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PARAGONS OF ART AND NATURE
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH AESTHETIC THEORY

By

Eduard B. Ghita

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Humanities

Department of Comparative Humanities
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2023

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IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH AESTHETIC THEORY

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April 21, 2023

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
Corina-Florela and Sorin.

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The early stages of my research were supported by the UEFISCIDI grant “An Intellectual History of the Imagination: Bridging Literature, Philosophy and Science in Early Modern and Enlightenment England.” I am much indebted to Sorana Corneanu who led this research project and facilitated my visits to the University of Oxford and the University of Aberdeen (special thanks to Endre Szécsényi for the warm welcome I received in Aberdeen and for sharing his precious insights into the intellectual history of aesthetics). I would also like to thank my former colleagues Dragoş Ivana, Alexandra Bacalu, and Irina Georgescu for creating a stimulating learning environment at the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Bucharest.

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Louisville, Kentucky

ABSTRACT

PARAGONS OF ART AND NATURE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH AESTHETIC THEORY

Eduard B. Ghita

April 21, 2023

This dissertation examines the interaction of nature and art as objects of aesthetic appreciation in eighteenth-century Britain, with special emphasis on the aesthetic theories of Anthony Ashley-Cooper-3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Addison, and William Gilpin. Despite its openness to explore principles of aesthetics and concepts, such as beauty and sublimity, that were common to both nature and art, modern aesthetic theory framed the relation of art to nature hierarchically, an aspect captured by the term ‘paragon’. In this dissertation I trace a movement away from theories in which the superiority of nature to art was recognized (chapter 2 on Shaftesbury’s aesthetics) to theories where this aspect was complicated (chapter 3 on Addison’s aesthetics), contested, and reversed (chapter 4 on Gilpin’s aesthetics), and I argue that this transformation was deeply interwoven with complex and changing notions of artistic imitation, conceptions of the sublime, and aspects of natural theology that were then an integral part of the aesthetic. By showing that the supersession of nature by art was already contained within Gilpin’s notion of the picturesque, this dissertation offers a historical antecedent to Hegel’s radical exclusion of natural beauty from the scope of philosophical aesthetics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Paragons of Art and Nature in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory

It has been suggested that the durable pairing of ‘art and ‘nature’ throughout most human history gave a complete picture of the world comprising both human culture as well as whatever was not human creation or whatever existed as such without human intervention.¹ According to an eminent historian, the division was formalized by the Greeks who differentiated that which is ‘of nature’ from that which is ‘of art’, or of human institution.² The relation of ‘art’ to ‘nature’ has been reflective of humanity’s most valued beliefs about their place in the world, and has been a productive vehicle for the expression of views on a variety of topics within disciplines as diverse as politics, rhetoric, ethics, theology, but also aesthetics.

Modern aesthetics,³ as it emerged at the dawn of the eighteenth-century in Britain, comprised the first systematic efforts to theorize a special kind of pleasurable experience

¹ Despite changes in the way the world was understood, the pairing of art and nature seems to have implied a sort of ubiquitous tension between that which is the product of human intervention and that which is not. See Edward Talyer’s treatment of the conceptual pair in Renaissance literature. Edward William Talyer, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1964), 21–22, 35. As for the eighteenth century, the formulation remains powerfully relevant; as Basil Willey puts it: “Nature was the grand alternative to all that man had made of man upon her solid ground therefore—upon the *tabula rasa* prepared by the true philosophy—must all the religion, the ethics, the politics, the law, and the art of the future be constructed.” Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), 2.

² Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Netherlands: Springer, Warsaw, 2013), 2.

³ The term ‘aesthetics’ is used to cover a broad range of concepts: a special kind of pleasure, taste, the categories of the beautiful, the novel, the sublime and the picturesque—applicable to the world at large, to both nature and art. The British did not use the term ‘aesthetic’, but they were the first to envision the

to be had in the world at large which commonly included both ‘the works of nature’ and ‘the works of art’. The relation between the two realms has been recognized as a major problem in the history of aesthetics.⁴ For one, modern aesthetics sought principles that were common to both nature and art.⁵ Take, for instance, the qualities of beauty and sublimity which, despite their varied articulations, have typically transcended the boundaries between nature and art. T.J. Diffey has suggested that the eighteenth-century British aestheticians were precursors of Frank Sibley who argued that the aesthetic interest should be in the quality itself rather than in the kind of object, natural or artistic, that instantiates it; accordingly, “between a graceful willow tree and a graceful dance, [...] the aesthetic interest is in the grace.”⁶ This is known as the ‘aesthetic-first’ position.

possibility of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline. I have argued that, from an intellectual-historical standpoint, it is not anachronistic to use the term when dealing with British aesthetics. Eduard Ghita. "Theological Underpinnings of Joseph Addison's Aesthetics." *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 6, no. 2 (2017): 100-101. Similarly, Karl Axelsson has argued that the use of the prefix ‘aesthetic’ facilitates an improved historical understanding that far outweighs the disadvantages. Karl Axelsson, *Political Aesthetics: Addison and Shaftesbury on Taste, Morals and Society* (NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 16–17.

⁴ See Frederic Will, “Goethe’s Aesthetics: The Work of Art and the Work of Nature,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 6, no. 22 (January 1956): 53, p. 62.

⁵ Walter J. Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth Century Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1957), 7. In a similar way, John Macarthur asserted that in eighteenth-century Britain, the reception of empirical sensation was understood in such a way that allowed both artistic and natural objects to appeal to the senses and be judged pleasing or not. John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London: Routledge, 2007), 4. Paul Guyer has remarked that since its emergence in the eighteenth century, the core subject matter of the discipline of aesthetics was the study of the nature and the value of aspects of the human experience of art and nature. Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics. The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1. Similar statements appear on pages 3, and 4-5. David B. Morris notes that “when eighteenth-century Englishmen enjoyed the religious sublime, they experienced an aesthetic pleasure which transcended the often uncertain boundaries of nature and of art.” David B. Morris, *Religious Sublime: Christian Poetry and Critical Tradition in 18th-Century England* (University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 8.

⁶ T.J. Diffey, “Art or Nature?” in *Aesthetic Concepts: Essays after Sibley*, ed. Emily Brady and Jarrold Levinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 162–79, p. 172. See Frank Noel Sibley et al., *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

At the same time, aesthetic theory was the locus of an adversarial relationship between art and nature. Jonathan Bate cites the aesthetics of Hegel to support his contention that the “opposition between art and nature [...] is the very core of ‘aesthetics’ as it was constituted as a discipline of thought during the Enlightenment.”⁷ The antagonistic relation between nature and art comes into sharper focus in Diffey’s remarks on the disagreement between Richard Wollheim and Frank Sibley. Contrary to Sibley, Wollheim argued for an ‘art-first’ view whereby the aesthetic interest lies not in the grace, but in the dance.⁸ For Wollheim, only artistic objects may be properly called aesthetic, making a proper aesthetic appreciation of nature impossible in the absence of a prior engagement with art. As Diffey makes clear, Wollheim’s radical position was anticipated in the history of philosophy by Hegel.⁹

Although clearly distinguishing itself from an ‘art-first’ view, the historical ‘aesthetic-first’ position, correctly identified as emerging and thriving in eighteenth-century Britain, accommodated theories that were not insensitive to whether the objects of appreciation were natural or artifactual. It is my contention that eighteenth-century British aestheticians were not only making neutral distinctions between nature and art as two possible realms of appreciation but employed the division hierarchically. To describe this hierarchical framing of the division, instead of using the term ‘paragone’ which denotes the historical rivalry between the arts, I choose to rely on the slightly different

⁷ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (Picador, 2000), 120.

⁸ Diffey, “Art or Nature?,” 172. See Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁹ Diffey, “Art or Nature?,” 172-3.

version, ‘paragon’, which also retains a normative meaning, but is defined simply as a model of excellence, applied not to any specific art, but to the relation between nature and art.¹⁰ By recapturing the normative force of this relation, I argue that, even when efforts were made to neutralize oppositions, paragons of art and nature continued to pervade aesthetic theories throughout the century, and their existence and evolution was deeply interwoven with complex notions of artistic imitation, conceptions of the sublime, and aspects of natural theology that were then an integral part of the aesthetic.

1.2 Establishing the Paragons: Mimesis, Sublimity, and Physico-Theology

The quintessence of this more complex ‘aesthetic-first’ position may be discerned in Rudolf Makkreel’s statement on the inclusiveness of aesthetics as a nascent discipline which developed, however, alongside the tendency of aestheticians to praise the superiority of nature to art.

This new discipline of aesthetics is more inclusive than a philosophy of the arts per se because it is concerned primarily with the appreciation of the sensory aspects of experience, whether derived from nature or the arts. Nature is also considered in terms of its ability to arouse aesthetic pleasure. In fact, some eighteenth-century thinkers found the purest instances of beauty and sublimity in the contemplation of nature.¹¹

¹⁰ For the historical meaning, as well as the continuity and relevance of the concept of ‘paragone’ well into the nineteenth century, see Sarah Lippert, *The Paragone in Nineteenth-Century Art* (Andover: Routledge, 2019). My choice of relying on the term ‘paragon’ has been partly influenced by Władysław Tatarkiewicz who shows that paragons of art and nature have filled entire volumes throughout the ages. Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas*, 294.

¹¹ Rudolf Makkreel, “Aesthetics,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy: The History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 516–56, p. 516.

Makkreel's assertion that the purest instances of beauty and sublimity were elicited by nature falls in line with similar views held by other scholars of aesthetics. Ronald Hepburn's 1967 groundbreaking essay "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty" starts with this bold assertion: "[o]pen an eighteenth-century work on aesthetics, and the odds are that it will contain a substantial treatment of the beautiful, the sublime, the picturesque in nature. Its treatment of art may be secondary and derivative, not its primary concern."¹² In a similar vein, commenting on eighteenth-century British aesthetics, Endre Szécsényi concludes that there is a general preference for nature to art, and that "the 'aesthetic' experiences of nature had at least a theoretical priority."¹³ David Marshall contends that the attack on the artificiality of the seventeenth-century gardens is related to an emerging concept of nature that is "accompanied by an avowed preference for nature to art."¹⁴ The truth value of these statements can be easily tested by considering a few examples from eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. These instances would suffice to show that the natural world offered pleasures that were grounds for supreme approbation.

In his philosophical dialogue, "The Moralists" (1711), Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, employs his mouthpiece, Theocles, to rhapsodize about the

¹² Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *British Analytical Philosophy*, ed. Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966). p. 285.

¹³ Endre Szécsényi, "Francis Hutcheson and the Emerging Aesthetic Experience" in *Francis Hutcheson and the Origin of the Aesthetic*, edited by Endre Szécsényi, 171-209. Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, (2016): 183.

¹⁴ David Marshall, "Literature and the Other Arts," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 4: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 681-741, p. 707.

superiority of nature to art: “O glorious nature! [...] whose every single work affords an ampler scene and is a nobler spectacle than all which ever art presented!”¹⁵ Similarly, in his 1712 collection of papers on the “Pleasures of the Imagination,” Joseph Addison institutes a comparison between the works of nature and those of art: “[i]f 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.”¹⁶ Francis Hutcheson, in his *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises* (1725) states clearly that “the Enjoyment of the noblest Pleasures of the internal Senses [is] in the Contemplation of the Works of Nature,”¹⁷ and in a section on the beauty of ‘the works of nature’, he adds that “[i]n every part of the World which we call Beautiful, there is a vast Uniformity amidst an almost infinite Variety. Many Parts of the Universe seem not at all design’d for the use of Man; nay, it is but a very small Spot with which we have any acquaintance.”¹⁸ In a section on magnitude found in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke exclaims that “[n]o work of art can be great, but as it deceives; to be

¹⁵ Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 298.

¹⁶ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), vol. 3, p. 548-549.

¹⁷ Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2004), 77.

¹⁸ Hutcheson, *An Inquiry*, 30.

otherwise is the prerogative of nature only.”¹⁹ And in his *Analysis of Beauty*, William Hogarth stresses that “[i]ndeed the works of art have need of the whole advantage of this line [of beauty] to make up for its other deficiencies” whereas in the works of nature “there is exhibited that infinite variety of human forms which always distinguishes the hand of nature from the limited and insufficient one of art.”²⁰

Shaftesbury rhapsodizes over the ability of nature to provide an ampler scene than art, while Addison lauds the vastness and the immensity which only nature could afford. Hutcheson admires nature as a repository of infinite instances of uniformity amidst variety, and Burke notes that our response to the sublime is almost always linked to the physical properties of magnitude which only nature could faithfully display. Hogarth celebrates natural beauty as accommodating an infinite variety of forms. All these excerpts are meant to show that the aesthetic superiority of the works of nature, praised by many eighteenth-century aesthetic theorists rests primarily on a shared recognition of nature’s characteristic vastness and the infinite variety of images or scenes it affords. These aspects were linked together in a discourse that came to be known as the (natural) ‘sublime’. As Emily Brady has observed, nature, “with its vast spaces,” was considered the ‘original’ sublime by many eighteenth-century writers, and its first-hand appreciation inspired writers, poets, artists, and philosophers alike.²¹ It has to be noted that a religious

¹⁹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, A. Phillips (ed.), (Oxford University Press, 1998), 70.

²⁰ William Hogarth. *The Analysis of Beauty. Written with a View of the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London, 1753), 129.

²¹ Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 118.

layer is shared by most conceptions of the sublime in the age: on its most basic level, this is visible in the acts of eulogizing the magnitude of divine creation which is preferred to the limited scope of artworks and artifacts. When considered cumulatively, these examples show that nature affords a kind of experience whose peculiarity lies in its transcendence of the inherent confinement of art.

Historically, *mimesis* provided another basis for placing art and nature in a hierarchical relation.²² Central to *mimesis* and the kindred concepts of ‘imitation’ and ‘representation’ is “the status of representational appearances in art and their relationship to worlds both real and invented.”²³ Typical of this polarization of nature and art is the view expressed by sixteenth-century music theorist Gioseffo Zarlino who wrote with confidence that “it is easy to recognize that Nature is superior to Art, inasmuch as the latter imitates the former and not vice versa.”²⁴ Equally representative of this attitude is mid-eighteenth-century theologian Christopher Sturm who was convinced that “[t]he bare consideration that all the works of art are merely imitations of Nature, is sufficient to place this truth [‘of the vast superiority of nature to art’] beyond all doubt.”²⁵ This rather orthodox view was also unambiguously conveyed by English critic and dramatist John Dennis who offered an analogy: “[a]s man is the more perfect the more he resembles the

²² Tayler’s claim that “a neutral opposition between art and nature grows out of the concept of imitation” is misdirected since a hierarchy is often implicated in the concept itself. Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature*, 16.

²³ Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 5.

²⁴ Ruth Katz and Carl Dahlhaus, *Contemplating Music: Source Readings in the Aesthetics of Music* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1987), 303.

²⁵ Christoph Christian Sturm and Frederic Shoberl, *Reflections on the Works of God in the Various Kingdoms of Nature: And on the Ways of Providence, Displayed in the Government of the Universe*, vol. 2 (London: Albion Press, 1808), 174.

Creator, the works of man must needs be more perfect the more they resemble his maker's."²⁶

Pervading all three accounts of artistic imitation is an important religious dimension shaping the very core of the mimetic relation.²⁷ As these examples evince, *mimesis* was broad enough to allow a usage not only in relation to the visual resemblance of a work to a model, but also with respect to the act of behavioral emulation: the object of emulation was both nature as the work of divine art, as well as the process of divine creation through which nature was believed to have come into being.²⁸ Conceiving nature as the work of a divine artificer was a specific application of physico-theology or the design argument in which nature's empirical aesthetic characteristics were considered as

²⁶ John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, Contain'd in Some New Discoveries Never Made before, Requisite for the Writing and Judging of Poems Surely. Being a Preliminary to a Larger Work Design'd to Be Publish'd in Folio, and Entituled, A Criticism upon Our Most Celebrated Englis Poets Deceas'd. By Mr. Dennis.* (London: Printed for Geo. Strahan, And Bernard Lintott, 1704), 6.

²⁷ Zarlino writes: "Nature is the outcome of divine Art imposed on things, whereby they move towards their end," quoted in Paolo Gozza, *Number to Sound: The Musical Way to the Scientific Revolution* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 37. See Gozza for a discussion of Zarlino's fusion of Aristotelian and Platonic-Christian conceptions of nature. Sturm asserts that "God has given such high perfections of his works, to this end, that we might discover in them the sublime attributes of his power, wisdom, and beneficence, and ascribe to him that glory which is his due," Sturm and Shoberl, *Reflections on the Works of God*, 174.

²⁸ From its very beginnings, *mimesis* had metaphysical connotations, as illustrated by Strabo's idea that human beings are capable in some way of becoming like the gods. A whole Pythagorean-Platonic tradition of metaphysical *mimesis* would later come to the fore. See Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 273. Inasmuch as artistic truth meant the successful relationship of a work to a model, the metaphysically-laden concept of *mimesis* played a central role in shaping hierarchical relations between nature and art. It must be pointed out that changes in the meaning of *mimesis* often involve modifications in the notions of 'nature', and 'art' to the extent that these three concepts are fully intertwined. Andrea Gatti, for instance, has suggested that a deeper understanding of the relationship between art and nature is gained by focusing on theories of imitation, "by analysing not so much the individual concepts of art and nature, but what lies between the two, that is, the artist's *inspiration* or *idea*, the vision that acquires a perceptible shape in the work of art." Andrea Gatti, "A Dialogue between the Deaf and the Dumb: Aesthetic Theories in England and Italy during the Eighteenth Century," in *Britain and Italy in the Long Eighteenth Century: Literary and Art Theories*, ed. Rosamaria Loretelli and Frank O'Gorman (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 49–59, p. 53

a posteriori proofs for the existence of God. As aestheticians were looking at nature's order as the work of a divine agent, the superiority of nature to art was implicit in such beliefs. So far, the notions of artistic imitation, the sublime, and the discourse of physico-theology were the arguments aestheticians used to buttress their contention that nature was superior to art. Yet, the primacy of nature was not the only possible interaction of nature and art in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory.

1.3 Paragons of Art and Nature: A Spectrum of Relations

Although the primacy of nature has been documented at some length, aesthetic theory admitted multiple and often more complex relations between the aesthetics of nature and those of art. Stated differently, it appears that a simple recognition of the primacy of nature as the paradigmatic object of aesthetic experience does not do justice to the complex spectrum of interactions between art and nature allowed by aesthetic theories throughout the eighteenth century. This complexity stems, in part, from the explosion of aesthetic categories in the eighteenth century, with the addition of the sublime, the novel, and the picturesque, which challenged the monolith of the beautiful, and allowed multifaceted comparisons between nature and art to emerge.

The complexity of the relationship between art and nature has been aptly summarized by Dabney Townsend who argued for the existence of four interactive combinations that appear throughout eighteenth-century aesthetic theory: (a) first, there is a general acknowledgement of the primacy of nature according to which nature is praised as the source of beauty while art is treated as secondary or derivative; (b) a second

combination follows from assigning to nature only one form of experience: nature appears more disposed to produce the sublime, while art the beautiful; (c) a third mode of interaction stipulates that art is said to improve nature, because art can produce effects that nature cannot produce; (d) a fourth and final combination is that “nature follows art,” as made clear in the picturesque approach to nature.²⁹

Informative and sweeping though it is, Townsend’s account is vulnerable to objections regarding the scope, contextualization, and the historicity of the inquiry.

Central to my discussion is an assertion made by Townsend early in the text:

The term “nature” then retained much of its theological and teleological baggage, so it is not primarily to the use of the term that one must look, but to the real relations between art and nature and to the paradigm instances where both nature and art are involved. Landscape painting and gardening illustrate the complex relations that are possible, for example, and they provide a central and controversial case that occupied the attention of many of the writers on aesthetics.³⁰

²⁹ Dabney Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature: Shifting Paradigms in Eighteenth-Century Philosophy,” in *The Reasons of Art* (University of Ottawa Press, 1985), 215–21. It will be shown in this dissertation that the first two interactive combinations (a and b) were conflated because aestheticians cited the sublimity of the natural world in support of their views that nature was aesthetically superior to art. Overall, Townsend’s account does not veer far from an earlier work on the uses of the nature-art conceptual pair in Renaissance literature authored by Edward Taylor. The latter seems to arrive at a similar conclusion regarding the possible historical relations of art and nature throughout antiquity, medieval times, and the Renaissance. The terms were often placed in opposition, with art either perfecting or perverting nature. Secondly, there was a reconciliatory view of their relation which acknowledged their interdependence: without art, nature can never be perfect, but without nature, art can claim no being. Third, there were views that highlighted distinctions between the two realms, with one realm producing effects altogether different from the other. Taylor, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature*, 31.

³⁰ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 215.

Landscape painting and gardening were perhaps the most conspicuous arts to illustrate the complex interaction of nature and art,³¹ but they certainly did not enjoy exclusivity: sculpture, architecture, and even poetry were often subject to ample discussions on the values of representation and imitation. As a matter of fact, while incorporating both nature and art, gardening ultimately remains an instance of art in which the natural environment is modified.³² Thus, if one limits the scope of the inquiry to only these so-called paradigmatic examples, one risks losing sight of how the natural world devoid of human intervention was meant to be appreciated. And perhaps most importantly, aesthetic theories often included more general comparisons between ‘the works of nature’ and ‘the works of art’ which, going beyond individual arts, suggest that art and nature were treated as meaningful categories of comparison *sui generis*.³³

³¹ Tayler notes that the “treatises on gardening, such fine barometers of taste during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reveal a similar use of Nature and Art; there appears again the shared assumption that really important distinctions may most conveniently be made by manipulating the ideas of naturalness and artificiality.” Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature*, 16. John Dixon Hunt affirms that the “garden is par excellence territory where we register the work of both art and nature.” John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination, 1600-1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 90.

³² Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell acknowledge that “[p]erhaps the strongest contrast to the otherness of nature lies in the determination of nature in gardening, which can justifiably be considered an art among others like painting and sculpture. Here art intrudes most directly, not simply singling out significant features on the model of landscape painting, but actually intervening in the natural order to control and reorder it.” Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, “Nature, Fine Arts, and Aesthetics,” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty, and the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1–42, p. 19. Malcolm Budd argues that garden appreciation is not the same as the appreciation of wild, pristine nature. “There are significant differences between the appeal of ‘wild’ nature and any form of domesticated nature or nature stamped with human design [...]” Malcolm Budd, *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature: Essays on the Aesthetics of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 7.

³³ It is important, for historical accuracy, to take cognizance of the meaning of ‘art’ in the eighteenth-century as extending beyond our current conception of the fine arts, and including the crafts as well. For a discussion of this broad conception of art in Shaftesbury, see Michael B. Gill, “Shaftesbury on Life as a Work of Art,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 26, no. 6 (April 19, 2018): 1110–31. Addison treated what we now call pyrotechnics as art. *The Guardian* ed. John Stephens (Lexington, KY, 1982), No. 103, p. 362.

Although Townsend treats gardening as a perfect paradigm for the expression of his four possible interactive combinations of art and nature, he makes an important concession at the end of the text:

Gardening provides an illuminating example of the interaction of art and nature, and *that* interaction, *in turn*, is one of the fundamental paradigms for the way that aesthetics was dealt with by the new empiricist philosophy and psychology.³⁴

The paradigm has been enlarged to welcome not only gardening, but all instances of the relation of nature to art in aesthetic theory. It is this enlargement that allows speaking of, say, Kant's aesthetic theory as oriented "towards nature as aesthetic paradigm," a formulation that belongs to Brady.³⁵ The interaction of nature and art which includes gardening but necessarily goes beyond it serves as an important paradigm for the way aesthetics was conceptualized in the eighteenth century. A fuller picture of the development of aesthetics can be gained by tracing the historical interplay of the aesthetic experience of art and of nature.

My second point is that the relevance of a conceptual analysis of the term 'nature' should not be deemphasized by placing its theological and teleological connotations in contradistinction to the elucidation of the "real relations" of art and nature expressed in

³⁴ Townsend, "The Interaction of Art and Nature," 220 (emphasis added). Townsend's reference to the "new empiricist philosophy" is not meant to exclude Shaftesbury's Neo-Platonic aesthetic theory. This is true because, as Townsend makes clear, although Shaftesbury's "own language and thought is overtly very much part of that neo-Platonic vision," nevertheless, "indirectly [...] he began to construct the more empirical alternative." Townsend, "The Interaction of Art and Nature," 218. Townsend successfully showed elsewhere that although there are clear grounds for calling Shaftesbury a Platonist—such as his treatment of the ontological status of beauty, and the equation of beauty and truth—there are serious qualifications over his Platonism, one being an inclination to empiricism: the dependence upon experience and verifiable observation, especially in the improvement of the self regarding moral and aesthetic matters. Townsend, Dabney. "Shaftesbury's Aesthetic Theory." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41, no. 2 (1982): 205–13, p. 207.

³⁵ Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 68.

paradigmatic examples of their combination, such as landscape painting and gardening.

Admittedly, nature was charged with meaning derived from theology and metaphysics; throughout the eighteenth century, these theological and metaphysical concerns were highly intermingled with the very fabric of the aesthetic, and to remain insensitive to this significant aspect of theory is to ignore an entire framework that purports to understand the emergence and development of modern philosophical aesthetics.³⁶ “Nature,” Basil Willey writes “has been a controlling idea in Western thought ever since antiquity, but it has probably never been so universally active as it was from the Renaissance to the end of the eighteenth century.”³⁷ An understanding of ‘nature’ as powerfully shaped by religious, metaphysical, and teleological connotations would concomitantly modify how the interaction of art and nature was perceived and conceptualized. The dynamic, and often hierarchical relations obtaining between art and nature in aesthetic theory came to be profoundly shaped by broader theological or metaphysical commitments.

Third, despite suggesting that there was a paradigm shift in the way the eighteenth-century framed the relation of art to nature, Townsend’s approach remains largely ahistorical. For one thing, the historical dimension of the enterprise is downplayed

³⁶ The most obvious discourses that went into the making of modern aesthetic theory were natural theology, natural philosophy as well as moral philosophy. For the influence of natural theology see Lisa M. Zeitz, “Addison’s ‘Imagination’ Papers and the Design Argument,” *English Studies* 73, no. 6 (1992) and Ghita. “Theological Underpinnings of Joseph Addison’s Aesthetics.” See also Simon Grote. *The Emergence of Modern Aesthetic Theory Religion and Morality in Enlightenment Germany and Scotland*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Connections among natural theology, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy can be found in Sorana Corneanu. *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern Cultura Animi Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, and Peter Harrison, “Physico-Theology and the Mixed Sciences,” in *The Science of Nature in the Seventeenth Century: Patterns of Change in Early Modern Natural Philosophy*, ed. Peter R. Anstey and John A. Schuster (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2005), 165–83.

³⁷ Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century Background*, 2.

by asserting that the combinations of art and nature in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory appear in “unsystematic and even contradictory ways.”³⁸ While it seems evident that diachronically, appropriate conclusions can hardly be drawn without examining the role of the interaction of art and nature in the economy of individual theories, this study will document a paradigm shift that had to do with the movement away from aesthetic theories in which the superiority of nature to art was recognized to theories where this aspect was complicated, contested or even reversed. In effect, one can speak of phases in which aesthetics moved from a stress on nature to a stress on art. If the earliest examples of aesthetic theory in the eighteenth-century put forth a taste for natural beauty and sublimity, the preference for artifice in the later part of the century would modify this view. The transformations traced by Carl Woodring in his book *Nature into Art*, “beginning with the ‘return to nature’ and ending with the supersession of nature by art, took related forms throughout the Western world,”³⁹ and as my dissertation shows, aesthetic theory was one privileged form of expression. Despite Woodring’s nonchalant attempt to offer a sweeping history of the nature-art dichotomy in *human culture*, no full-fledged study to date exists to document, examine, and then weave into a narrative the important transformations that took place in aesthetic theory.

³⁸ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 216. A history where not only continuities, but rather discontinuities are emphasized is legitimate. See Arthur Danto’s foreword to Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), ix-xv. Woodmansee’s approach takes its cue from Foucault. Tayler’s warning that “Nature and Art were combined, according to a writer’s temperament, training, and purpose, in innumerable and sometimes contradictory ways” does not prevent him from offering a quite comprehensive diachronic account of the uses of the conceptual pair in the Renaissance pastoral. Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature*, 27.

³⁹ Carl Woodring, *Nature into Art: Cultural Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), viii.

1.4 Corpus

Following a chronological order, this dissertation dwells on the relation of nature to art in the aesthetic theories of Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Addison, and William Gilpin. The choice of these three thinkers was based on representativeness, as each illustrates, in my argument, one phase in the evolution of the paragons of art and nature in eighteenth-century British aesthetic theory. The three phases that Shaftesbury, Addison, and Gilpin typify are, as follows: the superiority of nature to art, the neutralization of their opposition, and the superiority of art to nature, respectively. The position each thinker assumes in the juxtaposition of nature and art, far from being a self-evident fact, has stimulated debates in a type of secondary literature that serves different critical objectives. There is disagreement in the literature, for instance, as to whether Shaftesbury held nature superior to art or the other way around. There is also a lack of clarity, if not conceptual confusion, regarding how Addison's celebrated distinction between the primary and secondary pleasures of the imagination lines up with his treatment of the nature-art dichotomy. And it suffices to say that William Gilpin's concept of the picturesque has been recognized for its paradoxical treatment of the relation of nature to art, although there has been hardly any attempt to understand the reasons that gave rise to this paradox, and to gauge its significance for the evolution of paragons of art and nature as the eighteenth century progressed to its end.

Any attempt to settle these debates, however modest, will call for a more focused engagement with the aesthetic theories than it has been attempted by commentators so far. Such reading of aesthetics through the lens of the paragons will enable me to trace the evolving relation of art to nature to changes in the views of artistic imitation, the

sublime, and physico-theology. I am aware that this study might be read as a foray into the history of these concepts, particularly as they bear on aesthetic theory. The price of channeling my attention closely to these concepts has been the omittance of a good deal of important figures in eighteenth-century British aesthetics who would have otherwise deserved chapters of their own. Although Francis Hutcheson, Edmund Burke, and Archibald Alison are notable absences, a cursory look at their aesthetic theories would allow us to somewhat subsume their preference in the juxtaposition of nature and art under the existing chapters of this dissertation. Francis Hutcheson's aesthetics can be seen as reinforcing Shaftesbury's preference for nature in the juxtaposition of nature and art.⁴⁰ Burke appears to follow Addison in the way he neutralizes the polarities of nature and art.⁴¹ By further developing Addison's use of the association of ideas in aesthetics,

⁴⁰ Recall Hutcheson's statement that "the Enjoyment of the noblest Pleasures of the internal Senses [is] in the Contemplation of the Works of Nature." *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 77. M.A. Stewart maintains that although in his *An Inquiry*, Hutcheson puts forward a metaphysics of beauty that judges both the beauties of artefacts and of nature in terms of the properties of uniformity amidst variety, he clarifies that "[b]eauties in human creations lead us to admire their creators, and beauties in nature direct our minds not just to a superior intelligence, but to providential wisdom." M.A. Stewart, "Religion and Rational Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Broadie and Craig Smith (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 33-59, at p. 41. Moreover, Hutcheson sees all art as imitation of nature, and there is also, as far as I know, no detectable ambivalence toward the concept of artistic imitation in his thought. As Suzanne Marcuzzi explains, "[i]t seems clear that Hutcheson considers art to fall under the category of comparative beauty. For Hutcheson, all art, including poetry, is based on imitation and is representational. The pleasure we get from artistic works can therefore be as simple as the pleasure we get from a well-made copy, even when the original is ugly or unpleasant. In the same way, the beauty of poetry and literature lies in description, and the ability to represent manners and characters as they are in life." Suzanne Marcuzzi "Hutcheson on Beauty and Virtue," in *Britain and Italy in the Long Eighteenth Century: Literary and Art Theories*, ed. Rosamaria Loretelli and Frank O'Gorman (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 74-87, p. 77.

⁴¹ As we have seen, Burke holds that "no work of art can be sublime unless it deceives," (*A Philosophical Enquiry*, 70), a statement that betrays the aesthetic priority of nature to art. At the same time, he agrees with Addison's view (which is discussed in section 3.5 below) that the verbal takes precedence over the visual (on Burke's view because it raises stronger emotions): "If I make a drawing of a palace, or a temple, or a

Alison develops a theory of taste whereby art is superior to nature because it triggers stronger associations.⁴²

1.5 Critical Methodologies

Motivated by the lack of consensus in the literature as to what relations between nature and art transpire in each aesthetic theory, it was appropriate to adopt a critical methodology that aimed at a proper understanding of the aesthetic theories themselves: the operations of close-reading and conceptual analysis are central to my pursuit. These facilitate comparisons among different notions of artistic imitation, the sublime, and relevant elements of natural religion. But the project also needs adequate tools to highlight the historical evolution of the relation between nature aesthetics and art

landscape, I present a very clear idea of those objects; but then (allowing for the effect of imitation which is something) my picture can at most affect only as the palace, temple, or landscape would have affected in the reality. On the other hand, the most lively and spirited verbal description I can give, raises a very obscure and imperfect *idea* of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger *emotion* by the description than I could do by the best painting. This According to experience constantly evinces. The proper manner of conveying the *affections* of the mind from one to another, is by words; there is a great insufficiency in all other methods of communication [...].” *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 55-6. According to Murray Krieger, “Burke seems to have extended Addison's claims for the advantages of our varying interpretations of words [...] and their connotative potential for emotional appeal.” Murray Krieger, “Representation in Words and in Drama: The Illusion of the Natural Sign,” in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), 183–216, p. 199.

