

ADDISON'S CRITIQUE OF PARADISE LOST
AND THE PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION

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ADDISON'S CRITIQUE OF PARADISE LOST
AND THE PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION

The range of Joseph Addison's literary criticism is fairly broad. In his Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian papers he discusses such subjects as Italian opera, tragedy, and stage contrivances; wit true, false, and mixed; ballads; poetic genius; eritics and criticism; taste; even mythology and its place in literature. His critical reputation is based primarily upon two sets of essays: the critique of Paradise Lost and the papers "On the Pleasures of the Imagination." The former, comprising eighteen Saturday issues in the Spectator, No. 267 (January 5, 1712) through No. 369 (May 3, 1712), consists of both a formal and an informal consideration of Milton's epic; it shows Addison as a practicing critic. The latter, Spectator Nos. 411-421 (July 21-June 3, 1712), comprises, rather, a statement of his aesthetic theory.

These two sets of essays, the critique and the "Pleasures" papers, were written independently of each other. There is, however, a close relationship between them: the critique definitely foreshadows the "Imagination" papers. Even in his formal criticism of Paradise Lost Addison gives evidence of applying the aesthetic theory to which he later gave explicit statement in the papers on the pleasures of the imagination.

The critique of Paradise Lost is Addison's most complete single critical study. Addison himself divides his examination of the poem into two main parts. He first resolves to "examine it by the Rules of Epic Poetry."¹ To this task he devotes four papers, one to each of the four heads of fable, character, sentiments, and language. Secondly, he gives "an Account of the many particular

"Beauties" in Milton's epic;² in so doing he discusses each of the twelve books of Paradise Lost individually and in a separate paper. Finally and incidentally, he reflects upon the office of the critic with respect to the imperfections in a work and points out the particular defects of Milton's epic.

Addison's approach to Milton is, in the first place, formal: he appeals to "the greatest Critics," particularly Aristotle and Le Bossu, in considering what the epic genre should be; and he judges to what degree Milton's poem fulfills the requirements. In the second place, it is informal: Addison goes beyond "the Critic's nicer Laws" in pointing out the particular achievements of Paradise Lost, its "Beauties and Excellencies."³ Throughout both the formal and the informal approaches, Addison appeals directly and indirectly to the imagination. He asks, first and last, is the imagination gratified and pleased? Even the rules which he follows with such exactitude are for Addison indications of how the imagination is best pleased.

The early papers on Paradise Lost preceded treatment of the pleasures of the imagination by several months. The eleven papers entitled "On the Pleasures of the Imagination" follow the last of the papers on Paradise Lost by only seven weeks. It is immediately apparent that in his informal criticism of the poem, the enumeration of its beauties and excellences, Addison is, in effect, applying the principles of the aesthetic theory which he only later expressly recorded. Perhaps not so immediately clear is that his formal criticism of the epic also implicitly foreshadows the papers on the pleasures of the imagination. Such is the object of this demonstration: in his genre criticism of Paradise Lost Addison was formulating his theory of the pleasures of the imagination.

The papers "On the Pleasures of the Imagination" present a theory of the sources of aesthetic pleasure derived through the sense of sight. The imagination itself Addison defines rather broadly: it is a faculty of association

and comparison. In its activities it draws upon perception and memory. Usually free and unconscious, it sometimes breaks spontaneously upon the conscious mind; it furthermore stands ready for deliberate application.⁴ The imagination is a "Faculty" of the soul, together with memory, understanding, will, "all the Senses both outward and inward," and the like.⁵ It behaves very much like an appetite--and a voracious one--of sense: it "loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its Capacity."⁶ Through the imagination the "curiosity" of the soul is gratified.

The pleasures of the imagination stand between those of sense and those of the understanding. They are not so "refined" as the latter or so "gross" as the former. C. D. Thorpe, discussing these pleasures, terms them "those responses which accompany the perception of certain objects capable of giving aesthetic delight."⁷ These pleasures are two in kind: primary and secondary. There is a limited interdependence between them: the primary pleasures are independent of the secondary, but the secondary are, in general, derived from the primary and require their pre-existence.

The primary pleasures are "such as arise from Objects that are actually before our Eyes."⁸ Primary pleasures accompany sensory experience. They arise from the direct perception of secondary qualities, such as size, shape, and color, of present objects. A present object, as Elioseff notes, is "any natural object or artifact which is not a representation."⁹ Gardens and buildings, examples offered by Addison, are such artifacts which do not represent anything in nature; these objects may, therefore, excite the primary pleasures.¹⁰

The secondary pleasures, on the other hand, are one step removed from the direct perception of present objects; they accompany the recollection of these objects. Addison describes them as such as "once entered in at our Eyes . . . are afterwards called up into the Mind either barely by its own Operations, or

on occasion of something without us, as Statues, or Descriptions."¹¹ That is, the secondary pleasures proceed from the comparative action in the mind of a mental image or a particular representation--"Statue, Picture, Description, or Sound"--with the original or "present" object.¹²

Both the primary and the secondary pleasures are derived from three sources: the great, the strange or uncommon, and the beautiful. These may operate upon the imagination singly or in any combination. What stimulates the primary pleasures in the perception of present objects will, in general, also excite the secondary pleasures in the perception of the representation. Secondary pleasures may, in addition, be stimulated by the apt and convincing representation of the ugly and disagreeable, the originals of which inspire disgust rather than pleasure, and through the evocation in poetic passages of the passions of terror and even horror. In the latter instance the pleasure arises not at all from the description proper of what is terrible, be it never so apt; rather, the imagination is pleased through reflections upon the good fortune of "our own Condition" which is at so great remove from the terrifying or horrible circumstances represented.¹³

In the "Imagination" papers Addison treats the great, the uncommon, and the beautiful as the sources--apparently the only sources--for both the primary and secondary pleasures of the imagination. A brief examination of how he arrived at these particular qualities or characteristics will certainly facilitate an understanding of them. It will also prove pertinent to the exploration which I have undertaken, for the critique of Paradise Lost is a kind of laboratory in which Addison carried on experiments in the pleasures of the imagination preliminary to his explicit statement of the aesthetic theory.

