

JOSEPH ADDISON AND GENERAL EDUCATION: MORAL DIDACTICS IN EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

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Joseph Addison's (1672–1719) essays in *The Spectator* occupy contradictory positions in the history of aesthetics. While they are generally considered central to the institution of aesthetics as a scholarly discipline, their reception has throughout history entailed a strong questioning of their philosophical and scholarly importance. In the following paper, I consider this dual feature as regards reception, and set out to clarify how this has come about. A re-examination of the arguments advanced by Addison makes clear that his role is not that of a philosopher, but that of a public educator. As such he aims to raise the standard of general education of the British 'middling orders' in the early eighteenth century, and by using art for didactic purposes he seeks to contribute to the shaping of morally accomplished individuals.

Joseph Addison und die Allgemeinbildung: Das Lehren von Moral im England des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts

Joseph Addisons (1672–1719) Essays in der Wochenschrift *The Spectator* nehmen in der Geschichte der Ästhetik einen widersprüchlichen Platz ein. Während ihnen für die Konstitution von Ästhetik als Wissenschaft zentrale Bedeutung zugeschrieben wird, wurde ihre philosophische und wissenschaftliche Bedeutung im Laufe ihrer Rezeptionsgeschichte immer wieder nachdrücklich in Frage gestellt. Im Zentrum der folgenden Überlegungen steht dieser Doppelaspekt im Hinblick auf die Rezeption; dabei versuche ich zu erhellen, wie es dazu kommen konnte. Analysiert man Addisons Argumente, so wird klar, dass seine Rolle nicht die eines Philosophen, sondern die eines Erziehers der Öffentlichkeit ist. Als ein solcher ist er bemüht, mittels Kunst als didaktisches Medium das Niveau der Allgemeinbildung der britischen Mittelschicht des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts anzuheben und so einen Beitrag zur Bildung moralisch wohlherzogener Individuen zu leisten.

I. INTRODUCTION

If the institution of aesthetics as a scholarly discipline in the eighteenth century has an initiator, it may well be Joseph Addison (1672–1719). While his vision, launched in the single-essay periodical *The Spectator*, might seem remote from the science of sensible cognition proposed later by Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762), it has nevertheless been suggested that it provided a ground-breaking channel for the discipline to follow.¹ Such suggestions are, however, not universally prevalent. A large part of the reception has in fact always revealed an unyielding refusal to

¹ See, for example, Jerome Stolnitz, 'On the Origins of "Aesthetic Disinterestedness"', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 143; William H. Youngren, 'Addison and the Birth of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics', *Modern Philology* 79 (1982): 268; Basil W. Worsfold, *The Principles of Criticism: An Introduction to the Study of Literature* (Port Washington, NY, and London: Kennikat Press, 1970), 51–2 and 94; John George Robertson, *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 235–49.

accept the importance of Addison's essays, exuding throughout history strong claims of denunciation about the essays' lack of philosophical and scholarly depth. It now appears that such refusals have prevailed and it is fair to say that Addison's essays are conspicuous by their absence in most contemporary debates in aesthetics.²

In view of these circumstances, I shall attempt to do two things in the following paper. First, I will cast new light on the 'dual perspective' in the treatment of Addison's essays – a perspective which has hitherto been overlooked by historians of aesthetics. By dual perspective I mean the persistent inclination of readers to view Addison's periodical essays as innovative on the one hand and as philosophically superficial and unimposing on the other.³

Second, I aim to explain why the dual features of the reception of his essays may be regarded as rational and as something that aesthetics would benefit considerably from being involved in. I tackle the position of Addison's writings from the perspective of his essays in the British essay-periodical *The Spectator* – established by Addison and Richard Steele (1672–1729), and published first between 1711 and 1712 and then again in 1714. It is by approaching Addison as a public educator who endeavoured to raise the standard of general education that we can begin to recognize the importance of the essays. The 'Human Soul without Education' is, in Addison's words, 'like Marble in the Quarry'; and as such it requires a chisel to reveal its virtues.⁴ Rather than to dismiss such a didactic project as philosophically superficial and ingratiating, or – as has occasionally been the case in the affirmative part of his reception – simply to regard it as part of a democratic or egalitarian vision,⁵ I demonstrate that it is challenging in a very different sense.

Different in manner (not news-based or explicitly political) and form (a single unified essay), *The Spectator* was a triumph from its launch in March 1711. The function of Addison's essays is extraordinary because, with a circulation of approximately 3,000 daily issues from the start (each essay was read, according to Addison, by about twenty readers), it influenced a substantial part of the expanding

² The attention paid to the status of Addison's essays is of course very different in the academic study of English literature. See, for example, John Richetti, ed., *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), in particular 405–6, 485–7; Paul Poplawski, ed., *English Literature in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 271–4; Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, *Joseph Addison's Sociable Animal: in the Market Place, on the Hustings, in the Pulpit* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1971).

³ My focus here is scholarship on the history of aesthetics, written in English.

⁴ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, ed. by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 338.

⁵ See, for example, Alexandre Beljame, *Le public et les hommes de lettres en Angleterre au dix-huitième siècle, 1660–1744* (Paris: Hachette, 1881), 288–9.

stratum of the British 'middling orders'. When speaking about the early eighteenth century, the term 'middle class' is an anachronism and it evokes ideas about awareness and social unity, which are deceptive when applied to pre-industrialized social orders.⁶ The extensive stratum of the middling orders ranges from near-aristocratic standards of living to the ways of life of craftsmen and retailers, including shopkeepers, manufacturers, independent artisans, civil servants, professionals, and lesser merchants.⁷ As has been demonstrated elsewhere, the expansion of the middling orders in the first half of the eighteenth century was related to the growth of the free market and commercial culture.⁸ The publication of Addison's periodical essays was squeezed in between what Larry Shiner characterizes as the old patronage system of art and the new market system of fine art.⁹ Many of the new goods made available at this time were indispensable for the improved standard of living, while other products were expected to meet a more abstract need. One such need was edification and culture, meeting an essential demand for social and moral markers. To the same extent that a new domestic consumer product might signify rising private prosperity, the assimilation of the arts and confident behaviour in relation to them could imply personal moral aptitude.

