idea of English history and provided 'our ability to visualise the past' (Starkey 2007: 12). In the mid eighteenth century history was the preserve of the antiquarian scholar who relied on manuscripts, books and 'things' such as 'Remains of Ancient Workmanship' (ibid). However, all too often such objects elicited confusion and/or invention. For example, the Gray's Inn Axe, part of the original Sloane collection and dating to the Lower Palaeolithic period (c 500, 000 – 70,000 BP), was considered by John Bagford, one of the founder members of the Society of Antiquaries, on no evidence whatsoever, to have been the axe that had killed a Roman elephant at the time of the invasion in AD43 (Parry 2007: 13). The Museum, rather than focussing on antiquities from England and Britain, often accepted donations that were

mere curiosities such as 'a stone resembling a petrified loaf' and 'a dried thumb dug up on the foundations of St James' Coffee house' (1766), and even 'a monstrous pig from Chalfont St Giles' (1770) (Caygill 2002: 17). So unimportant were national antiquities that they did not have a person specifically appointed to deal with them until Taylor Coombes in 1803 (Wilson 2002: 60). Nevertheless, while the Museum's native collections in the eighteenth century were less about the nation's history than curiosity about the unusual or grotesque or just plain fanciful, its archives and books embodied the political history of the nation that Parliament was anxious to secure in perpetuity.

The Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts, founded in 1768 by professional artists with royal patronage, and officially independent of Parliament and the King, presented a differently nuanced version of the political nation from that of the British Museum, one that sought to acknowledge the benevolent influence of the monarch in the arts, and reflected George III's vision of himself as the father of his people. For, despite its ostensible independence, the Royal Academy was supported by the monarch in a multitude of ways. He subsidised it, made its annual show an important part of the Season, showed an active interest in the art it displayed and purchased some of the artists' works, (this is particularly true of George IV who was an avid collector of the English School). Like the British Museum, the Royal Academy's role (and the suspicions it aroused in some quarters) can only be understood within the context of the history of the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and against the background of the rise of absolutism. Artistic patronage was closely associated with monarchy in Europe. Kings used art as a political tool to assert their cultural superiority and to re-enforce their image as had Charles I (Wilks 2009, Brotton 2006: 10). At the same time, by the mid eighteenth century, the fine arts carried very positive cultural, social and patriotic connotations – the arts were seen to attest to the national character and civility of a people and the health and prosperity of a society and polity (Hooock 2005:5). A good monarch encouraged them for the benefit of the nation as a whole – though in the case of the Royal Academy the nation only included those who could afford the one shilling entrance fee to the summer exhibition (Hooock 2005: 34). There was thus in Britain a potential tension between the various roles that the monarch as a patron of the arts could exercise. Brewer positions the arts in the eighteenth century as the creative expression of the 'coffee houses, reading societies debating clubs, assembly rooms, galleries and concert halls' in London, not the court (Brewer: 1997: 3). However, research into the origins of the Royal Academy and the British Museum suggests that this movement was by no means complete at the time of the accession of George III, and the monarch's interest in the arts was still understood to have powerful political overtones.

George III's inexperience at the beginning of his reign, his reliance on Bute and aversion to his father's ministers, his ruthless removal of patronage from those who opposed his political preferences and the instability of his ministries in the 1760s, all contributed to a general political anxiety that George was too inclined to follow his own ideas rather than those of his elected ministers (Blanning 2002: 333). This in turn aroused anxieties about the constitution, or rather how the constitution could and should be interpreted. While the encouragement of the arts, in particular an English school of painting, was a patriotic act, royal patronage of this kind was likely to be regarded by some as political machinations by a monarchy eager to regain some of its lost powers (Brewer 1997: 187). Charles I had used the arts, in particular his patronage of painters and his collections of old masters, to promote the idea of a social order with the king at its head as the father of his people (Cressey 2015: 91) and a sacred monarchy whose authority derived from God alone (Smuts 1999: 236 – 7). He 'came to define his royal authority through the awe and silence induced by painting' (Brotton 2006: 10). Any monarch fond of the arts who came after him might, therefore, be suspected of using them to exalt the institution of monarchy and thus, albeit indirectly, challenge Parliament's hard fought rights and privileges. His execution in 1649 had been followed by the sale of the royal collections, a gesture which removed one of the symbols of royal power and provided the victors some much needed money (Wilks 2009: 200, Brotton 2006). In the Puritan Interregnum and Protectorate that followed there were plans to turn the royal collection of books into a public resource but