It is apparent that Addison elected to emphasize these qualities--the great, the uncommon, and the beautiful--as most comprehensive and most germane to his examination of the pleasures of the imagination. That they are not the only

qualities he might have selected is clear. For example, the ballad of "The Two Children in the Wood" pleases by reason of its naturalness: the song is "a plain simple Copy of Nature, destitute of all the Helps and Ornaments of Art;" the tale of it is "a pretty Tragical Story; and pleases for no other Reason, but because it is a Copy of Nature."¹⁴ Again, the "Multitude of astonishing Incidents" in Paradise Lost excites a pleasure "of the greatest Simplicity."¹⁵ On the other hand, Addison on one occasion mentions the amusement of the imagination: the "Account of the Hymns which our first Parents used to hear them [the Angels] sing" in their midnight walks is "altogether Divine, and inexpressibly amusing to the Imagination."¹⁶

Addison was not long in determining upon beauty and greatness as sources of pleasure to the imagination. Throughout his papers on Paradise Lost the beautiful and the great are singled out in this respect. Addison seems to have arrived at the second of these qualities on the basis of authority. Discussing the greatness of the action of Milton's epic, he invokes and cites Aristotle.¹⁷ A passing mention of Longinus in company with other Latin critics causes him to pause over the sublime.¹⁸ Even in his early criticism he shows a familiarity with the pleasure of greatness: Earl Percy's "lamentation over his Enemy" in the ballad of "Chevy Chase" is marked by "the Greatness of the Thought."¹⁹ In his short treatment of tragedy--Addison bases his discussion on Aristotle--both greatness and beauty are spoken of as pleasing the mind.²⁰

Addison invokes no authority when he proffers the beautiful as a source for pleasures of the imagination. The beautiful is always before him. In his papers on tragedy, in the ballad papers, in the critique of Paradise Lost, he seeks the beautiful, particularly in descriptions of places and objects which emphasize colors, symmetry and proportion of parts, or arrangement and disposition of wholes; and he impresses upon the reader his discoveries of this quality.

The uncommon poses a problem for Addison. For the uncommon as a source of pleasure to the imagination he strikes out independently of authorities. Therefore, it is not surprising that the concept is slow to develop with him. In the ballad papers he makes no mention of anything which might resemble this characteristic. In the early papers on Paradise Lost, however, he is attuned to the qualities of variety, surprise, and novelty. Writing of the poem in general, he remarks that it is "filled with such a Multitude of astonishing Incidents, that it gives us . . . a Pleasure of the greatest Variety."²¹ Milton's fruitful imagination, Addison continues, which is responsible for the many inventions he added to the few actual circumstances at his command, surprises the reader. Notwithstanding the restraints that Milton was under, "he has filled his Story with so many surprising Incidents . . . that it is capable of pleasing the most delicate Reader" ²²

In his early experiments with the quality of the uncommon, Addison differentiates between variety and novelty. Of Homer he writes, "Homer has excelled all the heroic Poets that ever wrote, in the Multitude and Variety of his Characters."²³ Again, "Homer does not only out-shine all other Poets in the Variety, but also in the Novelty of his Characters."²⁴ Furthermore, "Virgil falls infinitely short of Homer in the Characters of his Poem, both as to their Variety and Novelty."²⁵

While he uses the term "novelty" itself very sparingly, he often mentions "variety" in the critique of Paradise Lost. He comments upon the "variety" in Milton's numbers²⁶ and the "agreeable variety" which Milton gave his entire work.²⁷ The revolt in heaven, Addison notes, "is described with great Force of Imagination and a fine Variety of Circumstances."²⁸ Again, "the tenth Book of Paradise Lost has a greater Variety of Persons in it than any other in the whole Poem."²⁹ On the other hand, the absence of specific qualification is conspicuous

in several instances where the notion of novelty or variety or the uncommon is implicit. For example, Addison very matter-of-factly discusses the series of new and interesting beings and events which are presented in Book II of Milton's epic; he makes no observation of their novelty or variety.³⁰ Similarly, he omits comment on both the variety and the novelty in Satan's view as he "surveys all the Wonders" of the "vast Hollow of the Universe" and "takes in at one View the whole Round of the Creation."³¹ Even concerning Satan's disguises and transformations, Addison makes mention of neither variety nor novelty. Rather, these are called "Circumstances that give an agreeable Surprise to the Reader."³² Finally, in the brief recapitulation which introduces his examination of Book IV, the qualities of novelty and variety are only implicit in the expression, "Milton's Exuberance of Imagination, has poured forth such a Redundancy of Ornaments on this Seat of Happiness and Innocence [Paradise], that it would be endless to point out each Particular."³³

So far as Addison makes explicit statements concerning novelty and variety, one must agree with Thorpe that "variety, in the essay on the Imagination and in the criticism of Paradise Lost alike, is a virtual synonyma for novelty"³⁴ Nevertheless, Addison's examples and applications go beyond his definite statements. As is clear from his use of the terms, variety may be either a synonym for novelty or a subdivision of it. Variety implies plurality or multiplicity; novelty does not. Furthermore, both novelty and variety may on any single occasion be relative or absolute. The terms are, therefore, synonymous only when absolute variety and relative novelty are involved--when the particular "objects" or "representations" are more or less familiar to the perceiver and no single item in the series is repeated. It is such a situation that Addison has in mind when he states that the pleasure aroused in the imagination by novelty "recommends Variety, where the Mind is every Instant called off to something new,

and the Attention not suffered to dwell too long, and waste it self on any particular Object."³⁵ Upon every other occasion, variety is a subdivision of novelty. When any particular of absolute novelty is involved, the imagination will be temporarily gratified to fix upon it, examine it, and fill itself with it. In this instance variety may not only hold no pleasure, but actually prove a disturbance until the appetite excited by novelty is slaked. When relative variety is joined with relative novelty--that is, when all objects or representations involved are in some way familiar to the perceiver and a repetition of one or more in the series occurs--the pleasure of novelty is quickly lulled and only that of variety remains, itself diminishing as particulars grow in immediate familiarity through repetition.

It would appear that while Addison's critique of Paradise Lost was a practice field for the beautiful and the great as sources of imaginative pleasure, it was the proving ground for that source which he finally termed the uncommon. The uncommon is a general category which comes to include novelty, variety, surprise, and so on. These qualities remained independent of one another in the critique and other earlier essays: Addison remarks of all of them that they excite pleasure. They are, however, ultimately brought together and fixed as species of the uncommon.³⁶

Pleasure to the imagination increases as the great, the uncommon, and the beautiful occur in conjunction with one another. The greatest pleasure is, therefore, derived in the presence of all three. The increase is, for Addison, rather quantitative than qualitative. That quantity is a consideration basic to the pleasures of the imagination is most easily understood through the pleasure derived from novelty or variety. Pleasure quickly fails "where every thing continues fixt and settled in the same Place and Posture."³⁷ As the fancy delights in "every thing that is Great, Strange or Beautiful, and is still more pleased

the more it finds of these Perfections in the same Object, so it is capable of receiving a new Satisfaction by the Assistance of another Sense."³⁸

