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THE SUBLIME FORCE OF WORDS IN ADDISON'S "PLEASURES"

BY NEIL SACCAMANO

It must be so—*Plato*, thou reason'st well!—
Else . . .
. . . whence this secret dread, and inward horror,
Of falling into nought? why shrinks the soul
Back on her self, and startles at destruction?

—Addison, *Cato*¹

At least since Samuel Johnson tried to deflate his contemporaries' "consciousness of their superiority" by stressing their unacknowledged debt to the critical "labours" of Joseph Addison, "The Pleasures of the Imagination" has supplied a point of origin in the history of eighteenth-century aesthetics.² If subsequent assessments of Addison's "entirely new" discourse have not explicitly ratified its historical singularity as the moment of "birth" of aesthetic theory proper, they consider it to have given "decisive impetus to a movement that was completely to discredit the merely formalistic parts of neoclassicism and to eventuate in a new aesthetic."³ Of course, one of the most powerful forces Addison contributed to this movement was the imaginative pleasure of the sublime or the "great," as he calls it in this series of essays: the rhetorical or Longinian sublime would be superseded by the natural sublime whose defining features for the aesthetic theory culminating in Kant, according to Samuel Monk, are formulated in the "Pleasures."⁴ For Monk and other historians of the sublime, the dominance of an aesthetics of nature at the end of the eighteenth century is adumbrated in Addison's analysis of the "aesthetic apprehension of mass and space" and in his attributing "to natural objects more power to please the imagination than to art."⁵ And not surprisingly, the "macro" history of aesthetics that begins with the abandonment of rhetoric in the "Pleasures" has its counterpart in the "micro" history of Addison's critical works that ends in this series. More recent studies of Addison might not follow Monk in dismissing such earlier essays as the group on *Paradise Lost* because they seem less systematic and more rhetorical in orientation, but the teleological model prevails in efforts that trace in his work

the emerging superiority of the affective over the cognitive value of tropes, or the suspension of formal rules of composition in favor of a moving simplicity.⁶ In short, through his frequent reliance on aesthetic criteria of judgment and especially through his remarks on the great, the beautiful, and the uncommon in the “Pleasures,” Addison has been figured as the instrument of a cunning historical necessity that required neoclassicism to surpass itself.

Resistance to the story of aesthetics framing Addison’s criticism has arisen not merely because such self-legitimizing and totalizing historical narratives no longer compel assent: it springs from a recognition of the strategic function performed by the sublime in the discourse that tells its history. Donald Pease has recently argued, for example, that the sublime in *Monk* acts as the motor of history insofar as it names that which exceeds and thereby limits and determines the forms or periods of historical discourse.⁷ And Neil Hertz had earlier shown how *Monk*’s comprehensive historical ordering of various texts on the sublime repeats the scenario of blockage and recovery that the historian defines as the sublime itself, but that Hertz finds to be a strategy “designed to consolidate a reassuringly operative notion of the self.”⁸ In each of these critiques, the sublime makes possible the teleological historical discourse, determining its categories, and establishes the historian as a subject possessed of knowledge and freedom. It is imperative that rhetoric and nature be mutually exclusive, hierarchically organized categories so that there may be a progressive movement from one to the other. In fact, the historical narrative serves to accomplish just these tasks and propels itself by expelling or abandoning its inferior terms.

What such a teleological model necessarily by-passes in Addison’s case is that the sublime of tropes and figures is neither abandoned in the “Pleasures” nor retained in some inert, anachronistic juxtaposition with the sublime of nature. It seems probable, as *Monk* notes, that the sublime goes by the name of the “great” in the “Pleasures” “because of [the former’s] association with rhetoric and purely critical writings,” and Addison does, at one point in the series, declare the superiority of nature over art in imaginative pleasure.⁹ But Addison not only recognizes the importance of the secondary pleasures, as recent critics have rightly noted, he inverts the positions of nature and art: if, at first, works of art are judged “very defective” in comparison to natural objects (3.548), literary art takes precedence by the end because the imagination is always

“sensible of some Defect in what it has seen” in and of nature (3.569). This shift in the priority and value of the two kinds of imaginative pleasure requires an analysis attentive to the role performed by the very distinction between a rhetorical and natural sublime for the subject of aesthetics and knowledge—an analysis that cannot be expected from teleological histories of aesthetics or of Addison’s criticism, which must assume the insularity of these categories in order to construct a narrative.

Nor, for that matter, can we turn to Thomas Weiskel’s psychoanalytic-semiotic study of the sublime for guidance in pursuing this inquiry. Empowered by the hypothesis that the rhetorical and natural sublimines are “structurally cognate,” Weiskel’s complex analysis makes natural objects and linguistic entities equivalent and substitutable: the reader confronted by “the dark conceits of allegory” is in a situation similar to the “beholder of a natural scene, which can be literally *seen* well enough but which cannot be wholly *read*. . . .”¹⁰ While historians leave the rhetorical sublime behind as inevitably surpassed by the natural, Weiskel’s semiology collapses the two as indifferently the same. But the hierarchical inversion of nature and literary art (including allegory) in the “Pleasures” already indicates the limitations of this approach. In Addison, at least—and a more extensive study might allow us to say in neoclassicism generally—no simple equivalence exists between rhetoric and an aesthetics of nature, between reading and seeing as sublime pleasures. There is, rather, a desire to determine reading on the model of seeing (this determination is quite literally the “ideology” of empirical accounts of language) and at the same time to assert their incommensurability. In fact, the very lines in which Weiskel makes the rhetorical and the natural sublimines equivalent betray an asymmetry that privileges linguistic operations: both the reader and the beholder must read. For the one, allegorical texts can be read but not completely read (understood); for the other, nature is figured as a text that also resists being read. In each instance, reading functions as both a kind of seeing and as incommensurate with sight. And it is the conflict between reading and seeing that elicits the sentiment of the sublime.