While serious attention to Addison's essays is absent from contemporary debates on aesthetics, a critique of the reception of his political agenda as purely a bourgeois ideological project within the awakening middle-class, capitalist order has emerged in the study of eighteenth-century literature. Such a critique does not primarily set out to depoliticize the essays, but rather to identify the excessively intransigent socio-political examination of them.¹⁰ Though such a critique is indeed appreciated, I shall have little to say about it here. I do not wish to have the essays predictably reduced to a single matter of group-interest – be it in the political interest of the landowning gentry, the emerging bourgeoisie, or the Whigs.¹¹ Addison's essays were not predisposed merely to one

⁶ Concerning the daily circulation of *The Spectator*, see Addison, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, 44.

⁷ See Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political & Social History, 1688–1832* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1997), 108. See also Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 15.

⁸ O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, 108–13.

⁹ Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 126–9.

¹⁰ See, for example, William Walker, 'Ideology and Addison's Essays on the Pleasures of the Imagination', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 24 (2000).

¹¹ For the claim that Addison's concern was with the landowning gentry, see Nick Grindle, 'Virgil's Prospects: The Gentry and the Representation of Landscape in Addison's Theory of the Imagination', *Oxford Art Journal* 29 (2006): 185–95. For the claim that Addison's concern was with the Whigs, see Walker, 'Ideology and Addison's Essays'.

homogeneous political aim or task, which strictly has to be related to politics to be properly recognized. The readers of the periodical essays came from remarkably diverse social backgrounds, but shared a mutual need for moral guidance. One aspect which makes Addison's essays so fascinating is that they managed to reach out and provide for an educational demand of such a large and heterogeneous category of the population. So, when referring to the middling orders we need to bear in mind the extremely varied body of individuals within such a stratum, as well as the fact that the ideological implications of Addison's essays, and the role assigned to the arts, is but one of a number of factors which need to be examined before we can recognize Addison's position in the history of aesthetics. As historians we should not only consider which stratum of the public was addressed, but also begin to take into account what distinguished the moral and educative substance of such an address.

I therefore consider the educational vision of Addison's criticism to be marked by a determinate representation of civil society and the public of the early eighteenth century, which is in fact to claim that the essays manifest an ideological position towards the readers.¹² 'Fine Taste' is, according to Addison, 'the utmost perfection of the accomplished man', and the line of arguments pursued in the essays interpellate readers by means of art, and occasionally nature, as a way didactically to help the readers, in acknowledging the interpellation, to evolve into morally accomplished subjects.¹³ One way Addison promotes his project of general education is, as I will demonstrate, by encouraging the introspective practice of imagining, thus enabling the reader to achieve his or her full potential as a moral subject, separating him or her from an objectionable way of life.

II. THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RECEPTION

Apart from John Dennis's (1657–1734) letters and his unfavourable study of Addison's tragedy *Cato* (1713), the reception of Addison's writings was homogenous during the first decades of the eighteenth century.¹⁴ One voice

¹² Regarding the concept of 'criticism' we should bear in mind that it is considered unknown prior to the eighteenth century and is closely linked to the public sphere. See Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'Literaturkritik und Öffentlichkeit', *Lili: Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 1 (1971): 14–19.

¹³ I apply the notion of the subject developed by Althusser, where the subject is constitutive of ideology. See Louis Althusser, 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état (Notes pour une recherche)', *La Pensée* 151 (1970): 31: 'toute idéologie interpelle les individus concrets en sujets concrets, par le fonctionnement de la catégorie de sujet.'

¹⁴ Dennis was disapproving in his examination of *Cato* in 'Remarks upon *Cato*, a Tragedy', *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, vol. 2, ed. by Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1943), 41–80. Dennis also wrote a number of letters to *The Spectator* and Richard Steele, whom he had a dispute with. See *ibid.*, 18–22.

that is heard in the crowd is provided by a brief remark made by Voltaire (1694–1778) while in exile in England between 1726 and 1728. As expected, Voltaire eulogizes Addison as a poet in *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733), and he argues that Addison's play *Cato* (produced 1712) is a 'Master-piece both with regard to the Diction, and to the Beauty and Harmony of the Numbers'.¹⁵ Interestingly enough, however, Voltaire also draws attention to a trait in Addison's manner as a poet, indeed an ingratiating remark in Addison's mind-set towards his addressees, which would later reverberate in the disapproving reactions to his essays: 'Mr. Addison had the effeminate Complaisance to soften the Severity of his dramatic Character so, as to adapt it to the Manners of the Age; and from an Endeavour to please, quite ruin'd a Master-Piece in its kind.'¹⁶ Although Voltaire certainly is greatly in favour of Addison as a poet, he nevertheless caught sight of a writer somewhat too concerned with pleasing the general taste of the age. What Voltaire unconsciously put his finger on was a way of approaching art as well as the public, which was to go a long way towards obliterating Addison's standing in the history of aesthetics.