The quantitative increase in pleasure would at first appear subject to objective measure. But, while there must be a common sphere of that in experience which pleases the imagination, the extent or degree of such pleasure can be only subjectively determined, for two reasons: first, these pleasures will vary with the learning and experience of each individual viewer or auditor; secondly, innate imaginative capacities and predispositions toward particular ways of realizing the pleasures will differ among individual viewers and auditors. Addison specifically states that the pleasure of beauty inheres in the beholder: "there is not perhaps any real Beauty or Deformity more in one piece of Matter than another."³⁹ There is one kind of beauty which is innate and common to the species: "we see that every different Species of sensible Creatures has its different Notions of Beauty, and that each of them is most affected with the Beauties of its own Kind." Thus, "we might have been so made, that whatsoever now appears loathsome to us, might have shewn it self agreeable; but we find by Experience, that there are several Modifications of Matter which the Mind, without any previous Consideration, pronounces at first sight Beautiful or Deformed."⁴⁰

Pleasure derived through this kind of beauty will be the same for every member of any particular species. It may, thus, be objectively determined for that species. That inspired by another kind is, however, subjective with reference even to the individual within the species. This second kind of beauty works with less warmth and violence upon the imagination than the other; its appeal is, perhaps, less immediate and spontaneous--less emotional and more rational. It consists in "the Gaiety or Variety of Colours, in the Symmetry and Proportion of Parts, in the Arrangement and Disposition of Bodies, or in a just Mixture and Concurrence of all together."⁴¹ Addison does not pause to consider individual

preference in subject or arrangement with respect to this kind of beauty; nor does he point out the different and individual emphases of poets who concern themselves with it.⁴² It is, nevertheless, implicit in Addison's statement that response to this kind of beauty and the pleasure derived from it are subjective.

If the beautiful be a subjective source of pleasure to the imagination, how much more so is the uncommon. The uncommon, it goes without saying, will submit to no absolute objective measure; what is new for one may prove commonplace to another. The grand, likewise, eludes absolute measure, for there are things in nature too large (as well as too small) for the imagination to take in:

Let a Man try . . . to compare, in his Thoughts, a length of a thousand Diameters of the Earth, with that of a Million, and he will quickly find that he has no different Measures in his Mind, adjusted to such extraordinary Degrees of Grandeur

.....
 We can neither widen, nor contract the Faculty [the Imagination] to the Dimensions of either Extreme: The Object is too big for our Capacity, when we would comprehend the Circumference of a World, and dwindles into nothing, when we endeavour after the Idea of an Atom.⁴³

Addison does not define either the upper or lower limits of the imagination. Neither does he define the nature of these limitations. He indicates only that all imaginative faculties are in some way limited. Variation in individual imaginative capacities may, therefore, be inferred. To what extent one might be "conditioned" to grandeur in its median range--objects such as "the Prospects of an open Champian Country, a vast uncultivated Desert . . . or a wide Expanse of Waters"⁴⁴--Addison does not consider.

The quantity of the primary pleasures is, clearly, a subjective factor. The sources themselves are all in some measure subjective. As the secondary pleasures succeed and depend upon the primary, and as the sources of both are the same, the determination of secondary pleasures will, like that of the primary, be subjective.⁴⁵ The larger the number of ideas of original natural objects--objects capable of producing the primary pleasures--which are fixed in the mind

of the viewer of artistic representations, and the more exact these ideas are, the more able he will be to compare representations with their originals. The more refined, that is, will be his judgment of the aptness of artistic description, and the greater his potential for secondary pleasures of the imagination.

Addison's discussion of the poet's appeal to his audience through the principal characters in his work illustrates the subjective nature of greatness as a source of secondary pleasures of the imagination. He makes the point that the celebration of national heroes invites the attention and sympathy of the poet's readers. This appeal is essentially emotional and subjective. The heroes celebrated in the epics of Homer and Virgil were regarded by native readers as the greatest men in their countries: "A Roman could not but rejoice in the Escapes, Successes and Victories of Aeneas, and be grieved at any Defeats, Misfortunes or Disappointments that befel him; as a Greek must have had the same Regard for Achilles."⁴⁶ Addison points out that much advantage has been lost to these poems "among those Readers to whom their Heroes are as Strangers, or indifferent Persons." With Milton's poem, he continues, "it is impossible for any of its Readers, whatever Nation, Country or People he may belong to, not to be related to the Persons who are the principal Actors in it." He is hereby arguing, in the first place, for the universality of what is greatest; in the second place, he is thus indicating that response to the greatness of the characters and action of the poem is directly related to the subjective responsiveness or predisposition of the reader: the closer his identification with this action and the characters figuring as heroes in it, the greater will be the pleasure to his imagination from the greatness of the action--indeed, the more likely he will be to consider the action of a poem to which he thus responds great.

Pleasure to the imagination increases in the presence of more than one of its sources. Similarly, the capacity for both the primary and secondary pleasures

may be improved. Improvement of the receptivity of the imagination to the primary pleasures is effected by cultivating the senses; sensitivity to the secondary pleasures, on the other hand, is improved through the application of learning. Learning may dull the natural sense through an over-refinement of the understanding and, thus, impede the primary pleasures; properly directed, however, learning will polish the natural sense and develop taste.⁴⁷

The cultivation of the secondary pleasures of the imagination naturally contributes to the refinement of the understanding, for the activity of the understanding is necessary to their enjoyment. The pleasures themselves, of these respective faculties, resemble one another. The secondary pleasures of the imagination are stimulated by the apt representation of present objects and are realised by the comparative action of the mind apprehending this aptness. The pleasures of the understanding, on the other hand, are aroused by moral, natural, mathematical, and other kinds of dilemmas or problems--real or hypothetical; they are realised through the contemplation of truth.⁴⁸ Contemplation clearly includes more than simply the comparing and contrasting activities of the mind. Nevertheless, that it does include them is certain indication that full realization of the secondary pleasures requires the complementary activity of the understanding. The relationship between the realization of these different sorts of pleasures might be illustrated by several figures of speech: simile or metaphor and analogy. The aptness of comparison in simile or metaphor, like that in the secondary pleasures of the imagination, is suddenly apprehended. In analogy, on the other hand, as in the pleasures of the understanding, this aptness of comparison is arrived at through ratiocination.