This brief commentary on the priority Weiskel accords to reading in these lines may serve to suggest that Addison’s hierarchical inversion of nature and literary art in the “Pleasures” is itself a sublime turn or trope whose strategic interest needs to be analyzed. As the term “inversion” implies a temporal sequence, my discussion

of the “Pleasures” will proceed narratively while attempting to characterize the logic entailed in this shift. I do not want to reintroduce an opposition between rhetoric and nature in order to construct a counter teleology of aesthetics that would merely reverse their narrative positions, since the sublime itself depends precisely on maintaining these categories so as to enact both their indistinction and their incommensurability. In fact, as we shall see, the aesthetic economy that requires nature to be preserved so that its loss in figurative language may yield a gain of pleasure links the sublime to mourning, a persistent motif in the “Pleasures” and other critical, philosophical, and literary works of the period.¹¹ The task of this essay, then, is not to show that rhetoric supplants nature but to present an account of their dynamics in Addison’s text.¹²

I. WORKING METAPHORS, CHANCE PLEASURES

The particularly labile relation of rhetoric to nature in the “Pleasures” is evident from the outset. Introducing his series under the auspices of Longinus, Addison locates the touchstone of taste exclusively in the “Greatness of Mind” that “fine Writing” imparts to a reader (3.530). As is well known, the faculty of taste for Addison is a contingent, not universal, gift of nature to certain individuals who must cultivate it but cannot otherwise obtain it. To know whether one possesses the faculty and therefore is properly a subject of taste, taste must appear as the extraordinary delight that occurs when reading those literary works sanctioned by cultural authorities (3.528). As if there were a language of affects, the spontaneous event of pleasure functions as a sign by which a subject comes to know itself and may then claim membership in the polite society that declares its canon of great books to be the condition of taste.

But in *Spectator* 411, the distinction between the primary and secondary pleasures, which structures the series, transfers the condition of taste to nature insofar as all imaginative pleasure derives ultimately from sight. For Addison, we remember, the primary pleasures “entirely proceed from such Objects as are before our Eyes,” whereas the secondary pleasures “flow from the Ideas of visible Objects, when the Objects are not actually before the Eye, but are called up into our Memories, or form’d into agreeable Visions of Things that are either Absent or Fictitious.” And nature, of course, is preeminent among visible objects. In this empirical conception of imagination, priority goes to perception, which passively

receives images of objects, while memory and art (“Paintings, Statues, [and] Descriptions”) draw on imagination’s “Power of retaining, altering, and compounding those Images” to produce representations (3.537). The remembered, the absent, and the fictitious are continuous with each other in Addison’s notion of representation because all are modifications of objects no longer present in sight but replaced by some imaginative form. The secondary pleasures thus compensate for the passing away of the object, since memory and literary as well as visual art only come from and ultimately refer back to natural phenomena and perceptual consciousness.

When discussing imaginative pleasure generally, Addison states that “Delightful Scenes” may be found in “Nature, Painting, or Poetry” (3.539) and thereby affirms the equivalence of art and the natural objects it recalls. But the primary pleasures derived from nature seem here to underwrite taste itself. In contrast to the secondary pleasures of “fine Writing,” the pleasures of sight remain entirely within nature: nature gives the faculty of taste and also gives itself as the source of the pleasure by which the subject of taste knows its own nature. No labor or literary culture is necessary: “It is but opening the Eye, and the Scene enters. The Colours paint themselves on the Fancy, with very little Attention of Thought or Application of Mind in the Beholder. We are struck, we know not how, with the Symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the Beauty of an Object” (3.538). By grounding the system of taste in nature, this unmotivated, unmediated feeling of pleasure provides a natural sign for the aesthetic subject and guarantees the truth of its self-knowledge.

Aesthetic pleasure, however, does not simply “happen” in the sight of nature: it entails a dynamics of force and agency. In Addison’s formulation of the event of pleasure, nature gets figured as an agent able to touch the subject (the eye becomes the canvas of a painting) that will feel “struck” by beauty and will “immediately assent” to its force. And if the subject actively assents to its passivity in this encounter, this is because it knows at the same time that no hand strikes the blow, no blow literally occurs—colors “paint themselves” because nature is only figuratively or analogically an artistic agent. In fact, the very act of figuring beauty as the productive act of another, artistic subject makes aesthetic pleasure possible. Through figuration, what the subject knows to be merely the chance force of natural objects becomes an effect designed to

produce pleasure. Hence, aesthetic pleasure testifies to the mastery of the subject that can analogically appropriate nature for itself: the satisfaction a “Man of a Polite Imagination” feels “in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows” gives him “a kind of Property in every thing he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated Parts of Nature administer to his Pleasures” (3.538).¹³

Despite, then, the separation of the primary from the secondary pleasures, the sight of nature gives pleasure only through an analogy to art as if nature were an artistic agent administering to the desires of the subject. That the figural dynamics of passivity and activity require art to supplement nature is explicitly acknowledged by Addison in a passage that begins, however, by asserting the aesthetic superiority of nature. What prompts Addison to bestow this privilege on nature is the inimitability of its greatness or sublimity:

If we consider the Works of *Nature* and *Art*, as they are qualified to entertain the Imagination, we shall find the last very defective, in Comparison of the former; for though they may sometimes appear as Beautiful or Strange, they can have nothing in them of that Vastness and Immensity, which afford so great an Entertainment to the Mind of the Beholder. The one may be as Polite and Delicate as the other, but can never shew her self so August and Magnificent in the Design. There is something more bold and masterly in the rough careless Strokes of Nature, than in the nice Touches and Embellishments of Art. (3.548–49)

Addison’s claim here is that only the sublime gives to the aesthetic subject nature as nature—nature “left to her-self,” he wrote in an earlier draft (3.549,n.3), nature untouched by human hands and not designed for human ends. Able to appear “Beautiful” and “Strange,” nature contains all of art—and more. In its beauty and novelty, nature appears as the art that mimics it; in its greatness, nature becomes that which lies beyond the reach of mimesis. As *the* more-than-art, nature is a hypostatization of perpetual motion: while the imagination eventually “runs over” the beauties of art, requiring “something else to gratifie her,” the sight, in nature, “is fed with an infinite variety of Images, without any certain Stint or Number” (3.549). Allowing the eye to continue to wander, the natural sublime is art without an end to movement in sight.