The first rather indiscreet British critique of Addison's essays came a couple of decades later, written by Richard Hurd (1720–1808) in a dissertation published in Horace's *Q. Horatii Flacci epistolae ad Pisones, et Augustum* (1753). Commenting on the merits of Longinus, Dominique Bouhours (1628–1702), and Addison, Hurd unexpectedly feels 'obliged to add an observation concerning their *defects*' as well.¹⁷ These critics may have a scholarly method, Hurd argues, but the 'real service, they have done to criticism, is not very considerable'.¹⁸ The reason, he claims, is that 'they dwell too much in *generals*: that is, not only the *genus*, to which they refer their *species*, is too large, but those very subordinate species themselves are too comprehensive'.¹⁹ Addison's 'criticism' is, according to Hurd, 'by no means, his talent'.²⁰ His 'taste was truly elegant; but he had neither that vigour of understanding, nor chastised, philosophical spirit, which are so essential to this character'.²¹ The lack of philosophical depth is, furthermore, Hurd argues, related to a trait of

¹⁵ Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, trans. by John Lockman (London: C. Davis and A. Lyon, 1733), 178. Originally written in French, this work was first published in English translation, before being published as *Lettres Philosophiques*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁷ Richard Hurd, *Q. Horatii Flacci epistolae ad Pisones, et Augustum*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (London: W. Thurlbourne, 1753), 104.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

²¹ *Ibid.*

cursoriness. Not managing to display substantial philosophical erudition, and not attaining the requisite philosophical or scholarly depth, plainly suggests superficiality. In his criticism of John Milton (1608–1674), Addison is, according to Hurd, too dependent on Aristotle (384–322 BC) and René Le Bossu (1631–1680), and when making his own observations they are ‘so general and indeterminate, as to afford but little instruction to the reader, and are, not unfrequently, altogether frivolous’.²²

The two features of Addison’s writings insinuated by Voltaire in his remarks on *Cato*, and stated more resolutely by Hurd, may be further illustrated by a key figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, Hugh Blair (1718–1800), in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783). Commenting on the celebrated essays of ‘The Pleasures of the Imagination’, Blair asserts that Addison’s ‘speculations on this subject, if not exceedingly profound, are, however, very beautiful and entertaining; and he has the merit of having opened a track, which was before unbeaten’.²³ Blair has efficiently amalgamated the essays’ ability to strike out an important new course in criticism of the arts while managing to be both pleasurable and, if not superficial, at least not remarkably profound. What Blair points out is a dual trait that appears over and over again in the reception of Addison’s essays.

As approving as Blair is, the strongly sympathetic criticism of Addison’s essays wanes slightly towards the end of the century. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) captures the spirit of the times rather well in *The Lives of the Poets* (1780–81), when he remarks that a critic is a ‘name which the present generation is scarcely willing to allow’²⁴ Addison, and that his ‘criticism is condemned as tentative or experimental rather than scientific’.²⁵ The impression that Addison’s periodical essays are philosophically unsophisticated and not challenging enough for the reader is touched upon by Johnson as well, though he actually mentions this in support of Addison: superficiality, he says, made Addison easy to comprehend and could ‘prepare the mind for more attainments’.²⁶

When *The Spectator* was re-published in yet another edition in 1793–94, the historian and novelist Robert Bisset (c. 1758–1805) felt called upon to defend Addison mainly against the claim of being scientifically or philosophically

²² Ibid.

²³ Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, vol. 1 (Dublin: printed for Messrs. A. Gilbert, L. White, P. Byrne, J. Moore, W. Jones, and J. Rice, 1783), 52.

²⁴ Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with critical observations on their works*, vol. 3, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 36.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 37.

deficient and ingratiating. Bisset recapitulated the continuing debate, where it had been 'objected' that Addison was 'rather experimental than scientific' and where 'as a historian [...], he collects and narrates the facts, but does not as a philosopher investigate and ascertain the principles'.²⁷ Addison stood, in the straightforward language of Bisset, 'accused of not having entered into the subject with philosophical accuracy and depth'.²⁸ The underlying reason for the accusation was the fact that the philosophy evolved by Addison was, according to Bisset, made unpretentious and plain to the common man; it was a philosophy 'simplified to ordinary capacities'.²⁹ Complexity was not conducive to Addison's writings and aim. Since 'knowledge was then much less generally diffused than now' and 'philosophical discussions were confined to a few', Addison sought, according to Bisset, to reach out to as many readers as possible.³⁰ Complexity would have interfered with Addison's intention and, according to Bisset, 'he therefore acted judiciously in taking a contrary course, and answered an important purpose, by dispelling false taste, and introducing true'.³¹

III. THE DECLINE OF THE PERIODICAL ESSAY

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, Addison's essays met with more explicit disapproval. William Godwin (1756–1836), writing in *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature* (1797), thought it was high time to view the writers of the 'Age of Queen Anne' with 'fairness and impartiality',³² and claimed: 'nothing can be more glaringly exaggerated than praise' of Addison.³³ Godwin concluded: 'it were an endless task to hunt this author through all his negligences, uncouthnesses and solecisms'.³⁴ As a formalist and neo-classical poet, writing in compliance with the Horatian principles of 'to instruct' (*prodesse*) and 'to delight' (*delectare*), Addison was to some extent out of date as well.³⁵ His style was considered cursory, and as an essayist his observations frequently seemed to many to be obsolete and unimpressive. Though literature

²⁷ Robert Bisset, *The Spectator. A New Edition in Eight Volumes ... to which are prefixed the lives of the authors*, vol. 1 (London: 1793–1794), 29–30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² William Godwin, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature; In a Series of Essays* (New York: Augustas M. Kelley, 1965), 437.

³³ *Ibid.*, 438.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 442.

³⁵ See, for example, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*, vol. 2 (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1811), 328–32.

remained a largely public matter, and as such a moral matter as well, the attitude to the essays of Addison had changed considerably since the early eighteenth century. This was not only because of the moral principles they advanced, but also because of the changing preferences concerning the structure in which the morals were developed.