Addison nowhere formally explores the pleasures of the understanding as he does those of the imagination. In the introduction to the papers "On the Pleasures of the Imagination," he implies a practical distinction as regards discourse

upon their respective pleasures: examination of the pleasures of the imagination requires that a learned author (one "well versed in the Works of the best Criticks, both Ancient and Modern") "enter into the very Spirit and Soul of fine Writing, and shew us the several Sources of that Pleasure which rises in the Mind upon the Perusal of a noble Work."⁴⁹ Treatment of the pleasures of the understanding, on the other hand, simply requires the learned author to apply "the Mechanical Rules."⁵⁰ Later, in defining the pleasures of the imagination, Addison simply mentions those of the understanding: "the Pleasures of the Imagination, taken in the full Extent, are not so gross as those of Sense, nor so refined as those of the Understanding."⁵¹

It would be unjust and erroneous to impute to Addison a deliberate split between the imagination and the understanding and their respective functions and pleasures. A division is useful for purposes of analysis only. To so much and no more Addison was pleased to confine himself in the late Spectator papers. From a philosophical point of view he specifically precludes differentiation between these faculties. Discussing the happiness of the soul he remarks,

We cannot question but that the Happiness of a Soul will be adequate to its Nature The Happiness is to be the Happiness of the whole Man The Happiness may be of a more exalted Nature in Proportion as the Faculty employ'd is so, but as the whole Soul acts in the Exertion of any of its particular Powers, the whole Soul is happy in the Pleasure which arises from any of its particular Acts. For notwithstanding . . . we divide the Soul into several Powers and Faculties, there is no such Division in the Soul it self, since it is the whole Soul that remembers, understands, wills, or imagines. Our manner of considering the Memory, Understanding, Will, Imagination, and the like Faculties, is for the better enabling us to express our selves in such abstracted Subjects of Speculation, not that there is any such Division in the Soul it self.⁵²

The functions and pleasures of the imagination and the understanding occasionally approach one another and even come near to overlapping. This is the case with the cultivation of the secondary pleasures of the imagination through learning, for learning also contributes to the refinement of the under-

standing. Latent in Addison's consideration of cultivation of the secondary pleasures is a concept of a third kind of pleasures, pleasures which stand between these secondary pleasures of the imagination and the pleasures of the understanding but are clearly differentiated from both. These pleasures might be termed the tertiary pleasures of the imagination.⁵³ As my term "tertiary" indicates, they are pleasures at second remove from those taken in objects "before our eyes." While the secondary pleasures derive from representations of present objects, the tertiary pleasures are excited by representations of these representations. That is, tertiary pleasures depend upon works of art as "present objects;" they are stimulated by the artist's imitations, evocations, representations, or misrepresentations of familiar or known art works in new artistic creations. These pleasures derive from an apprehension of the aptness of the artist's imitations, evocations, or representations. Before the viewer or auditor can experience these pleasures, he must know the work "present" to the artist. The tertiary pleasures of the imagination, therefore, clearly require learning on the part of the viewer or auditor.

Although Addison does not himself specifically develop a concept of the tertiary pleasures of the imagination, in the critique of Paradise Lost he, in effect, applies it. Having Homer and Virgil--Milton's originals--in mind, he is able to point out the representations, imitations, and evocations of the works of these writers in Milton's epic. In the twelve papers in which he points out the particular beauties of Paradise Lost, Addison's observations frequently put the reader in mind of pleasures like these tertiary pleasures. For example, Addison remarks on the "several noble Similes and Allusions" in Book I, and he praises Milton in that "he never quits his Simile till it rises to some very great Idea, which is often foreign to the Occasion that gave Birth to it." This kind of structure in Milton's similes is such that "those, who are acquainted

with Homer's and Virgil's Way of Writing, cannot but be pleased with it.⁵⁴ Again, in examining Book VI, the war between the angels on the plain of heaven, he commends Milton: "It may, perhaps, be worth while to consider with what Judgment Milton, in this Narration, has avoided every Thing that is mean and trivial in the Description of the Latin and Greek Poets; and, at the same time, improv'd every great Hint which he met with in their Works upon this Subject."⁵⁵ He continues, "Milton has likewise raised his Description in this Book with many Images taken out of the Poetical Parts of Scripture."⁵⁶ His remarks at the conclusion of his treatment of Book II are in much the same vein: "as no Poet seems ever to have studied Homer more, or to have more resembled him in the Greatness of Genius than Milton, I think I should have given but a very imperfect Account of his Beauties, if I had not observed the most remarkable Passages which look like Parallels in these two great Authors."⁵⁷

Reviewing the whole of his critique, Addison includes in his several summary statements a comment which certainly indicates the latent presence of this concept: "I have likewise endeavoured to shew how the Genius of the Poet shines by a happy Invention, a distant Allusion, or a judicious Imitation; how he has copied or improved Homer or Virgil, and raised his own Imaginations by the Use which he has made of several Poetical Passages in Scripture."⁵⁸ In thus intimating the notion of tertiary pleasures of the imagination, Addison makes explicit two tenets basic to the neoclassical tradition: imitation and perfection. Milton is praised for imitating and perfecting the models of classical antiquity, Homer and Virgil. Homer and Virgil were also imitators; they copied Nature herself. Pope observed this, remarking,

When first young Maro in his boundless mind
A work t' outlast immortal Rome designed,
Perhaps he seem'd above the Critic's law,
And but from Nature's fountains scorn'd to draw;
But when t' examine every part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.

Imitation and perfection are implicit in the concept of secondary pleasures. This was too obvious to Addison's audience to require mention. The secondary pleasures are, after all, derived from the apt representation in a work of art of what is essential Nature--Nature completed or perfected. Works of art portray Nature through imitation; they illustrate general notions through particular examples. Thus, Addison remarks of the thoughts and sentiments which Milton attributes to the newly created Adam that they possess "all the graces of Nature;" they are natural, but not obvious.⁵⁹ That is to say, Milton is here imitating and perfecting Nature. Addison's observations of the sentiments with which Adam describes his conducting Eve to the nuptial bower are more explicit: these sentiments are "chaste, but not cold, and convey to the Mind Ideas of the most transporting Passion, and of the greatest Purity."⁶⁰ Finally, Addison notes Milton imitating Nature--"humane Nature"--directly. Addison here obliquely expresses the principle of particular example illustrating a general category: it is a knowledge of the "Sentiments of Love" which "gave the Angel such an Insight into humane Nature, that he seems apprehensive of the Evils which might befall the Species in general, as well as Adam in particular."⁶¹

A close relationship exists between Addison's aesthetic theory and his critical practice. In his aesthetic theory his concern, as I have been showing, is with the pleasures of the imagination. His ideal in criticism is a positive appeal to the imagination. He explicitly states that his intention in criticism is "rather to discover Beauties and Excellencies" in writing than to dwell upon "Faults and Imperfections."⁶²

Addison early indicated that he felt genre criticism alone to be futile.⁶³ He defines the strict genre or rule critic as "one that, without entering into the sense and soul of an author, has a few general rules, which, like mechanical instruments, he applies to the works of every writer, and as they quadrate with

them, pronounces the author perfect or defective."⁶⁴ This critical practice-- that engaged in by those who possess "neither Taste nor Learning"--Addison denounces as false.⁶⁵ It emphasizes an author's faults and imperfections, his failures to measure up to a set of rules governing the particular genre in which he is writing. The frequency with which Addison inveighs against these "false" critics indicates the strength of his feeling concerning the "true" function of criticism: "A true Critic ought to dwell rather upon Excellencies than Imperfections, to discover the concealed Beauties of a Writer, and communicate to the World such Things as are worth their Observation."⁶⁶

Genre criticism is a species of problem solving. The rules governing a particular genre indicate the "truth" of that genre. Thus, genre criticism appeals to the understanding; truth to the rules is its measure of a poet's achievement. When the poet fulfills expectations and writes in accord with the conventions or rules of that genre which he is practicing, he pleases the understanding of the reader who is aware of the rules and stands ready to apply them. The poet's failure to write in agreement with these conventions, failure by omission or commission, excites displeasure in the understanding.