Addison’s comparison to the art through which nature itself appears (as incomparable) erects an antithesis based on an ethics of movement: the “wild Scenes” of the natural sublime are opposed to

“artificial Shows” cultivated for pleasure, and art becomes a prison of “narrow Compass” opposed to the field “without Confinement” of nature (3.549). But this antithesis had already been canceled by the very terms of the comparison that made the opposition possible: the figures of “work” and “design.” By naming natural objects “Works of *Nature*,” Addison endows nature with agency and thus gives it the gift of giving itself in pleasure. As a consequence of this personification, nature becomes a productive subject and all of its works, including the sublime, will work for man’s pleasure because, of course, no artist works without design. Where Addison locates the nature of nature is precisely in the “August and Magnificent . . . Design” of the sublime, in the “bold and masterly” character of nature’s “rough careless Strokes”—those marks that, *like* the “nice Touches” of art, can be taken as the traces of a graphic artist’s handwork. The natural sublime can be opposed to art only insofar as both natural and art objects are already figures of design, design itself implying a productive subject at work in its works. For these figural operations do not just transfer sense from persons, the proper subjects of art, to nature, only figuratively an artist: the metaphorical transfer takes for granted that works of art are produced by subjects who can find their power to act reflected in them. Eliding any questions about this conception of the artwork, the figure of nature’s work enforces a “labor theory of aesthetic value” in assuming that art is a production designed by a “bold and masterly” subject to elicit pleasure.¹⁴

The figure of a working nature accomplishes two things for Addison. First, it provides continuity with his discussion of the final causes of aesthetic pleasure, all of which refer to the designing hand of the being whom Addison calls “the first Contriver” (3.545). Aesthetic pleasure, of course, is merely a coincidence; “several Modifications of Matter” elicit a pleasure that prompts the mind, “without any previous Consideration,” to pronounce an object beautiful (3.542). The facticity of this pleasure—the experience of being suddenly “struck” by the beautiful and assenting to the blow or of being thrown by the great, “flung into a pleasing Astonishment at . . . unbounded Views” (3.540)—underwrites the coincidence and places aesthetic pleasure beyond the control and knowledge of the subject. In the shock of this unanticipated event, the subject discovers itself to have been unaccountably subjected to the force of “matter,” for “it is impossible . . . to assign the necessary Cause of this Pleasure” (3.544–45). Incapable of knowing why this

accident happens but only that we suffer it in pleasure, “all we can do,” Addison speculates, “is to reflect on those Operations of the Soul that are most agreeable.” Teleology becomes eschatology as Addison then speculates that one of the most agreeable operations of the soul is to posit its own autonomous existence and to pronounce itself destined to contemplate a “Nature, that is neither circumscribed by Time nor Place, nor to be comprehended by the largest Capacity of a Created Being.” In reflecting on the aesthetic pleasure of the sublime particularly, Addison seems merely to infer a possible ethical meaning of this unsolicited and uncalculated occurrence for the subject’s understanding of itself. But Addison’s teleological speculations are not content with arbitrarily positing the accident of aesthetic pleasure as a sign whose meaning can then also be read (understood). If there is a message in contingent aesthetic pleasure, it must have been written, sent, and received: “The Supreme Author of our Being has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness. Because, therefore, a great Part of our Happiness must arise from the Contemplation of his Being, . . . he has made them naturally delight in the Apprehension of what is Great or Unlimited.” The accident of aesthetic pleasure is not just accidental, nor does its meaning result from retroactively turning it into an allegorical sign, a “just Relish” or foretaste of a disembodied soul (3.545). This coincidence has been contrived by an author who “forms the Soul of Man” so that it can read in pleasing natural greatness its final destination, from which place the message had first been sent.

Secondly, the figure of design in nature’s work permits the natural and the human to communicate by relating nature to art in a supplemental, not antithetical, way. “We find the Works of Nature still more pleasant,” Addison notes, “the more they resemble those of Art” (and vice-versa) (3.549). Because nature, while not art, nonetheless appears as if it were a cultural product even in the rough strokes of its sublime design, a reciprocity becomes possible: the aesthetic subject can “represent” to itself these works “either as Copies or Originals” and may thereby claim to engage in a dialogue with its other. Aesthetic pleasure thus explicitly comes to depend on objects that have “such Variety or Regularity as may seem the Effect of Design in what we call the Works of Chance” (3.550). This last statement seems merely to affirm the symmetrical reflection of a natural art and an artful nature, which results when their works “mutually assist and compleat each other” (3.553). But formulated

in terms of chance and design, the reciprocity entails a threat to the subject that will compel Addison to suppress nature's art.

The threat does not lie in the figure of nature's art itself, since the metaphorical transfer of art to nature, we have already noted, has the effect of ratifying that art is indeed the product of a working subject. In fact, the metaphor itself posits, as the condition of a transfer, the very distinction between the material, objective, non-human character of nature and the intentional, volitional, productive essence of human subjects. The beholder always *knows* that nature's patterns occur by chance; nature remains merely material whose striking modifications are still only accidental configurations that have not been designed and therefore, strictly speaking, have not been produced, reproduced, or freely and intentionally meant. Since chance does not properly perform work, a chance-work is not at all a "work" but merely its semblance. The aesthetic subject alone can represent to itself what it calls the "Works of Chance" as if they were designed by the working subject it calls itself and represents itself to be. On the other hand, to maintain this same reciprocity in the case of art's natural status would be to menace the subject with the possibility that it and its works are also only an illusory "Effect of Design"—a design-effect, not design as such—and that the subject's representations, particularly of itself, are only "Works of Chance." This possibility would deprive the subject of its essential distinction from nature; unable to separate itself from nature so that it could call and represent nature as other, the subject would be confounded in its power to call, represent, and know itself. And it is this unsettling logic of reciprocity that accounts, I believe, for Addison's defensive privileging of the secondary pleasures of the imagination.

II. MELANCHOLY DESCRIPTION AND THE TIME OF READING

Addison's remarks on the secondary pleasures are entirely determined by the substitution of poetic description, based on writing and speech, for the other "Kinds of Representation" he singles out: statuary, painting, and music. What makes it possible for this one kind of representation to represent the others is Addison's subordination of all of them to mimesis as resemblance. Despite his acknowledgement that language "runs yet further from the things it represents than Painting" because "Letters and Syllables are wholly void of" any resemblance to the original objects they signify and because "it is impossible to draw the little Connexions of

Speech, or to give the Picture of a Conjunction or an Adverb,” Addison’s analysis of the secondary pleasures gets under way by considering linguistic and literary signification the equivalent of pictorial mimesis (3.559–60). Unlike sculpture and painting, whose metaphors conditioned the mutual reflection of nature and art, poetic description does not possess a natural relationship to the natural. One cannot see the mimicry of a description; one can only read poetic description. Indeed, in the *Spectator* series on wit Addison had censured mimesis of the letter in false wit (such as typographical poems, puns, and anagrams) as effects of “Chance,” the “Goddess that presides over these sorts of Compositions” (1.254).