there was no interest in promoting the idea of a public museum of the royal collections of art (Brewer 1997: 7). According to Horace Walpole, 'the arts were, in a manner, expelled' [with] 'the royal family from Britain' (cited Brewer 1997: 6). When James II's Catholicism, and his leanings towards France and absolutism, resulted in his overthrow and exile in 1688, his court in France remained a centre of artistic patronage (Cruikshank 1995), with Italian and French artists in attendance. Not surprisingly, then, some politicians in Britain in the mid eighteenth century remained deeply sceptical of the use and power of royal patronage and regarded any attempt by a Hanoverian monarch to support the arts as a dangerous extension of the monarch's influence into wider political life (Hook 2005: 137). A number of artists such as Hogarth adopted similar views (Brewer 1997: 229).

Monarchs who wished to avoid accusations of accruing too much power to themselves had to keep a low cultural profile. Foreign observers throughout the eighteenth century expressed surprise that British monarchs did not promote their power through grand buildings in which they could display their cultural treasures, unlike the monarchs and princes of Europe (Brewer 1997: 12). According to Brewer George III, in his dealings with the arts, acted as a private patron, rarely as a national one (Brewer 1997: 21). Yet, this underestimates the social cachet of the association with royalty brought to artists and academicians. The private view of the annual exhibition by the monarch enabled George III to be imagined as a continental monarch (Hook 2005: 216), but not in all respects. Certainly he did not seek to emulate his predecessors' use of the court as the centre of the arts. His residences were not palaces of state designed to impress visitors. Indeed Buckingham House, or the Queen's House, was remodeled by the King and Queen so that it became less ostentatious (Blanning 2002: 344). Instead George III fostered the arts in an institution that could be seen to be both independent and royal and, at the same time, beneficial to the nation as a whole - a nation that was not necessarily attached to the person of the monarch, and one that could conceive of itself as independent of the Crown (Blanning 2002: 356 after Collinson 1997). For George III this was one specific area in which he felt royal influence could be effective and productive. He supported the Royal Academy in order to promote Britain's reputation and prestige at home and abroad, a form of 'cultural nationalism' (Hook 2005: 136-7). However, his patronage raised the spectre of royal influence beyond the confines of the artists' salon and his association with the Academy was regarded by some with grave suspicion (Conlin 2006: 31; Brewer 1997; Hook 2005: 26, 137). Hook's study of the Royal Academy has shown how deeply political the institution was and how conscious the Academicians and their royal patron were of their opportunity to represent a version of the nation that permitted the monarch to appear as an independent benevolent supporter of an aspect of an important part of national life (Hook 2005).

The following example will illustrate how this self-conscious royal initiative raised anxieties about the growing influence of the Monarch. The *Middlesex Journal, or Chronicle of Liberty*⁹ (Saturday October 14 to Tuesday October 17 1769) devoted its front page to three columns (out of a total of four) to an open letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Knight, president of the Royal Academy from 'Eresnoy'. Reynolds had been knighted by George III when he took up the presidency of the Academy. This letter satirised Reynolds' royal connections: 'that you have now, Sir Joshua, completely finished yourself as a determined courtier... The palace is now your heaven and you fancy yourself an angel there' The letter bitterly attacked Reynolds' perceived abandonment of the Society of Artists of Great Britain for the Royal Academy and argued that he favoured the latter because of the chance to obtain a knighthood. While ostensibly loyal to the monarchy, the open letter makes it clear how individual academicians are susceptible to royal influence, implying in this case that Reynolds has sold his integrity for royal patronage. On the same front page, the other open letter from one Anti-Draper, is a paean of praise for the constitution. It is worth quoting at length as it sums up the concerns and assumptions of politicians at the time. It also suggests, by its juxtaposition next to the denouncement of Reynolds, that royal influence can be detrimental as well as beneficial to the arts:

As limited monarch, tempered with democracy, with some privileges in favour of the body of the people, is one of the best forms of government, so it is best fitted to the genius of Great Britain yet is there no state, limit or absolute, that has more grievances to redress, or more hardships to complain of; and all this shall be under a K. we do not dislike and a Parliament (save one infamous and fatal

member) of our own choice. Lay not them all the blame on Majesty; for liberty, sacred liberty, which comprehends everything valuable in human life, has powerful and declared enemies to be afraid of in civil society, licentiousness and tyranny and the great art of governing is, to know how to guard against these two. Our constitution, to this end, is the most perfect that can be imagined; but alas! Men spoil it with their vices and their follies...

The letter calls for fair judges and unbribed MPs, and looks for honest ministers for the king. Parliament appeared to have little difficulty in finding funds for the British Museum but, as Mandler has pointed out, even when he was on good terms with Parliament, George III was unable to secure funds for such a patriotic institution as the Royal Academy, and thus had to provide the money himself (Mandler 2006: 106). Indeed, despite a general view that the arts had a civilizing effect, such was the suspicion of royal patronage that the King's association with any artistic endeavour was unlikely to find favour with Parliamentarians.

The Royal Academy and Englishness

Like the British Museum, the Royal Academy had several simultaneous roles. A very patriotic institution, it was capable of attracting a wide range of political support beyond the loyalist (pro-monarchist) factions. It was deeply embarrassing to the British intelligentsia in particular, and the political classes generally, that the nation did not have anything to rival the French, Italian or Dutch schools (Conlin 2006: 6). For the Royal Academy's founders art was the sign of a civilized society (ibid: 7 – 8). The Academy was thus not only defined by its association with the monarch. Indeed the Academy remained far more independent of royal influence than its critics suspected, unlike its continental counterparts which functioned only under state control (ibid: 6). That it became associated with 'contemporary conceptualisation of the national and patriotic role of the arts generally' (Hoock 2005: 40) was more to do with the general mood of patriotism during a time of wars and international rivalries than the influence of royal patronage. In addition art must be understood in the context of the mid to late eighteenth century political and military situation. For many politicians 'only an effort in the arts was wanting to enhance British superiority in the military, commercial and imperial realms' (Hoock 2005: 255).

Just as the British Museum was originally an English venture so too was the Royal Academy. Its founding in 1768 was a patriotic bid to forge an English school of painting, though this was later called a British one, mainly after 1800 (Hoock 2010: 574, fn 22). Its founders were very much influenced by the French model and the French boast that their art was superior because of their own academy (Brewer 1997: 229). Patriotism, and a reluctance to see the French continue to boast of their superiority in the arts, prompted its founding.

Art schools were closely associated with the characteristics of the countries in which they originated (Hoock 2005: 109). It was a matter of civic duty and national pride, to take an interest in native schools of painting' particularly as there was a view in continental Europe that England could not nurture a national school because of her 'climate and national character' (Hoock 2005: 5). Although the Scots were keen to demonstrate that they had their own Scottish School, independent of anything in London, as with the British Museum, an essentially English cultural institution, the English School soon became representative of Britain as a whole, a conflation of terms that is well documented and which applies to a variety of institutions (Kumar 2006). The Academy's influence over this school was at its height during the first fifty years of its existence and it is during this period that it can be seen to have been truly national in its influence (Hoock 2005). However, and perhaps inevitably, its claims to represent the nation in a school of art tradition and its role in developing this and the idea of the nation, have been questioned. In the mid nineteenth century, Redgrave (1866, cited Hoock 2005: 300) described the English school as something not led by an Academy but by individual artists such as Hogarth. The School was individualistic, and more diffuse than accepted by the Academy, with regional artists such as those belonging to the Norwich School moderating the influence of one London institution. However, like the British Museum its early development illustrates the evolving relationship between the notion of Britain and England and the former's dependence on the latter.