⁴² As Robert A. Ferguson explains, “[b]elief in the centrality of mental activity also allowed the artist a breathtaking ascendancy over the physical world. Since desirable aesthetic response came largely from an internal principle of connection [i.e. association of ideas], one was free to ignore or even to change what Alison called ‘that confusion of expression which so frequently takes place even in the most beautiful scenes of real Nature.’ *Essays* becomes one long celebration of the artist’s control as Alison establishes a continuum of the sublime based upon the artist’s corrective powers. The art of gardening rises above the confusion of nature, and landscape painting is superior to both because of the artist’s greater aesthetic control in that medium. Over all stands the poet who, ‘with the might spell of mind at his command,’ is most capable of giving to expression a unity of character not necessarily found in nature.” Robert A. Ferguson, *Law and Letters in American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 189.

aesthetics. It must be recognized that this study is not meant to be a history of the ideas of nature and art *per se*, but rather a more circumscribed intellectual-historical exploration of the relationships obtaining from the pairing of these terms within the confines of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. Much of the methodology adopted in this study can be illuminated by considering Edward Tayler's comments on intellectual history:

Admittedly, the study of intellectual history, even of genre history, is a risky business, largely because it involves the disquieting assumption that the materials dealt with may be isolated from context without undergoing essential change. The risk is unavoidable; it is an occupational hazard, akin to the critic's assumption that dissection does no permanent harm to the poem on the operating table. Ideas are heady items, especially ideas that like Nature and Art are so broad as to induce the intoxicating belief that they are present everywhere; hence I consider the terms not separately but only as a pair and confine myself to documents in which appear the words themselves as well as the ideas they represent.⁴³

Tayler's statement contains two important caveats whose discussion aids in clarifying my own methodological slant. First, I find myself in complete agreement with Tayler's twofold plea for the need to study the concepts of art and nature not separately but in conjunction, and to further circumscribe the scope of the inquiry to one single discipline of thought. It should be noted that this self-imposed limitation on the scope of the inquiry does not cancel out its interdisciplinary nature. Eighteenth-century British aesthetics was, for the most part, an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise located at the confluence of art theory, aesthetics of nature, and theology.

Second, in his discussion of one of the risks of intellectual history, Tayler unqualifiedly assumes that the only way to discuss ideas is to detach them from their

⁴³ Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature*, 9.

contexts. However, in light of more revisionary accounts of intellectual history, an adequate grasp of ideas cannot be secured in the absence of an engagement with the contexts of their production; as F.R. Leavis observed, much of a work's context can be inferred from a careful reading of the text, and that the critic's primary, but not necessarily exclusive, emphasis should be upon the text itself.⁴⁴ Accordingly, ideas, as well as their transformation, are historically conditioned, and can be best understood within the dynamics of wider contexts, dispositions, and discourses.⁴⁵ By way of consequence, intellectual history becomes an effective interdisciplinary tool for discussing the confluent discourses which were constitutive, and sometimes vitally so, of eighteenth-century aesthetic theories in Britain. My dissertation will reinforce the view that natural theology was a significant and inseparable part of the emerging aesthetic discourse and provided a central disciplinary context for understanding the evolution of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline.

Intellectual history helps establishing important links between aesthetics and related disciplines, such as natural theology, while retaining, on the other hand, a special affinity to the critical strategies of conceptual analysis and argument reconstruction. I believe, with historian Richard Whatmore, that because ideas assume many different

⁴⁴ Preston T. King, *The History of Ideas: An Introduction Method* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books; England, 1984), 293.

⁴⁵ Peter E. Gordon, "What Is Intellectual History?," 2012, <https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/uploads/files/Reports-Articles/What-is-Intellectual-History-Essay-by-Peter-Gordon.pdf>.

guises, they require careful semantic reconstruction.⁴⁶ Accordingly, I situate the change of orientation in aesthetic theory from nature to art within a trajectory following the evolving notions of artistic imitation, conceptions of the sublime, and elements of natural theology. I am aware that such a close pairing of intellectual history with conceptual analysis will gear the outcome toward a more internalist conception of history whereby the goal of the historian is to understand the evolution of concepts developed chiefly by aestheticians themselves, without attempting to engage in any overarching explanation of historical change. This is, to some extent unavoidable, as my main interest is uncovering internal rhythms in the history of aesthetics that have come to shape its disciplinary boundaries and scope. I agree that the evolution of the paragons of art and nature might be placed into more capacious cultural-historical⁴⁷ perspectives that address a combination of biographical, social, and political conditions that run parallel to, and often explain trends in aesthetics without reducing them, however, to such conditions. Such perspectives are, however, beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁴⁶ “People present their thoughts in many different guises. These require careful reconstruction in order to understand what people were doing, what the ideas being enunciated meant and how they related to the broader ideological cultures in which they were formed.” Richard Whatmore, *What Is Intellectual History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 7.

⁴⁷ According to Donald R. Kelley, cultural history is the outside of history as it tries “to place ideas in the context of their own particular time, place and environment.” Kelley, “Intellectual History and Cultural History,” 2. Intellectual history, on the other hand, is the inside of history as it looks at “the words, and so presumably thoughts, of historical agents,” “tracing ideas in terms of an inner dynamic, or familiar logic.” Donald R. Kelley, “Intellectual History and Cultural History: The inside and the Outside,” *History of the Human Sciences* 15, no. 2 (April 2002): 1–19, p. 2. Ultimately, the relationship between intellectual and cultural history is a complementary one and is expressed by Kelley in one pithy sentence: “cultural history is the outside of intellectual history, and intellectual history is the inside of cultural history.” Kelley, “Intellectual History and Cultural History,” 12.

2. SHAFTESBURY: A PREFERENCE FOR UNTOUCHED NATURE

Władysław Tatarkiewicz was possibly the first scholar to indicate that a hierarchical relation holds between nature and art in Shaftesbury's aesthetics. In his 1980 celebrated study *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics*, he formulated this relationship quite clearly: for Shaftesbury "art diverges from nature, because it is more perfect."⁴⁸ Although Tatarkiewicz gives no argument in support of his view, his assertion clearly anticipates a position that would only be fully articulated four years later by David Leatherbarrow: by improving nature, Shaftesbury affirms the superiority of art.

In his 1984 article "Character, Geometry and Perspective: The Third Earl of Shaftesbury's Principles of Garden Design," Leatherbarrow reconstructed Shaftesbury's pleasure ground at his main residence in Dorset, Wimborne St Giles, and noted how its peculiar geometrical organization of space was redolent of the formal garden style often contrasted with the informal which made free use of irregularity. His conclusion that Shaftesbury was a writer "generally supposed to have anticipated the informal garden in his writings, [but who] arranged his own plantations in the so-called formal style"⁴⁹ calls attention to the discrepancy between the Earl's aesthetic theory on the one hand, and his landscape gardening practice, on the other.

Although scholars usually agree that an incongruity exists between Shaftesbury's aesthetic theory and practice, they disagree as to how this mismatch ought to be

⁴⁸ Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas*, 297.

⁴⁹ David Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective: The Third Earl of Shaftesbury's Principles of Garden Design," *The Journal of Garden History* 4, no. 4 (October 1984): 332–58, p. 138.

interpreted. According to Leatherbarrow, acknowledging Shaftesbury's formal-style plantations requires a reconsideration of his theoretical preference for untouched nature. On the opposite side, Yu Liu reads the contradiction between what was said and what was done as significant, but not a genuine basis for one canceling out the other because, insofar as landscape gardening is concerned, the gap between theory and practice was not endemic to Shaftesbury: many "early garden reformers may have campaigned publicly for what was new in theory, but they betrayed in private practice their deep-seated alliance with what was very old."⁵⁰

Instead of addressing the significance of Leatherbarrow's account for the revision of English garden history, my intervention in this chapter is solely oriented toward scrutinizing the way Leatherbarrow's findings have guided an interpretation of the relationship between nature and art in Shaftesbury's aesthetics. A review of Leatherbarrow's thesis that Shaftesbury's reconstructed multi-layered garden is a representation of his conception of *perfected nature* is undertaken below and the implicit premise that the Earl recognized imperfections in the natural world is singled out for analysis (section 2.1). It is then shown how this premise is incompatible with

⁵⁰ Yu Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden: Chinese Gardening Ideas and a New English Aesthetic Ideal* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 116. "Since the regulating impulse of these pleasure grounds—palpable not only in the straight avenues and geometric parterres but also in the artificial labyrinths and other fanciful creations—is so opposite of the freedom and wildness of nature that Shaftesbury celebrated in *The Moralists*, it does not make sense to equate what he liked with what he did." Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 117. Liu cites approvingly Jerome Stolnitz's reading of this tension between Shaftesbury's preference for the regularity of geometric figures, on the one hand, and his passion for wild nature, on the other, as reflective of the Earl's Janus-faced nature: "the unhappy predicament of the conservative who sees the revolutionary consequences of his own discovery." Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 123. See Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Significance of Lord Shaftesbury in Modern Aesthetic Theory," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 11, no. 43 (April 1961): 113.

Shaftesbury's theodicean idea of the perfection of God's creation, and how ultimately this incongruence casts serious doubts on the project of establishing the concept of *perfected nature* as operative in his aesthetics (section 2.2).

Based on Shaftesbury's tripartite theory of beauty, an additional argument against the notion of perfected nature is made which concomitantly explains his preference for pristine nature to art (section 2.3). Whereas nature directly and unerringly reflects the absolute beauty of the divine creator, works of human art, including gardens, are a case of indirect or mediated reflection of that beauty since they must first reflect the beauty of the artist's mind.

As a follower of Leatherbarrow, John Dixon Hunt argues that, because Shaftesbury endorsed the idea of pure (ideal) nature that is hardly accessible to the senses, it must be studied in the perfected forms of art. This argument is problematic because it mandates that a proper appreciation of nature—which ascends from empirical figures to ideal forms—cannot be had unless the viewer is guided by garden perspectives. This is counterintuitive since Theocles's enthusiastic rhapsody in *The Moralists* occurs not in a garden, but in the uncultivated landscape. The attempt to rescue the concept of perfected nature is ultimately unsuccessful (section 2.4).

The issues with the notion of 'perfected nature' call forth an alternative explanation of the Earl's gardening philosophy which can be made by taking into account Katherine Myers's suggestion that the concept of nature promoted by Shaftesbury could be imitated in a lower form by the human art of gardening. Because the art of gardening per se is not the object of my investigation, I proceed to an exploration of how the general relation of art to nature is framed within the Earl's conception of artistic mimesis (section

2.5). Here, it is argued that despite the liberation of the artwork from the ancillary task of reflecting particulars of nature, the very existence of a requirement for art to imitate Nature's truth and not vice versa or otherwise suggests an asymmetrical relation between the terms of the mimetic model that ultimately betrays the superiority of nature to art. The chapter ends with a discussion of Shaftesbury's notion of the sublime, which in virtue of its origin in the physical property of vastness can only be adequately elicited by nature and does not allow a proper imitation in art (section 2.6).

2.1 On the Concept of 'Perfected Nature'

The *modus operandi* used by Leatherbarrow consists in taking the evidence of Shaftesbury's reconstructed garden at St. Giles as a premise for his conception of *perfected nature*. To perfect nature is to modify existing untouched *figures* (trees or plants) by trimming them into regular geometric shapes (typically pyramid or globe) so that the resulting cultivated *figures* can bring out the species' *inward character* (ideal form or the *true order* of a species).

He first argues that in light of Shaftesbury's paper on his plantation at St. Giles, three key principles of garden design can be discerned.⁵¹ The first principle is that of formal organization reflected in the relationships between the individual elements in the whole garden and represented by *formal unity* and *contrast*. The second of his principle

⁵¹ Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 345, 346.

ideas on garden design refers to the *geometry of nature*. The third and final aspect is *perspective*. It is best to consider these three ideas one at a time and see how each of them contributes to his conception of perfected nature.⁵²

The first ordering principle identified in Shaftesbury's garden design deals with the *formal unity* involved in grouping similar elements into a unified body or rank, and the *contrast* between the ranks consisting of different figures. The achievement of both formal unity and contrast is made possible by cutting a limited number of species into specific geometric shapes, with the two most common being the pyramid and the globe.⁵³ In other words, the process of trimming the species is a precondition for grouping them into one unified rank (achieving *formal unity*), as well as for alternating ranks consisting of different species (achieving *contrast*).

The same process of trimming species into basic geometric shapes is also the basis of identifying the second principle of gardening which is represented by the concept of *natural geometry*:

When describing the trees and hedges in his garden Shaftesbury usually referred to specific geometric shapes. The two most common were the pyramid and the globe [...]. It appears there is a geometry of nature (which might have been called a natural geometry) which represents the true order of *any* species. Some trees tend toward the globe figure, others toward the pyramid. Geometric figures represent perfected natural tendencies. Beyond the third or last rank of the garden trees and hedges were left unperfected in their potential forms.⁵⁴

⁵² The third and final aspect, perspective, will be dealt with in my discussion of John Dixon Hunt's argument in section 2.4 below.

⁵³ Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 344.

⁵⁴ Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 344.

The practice, adopted by Shaftesbury, of transforming the appearance of the figures in his garden into basic geometric shapes leads Leatherbarrow to the conclusion that the motivating force behind this operation is the Earl's belief in the existence of a geometry of nature that represents the true order of any species. To turn irregular figures into geometric shapes is to give them regular "proportion and measure" which is, according to Leatherbarrow, a practice used "to 'characterise' natural forms, that is to say—bring out their intrinsic character."⁵⁵ Consequently, the *true order* of a species represents its *intrinsic character* which can only be brought out by trimming the figures into the specific geometric shapes they approximate.

What does *character* mean? Leatherbarrow acknowledges that in his writings on human character, Shaftesbury distinguishes between inner and outer character, and he suggests that the same distinction may be applied to garden figures:

inner character was an ideal and lasting form, and outer character was the changing (but typical) bodily appearance of the person. If we apply this distinction between inner and outer character to garden elements it becomes clear that every plant, no matter how well cultivated may be, is never more than an approximation of its true character; the idea of the figure always transcends the particular example.⁵⁶

It becomes apparent from this analogy that *outward character* is synonymous with *figure* while *inward character* denotes the ideal *form* or essence of a kind. Thus, to speak of the *inward character* of a species is to invoke the species' ideal *form*. That there is an ideal

⁵⁵ Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 346.

⁵⁶ Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 350.

form behind *figures* is hardly questionable given Shaftesbury's Neo-Platonic aesthetics.⁵⁷

Thus, perfecting nature would mean bringing out the *inward character* (true form) of a plant by trimming its *outward character* (figure) into regular geometric shapes.

While the synonymous notions of *inward character*, *true order*, or *ideal form* are operative in Shaftesbury's philosophy and moreover have a textual basis, doubts can be cast on the soundness of the notion of natural geometry, on whether the regular shapes of cultivated figures genuinely reflect their ideal form or true order. Why must cultivated geometric figures represent perfected natural tendencies? Leatherbarrow argues that cultivated figures represent perfected natural tendencies because "the proportionate form is what defines the nature or essence of an object."⁵⁸ To illustrate this point, he offers an excerpt from *The Moralists* in which regularity of shape is celebrated whereas irregularity is denounced:

'It is enough if we consider the simplest of figures, as either a round ball, a cube or die. Why is even an infant pleased with the first view of these proportions? Why is the sphere or globe, the cylinder and obelisk, preferred and the irregular figures, in respect of these, rejected and despised?'
'I am ready', replied I, 'to own there is in certain figures a natural beauty, which the eye finds as soon as the object is presented to it.'⁵⁹

Although the preference for regular figures expressed in this excerpt is beyond doubt, it cannot be taken as a valid premise for the argument that regular figures dictate

⁵⁷ Theocles' philosophical sermons in *The Moralists* include a quote from the Platonist Maximus of Tyre which summarizes the Neo-Platonic aesthetics embraced by Shaftesbury: "For divinity itself", says he, "is surely beauteous, and of all beauties the brightest, though not a beauteous body but that from whence the beauty of bodies is derived, not a beauteous plain but that from whence the plain looks beautiful. The river's beauty, the sea's, the heaven's and heavenly constellations' all flow from hence as from a source eternal and incorruptible. As beings partake of this, they are fair and flourishing and happy; as they are lost to this, they are deformed, perished and lost." Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 277.

⁵⁸ Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 350.

⁵⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 326. Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 350.

the essence of an object. Shaftesbury never establishes any necessary connection between the regularity of a figure, on the one hand, and its ideal form or essence, on the other. Rather, the excerpt only shows that when considering “the simplest of figures,” the regularity of a sphere, globe, cylinder or obelisk is immediately preferred to any geometrical irregularity in virtue of the immediate judgment of an internal sense.⁶⁰

Moreover, it can be objected that the complete absence of any concrete reference to garden figures in the above excerpt makes its application to gardening questionable. The persuasive force of the excerpt is diminished if juxtaposed with Shaftesbury’s praise of irregularity in his *Second Characters* where references to plants and trees are notably explicit:

Ergo a tree or even a leaf, beautiful not as a green, *not as regularly shaped*; for then a mere turf or cut bush would equal and surpass an old oak, or cedar, or pine. But a rough bit of rock more beautiful in reality than a pearl or a diamond.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Liu remarks that “Instances such as this may have made it possible for Leatherbarrow and others to interpret Shaftesbury’s exultation over wild nature as a strangely manifested celebration of neoclassical art.” Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 128. However, according to Liu, the passage is only intended to offer a biological grounding of the human instinctive affection for the beautiful: “using the preferences of an infant for such figures as the sphere, globe, cylinder, and obelisk rather than an irregularly formed ball or cube, Shaftesbury sought to explain aesthetic judgments in terms of a certain inborn and instinctively exercised appreciation of designs involving not only particular shapes but also a particular proportionate relationship of the various parts to each other. The preferences can be rationalized, but since they are beyond the intellectual capability of an infant, he concluded, the judicial capacity for the beautiful, as for the good, must be part of the human biological makeup.” Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 123. It must be also noted that this instantaneous appreciation of simple, geometric figures is not appropriate for the spectator who wants to appreciate more complex structures which require careful rational examination: “beginning from those regular figures and symmetries, with which children are delighted, and proceeding gradually to the proportions of architecture and the other arts [...]. From beautiful stones, rocks, minerals, to vegetables, woods, aggregate parts of the world, seas, rivers, mountains, vales. The globe. Celestial bodies and their order. The higher architecture of nature.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 416, footnote 25.

⁶¹ Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Second Characters; or The Language of Forms*, ed. Benjamin Rand (London: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 113.

A tree is most beautiful in virtue of its irregular figure and not for either its potential or actual approximation of any regular geometric shape. In this way, the beauty of a natural oak, cedar, or pine exceeds the beauty of a turf or a cut bush that would instantiate the notion of natural geometry. The objections raised above significantly weaken the force of the claim that the concepts of natural geometry and perfected nature are operative in Shaftesbury's aesthetics.

2.2 Shaftesbury's Theodicean View of the Perfection of Nature

If we assume, however, that 'perfected nature' is a principle operative in Shaftesbury's aesthetics, then we must concomitantly accept that all *uncultivated* figures beyond or outside the garden are always "left *unperfected*, in their potential forms"⁶² pending human intervention to bring them to perfection. Therefore, the validity of the concept of *perfected nature* hinges vitally on the assumption that the Earl recognizes imperfections in the natural world, and if accepted, this view will allow one to ascribe to the art of gardening the task of perfecting nature. But does Shaftesbury really admit such a description of nature as imperfect?

The Earl does recognize that the natural development of plants may be hindered by certain factors, as expressed by Theocles in *The Moralists* and quoted diligently by Leatherbarrow:

⁶² Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 344.

in these plants we see round us, every particular nature thrives and attains its perfection, if nothing from without obstructs it nor anything foreign has already impaired [...]. What are all weaknesses, distortions, sicknesses, imperfect births and the seeming contradictions and perversities of nature other than of this sort? And how ignorant must one be [...] to think that any of these disorders happen by a miscarriage of the particular nature and not by the force of some foreign nature which overpowers it?⁶³

Because the natural development of plants may be held back by certain factors, it might seem legitimate that, at least in the circumstances described, nature would require the art of gardening to bring undeveloped plants to perfection. Accepting this thesis is, however, made at the expense of too cursory an understanding of the nature of the imperfections described by Shaftesbury.

Since the notions of ‘perfect’ and ‘perfected’ nature rely in equal measure on Shaftesbury’s concept of ‘nature’, it is imperative to discern its two meanings. For Shaftesbury, nature refers, on the one hand, to the totality of figures, but also denotes the unity of ideal forms, on the other. Differently stated, nature can refer to both particular figures that lend themselves to empirical observation, but also, and most importantly, to the order of ideal forms behind figures. This second acceptance is highlighted by Leatherbarrow when referring to nature as “the unity of all forms,” “as an order hidden beneath the changing and chaotic appearances of the figures in the uncultivated landscape.”⁶⁴

Although some figures may not attain perfection, it becomes evident in view of the second meaning of ‘Nature’ that all ideal forms behind the figures are necessarily

⁶³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 304. Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 352.

⁶⁴ Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 352.

perfect. This is why the Earl explicitly qualifies all possible perversions of nature—weaknesses, distortions, sicknesses and imperfect births—as “seeming contradictions” fully attributable to external factors and not originating in the “miscarriage of the [plant’s] particular nature,” in the disorder of its inward character, or in the corruption of its ideal form. Accordingly, in virtue of its immutable perfection, the ideal form of a plant is always imperfectly realized in the empirical reality of individual figures, irrespective of whether these figures are cultivated or not. Leatherbarrow voices this aspect with distinct clarity:

Although Shaftesbury’s idea of gardening seems workable, it presents a number of practical difficulties, the first and most obvious being that any existing plant is never perfect as the idea of its form. Shaftesbury was conscious of the impossibility of [outward] characters of ever achieving or maintaining their true form [...]. [E]very plant, no matter how well cultivated it may be, is never more than an approximation of its true character [because] the idea of the figure always transcends the particular example.⁶⁵

When Leatherbarrow is admitting these problematic aspects of Shaftesbury’s idea of gardening, he is actually spelling out the difficulties with his own coinage and analysis of the concept of ‘perfected nature’. Although it is true that in the natural world some figures manage to develop less successfully than others, this serves as no indication of Shaftesbury’s acknowledgment of real imperfections in the order of nature. Consequently, the role ascribed to gardening cannot be validated by Shaftesbury’s enumeration of possible perversions of creation. Leatherbarrow continues to quote

⁶⁵ Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 350.

excerpts from Shaftesbury's works which instead of supporting his conception of 'perfected nature', actually diminish its effectiveness:

What seems to be deformed appears so only because we cannot see how it fits into the pattern of the whole. [Quote from Shaftesbury follows:] *'Unable to declare the use or service of all things in this universe, we are yet assured of the perfection of all, and of the justice of that economy to which all things are subservient, and in respect of which things seemingly deformed are amiable disorder becomes regular, corruption wholesome, and poisons ... prove healing and beneficial.'*⁶⁶

Rather than functioning as evidence for the thesis that garden art perfects nature, the above excerpt serves as a proof of Shaftesbury's doctrine of the harmony of discords (*concordia discors*) which confirms his belief in an ultimately perfect universe.

Theocles's notorious defense of the beautiful and perfect order of nature is based on this relationship between contraries:

But I deny she [nature] errs and, when she seems most ignorant or perverse in her productions, I assert her even then as wise and provident as in her goodliest works. For it is not then that men complain of the world's order or abhor the face of things, when they see various interests mixed and interfering – natures subordinate of different kinds opposed one to another and in their different operations submitted the higher to the lower. It is on the contrary from this order of inferior and superior things that we admire the world's beauty, founded thus on contrarieties, while from such various and disagreeing principles a universal concord is established.⁶⁷

Sarah Eron notes that Shaftesbury's description of providential nature in this excerpt is based on a harmony of discords, "an interweaving of variances, a mixture of the high and low that actually affirms, and never disproves the notion of a harmonic and greater

⁶⁶ Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective," 352. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 315 (emphasis added).

⁶⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 244.

whole.”⁶⁸ The principle of *concordia discors* is predicated on the ultimate harmonization of the apparent contradiction between perfection and imperfection. The final view acknowledges the perfection of creation which is an integral aspect of Shaftesbury’s theodicy.

Shaftesbury’s theodicean defense of the goodness and perfection of creation is ultimately inconsistent with the coinage of the concept of ‘perfected nature’. In *The Moralists*, Theocles reveals the two opposite ways of regarding the status of creation:

In the whole of things, or in the universe, either all is according to a good order and the most agreeable to a general interest, or there is that which is otherwise and *might possibly have been better constituted, more wisely contrived* and with more advantage to the general interest of beings or of the whole.⁶⁹

The world is either the best of possible worlds or a product which might have been better designed. He relentlessly opts for the first view while holding that the deity cannot be held responsible for creating an imperfect world, and consequently, any perceived imperfections in the world at large are relegated to the status of appearances.

Shaftesbury’s theodicy consists more generally in a defense of goodness as the most fundamental divine attribute: it must be impossible for an inherently benevolent God to create a world corrupted by evil.⁷⁰ At the heart of his theodicy is the doctrine of metaphysical optimism according to which the postlapsarian condition of the natural world as a damaged or imperfect creation is outrightly rejected. The doctrine of optimism that informs the Earl’s philosophy is predicated on theistic principles which, according to

⁶⁸ Sarah Eron, *Inspiration in The Age of Enlightenment*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2014), 61.

⁶⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 164 (emphasis added).

⁷⁰ Patrick Müller, “‘Dwell with Honesty & Beauty & Order’: The Paradox of Theodicy in Shaftesbury’s Thought,” *Aufklärung* 22 (2010): 206.

Stanley Grean, require him to accept not only that there is an all-powerful and perfectly good God, but that the order of Nature as God's creation must be the epitome of ultimate perfection, goodness and beauty.⁷¹ Because he believes in a perfect world, there is no room for its improvement. Basil Wiley's description of this attitude to the postlapsarian condition is entirely reflective of Shaftesbury's position:

The Fall is no longer a haunting obsession, and whatever may be true of Man, Nature is now to be contemplated as the finished and *unimprovable* product of divine wisdom, omnipotence, and benevolence.⁷²

Theodicean aspects resonate throughout Shaftesbury's work. In *Askemata*, he holds that the world is "already taken care of" by a deity whose governance cannot be improved or surpassed.⁷³ A contemplation of the just state of things reveals even the "corruptions of nature as really beautiful and pleasing."⁷⁴ Therefore, God ought not to be charged with any wrongdoing, with creating an imperfect world because the very "[s]icknesses, diseases, deaths, in vegetables, animals, systems, worlds remote, and at a distance from ourselves, are natural."⁷⁵

As Shaftesbury notes in the *Inquiry*, the perfection or imperfection of particular beings must be grasped "in the general system" of all things, and if the system is "indeed

⁷¹ Stanley Grean, *Shaftesbury's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics: A Study in Enthusiasm* (Ohio University Press, 1967), 73. In *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, Shaftesbury postulates the existence of a perfectly good God: "there is nothing in God but what is God-like and that he is either not at all or truly perfectly good." Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 21.

⁷² Wiley quoted in Grean, *Shaftesbury's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*, 76 (emphasis added).

⁷³ "For it is not required of thee to be troubled for a world which is already taken care of, unless, perhaps, thou art of opinion that it might be governed much better yet than God governs it." Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury and Benjamin Rand, *The Life, Unpublished Letters and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury* (Swan Sonnenschein & Co.:London, 1900), 46.

⁷⁴ Shaftesbury, *The Life*, 46.

⁷⁵ Shaftesbury, *The Life*, 46.

perfect, [then it] excludes all real ill.”⁷⁶ Patrick Müller has argued that, from an ontological perspective, evil is not only an artificial entity alien to the frame of the world, but an erroneous projection of the *human* intellect onto the perfect structure of the world:

Because there was no such thing as real ill for Shaftesbury with relation to the system, the term should be put in inverted commas. ‘Ill’ is relative because of man’s self-absorbed prejudice. Human beings cannot see that what appears to them to be an ‘ill’ is for some greater good. ‘Evil’ is an illusion, a figment of the imagination, it is the result of an erroneous conception of the world. For Shaftesbury, then, the relativity of evil is an epistemological question: it denotes the inability of finite minds to comprehend in how far an apparent breach in the providential order of things contributes to the design of the whole. At the same time, the appearance of ‘ill’ is inevitable because of this defect in man’s intellect.⁷⁷

Considered cumulatively, these counterarguments cast serious doubt on the project of establishing both ‘natural geometry’ and ‘perfected nature’ as solid concepts operative in Shaftesbury’s aesthetics.

2.3 Shaftesbury’s Preference for Uncultivated Figures

One of the claims challenged in the previous section has been that cultivated figures reflect the true order of the species. Based on Shaftesbury’s tripartite theory of beauty, an additional argument can be made to show that rather than cultivated figures, it is their uncultivated counterparts that are most directly and successfully conducive to the

⁷⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 269.

⁷⁷ Müller, “‘Dwell with Honesty & Beauty & Order’,” 211.

true order of the species. These arguments concomitantly explain Shaftesbury's preference for pristine nature to works of art.

In his theory of beauty, the first order is represented by the material objects or *figures* "formed, whether by man or nature,"⁷⁸ such as "a tract of land, a number of slaves, a pile of stones, a human body," "medals, coins, embossed work, statues and well-fabricated pieces, of whatever sort."⁷⁹ Since "there is no principle of beauty in the body,"⁸⁰ Shaftesbury postulates a second order represented by minds possessing "intelligence, action and operation"⁸¹ that are the immediate cause of figures. The third and final order is represented by the divine mind that "fashions even minds themselves [and] contains in itself all the beauties fashioned by those minds and is consequently the principle, source and fountain of all beauty."⁸² The process of aesthetic appreciation is described by Theocles in a nutshell:

*the improving mind, slightly surveying other objects and passing over bodies and the common forms (where only a shadow of beauty rests), ambitiously presses onward to its source and views the original of form and order in that which is intelligent.*⁸³

How does the aesthetic appreciation of works of art function within this tripartite scheme?

Art appreciation begins with the perception of artifactual figures (first order) whose contemplation leads to an appreciation of their direct cause represented by the

⁷⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 323.

⁷⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 321-2.

⁸⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 322.

⁸¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 323.

⁸² Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 324.

⁸³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 332

human mind (second order). The mind is superior to “those other beauties of man’s formation:” the “palaces, equipages and estates” Shaftesbury holds, “shall never [...] be brought in competition with the original living forms of flesh and blood.”⁸⁴ Because whatever beauty appears in the human mind itself “is eminently, principally and originally in the last order of supreme and sovereign beauty,” it follows that “architecture, music and all which is of human invention resolves itself into the last order.”⁸⁵ All good works of art should finally reflect the Absolute Beauty of the divine mind (third order).

Since gardens are works of art *par excellence*, their cultivated figures (first order) must be an immediate reflection of the beauty of the gardener’s mind (second order). Theocles clearly expresses this direct correspondence between artificial figures and the human mind as their originating source:

The models of houses, buildings and their accompanying ornaments, *the plans of gardens and their compartments*, the ordering of walks, plantations avenues and a thousand other symmetries will succeed in the room of that happier and higher symmetry and order of a mind.⁸⁶

The figures in the garden must successfully reflect the “higher symmetry and order” of the gardener’s mind before the appreciation can reach its endpoint culminating in Absolute Beauty. In this scheme, the contemplation of human works of art is a case of

⁸⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 323.

⁸⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 324.

⁸⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 64. It is of course not only artworks that can be traced back to the human mind, but practically anything that “derives itself from your parent-mind,” Theocles remarks, including “sentiments,” “resolutions, principles, determinations, actions – whatsoever is handsome and noble in the kind, whatever flows from your good understanding, sense, knowledge and will, whatever is engendered in your heart [...]” Artifactual creation is termed a propagation of the “lovely race of mental children.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 324.

mediated reflection because works of art must first reflect the human mind before the whole process can resolve itself in the contemplation of the divine mind. Thus, instead of directly reflecting the divine mind, as Myers has observed, “[w]orks of art, including gardens [are] reflecting merely human intellect.”⁸⁷

Unlike works of art, the works of nature which include all uncultivated figures are *directly* reflective of their ideal forms in the divine mind.⁸⁸ Notwithstanding any similarities between art and nature, works of art and works of nature remain distinct from the viewpoint of the ability of each to reflect Absolute Beauty. So why cannot cultivated figures simply represent the true order of the species? In contrast with untouched figures directly reflecting Absolute Beauty, cultivated ones are only indirectly conducive to the divine mind. Thus, they are placed at a second remove from the endpoint of aesthetic contemplation.