An interesting article that throws light on the matter appears in *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* of June 1819. The article has the enlightening title 'On the Declining Popularity of the British Essayists', and is written in a straightforward tone. The essayists, among whom Addison and Steele are naturally deemed men of light and leadership, 'are visibly losing the high rank they once held, as manuals to form our sentiments, and models to guide our taste', and 'writers ambitious of being thought fashionable, who catch and reflect the taste of the day, no longer expect to gain credit or popularity by strewing their pages with beauties of thought and expression culled from the essayists'.³⁶

Addison helped, according to this anonymous writer in *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, to 'spread the colours of fancy and sentiment over the routine of existence, and taught that most useful philosophy which consists in occupying our sensibility and taste with the objects of common and domestic life immediately around us'.³⁷ An essayist like Addison allegedly required no 'stimulus of great events or dignified objects'.³⁸ The force of the essays, it is claimed, reside in their capacity to develop from the 'simplest incidents' and conclude in enduring truths.³⁹ But public preferences had changed considerably. New modes of literature added to the decline of the periodical essay, and cleared new ground for debates on moral matters. The 'works of fiction' – especially the novel, which had then developed into the most powerful of literary genres – had replaced the periodical essay, and was, according to the writer in *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, 'now the medium by which men of wit and talent communicate to the world'.⁴⁰ The periodical essays held, in the view of the author of the article, an unfortunate intermediate position with regard to philosophy and science on the one hand and poetry and fiction on the other, a position that rested on shaky ground. To be modern, a writer needed 'either [to] exercise the reason or stir the feelings strongly', but essayists 'who appeal to the reason without depth of thinking,

³⁶ Anon., 'On the Declining Popularity of the British Essayists', *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany; a new series of the Scots Magazine* 83 (1819): 538–9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 539.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 540.

and to the fancy without enthusiasm or passion, cannot enjoy a high degree of popularity'.⁴¹

The status of the moral essays written by Addison, as well as the position of the essayists themselves, had therefore undeniably fallen into decline by the mid-nineteenth century. As the Scottish author, publisher, and natural philosopher Robert Chambers (1802–1871) stated in *Cyclopædia of English Literature* (1844): '[I]t cannot be concealed, that since the beginning of the present century, their [the British essayists'] popularity has undergone a considerable decline.'⁴² And Leigh Hunt (1784–1859), an esteemed writer of periodical essays himself, remarked in *The Indicator and the Companion* (1834), 'Addison and Steele were too much given up to Button's [Coffee-house] and the town', and periodical writing was 'not favourable to reading' since 'it becomes too much a matter of business, and will either be attended to at the expense of the writer's books, or books, the very admonishers of his industry, will make him idle'.⁴³ With its 'gossiping nature' the periodical essay can, according to Hunt, merely re-produce 'experiences familiar to the existing community'.⁴⁴ As Hunt mulls over his book-collection, he appears ill at ease about the fact that it even contains the essays of Addison, and though he indeed supports the undertaking of the essays as such ('to regulate the minor morals of society'), he remarks that they had nothing to do with scholarship.⁴⁵

The outcome of Addison's essays was no longer regarded as entirely productive. In a letter of 28 January 1810, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) remarks to his friend Thomas Poole that he had indeed 'studied the Spectator – & with increasing pleasure & admiration'.⁴⁶ But as regards the effect of the essays, Coleridge was critical, claiming that the essays had 'innocently contributed to the general taste for unconnected writing – just as if 'Reading made easy' should act to give men an aversion to words of more than two syllables, instead of drawing them *thro'* those words into the power of reading Books in general'.⁴⁷ Intellectually, the essays had but a limited scope and it was, according to Coleridge, 'evident' that there was a 'class of Thoughts & Feelings, and these too the most important, even practicably, which it would be

⁴¹ Ibid., 541.

⁴² Robert Chambers, *Cyclopædia of English Literature* (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1844), 604–5.

⁴³ Leigh Hunt, *The Indicator and the Companion; a miscellany for the fields and the fire-side*, vol. 2 (London: published for Henry Colburn by R. Bentley, 1834), 200.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 201.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 3 (1807–1814), ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 801.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

impossible to convey in the manner of Addison'.⁴⁸ It is fair to say that the nineteenth-century critics looked back at the criticism advanced by Addison in his periodical essays and saw a thinker of great magnitude, but it was, nevertheless, someone that they had difficulty appreciating.

In a lengthy essay entitled 'Remarks on the Writings of Addison and Steele', published in *The Western Monthly Magazine* in April 1835, the writer, J.J.J. (Isaac Appleton Jewett), provides one of the most critical studies of Addison's essays thus far in the debate. One explicit characteristic of periodical literature is, Jewett remarks, the morals it evolves, different sets of principles, which Addison, according to Jewett, has failed to make relevant, since 'the moral teachings of this literature want life', 'want energy', and 'want the fire and the outbreak of a strong devotional spirit'.⁴⁹ Addison was allegedly lacking in the sentiments requisite of a moral educator. Moral suggestions (for example, on the subject of being a good husband or a good citizen) or a categorization of the appearance of virtue as beautiful is, Jewett argues, simply not acceptable from someone lecturing on the indispensability of specific morals. Addison was too formal, too middling, and too vain to meet the high standards of a moral educator. The periodical essays, Jewett argues, lack a sense of enthusiasm, a deficiency which tends to make them morally unconvincing. Addison was, Jewett claims, too set on pleasing a metropolitan sphere of the public to be able to speak convincingly from his heart.⁵⁰

Here, as elsewhere, the critical failure of Addison revolves around a specific kind of superficiality, in the sense that his essays frequently appear to lack philosophical complexity: '[W]e are disposed to smile at his efforts in criticism, while we can hardly refrain from laughing outright at his philosophical reasonings.'⁵¹ Because of a lack of 'time and space', Jewett does not go into what such philosophical reasoning might consist in. But Addison's failure in philosophical analysis is, he argues, on the one hand attached to the formal and artificial spirit of neo-classical values, as well as Aristotelian principles, which Addison is allegedly defending, and, on the other hand, his hasty analysis: 'The two characteristics of these essays, which we apprehend, cannot but be manifest to the most superficial reader, are, a prim starched, formal narrowness of conception, and a most unpardonable slovenliness of reasoning.'⁵² A more particularized autonomous approach to contemplating the arts would have

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ J.J.J. [Isaac Appleton Jewett], 'Remarks on the Writings of Addison and Steele', *The Western Monthly Magazine* 3 (1835): 235.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 236.