Imagining the nation on the walls of the Academy

The Academy brought into a public spotlight paintings and fashions that might otherwise have remained the preserve of the few. One of the most significant in its role as a national museum was history painting. According to Strong, the first type, 'the Gothick Picturesque' which used 'noble and uplifting incidents in British history', began in 1760 with an exhibition by the Society of Artists (who founded the Royal Academy) and 'reached its apogee on the walls of the Royal Academy in the 1770s and 1780s' (Strong 1978: 13). The importance attached to this type of painting is illustrated by the prizes awarded each year for the best paintings of English history, one of 100 guineas and one of 50 guineas (Strong 1978: 17). It was in this genre that ideas of the nation were explored. In spite of its royal connections, or perhaps because of them, many of the early historical paintings explored notions of freedom against tyranny, rooted in a concept of Saxon and English liberties. For example 50 guineas was awarded in 1763 to John Hamilton Mortimer's *Edward the Confessor stripping his Mother of her Effects*. Strong explains this rather odd subject as a reminder of 'British liberties' (ibid: 18). Here Edward, represents 'the return of the freedom-loving Anglo-Saxon monarchy in place of the hegemony of the Danes' (ibid). Edward's mother had married King Canute and shown a preference for her children by him, whereas Edward was the son of her first marriage. Obscure though this reference is to us it would have been clear to the Academicians. Monarchs were depicted exercising good judgement or mercy, (thus existing monarchs were reminded of the best of the monarchy), or as tyrants being challenged, such as Mortimer's 1776 offering to the Academy *King John delivering Magna Carta to the Barons*. While the Academy was not the only public gallery in which these types of paintings were exhibited, its status and its relationship with the Monarch gave it far reaching influence and ensured that these types of paintings were widely circulated. Once again, the apparent contradiction of a King supporting reminders of monarchical despotism can be understood within the idea of the balanced constitution of the eighteenth century. By his support of these types of paintings, George III, whatever disagreements he might have with Parliament over the choice of his ministers, was able to present himself as a constitutional monarch who understood the rules by which he governed.

Conclusion

Most nation states have a national museum devoted to their origins and subsequent history. The exception to this is England and the wider political construct of Britain. Despite its name, the British Museum is not the story of Britain (though there are galleries that exhibit material culture relating to its past), nor does it narrate a coherent narrative of the development of England over time. This paper has attempted to explain, in part, why this present circumstance is somewhat different from the intention of some of its first political supporters. Indeed we might well argue that the British Museum is 'the lost museum of England', in part established to present the origins of the national story through political arguments relating to English freedoms, Saxon traditions of democracy and the importance of Parliamentary government. As such it can be understood within the context of the development of culture as a political tool, asserting the power and prestige of Parliament in the national story during a time when rulers patronised the arts and, by association, themselves.

Museums are institutions that change in appearance and purpose over time. It is very tempting to read such spaces and places through the lens of contemporary concerns. However, here we have attempted to construct some context for the foundation of the British Museum and the Royal Academy that takes account of the roles they played in politics in the eighteenth century and how they can be understood as complimentary manifestations of forms of government. The former expressed the ideas of Parliamentary democracy within the context of how it was understood at the time, the latter the notion of the monarch as an enlightened constitutional monarch whose role in supporting culture was beneficial to the nation while at the same time enhancing his prestige.

All this was made possible, indeed perhaps necessary, by the fact that the British constitution is an unwritten one. It has provided the nations of Wales, Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland with a system of government that accommodates change such as devolution.