⁸⁷ Katherine Myers, “Shaftesbury, Pope, and Original Sacred Nature,” *Garden History* 38, no. 1 (2010): 3–19, p. 6. In his account of Shaftesbury, Guyer similarly underscores this difference between man-made and natural beauty without insisting, however, on its implications for the aesthetic hierarchization of art and nature. Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics. The Eighteenth Century*, vol.1 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 42-3. Gatti, on the other hand, accentuates not only the hierarchical opposition between works of art (reflective of human mind) and nature (as the superior creation of the divine mind), but more specifically the intense polarization between artistic beauty and natural sublimity: “why is it that natural objects with (seemingly) shapeless, horrid, and disturbing features evoke a degree of aesthetic pleasure that is superior even to the utmost perfection and regularity in human artifacts? Shaftesbury’s answer combines his aesthetics with cosmology, pointing to the type of mind at work in these two cases. The artistically beautiful in fact reveals the work of the human mind, whereas the naturally sublime is a manifestation of the divine mind [...]” Andrea Gatti, “The Aesthetic Mind: Stoic Influences on Shaftesbury’s Theory of Beauty,” in *New Ages, New Opinions: Shaftesbury in His World and Today*, ed. Patrick Müller (Frankfurt Am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 61–76, pp. 73-4.

⁸⁸ Irrespective of whether plastic nature is a principle working for God or identical with God, by virtue of Shaftesbury’s tripartite theory of the beautiful alone, the ability of works of nature to reflect absolute beauty is evidently greater than the potential of human works of art. For this debate over the role of plastic nature, see Grean, *Shaftesbury’s Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*, 67.

This kind of mediated reflection integral to art and the artistic process dovetails with the limitations Shaftesbury placed on art in successfully embodying absolute beauty and truth. Karl Axelsson has remarked that Shaftesbury's hierarchical theory of beauty can effect a separation of nature from art on the basis that nature's perfection is pitted against the fallibility of human art.⁸⁹ Unlike natural beauty which is characterized by divine perfection, human-made artistic beauty, though sometimes successful, is often imperfect or fallible, and hence not always conducive to Absolute Beauty:

since the artistic creation of art introduces elements depending on the realized disposition of the artist, rather than *the perfection of created nature*, we are, as it seems, also unveiling a new and potentially disturbing factor. The '*Forms which form*' might indeed successfully relate to the Absolute Beauty and bring out the rational harmony of nature in the dead forms, but then again, such artistic *Forms* might also fail to do so.⁹⁰

Although all appreciation should culminate in the contemplation of Absolute Beauty, not all figures are equally conducive to it. Figures left in a natural state are more directly reflective of the divine mind than cultivated ones.

As Eron has put it, "nature cannot err in her production and reproduction, while error is left entirely up to man and his desiring faculties."⁹¹ Whereas nature is always perfect, art can be imperfect; while artistic beauty *potentially* reflects Absolute Beauty, the artistic process may be marred by the artist's inability to fashion works as coherent wholes. Because Shaftesbury's concept of art extended well beyond gardening as well as

⁸⁹ "[T]he relevance of Shaftesbury's analysis of the three hierarchically organized degrees of beauty relates to a possible risk integral to the artistic process, where the artist occasionally might fail to create a whole that corresponds to the rationality and truth of providential nature." Axelsson, *Political Aesthetics*, 217.

⁹⁰ Axelsson, *Political Aesthetics*, 202 (emphasis added on "the perfection of created nature").

⁹¹ Eron, *Inspiration in The Age of Enlightenment*, 61.

our modern notion of the fine arts, it is appropriate to illustrate this limitation of artifacts with one particular instance in which Shaftesbury treats sacred writings as merely human artifacts.

Shaftesbury dismisses human productions as often marred by various imperfections to the point that they fail to reflect divine truth at all. As a result of his dismissal of revealed religion as merely “a handsome compliment to authority” with “no foundation at all,”⁹² Shaftesbury denies that scriptures are works of divine inspiration and recommends treating them as human artifacts:

It is indeed no small absurdity to assert a work or treatise, written in human language, to be above human criticism or censure. For if the art of writing be from the grammatical rules of human invention and determination, if even these rules are formed on casual practice and various use, there can be no scripture but what must of necessity be subject to the reader’s narrow scrutiny and strict judgment, unless a language and grammar, different from any of human structure, were delivered down from Heaven and miraculously accommodated to human service and capacity.⁹³

The error of effortlessly ascribing perfection to human productions determines Shaftesbury to question the authenticity of the Koran which he deems an artifact fully attributable to the rules of human art. He complains that Muslim clerics

boldly rest the foundation of their religion on a book: such a one as, according to their pretension, is not only *perfect* but inimitable. Were a real man of letters and a just critic permitted to examine this scripture by the known rules of art, he would soon perhaps refute this plea.⁹⁴

⁹² Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 367.

⁹³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 434-5.

⁹⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 437.

The upshot of this description is that there must be “a mere contradiction to all divine and moral truth that a celestial hand” can ever submit itself to “the rudiments of a human art.”⁹⁵ The “celestial hand” is however responsible, as we have seen, for the creation and the sustenance of the natural world which Shaftesbury considered the epitome of perfection, beauty, and truth, and which as we are going to see later, human art must strive to successfully imitate but cannot rival.

Having looked at this additional argument against the concept of perfected nature based on Shaftesbury’s tripartite theory of beauty, it is now time to foreground how Shaftesbury’s theoretical praise of uncultivated nature deals a final blow to this concept. The need to square the concept of *perfected nature* derived from Shaftesbury’s landscape gardening practice with the Earl’s theoretical praise for uncultivated landscape determines Leatherbarrow to argue that, ultimately, Shaftesbury’s thought was paradoxical:

Although the individual plant can be developed to an approximation of its true form and be shaped into a regular and well-proportioned image, the whole of the landscape cannot be cultivated. Consequently, the plant is abstracted from the whole of nature. While the perfected plant is to be admired because its figure embodies its true form, it is to be dispraised because its abstract perfection distracts the spectator’s attention from the whole to the part.⁹⁶

As already argued, cultivated plants do not approximate their true form, and hence the idea of art as perfecting nature was foreign to Shaftesbury. The detachment and abstraction of the elements of the garden is a serious threat to the claim that the task of

⁹⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 345.

⁹⁶ Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 351-2.

garden art is to perfect nature. As Leatherbarrow himself notes, in the garden, “the plant is abstracted from the whole of nature” which can subsequently pose an objection to the soundness of tasking garden art with the act of perfecting nature. Leatherbarrow himself spells out this difficulty:

In isolation each species would develop to perfection, *but nothing exists in isolation*. All things in nature are interconnected. Shaftesbury wrote ‘All things in this world are united’.⁹⁷

If “nothing exists in isolation,” how can the art of gardening—in which figures are isolated *par excellence*—succeed in the task of perfecting nature? No solution is advanced to overcome this difficulty.

The ultimate challenge faced by Leatherbarrow consists in grappling with the abundant theoretical evidence in favor of Shaftesbury’s praise for uncultivated nature. How can this preference be accounted for?

The uncultivated landscape is preferred to the garden because it is the place where the inquisitive (‘searching’) mind can (better) grasp the hidden (‘very absconded and deep’) order of nature.⁹⁸

Accepting that uncultivated landscapes lead the mind to a better grasp of the unity and order of nature undermines the thesis that geometrically shaped garden figures represent the true order of the species.

But why is the mind better able to grasp the order of nature when appreciating uncultivated landscapes? Why does Shaftesbury prefer the open landscape to the garden? The following explanation is offered:

⁹⁷ Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 352 (emphasis added)

⁹⁸ Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 353.

Shaftesbury preferred the open landscape to the garden because he preferred natural form to natural figures. ‘The beautifying, not the beautified, is really the beautiful.’ The choice is not between one figure and another, only the vulgar have a problem with that choice; more important is the choice between the substance and the shadow.⁹⁹

The use of the modifier ‘natural’ is misleading because a landscape is natural to the extent that a garden is not. Even if the qualifier ‘natural’ is discarded, the statement remains equally problematic. Why are landscapes associated with ‘forms’, and gardens with ‘figures’? This association clearly goes against several terminological distinctions used throughout Leatherbarrow’s text.¹⁰⁰ This association is fallacious because both landscapes and gardens contain figures, the former encompassing those formed by divine mind, while gardens displaying these figures that are controlled or altered by humankind. The argument offered for why Shaftesbury preferred the landscape to the garden is also largely misdirected. Shaftesbury prefers the landscape to the garden not because he prefers natural forms to natural figures, a statement on the verge of truism, but because he prefers uncultivated figures to cultivated ones and, in virtue of his theodicy and his theory of hierarchically-organized degrees of beauty, he judges only uncultivated figures to be fully conducive to the ideal forms.

⁹⁹ Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 353.

¹⁰⁰ According to Leatherbarrow, ‘figure’ refers mostly to ‘actual figure’ (Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 353), as made clear when Shaftesbury describes the inward eye as “a capacity of seeing and admiring” that necessarily finds “a beauty and a deformity as well in actions, minds and tempers as in figures, sounds, or colours.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 178. Leatherbarrow correctly defines an ‘actual figure’ as “the measurable shape of an object as it presents itself to the bodily senses.” Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 352. ‘Actual figures’ are perfectly synonymous with Shaftesbury’s ‘dead forms’ “which [...] are formed, whether by man or nature, but have no forming power, no action or intelligence.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 323.

2.4 Does Art Bring out the Character of Natural Items?

In his written work, the Earl considered informal figures superior to formal ones because they were more directly conducive to an appreciation of absolute beauty. His theoretical preference for untouched nature poses a real difficulty to the notion of perfected nature according to which cultivated figures are better than uncultivated ones. John Dixon Hunt's notable attempt to salvage the concept of perfected nature is predicated on the third key principle of garden design identified by Leatherbarrow—perspective. Hunt's view is articulated in *Garden and Grove* where Shaftesbury's plea for the idea of "pure nature" is also addressed:

It has however, been something of an embarrassment to garden historians that Shaftesbury's preference for 'untamed nature' did not jibe with his own garden [...]. But it transpires that we have all along misunderstood him, and that his plea for nature was in fact a plea for the idea of *pure nature*, which since it rarely discloses itself to the naked eye *must* be studied in the 'perfected forms' which art provides. Art in gardens is dedicated, then, to bringing out the intrinsic character of natural items. What Shaftesbury's theory did require of gardens was a graded sequence of design whereby regulated nature near the house gradually gave way to the untouched forms of nature on the horizon, this sale of diminishing artifice being observed along avenues and walks which gave a unified perspective to the variety of natural forms in view; what art organized near to the beholder taught him to understand the potential in untouched forms further off.¹⁰¹

Before proceeding to an analysis of the overall soundness of this view, the meaning of 'pure nature' must be clarified. The concept typically denotes the totality of uncultivated figures, or more generally, as A.O. Lovejoy put it, that "part of *empirical reality* which

¹⁰¹ Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, 96.

has not been transformed (or corrupted) by human art.”¹⁰² A more careful look at Hunt’s text will reveal however that the qualifier ‘pure’ is not used to refer to Shaftesbury’s “untamed nature,” but to the “intrinsic character of the natural items.” In this context, ‘pure’ does not designate the quality of figures untouched by human intervention but applies rather to the ideal forms behind figures. Forms are pure in contradistinction to figures. Understood as such, Hunt’s argument is comprised of four premises leading to a conclusion:

- (P1) Shaftesbury’s plea was for the idea of ‘pure nature’.
- (P2) ‘Pure nature’ rarely discloses itself to the naked eye.
- (P3) Only perfected forms are conducive to ‘pure nature’.
- (P4) Art contains ‘perfected forms’.
- (C) ‘Pure nature’ must be studied in art.

Because I have already shown in the previous sections that art does not contain perfected forms, we will dismiss the fourth premise, all the more so since no additional argument is advanced in support of it. As for the first premise, it can be rightly stated that Shaftesbury’s plea was indeed for ‘pure nature’ as he preferred ideal forms to figures. The second premise is also true, although not without qualifications, since ‘pure nature’, by designating ideal essences, *never* discloses itself to the naked eye, never lends itself to empirical observation.

Hunt’s attempt to rejuvenate the concept of perfected nature is hindered by the inclusion of an imperative which prescribes that pure nature “*must* be studied in the

¹⁰² Arthur O. Lovejoy, “‘Nature’ as Aesthetic Norm,” *Modern Language Notes* 42, no. 7 (November 1927): 445. Donald W. Crawford defines ‘pure nature’ as “nature as it would be without the existence or influence of human beings. [...] It is the idea of nature as pure wilderness, nature *primaeva*l – nature as it exists apart from any human intervention.” Donald W. Crawford, “The Aesthetics of Nature and the Environment,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed. Peter Kivy (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004), 306–24, p. 317.

perfected forms which art provides.” According to Hunt, only the perfected forms of art are conducive to ‘pure nature’ (P3). Let us call this a ‘strong reading’ because the imperative dictates that pure nature cannot be grasped unless the observer is guided by garden perspectives. He borrows the notion of garden perspective directly from Leatherbarrow’s text where it functions as the third and final key principle of Shaftesbury’s garden design and is defined as a gradated sequence of design whereby the purportedly regulated and perfected forms near the observer gradually give way to the untouched forms of nature on the horizon.¹⁰³ According to the strong reading, the garden perspective is a necessary condition for appreciating “the fullest images of nature.”¹⁰⁴ Stated otherwise, an adequate appreciation of nature cannot be had in the absence of the viewer’s adoption of garden perspectives. This claim is strongly counterintuitive and remains unsupported by any evidence from Shaftesbury’s written work.

An elimination of the imperative from the structure of the argument allows a different interpretation to emerge. Ten years after his initial statement in *Garden and Grove*, Hunt offers two paragraphs on the idea behind Shaftesbury’s garden design in which a much milder conclusion is reached:

The ultimate significance and purpose of such visible garden hierarchies of control was to educate man and woman through the contrived forms of garden art and husbandry to appreciate the ideal perfection of God’s handiwork in the large world of nature.

A variant and less explicitly theological version of that perspective as enunciated by the third earl of Shaftesbury in his unpublished *Second characters*, is that garden art represents – presents over again in its own form – the proper character

¹⁰³ Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, 96.

¹⁰⁴ Leatherbarrow, “Character, Geometry and Perspective,” 346.

of the natural world that will be better appreciated once a garden's version of it has been understood.¹⁰⁵

Following a general theorization of garden space, Hunt goes on to exemplify it with Shaftesbury's organization of his own garden. A few pages later, inspired by Leatherbarrow, Hunt points out the Earl's specific gardening philosophy:

Shaftesbury makes his proposals for a garden art that juxtaposes along the central axis of a garden a series of less and less mediated natural forms, what he calls 'the several orders ... into which it is endeavoured to reduce the natural views'. This prospect or perspective will teach the person 'who studies and breaks through the shell [*or exterior of the world*]' to 'see some way into the kernel' and appreciate the 'genuine order' of the natural world. Garden perspectives, then became for Shaftesbury a moral activity, as they initiated humans into a proper appreciation of the natural world.¹⁰⁶

Devoid of any imperative, the excerpt enables a reading in which the controlled figures in the garden "*could* lead to an appreciation of the more complex and subtle forms of unmodified natural objects."¹⁰⁷ In Hunt's quotation above, the task of gardening is to promote a proper appreciation of the natural world by initiating the observer. But to hold that "garden perspectives" initiate humans into an aesthetic appreciation of nature is not the same as claiming that these perspectives are *sine qua non* for the proper appreciation of nature. Garden perspectives may lead to an adequate appreciation of nature which can be otherwise had in the absence of these perspectives. The upshot of this interpretation is that a full appreciation of nature is no longer fundamentally dependent on the appreciation of garden perspectives. Let us call this interpretation the 'weak reading'.

¹⁰⁵ John Dixon Hunt, "Hortulan Affairs," in *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, ed. Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, and Timothy Raylor (Cambridge England: New York, 1994), 333.

¹⁰⁶ Hunt, "Hortulan Affairs," 339.

¹⁰⁷ Myers, "Shaftesbury, Pope, and Original Sacred Nature," 5 (emphasis added).

The weak reading is, however, saddled with problems too. On the face of it, the interpretation seems plausible, but remains unsupported by textual evidence from either Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* or his *Second Characters*. In *The Moralists*, Theocles's enthusiastic rhapsody unfolds not in the garden, but in the uncultivated landscape, in the "sacred groves," "on the most beautiful part of the hill," where "the sun, now ready to rise, draws off the curtain of night and shows us the open scene of nature in the plains below."¹⁰⁸ There is no evidence that the vantage point of the rhapsodist is represented by the garden perspective or has anything to do with gardening more generally. This concern was cogently voiced by Michael Charlesworth:

It is worth noting that the two characters in the dialogue are not discussing garden design, make no recommendations for future gardens, and in fact evoke 'the formal mockery of princely gardens' only as an antithesis to the 'horrid graces of the wilderness itself, which they have come to admire. [...] [T]hey are caught in the act of preferring wild places rather than any kind of garden.'¹⁰⁹

Beside the lack of explicit textual evidence that the characters in the dialogue ever engage with garden design, another problem that besets the weak interpretation is related to the very nature of appreciation involved in garden perspectives. To appreciate nature in this way involves the adoption of a vantage point structured by the gradated sequence of design of the garden, which considered as a unified view, diminishes the sense of an unmediated nature appreciation. This in turn severely limits the point of view so that the result may not be an appreciation of nature at all. As Douglas Chambers warns, seen from

¹⁰⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 298.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Charlesworth, *The English Garden: Chronological Overview, 1550-1730* (Helm Information, 1993), 335.

the garden perspective, the “woods beyond the garden” are not appreciated as nature at all, but as part of the “variety of garden experience itself.”¹¹⁰

The problems with both the strong and the weak reading leaves us with one viable option: garden perspectives may retain a heuristic role as they can function merely as a distant backdrop against which untouched nature can be properly studied or appreciated. This relationship obtained between the garden and the open landscape would be nothing more than a reiteration of the old tension between nature and art, of the general contrast between pristine nature and human art, between that which was not created by man and that which is the result of human creation. As Timothy Costelloe observes, the setting of *The Moralists* allows Shaftesbury to juxtapose “wild untamed nature” to the “artifice of the domesticated garden” so as to enable the discovery of the “original pattern of all things.”¹¹¹ What needs underlining is that the setting of the rhapsody itself is represented solely by wild, untamed nature, while gardening art is the absent term implied in this relationship.

Shaftesbury does not invoke ‘garden perspectives’ in *The Moralists* at all, but as Leatherbarrow and Hunt note, he invokes them in his *Second Characters*, in an unfinished work on plastic art:

Remember the several orders (as of old with Mr Clostr in Richmond Park and *St. Giles’s* woods) into which it is endavoured to reduce the natural views: the last and most sacred, like the Alpine kind, where the vast wood and caverns with the hollows and deep valleys worn by the cataracts in the very rock itself, pines, firs,

¹¹⁰ Douglas Chambers, *The Planters of the English Landscape Garden: Botany, Trees, and the Georgics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 56.

¹¹¹ Timothy M. Costelloe, “Imagination and Internal Sense: The Sublime in Shaftesbury, Reid, Addison, and Reynolds,” in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy M. Costelloe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50–63, p. 53.

and trunks of other aged trees. This attempted by Salvator Rosa, but without the just speculation. Witness the stickiness of his noble trees (which he otherwise finely described), and his mangling them like artificial trunks and amputations made by man and with instruments—contrary to the idea of those sacred recesses, where solitude and deep retreat, and the absence of gainful, lucratable and busy mortals, make the sublime, pathetic and enchanting, raises the sweet melancholy, the reverie, meditation. “Where no hand but that of time. No steel, no scythe, but that of Saturn’s.” Secret suggestion of the world’s ruin and decay; its birth and first formation, “where neither art nor the conceit or caprice of man has spoiled their genuine order.”¹¹²

Had Leatherbarrow and Hunt quoted or considered this passage in full, they would have realized that Shaftesbury does not speak highly of the endeavor “to reduce the natural views” involved in (garden) art. Insofar as the “last and most sacred” order of “woods and caverns” beyond the garden is concerned, the result of perspectival reduction is likened to Salvator Rosa’s¹¹³ failure to properly depict trees in certain landscape compositions. The pristine condition of the “noble trees” is pitted against their “mangling [...] like artificial trunks and amputations” by “busy mortals” whose intervention in the natural world amounts to nothing but “gainful” and “lucratable” exploitation. The conclusion reinforces Shaftesbury’s preference for the uncultivated figures of the world’s “birth and first formation” and is linked explicitly with the specific line in *The Moralists* where Philocles espouses

things of a natural kind, where neither art nor the conceit or caprice of man has spoiled their genuine order by breaking in upon that primitive state. Even the rude rocks, the mossy caverns, the irregular unwrought grottos and broken falls of waters, with all the horrid graces of the wilderness itself, as representing nature

¹¹² Shaftesbury, *Second Characters*, 163.

¹¹³ Salvator Rosa’s landscape painting influenced the development of the picturesque. See, Richard W Bevis, *The Road to Egdon Heath: The Aesthetics of the Great in Nature* (Montreal ; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 36, as well as Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England*. (New York, Russell & Russell, 1965). Shaftesbury rejected picturesque aesthetics, as shown in the next section below.

more, will be the more engaging and appear with a magnificence beyond the formal mockery of princely gardens.¹¹⁴

Theocles defends the idea that the more untouched the natural world is by the human hand, the greatest the pleasure it affords.

Grounded in his practice of trimming figures into specific geometric shapes, Shaftesbury's gardening design has been interpreted as a confirmation of the problematic notion of 'perfected nature'. The incongruity between this notion and Shaftesbury's theodicy calls for an alternative explanation of the Earl's gardening philosophy. As suggested, the very ordering principles of formal unity and contrast can be interpreted as applications of his doctrine of mimesis. As Myers has shown, the concept of original sacred nature promoted by Shaftesbury could be imitated in a lower form by the human art of gardening.¹¹⁵ However, because the art of gardening per se is not the object of my investigation, and moreover since Shaftesbury considered gardening an instance of art, it is necessary to now proceed with an examination of the general relation of art to nature as framed within Shaftesbury's theory of mimesis. A discussion of mimesis can be initiated by considering two ways of conveying the analogy between nature and art.

¹¹⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 317 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁵ Myers, "Shaftesbury, Pope, and Original Sacred Nature," 3.

2.5 Shaftesbury's Conception of Artistic Mimesis

It has been noted that the relation between art and nature in Shaftesbury's aesthetics is one of analogy. Wallace Jackson underscores the centrality of this analogy to the Earl's aesthetics:

Shaftesbury's aesthetic depends basically upon the concept of analogues between art and nature, artist and divine artist. Thus, to Shaftesbury, the artist is like divinity, and art is like nature; the former in each case is a reflection or mirror of the latter.¹¹⁶

Moshe Barasch similarly remarks about Shaftesbury that "[w]hat he says about nature in general, and about landscapes in particular, sometimes displays a surprising affinity to art and an understanding of artistic processes."¹¹⁷ Descriptions of this kind tend to emphasize, *au fond*, the similarity between the realms of art and nature. On the other hand, characterizations of Shaftesbury's notion of art as a heterocosm tend to throw into relief the existence of differences between the two realms. K.K. Ruthven, for instance, writes that, on Shaftesbury's view, "what the second maker makes is a second world, a heterocosm *distinct* from the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of man."¹¹⁸ The very meaning of 'hetero' (other) conveys a *prima facie* recognition of art as an entity dissimilar to the world.

The acknowledgment of an analogical relationship between art and nature, as well as the description of art as a heterocosm are, however, two ways of addressing one and

¹¹⁶ Wallace Jackson, *Immediacy: The Development of a Critical Concept from Addison to Coleridge* (Amsterdam: Rodopi NV, 1973), 106.

¹¹⁷ Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art. From Winckelmann to Baudelaire* (New York, London: Routledge, 2000), 37.

¹¹⁸ Kenneth Knowles Ruthven, *Critical Assumptions* (London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1-2.

the same phenomenon. As stated by M.H. Abrams, according to the heterocosmic model, “the residing work of art constitutes a new creation—its own world or a second nature” that is “an *analogue* to God’s created world.”¹¹⁹ The purpose of Shaftesbury’s use of the analogy is precisely to evince similarities without the danger of obscuring significant critical differences. Because every analogy is an ambivalent establishment of similarity with a difference, the analogy made between art and nature needs to be explained.

Analogical predication is based on the existence of an analogon as the element of similarity in two or more subjects called analogates. As employed by Shaftesbury, the analogy between divine creation and human art consists in the juxtaposition of a primary analogate, ‘God creating the world’, to a secondary one: ‘an artist creating an artwork’. The analogon is represented by the act of creation: both divine and human minds create things. The notable difference however stems from the hierarchy of analogates. The relationship between the artist and God, and human and divine creation is nothing but the mimetic relationship that obtains between a copy and its exemplar. As we shall see in this section, for Shaftesbury, the exemplar is always perfectly realized while copies only afford imperfect or perfectible realizations. The two analogates are involved, thus, in a

¹¹⁹ M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 170. According to Abrams, the term ‘heterocosm’ is needed precisely to avoid the reductionism of art as a mirror analogy, which tends to obstruct critical differences between art and the mirror image it is supposed to reflect: “analogues are by their nature only partial parallels, and the very sharpness of focus afforded by a happily chosen archetype makes marginal and elusive those qualities of an object that fall outside its primate categories. While a work of art, for instance, is very like a mirror, it is also, in important respects, quite different, and not many critics have been able to keep the derived aesthetic categories flexible, and sufficiently responsive to data outside their immediate scope. The history of modern criticism [...] may in some part be told as the search for alternative parallels—a heterocosm or ‘second nature’ [...] which would avoid some of the troublesome implications of the mirror, and better comprehend those aspects and relations of an aesthetic object which this archetype leaves marginal or omits.” Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 35.

strict relationship which mandates that the production of human art be an imitation of nature as God's creation. If the relation between God and artist, or that between nature and art, is properly perceived as the relation between a primary and a secondary analogate, then the analogates are involved in relationship that is at once hierarchical and mimetic. Given that both the commonalities and differences between the two realms originate in a theory that demands that a good work of art resemble certain aspects of nature, it is to Shaftesbury's concept of mimesis that we must now turn.

Theocles's conspicuous remark that "poets and all those other students in nature and the arts" "copy after her"¹²⁰ betrays Shaftesbury's defense of a mimetic theory of art. Robert Uphaus argues that Shaftesbury's "final criterion of beauty is imitation"¹²¹ which can be foregrounded by bringing his views into relation with two influential and antithetical theories of mimesis, one voiced by Plato, and the other by Plotinus. Plato is generally known for his notorious repudiation of the arts in *Book X* of the *Republic* by placing them at a second remove from the eternal realm of ideas. He contends that while orienting themselves by immutable ideas, carpenters manage to *make* real beds. A painter of a bed, on the other hand, is not a maker, but merely an *imitator* of real beds existing in the world. Artists are assigned the low status of imitators of superficial appearances, and whose created product is further away from the realm of ideas or essences of things.¹²²

¹²⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 317.

¹²¹ Robert W. Uphaus, "Shaftesbury on Art: The Rhapsodic Aesthetic," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 27, no. 3 (1969): 344.

¹²² See Uphaus, "Shaftesbury on Art," 342 and Gunter Gebauer, Christopher Wulf, and Don Reneau, *Mimesis: Culture - Art - Society* (California: University of California Press, 1996), 37.

Stephen Halliwell, while restoring the complexity of Plato's own insights on mimesis, has continued to emphasize the Greek philosopher's anxiety about the status of representational appearances.¹²³ These concerns must have triggered, if only partly, Plotinus's defense of mimetic arts in the *Enneads* where the term acquires favorable connotations with reference to two central aspects: mimesis is, first, accepted as an overarching principle of reality—so to imitate does no longer mean to produce condemnable illusionistic copies—and second, it becomes an essential principle of a dignified view of art entrusted with the ability to “reach beyond the appearances to the underlying principles of nature, and [...] emulate the mimetic activity of nature itself.”¹²⁴ Shaftesbury will come to appropriate these two mimetic principles.

¹²³ Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 37-117.

¹²⁴ Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 317. The value-loaded opposition between nature and art in Plotinus has been a point of contention among scholars. Ronald Moore believes that Plotinus was the first Western philosopher to declare the superiority of artistic beauty to natural beauty. Ronald Moore, *Natural Beauty: A Theory of Aesthetics beyond the Arts* (Peterborough, Ontario; New York: Broadview Press, 2008), 45. In much the same vein, Abrams argues that “Plotinus’ allowance of art to bypass the empirical world and imitate nature’s formative essences turns art into a more accurate reflector of the ideal than does imperfect nature itself.” Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 42. Both views are to a great degree consonant with the treatment given by P.V. Pistorius in his *Plotinus and Neoplatonism* in which he suggests that on Plotinus’s view, a work of art stands actually higher in the scale of reality than its model. Philippus Villiers Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism; an Introductory Study* (Cambridge England: Bowes & Bowes, 1952). Audrey N.M. Rich took Pistorius to task for this reading: “Pistorius would even go to the extent of saying that in Plotinus’ view, a work of art, e.g. a portrait of Socrates, stands actually higher in the scale of reality than its model, in this case, than Socrates himself. This is because it imitates ‘the Idea of Socrates, the νοητόν of the man’. But against this it should be pointed out that for Plotinus ‘the Idea of Socrates’ would be precisely what Socrates himself imitates. It is therefore difficult to see how a portrait of him could be regarded as some higher kind of reality. In any case, Plotinus makes it perfectly clear that as far as he is concerned, the very fact that a portrait is not alive, is one good reason for looking upon it as less, not more, than the living being it purports to represent. In fact, he even goes so far as to say that something ugly that is alive is actually preferable to a beautiful statue, a remark which certainly does not bear out the suggestion that a work of art is superior to a work of nature.” Audrey N.M. Rich, “Plotinus and the Theory of Artistic

The first principle which recognizes mimesis as a fundamental aspect of reality is manifested in Shaftesbury's acknowledgement of a perfect God as a model of both moral and aesthetic emulation. Because, for him, morality and religion are intertwined, he defines true religion as the "discipline and progress of the soul towards perfection."¹²⁵

The process can be described as an act of moral mimesis whose object of imitation is God:

nothing can more highly contribute to the fixing of right apprehension and a sound judgment or sense of right and wrong than to believe a god who is ever and on all accounts represented such as to be actually a true *model* and example of the most exact justice and highest goodness and worth. Such a view of divine providence and bounty extended to all and expressed in a constant good affection towards the whole must of necessity engage us, within our compass and sphere *to act by a like principle and affection.*¹²⁶

Stated otherwise, human beings should model themselves after the "excellency and worth" of God, "thinking it the perfection of [their] nature to imitate and resemble him."¹²⁷ Hence, Shaftesbury believes, according to Michael Gill, that "our ideas of

Imitation," *Mnemosyne* 13, no. 1 (1960): 238. Shaftesbury placed inanimate natural objects over artifacts: "In things inanimate, nature before the arts, and thus from stones, diamonds, rock, minerals; to vegetables, woods, aggregate parts of the world, as sea, river, hills, vales. The globe, celestial bodies and their order; the great architecture of Nature—Nature itself." Shaftesbury, *The Life*, 244. He was also influenced by Aristotle's distinction between artificial and natural things, with the latter showing an internal and organic source of motion instead of an external efficient agent. Hence, he contrasts a living tree with "a figure of wax [...] cast in the exact shape and colours of this tree" in order to conclude that what makes the "oneness or sameness in the tree" is that it is "a real tree, lives, flourishes, and is still one and the same." It becomes apparent that the attributes of the tree show that unlike artificial figures, one of nature's peculiarity lies in the internal and organic character of its figures. "Leaving, therefore, these trees", continued he, 'to personate themselves the best they can, let us examine this thing of personality between you and me and consider how you, Philocles, are you, and I am myself. For that there is sympathy of parts in these figures of ours other than in those of marble formed by Phidias or Praxiteles, sense, I believe, will teach us.' Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 300.

¹²⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 269.

¹²⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 182 (emphasis added).