The letteral difference of the linguistic contributes to the superiority of poetry for Addison, even though he suppresses this difference by characterizing the literary as descriptive. Through literary mimesis Addison seeks the transformation accomplished by the “lively” historical narrative of Livy, whose “Reader becomes a kind of Spectator” (3.574). But no sooner does he subordinate literary art to the sight of nature than he immediately stresses the profit of pleasure that results from the difference between language and perception: “Words, when well chosen, have so great a Force in them, that a Description often gives us more lively Ideas than the Sight of Things themselves” (3.560). In this energetic economy, the force of words produces the gain of “life” and vigor at the expense of the missing natural object which, as an effect of literary mimesis, will “appear weak and faint” when it re-presents itself (3.560–61). Appearing “more to the Life” through linguistic force than in life itself (3.560), natural objects become less alive and fall back to the condition of mere matter or body.

In explaining the “lively” linguistic force that deadens nature, Addison will ignore his recognition of the essential irreducibility of language to the order of visibility. Unlike Burke, who accounts for this force through an affective psychology of linguistic association, he resorts to the perceptual model that this force places in doubt.¹⁵ For Addison, imagination remains a combinatory faculty dependent for its material on nature, and language will continue to serve as simply a medium of visibility. In the “Survey of any Object,” he comments, “we have only so much of it painted on the Imagination, as comes in at the Eye; but in its Description, the Poet gives us as free a View of it as he pleases, and discovers to us several Parts, that either we did not attend to, or that lay out of our Sight when we first beheld it” (3.561). The difference made by language thus depends

on the intervention of the totalizing perception of the poet, who could see what had always been present to sight but overlooked by others and whose poetic expressions recollect these “several Parts” of the object “in such Figures and Representations as are most likely to hit the Fancy of the Reader” (3.563). But poetic description enables the reader to become a spectator by hallucinating a memory: it recalls what had never been present to the reader before linguistic force retrieved the memory of the missed experience. To the extent that description “discovers” to the reader a sight that happens as its after-effect, the force of language both conditions the very experience of the subject and dispossesses it of what occurs to it and what it remembers. By troping the force that “hits” the reader as the stroke of a poetic genius—as he had previously figured nature’s art—Addison, however, seeks to maintain language in its subservience to perceptual phenomena and thereby to keep literary art, along with its productive subject, distinct and immune from any unappropriable chance effects. The consequences for the subject would be disastrous if language were thought to function on the order of chance effects that could only be figured in language itself as works of design. So, whereas Addison affirms that in poetic description “the Poet seems to get the better of Nature” even though he takes his images “after her” (3.560), we could as justly conclude that linguistic force gets the better of a phenomenological account of literary art.

Addison does not denounce the gap opened by the force of words between representation and perception. That literary art and memory, in recalling images of missed objects, “get the better of Nature” by making her “weak and faint” is neither morally censured for endangering natural life nor attacked philosophically for threatening empirical knowledge. On the contrary, the pleasure attending recollection prompts Addison to invert the hierarchical positions of nature and art. This inversion compromises the contingency of aesthetic pleasure as well as the primacy of nature. Because literary art both resurrects and deadens the objects it recalls, the privileging of art betrays a desire to lose and lament nature in order to produce pleasure. Taking the force of language for a power it deploys and controls, the aesthetic subject wants images to be detached from their natural origin so that it can then freely recollect them and thereby establish its own autonomy.

Since the characterization of art as mimesis requires visible objects to function as at least the virtual or possible referents of poetic

description, nature cannot be altogether cast out. The secondary pleasures become primary only in the sense, Addison first remarks, that they are “of a wider and more universal Nature than those [the imagination] has, when joined with Sight; for not only what is Great, Strange or Beautiful, but any Thing that is Disagreeable when look’d upon, pleases us in an apt Description” (3.566). The superiority of literary art lies in the negativity of its figures, by which the aesthetic subject can appropriate the “Disagreeable” for and at its own pleasure. Or, rather, because pleasure arises from “nothing else but the Action of the Mind, which *compares*” the ideas presented in language with those derived from objects of perception, this pleasure belongs more properly to the understanding than to the imagination (3.566–67). In fact, the gap between the “Original” and the “Representation” opened or spanned by language—it is, after all, what makes language necessary or what language makes necessary—conditions aesthetic pleasure by installing the subject of understanding as a masterful reading subject. As readers, we know the difference between linguistic and natural entities; when displeasure would attend the sight of an object, we can always reflect on the “Aptness” or power of language to “excite the Image” so that we may tell a copy from an original or the active recollection of the past from the passive reception of images in a present perception, and the ability to tell this difference makes possible our pleasure. Addison insists that descriptions of what is great, surprising, or beautiful delight us “not only” because we find ourselves “*comparing* the Representation with the Original,” but because we “are highly pleased with the Original it self” (3.567)—a double pleasure. However, since the cognitive act of comparison had already supplemented the pleasurable sight of the “Original it Self,” whose form was figured as a work, the subject of understanding has never left and could never leave the subject of taste alone.

In short, the negative force of linguistic mimesis generates a sublime turn. In the sight of nature, the aesthetic subject may forget that its pleasure derives from the knowledge of itself as a subject with the power to represent, mean, and read or understand. Dependent on the distinction established through the analogy of nature’s art between the mere body of nature and the productive soul of human beings, the pleasure of the aesthetic subject comes not from simply seeing nature but from reading itself reading the language of nature. The turn to literary art, in which nature becomes clearly only a memory resuscitated and weakened by representa-

tions having no natural relation to the natural, is an attempt to prevent the aesthetic subject from forgetting the act of reading constitutive of its pleasure. In literary figuration, the productive activity of the subject is less likely to be missed, and the images excited by language will not as easily be mistaken for the objects to which they *only* refer.