The classification of a poem as "epic" presupposes the artist's execution of definite matters of plot, character, sentiments, and language. Thus, for Milton to plunge into the "midst of things" in Paradise Lost is proper, according to the rules for epic; it is in harmony with the truth of epic; therefore, it pleases the understanding. Similarly, it is proper and, therefore, pleasing to the understanding that Milton does not omit "in the first Book the Project upon which the whole Poem turns."⁶⁷ On the other hand, "Digressions are by no means to be allowed of in an Epic Poem."⁶⁸ Milton's digressions, such as his "Complaint for his Blindness, his Panegyrick on Marriage, his Reflections on Adam and Eve's going naked, of the Angels eating, and several other Passages in his

Poem," though perhaps pleasing to the imagination, displeases the understanding by reason of the poet's failure to conform to the rules or truth of epic.⁶⁹

Addison employed the formal approach as only a part of his consideration of Paradise Lost. He by no means intended that this portion of the critique should stand alone. In his own practice of genre criticism he maintains perspective through reason:

I must . . . observe, that as the greatest Masters of critical Learning differ among one another as to some particular Points in an Epic Poem, I have not bound my self scrupulously to the Rules which any one of them has laid down upon that Art, but have taken the Liberty sometimes to join with one, and sometimes with another, and sometimes to differ from all of them, when I have thought that the Reason of the Thing was on my side.⁷⁰

In one of his later Spectator papers, Addison makes a general statement concerning truth in writing: "No Thought is beautiful which is not just, and no Thought can be just which is not founded in Truth, or at least in that which passes for such."⁷¹ Truth to Nature is the criterion by which Addison judges poetic achievement. The contemplation of this truth pleases the understanding. It would, thus, at first appear that Addison's criticism of Paradise Lost--the formal and informal parts of it alike--focuses upon the pleasures of the understanding. However, as the imitation and perfection of Nature stimulates the secondary pleasures of the imagination, it is clear that in his genre criticism of Milton's epic Addison goes beyond attention simply to the pleasures of the understanding and focuses upon those of the imagination.

Addison states that his investigation of the pleasures of the imagination, through a consideration of the "Subject at large," is intended to suggest to the reader "what it is that gives a Beauty to many Passages of the finest Writers both in Prose and Verse."⁷² That he understood his critique of Paradise Lost to have been such a particular application of this general theory Addison makes clear: "I have likewise examined the Works of the greatest Poet which our Nation or

perhaps any other has produced, and particularized most of these rational and manly Beauties which give a Value to that Divine Work."⁷³

The critique of Paradise Lost opens with an examination of the poem "by the Rules of Epic Poetry."⁷⁴ Addison follows Aristotle in his approach to the poem under the four heads of fable, characters, sentiments, and language. With respect to the fable, Addison remarks,

The first Thing to be consider'd in an Epic Poem, is the Fable, which is perfect or imperfect, according as the Action which it relates is more or less so. This Action should have three Qualifications in it. First, It should be but one Action. Secondly, It should be an entire Action; and Thirdly, it should be a great Action.⁷⁵

That the action of Milton's epic meets these qualifications is pleasing to the understanding.⁷⁶ That it meets them very well greatly pleases the understanding. That Milton surpasses both Homer and Virgil in his execution with respect to these qualifications pleases the understanding even more. It is a pleasure of the imagination, however, what I have termed the tertiary pleasure, which is excited by the realization that Milton's epic imitates and evokes the epic writings of Homer and Virgil.⁷⁷ Thus, the imagination is pleased through the apprehension that it was "in Imitation of these two great Poets" that Milton "opens his Paradise Lost with an infernal Council plotting the Fall of Man, which is the Action he proposed to celebrate."⁷⁸ The "Multitude of astonishing Incidents" in the action of Paradise Lost excites the secondary pleasures of the imagination: "it gives us . . . a Pleasure of the greatest Variety"⁷⁹

The realization of greatness in the epic action excites, by Addison's definition, the secondary pleasures of the imagination: the "Description of what is Great" is very "acceptable to the Imagination" because "we are not only delighted with comparing the Representation with the Original, but are highly pleased with the Original it self," as "the Sight of what is Great" is a source for the primary pleasures of the imagination.⁸⁰ Paradise Lost is truly great

in its nature, for "every Thing that is great in the whole Circle of Being, whether within the Verge of Nature, or out of it, has a proper Part assigned it in this noble Poem."⁸¹ Not only is the whole of the action of the poem great, but also all of the parts are so: "there is an unquestionable Magnificence in every Part of Paradise Lost."⁸² Finally, the action of the poem is great "in its Duration;" that is, it is neither too long nor too short. Addison refers to Aristotle for "a just Measure of this Kind of Magnitude," and the similitude which Aristotle cites by way of explanation clearly foreshadows Addison's own prescription for the upper and lower limits of the grand:

An Animal, no bigger than a Mite, cannot appear perfect to the Eye, because the Sight takes it in at once, and has only a confused Idea of the Whole, and not a distinct Idea of all its Parts; If on the contrary you should suppose an Animal of ten thousand Furlongs in Length, the Eye would be so filled with a single Part of it, that it could not give the Mind an Idea of the Whole. What these Animals are to the Eye, a very short or a very long Action would be to the Memory.⁸³

The imagination clearly cannot be pleased with excess in either direction. That which is "great" stretches the capacity of the imagination. Excess beyond the upper or lower limits of the grand leads to confusion and dissatisfaction; the imagination is unable to apprehend the certain magnitude of objects too large or too small and is, therefore, displeased.