¹²⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 183.

goodness originate in God and [...] we become God-like when our conduct accords with those ideas.”¹²⁸

But it is not only in relation to moral behavior that human agents strive to imitate God as the perfect entity, but also with reference to art and the artistic process. God is not only the perfect moralist, but more importantly, the perfect artist. This dimension is illustrated by Theocles who urges that one should not

judge less favourably of that consummate art exhibited through all the works of nature, since our weak eyes, helped by mechanic art, discover in these works a hidden scene of wonders, worlds within worlds of infinite minuteness, though as to art still equal to the greatest and pregnant with more wonders than the most discerning sense, joined with the greatest art or the acutest reason, can penetrate or unfold.¹²⁹

Because the world that God created is an “all-good and perfect work”¹³⁰ in all respects, it must also be perfectly beautiful as the greatest work of art. As Gill points out, Shaftesbury envisions God as a perfect artist whose work of art, nature, must elicit the superlative of aesthetic experience:

The feature of God that dominates Shaftesbury’s *Moralists* [...] is the consummate artistry with which He created the world. An artist makes things that he finds beautiful, and the more successful the artist, the closer to his idea of beauty his creation will be. But God is a perfect artist, and the world is His creation. So from God’s perspective, the world (in its entirety) must be absolutely beautiful. We become God-like, then, just to the extent that we see the world as beautiful.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 128.

¹²⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 307. Theocles also states that God is an artist when he confesses that the “virtue” of forming forms (the second order of beauty) “was from another form above them and could not properly be called their virtue or art if in reality there was a superior *art* or something *artist-like* which guided their hand and made tools of them in this specious work.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 323 (emphasis added).

¹³⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 310.

¹³¹ Gill, *The British Moralists*, 108.

The second mimetic principle is reflected in Shaftesbury's preference for Nature's creative process rather than its created product as the proper object of imitation.¹³² He contends that the "great original" of imitation is never to be found in the material world of bodies, but is represented by the divine mind that created the physical world and continues to animate it: "the particular [human] mind," Theocles exclaims "should seek its happiness and conformity with the general one and endeavor to resemble it in its highest simplicity and excellence."¹³³ Shaftesbury offers his celebrated analogy of the poet as a Promethean figure who manages to fashion artistic products that reflect Nature's fundamental characteristics - wholeness, coherence, and proportion of parts:

a poet is indeed a second Maker, a just Prometheus under Jove. Like that sovereign artist or universal plastic nature, he forms a whole, coherent and proportioned in itself, with due subjection and subordinacy of constituent parts [...] The moral artist who can thus imitate the Creator and is thus knowing in the inward form and structure of his fellow creature, will hardly, I presume, be found unknowing in himself or at a loss in those numbers which make the harmony of a mind.¹³⁴

In the *Soliloquy*, he contrasts the imitators of bodies with those that take the perfections of minds as paradigmatic objects of their artistic imitations:

There is this essential difference however between the artists of each kind: that they who design merely after bodies and form the graces of this sort can never, with all their accuracy or correctness of design, be able to reform themselves or grow a jot more sharply in their persons. But for those artists who copy from another life, who study the graces and perfections of minds and are real masters of

¹³² Cassirer offered a description of this shift with characteristic clarity: "[a]rt is not imitation in the sense that it is content with the surface of things and with their mere appearance, and that it attempts to copy these aspects as faithfully as possible. Artistic "imitation" belongs to another sphere and, so to speak, to another dimension; it imitates not merely the product, but the act of producing, not that which has become, but the process of becoming. The ability to immerse itself in this process and to contemplate It from this standpoint is, according to Shaftesbury, the real nature and mystery of genius." Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton; Oxford Princeton University Press, 2009), 317.

¹³³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 304.

¹³⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 93.

those rules which constitute this latter science, it is impossible they should fail of being themselves improve and amended in their better part.¹³⁵

The faithful copying of external figures is abandoned in favor of a kind of imitation that renounces strict correspondences between the descriptive content of nature and art, and is marked rather by a structural *dependence* of art on nature which holds irrespective of the specific content of both.¹³⁶ Even though the artwork's content is independent of the work of nature, it must still display a basic structural dependence on the work of nature which Shaftesbury describes as the "rules of proportion and truth."¹³⁷

If artists are aware of these rules, then

[t]he creature of their brain must be like one of nature's formation. It must have a body and parts proportionable, or the very vulgar will not fail to criticize the work when 'it has neither head nor tail'. For so common sense (according to just philosophy) judges of those works which want the justness of a whole and show their author, however curious and exact in particulars, to be in the main a very bungler: The point of the work is missed because he does not know how to fashion the whole.¹³⁸

The work of art should be modelled after the structure of the cosmos which displays harmony, order, and proportion, and the artists must be aware of their weaknesses and inability to fashion works that are coherent wholes. It is no coincidence that Shaftesbury proposes the neologism 'tablature' as a plastic painting genre borrowing the attributes of the natural world as a whole shaped ultimately by the divine mind:

We may give the name of Tablature, when the Work is in reality a Single Piece, comprehended in one View, and form'd according to one single Intelligence,

¹³⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 92-3.

¹³⁶ For a discussion of this distinction between representational and structural mimesis, see Martha Husain, *Ontology and the Art of Tragedy: An Approach to Aristotle's Poetics* (Albany: State University Of New York Press, 2002), 25-6.

¹³⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 67.

¹³⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 67.

Meaning, or Design; which constitutes a real WHOLE, by a mutual and necessary Relation of its Parts, the same as of the Members in a natural Body.¹³⁹

The structural dependence of the work of art on nature dictates that like nature, art must also reflect truth. In *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, Shaftesbury holds that as the world is governed by truth, art must be likewise governed by it: “truth is the most powerful thing in the world, since even fiction itself must be governed by it and can *only* please by its resemblance.”¹⁴⁰ The truth of art must depend on the correspondence to the truth of nature, and must display unity of design and wholeness as seen in the Earl’s advice to painters:

A painter, if he has any genius, understands the truth and unity of design and knows he is even then unnatural when he follows nature too close and strictly copies life. For his art allows him not to bring all nature into his piece but a part only. However, his piece, if it be beautiful and carries truth, must be a whole by itself, complete, independent and withal as great and comprehensive as he can make it.¹⁴¹

Shaftesbury expands on the analogy between natural and artistic truth in *Sensus Communis* where he insists that “[t]rue features make the beauty of a face and true proportions, the beauty and architecture as true measures, that of harmony and music. In poetry, which is all fable, truth is still the perfection.”¹⁴² Gill has contended that Shaftesbury’s notion of truth as applicable both to nature and art, by presupposing the ideas of harmony and proportion among the parts of a whole, goes beyond a notion of “representational accuracy,” more specifically defined as an “agreement between a

¹³⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 348. For the revolutionary implications of the coinage of this neologism, see John Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, 28-32.

¹⁴⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 5 (emphasis added).

¹⁴¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 66.

¹⁴² Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 65.

proposition and a state of affairs the proposition purports to describe.”¹⁴³ As Gill continues, true artists are those committed fully “to making things in accord with a standard” which is nothing but the achievement of beauty; beauty is described as: harmony, regularity, proportion, order, balance, symmetry.¹⁴⁴

The distinction between representational and structural mimesis facilitates a better understanding of the tension lying at the core of Shaftesbury’s theory of artistic imitation. Using a distinction made earlier in this section, the internal organization of the work of art is a *structural* desideratum, while the relationship of the contents of a work of art to identifiable particulars is a *representational* requirement. Shaftesbury does away with the second requirement as he celebrates the representational autonomy of the work of art from nature. He concomitantly acknowledges, however, its structural dependence on the fundamental properties of Nature.

The tension between these two aspects of imitation has been recognized by several commentators of Shaftesbury’s theory of art. Uphaus concedes that “[w]hile beauty is derivative inasmuch as it is the product of participation in the divine, it has nevertheless its own original stamp of creation – individual creation itself.”¹⁴⁵ Axelsson

¹⁴³ Gill, “Shaftesbury on Life as a Work of Art,” 6.

¹⁴⁴ Gill, “Shaftesbury on Life as a Work of Art,” 6.

¹⁴⁵ Uphaus, “Shaftesbury on Art: The Rhapsodic Aesthetic,” 344-5. Some scholars choose to emphasize either one of these two aspects. For instance, “Shaftesbury’s fascination with the creative power of art would greatly contribute,” Liu contends, “to the extravagant glorification and self-glorification of the artist in English and continental European Romanticism [...]” Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 130. Elsewhere he is more explicit in articulating the Earl’s contribution to the notion of genius: “The Earl’s conspicuous promotion of spontaneity or freedom makes sure that there is still a prominent place in his aesthetic framework for the concept of ‘genius’. [...] The kind of genius Shaftesbury delineates implicitly in *The*

similarly notes that “[t]he poet was thus an autonomous and creative maker, participating in the divine (re)creation of nature, although his mimetic activity naturally remained determined by the ‘heavenly Maker of that maker.’”¹⁴⁶ By imitating “the structural rules by which the world functions,” art “becomes,” on Fabienne Brugère’s view, “an autonomous region to the extent that the rules of world’s truth are totally reformulated,”¹⁴⁷ although this autonomy is ultimately challenged by making nature and natural beauty “the unsurpassable condition of any definition of art.”¹⁴⁸

While Shaftesbury’s conception of mimesis rescues the artistic process from the ancillary act of faithfully copying empirical nature, it effects a simultaneous subordination of art to Nature by rendering human artistic process derivative of, and ultimately dependent on providential nature’s creative force structuring a cohesive whole. Formulated in an alternative vocabulary, the completed and cohesive work of art, thus, is at once an entity autonomous in relation to ‘nature’ (the faithful depiction of natural figures) while entirely dependent on ‘Nature’ as its exemplar. According to yet another terminology, this ambivalence reflects the two polarizing forces of mimesis as both world-reflecting and world-creating:¹⁴⁹ art is at once defined as structurally mimetic

Moralists [...] is merely exemplary in embodying and celebrating the creative and self-creative potential of each and every person: what one is, others can also be. [...] To be original or creative, then, is not so much to produce things that others cannot produce, as to enable them, as Theocles does Philocles, and Philocles in turn Palemon, to reconnect with their own freedom or (self-)creative instincts [...].” Yu Liu, “The Surprising Passion for Wild Nature: The True Innovation of Shaftesbury’s Aesthetics,” in *New Ages, New Opinions: Shaftesbury in His World and Today*, ed. Patrick Müller (Frankfurt Am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 77–92, p. 90.

¹⁴⁶ Axelsson, *Political Aesthetics*, 213.

¹⁴⁷ Fabienne Brugère, “Esthétique et Ressemblance Chez Shaftesbury,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 100, no. 4 (1995): 530 (my own translation from French).

¹⁴⁸ Brugère, “Esthétique et Ressemblance Chez Shaftesbury,” 518 (my own translation from French).

¹⁴⁹ Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 377.

production, and yet the artist can create new worlds by going beyond the production of mere copies.

Paying attention to this tension at the core of Shaftesbury's theory of mimesis reminds us again that the purpose of analogical thought should not allow a disproportionate emphasis on similarities between nature and art at the expense of concealing significant critical differences. Natural and artistic beauty are not identical, but analogous. An appeal to analogy is made precisely in virtue of its ability to accentuate that artistic beauty is like *and* unlike natural beauty at the same time.

Likewise, the qualitative distinction between the two realizations of truth—human and divine—should not be blurred. Axelsson contends that “[b]eauty appears in the poetic verse of Horace where the work is the harmonious reflection of Absolute Beauty, as well as in the physical rock, and as such they are true, although this truth is manifested in two *different* ways.”¹⁵⁰ What needs to be added is that while ‘Absolute Truth’ admits double realizability by both nature and art, the two manifestations of truth are not only different, but hierarchical. The risk inherent in the human artistic process ties back to the theodicean defense of the perfection of God’s creation¹⁵¹ which is pitted against the imperfections of human art. The failure to create a whole is a failure to abide by the structural properties of the world perceived as a providentially-ordered cosmic whole.

¹⁵⁰ Axelsson, *Political Aesthetics*, 217.

¹⁵¹ As Patrick Muller has remarked, “[t]heodicy brings together most of the key components of Shaftesbury’s thought [...] and ultimately, the nature of the relation between art and ‘reality’.” Müller, “‘Dwell with Honesty & Beauty & Order’,” 229-30.

Despite previously admitting that “mimetic activity naturally remained determined by the ‘heavenly Maker of that maker,’” Axelsson tends to minimize the importance of this statement and ultimately sweep under the carpet a discussion of the hierarchical relationship that holds between the two manifestations of truth:

The question that is relevant for Shaftesbury is not so much whether the truth of the whole shaped by the artist is inferior or not to the truth of created nature. Given that the success of the work of art does not hinge on the complete correspondence between the work and the particulars of nature, but on the correspondence of the work’s truth to nature’s truth, such questions are somewhat beside the point.¹⁵²

In light of my previous discussion of the two aspects of mimeticism, it becomes apparent that Axelsson is invoking the distinction between the *representational* correspondence and the *structural* correspondence of the work of art to nature. He is ready to concede that if the success of the work of art relied on the “complete correspondence between the work and the particulars of nature,” the superiority of the truth of nature to the truth of art would become a relevant topic of inquiry. If the representational correspondence of the work of art to created nature can legitimize a question on the superiority of the latter to the former, there is no good reason why the principle of structural correspondence embraced by Shaftesbury cannot potentially raise the same question.

Despite the liberation of the artwork from the particulars of nature, the very existence of a requirement for art to structurally imitate Nature’s truth and not vice versa or otherwise suggests an asymmetrical relation between the terms of the mimetic model that ultimately betrays the subordination of art to Nature. Martha Husain, while referring

¹⁵² Axelsson, *Political Aesthetics*, 217.

to nature as *physis*, and to art as *techne*, has offered a perfect description of this relational asymmetry:

Mimesis relates *physis* and *techne* asymmetrically, since *techne* imitates *physis*, never *physis techne*. *Physis* is, so to say, the senior partner, and its products are the paradigms. Human making orients itself by these paradigms.¹⁵³

It has been emphasized again that this mimetic subordination of art to nature ultimately has a limiting effect on art. For Shaftesbury,

[t]his likening [between artist and divinity, art and nature] could not escape the pitfall of correspondences: certain forms were inherently more pleasing than others because they were better suited to lead the mind to certain moral perceptions. For art, the ultimate effect of such a theory could only be stultifying.¹⁵⁴

Shaftesbury's theory of mimesis amounts to a prescription that art should ultimately imitate providential Nature's creative act of fashioning a coherent whole. As the eighteenth century wore to its end, nature came to be appreciated for its resemblance to *human* art, which could be either accidental or voluntary. Both possibilities anticipate the picturesque¹⁵⁵ aesthetics according to which nature's resemblance to human-made products can bring aesthetic satisfaction to the viewer. Nowhere in his written work does Shaftesbury, unlike Addison, affirm the possibility of deriving aesthetic pleasure from nature's accidental resemblance to human art. Nature made to resemble art through a

¹⁵³ Husain, *Ontology and the Art of Tragedy*, 23.

¹⁵⁴ Jackson, *Immediacy*, 106-7.

¹⁵⁵ It is known that as the eighteenth century progressed to its end, the aesthetic category of the picturesque came to the fore. According to Monk, "[i]t was not until about 1738 that landscape painting and natural scenery actually came together and that the picturesque phase of English art began. Then and only then was it possible for scenery to be valued generally for its composition and not primarily for its ability to awaken emotions." Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime, a Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1935), 209.

voluntary process can be illustrated by the late eighteenth-century picturesque traveler who would approach nature “with his head full of vistas and lights and foregrounds and points of view and side-screens” that would offer a world not as it was, but “as it might have been had the Creator been an Italian artist of the seventeenth century.”¹⁵⁶

Shaftesbury does not only engage with this second possibility, but appears to challenge it in his *Second Characters*:

Remember the reverse of the common phrase (speaking of meadows and perspective). “’Tis as if it were painted.” – Ridiculous!— Therefore this is just what should not be painted. And therefore when a real good picture is to be commended say of it: “This is like perfect nature and not like paint.” For when nature herself paints (as sometimes in wantonness and as it were luxuriantly) she ought not to be imitated: not the picture, but *herself* only (her pure self) copied.¹⁵⁷

The core of picturesque aesthetics, instantiated by a meadow perspective appreciated as if it were a painting, is rejected by Shaftesbury who praises the exact opposite: a painting resembling perfect nature. The nature as the model of imitation is, however, not the empirical nature displaying its peculiar abundance, luxury and variety, but Nature as a generative force, “her pure self.” Shaftesbury suggests, once again, that true *mimesis* consists not in the copying of dead forms, but in the imitation of the divine mind that gave birth to their formative essences.

For Shaftesbury, the concept of the picturesque did not have the positive meaning it would acquire by the end of the century. In his *Second Characters*, he included a

¹⁵⁶ Monk, *The Sublime*, 204.

¹⁵⁷ Shaftesbury, *Second Characters*, 139.

Dictionary of Art where the term ‘picturesque’ is accompanied by a footnote in which he advises:

remember never to use the word picturesque by way of honor (as all common painters in their art, so Raphaelesque or salvatoresque).¹⁵⁸

The honorific dimension of labeling some compositions as Raphaelesque or Salvatoresque is not applicable to the picturesque whose use is incriminated. This distrust of the picturesque is consonant with Theocles’s preference in the *Moralists* for “things of a natural kind.” Nature resembling or made to look like human art is frowned upon because art’s intervention in nature is a perversion of its genuine order. So unlike Addison, and the picturesque tradition that developed in the late eighteenth century, Shaftesbury considered nature’s resemblance to art as a violation of its true order and consequently not a source of beauty. He held that it was not nature imitating art that offered an aesthetic appeal, but only the other way around. The irreversibility of his doctrine of imitation is thus secured.

2.6 Wildness and Vastness: Shaftesbury on the Natural Sublime

Although a special connection between the sublime and the aesthetics of nature has been repeatedly underscored, the implication of this affinity for the value-loaded relation of art to nature in Shaftesbury’s aesthetics remains yet to be considered.

Therefore, the goal of this final section is to show that another reason for Shaftesbury’s

¹⁵⁸ Shaftesbury, *Second Characters*, 179.

preference of nature to art grows out of his belief that sublime responses, in virtue of their origin in the physical properties of irregularity and vastness, can only be adequately elicited by nature, and cannot be properly reproduced by art.

Among the shared features that drew natural beauty and the arts together in the eighteenth century was, according to Arnold Berleant, the ability of both to be experienced perceptually and appreciated aesthetically.¹⁵⁹ Going beyond natural beauty, however, Berleant praises the notion of the sublime for the distinctive aesthetic effects it can produce:

the sublime captures one aspect of the aesthetic experience of nature—the capacity of the natural world to act on so monumental a scale as to exceed our powers of framing and control, and to produce in their place a sense of overwhelming magnitude and awe.¹⁶⁰

The concept of the sublime effects the decoupling of art and nature, and dissolves the bond created by the shared ground of beauty. While praising Kant as the innovator of the aesthetics of the sublime, Berleant concedes that “Shaftesbury, who preceded Kant [...] actually provided much of the originality of conceptions to which Kant later gave philosophical order and structure [...]”¹⁶¹ Berleant ultimately contends that the historical category of the sublime identifies a distinctive aesthetics of nature that is unrelated to the traditional theory of the arts.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Arnold Berleant, “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19.

¹⁶⁰ Berleant, “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature,” 234.

¹⁶¹ Berleant, “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature,” 229-30.

¹⁶² Berleant, “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature,” 234.

Several historians and scholars of aesthetics have discussed the emergence of the sublime as a distinct aesthetic at the dawn of the eighteenth century, and many of these scholars have also recognized that the category applied predominantly not to art but to the natural world. Samuel T. Monk notes that from ancient times onward, the sublime has always been strongly connected with the natural world.¹⁶³ Marjorie Hope Nicolson views the sublime as based on the amelioration of the views on the infinite, and hence locates its conceptual core in the stimuli of vast natural objects reflecting the glory of God.¹⁶⁴ Brady similarly situates the sublime in the nature paradigm of aesthetic experience as operating first and foremost through natural objects or phenomena which possess qualities of great height or vastness or tremendous power.¹⁶⁵

As employed by Shaftesbury, the word ‘sublime’ has three discernible meanings in his works. When used exclusively in a literary context, it denotes a style of written discourse which most aptly reflects the Longinian inheritance of the rhetorical sublime. Used in the broader context of the arts such as music, dance, painting, as well as literature, Shaftesbury understands the sublime as “greatness with order,” a watered-down version of the sublime necessarily abiding by the demands of beauty which consist in the proper arrangement of parts forming a harmonious whole. Third, he uses the sublime, only on few occasions, with reference to the human visual response to natural stimuli displaying the physical property of vastness.

¹⁶³ Monk, *The Sublime*, 205.

¹⁶⁴ Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 271-323.

¹⁶⁵ Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy*, 118.

Scholars have remarked that most often when Shaftesbury employed the word ‘sublime’, he used it to refer to a literary style meant to arouse an elevated nobility of thought along with powerful emotional transport.¹⁶⁶ Shaftesbury comes closest to offering a definition of the sublime style in *The Soliloquy*:

It is easy to imagine that, amid the several styles and manners of discourse or writing, the easiest attained and earliest practised was the miraculous, the pompous or what we generally call the *sublime*. Astonishment is of all other passions the easiest raised in raw and unexperienced mankind. Children in their earliest infancy are entertained in this manner, and the known way of pleasing such as these is to make them wonder and lead the way for them in this passion by a feigned surprise at the miraculous objects we set before them. The best music of barbarians is hideous and astonishing sounds. And the fine sights of Indians are enormous figures, various odd and glaring colours and whatever of that sort is amazingly beheld with a kind of horror and consternation.

In poetry and studied prose, the astonishing part, or what commonly passes for *sublime*, is formed by the variety of figures, the multiplicity of metaphors, and by quitting as much as possible the natural and easy way of expression for that which is most unlike to humanity or ordinary use.¹⁶⁷

As described, the sublime appears to play a constitutive role in the creation of fantastic literature, as suggested by equating it with a “pompous” writing style that raises passions

¹⁶⁶ “Shaftesbury, himself, most often uses the word ‘sublime’ in connection with style. His view of sublimity in style is that it consists in emotional appeal wedded to loftiness of thought and expression, a sublime style being one in which the fusion of high feeling and thought imparts to the language an eloquence that defies analysis.” R.L. Brett, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury* (London Hutchinson, 1951), 146. See also Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 294, footnote 28.

¹⁶⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 108-9 (emphasis added). A similar passage addresses the genesis of sublime style in Ancient Greece: “Now, according to this natural growth of arts peculiar to Greece, it would necessarily happen that at the beginning, when the force of language came to be first proved, when the admiring world made their first judgment and essayed their taste in the elegancies of this sort, the lofty, the sublime, the astonishing and amazing would be the most in fashion and preferred. Metaphorical speech, multiplicity of figures and high-sounding words would naturally prevail. Though in the commonwealth itself and in the affairs of government men were used originally to plain and direct speech, yet, when speaking became an art and was taught by sophists and other pretended masters, the high poetic and the figurative way began to prevail [...]” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 398.

in the reader through eliciting a “feigned surprise” in response to descriptions of “miraculous objects.”

Paddy Bullard has stressed that when Shaftesbury uses the word ‘sublime’ understood in its Longinian-rhetorical context, as in the excerpt quoted above, it undergoes pejoration by association with “uncultivated enthusiasm, superstition, and an infantilism proper only to Asian slavery.”¹⁶⁸ While it is true that the meaning of sublime in this excerpt is far from eulogistic, it is important not to overstate Shaftesbury’s ascription of negative connotations to the sublime style. This style acquires a positive connotation when the Earl reflects back on the stylistic makeup of his own dialogue *The Moralists* which is written “with variety of style – the simple, comic, rhetorical and even the poetic or *sublime*, such as is the aptest to run into enthusiasm and extravagance.”¹⁶⁹ The sublime style does not have either positive or negative connotations per se but is, more importantly, traced to the moving force of figurative language and especially metaphor which is counterposed to the innocuous effects of ordinary language. Textually, the sublime style is realized through a “pile of metaphors.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Paddy Bullard, “The Meaning of the ‘Sublime and Beautiful’: Shaftesburian Contexts and Rhetorical Issues in Edmund Burke’s Philosophical Enquiry,” *The Review of English Studies* 56, no. 224 (April 1, 2005): 174. Nicolson also remarks that “The word *sublime* was so seldom on Shaftesbury’s lips that it surprises. When he used it at all, it was usually with disparagement.” Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 294. Lawrence Klein interprets Shaftesbury’s pejorative statements on sublime writing as partaking of a mode of cultural expression indicative of the “unpoliteness” of the Church and Court he was resisting. Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge England; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 203-4.

¹⁶⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 458-9.

¹⁷⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 455.

Going beyond figures of speech, the sublime is also applied, in the Earl's writings, to music, dance, painting, and literary art, and used, more specifically, as an attribute to describe artistic compositions. A composition is the arrangement of constituent parts within a harmonious whole. In the *Askemata*, Shaftesbury reveals what constitutes the sublime of the art of (musical) composition:

What is music? What is one note prolonged? Nothing more dissonant and odious. But seek the changes and vicissitudes, and those too the most odd and various ones; and here it is where harmony arises. Mix even a dissonance after a certain manner and the music is still more excellent; and in the management of these dissonances is *the sublime of the art*. What is dance but a like succession of motions diversified, of which not one single one would continue graceful if viewed by itself and out of this change, but which taken as they are joined together and depending on one another, form the highest grace imaginable.¹⁷¹

The term 'sublime' is here not so much a feature of composition, but a term applicable to the skill of the musician who manages to create a perfectly harmonious musical piece made up of alternations of sounds. Similarly, there is also a sublime of the art of dance construed as a "succession of motions diversified" and "joined together." The "sublime of the art" conveys, thus, the artist's skill of successfully integrating particulars within a harmonious whole.¹⁷²

A similar description of the sublime is offered in his discussion of painting in *Sensus Communis* where Shaftesbury seeks to establish the most basic principle of painting: that the painter should never imitate the variety of external figures available as

¹⁷¹ Shaftesbury and Benjamin Rand, *The Life*, 82 (emphasis added).

¹⁷² "A work without an integral difference between the unique elements is simply incapable of producing the highest rational harmony." The same work of art, "in order to be appropriately experienced, must be regarded as a whole, even though it is constituted by a concentration of dissimilar parts." Axelsson, *Political Aesthetics*, 206.

such in nature, but must work selectively to accommodate figures within the composition so that they can be comprehended in one single piece that constitutes a whole by itself.¹⁷³

Shaftesbury's discussion of painting is accompanied by a long footnote which is crucial to this meaning of the sublime:

The *ready apprehension*, as the great master of arts [Aristotle] calls it in his *Poetics*, Chapter 23 but particularly Chapter 7, where he shows 'that the τὸ καλόν, *the beautiful or the sublime*, in these above-mentioned arts, is from the expression of *greatness with order*, that is to say, exhibiting the principal or main of what is designed in the very largest proportions in which it is capable of being viewed. For when it is gigantic, it is in a manner out of sight and can be no way comprehended in that simple and *united* view. As, on the contrary, when a piece is of the miniature kind, when it runs into the detail and nice delineation of every little particular, it is, as it were, invisible, for the same reason, because the summary beauty, the whole itself, cannot be comprehended in that one united view, which is broken and lost by the necessary attraction of the eye to every small and subordinate part. In a poetic system, the same regard must be had to the memory, as in painting, to the eye. The dramatic kind is confined within the convenient and proper time of a spectacle. The epic is left more at large. Each work, however, must aim at vastness and be as great and of as long duration as possible, but so as to be comprehended (as to the main of it) by one easy glance or retrospect of memory. And this the Philosopher calls, accordingly, the *ready memorability*.'¹⁷⁴

What is the meaning of the sublime here? Raymond L. Brett argues that in this passage, and for that matter, whenever "used with reference to art, [the sublime] is identical with the beautiful in Shaftesbury's view."¹⁷⁵ Judging by his commentary on Aristotle,

¹⁷³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 66. Here is the passage quoted in full: "A painter, if he has any genius, understands the truth and unity of design and knows he is even then unnatural when he follows nature too close and strictly copies life. For his art allows him not to bring all nature into his piece but a part only. However, his piece, if it be beautiful and carries truth, must be a whole by itself, complete, independent and withal as great and comprehensive as he can make it. So that particulars, on this occasion, must yield to the general design and all things be subservient to that which is principal, in order to form a certain easiness of sight, a simple, clear and united view, which would be broken and disturbed by the expression of any thing peculiar or distinct." Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 66.

¹⁷⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 66, footnote 48.

¹⁷⁵ Brett, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 150.

however, it appears that what the Earl suggests is not that the sublime is identical with the beautiful, but rather that the Greek τὸ καλόν is broad enough a concept to accommodate both beautiful and sublime occurrences.¹⁷⁶ Because all the subcategories of artists enumerated in the excerpt—painters, poets, epic writers, etc—“aim at vastness,” it follows that the sublime is not confused with beauty, but can be understood as a particular species of beauty that aims at greatness or vastness while necessarily observing the physical limitations of artistic compositions.

Like all forms of art, paintings can only be sublime, on condition that the work remains a beautiful whole. Hence, in art, the sublime is not manifested through vastness, but through a watered-down “greatness with order” which represents a necessary adaptation of physical vastness to the small confines of compositions, to the “very largest proportions in which it is [still] capable of being viewed.” If it is too large, he warns, it will not be properly contained within the frame. If it is too small, the details will lack adequate proportion in relation to the whole. By including poetry, drama, and the epic, he underscores how ubiquitous this quality of “greatness with order” can be across the arts. Whenever attempted in art, the sublime must be necessarily accommodated within the limiting constraints of the beautiful. Vastness, then, is not a quality that properly belongs to art. If artists attempt to use it in art, however, the result must be adapted to the limited size of the composition.

¹⁷⁶ “We can at least be confident in concluding that Shaftesbury coined the phrase ‘SUBLIME and BEAUTIFUL’ as part of his strategy for translating the Greek τὸ καλόν and the Latin *honestum* into a single concept. As such, the phrase ‘SUBLIME and BEAUTIFUL’ is designed to evoke (all at once) the sensual, moral, aesthetic, and metaphysical aspects of those words.” Bullard, “The Meaning of the ‘Sublime and Beautiful’”, 174.

We must now turn to the few examples in which ‘sublime’ is used not in relation to either literary style or art, but with reference to natural stimuli. At the end of his enthusiastic transport, Philocles remarks: ”I could easily find that we were come to an end of our descriptions, and that whether I would or no, Theocles was now resolved to take his leave of the sublime.”¹⁷⁷ Nicolson contends that in the last sections of *The Moralists*, Shaftesbury applied the word “to express whatever was sublime in human passions,” carrying it over from religion to describe the emotions evoked by Nature in the universe and into the world.”¹⁷⁸ This reveals the strong connection between enthusiasm and the natural sublime.

Eron has remarked that Shaftesbury’s texts address “a kind of enthusiasm related to ‘inspiration’ and ‘sublimity’,” while simultaneously “connected to nature and natural occurrences.”¹⁷⁹ Likewise, Christopher Thacker notes that the worship of nature (undertaken by Theocles) “is a state of what Shaftesbury terms [true] ‘enthusiasm’, a

¹⁷⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 316.

¹⁷⁸ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 298. The phrase “sublime in human passions” occurs in *A Letter*: “For inspiration is a real feeling of the Divine Presence and enthusiasm a false one. But the passion they raise is much alike. For when the mind is taken up in vision and fixes its view either on any real object or mere spectre of divinity, when it sees, or thinks it sees, anything prodigious and more than human, its horror, delight, confusion, fear, admiration or whatever passion belongs to it or is uppermost on this occasion, will have something vast, ‘immane’ and (as painters say) beyond life. [...] Something there will be of extravagance and fury when the ideas or images received are too big for the narrow human vessel to contain. So that ‘inspiration’ may be justly called ‘divine enthusiasm’, for the word itself signifies ‘divine presence’ and was made use of by the philosopher whom the earliest Christian Fathers called ‘divine’ to express whatever was sublime in human passions. This was the spirit he allotted to heroes, statesmen, poets, orators, musicians and even philosophers themselves.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 27.