That reading as a structure of self-reflection is essential to the priority accorded the secondary pleasures becomes clear as Addison inquires into the pleasure gained from another, more forceful displeasure: “But how comes it to pass, that we should take delight in being terrified or dejected by a Description, when we find so much Uneasiness in the Fear or Grief we receive from any other Occasion?” (3.568). Unlike Burke, Addison neither defines a distinct aesthetic pleasure (delight) to cover this negative category, nor considers terror the predominant sublime passion. He does, however, place terror in proximity to the sublime on the only occasion he uses that term in this text: Homer’s “God-like and Terrible” persons, he says, fill “his Readers with Sublime *Ideas*” (3.565). Addison answers his query with an explanation that speaks directly to the possibility of confusing a terrifying blow of nature and its recollection:

This Pleasure . . . does not arise so properly from the Description of what is Terrible, as from the Reflection we make on our selves at the time of reading it. When we look on such hideous Objects, we are not a little pleased to think we are in no Danger of them. We consider them at the same time, as Dreadful and Harmless; so that the more frightful Appearance they make, the greater is the Pleasure we receive from the Sense of our own Safety. In short, we look upon the Terrors of a Description, with the same Curiosity and Satisfaction that we survey a dead Monster. [Addison then cites Virgil’s *Aeneid*, 8.264–67, beginning with “*informe cadaver.*”] (3.568)

Like Burke, Addison finds figurative danger—a danger that is known, upon reflection, to be only figured and therefore no danger—to be essential to the production of aesthetic *pathos*. The unanticipated chance effects of nature, which affect and move individuals as if they were nothing but bodies, appear here to menace the very self-identity and existence of the subject that turns for safety to the knowledge of itself as reading. Because the aesthetic subject confounds seeing and reading—and the passage quoted above enacts this confusion by moving from reading a description

of terrifying objects, to “look[ing] on” these objects, and then back again to description—the understanding intervenes in reflection to save it. Or, rather, since the understanding enters at this terrifying moment precisely to establish the difference between figures and referents, we should say that the aesthetic subject does not know whether it is reading or seeing, does not know or feel itself to be present or absent, and hence does not know that it even forgot to remember this difference. In this respect, what terrifies is not the life-threatening object as such but the failure to distinguish objects of all sorts from language. As long, however, as we can reflect on “our selves at the time of reading,” we may find ourselves, there, reading, having suffered once—but no longer suffering—under the delusion that poetic language gives us the terrifying object as referent. And the more frightful the object to which language refers, the greater the pleasure we take in recognizing the aptness of a figure to excite an image *as if* the object were present, imperiling our ability to represent it and ourselves to ourselves.

The essential condition for the self-reflection of reading is, of course, time. We find ourselves by recollecting ourselves as having been, but not now, at risk; we survive the fear of sudden death by making it a memory for the self we take ourselves still to be; “we are delighted with the reflecting upon Dangers that are past.” Addison makes it explicit that the shock of terror can become pleasure only in the time of self-reflection given in reading. “When we read of Torments, Wounds, Deaths and the like dismal Accidents,” he explains, we get pleasure not so much “from the Grief which such melancholly Descriptions give us as from the secret Comparison which we make between our selves and the Person who suffers” (3.568). Grief or mourning itself is not pleasurable: it is the accompanying knowledge that the “accident” of death has happened to others whose absence is recalled in “melancholly Descriptions.” In mourning others for whom time is no more, we find ourselves alive. If the “lively” force of poetic language makes the object comparatively “weak and faint,” then the representation of another’s death is a memorial that deadens death by reflecting “our good Fortune, which exempts us from the like Calamities.” The figures that only refer to but do not give us death itself save us from this calamity of calamities. No pleasure arises,

however, . . . when we see a Person actually lying under the Tortures that we meet with in a Description; because, in this

Case, the Object presses too close upon our Senses, and bears so hard upon us, that it does not give us time or leisure to reflect upon our selves. . . . [and] turn [our thoughts] upon our own Happiness. Whereas, on the contrary, we consider the Misfortunes we read in History or Poetry, either as past, or as fictitious, so that the Reflection upon our selves rises in us insensibly, and over-bears the Sorrow we conceive for the Sufferings of the Afflicted. (3.568–69)

For the aesthetic subject, history and poetry, whatever their other differences, collapse into the saving opposition between having time and being out of time made possible by the knowledge that language only figures objects. Whether the objects of history and poetry are past or fictitious is irrelevant here; all that matters is that the aesthetic subject miss them in the act of reading. The truth of reading is the truth of fiction in this sense: we know we only ever have to do with figures that give us “the time or leisure to reflect upon our selves.” Addison’s analysis, of course, always supposes this knowledge. In contrast to the pressing communication of suffering—the sight of “Tortures” tortures sight—which marks actuality, reading gives us the time to reflect pleasurably on ourselves as if we were subject to “dismal Accidents.” Yet the self that we find in reflection to have been deceived by the mere figure of death is itself only a figure; the terrifying moment in which the self does not know or feel itself present gets read as a past belonging to the self that now has the time to reflect on its loss and recovery. It is this temporally split grieving subject that finds its sublime pleasure by reading itself as having been deceived by reading.

This stress on self-reflective reading as the sublime “Happiness” of self-affection leads Addison to affirm that the mind “can never meet with any Sight in Nature which sufficiently answers its highest Ideas of Pleasantness.” The threat to the autonomy of the subject entailed in the reciprocity between nature and art, chance and design, in the primary pleasures finally compels the abasement of nature. Because “the Imagination can fancy to it self Things more Great, Strange, or Beautiful, than the Eye ever saw, and is still sensible of some Defect in what it has seen,” the poet should work “to humour the Imagination in its own Notions,” by “mending,” “perfecting,” or “adding” to nature (3.569). A vast horizon may well have been an image of liberty, but any uncertainty concerning the subject’s free self-determination must be resolved by foregrounding the excessive force of figures. Once again personifying this

force as an act of genius, Addison requires the poet to show that “he is not obliged to attend” nature by transgressing in his landscape descriptions the seasonal and topographical differences governing natural generation (3.569). Addison’s poet should produce what Pope would call the monstrous, bathetic works inspired by Dulness, where “Time himself stands still” as “Realms shift their place” and “gay Description AEGypt glads with show’rs” or makes “painted vallies of eternal green.”¹⁶

Such grotesque art discloses that the referent of the image had always been needed only to be suspended by figuration. The kinds of literary work Addison praises here do not define a distinct genre or mode: they simply radicalize the distinction between language and its referent and make evident the need of the subject to possess itself in mournful and deadening poetic recollection. Nature had always to be reduced to the matter or body of an “*informe cadaver*” by the (de)formative linguistic activity of the noble poet. To prevent, then, the troubling confusion that haunts literary mimesis, Addison turns to the recognizably figural pleasures of “the Fairie way of Writing” and the “Emblematical Persons” of allegory (3.570, 573).