Its survival has depended on the ability of its main players, such as the monarch and Members of Parliament, to be flexible. It is based on the notion of liberties which require those who rule to take account of the views of the people, to accept that the elite (whether they be monarch or Prime Minister and Cabinet) may not dictate to the rest. Whilst this imagining of the origins of England and its story may be seen as a form of Whig history that does not take account of the historic oppression of the working class or the denial of the rights of women it is always a work in progress, with progress being the definitive term here. This early history of these two institutions, the British Museum and the Royal Academy, illustrate the attitudes of the so called great and the good towards the principle of government by consent through a benevolent democracy. Their foundation and early development are as much about politics as they are about culture and this paper suggests it is time that we paid more attention to this context in order to understand not only eighteenth century constitutional history but also the role of state culture in the development of those liberties which we take for granted in the twenty-first century.

Thus both the British Museum and the Royal Academy can be understood as places through which different nuanced ideas of the constitution and its relationship to the nation state were made explicit and, at the same time, explored. This is not to suggest that these institutions were not many other things as well, and the Enlightenment was undoubtedly influential in encouraging the kind of thinking that envisioned a public space for knowledge and learning (for example see Anderson 2003). However, it is suggested here that the British Museum was the product of a certain type of English identity rooted in a past dominated by constitutional struggles. The Royal Academy, in its early years, aroused anxieties about the role of the monarch in the cultural sphere, anxieties that had similar origins. However, by the end of the century both institutions had developed roles that promoted a more British rather than English identity and the British Museum, with its enthusiastic acquisition of classical antiquities, had begun its long journey along the road to the universal museum of the enlightenment and world cultures that it is known as today.

Received: 22 November 2018
Finally accepted: 2 February 2019

Acknowledgements

The earliest stage of this research was facilitated by EuNaMus, (European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past the European Citizen), a three-year project (2010-13) funded by the EU Seventh Framework programme, in which the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester was a partner. I thank my reviewers for their constructive comments.

Notes

- ¹ http://www.britishmuseum.org/the_museum/management_and_governance/about_us.aspx Accessed 30 June 2010.
- ² <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/europe-and-the-world-a-symphony-of-cultures/> Accessed 4 April 2018.
- ³ *Minutes of the Committee of the Trustees of the British Museum*, 30 July 1756, British Museum archives. Also *Journal of the House of Lords* volume 28 April 1756, 11 – 20.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Anon 2010 *History of the Cotton Library* <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/manuscripts/cottonmss/cottonmss.html> Accessed 17 May 2010.

- ⁸ The anonymous writer of the Preface to the British Museum's catalogue of Thomason's collection refutes any idea that this collection was a royalist one. A glance through the catalogue reveals that Thomason collected material from both sides and, indeed, from many minority religious and political groups, thus indicating he was an archivist and historian rather than a polemicist. Anon (1908) 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books, Newspapers and Manuscripts relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth and the Restoration. Catalogue of the Collection, Vol 1. 1640 – 42*, iii – xxv. London: The British Museum.
- ⁹ *Royal Academy Critiques etc, Vol 1 1769 – 1793*. Royal Academy Library, p. 11.