¹⁷⁹ Eron, *Inspiration in the Enlightenment*, 43. She argues for the existence of a pre-romantic secular enthusiasm championed by Shaftesbury. The connection between enthusiasm, nature, and the aesthetic superiority of the beauty of irregularity is also made clear by Liu: “As soon as the enthusiasm of Theocles begins to have its incendiary effect, Philocles speaks about nature as a better landscaping design than the conventional symmetry of parts which, as René Rapin (1621-1687) said in the seventeenth century, ‘is now visible in every Garden, [and which] is that exact beauty to which nothing can be added.’” Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 131.

receptive and yet outgoing unity with the unspoiled manifestations of the natural world.”¹⁸⁰ Resisting false enthusiasm grounded in revealed religion, Shaftesbury recovers a conception of true enthusiasm as the hallmark of nature appreciation. His rejection of revelation manifested in his deep distrust of sacred writings and miracles is presented in the fifth section of Part II of *The Moralists* which opens up with Philocles’ confession that

this was not a face of religion I was like to be enamoured with. It was not from hence I feared being made enthusiastic or superstitious. If ever I became so, I found it would rather be after Theocles’ manner. The monuments and churchyards were not such powerful scenes with me as the mountains, the plains, the solemn woods and groves [...].¹⁸¹

For Shaftesbury, false enthusiasm entails, among other things, the erroneous acceptance of artifacts, such as biblical literature and monuments, as sacred objects to properly induce or support religious belief. Genuine enthusiasm cannot be triggered by artifacts—which are firmly denounced as incapable of arousing sublime experiences—but rather by natural stimuli, such as “mountains,” “plains,” “woods” and “groves.” Theocles upholds this view while confessing vis-à-vis his enthusiastic journey: “[I am] taking rise from nature’s beauty which transported me.”¹⁸²

The proper appreciation of nature does not only arouse enthusiastic rapture in the spectator, but serves subsequently as a prime moving force behind the creation of highest art:

¹⁸⁰ Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (Berkeley: Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 181.

¹⁸¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 289 (emphasis added).

¹⁸² Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 331.

The transports of poets, the sublime of orators, the rapture of musicians, the high strains of the virtuosi – all mere enthusiasm! Even learning itself, the love of arts and curiosities, the spirit of travellers and adventurers, gallantry, war, heroism – all, all enthusiasm!¹⁸³

Enthusiastic transport is made a necessary condition for the successful production of art (broadly understood as *tékhnē*): writing poetry, giving a speech, composing music, learning, travelling, fighting in war and so forth. It must be recalled specifically how enthusiasm plays a major role in the production of poetry: Shaftesbury's statement in the *Soliloquy* that "[n]o poet [...] can do anything great in his own way without the imagination or supposition of a divine presence, which may raise him to some degree of this passion"¹⁸⁴ clearly evinces the role of enthusiasm in art making while reinforcing the dependence of the artist's work of art on God's works of nature, as well as the subordination of the former to the latter.¹⁸⁵

The essence of Shaftesbury's natural sublime is most forcefully expressed by his phrase 'wildness pleases' which simultaneously captures the value-loaded opposition

¹⁸³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 320. Monk remarks that "Shaftesbury himself equates enthusiasm with the *furor poeticus*; the source of the highest art with the source of the highest virtue." Monk, *The Sublime*, 209. Barasch has also accentuated the close connection between the solitude of nature and artistic creation: "To what degree Shaftesbury believed the creative gift to be an altogether personal, individual endowment, one can infer from his advice that the artist seek the solitude of nature, the true place of inspiration. Withdrawing from the social racket, retreating into the silence of seclusion: this is the best way to discover one's own, true character. Shaftesbury even offers technical advice for educative behavior: in solitude the artist should talk to himself in a loud voice. Soliloquy in retreat leads to self-knowledge, and self-knowledge is an essential condition in forming and articulating one's character." Barasch, *Theories of Art*, 40.

¹⁸⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 26. Shaftesbury goes on to say that "Something there will be of extravagance and fury when the ideas or images received are too big for the narrow human vessel to contain. So that 'inspiration' may be justly called 'divine enthusiasm', for the word itself signifies 'divine presence' and was made use of by the philosopher whom the earliest Christian Fathers called 'divine' to express whatever was sublime in human passions. This was the spirit he allotted to heroes, statesmen, poets, orators, musicians and even philosophers themselves." Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 27.

¹⁸⁵ For the relationship between enthusiasm and mimesis, see Eron, *Inspiration in the Age of Enlightenment*, 27.

between untouched nature and human-made artifacts. The kind of nature that Shaftesbury appreciated was the pristine, untouched by human intervention as indicated by the qualifier ‘wild’. In *La Promenade de Versailles*, a 1669 panegyric upon the gardens of Versailles, Madeleine de Scudéry expressed a view that can be taken as the epitome of an entire tradition that not only saw wild irregular uncultivated nature as unworthy of aesthetic value, but concomitantly praised art for its ability to perfect nature:

We must accept as a general rule that *Art embellishes Nature*; that palaces are more beautiful than caves, that well cultivated gardens are more pleasing than a barren waste.¹⁸⁶

Within this tradition, it is not only the regularity of formal gardens that was preferred to the irregularity of informal ones, but works of art and crafts, such as palaces, were deemed superior to pristine nature. As Thacker notes, much of Shaftesbury’s ‘enthusiasm’ for the natural world can be framed as a direct reaction to Madeleine de Scudéry’s statement.¹⁸⁷ The Earl has his mouthpiece Theocles affirm that

The wildness pleases. We seem to live alone with nature. We view her in her inmost recesses, and contemplate her with more delight in these *original wilds* than in the *artificial labyrinths and feigned wilderness of the palace*.¹⁸⁸

This clear articulation of an ameliorated view of wildness that characterizes the emergence of early eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse of the sublime also illustrates Shaftesbury’s contention that human-made artifacts can only display a “feigned wilderness,” and thus cannot properly imitate the sublimity of their “original wilds.”

¹⁸⁶ Scudéry quoted in Thacker, *Wildness Pleases: The Origins of Romanticism* (Routledge, 2018), 12.

¹⁸⁷ Thacker, *Wildness Pleases*, 12, 13.

¹⁸⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 315 (emphasis added).

Because wild nature simply abounds in irregularities, this property must be discussed as part of Shaftesbury's appreciation of the natural sublime.

When used in an ethical and artistic context, the word 'irregularity' is pejorative on Shaftesbury's view. A few examples would serve to illustrate these negative connotations. Palemon condemns "gentlemen of fashion" as "extravagant," and "irregular in their morals."¹⁸⁹ In *An Inquiry*, the "regularity of affections which causes" a moral subject "to be good" is contrasted with the "irregularities of appetite" which make the very same person "ill to others" and "to himself."¹⁹⁰ In a similar vein, attention is drawn, in *Sensus Communis*, to "vicious poets" whose art is "irregular and short-lived" because of their failure to shape their work as a coherent whole.¹⁹¹ Authors are also warned in the *Soliloquy*, against the temptation to "regulate themselves by the irregular fancy of the world."¹⁹²

Despite these negative connotations, Shaftesbury employs two different ways through which irregularity undergoes semantic amelioration. Both ways are contingent on the application of the term not primarily to art, but to the natural world. The first strategy is constitutive of his idea of theodicy whereby the existence of irregularity in nature is only apparent because it ultimately dissolves into to a larger and more harmonious regularity. Theocles professes that

¹⁸⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 62.

¹⁹⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 167

¹⁹¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 67

¹⁹² Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 118.

we admire the World's Beauty, founded thus on Contrarietys, whilst from such *various* and disagreeing principles a universal Concord is establish'd.¹⁹³

One way to fully appreciate the natural world consists, therefore, in the contemplation of the complementary relationship between regularity and irregularity. Put together, the terms of the binary are ultimately accommodated within the capacious term "World's Beauty." Shaftesbury's reconciliation of the classical aesthetics of regularity with that of wild irregularity is hence founded on the doctrine of the harmony of contraries. These apparently contradictory principles that are recognized to operate in the natural world also enable an appreciation of nature's variety. By complementing the principle of regularity with that of irregularity, Nature creates a variety of external forms which have a "peculiar original character" that is not to be imitated by art:

Now the variety of nature is such as to distinguish everything she forms by a peculiar original character, which, if strictly observed, will make the subject appear unlike to anything extant in the world besides.¹⁹⁴

The complementary relationship between regularity and irregularity enabled by the principle of *concordia discors* was identified by K. Claire Pace as lying at the core of the ubiquitous polarization of beauty and sublimity in seventeenth and eighteenth-century aesthetics:

¹⁹³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 244. "It is important to note that [...] the sublime is not opposed to the beautiful, as it was for Dennis and to some extent for Addison, but rather works in concert with it to assist the mind in its ascent from corporeal distraction to visionary perception." Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2017), 40.

¹⁹⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 66. This statement squares perfectly with Shaftesbury's belief that it is impossible and undesired to imitate this great variety of nature, but rather imitate the creative force that stands behind its creation and sustenance. Theocles also remarks that in the appreciation of the terrestrial sublime, "[s]o various are the subjects of our contemplation that even the study of these inglorious parts of nature [such as minerals] in the nether world is able itself alone to yield large matter and employment for the busiest spirits of men [...]" Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 311.

What is not always sufficiently recognized is the degree to which the sense of opposition, of polarity and tension [between the beautiful and the sublime] was a requisite. Each kind had its peculiar excellence, and each complemented the other; finally the antithesis became a commonplace. It could be expressed variously as harmony/disharmony, or regularity/irregularity; constantly, though, the singling out of one quality, or cluster of qualities, implied the existence of its opposite.¹⁹⁵

Pace notes that Shaftesbury makes frequent reference to “order in variety” as one definite consequence of the principle of *concordia discors*. In his classic study, H.V.S. Ogden argues that the principle of variety in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was founded on two traditions: it was not only the idea that the human mind is naturally pleased with change, as stated by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, but most importantly, the tradition of optimism in which Shaftesbury participated himself.¹⁹⁶

Let us look at one instance in which the complementary relationship between beauty and sublimity, regularity and irregularity is made clear by Theocles in the dialogue:

My notion was that the grievance lay not altogether in one part, as you placed it, but that everything had its share of inconvenience. Pleasure and pain, *beauty and deformity*, good and ill, seemed to me everywhere interwoven, and one with another made, I thought, a pretty mixture, agreeable enough in the main. It was the same, I fancied, as in some of those rich stuffs where the flowers and ground were oddly put together with such *irregular* work and contrary colours as looked ill in the pattern but mighty natural and well in the piece.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ K. Claire Pace, “‘Strong Contraries...Happy Discord’: Some Eighteenth-Century Discussions about Landscape,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40, no. 1 (January 1979): 142.

¹⁹⁶ H. V. S. Ogden, “The Principles of Variety and Contrast in Seventeenth Century Aesthetics, and Milton’s Poetry,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 2 (April 1949): 159-160. There is an obvious congruence between Shaftesbury’s theodicy and this tradition. See Ogden, “The Principles of Variety and Contrast,” 160.

¹⁹⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 239 (emphasis added).

In defending his thesis that Shaftesbury's concept of 'irregularity'—understood as “asymmetrical beauty” or “beauty without order”—is indirectly inspired by Chinese ideas of horticultural naturalism, Liu argues that this passage reflects two distinct ways of aesthetically appreciating the irregularity of nature. As an aesthetic application of the Neo-Platonic principle of *concordia discors*, the first scenario—illustrated by the juxtaposition of “pleasure and pain,” “beauty and deformity,” “good and ill”—adopts “a totalizing scheme” so that the irregular, “the ill or deformed could be seen in a complementary or compensatory relationship with the good or beautiful.”¹⁹⁸

In contrast, the second way—exemplified, according to Liu, with the “flowers and [the] ground”—keeps far away from any totalizing designs and sees everything, including irregularity, as “an end in itself rather than a means to any end in its relationship with others.”¹⁹⁹ Unfortunately, the passage fails to reflect the second way of appreciating irregularity non-relationally. The irregularity of the “flowers and [the] ground” as well as their “contrary colours” all look “ill in the pattern,” says Theocles, “but mighty natural and well” in relation to the whole “piece.” This goes to show that this non-relational appreciation of irregularity falls back into the first relational mode of appreciation.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 132. Philocles describes this process in the wake of his transformation: “But now I find I must place all in general to one account and, viewing things through a kind of magical glass, I am to see the worst of ills transformed to good and admire equally whatever comes from one and the same perfect hand.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 305.

¹⁹⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 133.

²⁰⁰ Beside the unconvincing interpretation of this excerpt, another issue is that Liu frames this mode of non-relational appreciation of irregularity in terms of a “disinterested” attitude” which constitutes an anachronistic misattribution of the perceptual sense of disinterestedness to Shaftesbury. Liu, “The Surprising Passion for Wild Nature,” p. 88. For a critique of this practice, see Miles Rind, “The Concept of Disinterestedness in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40.1 (2002), pp. 67-87, esp. pp. 70-74.

Although the passage in question fails to reflect the view that irregularity can be appreciated non-rationally, Theocles's flight to the desert is accompanied by a statement that does illustrate the intrinsic and non-relational aesthetic value of irregularity:

All ghastly and hideous as [...] [the vast deserts of these parts] appear, they want not their *peculiar beauties* [which are described next] [...]. The objects of the place, the scaly serpents, the savage beasts and poisonous insects, how terrible soever or how contrary to human nature, are *beauteous in themselves* and fit to raise our thoughts in admiration of that divine wisdom, so far superior to our short views.²⁰¹

An aesthetics of the "ghastly," "hideous," "savage," and ultimately "terrible" arises from the appreciation of the natural "objects of the place" neither in relation to a harmonious whole, nor in connection with "human nature," but rather as "beauteous in themselves," as a source of a "peculiar" kind of beauty.²⁰² It can be said, thus, that Shaftesbury appreciated irregularity both rationally, as part of a larger beauty, but most importantly non-rationally or intrinsically, as one of the two physical properties which enabled experiences of the natural sublime. The second of these properties is 'vastness' or greatness to which we shall now turn our attention.

Brett had already noted that "when used in this sense of being too vast for the sense or the imagination," the sublime "belongs properly to nature and not to art."²⁰³ The quality of physical vastness is best showcased during Theocles's enthusiastic journey to

²⁰¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 315.

²⁰² "[...] the grand and even terrible aspects of nature were appreciated, not because they were beautiful in the ordinary sense, not only because they were part of a larger beauty, but because of some special quality all their own." Brett, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 157.

²⁰³ Brett, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 150.

find the “sovereign genius” or absolute beauty. The imaginative journey begins near the “*sacred groves*,” “on the most beautiful part of the hill,” where “the sun [...] shows us the open scene of nature in the plains below.”²⁰⁴ While “musing a while by himself,” Theocles is “stretching out his hand, as pointing to the objects round him” which comprise “various scenes of nature”: the “fields and meadows,” and the “verdant plains” with its “[d]elightful prospects.”²⁰⁵ The encounter with these natural scenes enables Theocles to immediately deliver his apostrophe to Nature:

O glorious nature! Supremely fair and sovereignly good! All-loving and all-lovely, all-divine! Whose looks are so becoming and of such infinite grace, whose study brings such wisdom and whose contemplation such delight, *whose every single work affords an ampler scene and is a nobler spectacle than all which ever art presented!*—O mighty nature! Wise substitute of Providence! Empowered creatress! Or thou empowering deity, supreme creator! Thee I invoke and thee alone adore. To thee this solitude, this place, these rural meditations are sacred while thus inspired with harmony of thought, though unconfined by words and in loose numbers, I sing of nature’s order in created beings and celebrate the beauties which resolve in thee, the source and principle of all beauty and perfection.²⁰⁶

Theocles’s apostrophe reflects the two distinct meanings of nature which is described as “all-lovely,” denoting the aesthetic appeal of external figures, as well as “all-loving,” suggesting the creative agency of the divine mind. As we have seen, Shaftesbury uses ‘nature’ on the one hand, to refer to the sum total of natural objects which lend themselves to natural-philosophical inquiry (“whose study brings such wisdom”), and “whose looks” are the starting point of aesthetic contemplation. “Mighty nature,” on the other hand, suggests the formative power of plastic nature capable of beautifying. A

²⁰⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 298.

²⁰⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 298.

²⁰⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 298.

pause in the rhapsody (suggested by the em dash) enables the transition from external natural figures to the contemplation of the higher notion of plastic nature or “Empowered creatress,” construed as the “Wise substitute of Providence.” This second level ultimately resolves itself in the third level of the “empowering deity” or the “supreme creator” which is “the source and principle of all beauty and perfection.”

Nature offers a “nobler spectacle” than art in virtue of its “ampler scene,” which is an elegant indication that the physical property of vastness lies at the core of the sublime which can only be properly triggered by nature. Unlike many of his predecessors, Nicolson observes, Shaftesbury no longer sees vast space as terrifying, but celebrates its ability to arouse ideas of divinity in the minds of observers, and advances a threefold “aesthetics of the infinite:” the true origin of the sublime is theological as it lies in the recognition of God’s attributes; secondly, there is a cosmic sublime which, as argued before is the least touched by human intervention; and finally, there is a terrestrial sublime.²⁰⁷

Having stated that God is “the source and principle of all beauty and perfection,” Theocles goes on to praise divine attributes among which infinity occupies a privileged position:

Thy being is boundless, unsearchable, impenetrable. In thy immensity all thought is lost, fancy gives over its flight and wearied imagination spends itself in vain, finding no coast nor limit of this ocean, nor, in the widest tract through which it soars, one point yet nearer the circumference than the first centre whence it parted.—Thus having oft essayed, thus sallied forth into the wide expanse, when I return again within myself, struck with the sense of this so narrow being and of

²⁰⁷ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 291.

the fullness of that immense one, I dare no more behold the amazing depths nor sound the abyss of deity.²⁰⁸

At the endpoint of aesthetic appreciation, there is a God that is too vast an entity to be comprehended by means of our limited mental apparatus. The contemplation of God reveals the ultimate failure of the imagination when confronted with the transcendent: a “sense of this so narrow being” strikes Theocles as he attempts to “tread the labyrinth of *wide* nature and endeavour to trace [...] [the sovereign mind] in [...] [his] works.”²⁰⁹ It is through this “pleasing vision” that Philocles begins “to see wonders in that nature” and comes “to know the hand of your Divine Artificer.”²¹⁰ Shaftesbury employs here natural theological arguments for the existence of God that are also infused with affectivity.²¹¹

God exists outside time and “escapes our hold or mocks our scanty thought by swelling to eternity,” as well as outside space, by dwelling in “the abyss of space.”²¹² Philocles’s description of the act of contemplating God’s sublimity as “an entangling abstruse philosophy” anticipates that part of the journey in which Theocles “might stick closer to nature since he was now come upon the borders of our world.”²¹³ We move from the sublimity of God to the cosmic sublime:

Besides the neighbouring planets,’ continued he in his rapturous strain, ‘what multitudes of fixed stars did we see sparkle not an hour ago in the clear night, which yet had hardly yielded to the day? How many others are discovered by the

²⁰⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 298-299.

²⁰⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 299. The limitations of the imagination, of the “wings of fancy,” (Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 313) are connected to the myth of the Icarian flight. Theocles reminds Philocles that “in these high flights I might possibly have gone near to burn my wings.’ ‘Indeed,’ said I, ‘you might well expect the fate of Icarus for your high soaring.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 312.

²¹⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 299.

²¹¹ Philocles characterizes Theocles as a “conqueror in the cool way of reason” but also able to “grow warm again in your poetic vein.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 307.

²¹² Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 308.

²¹³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 308.

help of art? Yet how many remain still beyond the reach of our discovery! Crowded as they seem, their distance from each other is as unmeasurable by art as is the distance between them and us. Whence we are naturally taught the immensity of that being who, through these immense spaces, has disposed such an infinity of bodies, belonging each (as we may well presume) to systems as complete as our own world, since even the smallest spark of this bright galaxy may vie with this our sun, which, shining now full out, gives us new life, exalts our spirits and makes us feel divinity more present.²¹⁴

An apostrophe to the sun, this “[p]rodigious orb,” is followed by a rhapsody about the Earth.

Overall, the terrestrial journey consists in being carried through “aerial spaces and imaginary regions,”²¹⁵ in being taken successively to the arctic climate, to the hot desert, to “a vast tract of sky,” and to Mount Atlas whose “deep precipices” arouse in the observer feelings of “giddy horror” which, unlike so many of his predecessors, Shaftesbury values for their ability to present “the world itself only as a noble ruin.”²¹⁶ Just as our own bodies are animated by a soul, the earth is infused “with a sublime celestial spirit” which is nothing but plastic nature. Unlike our bodies, however, the Earth is too big an object by comparison:

Yet how immense a body it seems compared with ours of human form, a borrowed remnant of its variable and oft-converted surface, though animated with a *sublime* celestial spirit by which we have relation and tendency to Thee our heavenly sire, centre of souls, to whom these spirits of ours by nature tend, as earthly bodies to their proper centre.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 308-9.

²¹⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 310.

²¹⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 316.

²¹⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 309.

Theocles's remark that the Earth accommodates the smallest "minerals of different natures"²¹⁸ is followed by his observation on "[h]ow vast" "the abysses of the sea"²¹⁹ are. The observer is enchanted by "a spacious border of thick wood" comprising "lofty pines, the firs and noble cedars, whose towering heads seem endless in the sky."²²⁰ Along with the great height of trees, the "spacious caverns of the wood" enables Theocles to affirm that in nature "space astonishes,"²²¹ a memorable confession meant to foreground without equivocation that vastness is the requisite property of sublime experiences.

²¹⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 311.

²¹⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 311.

²²⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 316.

²²¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 316.

3. ADDISON: NEUTRALIZING THE POLARITIES OF NATURE AND ART

Because it views the empirical particular as beautiful only so far as it reflects the beauty of its creator's mind, Shaftesburian aesthetics privileges nature as the unmediated reflection of the ultimate beauty of divine mind, leaving art to first mirror the beauty of the artist's mind before it may possibly ascend to absolute beauty. It was inherent in Shaftesbury's tripartite model, I argued, that natural beauty was superior to artistic beauty. In this section I will be turning my attention to Joseph Addison, a contemporary of Shaftesbury who offers an important empiricist account of aesthetics in the eighteenth-century.

A preliminary clarification of Addison's terminology is meant to dispel the myth that the nature-art dichotomy fully lines up with his distinction between primary and secondary pleasures of the imagination (section **3.1**). Solely based on the Lockean empiricist framework used by Addison to develop his philosophical aesthetics, it is impossible to distinguish between nature and art since both comprise material objects with properties which produce pleasure in the mind. By engaging with Dabney Townsend's paper "The Interaction of Art and Nature: Shifting Paradigms in Eighteenth-Century Philosophy" which, to my knowledge, is the only attempt to more or less systematically grapple with the relationship between nature and art in Addisonian aesthetics, I show that in line with the empiricist orientation of aesthetics, the real separation occurs not between nature and art, or between mind and nature, but more generally between mind and matter (section **3.2**).

Although, in a strict sense, eighteenth-century empiricist accounts of aesthetic experience are indifferent to a value-laden relationship obtaining between nature and art, a hierarchization of the two realms is occasioned by theological aspects that pervade the very fabric of the aesthetic (section 3.3). Following Locke, Addison attempts to solve the problem of the necessary connection between the primary qualities of matter (objective properties such as shape, size, motion, and the like) and the secondary qualities (pleasures) in the subjective mind by having recourse to God as a benevolent agent linking the two. One of the implications of this theological explanation is that all instances of pleasures afforded by nature and art may function as design arguments for the existence of God. In other words, human beings are capable of taking pleasure in *both* nature and art simply because they have been so designed by a wise and caring God. Although no hierarchization of nature and art is imminent in the way Addison deals with the problem of the necessary connection of qualities, nature gains the upper hand because both the secondary qualities it produces as well as its primary qualities are the work of a divine architect. Closely related to this natural-theological motif, another tell-tale sign of the aesthetic superiority of nature to art is Addison's explanation of the final causes of the pleasures of the imagination exclusively with reference to nature, and never to art. The pleasures associated with Addison's three categories of greatness, novelty, and beauty have been enabled by God in order to lead humans to the acquisition of true knowledge of nature, the contemplation of the whole creation while recognizing in it the imprint of God. But as I suggest, unlike the pleasures of nature, those of art can only fulfill their final causes indirectly, an aspect which confirms art's derivative status.

Another aspect that confirms the aesthetic priority of nature is Addison's treatment of the natural sublime, and more specifically his provision that even forms of art which deal most explicitly with physical extension, such as works of architecture, are unable to compete with the vastness of nature (section 3.4). Physical extension, construed as the primary quality of the pleasure from greatness, differs significantly from the primary qualities of beauty—symmetry and proportion of parts. The latter are only symbolic of God's existence and benevolence, whereas the former is an attribute which participates in the infinity of God. The implication is that the more unbounded an object is, the greater pleasure it affords. Recognizing that most instances of art cannot properly display spatial magnitude, Addison concedes that sublimity may also be aroused from the artist's subject as well as the manner of execution. My discussion of these two sources with reference to poetry reveals how Addison relegates sublimity to a literary style accommodated within the overarching category of beauty. It is further suggested that, as in Shaftesbury's case, Addison's failure to keep literary beauty and sublimity apart is exacerbated by relying on the Aristotelian notion of 'greatness with order' which implies that no literary work can be sublime unless it is a beautifully-proportioned whole.

Because the artistic and the natural sublime are not unrelated phenomena, and a mimetic relationship obtains between the two, I proceed to an examination of Addison's conception of artistic imitation (section 3.5). Having initially offered a theory of art as the illusionistic imitation of actual, empirical nature, a position which confirms the aesthetic primacy of nature, Addison undermines it by making several moves. He transcends the asymmetry of the Shaftesburian mimetic model by proposing the mutual imitation of art and nature as a genuine source of pleasure. Then, he allows poetry's object of imitation to

shift from empirical to ideal nature, so that the poet, no longer constrained to imitate nature strictly, can now exercise the powers of the imagination in an effort to combine at will images received from nature, and even create scenes whose aesthetic appeal surpasses the potential of empirical nature. I bring this section to a close by arguing against views which assume that ideal nature, originally developed by Addison with reference to literary art, also informs his theory of gardening where it purportedly reflects a conception of art as corrective of the postlapsarian imperfections of the natural world. This interpretation of his theory of gardening art does not hold water because Addison does not believe that the fall of man occasioned any decline of external nature. Having admitted of no imperfections in nature, it is rather the defects of our human nature that Addison deplores and seeks to correct by associating (gardening) art with the myth of a prelapsarian return.

Through his release of poetry from the obligation to provide a strict imitation of nature, Addison paves the way for the anti-mimetic character of the fantastic (section 3.6). Although the poet of the fantastic loses sight of actual nature by portraying magicians, witches, demons, spirits, and the like, he suggests the rendition of such characters in a way that complies with the Aristotelian rules of probability and verisimilitude which had informed his conception of ideal nature. Despite this return to natural representation, the fantastic expresses humanity's most cherished desire for the disembodied existence of spirits, and a simultaneous dissatisfaction with our finite and imperfect sense experience. Closely related to this point is my contention that although the processes of idealization and creation of the fantastic both imply an underlying discontent with nature which is amenable to refinement or improvement, the defects are

not in nature per se, but in our embodied perception which has a strong affinity with actual nature.

Addison's subversion or complication of each aspect of the superiority of nature to art does not amount to an inversion of the polarities but represents an effort to neutralize them. With neither art nor nature clearly enjoying aesthetic priority, I conclude that Addison intended to shift the focus of aesthetic appreciation away from this world to the next, with the implication that both nature and art offer only fleeting and imperfect aesthetic enjoyments in contradistinction to the permanent pleasures of the afterlife.

3.1 Nature and Art as Primary and Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination

The art-nature dichotomy in Addison's aesthetics has often been approached alongside his important structural division of the primary and the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and it is not unusual for scholars to assume that the primary pleasures designate these pleasures derived from nature, while the secondary pleasures are reserved to art. In her influential study of the Addisonian sublime, Nicolson argues for the historical importance of the primary pleasures of the imagination as shifting the focus of aesthetic appreciation from art to the natural world.²²² "Primary pleasures," she contends,

²²² "Addison's distinction between the "primary" and the "secondary" pleasures of the imagination was, as he knew, a most important one: in the past, a chief stimulus had come from books—from reading about Nature or, as we have seen, looking at Nature with eyes clouded by such reading. Addison was urging upon his contemporaries the necessity of man's looking directly upon Nature and realizing that the stimulus that came from painting or poetry was "secondary." Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 309-10.

are those pleasures “which man receives directly from Nature.”²²³ The assumption that Addison unproblematically identified the primary pleasures with the pleasures afforded by the natural world is also shared by Ronald Paulson who makes the same association in his treatment of Addison’s aesthetics of novelty. We learn that, at one point in his development, Addison is “privileging the primary Pleasures of the Imagination over the secondary (nature over art) [...]”²²⁴ Similarly, Neil Saccamano can assert without much difficulty that “[i]n contrast to the secondary pleasures of ‘fine Writing,’ the pleasures of sight remain *entirely* within nature” and as a result, “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.”²²⁵ But perhaps no other scholar has affirmed this connection as categorically as James Sambrook who

²²³ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 308. The same assumption is shared by William H. Youngren who hypothesizes that the additions Addison made to the original manuscript of the pleasures of the imagination essays indicate his gradual recognition of the significance of art alongside nature aesthetics. Youngren argues that these addition show “Addison laboring to express his deepening sense of the complexity of the mind’s action, as it responds through time to the greatness, beauty, and novelty found in the natural world. These qualities are what came to be called, in the final *Spectator* version, the primary pleasures of the imagination.” William H. Youngren, “Addison and The Birth of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics”, *Modern Philology* 79, no. 3 (1982): 267-283, p. 280. In a similar way, Youngren identifies the secondary pleasures with art, as noted by Szécsényi: “[a]ccording to Youngren, though this dichotomy [between artistic and natural objects] is the starting point in this essay series, later in the argumentation Addison gradually recognizes the greater significance of Art (*the secondary pleasures of the imagination*), and changes his mind.” Endre Szécsényi, “The Regard of the First Man: On Joseph Addison’s Aesthetic Categories”, *History of European Ideas* 43, no. 6 (2016): 582-597, 7 (emphasis added).

²²⁴ Ronald Paulson, *The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange* (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 54.

²²⁵ Neil Saccamano, “The Sublime Force of Words in Addison’s ‘Pleasures’”. *ELH* 58, no. 1 (1991): 83-106, at pp. 86-7 (emphasis added). Following Saccamano, David Sandner concludes that “[t]he primary pleasures arise from an actual view of nature.” David Sandner, *Critical Discourses of The Fantastic, 1712-1831* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 36.

claims that “essentially Addison’s distinction [between primary and secondary pleasures] is only the old one between nature and art which imitates nature.”²²⁶

The views of these scholars converge in assuming that the distinction between primary and secondary pleasures neatly lines up with the nature-art dichotomy. This misguided belief is nourished by a failure to properly distinguish the defining features of primary and secondary pleasures, an issue already acknowledged in the literature; a long time ago, Walter J. Hipple remarked that Addison’s aesthetic theory was obscured by the overlapping of various distinctions he employed, noting that in his work “we find art affording primary pleasures and nature secondary.”²²⁷ Timothy Costelloe has similarly drawn attention to the fact that “the primary/secondary distinction [does not] coincide with Addison’s categories of ‘nature’ and ‘art.’”²²⁸ A more systematic account is needed to foreground the two interrelated criteria used by Addison to distinguish between the two kinds of pleasures. On the most basic level, Addison states that the “Primary Pleasures of the Imagination [...] entirely proceed from [the Ideas of] such Objects as are before our Eyes” while the “Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination [...] 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.”²²⁹

²²⁶ James Sambrook, “The Psychology of Literary Creation and Literary Response,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 4: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 614–32, p. 619.

²²⁷ Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque*, 20.

²²⁸ Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 39.

²²⁹ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, vol.3, p. 537.

Costelloe has contributed significantly to clarifying the distinctions by describing the operation mechanism of the pleasures of the imagination: for Addison, “aesthetic value arises through the interplay of an object with certain primary qualities, and a faculty – the imagination – so constituted to receive those qualities and capable of being affected by them to give rise to a particular feeling we call pleasure.”²³⁰ Because it accommodates only the sensations aroused in us by the immediate perception of objects, Costelloe’s description addresses the primary pleasures of the imagination. The “‘Secondary Pleasures,’ by contrast,” he remarks, “come not from the qualities of objects, but originate in the ‘Action of the Mind’ called *comparison* [...]”²³¹ Unlike primary pleasure which arises from the “the Agreeableness of the Objects to the Eye,”²³² Addison insists that “Secondary Pleasure of the Imagination proceeds from that Action of the Mind, which *compares* the Ideas arising from the Original Objects, with the Ideas we receive from the Statue, Picture, Description, or Sound that represents them.”²³³

Primary pleasures derive from the immediate appreciation of objects whereas secondary pleasures arise from an act of comparison between the ideas of things represented and the ideas of present things themselves as originals. Addison’s own distinction between ‘present’ and ‘represented’ objects deserves further attention. As pointed out by Lee Andrew Elioseff,

The primary pleasures of the imagination are those which arise from the “perception of visual objects which are present to the beholder.” A “*present object*” is any natural object or artifact which is not a representation. Gardens

²³⁰ Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 38-39.

²³¹ Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 39.

²³² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 550.