⁵² Ibid., 238.

resulted in the accomplishment of a more circumspect manner, but Addison appears, according to Jewett, to be in the firm grip of a hampering, conformist mode of philosophical thinking, which makes him too formal and uncritical.

Addison is not, however, only restricted by neo-classical values as such; he is also restricted by his personal intellectual limitations as a critic. He lacks, according to Jewett, a 'large intellectual reach' and his 'mental glances did not shoot to and fro, athwart the darkness of the moral world, and reveal its mysteries'; his 'reasonings are full of *non sequiters*'.⁵³ Furthermore, Addison's 'propositions are not bound together by strong, invincible chains of ratiocination'.⁵⁴ The example Jewett gives here is the discrepancy between Addison's aim, which was to improve general morals, and his method, which consisted in creating fine taste for the public. There is no natural connection between aim and method. In fact, 'not only a priori reasoning, but all the past is full of refutations of this unsound conclusion', according to Jewett.⁵⁵

By the late nineteenth century, then, a characteristic portrait of Addison would mention the ground-breaking effect of his periodical essays, yet would not consider this effect to be truly proportional to its deficiencies. When we look at their reception in the twentieth century, we see that the position of periodical essays has become increasingly problematic. A twentieth-century scholar, such as Bonamy Dobrée (1891–1974), who feared too strong a division between 'lachrymose adoration' on the one hand and 'depreciation' on the other, has in fact had all his misgivings verified.⁵⁶ Addison is, as Leopold Damrosch, Jr recognized some thirty years ago, 'one of those writers whose reputation, which once seemed established for all time, has fallen so drastically that literate people feel no shame in admitting complete ignorance of him'.⁵⁷ How did this happen?

Part of the answer lies in the twentieth-century analytic movement in aesthetics. To draw on the highly influential terminology of Monroe C. Beardsley (1915–1985), we could refer to *philosophical aesthetics* concerned with the meaning and truth of critical statements, rather than *psychological aesthetics* dealing with the cause and effect of an artwork.⁵⁸ For aesthetics to develop into the philosophical discipline it is today it has been necessary to align the historical narrative of aesthetics to suit its scholarly status and aim.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Bonamy Dobrée, *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century: 1700–1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 102.

⁵⁷ Leopold Damrosch, Jr, 'The Significance of Addison's Criticism', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 19 (1979): 421.

⁵⁸ Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Art*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981), 7.

As aesthetics has become gradually more focused on philosophical problems consistent with analytic methodologies – naturally concentrating on non-evaluative and ahistorical ideas rather than their connection with socio-political conditions, an interaction which produced the modern system of the fine arts – the discipline’s introspection and philosophical-historical narrative has been steadily transformed.⁵⁹ To put it more bluntly, one could say that we have moved from the glorious mess of the eighteenth-century *literati*, politicians, laymen of the arts, publishers, poets and artists, towards a canonized set of eighteenth-century philosophers who fit into a required philosophical continuum. As a result, the discipline has of course gained in scholarly rigour, but has also lost a sense of historical complexity. It is difficult to dispel the impression that an excessive focus on philosophical problems that can be addressed in an analytic discourse without interference from outside has resulted in a disregard for Addison’s periodical essays. Though the analytic movement in aesthetics is a twentieth-century phenomenon, the conditions – especially the divided loyalty to the philosophical merits of Addison’s essays – have, as we have observed, been present since the mid-eighteenth century, a circumstance that has naturally contributed to the current neglect. Add to this – as has been effectively demonstrated by Brian McCrea in *Addison and Steele Are Dead* (1990) – the quest for the autonomy and professionalization of the discipline of literature in the twentieth century, the force of New Criticism, especially in post-1945 USA, with its accent on the text as an autonomous whole, and we begin to sense just how the periodical essays have lost a good deal of their interest among scholars.⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, Addison – a critic who never produced an extensive philosophical work on art, but only brief, entertaining, periodical essays in a form (the single unified essay published daily) that was unique for his generation – is absent from many twentieth-century accounts of the history of aesthetics, especially anthologies, which are such effective instruments in setting up and preserving the narrative.⁶¹

⁵⁹ A recognized feature of analytic philosophy and analytic aesthetics is a neglect of the social and political structure of ideas. See Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, eds, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 2. See also Richard Shusterman, ed., *Analytic Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 10.

⁶⁰ Brian McCrea, *Addison and Steele Are Dead: The English Department, Its Canon, and the Professionalization of Literary Criticism* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990), esp. 171–216.

⁶¹ Addison’s periodical essays are generally not included in anthologies on aesthetics. See, for example, Morris Weitz, ed., *Problems in Aesthetics* (New York: Macmillan, 1959); Patricia H. Werhane, ed., *Philosophical Issues in Art* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984); Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin, eds, *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Frank A. Tillman and Steven M. Cahn, eds, *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics: From Plato to Wittgenstein* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Carolyne Korsmeyer, ed., *Aesthetics: The Big Questions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

IV. DIDACTICS, ETHICS, AND ART

One of the questions that we have not asked ourselves thus far relates not only to why Addison has been perceived as unscholarly or unphilosophical and ingratiating, but, what is more important, why he was in fact both unscholarly and unphilosophical. If we acknowledge that a large part of the reception of his work reveals an important trait, the next sensible step would be to look for the reasons behind such a characteristic rather than removing it altogether from the discipline.