Addison’s remarks on allegorical and fabulous kinds of writing advance a neoclassical version of a productive imagination that properly rivals or mimics the productivity of nature, itself designed by the “Supreme Author” who, like the “Soul of Man,” transcends the limits of space and time. Both these rhetorical modes or genres overthrow the rule of pictorial mimesis and claim, instead, to present what has never been or never could be seen. In “the Fairie way of Writing,” the aesthetic subject does not lose itself in nature because “the Poet quite loses sight of Nature, and entertains his Reader’s Imagination with the Characters and Actions of such Persons as have many of them no Existence, but what he bestows on them” (3.570). Having “no Pattern to follow” in these productions, the poet leads a delighted reader, “as it were, into a new Creation” whose monsters cannot be mistaken for the familiar referents of perception—“we have no Rule by which to judge” these “Imaginary Persons” (3.570, 571, 573). Similarly, allegory has “something in it like Creation” (3.579). A rhetorical trope employed by poets as well as “the Polite Masters of Morality, Criticism, and other Speculations abstracted from Matter,” allegory, like metaphor and other figures of similitude, is generally for Addison a technique of allusion by which “a Truth of the Understanding is as it were re-

flected by the Imagination” and “a Scheme of Thoughts [is] traced out upon Matter.” Instead of copying nature, the allegorical imagination “is busy copying after the Understanding, and transcribing Ideas out of the Intellectual World into the Material” (3.577). In literary art specifically, allegory presents the reader with “a whole Creation of . . . shadowy Persons” (3.573).

In both these kinds of writing, then, the material or natural world is made to minister to the intellectual by means of the reoriented work of an imagination that only embodies the truths—and truth—of the mind. In the operation of transcription, the subject strikes matter and produces a type or imprint of itself that can be read as such. Allegorical and fabulous figures are generated by the imaginative touching of matter and mind, which remain nonetheless irreducibly opposed and hierarchically related, and the reader will recognize with pleasure their continued antagonism in the very figures that seem to reconcile them. By emphasizing the analogical status of these monstrous productions—they have “something in [them] *like* creation”; “we are lead, *as it were*, into a new Creation”—Addison indicates that their strategic function is to give us the time of reflection. But some of Addison’s remarks also suggest the inability of this sublime turn to these imaginary beings to prevent the confusion of the aesthetic subject. For while ghosts and fairies return the profit of a “pleasing kind of Horror” only insofar as we know them to be fiction and then “willingly give our selves up to so agreeable an Imposture” (3.571, 572)—the recognized loss of the referent conditioning, again, the self-affection of the willing aesthetic subject—Addison concedes the possibility of being deluded about these delusions. Just as the understanding saves the aesthetic subject from losing itself in terror, so Addison knowledgeably affirms the error of others so “prepossess with such false Opinions, as dispose them to believe these particular Delusions” (3.571).

The line demarcating Addison from these others, however, cannot be precisely drawn, since the fabulous relies on the “Legends and Fables, antiquated Romances, and the Traditions of Nurses and old Women” that comprise “our natural Prejudices,” those notions “we have imbibed in our Infancy” (3.570). As does Plato in the *Republic*, Addison traces the origin of delusion to the discourse of women, who preside over the subject’s accession to language and to subjectivity itself: as infants (*in-fans*), we “imbibe” ghostly figures with the language alone in which we *tell* the difference between

truth and fiction, ourselves and other persons or objects.¹⁷ In this context, the terrifying failure to differentiate language from its missed objects constitutes a regression to a past which, instead of being safely laid to rest by recollection, haunts the present. Moreover, by aligning legends and romances with this female discourse, Addison suggests that the historical division between superstition and enlightenment—a cut from which aesthetics as such emerges—is similarly gendered. The fabulous “owes its Original” not to the ancients (for Plato reasoned well) but “to the Darkness and Superstition of later Ages, when pious Frauds were made . . . [to] frighten [mankind] into a Sense of their Duty.” The modern national subject “enlightened by Learning and Philosophy” also remains susceptible to this infantilizing, feminizing regression because the English are “disposed by that Gloominess and Melancholly of Temper . . . to many wild Notions.” In fact, English poets excel in this genre precisely because, like their “Forefathers,” they have a “Reverence and Horror” of nature—as if poets must delusively mistake their own demons for those of nature (3.572).¹⁸ Although Addison’s progressive historical discourse restricts nature to the field of objects ruled by scientific-technical understanding, the “pleasing kind of Horror” of the fabulous depends on managing the return of this horrifying nature by reading its ghostly images as figures of the past.¹⁹

III. MADDENING RECOLLECTION

Insofar as fabulous and allegorical figures promise that which they enable us to see or think, the possibility of delusively mistaking language and its objects is a necessary component of representation. Delusion becomes possible when representation becomes necessary, and representation is necessary from the moment the image of an object must be “retained” in the very act of perception itself. While a Swiftian, satiric defense against this possibility would parodically expel those “whose peculiar Talent lies in fixing Tropes and Allegories to the *Letter*,” Addison scapegoats only those who fail to manage such confusion for aesthetic pleasure: as if it were in our power, we should “willingly give our selves up” to “Imposture” as if it were literally the perceived object itself.²⁰ The management of the confounding of figures with the figured presupposes, however, a distinction between literary and nonliterary modes of discourse—a distinction whose establishment or confirmation is sought precisely in aesthetically controlling its disappear-

ance. If poetic description were not known to differ from historical and scientific description, aesthetics itself could not exist: the epistemological status of every discourse would be merely uncertain as reference and figuration collapsed into each other.

When, toward the end of the series, Addison turns to the secondary pleasures felt in reading historians and natural philosophers who all “describe visible Objects of a real Existence” (3.574), he mimics that other imaginative operation—converting “what is Literal into Figure and Mystery”—parodied by Swift.²¹ Addison runs no epistemological risk in feeling the “pleasing Suspence” of Livy’s narrative because he does not convert reference into figuration but maintains their separation in coexistence: he simply considers “more the Art than the Veracity of the Historian” (3.574). Similarly, in describing the “pleasing Astonishment” felt in surveying the infinite universe after reading the “Theories” of “the new Philosophy”—one of the moments entitling the “Pleasures” to its place in histories of the Kantian natural sublime—Addison suffers no delusion because he knows he reads science as if it were poetry and he reads nature as if he were seeing (3.575, 574). In fact, the aesthetics of the infinite in *Spectator* 420 enforces the truth of the mind by naming what can only be read in a language irreducible to images. The understanding or reason as *ratio* underwrites and goes beyond aesthetics here to the extent that the imaginative apprehension of infinity depends on the work of “Analogy and Proportion”—the fancy “enlarge[s] itself . . . in its Contemplation of the various Proportions which its several Objects bear to each other” (3.576, 575)—a work needing the productive and transformative operations of language. Hence Addison dwells “longer on this Subject” because in moving from reading infinity in the language of science to beholding the universe, he seeks to show “the proper Limits, as well as the Defectiveness, of our Imagination” (3.576). Since the “visible Objects of a real Existence” to which science refers are actually invisible and have no existence before language names them, the sublime “new Philosophy” halts the secondary, recollective, representation of nature: while understanding “opens an infinite Space” and reason “can pursue a Particle of Matter through an infinite variety of Divisions,” the imagination is “immediately stopt” in its efforts, “loses sight” of matter, and “finds her self swallowed up in the Immensity of the Void that surrounds it” (3.576). In contrast to the possibility of delusion attending the fabulous and the allegorical, scientific theory posits by

naming what the imagination, acting “in Conjunction with the Body,” is “incapable of figuring” (3.575).