Addison continues his formal criticism of Paradise Lost by considering the actors or characters. He clearly foreshadows statement of the secondary pleasures of the imagination derived through the uncommon when he observes, "If we look into the Characters of Milton, we shall find that he has introduced all the Variety his Poem was capable of receiving."⁸⁴ The characters of Adam and Eve in the prelapsarian state--"in the highest Innocence and Perfection" excite the secondary and, what I have termed, the tertiary pleasures of the imagination through greatness and novelty: they are "not only more magnificent, but more

new than any Characters either in Virgil or Homer, or indeed in the whole Circle of Nature."⁸⁵ Again, "the great Enemy of Mankind" works upon the imagination and stimulates the secondary and tertiary pleasures through variety: Satan "makes a much longer Voyage than Ulysses, puts in Practice many more Wiles and Stratagems, and hides himself under a greater Variety of Shapes and Appearances, all of which are severally detected, to the great Delight and Surprise of the Reader."⁸⁶ The "several Characters of the Persons that speak in his infernal Assembly" also excite the secondary pleasures of the imagination through variety.

Both secondary pleasures of the imagination and pleasures of understanding figure in Addison's observations concerning Sin and Death and the angels. While the characters of Sin and Death may stimulate the secondary pleasures of the imagination through the "very beautiful and well invented Allegory" which Milton wrought with them, the characters themselves are cause for displeasure to the understanding: "I cannot think that Persons of such a chymical Existence are proper Actors in an Epic Poem; because there is not that Measure of Probability annexed to them, which is requisite in Writings of this Kind"⁸⁷ The "Person of Raphael," on the other hand, pleases the understanding, for he "shews such a Dignity and Condescension in all his Speech and Behavior [toward Man], as are suitable to a Superior Nature." Milton's treatment of the angels in general excites both the secondary and tertiary pleasures of the imagination (through greatness and variety) and the pleasures of the understanding. These figures, great by their very natures, are "as much diversified in Milton, and distinguished by their proper Parts, as the Gods are in Homer or Virgil," they are presented with such art and "in a particular manner suitable to their respective Characters."⁸⁸

In his exploration of the relative conformity of Paradise Lost to the critical rules for the epic, Addison next considers the sentiments. "The

Sentiments in all Epic Poems are the Thoughts and Behavior which the Author ascribes to the Persons whom he introduces."⁸⁹ Addison's emphasis, with respect to the pleasures of the imagination, is on the sublimity of the thoughts. He considers that Milton's chief talent--"and indeed his distinguishing Excellence"--lay in "the Sublimity of his Thoughts," for "it is impossible for the Imagination of Man, to distend it self with greater Ideas, than those which he has laid together in his first, second, and tenth Books."⁹⁰ Book VII, "tho' not so apt to stir up Emotion in the Mind of the Reader," is likewise "wonderfully sublime" and, therefore, pleasing in this respect to the imagination.⁹¹

Addison distinguished three sources for the sublime in poetry: "the nobleness of the thought, the magnificence of the words, or the harmonious and lively turn of the phrases."⁹² Thus, with the language of Paradise Lost as with its sentiments, Addison emphasizes sublimity as a source for pleasures of the imagination. Sublimity of style is achieved through the use of metaphor, unusual and uncommon forms and phrases, the idioms of other tongues, and the variation in length of words and phrases by the addition or subtraction of syllables. Addison observes that through employing the methods available and through a judicious choice of words and phrases, Milton "made the Sublimity of his Style equal to that of his Sentiments."⁹³ Milton "raised the Language" through the "great many Latinisms, as well as Græcisms, and sometimes Hebraisms" which he infused into his poem.⁹⁴ He has, furthermore, "with great Judgment suppressed a Syllable in several Words, and shortened those of two Syllables into one," thus pleasing the imagination not only through sublimity, but also through the "greater Variety" thereby given his numbers.⁹⁵

Addison's genre criticism of Paradise Lost does not conclude with the first four formal essays of the critique. The paper in which he points out the deficiencies of the poem, No. 297, includes appeals to the classical rules as well

as to precedents.⁹⁶ In the twelve papers which mark the "Beauties and Excellencies" in each book of Milton's epic, Addison makes further reference to formal genre criticism. The catalogue of evil spirits, for example, he praises as combining the marvelous (the great or sublime) with the probable, and it is clearly in keeping with the form of epic as Homer's catalogue of ships and Virgil's list of warriors had established it.⁹⁷ Midway in turning over Book III, Addison directs his remarks to rule criticism:

Aristotle observes, that the Fable of an Epic Poem should abound in Circumstances that are both credible and astonishing; or, as the French Criticks chuse to phrase it, the Fable should be filled with the Probable and the Marvelous. This Rule is as fine and just as any in Aristotle's whole Art of Poetry.⁹⁸

Milton's fable, Addison continues, is "a Master-piece of this Nature."

Addison likewise remains mindful of the pleasures of the understanding in those papers which consider the particular beauties of Milton's epic. The division of the poem into twelve books rather than its original ten "was not done for the sake of such a Chimerical Beauty as that of resembling Virgil in this Particular, but for the more just and regular Disposition of this great Work."⁹⁹ The resemblance to Virgil may, indeed, excite a tertiary pleasure of the imagination, but the pleasures of the understanding are served by the propriety or truth of a just and regular disposition. The moral of Paradise Lost--"that Obedience to the Will of God makes Men happy, and that Disobedience makes them miserable"¹⁰⁰--pleases the understanding through its propriety. Every epic must have a moral, as Le Bossu "and many of the Criticks who have written since his Time" have pointed out. Addison expresses his opinion "that no just Heroic Poem ever was, or can be made from whence one great Moral may not be deduced."¹⁰¹

I have affirmed that in his informal criticism of Paradise Lost Addison also applies the principles of his aesthetic theory. The validity of this proposition stands to reason: if a foreshadowing of the theory of the pleasures

of imagination is to be seen in Addison's formal or genre criticism of the epic, how much more easily should elements of this theory be discovered in his informal criticism of the work. The papers of informal criticism are, after all, closer in both time and design to those on the pleasures of the imagination than are the papers of genre criticism. The briefest look at these twelve papers will serve to substantiate what I have suggested. Of the poem in general Addison observes at the conclusion to his treatment of Book I that Milton gave it "an agreeable Variety" by presenting his episodes as "so many short Fables" and his similes as "so many short Episodes."¹⁰² While the focus here is upon variety, "Satan's Walk upon the Outside of the Universe" in Book III exemplifies the great: "As his Roaming upon the Frontiers of the Creation, between that Mass of Matter, which was wrought into a World, and that shapeless unformed Heap of Materials, which still lay in Chaos and Confusion, strikes the Imagination with something astonishingly great and wild."¹⁰³ Again, it is "a noble Incident in the Poem" in Book I where "we see the Angels heaving up the Earth, and placing it in a different Posture to the Sun from what it had before the Fall of Man," an incident "conceived with that sublime Imagination which was so peculiar to this great Author."¹⁰⁴

As in these several passages, Addison repeatedly calls attention to places in the poem which please through the great and the uncommon. The same is true, to a lesser degree, of the pleasure derived through the beautiful. Discussing Satan's advance to earth in Book III, Addison remarks his "Sitting upon the Brink of this Passage Into the lower World", and taking a Survey of the whole Face of Nature, that appeared to him new and fresh in all its Beauties." He observes that this circumstance "fills the Mind of the Reader with as surprising and glorious an Idea as any that arises in the whole Poem."¹⁰⁵ That is, the imagination is not only pleased through this description of earth--so beautiful

in its newness, its freshness, its purity--but it is elevated by the sublimity of the conception itself.