²³³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 560.

and buildings, though artifacts, excite primary pleasures of the imagination, because they do not “represent” (“imitate”) anything in nature.²³⁴

On Elioseff’s reading, if an object is representational, it will naturally tend to lose the capacity to excite primary pleasures of the imagination. But this is not necessarily the case: the fact that a building resembles a mountain does not cancel out the possibility of appreciating that building as a “present object” for its agreeableness to the eye as manifested specifically in the aesthetic effects of bulk or size. An amended version of Elioseff’s statement would take this shape:

A present object is any natural object or artifact which *during* appreciation is not attended to for any representational value.

It follows that one can attend to an object specifically for its representational value, but one can also focus on the agreeableness of the object to the eye. In other words, the object can be appreciated both for its agreeableness to the eye, as well as for the pleasures of representation. Addison never actually denies that one and the same object may be appreciated as a “present” object as well as a representation.

Primary pleasures involve the unmediated reception of *present* objects that lend themselves directly to the senses and the imagination:²³⁵ “[i]t is but the opening of the eye and the scene enters. The colors paint themselves on the fancy with very little attention of thought or application of mind in the beholder.”²³⁶ Requiring far greater mental effort than primary pleasures, the secondary pleasures can be aroused in two

²³⁴ Lee Andrew Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*. (University of Texas Press, 2014), 163 (emphasis added).

²³⁵ According to Helen Deutsch, the primary pleasures afford “the delight of unmediated vision.” Helen Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*. (Harvard University Press, 2014), 113-4.

²³⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 538.

different but related ways: by “Visions of Things that are either *Absent* or *Fictitious*.”²³⁷

Without responding directly to the idea of an object present to sight, one responds instead to the idea of the object that is “called up into the Mind, *either* barely by its own Operations, *or* on occasion of something without us, as Statues and Descriptions.”²³⁸

The first scenario involves the production of mental images solely through the processes of memory and imagination, and in the absence of any perceptual stimulus that has a bearing on the objects imagined. In this way, “a Man in a Dungeon [...] entertaining himself with Scenes and Landskips”²³⁹ relies on no specific stimulus in the dungeon to produce a vision which arises, rather, from ideas that have been retained, altered and compounded into a variety of forms by the power of the imagination. The second possibility of eliciting secondary pleasures consists in responding to fictional media which furnish us with *representations* of objects. Objects can be represented through various media: painting uses an array of paint on the canvas; poetry makes use of combinations of words on a piece of paper; dance utilizes a sequence of body movements.

The distinction between primary and secondary pleasure can also be illuminated by acknowledging the connection between the secondary and the association of ideas. Marion Harney has maintained that Addison’s primary and secondary pleasures actually correspond to “two types of pleasure, the immediate and the associative, or remembered,” and has rightly pointed to the influence of Locke on Addison’s attempt “to explain the

²³⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 537.

²³⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 558 (emphasis added).

²³⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 537.

mental processes involved in this train of associative thought.”²⁴⁰ Unlike Shaftesbury who neglects association and insists only on the immediate taste for beauty,²⁴¹ Addison is convinced that the operation of natural association plays an important role in the production of the secondary pleasures, as seen in the real affinity between ideas, in their likeness or resemblance. Dale Townshend’s assertion that Addison places mental association “at the heart of his conceptualization of the imagination’s secondary pleasures” is the point of departure for his inquiry into the idea of eighteenth and nineteenth-century architectural imagination which he defines as the “ability of architecture to conjure up in the perceiver ideas, impressions, reveries, and trains of

²⁴⁰ Marion Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 33.

²⁴¹ Shaftesbury’s rejection of Lockean associationism due to his espousal of innatism was analyzed by Marta Kallich in her study of the historical development of association psychology: “Although his tutor Locke had enunciated the theory of association, Shaftesbury found no room for it in his moral and esthetic system of thought. In clear opposition to Locke’s doctrines, he believed that we possess an innate or instinctive taste or sense for certain harmonies and forms [...]. Consequently, his philosophy did not compel him to consider the extent to which our ideas of beauty may be influenced by associations with other ideas and emotions.” Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism* (The Hague; Paris: Mouton, 1970), 55. On the other hand, “the theory of association finds its proper place” (Kallich, *The Association of Ideas*, 45) in Addison’s series of papers on the imagination where he significantly contributed to the “application of the contemporary Lockian version of associationist psychology to taste [...] [and] set forth the pattern of associationist conceptions of art which many critics were later to follow.” Kallich, *The Association of Ideas*, 35. Some of these critics, Kallich remarks, such as the “later writers, Kames, Alison, Wordsworth, do not fundamentally differ from Addison’s concise description of the effects of recollection upon the imagination.” Kallich, *The Association of Ideas*, 48. Clarence D. Thorpe had noted that “in his exposition of the phenomena of association with relation to aesthetic pleasure, Addison is not only foreshadowing the later 18th-century school of associationists culminating in Alison, but is stating in brief, three quarters of a century before Wordsworth, a doctrine of pleasure through recollected emotion.” Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, “Addison and Hutcheson on the Imagination,” *ELH* 2, no. 3 (November 1935): 215, p. 225, footnote 37. It is equally important to acknowledge that in Addison’s work “the two significant uses of association throughout the course of eighteenth-century criticism can already be perceived. First, Addison resorts to association as the explanation of improper connections between ideas and of diversity in taste; secondly, he believes that the succession of associated ideas in the memory accounts for the increased pleasures of imagination [...]” Kallich, *The Association of Ideas*, 50.

thought” “in accordance with the assumptions of associationist psychology.”²⁴² It must be noted that Townshend’s work does not only cast light on the associationist foundation of the secondary pleasures, but points to the ability of architecture to function simultaneously as a primary and secondary pleasure of the imagination.

Architecture is praised by Addison as “that Particular Art [...] [which] has a more immediate Tendency, than any others, to produce those primary Pleasures of the Imagination.”²⁴³ Primary pleasures from greatness in the works of architecture can arise either from the great size of the construction or its manner of execution.²⁴⁴ But no sooner had Addison characterized the Tower of Babel as a paradigmatic example of primary pleasure from greatness of size, than he ascertained that the tower “looked like a Spacious Mountain.”²⁴⁵ In a similar way, one learns that “the Prodigious Basin” of The Gardens of Semiramis resembled an “artificial Lake” that “took in the whole Euphrates.”²⁴⁶ Had one accepted Elioseff’s narrow description of a ‘present object’, it would have been impossible for Addison to affirm that these examples of architecture produce primary pleasures at all. These two examples showcase how one and the same instance of architecture can trigger both primary pleasures from an immediate appreciation of size, as well as secondary pleasures from their resemblance to other objects. The ease with which architecture elicits both primary and secondary pleasures

²⁴² Dale Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 14.

²⁴³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 553.

²⁴⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 553.

²⁴⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 553.

²⁴⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 554.

has led Harney to conclude that Addison “contradicts his own assertion [that architecture is a primary pleasure] when he demonstrates an imaginative, associative response to architecture remains [...]”²⁴⁷ But the ability of art to elicit both primary and secondary pleasures can be registered as contradictory only so long as scholars continue to credit the mistaken assumption that art only affords secondary pleasures, and nature elicits the primary.

If art has been shown to elicit both primary and secondary pleasures, nature demonstrates the same ambivalence. In *Spectator* No. 414, Addison discusses grottos as natural objects of aesthetic appreciation. Because the grotto can be appreciated for the immediate effect its qualities produce on us, the pleasure derived is primary.

Additionally, the observer may derive pleasure from “those accidental Landskips of Trees Clouds and Cities, that are sometimes found [...] in the curious Fret-Work of Rocks and Grottos,” an image which reveals “a Variety or Regularity as may seem the Effect of Design, in what we call the Works of Chance.”²⁴⁸ If the texture and shape of the rock is

²⁴⁷ Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination*, 46.

²⁴⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 550. Addison also underlines the ability of nature to elicit secondary pleasures in his travel writings: “I took care to refresh my Memory among classic Authors . . . I must confess it was not one of the least Entertainments that I met with in Travelling, to examine these several Descriptions, as it were upon the Spot, and to compare the Natural Face of the Country with the Landskips that the Poets have given us of it.” Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &C. In the Years, 1701, 1702, 1703. By the Late Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.* (London: Printed for J. And R. Tonson and S. Draper, 1753), 3-4. Robert J. Mayhew has called this the “antiquarian way of seeing landscape.” Robert J. Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture 1660-1800: Samuel Johnson and Languages of Natural Description*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 54. Addison’s emphasis in his travel writings on the ability of nature to arouse secondary pleasures led to different reactions in the century. Walpole ironically observed that “Mr. Addison travelled through poets, and not through Italy; for all his ideas are borrowed from the descriptions, and not from the reality. He saw places as they were, not as they are.” Walpole quoted in Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination*, 46. Lawrence Sterne’s *Tristram*

perceived to imaginatively resemble a landscape, a secondary pleasure is produced which stems from comparing the idea of the imaginary landscape with the idea of a real one.

Weaving the illusion of design in happenstance, Addison is perhaps the first aesthete to integrate in a more or less systematized form an aesthetics of pareidolia.²⁴⁹ Thus, the viewer is both “surveying” the grotto for its “Agreeableness [...] to the Eye,” arousing primary pleasure, as well as from its “Similitude to other Objects,” arousing a secondary one.

The view defended here, that irrespective of whether natural or artificial, one and the same object may lend itself to the production of both primary and secondary pleasures has been already acknowledged by some scholars, albeit in works with different goals. Alert to the ways in which both art and nature can be pursued for the primary as well as the secondary pleasures they afford, Jonathan Lamb has asserted that for Addison, “[t]he mind’s chief delight is to oscillate as rapidly as possible between the perception of the same thing as both natural and artificial, as real but defective, and as whole but copied

Shandy, on the other hand, was quite unforgiving: “the great Addison who did it [traveled and wrote] with his satchel of school-books hanging at his a— [...]” Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions), 337. See also Susan Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home to England: Tourism, Gender, and Imaginative Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 111.

²⁴⁹ Robin Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), 24-25. Kelsey mentions Addison’s antecedents in the Renaissance, especially Leonardo. Anthony Grafton briefly discusses Leon Battista Alberti while pointing to art historian H. W. Janson who shows that the recognition of nature’s ability to produce likenesses goes back to antiquity. Anthony Grafton, “Renaissance Histories of Art and Nature,” in *The Artificial and the Natural: An Evolving Polarity*, ed. Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and William R. Newman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 185–210, p. 192. H. W. Janson, “The Image Made by Chance in Renaissance Thought,” in *Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 254–66. What singles out Addison is not only the integration of pareidolia into his aesthetic series on the pleasures of the imagination, but more importantly, casting an influence on the picturesque aesthetic that emerged later in the eighteenth century; with the picturesque, Kelsey observes, “the habit of finding order in accident was renewed and elevated.” Kelsey, *Photography*, 24.

[...].”²⁵⁰ Helen Deutsch has similarly pointed out that during appreciation “[t]he eye shifts from the apprehension of singularity and the object itself [producing primary pleasure], to a pleasure in relativity [i.e. secondary pleasure],” and has further emphasized that “for Addison these two sorts of looking are not opposed to each other; each augments the pleasure involved in the other [...]”²⁵¹ In line with both Lamb and Deutsch, Myers has more recently observed that the pleasures of imitation depend “on the way *we choose* to interpret the data of visual experience.”²⁵² With explicit reference to Addison’s own example of the grotto which may be represented to our minds either as an original, or a copy, Myers concludes that

through the imagination we can choose how we view them. This is not just a matter of one idea suggesting another, but of our seeing (or not) the rock-face as a landscape, just as we may choose to see patches of colour as flat or three-dimensional.²⁵³

Myers touches upon two distinct but closely related aspects. First, the *choice* of appreciating an object for either primary or secondary pleasures being voluntary, is independent of any mental association process.²⁵⁴ Second, she notes that the two ways of seeing the rock-face, either for primary or secondary pleasures, are consonant with

²⁵⁰ Jonathan Lamb, *Sterne’s Fiction and the Double Principle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 27.

²⁵¹ Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, 114.

²⁵² Katherine Myers, “Ways of Seeing: Joseph Addison, Enchantment and The Early Landscape Garden,” *Garden History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 3-20, p. 5 (emphasis in the original).

²⁵³ Myers, “Ways of Seeing,” 9.

²⁵⁴ Without denying that associations can be completely voluntary, Cian Duffy has argued that there are also cultural associations that go beyond the individual subject’s intentions, as shown in Addison’s travels to Italy which showcase Duffy’s concept of ‘classic ground’: “what Addison registers in his concept of ‘classic ground’, then, is the extent to which it is all but impossible for an educated traveller to have a disinterested aesthetic response to a landscape or an environment which has long possessed a range of specific historical and cultural associations.” Cian Duffy, *The Landscapes of the Sublime, 1700-1830: Classic Ground* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 9.

Addison's description of the ways of perceiving patches of color in the appreciation of gardens.²⁵⁵ Extrapolating from Addison's example of architecture, Costelloe has similarly suggested that in painting, style or the manner of depiction may yield a primary pleasure of the imagination.²⁵⁶ These instances suggest that there are good reasons to

²⁵⁵ Myers maintains that color is crucial to Addison's theory of vision, and offers a case study of gardening that supports her conclusion that according to Addison, one can choose between different ways of interpreting the experience of color. The context of Myers's reference to ways of seeing patches of colors is represented by Addison's description of a multicolored bed of tulips in a florist's garden, a scene which he perceived in three different modes of vision: "First, he considered the flowers in a common-sense way, 'with an eye of an ordinary spectator', as a natural phenomenon superior to artifice, but described in terms of manufactured colour: 'so many beautiful objects, varnished over with a natural gloss, and stained with such a variety of colours as are not to be equalled in any artificial dyes or tinctures'. He also, however, 'considered every leaf' (petal), imagining the ensemble as something man-made, 'an elaborate piece of tissue' composed of interwoven threads, 'which gave a different colouring to the light as it glanced on the several parts of the surface'. Lastly, he thought of the whole bed as 'a multitude of optic instruments, designed for separating light into all those various colours of which it is composed', in accordance with 'the notion of the greatest mathematician and philosopher that ever lived.'" Myers, "Ways of Seeing," 9. Based on Myers' description, Addison first appreciated the natural colors of flowers as superior to any artifice; secondly, he appreciated the petals as a work of human design which gave a different coloring to the light; and thirdly, he viewed the whole garden as resembling an optical prism that separated light into a multitude of colors. It becomes apparent that only the first manner of appreciation consists in the immediate experience of color, and as such, falls under the category of primary pleasure. The second way, however, integrates the perception of color into an imaginative appreciation of the petals as a work of human design. Similarly, in the third case, the whole bed of tulips is appreciated specifically for its resemblance to an optical instrument of human invention. The last two ways of seeing might be included in the category of secondary pleasures of the imagination. Myers herself used these examples to drive home the point that "Addison's responses to the tulip bed effected a conceptual separation of the experience of colour, the visual idea, from the objects exciting it." Myers, 9.

²⁵⁶ "In principle at least, there is no reason why the same [notion of primary pleasure discussed by Addison with reference to architecture] cannot be applied to other arts, though Addison does not do so himself; in painting, for example, one might consider how the manner of depiction produces an effect not restricted to the size of the canvas: Peter Paul Rubens's *The Dying Seneca* is surely sublime in Addison's sense, but achieves this status independent of the similarity it bears to any original. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 40. Since the application and use of color are part and parcel of the manner of depiction in painting, it is appropriate to return to the topic of color broached in the previous footnote. The appreciation of color transcends any boundaries between nature and art, and moreover since gardens are places where the natural and the artifactual commingle, one is strongly inclined to extrapolate Myers's findings about the appreciation of color to other arts. One may choose to see patches of color as either flat or three-dimensional not only within the experience of nature or gardens, but in the appreciation of paintings. On the one hand, the viewer can choose to see color on canvas for its representational value, as when color is used descriptively, raising a secondary pleasure in the imagination. Alternatively, color can be appreciated not for its instrumental or referential value, its potential to contribute to the creation of a life-like illusion of

enlarge the scope of Addison's statements on architecture so that with few exceptions, everything around us, be it nature or art, can be appreciated both as a primary and as a secondary pleasure.²⁵⁷ A detailed examination of such view would, however, exceed the frame of this dissertation.

3.2 The Indistinctness of Nature and Art in Empiricist Aesthetics

Having shown in the previous section that there is no conceptual equivalence between primary pleasure and nature, on the one hand, and secondary pleasure and art, on the other, we are now in a more suitable position to examine one of the few accounts that addresses at some length the relation of nature to art in Addison's aesthetics — Townsend's paper "The Interaction of Art and Nature: Shifting Paradigms in Eighteenth-century Philosophy." Townsend's treatment of Addison is accompanied by a brief but important discussion of empiricist accounts of aesthetic experience in the eighteenth-

(a three-dimensional) object, but precisely for the way it has been applied to the canvas. In this way, the spectator engages in the appreciation of pictorial technique, of the patches of color which can now be sources of primary pleasures of the imagination. One privileged case would be the appreciation of color that is intentionally devoid of any descriptive value, such as the red grass in Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon*. We do not need to go so far as to cite the modernist fascination with color whose programmatic manipulation led to a new emphasis on the flatness of the canvas. See Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Modern Art and Modernism*, ed. Francis Frascina, Charles Harrison, and Deirdre Paul (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 5–10. The technique of applying paint to the canvas has always been an element of style that might arouse a primary pleasure, as for instance in Addison's description of a portrait of a woman: "in Painting, it is pleasant to look on the Picture of any Face, where the Resemblance is hit, but the Pleasure increases, if it be the Picture of a Face that is Beautiful, and is still greater, if the Beauty be softened with an Air of Melancholy or Sorrow." Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 567. Lamb reads this illustration through the lens of his conception of double principle whereby one and the same object may arouse both primary and secondary pleasures: "The pleasure has two distinct sources: the design and colours of the copy and the presence of the original. It begins to be compounded when the mind starts oscillating between the set of ideas appropriate to each." Lamb, *Sterne's Fiction and the Double Principle*, 28.

²⁵⁷ The possible exception is literary art. See section 3.6 below.

century which grapple unanimously with the problem of identifying the qualities that produce the pleasure of beauty; such qualities as uniformity amidst variety (Francis Hutcheson), the line of beauty (William Hogarth), smoothness and size (Edmund Burke), and one might add symmetry, and proportion of parts (Addison) are identified as “principles of nature that correspond to the beauty in the eye of the beholder.”²⁵⁸ The continuous quest for such principles reveals that “Addison [...] shared with virtually all eighteenth-century writers the separation of *nature and the mind* and the quest for principles that connect the two.”²⁵⁹ This general description of empiricist aesthetics along with the division of nature and mind will need further clarification.

Eighteenth-century empiricist accounts of aesthetics generally accept two interconnected theses. First, aesthetic experience consists in the percipient’s response to certain properties inherent in objects (qualities that have objective existence). Second, the pleasure of beauty is a subjective feeling in the mind of an observer which is produced by the appreciation of these qualities. “There is a fit or causal relationship between primary qualities that are in the object and secondary ones that are in us,” Costelloe perspicaciously observes, “so that the secondary quality arises as a function of the relation between the object and a mind with the capacity to be affected by it.”²⁶⁰ Hence, the task of the aesthetician is to identify these objective qualities which correlate to subjective beauty. While not departing in any way from Townsend’s short description of empiricist aesthetics, this clarification indicates that during appreciation, the real

²⁵⁸ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 215.

²⁵⁹ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 215-216.

²⁶⁰ Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 39

separation occurs not between nature and the mind,²⁶¹ but more generally between objects and perception,²⁶² or to put it differently, between *matter* and mind. Matter is the objective reality of both natural and artistic objects.

Besides this problematic separation of nature and mind, Townsend introduces an additional divide between nature and art, and goes so far as to claim that “[t]he whole doctrine of aesthetic experience and aesthetic qualities [...] was worked out in response to the separation of art and nature [...]”²⁶³ As he points out,

nature was effectively separated from art by the location of beauty within the range of the passions. Joseph Addison accepted the consequences of that separation; he admitted that there need be no real beauty in matter, and that we might have been formed so that what is loathsome appeared agreeable. The fact that we have an immediate sense of beauty is a consequence of our constitution.²⁶⁴

The first claim pertains to Addison’s denial of the existence of real beauty in matter which is considered a consequence of the separation of nature and art. But as seen earlier, the scope of Addison’s conception of ‘matter’ is broad enough to accommodate nature and art alike since both include objects with properties. Consequently, the recognition of the absence of real beauty in matter is a result of the broader separation of mind and matter. Second, it is claimed that nature and art are located differently within human passions which, in principle, suggests that natural and artistic beauty follow distinct mechanisms of operation during appreciation. Where the beauty of “art is to be located in

²⁶¹ Although it will be conceded that in an extended sense, ‘nature’ may sometimes be used as an umbrella term for everything that exists externally to the perceiving subject — and thus going beyond natural objects — its use in such manner is inconsistent with the goal of elucidating the interaction of art and nature.

²⁶² See also Lamb, *Sterne’s Fiction*, 26.

²⁶³ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 221.

²⁶⁴ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 215.

the range of experience”²⁶⁵ differs from the location of natural beauty. Promoting this contrastive reading of the relation between art and nature is another statement in which Townsend indicates with more exactness the location of artistic beauty in the range of experience:

From trouble with imitation, which requires that one recognize the deception, Addison assigned the emotion of art to a pleasure.²⁶⁶

The assumption is that the pleasures of imitation are exclusively consigned to art. But the view that Addison somehow limits the pleasures of imitation to the artistic process is indicative of the all too familiar assumption that art is only allowed to excite secondary pleasures. As seen in the previous section, however, Addison never draws an absolute distinction between nature and art based on the exclusive ability of the former to elicit primary pleasures, and the provision that only the latter produces the secondary. It becomes apparent that Townsend’s account is ultimately marred by the same erroneous assumption which has informed several scholars of Addisonian aesthetics. The conflation of the two dichotomies results in mistakenly attributing “the emotion of art to a pleasure” (secondary pleasure) and by homology, assigning the emotion of nature to another (primary pleasure).

The empiricist framework of Addison’s aesthetics which comprises the doctrine of aesthetic qualities allows no distinction between nature and art. As Thomas Weiskel remarks, “[n]o categorical distinction between life and art could be erected on Locke’s

²⁶⁵ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 221.

²⁶⁶ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 219.

psychology.”²⁶⁷ Both art and nature rely on shared mechanisms of operation, meaning that both lend themselves to the production of primary and secondary pleasures. Both kinds of pleasures are ultimately secondary qualities,²⁶⁸ although the operation of each is different. Unlike the primary pleasures aroused from responding directly to the qualities of objects, secondary pleasures, as we have seen, are the pleasures of comparing ideas of objects. All objects, natural or artistic, that lend themselves to perception are made of a collection of objective properties which subsequently produce pleasure in our minds. From a purely empirical perspective, the effects of aesthetic qualities on the human mind disallow any general difference between art and nature. As Elioseff indicates, Addison’s papers on the imagination “are concerned not only with the affective relationship between the work of art and the observer, but, also, with the effect of any object, natural or artificial, upon the sense and imagination of the percipient.”²⁶⁹ Fundamentally, the quest of eighteenth-century aestheticians is not specifically for “the connection between what there is in nature and what occurs in the mind,”²⁷⁰ but rather for principles that more generally link objects with the pleasures they produce. A long time ago, Hipple voiced this aspect when he wrote that “beauty and sublimity and picturesqueness,” the chief subject of eighteenth-century aesthetics

transcends the boundaries between nature and art. The principles of aesthetics and criticism, accordingly, are sought not in the peculiar nature of art, but in what is

²⁶⁷ Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 13.

²⁶⁸ Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 39

²⁶⁹ Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 162.

²⁷⁰ Townsend, “The Interaction of Art and Nature,” 217.

common to nature and art and this common element, since the Cartesian revolution in philosophy, is of course the mind which apprehends both realms.²⁷¹

In like manner, Macarthur has drawn attention to what the rise of empiricist aesthetics means for the pairing of art and nature:

With the rise of aesthetic discourse, beauty [...] became a reflection on whether the ‘taste’ of something that pleases the eye or ear, as foods do the tongue. [...]. Aesthetics is a concept of the reception of empirical sensation; understood strictly, it cannot allow for general difference between art and nature. There can be no difference in kind between trees and painting – each appeals to the senses and is judged pleasing or not.²⁷²

3.3 The Superiority of Nature to Art: The Physico-Theological Perspective

The Lockean empiricist framework of primary-secondary qualities underlying all instances of pleasure of the imagination ranges indiscriminately over art and nature.²⁷³

Ultimately, a knowledge of how primary qualities happen to give rise to secondary ones is impossible, or to quote Hipple, “efficient causes in the sense of ultimate ties between

²⁷¹ Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque*, 6.

²⁷² Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, 3-4.

²⁷³ The broader question of the interaction of mind with matter, of the interplay of our mental faculties with the object of appreciation maps onto the Lockean problem of the necessary connection between primary and secondary qualities. Locke had distinguished between primary qualities which reside in the object, and secondary qualities such as color and heat which have no real existence in the object but are a result of subjective affection. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. with a foreword by Peter H. Niddich, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, Book II, chapter viii. Having offered a justification of aesthetic value by appropriating Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities (Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 39-40), Addison concomitantly assimilates beauty to a secondary quality that proceeds from our subjective response to primary qualities. As pointed out by Elioseff: “Beauty, which most of Addison’s predecessors thought of as a primary quality of objects, is for Addison, induced by a subjective response through the operation of the primary qualities of matter upon the imagination. [...] [B]eauty, like sound and color, is received, as if were a *secondary quality*.” Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 179 (emphasis added).

mater and mind [...] are undiscoverable.”²⁷⁴ Addison, then, proceeds to attribute to a wise and caring God this type of efficient causality responsible for the existence of our aesthetic response to nature and art, a move which simultaneously functions as an *a posteriori* argument for the existence of God.²⁷⁵ In other words, the pleasures received from both nature and art may function as design arguments for the existence of an all-loving God who has allowed such pleasures by having linked certain “real Qualities” of objects (primary qualities) with “such imaginary Qualities” in our minds (secondary qualities):

We may further observe how Providence has taken care to keep up this Cheerfulness²⁷⁶ in the Mind of Man, by having formed it after such a manner, as to make it capable of conceiving Delight from several Objects which seem to have very little use in them; as from the Wildness of Rocks and Desarts, and the like grotesque Parts of Nature. Those who are versed in Philosophy may still carry this Consideration higher, by observing that if Matter had appeared to us endowed only with those real Qualities which it actually possesses, it would have made but a very joyless and uncomfortable Figure; and why has Providence given it a Power of producing in us such imaginary Qualities, as Tastes and Colours, Sounds and Smells, Heat and Cold, but that Man, while he is conversant in the lower Stations of Nature, might have his Mind cheered and delighted with

²⁷⁴ Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque*, 20. Addison formulates this problem in the following way: “Though in Yesterday’s Paper we considered how every thing that is Great, New, or Beautiful, is apt to affect the Imagination with Pleasure, we must own that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary Cause of this Pleasure, because we know neither the Nature of an Idea, nor the Substance of a Human Soul, which might help us to discover the Conformity or Disagreeableness of the one to the other; and therefore, for want of such a Light, all that we can do in Speculations of this kind is to reflect on those Operations of the Soul that are most agreeable, and to range under their proper Heads, what is pleasing or displeasing to the Mind, without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient Causes from whence the Pleasure or Displeasure arises.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 544-5.

²⁷⁵ Lisa M. Zeitz, “Addison’s ‘Imagination’ Papers and the Design Argument,” *English Studies* 73, no. 6 (December 1992): 493–502. See also Ghita, “Theological Underpinnings of Joseph Addison’s Aesthetics.”

²⁷⁶ Cheerfulness, understood as the modern idea of happiness, has been linked to the emergence of aesthetic theory in early eighteenth-century Britain. It has been argued that, for Addison and Steele, the aesthetic experience of the world is accompanied by happiness, a heightened sense of feeling alive, of connecting to the providential order. See Brian Michael Norton, “‘The Spectator’, Aesthetic Experience and the Modern Idea of Happiness,” *English Literature*, 2.1 (2015), pp. 87-104.

agreeable Sensations? In short, the whole Universe is a kind of Theatre filled with Objects that either raise in us Pleasure, Amusement, or Admiration.²⁷⁷

Although the pleasures one receives from “Rocks and Desarts,” and other “Parts of Nature” serve as evidence for the existence of “Providence,” Addison concedes that the pleasures from human-made objects may bring about the same result:

the several Entertainments of Art, with the Pleasures of Friendship, Books, Conversation, and other accidental Diversions of Life [...] may *sufficiently* shew us that Providence did not *design* this World should be filled with Murmurs and Repinings, or that the Heart of Man should be involved in Gloom and Melancholy.²⁷⁸

The pleasures aroused from artifactual objects and activities also constitute proof that “Providence did not design this World” to be filled with “Gloom and Melancholy” but rather to produce quite the opposite result, namely “Chearfulness in the Mind of Man.”

This potential of pleasures from both nature and art to function as arguments for God’s existence has also been noted by Lisa M. Zeitz. Although emphasizing that the “focus in the *Spectator’s* treatment of the design argument is on the individual’s perception of *nature*,” she adds an important qualification:

²⁷⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 453. Elsewhere, he considers the workings of human imagination manifested in the perceptive response to nature and art as a tool through which God ultimately conveys pleasure: “what an infinite Advantage this Faculty gives an Almighty Being over the Soul of Man, [...] with what Ease he conveys into it a Variety of Imagery; how great a Power then may we suppose lodged in him, who knows all the ways of affecting the Imagination, who can infuse what Ideas he pleases, and fill those Ideas with Terrour and Delight to what Degree he thinks fit?” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 538. Zeitz rightly observes that “[f]ar from being an inferior or misleading faculty ‘which recombines images nearly at random’, the imagination could be discussed as a God-given faculty designed by the Creator for specific ends.” Zeitz, “Addison’s ‘Imagination’ Papers and the Design Argument,” 495. She also makes an important point on the centrality of the imagination in Addison’s aesthetics: “By drawing upon shared aesthetic elements in the natural theological tradition, Addison placed the imagination in a culturally and spiritually central position, attributing to its workings the ‘moral certainty’ of divine design.” Zeitz, “Addison’s ‘Imagination’ Papers,” 502.

²⁷⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 453 (emphasis added).

It is not much of a leap, then, when considering the individual's perception of 'imitations' of nature ([i.e.] art), to return once more to this method of apprehension [i.e. the design argument].²⁷⁹

According to Zeitz, both the perception of nature and the appreciation of art can be incorporated into arguments from design. Despite Addison's willingness to accept both pleasures from nature and from art as possible premises for design arguments, his use of the adverb "sufficiently" with reference to art indicates that the latter has only a diminished potential to demonstrate God's existence. A distinction between traditional and aesthetic versions of the design argument will reveal why this is the case.

Both natural and artificial objects are ultimately collections of primary qualities that give rise to secondary ones. Addison reasons that the sole existence of secondary qualities in us constitutes a sufficient proof for the existence of a benevolent God who has enabled them in the first place. This may be called an aesthetic version of the design argument which views the human capacity to respond with pleasure to certain arrangements of primary qualities, as well as the pleasure itself, as the work of God. Insofar as natural objects are concerned, however, it is not only the secondary qualities that function as arguments for divine existence, but their primary qualities as well. The various configurations of size, motion and shape perceived as instances of order and design in the natural world require the existence of a Divine Architect. This is known as the traditional argument from design which has as its premise the recognition of certain

²⁷⁹ Zeitz, "Addison's 'Imagination' Papers," 495. Zeitz appears to limit, without justification, the pleasures of art to those of imitation (secondary pleasures). I have argued against this tendency in section 3.1 above.

observable primary qualities inherent in objects that require the existence of an intelligent designer. One subset of the traditional argument is the argument from function.²⁸⁰

Thus, according to the kind of facts that are accepted as premises, one can distinguish between traditional and aesthetic versions of the design argument. Addison touches upon these two versions of the argument in *Spectator* No. 387 on the two ends of the works of nature:

If we consider the World in its Subserviency to Man, one would think it was made for our Use; but if we consider it in its natural Beauty and Harmony, one would be apt to conclude it was made for our Pleasure. The Sun, which is as the great Soul of the Universe, and produces all the Necessaries of Life, has a particular Influence in chearing the Mind of Man, and making the Heart glad.²⁸¹

Addison's example of the sun is illustrative of the potential of works of nature to fulfill both a functional as well as an aesthetic end. On the one hand, the sun can be seen from a functional perspective, as that of a natural philosopher inquiring into how the primary qualities of this celestial body, such as its size, shape, motion, and solidity, contribute to its capacity to produce "all the Necessaries of Life." If these qualities were different, life on Earth would be severely affected, so the current function of the sun cannot be attributed to mere chance, but to God whose existence it demonstrates. The aesthetic perspective, on the other hand, will focus more specifically on how the arrangement of the sun's primary qualities exerts "a particular Influence in chearing the Mind of Man," producing secondary qualities apt for "making the Heart glad." This capacity to derive

²⁸⁰ Averroes's illustration of the argument from function is paradigmatic: "The functionality exhibited throughout the world cannot conceivably be due to 'chance.' It must 'perforce' be the doing of 'an agent ... who intends ... and wills it'; and the 'existence of a creator' is thereby established." Benjamin C. Jantzen, *An Introduction to Design Arguments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 48.