Yet if natural philosophy shares with literary art and moral philosophy a reliance on language to posit such entities as the “Idea of an Atome” (3.577)—or the idea of the self or the mind—that exist only for the understanding, then does not the subject necessarily mistake “Art” for “Veracity” when it takes itself and its practical or cognitive powers to be independent of the discourses by which it names and knows itself? Does not the subject inevitably run the risk of confusing itself with a ghostly, allegorical person produced by the force of words? Addison implicitly responds to these worrisome questions by focusing, in the concluding number of the series, on another limit of the imagination: its pains, rather than pleasures. Although he finds the very idea of the “Distaste and Terrour” that could “fill” the fancy so “disagreeable” that his criticism devotes less than a paragraph to it, he does not “quit” it before mentioning one of those “contrary Objects” that resists being turned to the profit of pleasure by figuration: “There is not a Sight in Nature so mortifying as that of a Distracted Person” whose mind has been “hurt by [some] Accident” and whose “whole Soul” has been so “confused” and “disordered by Dreams or Sickness” that the “Fancy is over-run with wild dismal Ideas, and terrified with a thousand hideous Monsters of its own framing” (3.579). The “Accident” of madness—and for Locke, Addison knows, madness consists in reasoning from ideas joined by chance or custom and unalterably repeated—upsets the ability of the subject to distinguish itself from its representations. Insensibly striking a blow to the understanding, this “Accident” suspends the knowledge underpinning aesthetics and turns self-reflection into an act of delusional repetition.

At precisely this “disagreeable” moment in the last paper, Addison *cites*—recalls or repeats—a passage from the *Aeneid* (4.469–73) that describes two instances of distraction: Pentheus, who, in seeing twin suns and a double Thebes rise to view, seems himself a double of the spectator astonished at nature’s infinity, “lost in . . . a Labyrinth of Suns and Worlds” (3.575); and Orestes, who flees from the sight of both his dead mother and the avenging Furies. Presumably for Addison the enlightened reader, these two persons are disordered by monsters they do not know to be of their own framing. (Orestes, in particular, should know better because he has already killed the missed object of his mother who, consequently,

should only appear in a ghost story as a memory of a past-present forever cut off from the present in which her figure might administer to his pleasure.)²² But the description of Pentheus and Orestes is a simile in the *Aeneid* for the madness of Dido, whom Addison here leaves off-stage but who then structurally occupies the position of the “contrary Object” that Pentheus and Orestes resemble.²³ Dido, if I may put it this way, comes to be the very emblem of madness in this *Spectator* paper and, as such, her inability to mourn defines the mortifying “Distaste” within the system of taste.

The conclusion to the story of Dido and Aeneas turns on the time of mourning—the time mourning takes and the time mourning brings—essential for survival of the self. Begging her sister Anna to plead with Aeneas to delay his departure, Dido explains: “for empty time I ask, for peace and reprieve for my frenzy, till fortune teach my vanquished soul to grieve” [tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque furori, / dum mea me victam doceat fortuna dolere].²⁴ In contrast, Aeneas, whose immortal destiny requires that Dido be for sacrifice, resists Anna’s appeals as, says Virgil, a strong oak withstands the blows of roaring Alpine winds: he remains in place even as he feels—so that he can feel—“the thrill of grief” [magno persentit pectore curas].²⁵ Struck by the suffering he knows he has inflicted on Dido and thus on himself, Aeneas has the empty time to find himself having already passed beyond his erotic entanglement; his mourning assures the loss and establishes his autonomous self-identity over time: the past of his attachment, the present of his grief, the future of his destiny. In fact, Aeneas’s “last, adequate, and proper” end, as Addison termed the ethical *telos* of the sublime, demands that his attachment to Dido be felt as dangerous and needing to be broken and mourned in an act of self-affirmation. But while Aeneas recovers himself in the vacant, aesthetic time of mourning, Dido’s ultimately suicidal failure to mourn suggests that she has run out of time. In her furor, she knows no time because the past forever haunts and vacates the present and the future. Following Locke on time, whom Addison cites in *Spectator* 94, we could say that Dido’s waking life becomes a dreamless sleep where there is “no Perception of Time” because repetition fixes “only one *Idea* in [her] Mind, without Variation, and the Succession of others” (1.399). The “no time” of madness seems here a kind of “full time” that mimics an eternal present: endlessly repeating the past in recollecting it, Dido no longer differs from herself but survives as a ghostly presence or allegorical person.

Yet the “full time” of madness is not simply the flawed, parodic double of the aesthetic “empty time” of mourning. As I have tried to show, the pleasures of the imagination in Addison arise from the nonphenomenological force of words that conditions the time of reflection. In this mournful time of self-appropriation and self-affection, however, the subject finds its sublime pleasure, reflects itself, only by reading a ghostly figure of itself reading.

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NOTES

¹ *Cato*, 5.1.1–6, in vol. 1 of *The Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Addison*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1914).

² Samuel Johnson, “The Life of Addison,” in *The Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 2:148, 146.

³ *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 3:531 (hereafter, all citations will be from this edition and will refer to volume and page number, respectively); Clarence D. Thorpe, “Addison’s Contribution to Criticism,” in *The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of Thought and Literature from Bacon to Pope* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1951), 324. See also William H. Youngren, “Addison and the Birth of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics,” *Modern Philology* 79 (1982): 267–83, and M. H. Abrams’s remarks on Addison in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1958), 274–75, and his more general, recent essay, “From Addison to Kant: Modern Aesthetics and the Exemplary Art,” in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), 16–48.

⁴ Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1935), 57–59.

⁵ Monk, 58. Monk’s lead was followed by Marjorie H. Nicolson in *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1959), 300–323, and Lee Andrew Elioseff in *The Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1963), 95–120.