Addison's aesthetic theory is given explicit statement only in his papers "On the Pleasures of the Imagination." Nevertheless, the major elements of this theory are foreshadowed in his critique of Paradise Lost. Not only in the informal criticism of the poem, but also in his formal or genre criticism, he is seen to be gathering, sifting, and organizing the materials for this aesthetic theory. Although the critique is first a storehouse for his practical criticism, it might well be regarded as the laboratory in which Addison solidified his conception of the pleasures of the imagination.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The Spectator, ed. G. Gregory Smith (New York, 1897-98), No. 267, IV, 60. All subsequent quotations from Spectator papers will refer to this edition which reproduces the text of the first collected edition, edited by Addison himself between 1712 and 1715.

² Spectator, No. 297, IV, 179.

³ Cf. Spectator 297, IV, 60-65.

⁴ W. J. Hipple, Jr., sees Addison's conception of the imagination as "a conglomerate faculty of presentation, of memory, of conception, and of association, both controlled and unbridled." (The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory / Carbondale, Ill., 1967/, p. 14.)

⁵ Spectator, No. 600, VIII, 149.

⁶ Spectator, No. 412, VI, 59.

⁷ Clarence D. Thorpe, "Addison & Hutcheson on the Imagination," ELP, II (1935), 217.

⁸ Spectator, No. 416, VI, 73.

⁹ L. A. Elioseff, The Cultural Milieu of Addison's Literary Criticism (Austin, Texas, 1963), p. 163.

¹⁰ Spectator, Nos. 414-415, VI, 65-73.

¹¹ Spectator, No. 416, VI, 73.

¹² Ibid., p. 75.

¹³ Spectator, No. 418, VI, 83.

¹⁴ Spectator, No. 85, II, 18.

¹⁵ Spectator, No. 267, IV, 62.

¹⁶ Spectator, No. 321, IV, 283. By "amuse," according to the OED, Addison is likely to have meant "to engage, arrest, or occupy the attention of;" "to divert, please with anything light or cheerful;" or "to excite the risible faculty or tickle the fancy of." Amused is defined as "diverted, entertained, tickled (in fancy)."

17 Spectator, No. 267, IV, 63-64.

18 Spectator, No. 253, IV, 8. Addison is not so precise or so categorical regarding the "sublime" as we might wish. For example, what he calls "sublime" in the critique of Paradise Lost he terms "great" in the papers on the pleasures of the imagination. These and several like, but not strictly synonymous, terms Addison is careful not to use interchangeably. In the critique the application of "sublime" is restricted to images, sentiments, and certain devices of language. Addison speaks of actions and characters, on the other hand, as "great," "noble," "magnificent," "majestic," or "marvelous." (Cf. Hippie, The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque, pp. 16-17.) Samuel Monk, discussing Addison's theory in relation to the emergence of the "sublime" in eighteenth-century criticism, states that greatness is "identical with sublimity" and that the effect of greatness is "virtually that of sublimity." (The Sublime, a Study in Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England [Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960], p. 87.)

19 Spectator, No. 70, I, 268.

20 Spectator, Nos. 39-40, I, 143-150. While Addison may have followed John Dennis's treatment of the sublime, Monk points out that Addison first established the sublime as a category separate from the beautiful. (The Sublime, p. 54.) In this regard see also John G. Robertson, Studies in the Genesis of the Romantic Theory in England (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 243-244.

21 Spectator, No. 267, IV, 62.

22 Ibid., pp. 64.

23 Spectator, No. 273, IV, 82.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 83.

26 Spectator, No. 285, IV, 133.

27 Spectator, No. 303, IV, 204.

28 Spectator, No. 327, V, 26.

29 Spectator, No. 357, V, 141.

30 Spectator, No. 309, IV, 225 and 232.

31 Spectator, No. 315, IV, 257.

32 Spectator, No. 321, IV, 281.

33 Ibid., p. 280.

34 C. D. Thorpe, "Addison and Some of his Predecessors on 'Novelty,'" PMLA, LII (1937), 1114.

35 Spectator, No. 412, VI, 60.

36 C. D. Thorpe observes this apparent ambivalence in terminology of Addison's early consideration of the uncommon. He lists as Addison's predecessors in this area of aesthetic theory Aristotle, Hobbes, Descartes, Le Bossu, Rapin, Dryden, Dennis, Longinus, Boileau, and Gracien. ("Addison and Some of his Predecessors," pp. 1114-29.) J. G. Robertson adds to this list the Italian Muratori. (The Genesis of the Romantic Theory, p. 248.)

37 Spectator, No. 412, VI, 60.

38 Ibid., p. 62. My italics.

39 Ibid., p. 61.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p. 62.

42 Poets, Addison remarks, borrow "more of their Epithets from Colours than from any other Topic." (Spectator, No. 412, VI, 62.)

43 Spectator, No. 420, VI, 89-90.

44 Spectator, No. 412, VI, 59.

45 While the apt and convincing representation of the ugly and disagreeable may stimulate the secondary pleasures, the subjective determination of what is ugly or disagreeable in no way affects the relative subjectivity of these pleasures. It is upon the aptness of the representation, not the subject matter, that Addison focuses. On the other hand, the determination of the good fortune of our own condition, productive of secondary pleasures when contrasted to the poetic description of what is terrible, may admit of some subjectivity. However, as the contrast must be considerable in order to stimulate these pleasures, significant individual variation in defining this "good fortune of our own condition" is very unlikely. Therefore, these additional sources do not affect the relative subjectivity of the secondary pleasures.

46 Spectator, No. 273, IV, 85.

47 Addison defines taste as a faculty of judgment. Taste in writing is "that Faculty of the Soul, which discerns the Beauties of an Author with Pleasure, and the Imperfections with Dislike." (Spectator, No. 409, VI, 49.) Although taste must "in some measure be born with us," without cultivation and improvement the faculty "will be very uncertain, and of little use to the Person that possesses it." (Ibid., p. 50.) Despite the above, Addison on occasion champions the popular taste, that "born with us"--unaided and unnumbered good sense confronting simple and naked Nature. The best example is his ballad papers. The ballad of "The Two Children in the Wood," termed "one of the Darling Songs of the Common People," is marked, Addison observes, by such simplicity in the verse as is even "despicable;" and yet, he continues, "because the Sentiments appear genuine and unaffected, they are able to move the Mind of the most polite Reader with inward Meltings of Humanity and Compassion." (Spectator, No. 88, II, 18.) The cultivated taste is, thus, on occasion taught by the popular taste.