References

- Anon (2005 [1905]) 'One hundred years ago: The foundation of the British Museum' *British Medical Journal* 331 146 <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/331/7509/146.pdf> accessed 17 May 2010.
- Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.
- Anderson, R. G. W. 'Introduction' in R.G. W. Anderson, M. L. Caygill, A. G. MacGregor and L. Syson (eds) *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, discovery and the museum in the eighteenth century*, 1-4. London: British Museum Press.
- Anderson, R.G. W., Caygill, M. L. MacGregor A. G. and Syson, L. 2003 (eds) *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, discovery and the museum in the eighteenth century*, London: British Museum Press.
- Bennett, T. (1995) *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics*, London: Routledge
- Blanning, T. C. W. (2002) *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660 – 1789*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brewer J. (1997) *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century*, London: HarperCollins publishers.
- Brotton, J. (2006) *The Sale of the Late King's Goods: Charles I and His Art Collection*, London: Macmillan.
- Butler, M. (1988) 'Romanticism in England' in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds) *Romanticism in National Contexts*, 37-67, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Caygill, M. (2002) *The Story of the British Museum*, London: British Museum Publications Ltd.
- Caygill, M. (2003) 'From private collection to public' R.G. W. Anderson, M. L. Caygill, A. G. MacGregor and L. Syson (eds) *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, discovery and the museum in the eighteenth century*, 18-28, London: British Museum Press.
- Caygill, M and Date, C. (1999) *Building the British Museum*, London: British Museum Press.
- Cannon, J. (2006) 'Dunning, John, first Baron Ashburton, (1731–1783)' in Anon *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8284.jsessionid=CDA3927C26ED9D357C8524C5761AC167> accessed 23 January 2019.

- Clark, J. C. D. (2000) *English Society 1660- 1832, Religion, ideology and politics during the ancient regime*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Colley, L (2005) *Britons: Forging the nation 1707 – 1837*, Yale: Yale University Press.
- Collinson, P. 1997 (cited Blanning 2002) 'Biblical rhetoric: the English nation and national sentiment in the prophetic mode' in C. McEachern and D. Shugar (eds) *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Conlin, J. (2006) *The Nation's Mantelpiece: A history of the National Gallery*, London: Pallas Athene Publishers Ltd.
- Cressey, D. (2015) *Charles I and the People of England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cruickshank, E. (1995) *The Stuart Court in Exile and the Jacobites*, Hambledon: Continuum.
- Darby, W. J. (2000) *Landscape and Identity: Geographies of nation and class in England*, Oxford: Berg.
- Delanty, G and Kumar K (2006) *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Dickinson, H. T. (2002) 'The British Constitution' in H. T. Dickinson (ed.) *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 3 – 18. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Ditchfield G. M (2002) *George III: An essay in monarchy*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Evans, E. (1995) 'Englishness and Britishness: National identities, c 1790 – c 1870' in Francis, F. (ed) *The Treasures of the British Museum*, 9-26, London: Thames and Hudson.
- Francis, F. (1971) 'Introduction' in F. Francis (ed) *The Treasures of the British Museum*, 9-26, London: Thames and Hudson.
- Goldgar, A. (2000) 'The British museum and the virtual representation of culture in the eighteenth century' *Albion* 32 195 – 231.
- Greenfeld, L and Eastwood, J (2009) 'National Identity' in Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, online DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566020.003.0011 1 – 21.
- Handley, S (2011) 'Cotton, Sir Robert Bruce, first baronet (1571–1631)' *The Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6425>
- Harris, M. (1987) *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A study of the Origins of the Modern English Press*, Madison, N. J. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Hill, C. (1969) 'The Norman Yoke' in C. Hill *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in the Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century*, 58 - 125 London: Panther Books.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1990) *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hogan, J. (2009) *Gender, race and national identity: Nations of flesh and blood*, London: Routledge.