²⁸¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 452.

pleasure is itself an argument for divine existence. It appears that Addison appropriated Robert Boyle's discussion "Of the usefulness of Natural Philosophy" on these two ways of seeing the natural world:

the book of nature is to an ordinary gazer, and a naturalist, like a rare book of hieroglyphicks to a child, and a philosopher; the one is sufficiently delighted with the oddness and variety of the curious pictures that adorn it; whereas the other, is not only delighted with these outward objects, that gratify his sense, but receives a much higher satisfaction, in admiring the knowledge of the author.²⁸²

Mayhew notes that for Boyle "the scientific apprehension of the natural world adds a rational to the aesthetic argument from design."²⁸³ But Boyle does not only supplement a traditional-rational argument from design with a so-called aesthetic version of it—he is ready to argue that to a successful naturalist, the two ways of seeing nature are inseparable. As pointed out by Zeitz, this vision of nature proves that "it is God the orderer, the consummate artist, the pragmatic *designer melding form and function*, who is manifested in the natural world."²⁸⁴

Unlike man-made artifacts which may only function as aesthetic arguments from design, the natural world lends itself to the formulation and defense of traditional and aesthetic design arguments that blend into a greater and more harmonious whole, as Addison himself makes clear:

The Creation is a perpetual Feast to the Mind of a good Man, every thing he sees cheers and delights him; Providence has imprinted so many Smiles on Nature that it is impossible for a Mind which is not sunk in more gross and sensual Delights to take a Survey of them without several secret Sensations of Pleasure. [...].

²⁸² Robert Boyle, *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle*, vol. 2 (A. Millar, 1744), 6.

²⁸³ Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture*, 74.

²⁸⁴ Zeitz, "Addison's 'Imagination' Papers...", 495 (emphasis added). Of course, the implication is that nature, being a perfect fusion of form and function, is perceived as divine art whose attributes are grounds for supreme approbation.

Natural Philosophy quickens this Taste of the Creation, and renders it not only pleasing to the Imagination, but to the Understanding.²⁸⁵

Addison holds that so long as the viewer is not engrossed in the pleasures of the sense, it is impossible to look at the creation without experiencing the pleasures of the imagination. The creation also lends itself to the scientific approach of the natural philosopher, so that ultimately, it is pleasing both to the imagination and to the understanding. Corroborating these findings, Mayhew asserts that

Addison's approach to landscape centres on [...] the fact therefore that the senses and reason, in their approach to nature, can be part of a larger spiritual activity. This can be seen by the fact that two major types of deployment of landscape imagery occur in the *Spectator* papers, which are aimed at these two faculties of imagination and reason, and which are broadly equivalent to the aesthetic and design readings of the book of nature [...].²⁸⁶

From an aesthetic standpoint, the pleasures excited by artistic objects can be taken as a premise for the existence of God who has enabled such pleasures. From a traditional-rational perspective, however, the arrangement of the primary qualities of artistic objects only demonstrate that they were brought into existence by the power of human agency rather than by mere chance. Of these two applications of the argument to works of art, only the aesthetic version can be understood as a genuine argument for the existence of God. Nature stands out because both its primary qualities (the focus of the natural philosopher) as well as secondary ones (the focus of the aesthetician) have a shared divine origin. Because the source of the primary qualities of natural objects, such as regularity and proportion, as well as the human perceptive response to them, the so-called

²⁸⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 475.

²⁸⁶ Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture*, 84 (emphasis added).

aesthetic pleasures, are both phenomena ordained by God, it follows that the appreciation of nature—which relies in equal measure on God to link (“melt”) these two kinds of qualities together—produces pleasures that are superior to those afforded by art.²⁸⁷

A final aspect that places works of nature above those of art comes from Addison’s teleology of aesthetic pleasures. As he recognizes that the efficient causes of our pleasures cannot be really pursued in a philosophically satisfactory manner, he resorts to an exposition of the final causes of our delights. He trades efficient causes for final causes as he adds another piece to his scaffolding of theological explanations. Addison lays heavy emphasis on final causes in the process of knowledge acquisition. Of the function of natural philosophy, he maintains that it “does not rest on the Murmur of Brooks, and the Melody of Birds, in the Shade of Groves and Woods, or in the Embroidery of Fields and Meadows, but considers the several Ends of Providence which are served by them, and the Wonders of Divine Wisdom which appear in them.”²⁸⁸ In the manner of Boyle,²⁸⁹ a diligent inquirer into nature should not merely describe what one perceives out there in the world, but should more fundamentally concern oneself with identifying ends and goals in the works of nature, which cannot be but the “ends of providence.” By the same token, a student of human nature, of our mental faculties and, more specifically, of our aesthetic pleasures is, for Addison, bound to raise the question

²⁸⁷ See also Zeitz, “Addison’s ‘Imagination’ Papers...,” 495 (emphasis in the original): “A re-thinking of the design argument within an aesthetic context also suggests itself for a number of other reasons. First, one of the central motifs of natural theology was the superiority of Nature to Art. Because Nature is defined as *God’s* art, the design argument rests upon what is fundamentally an *aesthetic* analogy [...]”

²⁸⁸ *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 475.

²⁸⁹ For Boyle’s influence on Addison, see Zeitz, “Addison’s Imagination Papers,” esp. p. 496.

of the “ends of providence” in his inquiries. Therefore he writes that the final causes of our aesthetic pleasures are that the latter generally “give us greater Occasion of admiring the Goodness and Wisdom of the first Contriver.”²⁹⁰ He goes on to say that God has annexed a secret pleasure to each aesthetic category: we have been allowed the pleasure from greatness because “a great Part of our Happiness must arise from the Contemplation of his Being.”²⁹¹ The pleasure from the new or the uncommon has been enabled because God wants to “encourage us in the Pursuit after Knowledge, and engage us to search into the Wonders of his Creation.”²⁹² And finally, we have been allowed beauty in general so as to “render the whole Creation more gay and delightful.”²⁹³

Like Boyle and Newton, by final causes, Addison understands “the purposes, aims, or ends for which things are made.”²⁹⁴ The final causes of all aesthetic pleasures are always explained with reference to nature, and never to art. Addison states that generally, aesthetic pleasure has been enabled by God in order for us to be able to admire his goodness and wisdom. This is a rephrasing of the aesthetic argument from design which addresses both nature and art. In his explanation of the final cause of the aesthetic category of novelty, he maintains that spectators should ultimately engage in the acquisition of knowledge of nature. It follows that artistic novelty must also be reflective of this ultimate goal. But unlike the novelty of nature, for instance, of spring—which

²⁹⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 545.

²⁹¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 545.

²⁹² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 545.

²⁹³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 546.

²⁹⁴ Robert H. Hurlbutt, *Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 16.

might direct the observer toward a knowledge of the recurrence of seasons—the novelty of a monster, for instance, appears disconnected from any apparent final cause. Of course, the novelty of the monster, may “by consequence” remind us of the importance of the idea of novelty whose application is technically prior in nature. He says that God has allowed beauty to render the creation gay and delightful. Of course, artistic beauty will only in a limited sense beautify God’s creation since artistic activity will first and foremost render the artifactual object itself beautiful, rather than nature. The final causes of the category of greatness may offer a glimpse into the meaning of Addison’s phrase “by consequence:”

Our Admiration, which is a very pleasing Motion of the Mind, immediately rises at the Consideration of any Object that takes up a great deal of Room in the Fancy, and *by Consequence*, will improve into the highest Pitch of Astonishment and Devotion when we contemplate his Nature, that is neither circumscribed by Time nor Place, nor to be comprehended by the largest Capacity of a Created Being.²⁹⁵

The pleasures of art only manage to fulfill their final causes indirectly, or what Addison calls “by consequence” while the pleasures of nature allow a somewhat direct fulfillment of these causes. The objective makeup of works of art themselves, on the other hand, do not prove the existence of God, but of human agency. This activity of human agency can however point to the desired final causes. The same applies to the final causes of the secondary pleasures from imitation; Addison writes that “we find a great variety of Entertainments derived from this single Principle,” and

The final Cause, probably, of annexing Pleasure to this Operation of the Mind [i.e. comparison], was to quicken and encourage us in our Searches after Truth, since

²⁹⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 545 (emphasis added).

the distinguishing one thing from another, and the right discerning betwixt our Ideas, depends wholly upon our comparing them together, and observing the Congruity or Disagreement that appears among the several Works of Nature.²⁹⁶

Addison resorts here to an explanation of the final causes of the operation of comparison that is vital to the secondary pleasures through explicit reference to the aim of searching for truth in the works of nature. How does this explanation apply to the secondary pleasures obtained from works of art? The final causes of these must also reflect the search for the truth of God's creation. A nature-centric perspective permeates Addison's explanation of all final causes of aesthetic appreciation.

3.4 The Centrality of the Natural Sublime

Although all instances of pleasures of the imagination are ultimately gifts bestowed on humanity by a wise and beneficent God, in virtue of being God's creation, nature is aesthetically superior to works of art. The existence of the Divine Being is knowable, among other things, from the ability of mankind to derive a special kind of pleasure even from these areas of nature that are apparently of no use to them, such as wild rocks and deserts: "Providence has taken care to keep up this Cheerfulness in the Mind of Man" by making it "capable of conceiving Delight from several Objects which seem to have very little use in them; as from the Wildness of Rocks and Desarts, and the like grotesque Parts of Nature."²⁹⁷ A "vast uncultivated Desart," "huge Heaps of

²⁹⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 560.

²⁹⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 453.

Mountains, high Rocks and Precipices, or a wide Expanse of Waters” are instances “where we are not struck with the Novelty or Beauty of the Sight, but with that rude kind of Magnificence which appears in many of these stupendous Works of Nature.”²⁹⁸ The large number of examples of pleasure from greatness that arises solely from the magnitude of the natural world determined Samuel Monk to conclude that the sublime “emerged from Addison’s hands definitely related to nature, to mass, and to space,” and has led Brady to point out more accurately that the qualities identified by Addison as producing the sublime are “largeness, greatness, immensity, vastness, magnificence through height, undetermined and unbounded.”²⁹⁹ The pairing of such qualities with certain objects of appreciation is not arbitrary but follows a hierarchical ranking of pleasures “from Greatness” according to how well they reflect infinity as a divine attribute.

The apex of the pleasure from greatness which also acts as its final cause lies in the contemplation of God. Because “[t]here is no end of his Greatness,”³⁰⁰ the “Idea of the Supreme Being is [...] filled with every thing that can raise the Imagination, and give an Opportunity for the Sublimest Thoughts and Conceptions.”³⁰¹ The most common way one can arrive at the idea of God is through a Lockean conjunction of ideas: having formed from experience “the Ideas of Existence and Duration; of Knowledge and Power; of Pleasure and Happiness; and of several other Qualities and Powers” in our minds, “we

²⁹⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 540.

²⁹⁹ Monk, *The Sublime*, 16.

³⁰⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 393.

³⁰¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 95.

enlarge every one of these with our Idea of Infinity; and so putting them together, make our complex Idea of God.”³⁰² Addison applies the attribute of infinity, which is central to the definition of God, to space itself: “Space [...] is diffused and spread abroad to Infinity,” he remarks, while elsewhere he describes “infinite Space as the Receptacle, or rather the Habitation of the Almighty.”³⁰³ Moving down the scale, the whole Creation, or what Addison sometimes calls the universe is not infinite per se: “There is no Question but the Universe has certain Bounds set to it.”³⁰⁴ Rather, the universe is deemed *immense*: this qualifier is applied to the Milky Way, to “the Immensity of Nature” as a whole or to specific natural objects, such as “an immense Ocean.”³⁰⁵ Views and prospects are sometimes noted for their immensity or unboundedness, and vastness is used in reference to the stars and the desert.³⁰⁶

³⁰² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 393.

³⁰³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 532. Developments in seventeenth-century theology saw the identification of Deity’s traditional attributes—among which infinity occupied a privileged position—with the “vast space newly discovered by emergent astronomy” so that “divine presence [was] felt to be immanent in nature, or at least likely to be evoked by nature’s grander aspect.” Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, 14.

³⁰⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 530.

³⁰⁵ Addison considers oceans as some of the finest objects to raise pleasure from greatness: “I cannot see the Heavings of this prodigious Bulk of Waters, even in a Calm, without a very pleasing Astonishment; but when it is worked up in a Tempest, [...] it is impossible to describe the agreeable Horror that rises from such a Prospect. A troubled Ocean, to a Man who sails upon it, is, I think, the biggest Object that he can see in motion, and consequently gives his Imagination one of the highest kinds of Pleasure that can arise from Greatness.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 234. No sooner had Addison finished describing the aesthetic effects of the ocean on the imagination, than he integrated this description into an aesthetic version of the design argument: “I must confess, it is impossible for me to survey this World of fluid Matter, without thinking on the Hand that first poured it out, and made a proper Channel for its Reception. Such an Object naturally raises in my Thoughts the Idea of an Almighty Being, and convinces me of his Existence as much as a metaphysical Demonstration. The Imagination prompts the Understanding, and by the Greatness of the sensible Object, produces in it the Idea of a Being who is neither circumscribed by Time nor Space.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 234.

³⁰⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 531, 540, 564, 575.

Addison's selective use of these modifiers strengthens the conviction that the objects of appreciation are hierarchized according to the amount of pleasure from greatness they can afford, an aspect confirmed also by the several degrees of sublimity that Addison recognizes in the world:

Nothing is more pleasant to the Fancy, than to enlarge it self by Degrees, in its Contemplation of the various Proportions which its several Objects bear to each other, when it compares the Body of Man to the Bulk of the whole Earth, the Earth to the Circle it describes round the Sun, that Circle to the Sphere of the fixt Stars, the sphere of the fixt Stars to the Circuit of the whole Creation, the whole Creation it self to the *infinite* Space that is every where diffused about it [...].³⁰⁷

It becomes apparent from this gradation of sublime objects that the more unbounded an object is the greater pleasure it affords. As Bevis points out, although Addison does not rank the aesthetic categories of the great, the uncommon and the beautiful against each other, he does imply the centrality of the pleasures from the great which prompts the mind to contemplate the greatness of God.³⁰⁸

The category of the great offers the most important point of convergence between aesthetic and religious contemplation.³⁰⁹ The faculty responsible for aesthetic perception, namely the imagination, is not merely a device given by God to mankind to prove divine existence. It is above all a cornerstone of religious devotion. The final cause of the aesthetic contemplation of great objects is a spiritual exercise that can move one from the cold acknowledgment of God's existence to an act of divine worship:

One of the Final Causes of our Delight, in any thing that is great, may be this. The Supreme Author of our Being has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but

³⁰⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 575.

³⁰⁸ Bevis, *The Road to Egdon Heath*, 46.

³⁰⁹ Thorpe remarked that for Addison "aesthetic contemplation frequently merges into the religious." Thorpe, "Addison and Hutcheson on the Imagination," 224.

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, that he might give our Souls a just Relish of such a Contemplation, he has made them naturally delight in the Apprehension of what is Great or Unlimited. Our Admiration, which is a very pleasing Motion of the Mind, immediately rises at the Consideration of any Object that takes up a great deal of Room in the Fancy, and, by consequence, will improve into the highest Pitch of Astonishment and Devotion when we contemplate his Nature, that is neither circumscribed by Time nor Place, nor to be comprehended by the largest Capacity of a Created Being.³¹⁰

Infusing a philosophical-naturalistic approach with spiritual significance, Addison's effort is explained by a more basic distinction which he draws between religion and philosophy. He opts for the primacy of the latter, as he writes:

A state of Temperance, Sobriety, and Justice, *without Devotion*, is a cold, lifeless, insipid Condition of Virtue; and is rather to be stiled Philosophy than Religion. Devotion opens the Mind to great Conceptions, and fills it with more sublime Ideas than any that are to be met with in the most exalted Science; and at the same time warms and agitates the Soul more than sensual Pleasure.³¹¹

There is an evident distinction between philosophical reflection and religious contemplation as he writes of the Supreme Being that: "It is not to be reflected on in the Coldness of Philosophy, but ought to sink us into the lowest Prostration before him, who is astonishingly *Great, Wonderful and Holy*."³¹² Devotion is a subjective experience of God, and it is the natural endpoint of the aesthetic experience of sublimity: "The Devout Man does not only believe, but feels there is a Deity. He has actual Sensations of him; his Experience concurs with his Reason, [...] and even in this Life almost loses his Faith in Conviction."³¹³ For Addison, man is not strictly a rational, but a devout animal. It is no

³¹⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 545.

³¹¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, p. 287 (emphasis added).

³¹² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 586 (emphasis added).

³¹³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 143.

wonder then that the final cause of our pleasure from the great is the contemplation of God as a way to the ultimate goal of life: “It would likewise quicken our Desires and Endeavours of uniting our selves to him by all the Acts of Religion and Virtue.”³¹⁴ Whenever human beings are aesthetically experiencing the sublime, they are brought closer to a state of devotion.

One of the ways of promoting faith and devotion is the exclusive appreciation of nature in general, and of natural sublimity in particular, as aided by the “frequent retirement from the [urban] World, accompanied with religious Meditation.”³¹⁵

the Mind is stunned and dazzled amidst that variety of Objects which press upon her in a great City: She cannot apply her self to the Consideration of those things which are of the utmost Concern to her. The Cares or Pleasures of the World strike in with every Thought, and a Multitude of vicious Examples give a kind of Justification to our Folly. In our Retirements every thing disposes us to be serious. In Courts and Cities we are entertained with the Works of Men, in the Country with those of God. One is the Province of Art, the other of Nature. Faith and Devotion naturally grow in the Mind of every reasonable Man, who sees the Impressions of Divine Power and Wisdom in every Object on which he casts his Eye. The Supream Being has made the best Arguments for his own Existence, in the Formation of the Heavens and the Earth, and these are Arguments which a Man of Sense cannot forbear attending to, who is out of the Noise and Hurry of Human Affairs. *Aristotle* says, that should a Man live under Ground, and there converse with Works of Art and Mechanism, and should afterwards be brought up into the open Day, and see the several Glories of the Heav'n and Earth, he would immediately pronounce them the Works of such a Being as we define God to be.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 394.

³¹⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 143.

³¹⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 143-144. For Addison's thoughts on the aesthetic value of urban experience, see Eduard Ghita, “‘It was a pleasing Reflection to see the World so prettily chequer’d’: Aesthetics of Urban Experience in the Spectator,” *University of Bucharest Review*, special issue on Cultural Representations of the City, vol. VI, no. 2 (2017), 149-157.

The way Addison describes the “Pleasures of the World” as a “Multitude of Vicious Examples [that] give a kind of Justification to our Folly” is redolent of his treatment of the pleasures of the sense which are characterized as obstacles to virtue, and hence inferior to the pleasures of the imagination.³¹⁷ On the other hand, explicit references to “Art” and “Works of Art” show that the “Pleasures of the World” extend beyond sensorial pleasures and include all artifactual productions that one might encounter in the city. The clash of “Cities” and the “Country” partakes of the larger opposition between “Works of Men” and “those of God.” “Nature, or more accurately, the objects of nature which make up a pleasing natural scene,” writes Michael F. Bunce “has long been the counterpoint of reaction against the city” to the point that it has become the “defining focus of the theme of retreat from the civilised world.”³¹⁸ This retreat from the world amounts to a voluntary suppression of artificial stimuli so that the imagination can be affected exclusively by the works of God. It is notable how “Faith and Devotion” is triggered in the minds of spectators not primarily by means of any work of art, but specifically through natural objects lending themselves to sublime experiences, such as “the Heavens and the Earth.”

³¹⁷ “There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a Relish of any Pleasures that are not Criminal; every Diversion they take is at the Expence of some one Virtue or another, and their very first Step out of Business is into Vice or Folly. A Man should endeavour, therefore, to make the Sphere of his innocent Pleasures as wide as possible, that he may retire into them with Safety, and find in them such a Satisfaction as a wise Man would not blush to take. Of this Nature are those of the Imagination, which do not require such a Bent of Thought as is necessary to our more serious Employments, nor, at the same time, suffer the Mind to sink into that Negligence and Remissness, which are apt to accompany our more sensual Delights, but, like a gentle Exercise to the Faculties, awaken them from Sloth and Idleness, without putting them upon any Labour or Difficulty.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 539.

³¹⁸ M F. Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 18.

A final aspect that singles out the category of greatness from both beauty and novelty has to do with the ability of its primary quality—spatial extension—to affect the mind without operating merely as a symbol for God’s existence or presence, but as a constitutive part of it.³¹⁹ Any instance of considerably large spatial magnitude does not only symbolize but partakes in the infinity of God. For Addison, space as well as everything that occupies it is animated by divine (omni)presence: “Every Particle of Matter is actuated by this Almighty Being which passes through it.”³²⁰ The implication is that the larger an object is or the more particles of matter it contains, the greater its reflection of divine presence will be. The infinity of God is manifested immanently in the primary quality of the pleasures from greatness. The same cannot be said of beauty and its primary qualities: neither symmetry, nor proportion of parts are attributes of God, but merely “several Modifications of Matter which the Mind [...] pronounces at first sight Beautiful”³²¹ because they have been necessarily invested by God with a symbolism well beyond themselves, and without which their aesthetic appeal would be ineffective. The final cause of the pleasure from beauty reveals this limitation:

³¹⁹ Hipple points out that “there is also a purely systematic reason why Addison should stress magnitude: the sublime must depend on visual images, in consequence of Addison's limitation upon the scope of imagination—and the only trait of visible objects which astonishes the mind without operating clearly as a sign or by engaging the passions, is magnitude.” Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque*, 18.

³²⁰ Addison wrote the following on God’s omnipresence: “If we consider him in his Omnipresence: His Being passes through, actuates, and supports the whole Frame of Nature. His Creation, and every Part of it, is full of him. There is nothing he has made, that is either so distant, so little, or so inconsiderable, which he does not essentially inhabit. His Substance is within the Substance of every Being, whether material, or immaterial, and as intimately present to it as that Being is to it self. It would be an Imperfection in him, were he able to remove out of one Place into another, or to withdraw himself from any Thing he has created, or from any Part of that Space which is diffused and spread abroad to Infinity. In short, to speak of him in the Language of the old Philosopher, he is a Being whose Centre is every where, and his Circumference no where.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 531.

³²¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 542.

[God] has made so many Objects appear beautiful, that he might render the whole Creation more gay and delightful. [...]. Things would make but a poor Appearance to the Eye, if we saw them only in their proper Figures and Motions: And what Reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those Ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the Objects themselves, (for such are Light and Colours) were it not to add Supernumerary Ornaments to the Universe, and make it more agreeable to the Imagination? We are every where entertained with pleasing Shows and Apparitions, we discover Imaginary Glories in the Heavens, and in the Earth, and see some of this Visionary Beauty poured out upon the whole Creation [...].³²²

Addison uses color and light — secondary qualities not inherent in objects themselves — to drive home the point that beauty, a secondary quality also, does not exist at all in matter but is a supervenient ornament added by God. By contrast, extension is not an illusory quality, but has a real existence in matter and is concomitantly an attribute of God. From infinity as a divine attribute to the absolute infinity of space, down to the relative unlimitedness of the universe, and ultimately to objects that only give the illusion of infinity,³²³ the common denominator of these instances of greatness is spatial extension. The special importance of the pleasures from greatness has also been pointed out by Tuveson who accentuates how the category of greatness represents the image of God in “His extended omnipresence:”

The beautiful corresponds to less important aspects of the moral world than does the “immense.” When we look at the vastness of the heavens or at the expanse of the sea, we look upon no mere “supernumerary ornaments,” but upon the very image, so far as we can comprehend it, of God Himself, in His extended omnipresence. [...] Addison felt the ornaments should, if possible, be present in a scene; but they are not necessary, for “huge heaps of mountains” or a “vast uncultivated desert” will arouse in us the greatest emotions, ugly as those objects may be according to the lesser criteria.³²⁴

³²² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 546.

³²³ Ernest Lee Tuveson, “Space, Deity, and the ‘Natural Sublime,’” *Modern Language Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 1951): 20–38, p. 34.

³²⁴ Tuveson, “Space, Deity, and the ‘Natural Sublime,” 38.

Any object that takes up a great room in the fancy partakes of the upper part of the hierarchy of greatness and a proper engagement with it should culminate in a devotional appreciation of divine greatness. All examples of greatness rely on spatial magnitude, and thus, they are constitutive parts of divinity.

Addison's well-known treatment of greatness in the imagination papers is consistent with this gradation of sublime experiences; higher-level pleasures from greatness arise not from any single object, but require a whole view designed to overwhelm the spectator:

By Greatness, I do not only mean the Bulk of any single Object, but the Largeness of a whole View, considered as one entire Piece. Such are the Prospects of an open Champain Country, a vast uncultivated Desart, of huge Heaps of Mountains, high Rocks and Precipices, or a wide Expanse of Waters, where we are not struck with the Novelty or Beauty of the Sight, but with that rude kind of Magnificence which appears in many of these stupendous Works of Nature.³²⁵

Attributes such as large, vast, huge, high, and wide appear in “many of these stupendous Works of Nature.” But there is a more telling consequence of Addison's apparent exclusion of “the Bulk of any single Object” from the scope of greatness. This points directly to the difficulty of artistic objects to produce sublime effects. While not completely disqualifying art from the range of sublime experiences, the property of physical magnitude which informs the natural world has an ability to raise pleasures that belittle even the best attempts of art. While he often characterizes works of architecture as large, great, immense, magnificent, and even vast, Addison never describes them as

³²⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 540.

“infinite,” “unbounded” or “undetermined.” As shown, these three qualifiers are only the prerogative of nature. “The fundamental requirement for this category”³²⁶ of the great, says Bevis, is clearly the largeness of a whole view, a property which is notably absent in works of art. As also made clear by Elioseff, “to support his own contention that Nature is greater than art,” Addison cited “[t]he immense Nature of the new science [that] had a great aspect which art could not reproduce.”³²⁷ This aspect would serve as the basis for Addison’s complaint about art’s lack of sublimity and its subsequent inferiority to works of nature:

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 show herself 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. The beauties of the most stately garden or palace lie in a narrow compass, the imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratify her; but in the wide fields of nature the sight wanders up and down without confinement, and is fed with an infinite variety of images without any certain stint or number.³²⁸

While ready to admit that the works of art may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange as the works of nature, Addison insists that the former lack the vastness and immensity of the latter. The works of nature are magnificent in design, they allow the sight to wander “without confinement” and offer “an infinite variety of images.” The argument he makes for the superiority of the works of nature is clearly founded on his

³²⁶ Bevis, *The Road to Egdon Heath*, 45.

³²⁷ Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 111.

³²⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 549.

previous description of the category of pleasures from the great. By contrasting the “rough careless strokes of nature” with the “nice touches and embellishments of art,” Addison opposes the vigorous or energetic, disorganized efforts of nature to the carefully-planned stylistic additions of art (the manner of execution). In his analysis of Addison’s literary style, eighteenth-century critic Hugh Blair opines that this opposition reveals “the freedom and ease of Nature” versus the “diminutive exactness of Art.”³²⁹ As we shall see, most instances of art are forced to rely on style as the only way to aspire to greatness. Compared with greatness from size, greatness from manner of execution appears to be a water-down version of sublimity.

Despite his statement in an earlier paper that pleasure from greatness does not arise from the bulk of the object, he concedes that “Greatness, in the Works of Architecture, may be considered as relating to the Bulk and Body of the Structure.”³³⁰ This concession may be read as an attempt to rescue architecture and make it a valid candidate for sublime responses. But all instances of art that may be included in the category of greatness based on their potential to deal with physical extension may also function as a backdrop against which the magnificence of nature is further reinforced. Such is the case in *Guardian* No. 103 in which Addison describes the “noble firework that was exhibited” on the Thames as “a little sky filled with innumerable blazing stars and meteors,” where “[n]othing could be more astonishing than the pillars of flame, clouds of smoke, and multitudes of stars mingled together,” and where “[e]very rocket ended in a constellation, and strow’d the air

³²⁹ Hugh Blair, *Lectures on the Rhetoric & Belles Lettres*, (New York, Collins, 1819), 259.

³³⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 553.

with such a shower of silver spangles, as opened and enlightened the whole scene from time to time.”³³¹ Although the display of fireworks is not limited to the bulk or body of one particular object—as it involves a “whole scene” which appears to satisfy Addison’s criterium for greatness—it is quickly dismissed as inferior to its natural counterpart, the falling of a comet:

I could not forbear reflecting on the insignificancy of human art, when set in comparison with the designs of Providence. In the pursuit of this thought I considered a comet, or, in the language of the vulgar, a blazing-star, as a sky-rocket discharged by the hand of the Almighty. [...]. What an amazing thought is to consider this stupendous body traversing the immensity of the creation with such a rapidity [...]. How spacious must the universe be that gives such bodies as these their full play, without suffering the least disorder or confusion! What a glorious show are those beings entertained with, that can look into this great theatre of nature, and see myriads of such tremendous objects wandering through those immeasurable depths of ether, and running their appointed courses! [...] [T]hey are very proper objects for our imaginations to contemplate, that we may form more exalted notions of Infinite Wisdom and Power, and learn to think humbly of ourselves, and of all the little works of human invention.³³²

These lines unequivocally convey the idea that art—understood as any work of human making—is inferior to nature in terms of sublimity. The “insignificancy of human art” is caused by its relative smallness and likelihood of failing to raise in our minds an “amazing thought.” On the other hand, works of nature, such as comets, are significant because God is simultaneously their efficient and final cause. In terms of efficient causality, the comet has been “discharged by the hand of the Almighty,” and only then may it travel through the “immensity of the creation,” the “spacious” universe, and “through those immeasurable depths of ether.” Its final cause pertains to its capacity to

³³¹ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Guardian, with Notes, and a General Index, Complete in One Volume*. (Philadelphia, M. Wallis Woodward & Co, 1835), 116-7.

³³² Addison and Steele, *The Guardian*, 119-120.

constitute a proper object “for our imaginations to contemplate” so that “we may form more exalted notions of Infinite Wisdom and Power.” In addition to functioning as traditional argument for the “Infinite Wisdom and Power” of God, the comet also lends itself to aesthetic appreciation that terminates with an “exalted” notion of the divine being, a state of devotion that Addison had theorized as the final cause of pleasures from greatness.

A final aspect that further exacerbates the division between art and nature lies in Addison advancing greatness of manner as a specific means for art to compensate for its lack of physical extension. Besides the ability of art to elicit sublime effects from “the Bulk and Body of the Structure,” the sublimity of an artistic object might also be related “to the Manner in which it is built.”³³³ Thus, while the magnitude of certain artifactual structures may liken them to the vastness of the natural sublime, it is often the case that artists compensate for art’s lack of magnitude by creating an illusion of it. Theodore Gracyk has managed to aptly capture these aspects:

[Addison is] recognizing that our admiration of ‘what is Great’ is frequently a function of both subject matter and artistic style. [...] Addison allows that a single aesthetic property, greatness, can be found in nature (as subject matter) and as an artifact of artistic representation. Initially, artworks are not included among his candidates for sublimity, for “greatness” is primarily a matter of “wide and undetermined Prospects.” Turning explicitly to the topic of arts that please the imagination, he immediately abandons the suggestion that greatness is not a property of individual objects by allowing that a building can be sublime either for itself or deceptively, in its manner.³³⁴

³³³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 553.

³³⁴ Theodore Gracyk, “The Sublime and the Fine Arts,” in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy M. Costelloe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 217–29, p. 223.

Certain forms of art, such as architecture, share with nature, though in a diminished form, the potential to trigger sublime experiences from “subject matter,” as it were, from their physical extension. But whereas a scene in nature or any considerably large natural object might be construed in terms of subject matter or content, it is impossible to properly ascribe to a natural scene a particular style or a manner of execution.³³⁵ Style is an aspect of composition which requires human agency for its accomplishment, a condition notably absent in nature. The postulation of greatness from manner of execution drives a wedge between nature and art by pointing to the inability of most instances of art to satisfy the main requirement which Addison praised in his imagination papers, “the Largeness of a whole View, considered as one entire Piece.”³³⁶ In contradistinction to nature, artworks “can have nothing in them of that vastness and immensity, which afford so great an entertainment to the mind of the beholder.”³³⁷

As Nicolson observed, Addison used ‘the great’ to refer primarily to the natural sublime, while leaving for the most part the term “sublime” for literary art.³³⁸ The last part of this section serves to illustrate how in a literary context, the sublime is used with reference to either subject matter or style, and how these two uses, considered cumulatively with Addison’s tendency to classify the literary sublime as a species of beauty reinforce the inability of art to properly display physical magnitude.