To identify the historical analysis of Addison's periodical essays, it is essential to recognize the didactic undertaking that aimed to serve and increase the standard of general education. The moral-didactic aim of the periodical essays is manifest from the very commencement of *The Spectator*. In an early essay, published on 12 March 1711, Addison famously states that he is attempting to 'enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality,' and 'to recover' his readers 'out of that Desperate state of Vice and Folly into which the Age is fallen'.⁶² In an essay published a couple of months later, we learn that such a moral moulding of public opinion is intimately mixed with an accurate judgement of writing, when Addison, true to his overall aim to 'banish Vice and Ignorance out of the Territories of *Great Britain*', sets out to 'establish among us a Taste of polite Writing'.⁶³ The moral manifesto established here is perfectly clear about whom to address: men and women of 'ordinary capacities'.⁶⁴ Such a category is important not only because of its conceivable magnitude, but also because the largest part of such a category was, early in the century, not greatly involved in the arts.

Most works of art in the last few decades of the seventeenth century were confined to the courts of royalty and the nobility, which had limited finances for the arts. The Protestant church was, as John Brewer remarks, opposed to the creation of music and the display of art, and there was also a ban on the importing of foreign art.⁶⁵ Performances of spoken drama were limited to two 'patent theatres' in England, and there was no such thing as concert series, public exhibitions of art, operas, daily newspapers, magazines, reviews, art-dealers, professional (that is, self-supporting) writers, or professional artists or musicians. Nor was there of course a qualified public audience for any of these artistic and intellectual activities, and hence no proper market for the arts.⁶⁶ A multitude of

⁶² Addison, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, 44.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ John Brewer, 'Cultural Production, Consumption, and the Place of the Artist in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

radical changes occurred throughout the eighteenth century, which revolutionized the traditional scenario for the arts, the artists, and the public, and initiated the establishment of the modern system of the fine arts. By the late eighteenth century, one could, as Brewer notes, attend the opera or concerts in London every evening, and in the 1760s there were more than 12,000 theatre-goers a week.⁶⁷ Furthermore, public pleasure gardens – like Vauxhall and Ranelagh – had been established with performances of small-scale operas and concerts, and the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 signified the end of censorship and the old press monopoly held by the Stationers' Company.⁶⁸

During the first few decades of the eighteenth century the need for straightforward guidelines for ethics and art was therefore considerable in the expanding middling orders. The readers of *The Spectator* were educated, though, as Robert DeMaria, Jr observes, 'not as learned as the audience for periodical writing in many of the "Reviews", "Works of the Learned", journals of societies [...], and even book catalogues'.⁶⁹ The readers of Addison's periodical essays held learning and culture in the highest regard, but, for a number of reasons, they were unable to continue studying.⁷⁰ Addison set out to meet this growing demand. The edification of the 'ordinary capacities' was, from this perspective, a triumphant project, partly because self-respect and good taste were so firmly entwined at the time, which made the motivating force behind the cultivation of the arts resolute and effective.

General education in the arts was not, however, impartial. Rather it was educational encouragement to the readers to use all their creative abilities, an ideological implementation, so to speak, in the material forms of the readers' daily life. By recognizing Addison's claims on art and ethics, the readers interacted with the ideological position of the arguments, and by doing so developed into morally accomplished subjects. To demonstrate moral virtue, such a subject needed to be cultured in the arts. Art was therefore not an end in itself, but a means to a desirable social status, and, indeed, an instrument for social discrimination.⁷¹ A judgement of taste was also the dividing line between

⁶⁷ Ibid., 8–9.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Robert DeMaria, Jr, 'The eighteenth-century periodical essay', in Richetti, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, 528.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Concerning this point, see Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 40: 'The aesthetics is, from its earliest formulations, engaged in the process of social discrimination: one argument has it that art is only art insofar as it is out of the reach of the vulgar.' De Bolla makes this claim with reference to Addison's separation of the polite from the vulgar, which I discuss later in this paper.

morality and immorality, between accomplishment and deficiency, between politeness and vulgarity. As commercial culture intensified, social transformation by means of commodities also accelerated. Status consciousness could be verified in numerous ways, but to be cultured in the arts was essential at all times as an apparent sign of moral self-confidence and power.

The arts (here, music, architecture, painting, poetry, and oratory) should, in the words of Addison, 'deduce their Laws and Rules from the general Sense and Taste of Mankind, and not from the Principles of those Arts themselves; or in other Words, the Taste is not to conform to the Art, but the Art to the Taste'.⁷² Art must simply adapt to public taste, and not the other way around. This did not, however, imply that art was incapable of fostering moral development, or was prevented from teaching and cultivating the public and forming them into morally accomplished subjects. Art was not lacking in self-determination and inventiveness. What Addison suggested was rather that art required a specific sensibility precisely because it had the important responsibility to provide the public with moral instruction. Art had then to ensure that it was compatible with public taste, to be able to make advancement as steadfastly and influentially as possible. The mimetic model which Addison depended on here placed a strong emphasis on art as a representation of a refined nature, that is to say, nature (chiefly human nature) as conceived by most members of the public. The ambition was not to bring about a radical transformation of public taste, but rather to be consistent with a large part of public taste, keenly aware of the direction it might move in next, and when it did, efficiently to reinforce its inclination. In this sense, the ideology and the subject of the middling orders, evolving from the periodical essays of the early eighteenth century, were inseparable, since the latter was utterly constitutive of the first.