48 Addison very briefly defines the pleasures of the understanding: the understanding "may be happy in the Contemplation of Moral, Natural, Mathematical, and other Kinds of Truth." (Spectator, No. 600, VIII, 180.)

49 Spectator, No. 409, VI, 51.

50 Ibid.

51 Spectator, No. 411, VI, 57.

52 Spectator, No. 600, VIII, 180.

53 Although Addison does not name or even recognize this category of pleasures, the idea is implicit in his writing. To simplify discussion of what is not developed by Addison and must therefore remain, in great measure, hypothetical to him, I shall treat the tertiary pleasures as existing and established.

54 Spectator, No. 303, IV, 203.

55 Spectator, No. 335, V, 46.

56 Ibid., p. 49.

57 Spectator, No. 351, V, 124.

58 Spectator, No. 369, V, 198.

59 Spectator, No. 345, V, 98.

60 Ibid., p. 99.

61 Ibid., p. 100, *My italics*.

62 Spectator, No. 262, IV, 42. Cf. Spectator, No. 291, IV, 153.

63 Cf. The Tatler, ed. George A. Aitken (London, 1898), No. 165, III, 269-272.

64 Ibid., pp. 269-270.

65 Spectator, No. 291, IV, 153. Analogous statements concerning false criticism occur in Spectator, No. 253, IV, 6; No. 262, IV, 42; and No. 692, VIII, 126-129; in Tatler, ed. G. A. Aitken, No. 165, III, 269-272; and in Guardian, No. 118, The Works of the Right Honorable Joseph Addison, ed. Richard Hurd (London, 1811), V, 251-264.

66 Spectator, No. 291, IV, 153.

67 Spectator, No. 309, IV, 229.

68 Spectator, No. 297, IV, 176.

69 Ibid., p. 177. Answering his own objection, Addison remarks that "there is so great a Beauty in these very Digressions, that I would not wish them out of his Poem."

70 Spectator, No. 321, IV, 279.

71 Spectator, No. 523, VII, 182.

72 Spectator, No. 409, VI, 52.

73 Ibid. My italics.

74 Spectator, No. 267, IV, 60.

75 Ibid., pp. 60-61.

76 Addison does not, of course, specify the various pleasures of "understanding" and "imagination" in the critique; he simply remarks that one thing and another "pleases" or "gives us the greatest pleasure." He does, however, frequently note the sources of particular pleasures, *i.e.*, variety, greatness, beauty.

77 That Addison nowhere names specifically, as I have done, these "tertiary" pleasures of the imagination cannot be emphasized too strongly. The concept is, however, latent in his theory and by retrospect in the papers on Paradise Lost. (See above, pp. 14-15.)

78 Spectator, No. 267, IV, 61.

79 Ibid., p. 62.

80 Spectator, No. 418, VI, 81; No. 412, VI, 59.

81 Spectator, No. 267, IV, 63.

82 Ibid. Note: Addison uses magnificent and great interchangeably.

83 Ibid., p. 64. Cf. Aristotle, De Poetica, chapters 24 and 7. See also Spectator, No. 420, VI, 89-90, and pp. 10 above. Addison did not attempt to refine what Aristotle had specified only so far.

84 Spectator, No. 273, IV, 83.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid., p. 84.

87 Ibid. My italics.

88 Ibid., p. 85.

89 Spectator, No. 279, IV, 106.

90 Ibid., p. 106.

91 Ibid.

92 Guardian, No. 117, The Works, ed. Richard Hurd, V, 267.

93 Spectator, No. 285, IV, 132.

94 Ibid., pp. 130-131.

95 Ibid., p. 131.

96 This enumeration of particular defects follows the general statements concerning fault-finding criticism made in Spectator No. 291. These two essays form a transition in the critique between the first four papers of formal genre criticism and the last twelve of informal criticism.

97 Spectator, No. 303, IV, 201.

98 Spectator, No. 315, IV, 255.

99 Spectator, No. 389, V, 196.

100 Ibid., p. 197.

101 Ibid., pp. 196 and 197.

102 Spectator, No. 303, IV, 204.

103 Spectator, No. 315, IV, 255.

104 Spectator, No. 357, V, 143. *My italics.*

105 Spectator, No. 315, IV, 257.

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ADDISON'S CRITIQUE OF PARADISE LOST
AND THE PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION

by

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ADDISON'S CRITIQUE OF PARADISE LOST
AND THE PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION

The writings upon which Joseph Addison's critical reputation is primarily based are the critique of Paradise Lost and the papers "On the Pleasures of the Imagination." The former, comprising eighteen issues of the Spectator, consists, basically, of an examination of Milton's epic "by the Rules of Epic Poetry" as set forth by "the greatest Criticks" and an informal account of "the many particular Beauties" in the poem. The latter, which appeared in the Spectator only seven weeks after the critique, is Addison's statement of his aesthetic theory. Although the two sets of papers are independent of each other, the critique definitely foreshadows the "Imagination" papers. Even in his formal or genre criticism of Paradise Lost Addison was formulating his theory of the pleasures of the imagination.

Addison's ideal in criticism is a positive appeal to the imagination. The rules governing a genre--rules indicating the "truth" of a genre--which he frequently applies are, in reality, directives to indicate how the imagination is best pleased. Thus, while his formal criticism of Paradise Lost seems, on the face of it, to concentrate upon the pleasures of understanding (the understanding "may be happy in the Contemplation of Moral, Natural, Mathematical, and other Kinds of Truth"), Addison constantly strives to show how the imagination is pleased by greatness in the epic action, by novelty in episode and characterization, and by beauty in description of persons and objects. Similarly, the informal examination of the poem, closer in both time and design to the "Imagination" papers, repeatedly calls attention to passages that exemplify the appeal of the great, the uncommon, or the beautiful to the imagination.

The papers on Paradise Lost served Addison as a practice field for the beautiful and the great as sources of imaginative pleasure. For that source

finally termed the uncommon, however, it was a proving ground: the qualities of novelty, variety, surprise, and so on, unsystematised in the earlier essays, are brought together in the "Imagination" papers under the general category of the uncommon. Thus, the critique is a kind of laboratory in which Addison carried on experiments in the pleasures of imagination preliminary to his explicit statement of the aesthetic theory itself.