⁶ Monk, 55–56; in addition to Youngren’s essay, see David A. Hansen, “Addison on Ornament and Poetic Style,” in *Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics, 1660–1800: Essays in Honor of Samuel Holt Monk*, ed. Howard Anderson and John S. Shea (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1967), 94–127, and Robert L. Montgomery, “Addison and the ‘Helps and Ornaments of Art,’” *Criticism* 25 (1983): 329–46.

⁷ Donald Pease, “Sublime Politics,” *boundary 2*, 12/13 (1984): 259–79.

⁸ Neil Hertz, “The Notion of Blockage in the Literature of the Sublime” (first published in 1978), in his *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), 48.

⁹ See Monk, 57.

¹⁰ Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), 11, 30.

¹¹ In “Economimesis” (*Diacritics* 11.2 [1981]: 3–25), Jacques Derrida has noted the connection between mourning and negative pleasure in Kant’s third *Critique*.

¹² In this task, I align myself with the reevaluation of the relation between rhetoric and nature undertaken by Frances Ferguson in “The Sublime of Edmund Burke, or the Baths of Experience,” in *Glyph* 8 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press,

1981), 62–78, and by Suzanne Guerlac in “Longinus and the Subject of the Sublime,” *New Literary History* 16 (1985): 275–89. Neil Hertz’s essays in *The End of the Line* have been a constant challenge to think the strategic operation of the sublime.

¹³ For an analysis of the ideology of landscape aesthetics in Addison and others, see Carole Fabricant’s “The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Cohen (note 3), 49–81.

¹⁴ This is Frances Ferguson’s characterization of the social work she considers the sublime to perform for Burke (“Legislating the Sublime,” in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Cohen [note 3], 135).

¹⁵ See Stephen Land, *From Signs to Propositions: The Concept of Form in Eighteenth-Century Semantic Theory* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1974), 21–50, for a discussion of Burke’s and, more briefly, Addison’s departure from the representational semantic model of language and metaphor based on Lockean epistemology.

¹⁶ Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), 1.71–76.

¹⁷ See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s “Typographie,” in *Mimesis: Desarticulations* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 165–270, esp. 257–60, for an analysis of Plato’s censure of the poetic fictions narrated by mothers and nurses to infants—“these narratives drawn from mythological poetry . . . which provide the Greeks with the principal material of the first familial education and through which the ‘maternal’ language also comes to be learned” [se fait aussi l’apprentissage de la langue ‘maternelle’] (257). Since these narratives “received from the mouth of women” form the linguistic origin of the subject, Lacoue-Labarthe correlates two major risks run by Platonic mimesis: “feminization and madness” (260; my translation). In *Spectator* 110, Addison cites Locke on the association of ideas to explain that “weak Minds” fill the “supernumerary Horrors” of night with “Spectres and Apparitions” as a result of “the Prejudice of Education” inculcated by “foolish Maid[s]” (1.454).

¹⁸ The importance of the historical opposition between superstition and rationality for the sublime has been addressed by Paul Fry in his “The Possession of the Sublime,” *Studies in Romanticism* 26 (1987): 187–207.

¹⁹ The possibility of delusion persists in allegory as well. As Steven Knapp has also argued (*Personification and the Sublime: Milton to Coleridge* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985], esp. 51–65), Addison criticizes the allegory of Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost* because the juxtaposition of rhetorical personifications and literal agents threatens the distinction between them. In *Spectator* 337, Addison again resorts to a historical discourse to determine this distinction: for the ancients such beings were real deities, whereas for enlightened Christians they are mythical and hence inappropriate in an epic that recites the historical truth of Genesis.

²⁰ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 190.

²¹ Swift, 190.

²² Through a reference to stage performance, exceptional in his work, Virgil stresses that Orestes is merely a *dramatis persona*—“as when Agamemnon’s son, Orestes, driven over the stage” [aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes]—and thus that, unlike mad Orestes, he knows mimesis when he sees it (*Aeneid*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978], 4.471). Yet in naming the person on stage “Orestes,” Virgil confuses an actor with Orestes in *propria persona* and, in so doing, enacts the terrifying madness he recollects.

²³ Addison does, however, cite the description of Dido’s dream (*Aeneid* 4.466–68), which immediately precedes the allusion to Pentheus and Orestes, twice in *The Spectator*: as the motto for number 240, and, more interestingly, in number 487,

where it dizzyingly exemplifies the “painful Solitude” the soul would feel if she “were sensible of her being alone in her sleeping Moments”—“the time would hang very heavy on her, as it often actually does when she dreams that she is in such Solitude” (4.228). In sleep, “the Soul seems gathered within her self, and recovers that Spring which is broke and weakened, when she operates more in concert with the Body.” Yet the soul’s self-recovery entails a horrifying suspension or “hanging” of time that oneiric representation must ward off. In dreaming, the soul exercises a “wonderful Power” to produce “her own Company,” “converses with numberless Beings of her own Creation, and is transported into ten thousand Scenes of her own raising”: “She is herself the Theatre, the Actors, and the Beholder” (4.229).

²⁴ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.433–34.

²⁵ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.448. The entire passage reads:

But by no tearful pleas is he moved, nor in yielding mood pays he heed to any words. Fate withstands and heaven seals his kindly, mortal ears. Even as when northern Alpine winds, blowing now hence, now thence, emulously strive to uproot an oak strong with the strength of years, there comes a roar, the stem quivers and the high leafage thickly strews the ground, but the oak clings to the crag, and as far as it lifts its top to the airs of heaven, so far it strikes its roots down towards hell—even so with ceaseless appeals, from this side and from that, the hero is buffeted, and in his mighty heart feels the thrill of grief: steadfast stands his will; the tears fall in vain. (4.438–449)

Through the simile to the oak that mounts up to the heavens but that also drives down through the earth toward Tartarus, Aeneas expands at this moment into a sublime colossus and thus may be compared to Virgil’s Fame (*Aeneid*, 4.176–77) and Homer’s Discord (*Iliad*, 4.440–45), whose heads are hidden in the clouds as they walk on earth. Longinus, of course, interpreted the magnitude of Discord as the measure of Homer’s greatness (*On Sublimity*, 9.5), and Boileau argued, against Perrault, that the sublimity of both Virgil’s and Homer’s giants results from the allegorical unity of these immense bodies whose heads would be missed in perception or description (see the fourth of Boileau’s “Réflexions critiques”).