It is by regarding Addison as a moral moulder of general education – rather than a philosopher expressing himself within a specialized scholarly discourse – that we can begin to recognize his standing as a central critic in the history of aesthetics. Addison reached out as no one had before, addressing a previously ignored stratum of a public that was largely removed from the arts. It is also by regarding the other part of the dualism – the claim that his essays lack scholarly or philosophical depth – that we can distinguish what the project of general education actually required from its leading figure. The pervasive influence arose from moral simplicity and straightforward language, both of which were essential for achieving the aim of general education leading to morality. To speak productively with the 'ordinary capacities', to interpellate readers as subjects, Addison expressed himself in the established idiom of a public that

⁷² Addison, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, 123.

was inexperienced in the arts, and whenever the readers felt that the essays were, as Addison himself put it, a 'little out of their Reach', he 'would not have them [the readers] discouraged, for they may assure themselves the next shall be much clearer'.⁷³

In the interaction between Addison and the readers the term 'philosophy' has the plain connotation of the pursuit of leisure, a dignified pastime for the inexperienced layman who is nevertheless keen to be taught. In a letter, published on 15 October 1711, a reader recommends Addison to 'speak of the Way of Life which plain Men may pursue, to fill up the Spaces of Time with Satisfaction'.⁷⁴ Such a pastime is to the reader closely associated with a particular notion of philosophy and what it ought to accomplish: 'It is a lamentable Circumstance, that Wisdom, or as you call it Philosophy, should furnish Ideas only for the Learned, and that a Man must be a Philosopher to know how to pass away his Time agreeably.'⁷⁵ The letter formulates the edifying ambition of the essays well: they should provide wisdom, or philosophy, in an uncomplicated manner that might aid the everyday pursuit of leisure. Though this scarcely corresponds to a professional notion of philosophy, nor indeed has it produced any serious interest in contemporary debates in aesthetics, it is important to recognize that it served an essential purpose for the layman of the middling orders in the early eighteenth century, which desired straightforward moral guidance germane to daily labours and duties. It was with a great sense of contentment that Addison himself observed the close similarities between his educational project and the position of Socrates in ancient Greece. While it was said of the latter 'that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men', Addison wrote that he was 'ambitious to have it said of [himself], that [he had] brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables and in Coffee-Houses'.⁷⁶

V. THE LIVES OF AURELIA AND FULVIA

The regimen for how to develop into a morally accomplished subject was considerably introspective in the way it was practised. The development and refinement of virtues corresponded to increasing familiarity with, and sophistication and self-assurance in, the arts. The final purpose of an introspective practice like that was not an absolute experience of art and nature, though

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 269.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 44.

such genuine experiences were compulsory for the objective with which Addison was truly concerned: morals. The moral regimen advanced by Addison dealt with the materiality of daily life, and it was essentially introspective, implying that the emerging subject of the middling orders was advised to achieve intellectual balance by cultivating the inner, productive faculty of the imagination. The inner life was reflected in the actions and manners of the subject, and moral actions became appropriate by refining the faculty of the imagination.

The notion of the imagination – famously developed by Addison – is often regarded solely as a critical means to judge and experience art and nature. In fact it is also important in the moral shaping of the subject.⁷⁷ It is in the essays published between 21 June and 3 July 1712 that Addison develops his ideas about the imagination. Without bearing in mind the model of the accomplished moral subject elaborated in the previous essays, however, it is, I believe, difficult really to do justice to the implications of the concept.

Addison makes a distinction between someone possessing a polite imagination and someone who is merely vulgar. The distinction presents an explicit vision of the kind of moral subject that is brought into being through the introspective practice of the imagination. 'A Man of Polite Imagination is', according to Addison, 'let into a great many Pleasures, that the Vulgar are not capable of receiving'.⁷⁸ The polite, educated, and sophisticated are separated from the vulgar, the uneducated:

⁷⁷ The notion of the imagination has of course a long history in British philosophy and science, where observations on the creative role of the imagination are frequently combined with scepticism regarding its undisciplined power and its relevance for science. Bacon – who shaped much of the conditions of the scientific and philosophical debate during the seventeenth century – assigned a certain status to the category of the imagination in his structure of human learning, in *Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning Divine and Human* (1605), in *Collected Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 3, ed. by James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (1876) (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1996), 329. Hobbes made crucial remarks about the creative power of the imagination. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651), in *The Collected Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 3, ed. William Molesworth (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1992), 3–17. See also Thomas Hobbes, *The Answer of Mr. Hobbes to Sir William Davenant's Preface Before Gondibert* (1650), in *The Collected Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 4, ed. William Molesworth (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1992), 441–58; and Thomas Hobbes, *The Iliads and Odysseys of Homer. Translated out of Greek into English, by Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (1675), 2nd ed. (1677), in *The Collected Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 10, ed. William Molesworth (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1992), 3–10. Locke did not concern himself specifically with the notion of fancy or imagination, but, through his claims regarding the creative power of forming complex ideas, he nevertheless had an important impact on the debate on the inventive structure of the imagination. See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), 5th ed. (1706) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 96–7.

⁷⁸ Addison, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 538.

He [a man of polite imagination] can converse with a Picture, and find an agreeable Companion in a Statue. He meets with a secret Refreshment in a Description, and often feels a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows, than another does in the Possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of Property in everything he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated Part of Nature administer to his Pleasures: So that he looks upon the World, as it were, in another Light, and discovers in it a Multitude of Charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of Mankind.⁷⁹

The arguments evolved here may well be considered in the light of Addison's notion of happiness and unobtrusive nature. 'True Happiness', he argues, 'is of a retired Nature, and an Enemy to Pomp and Noise'.⁸⁰ Such a nature is the product of virtuous self-knowledge, where the manners of the subject are well balanced from the perspective of the context, while appearing to be almost indifferent to any opinion that such a milieu might have of the manners of the subject: 'In short, it [true happiness] feels every thing it wants within it self, and receives no Addition from Multitudes of Witnesses and Spectators.'⁸¹ The self-confidence which underpins these manners is essentially a unified whole: the moral compass is at this point so entrenched and confident that nothing might disrupt its actions. What is cultivated in the case of polite imagination, then, is a sensitivity distinguishing the morally accomplished subjects from the vulgar. While the latter are restless, untrained, and unable to face anything but disorder in nature, a subject with a polite imagination has enough social self-confidence carefully to contemplate and take pleasure in such disorder. The distinction also takes us back to Addison's fable, in the same essay, on the lives of Aurelia and Fulvia, two opposites. The opening motto of the essay – 'Parva leves capiunt animos' (Light minds are pleased with trifles) – is from Ovid's (43 BC–AD 17) *Ars amatoria*, and refers here to the discourse of women, who appear ostentatiously to focus solely on superficial exteriors. This leads Addison to moralize on the lives of Aurelia and Fulvia.