- Hook, H. (2003) 'Reforming culture: national art institutions in the age of reform' in A. Burns and J. Innes (eds) *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780 – 1850*, 254-270, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hook, H. (2005) *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the politics of British culture 1760 – 1840*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hook, H. (2010) "'Struggling against a Vulgar Prejudice": Patriotism and the collecting of British art at the turn of the nineteenth century' *Journal of British Studies*, 49 566-591.
- Jenkins, I. (1992) *Archaeologists & Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800 – 1939*, London: British Museum Press.
- Kumar, K. (2006) 'English and British national identity', *History Compass*, 4/3 428 – 447.
- Langford, P. (2003) *Englishness Identified: Manners and character 1650 – 1850*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lock, A. (2018) 'Reform, radicalism and revolution: Magna Carta in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain' in L. Goldman (ed.) *Magna Carta: history, context and influence*, 101- 16, London: School of Advanced Study, University of London, Institute of Historical Research URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv5136sc.14>
- McKitterick, D. (2004) 'Wantonness and use: ambitions for research libraries in early eighteenth-century England' in R.G. W. Anderson, M. L. Caygill, A. G. MacGregor and L. Syson (eds) *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, discovery and the museum in the eighteenth century*, 37-48, London: The British Museum Press.
- Miller, E. (1973) *That Noble Cabinet: History of the British Museum*, London: Andre Deutsch.
- Mandler, P. (2006) *The English National Character: The History of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Mandler, P. (2006) 'Art in a Cool Climate: The cultural policy of the British state in European context' in T. Blanning and H. Schulze (eds) *Unity and Diversity in European Culture c. 1800, Proceedings of the British Academy: 134*, 101 – 120, Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy.
- Mordaunt Crook, J. (1971) *The British Museum, London*: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.
- Parry, G (2007) 'Mists of time' in D. Gaimster, S. McCarthy and B. Nurse (eds) *Making History: Antiquaries in Britain: 1707 – 2007*, 17 - 35. London: Royal Academy of Arts
- Phillipson, N.(1996) 'Politeness and politics in the reigns of Anne and the early Hanoverians' in J.G. A. Pocock (ed) *The Varieties of British Political Thought 1500-1800*, 211-245, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Porter, R. (2001) *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world*, London: Penguin Books.
- Porter, R. and Teich, M. (1988) 'Introduction' in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds) *Romanticism in National Contexts*, 1-8, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Redgrave, R. and Redgrave. S. (2005) *A Century of Painters of the English School: With Critical Notices of the Works, and an Account of the Progress of Art in England*, 2 vols, cited Hoock 2005: bibliography 346.

- Shelley, H. C. (1911) *The British Museum, its history and treasures*, Boston: L.C. Page & Company.
- Smuts, R. M. (1999) *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.
- Starkey, D. (2007) 'Making history' in D. Gaimster, S. McCarthy and B. Nurse (eds) *Making History: Antiquaries in Britain: 1707 – 2007*, 11-13, London: Royal Academy of Arts.
- Strong, R. (1978) *'And When Did You Last See Your Father?' The Victorian painter and British history*, London: Thames and Hudson.
- Thomas, P. D. G. (2003) *George III: King and politicians 1760 - 1770*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Turner, R. V. (2014) *Magna Carta: Through the ages*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge
- Vallance, E. (2007) *The Glorious Revolution: 1688 - England's fight for liberty*, London: Abacus; New Ed edition..
- von Archenholz, J. W. (1790) *A Picture of England, containing a description of the laws, customs and manners of England*, London: no publisher cited.
- Ward, L. (2010) *The Politics of Liberty in England and Revolutionary America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Watson, S and Sawyer, A. (2011) 'National Museums in Britain' in Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011. Peter Aronsson & Gabriella Elgenius (eds) *EuNaMus Report No 1*. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=064, accessed 12 November 2018.
- Weston, C. C. (1991) 'England: ancient constitution and common law' in J. H. Burns and M Goldie (eds) *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, 374-411, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilks, T. (2009) 'Art, architecture and politics' in B. Coward (ed) *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, 186 -213, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wilson, D. M. (1990) *The British Museum: purpose and politics*, London: British Museum Press.
- Wilson, D. (2002) *The British Museum: a history*, London: The British Museum Press.
- Woolf, D. (2005) *The Social Circulation of the Past: English historical culture 1500- 1730*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yeo, R (2003) 'Encyclopaedic collectors: Ephraim Chambers and Sir Hans Sloane' in R.G. W. Anderson, M. L. Caygill, A. G. MacGregor and L. Syson (eds) *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, discovery and the museum in the eighteenth century*, 29-36, London: British Museum Press.

Author

***Sheila Watson**

serw1@le.ac.uk

Affiliation University of Leicester

United Kingdom

Associate Professor Museum Studies