While Aurelia ('a Woman of Great Quality') 'delights in the Privacy of a Country Life, and passes away a great part of her Time in her own Walks and Gardens', Fulvia 'lives in a perpetual Motion of Body, and Restlessness of Thought, and is never easie in any one Place when she thinks there is more Company in another'.⁸² The morals advanced here touch upon the complexity of living conditions, guiding principles, and objects in life. Aurelia and her husband 'abound with good Sense, consummate Virtue, and a mutual Esteem'.⁸³ Aurelia

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, 67.

⁸¹ Ibid., 68.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

is apparently established in the upper, privileged stratum of the middling orders. The *sine qua non* for pleasure and virtue is sound finances: confident access to capital and property (the family divides its time between the town and the country, depending on their frame of mind). To elaborate on the subject of wealth, however, suits neither Addison's purpose nor his manners, since he refers to a virtuous life that transcends material conditions. But we learn, at any rate, that private economy is of such a nature that Aurelia and her family form part of a desirable 'little Common-wealth within it self'.⁸⁴

Fulvia, on the other hand, considers her 'Life lost in her own Family, and fancies her self out of the World when she is not in the Ring, the Playhouse, or the Drawing-Room' and 'pities all the valuable Part of her own Sex, and calls every Woman of a prudent modest retired Life, a poor-spirited unpolished Creature'.⁸⁵ By 'setting her self to view' Fulvia is 'exposing her self', and Addison concludes with ill-concealed disdain that she 'grows Contemptible by being Conspicuous'.⁸⁶

What is displayed in the fable of Aurelia and Fulvia is nothing less than the difference between a polite imagination and a vulgar imagination, as well as a morally accomplished subject and a morally unaccomplished one. While one of the women will be able to educate herself by means of the arts, and as a result nurture a proper judgement of taste which, according to Addison, indeed provides 'another Sense',⁸⁷ the other will arguably end up in the position that distinguishes the 'Distracted Person', where the 'Imagination is troubled, and [the] whole Soul disordered and confused'.⁸⁸

Through her virtuous manners, Aurelia will naturally also act in accordance with Christian religious conviction. Elements of contentment originate from a contemplation filled with awe of the 'Supreme Author of our Being [who] has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness'.⁸⁹ Man is then by nature enthralled by 'great' and 'unlimited' creations, by which he experiences 'Admiration, which is a very pleasing Motion of the Mind'.⁹⁰ At this point our admiration 'immediately rises at the Consideration of any Object that takes up a great deal of room in the Fancy', which is exactly what Addison is implying when he remarks that Aurelia spends much of her

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 68–9.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 397: 'A Man that has a Taste of Musick, Painting, or Architecture, is like one that has another Sense, when compared with such as have no Relish of those Arts.'

⁸⁸ Ibid., vol. 2, 579.

⁸⁹ Ibid., vol. 3, 545.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

time sauntering about in the privacy of nature.⁹¹ Since God has 'given almost every thing about us the Power of raising an agreeable Idea in the Imagination', it is, according to Addison, 'impossible [...] to behold his Works with Coldness or Indifference'.⁹² Thus, when Aurelia demonstrates her sensitive contemplation of nature, and exercises her polite imagination, she acts according to nature and displays her religious conviction as well. And since 'Faith and Morality naturally produce each other' Aurelia will reinforce her moral conduct.⁹³

Because of her socio-economic position, though the structures of such a position remain merely implied, Aurelia is able to engage in the introspective practice in which the imagination is refined and its cultivation displayed in her self-assured sense of contemplation, where she uncovers and explores her imaginative capability. Aurelia is involved in the prolific project of self-fulfilment suggested by Addison, a project where she has recognized the ideological interpellation, and will expose her morality in her refined judgement and be regarded as a morally accomplished subject. Fulvia, on the other hand, with her uneasy, narcissistic yet extroverted, character, never single-minded in any experience of the arts, constantly perceptive yet evidently insensible to her own creative faculty, will not display any such morals. While Aurelia turns inwards, exploring her imaginative power (primary as well as secondary pleasures of the imagination), and is able to display her morals in her manners and dissociate herself from uncouth behaviour, Fulvia turns outwards, exposing only insecurity and lack of culture. As Addison examines the imagination, famously claiming that we are 'flung into a pleasing Astonishment at [...] unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them', the reader cannot help recalling the daily life of Aurelia, who epitomizes all such virtuous qualities.⁹⁴

By analyzing the morals developed by Addison, aesthetics begins to open itself up to less recognized parts of its history, parts contending with structures, power, and discrimination. More than anything, the history of aesthetics is a heterogeneous body of ideas, and as such should not be arranged to suit present-day trends in scholarship. Instead, it should be accepted with all its inadequacies and unimposing claims. Addison's essays do not provide multifaceted criticism ready to be reinterpreted and applied to modern conditions. What Addison did was to reach out to a previously uninitiated stratum and invite its members to reflect on the arts, and he demonstrated how the arts could

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 546.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 143.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 540.

be used to separate the cultured and morally accomplished subject from the unaccomplished. In so doing, Addison not only broke new ground for the debate on the arts, which naturally also aided the establishment of aesthetics, but he also aroused topical interest in how the arts could operate morally as a sign to distinguish a virtuous and educated way of life from a substandard one.

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