³³⁵ “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.” Saccamano, “The Sublime Force of Words in Addison's ‘Pleasures’,” 91.

³³⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 540.

³³⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 548.

³³⁸ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 300-1.

In *Guardian* No. 117, Addison uses Boileau's translation of Longinus to foreground the three qualifications of the literary sublime:

the sublime *in writing* rises either from the nobleness of the thought, the magnificence of the words, or the harmonious and lively turn of the phrase, and that the perfect sublime arises from all these three in conjunction together.³³⁹

By stressing nobleness of thought, Addison underscores the necessity on the part of the artist to fill one's mind with notions such as the "Idea of the Supreme Being [...] [that] give[s] an Opportunity for the Sublimest Thoughts and Conceptions."³⁴⁰ Nobleness of thought might be construed as an essential condition for the creation of the artistic sublime, as much as it is an important element of the appreciation of the natural sublime.³⁴¹ The last two aspects of the literary sublime, namely magnificence of words, and lively turn of phrase, correspond roughly to the two ways in which works of architecture may arouse sublimity: by means of subject matter and manner of execution. Of course, in the case of literature no subject matter can exist at all in the absence of words to represent it. But a word is magnificent, according to Addison, only so long as its denotation ('subject matter') is "in its Nature" sublime.³⁴² One could say that words such

³³⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Guardian*, 160.

³⁴⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 95.

³⁴¹ Construed in essentially religious terms, 'nobleness of thought' is associated by Addison with the fear of God: "[s]uch a thought gives no less a sublimity to human nature, than it does to good writing. This religious fear, when it is produced by just apprehensions of a divine power, naturally overlooks all human greatness that stands in competition with it, and extinguishes every other terror that can settle itself in the heart of man; it lessens and contracts the figure of the most exalted person; it disarms the tyrant and executioner; and represents to our minds the most enraged and the most powerful as altogether harmless and impotent." Addison and Steele, *The Guardian*, 160.

³⁴² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, p. 541. On the power of words to produce effects on the readers, Gracyk notes that "[a]n inept, ugly piece of writing can succeed in communicating that a face is beautiful by merely using the word." Gracyk, "The Sublime and the Fine Arts," 222.

as ‘chaos’, ‘creation’, ‘heaven’, and ‘hell’, used repeatedly and thematically by Milton in his *Paradise Lost*, are magnificent in virtue of the sublime subjects they represent:

As his [Milton’s] Genius was wonderfully turned to the Sublime, his *Subject* is the noblest that could have entered into the Thoughts of Man. Every thing that is truly great and astonishing, has a place in it. The whole System of the intellectual World; the *Chaos*, and the Creation; Heaven, Earth and Hell; enter into the Constitution of his Poem.³⁴³

Aside from the magnificence of words, poets may, through stylistic choices, “through a lively turn of phrase,” enhance the sublimity of their subjects. What matters is not only the subject of the poem, but the sublimity of its description. Addison insists that the “seventh [book of *Paradise Lost*] which *describes* the Creation of the World is [...] wonderfully Sublime [...].”³⁴⁴ The dignity of the theme of genesis is supplemented with the sublimity of its description.

These last two qualifications of the literary sublime show that it is impossible for literature to display greatness apart from the power of words to represent or describe it. This divide between natural greatness and artistic sublimity is further accelerated by Addison’s relegation of the latter to a particular species of beauty:

After having thus treated at large of *Paradise Lost*, [...] I have [...] endeavoured not only to prove that the Poem is beautiful in general, but to point out its Particular Beauties, and to determine wherein they consist. I have endeavoured to shew how some Passages are beautiful by being Sublime, others by being Soft, others by being Natural [...].³⁴⁵

Sublimity, softness, and naturalness appear to be nothing more than literary styles accommodated within the inclusive notion of beauty. The broadness of the category of

³⁴³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 141.

³⁴⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, p. 587.

³⁴⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 392.

beauty is also visible in Addison's statement that the "Beauties [...] which we are to look for in these Speeches" of the Third Book of the poem are suited to "fill the Mind with [...] Thoughts of Devotion."³⁴⁶ It is the greatness rather than the beauty of these speeches that make them apt to raise devotion in the readers, but Addison feels no need to distinguish between the two in this literary context.

What may have ultimately contributed to Addison's failure to keep literary beauty and sublimity apart is his reliance on the Aristotelian notion of "greatness with order," which as we have seen in Shaftesbury's work, is predicated on the notion that no literary artwork can be sublime unless it is also beautiful. In *Spectator* No. 267, Addison enumerates the three Aristotelian criteria for a successful epic poem: "First, It should be but One Action. Secondly, It should be an entire Action; and, Thirdly, It should be a great Action."³⁴⁷ The third requirement throws light on Addison's conception of artistic sublimity and reveals obvious similarities with Shaftesbury:

The third Qualification of an Epic Poem is its *Greatness*. [...]. In Poetry, as in Architecture, not only the Whole, but the principal Members, and every Part of them, should be Great. [...]. But *Aristotle*, by the Greatness of the Action, does not only mean that it should be great in its Nature, but also in its Duration, or in other Words that it should have a due Length in it, as well as what we properly call Greatness. The just Measure of this kind of Magnitude, he explains by the following Similitude. An Animal, no bigger than a Mite, cannot appear perfect to the Eye, because the Sight takes it in at once, and has only a confused Idea of the Whole, and not a distinct Idea of all its Parts; if on the contrary you should suppose an Animal of ten thousand Furlongs in length, the Eye would be so filled with a single Part of it, that it could not give the Mind an Idea of the Whole. What these Animals are to the Eye, a very short or a very long Action would be to the Memory. The first would be, as it were, lost and swallowed up by it, and the other difficult to be contained in it.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 141.

³⁴⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, p. 539.

³⁴⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, p. 541-52.

By associating poetry with architecture, Addison underlines that even those instances of art that deal most successfully in physical magnitude are essentially bounded, and hence their aesthetic appeal is inferior to the sublimity of undetermined nature: “Look upon the Outside of a Dome, your Eye half surrounds it; [...].”³⁴⁹ As Carole Fabricant notes, “Addison’s praise of concave and convex shapes in architecture was based on the fact that they lend themselves so well to man’s visual appropriation and possession.”³⁵⁰ Fabricant’s remark on the boundedness of architecture that lends itself to visual appropriation applies in equal measure to gardening art, an aspect corroborated by Addison’s description of the plantation at Kensington as “lying so conveniently under the Eye of the Beholder.”³⁵¹

Drawing a parallel between poetry and architecture, Addison also makes the point that in a successful epic poem, as in any piece of literature and art, for that matter, a proper relationship must obtain between the sublimity of the whole and its constituent parts. Following Aristotle, he applies greatness to the duration of action and illustrates it with an analogy with our perception of animals of different sizes. If the animal is too small, one will fail to distinguish its constitutive parts. If the animal is too big, the spectator can only view a part of it, while compromising the whole. Again, the key assumption here is that unlike the magnificent extension of nature, “art is associated with

³⁴⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 557.

³⁵⁰ Carole Fabricant, “Binding and Dressing Nature’s Loose Tresses: The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 8, no. 1 (1979): 109–35, p. 115.

³⁵¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 190. Carole Fabricant believes that Addison’s statement conveys a “sense of dominance, here perceptual over an essentially inert or docile object.” Fabricant, “Binding and Dressing,” 116.

boundaries and limits.”³⁵² The artistic sublime is possible only if it observes spatial boundaries, whereas natural greatness arises precisely from overstepping them, as made clear by the comparison instituted between the body of an animal and the body of the whole universe:

The Body of an Animal is an Object adequate to our Senses [...] that lies in a narrow Compass. The Eye is able to command it, and by successive Enquiries can search into all its Parts. Could the Body of the whole Earth, or indeed the whole Universe, be thus submitted to the Examination of our Senses, were it not too big and disproportioned for our Enquiries, too unwieldy for the Management of the Eye and Hand, there is no question but it would appear to us as curious and well-contrived a Frame as that of an Human Body.³⁵³

Ultimately, the microcosm of the animal body is structurally similar to the macrocosm of the whole universe. But an important difference between the two is also apparent: unlike the relatively limited size of an animal’s body which can easily lend itself to perception, the greatness of the whole Universe eludes an “examination of our Senses,” and is depicted as “too big and disproportioned for our Enquiries.” Although it almost does violence to our finite capacities, the natural sublime is desired, rather than avoided or incriminated. Quite the opposite is preached about art, where any excess in the size or

³⁵² Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, 113.

³⁵³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 442. The same rule applies to objects that are infinitely small. Due to its limited size, a mite cannot appear perfect in art, but in the natural world, only one particle of it would be enough to elicit pleasures from the natural sublimity—in effect, the pleasures of the great universe in a nutshell: “But if, after all this, we take the least Particle of these Animal Spirits, and consider its Capacity of being Wrought into a World, that shall contain within those narrow Dimensions a Heaven and Earth, Stars and Planets, and every different Species of living Creatures, in the same Analogy and Proportion they bear to each other in our own Universe; such a Speculation, by reason of its Nicety, appears ridiculous to those who have not turned their Thoughts that way, though at the same time it is founded on no less than the Evidence of a Demonstration. Nay, we might yet carry it farther, and discover in the smallest Particle of this little World a new and inexhausted Fund of Matter, capable of being spun out into another Universe.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 144.

duration of (various elements of) an artwork's composition is denounced as unbefitting to our limited capacity of perception.

Essentially, Addison shares with Shaftesbury the Aristotelian notion of the artistic whole which widens the gap between sublimity in art and natural greatness. We should not assume however, as David B. Morris has maintained, that "sublimity in nature and sublimity in literature are essentially unrelated phenomena."³⁵⁴ Because Addison establishes a mimetic relation between them, it is appropriate to examine next his more general conception of artistic imitation, and the radical ambivalence that informs it.

3.5 The Ambivalence of Addison's Conception of Mimesis

The achievement of greatness in works of art is contingent on the adaptation of physical magnitude to the limited size of the composition. If "[i]n its beauty and novelty, nature appears as the art that mimics it," observes Saccamano, "in its greatness, nature becomes that which lies beyond the reach of mimesis."³⁵⁵ Saccamano's assertion is perhaps too radical since natural greatness is not inimitable, but only more inhospitable to representation in works of art. As such, the imitation of natural greatness in art *does* produce positive effects, as Axelsson well remarks: "in Addison's writings, imitation is [...] referred to as a dynamic and artistically significant quality in creating the

³⁵⁴ Morris, *Religious Sublime*, 4.

³⁵⁵ Saccamano, "The Sublime Force of Words in Addison's 'Pleasures'," 88.

sublime.”³⁵⁶ This view is confirmed by Addison’s insistence that although nature is more sublime than art, the reproduction of sublimity in art is a praiseworthy quality:

We have before observed, that there is generally in nature something more grand and august, than what we meet with in the curiosities of art. When, therefore, we see this imitated *in any measure*, it gives us a nobler and more exalted kind of pleasure than what we receive from the nicer and more accurate productions of art.³⁵⁷

Because it allows a more accurate reproduction or imitation of natural greatness, architecture may instill in the viewers feelings of devotion: “We are obliged to Devotion for the noblest Buildings,” such as “Temples and Publick Places of Worship,” and it is not only owing to “the Magnificence of the Building [which] invite[s] the Deity to reside within it, but that such stupendous Works might, at the same time, open the Mind to Vast Conceptions, and fit it to converse with the Divinity of the Place.”³⁵⁸ It is to be noted that Addison does not restrict the architectural sublime to places of worship, but includes all buildings that deal with physical extension. Alongside works of architecture which deal most successfully in mass and space, landscape gardening is noted for its ability to trigger “a nobler and more exalted kind of pleasure” that may culminate in religious devotion.

Unlike Shaftesbury, Addison does not dismiss the ability of artifacts to excite religious devotion in the spectators. He moves closer to Shaftesbury, however, by disparaging topiary in British gardens and advocating the informal gardening style, “the mixture of Garden and Forest, which represent everywhere an artificial Rudeness.”³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ Karl Axelsson, *The Sublime: Precursors and British Eighteenth-Century Conceptions* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 76.

³⁵⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 551 (emphasis added).

³⁵⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 555.

³⁵⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 551.

The contrast between the two styles may be illustrated with the comparison that Addison makes between the gardens at Versailles and those at Fontainebleau. In the former, the human modification of the natural world is so formidable that it is almost beyond belief: “I could not believe it was in the power of art, to furnish out such a multitude of noble scenes as I there met with, or that so many delightful prospects could lie within the compass of a man’s imagination.”³⁶⁰ These effects are achieved, however, at the expense of a radical and destructive intervention in the natural world whereby the king hubristically “removes mountains, turns the course of rivers, raises woods in a day’s time, and plants a village or town on such a particular spot of ground, only for the bettering of a view.”³⁶¹ Addison’s preference for Fontainebleau is predicated on the assumption that artificial production that imitates or even creates the illusion of natural wildness and irregularity does afford greater pleasures than formalized and highly geometric figures:

[Fontainebleau] is situated among rocks and woods, that give you a fine variety of salvage prospects. The king has humoured the genius of the place, and only made use of so much art as is necessary to help and regulate nature, without reforming her too much. The cascades seem to break through the clefts and cracks of rocks that are covered over with moss, and look as if they were piled upon one another by accident. There is an artificial wildness in the meadows, walks, and canals; and the garden, instead of a wall, is fenced on the lower end by a natural mound of rock-work that strikes the eye very agreeably. For my part, I think there is something more charming in these rude heaps of stone than in so many statues, and would as soon see a river winding through woods and meadows, as when it is tossed up in so many whimsical figures at Versailles.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 99.

³⁶¹ Addison and Steele, *The Guardian*, 144

³⁶² Addison and Steele, *The Guardian*, 144. According to Lovejoy, “Addison [...] assumed that the Chinese gardeners sought and achieved the imitation of natural wildness.” Arthur O Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York, N.Y. Putnam’s Sons, 1960), 115. Elioseff reaches the same conclusion after

At Fountainbleu, the king has given wildness a prominent place in his garden. The irregularity of cascades and grottos is preserved, while most importantly, the garden fence is replaced with a “natural mound of rock-work” as if to weave the illusion of natural unboundedness into an enclosed space.

This acute taste for the irregularity of Fountainbleu represents one manifestation of Addison’s theoretical preference for the informal gardening style, which, as *Spectator* No. 414 most aptly reveals, is an embodiment of a far-eastern viewpoint:

Writers who have given us an Account of *China*, tell us the Inhabitants of that Country laugh at the Plantations of our *Europeans*, which are laid out by the Rule and Line; because, they say, any one may place Trees in equal Rows and uniform Figures. They chuse rather to shew a Genius in Works of this Nature, and therefore always conceal the Art by which they direct themselves. They have a Word, it seems, in their Language [i.e. *sharawadgi*], by which they express the particular Beauty of a Plantation that thus strikes the Imagination at first Sight, without discovering what it is that has so agreeable an Effect. Our *British* Gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humouring Nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our Trees rise in Cones, Globes, and Pyramids. We see the Marks of the Scissars upon every Plant and Bush. I do not know whether I am singular in my Opinion, but, for my own part, I would rather look upon a Tree in all its Luxuriancy and Diffusion of Boughs and Branches, than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a Mathematical Figure; and cannot but fancy that an Orchard in Flower looks infinitely more delightful, than all the little Labyrinths of the more finished Parterre.³⁶³

contrasting Temple’s idea of gardening with that of Addison: “Temple, unlike Addison, considers this ‘disorder’ under the category of beauty, emphasizing the fact that order and harmony are obscured in, not absent from, the artificial naturalness of the Chinese garden, whose style is so difficult to imitate that Temple discourages any English attempts to do so. Addison, by removing this naturalness from the realm of the beautiful, strikes upon the similarity between the artificial naturalness of these gardens and the sublimity of physical nature, which it imitates [...]” Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 117-18.

³⁶³ Addison’s unusual love for irregularity may also be seen in *Tatler* Nos. 161 and 218. The word that Addison has in mind is ‘sharawadgi’ whose definition is supplied by William Temple: “[T]hough we,” Temple says “have hardly any notion of this sort of beauty, yet they have a particular word to express it, and, where they find it hit their eye at first sight, they say the sharawadgi is fine or is admirable, or any such expression of esteem.” Temple quoted in Ciaran Murray, *Sharawadgi: The Romantic Return to Nature* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 33.

Influenced by William Temple who derived most of his gardening ideas from reports from China, Addison contrasts the geometric organization of European gardens with the Chinese notion of *sharawadgi* understood as a kind of beauty without order.³⁶⁴ At the same time, this gardening ideal encodes the virtue of “humouring Nature” by imitating as much as possible the irregularity of natural wilderness. No longer trimmed into mathematical shapes such as “Cones, Globes, and Pyramids,” trees are allowed to display their “Luxuriancy and Diffusion of Boughs and Branches.” “Addison finds the Chinese garden so attractive,” writes Tony C. Brown, “because it presents a seemingly free distribution of natural objects” so that ultimately “[o]ne’s eyes can roam over the scene at will, undirected by an artificial and enforced geometric order.”³⁶⁵ Although the garden is by essence an enclosed space, if organized by the principle of *sharawadgi*, it allows spectators to experience it as an imitation or illusion of natural greatness produced by the hands of a skillful gardener. According to Addison’s logic, greater merit goes to gardeners who are capable of achieving the most illusionistic imitation of natural wilderness in the garden, to those planters whom Harney has described as having “the genius for concealing art in their planting.”³⁶⁶ It is with reference to this mimetic ideal that Addison praises once again the practical application of *sharawadgi* in his letter on gardening in *Guardian* No. 101:

³⁶⁴ Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden*, 111.

³⁶⁵ Tony C. Brown, “Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of Sharawadgi,” *ELH* 74, no. 1 (2007): 171–93, p. 176. Ultimately Brown contends that “Addison praises Chinese artistry in imitating nature [...]” Brown, “Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of Sharawadgi,” 188. See also Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 32, no. 1 (1933): 1-20.

³⁶⁶ Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination*, 62.

It is a Confusion of Kitchin and Parterre, Orchard and Flower Garden, which lie so mixt and interwoven with one another, that if a Foreigner, who had seen nothing of our Country, should be conveyed into my Garden at his first landing, he would look upon it as a natural Wilderness, and one of the uncultivated Parts of our Country. My Flowers grow up in several Parts of the Garden in the greatest Luxuriancy and Profusion. [...]. The only Method I observe in this Particular is to [...] compose a Picture of the greatest Variety. There is the same Irregularity in my Plantations, which run into as great a Wildness as their Natures will permit.³⁶⁷

Producing in the viewers the illusion that what they have before them is natural wilderness itself rather than a mere garden which imitates it, the landscape gardener affirms once again this pervasive principle of illusionistic mimeticism.

The same principle underlies much of Addison's effort to rank arts according to their potential to achieve the highest level of mimetic fidelity. Because it enables a rendition of depth and three-dimensionality, sculpture is highest on the scale, being "like the Object that is represented."³⁶⁸ Placed below sculpture, painting does not manage to accurately represent the natural world because "a plain Piece of Canvas"³⁶⁹ is condemned to flatness and forced to create only the illusion of depth. In terms of representational accuracy, poetry and description are placed at a further remove from painting since "Letters and Syllables are wholly void of"³⁷⁰ any resemblance to the object imitated. The lowest on the hierarchy is music whose abstract nature further complicates the possibility of representing "visible Objects by Sounds."³⁷¹ Murray Krieger underlines that this hierarchical ordering of the arts according to their mimetic potential signals an elevation

³⁶⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 188.

³⁶⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 559.

³⁶⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 559.

³⁷⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 559.

³⁷¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 559.

of the ‘natural-sign’ art of sculpture and even painting over and above the ‘arbitrary-conventional’ sign of poetry, an aspect which implies not only the superiority of sculpture to poetry, but conveys in equal measure the aesthetic supremacy of nature over all artifacts:

If we extend this line of argument, nature itself, the prime mover, is itself as much superior to the visual arts as the latter are superior to literature. Logic would suggest that the best art object is that which tends toward self-effacement as art in favor of appearing to be the natural object itself: all works try to become the substitute without difference [...].³⁷²

Another theoretical formulation of this principle of mimetic fidelity may be recognized in Addison’s statement that “artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their Resemblance of such as are natural; because here the Similitude is not only pleasant, but the Pattern more perfect.”³⁷³ The view that the more illusionistic the imitation of external reality is, the greater pleasure it affords, is exemplified with the camera obscura which produces the most accurate representations of reality: “The prettiest Landskip I ever saw, was one drawn on the Walls of a dark Room, which stood opposite on one side to a navigable River, and on the other to a Park.”³⁷⁴ “The Experiment,” he continues “is very common in Opticks” where a “Picture of a Ship [is seen] entering at one end, and sailing by Degrees through the whole Piece,” while “[o]n another there appeared the Green Shadows of Trees, waving to and fro with the Wind,

³⁷² Murray Krieger, “Representation in Words and in Drama: The Illusion of the Natural Sign,” 197. See also Brian Cosgrove, “Murray Krieger: Ekphrasis as Spatial Form, Ekphrasis as Mimesis,” in *Text into Image, Image into Text*, ed. Jeffrey Morrison and Florian Krobb (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997), 25–31, esp. p. 30.

³⁷³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 550.

³⁷⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 551.

and Herds of Deer among them in Miniature, leaping about upon the Wall.”³⁷⁵ His remark on this projected image is telling: “one occasion of its Pleasantness to the Imagination” “is its near Resemblance to Nature [...]”³⁷⁶

Deutsch has underscored that viewers of the camera obscura are “merging mimesis with creation” as they “appreciate the perfect mimesis of the natural” while aware of “the theatrical display of art which creates a new world.”³⁷⁷ In a similar way,

³⁷⁵ Donald Bond notes that Addison probably refers to such camera obscura as the one located at Greenwich Park, and cites the critic High Blair who in his 1783 *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* recalled the experiment: “The scene, which I am inclined to think Mr. Addison here refers to, is Greenwich Park, with the prospect of the Thames, as seen by a Camera Obscura, which is placed in a small room in the upper story of the Observatory; where I remember to have seen, many years ago, the whole scene here described, corresponding so much to Mr. Addison's account of it in this passage, that, at the time, it recalled it to my memory. As the Observatory stands in the middle of the Park, it overlooks, from one side, both the river and the park; and the objects afterwards mentioned, the ships, the trees, and the deer, are presented in one view, without needing any assistance from opposite walls.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 550, footnote 2.

³⁷⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 551. According to Gebauer and Wulf, the technical concept of camera obscura had important implications for art theory especially in seventeenth century Dutch painters. “In this conception, art is no longer mimetic but rather a reflex of reality, whereby reality is defined in physical terms. The things of the world are left untouched; they are not integrated into a deeper order. The artist is reproducing no invisible sensations or passions of the soul.” Gebauer, Wulf, and Reneau, *Mimesis: Culture - Art - Society* (California: University of California Press, 1996), 150. The authors also add that “there developed in Dutch art a type of representation that, according to the contemporary understanding of the handicraft tradition, the state of experimental science, the technique of the camera obscura, and the theory of vision, relied not on mimetic mediation but rather on the direct apprehension of images taken in from the world by the eye.” Gebauer, Wulf, and Reneau, *Mimesis*, 148. See also Malcolm Andrews's short discussion of the Dutch painters' tendency to faithfully render natural detail instead of idealizing the natural world. Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989), 239, p. 28.

³⁷⁷ Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, 115-6. Deutsch quotes Fabricant who “reads the early eighteenth-century's fondness for the camera obscura as indicative of the period's ‘simultaneous embrace and rejection of empirical reality . . . a process which discards nature in the raw for nature in a finer—which is to say, a more artificial and regulatable—tone.’” Deutsch, 118. See Fabricant, “Binding and Dressing,” 126-7. Contrary to Fabricant's view, as I wish to argue in chapter 4 of this dissertation, it is not the camera obscura per se that betrays the tendency to abandon an appreciation of nature in favor of an artistic rendition of it. Rather, the Claude glass came to perform that function. To this extent, Alexandra Wettlaufer's comparison between the camera obscura and the Claude glass is imbalanced, as she chooses to emphasize only the similarities between the two while ignoring differences. Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, *In the Mind's Eye: The*

Catherine Holochwost asserts that “[i]t was the mediation of a lens or screen that made these images pleasant, [...] not any inherent or inborn quality of the thing-in-itself.”³⁷⁸

These views genuinely reflect the position of Addison for whom a direct appreciation of the natural world is not interchangeable with an appreciation of its representation or reflected image obtained through the lens of a camera obscura. In this sense, I have reservations about Marshall’s interpretation that

Addison does not appear to be interested in looking out the window or actually stepping into the landscape of nature. The prettiest landscape he has ever seen is this natural representation.³⁷⁹

Marshall’s reading thrives on the fundamental ambiguity of the term “Landskip” used by Addison in his confession that “The prettiest Landskip” he ever saw “was one drawn on the Walls of a dark Room.” Because historically, the term could have been used to refer indiscriminately to both nature *and* art,³⁸⁰ Marshall’s reading appears justified. What is neglected, however, is the illuminating context of Addison’s utterance. The statement which precedes it narrows down the very scope of the term “Landskip” which is used exclusively with reference to artistic products: having previously stated that “artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their Resemblance of such as are natural,”

Visual Impulse in Diderot, Baudelaire and Ruskin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003). The aspect that sets the Claude glass apart is that due to its portability, it became a tool for appreciating the natural world through the lens of art, and this mode of appreciation became a preferred alternative to the unmediated or direct appreciation of nature.

³⁷⁸ Catherine Holochwost, *The Embodied Imagination in Antebellum American Art and Culture* (New York, London Routledge, 2020), 23.

³⁷⁹ David Marshall, *The Frame of Art: Fictions of Aesthetic Experience, 1750-1815* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 24.

³⁸⁰ “Landscape, according to [Samuel] Johnson, meant: 1) ‘A region; the prospect of a country’ and 2) ‘A picture, representing an extent of space, with the various objects in it.’” Kenneth Olwig, “Review of Mayhew, Robert J. Landscape, Literature, and English Religious Culture, 1660-1800: Samuel Johnson and Languages of Natural Description,” *H-HistGeog, H-Net Reviews*, 2004, p. 3.

Addison goes on to illustrate this general rule by having recourse to the camera obscura image as the most faithful kind of artistic representation of nature in (visual) art. Jean Hagstrum has rightly observed that, for Addison, the image obtained by the camera obscura is “the most beautiful *painting* he ever saw”³⁸¹—an identification of the projected image with pictorial art which reinforces the conviction that Addison is neither unwittingly confusing the image on the wall with an actual experience of nature, nor attempting to blur the distinction between experiences of “Landskip,” on the one hand, and the natural world, on the other.

Hagstrum finds Addison’s example of the camera obscura supportive of his conclusion that “[a]esthetic excellence [...] arises from the ability to reproduce direct visual experience,” and as such, art is committed to “the rendition of particular, visible nature.”³⁸² The need to more accurately outline Addison’s conception of nature prompts him to quote from Charles Batteux of the French Academy who, in his famous 1746 treatise *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle*, discerns two central meanings of nature as candidates for artistic imitation: “Nature, that is to say, all that is, or that we easily conceive as possible, is the prototype or the model of the arts.”³⁸³ These two

³⁸¹ I suspect that Marshall’s topic, (the problem of) the picturesque, created the perfect conditions for him to retrospectively ascribe to Addison a full-fledged picturesque aesthetic which though he may have initiated, does not fully conform to. As we shall see in chapter 4 below, adepts of the Claude glass at the end of the eighteenth-century picturesque tradition were more concerned with creating a new artistic representation of nature which came to ignore in significant ways, if not replace, a first-hand appreciation of nature. In this sense, any attempts to single out Addison for his pioneering work on the picturesque fall prey to anachronism.

³⁸² Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*. (Editorial: Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 136-7.

³⁸³ Batteux is quoted in Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 134. The translation from French is my own. “La Nature, c'est-a-dire tout ce qui est, ou que nous concevons aisement comme possible, voila le prototype ou le modele des Arts.”

aspects are “the particular (or visible) and the ideal (which here he calls the “possible” and everywhere, in the terminology of French neoclassicism, *la belle nature*).”³⁸⁴ It is specifically claimed that “Addison may be chosen to represent the first of these meanings, Reynolds the second.”³⁸⁵ As a believer in the “sanctions of Newtonian physics and Lockean epistemology,” Addison must have relied exclusively on the first conception of nature as the empirical particular.³⁸⁶ Indeed, as noted before, the camera obscura image is praised precisely for its rendition of the most accurate representation of actual nature. However, in his account of Reynolds’ mimetic theory which serves as a counterpoint to, and an illustration of the second meaning of nature, Hagstrum confirms that ideal nature “arises from continuously and vigorously pursued empirical observation and search.”³⁸⁷ Addison is not as unfamiliar with this notion of ideal nature as Hagstrum portrays him. The poet, writes Addison, “has the modelling of Nature in his own Hands, and may give her what Charms he pleases,” and moreover,

He is not obliged to attend her in the slow Advances which she makes from one Season to another, or to observe her Conduct, in the successive Production of Plants and Flowers. He may draw into his Description all the Beauties of the Spring and Autumn, and make the whole Year contribute something to render it the more agreeable. His Rose-trees, Wood-bines, and Jessamines may flower together, and his Beds be cover'd at the same time with Lillies, Violets, and Amaranths. His Soil is not restrained to any particular Sett of Plants, but is proper either for Oaks or Mirtles, and adapts itself to the Products of every Climate. Oranges may grow wild in it; Myrrh may be met with in every Hedge, and if he thinks it proper to have a Grove of Spices, he can quickly command Sun enough to raise it. [...]. His Consorts of Birds may be as full and harmonious, and his Woods as thick and gloomy as he pleases. He is at no more Expence in a long

³⁸⁴ Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 134

³⁸⁵ Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 136.

³⁸⁶ Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 136, 137-8.

³⁸⁷ Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 142. Reynolds says: “This great ideal perfection and beauty are not to be sought in the heavens, but upon the earth [...]” Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 143.

Vista, than a short one, and can as easily throw his Cascades from a Precipice of half a Mile high, as from one of twenty Yards. He has his Choice of the Winds, and can turn the Course of his Rivers in all the Variety of *Meanders*, that are most delightful to the Reader's Imagination.³⁸⁸

To say that the poet is no longer required to describe the scene as accurately as possible already signifies an abandonment of the mimetic principle of faithfully rendering particular, visible nature. Since it arises from a continuous observation and search of particulars, Addison's view of mimesis here dovetails perfectly with Hagstrum's description of ideal nature. Once particulars are identified and selected, the poet creates "a synthesis of scattered excellencies:"³⁸⁹ a new scene may be created out of the conjunction of elements endemic to different seasons. Plants such as "Rose-trees, Wood-bines, and Jessamines may flower together" because products of various climates are conjoined in one and the same poetic scene. His discussion of "Birds," "Woods," "Vistas," "Cascades," "Winds," "Rivers," suggests that a potentially unlimited number of particulars may be brought together in this way. Moreover, it is the faculty of imagination that enables this operation of synthesizing images: "we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination [...]."³⁹⁰ According to Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, Addison is underscoring here one important function of the imagination as a "selective, forming faculty in the production of art,"

³⁸⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 569.

³⁸⁹ Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 143.

³⁹⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 537.

namely “an adoption with variation, of the Baconian theory of *ideal imitation*.”³⁹¹ As Addison further emphasizes, “Writers in Poetry and Fiction borrow their several Materials from outward Objects, and join them together at their own Pleasure [...]”³⁹²

We may conclude that the very claim that Addison only had a conception of nature as particular is half the story, as it were. When Addison speaks of the camera obscura, the object of imitation is indeed the empirical particular of nature. But as he proceeds to a discussion of poetry, the notion of imitation shifts to an idealization of the actual. His aesthetics embodies both nature as empirical as well as ideal, and it is the transition from the first to the second that paves the way for his aesthetic-mimetic innovation.³⁹³ This shift is indeed accompanied by what Hagstrum calls the psychologizing of the process of poetic creation and reception.³⁹⁴ Without totally

³⁹¹ Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, “Addison’s Theory of the Imagination as ‘Perceptive Response,’” *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters* 21 (1935): 509–30, p. 512 (emphasis added). Elioseff has pursued Thorpe’s point further, adding that “Bacon, calling poetry ‘feigned history,’ remarks on the ability of the imagination to ‘join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined.’” Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 172. Corroborating evidence for the fact that Addison retains an important connection with ideal nature can be also be found in Herrick who writes in his study on the influence of Aristotle that “Addison thinks of all poetry as an idealized imitation of nature.” Marvin Theodore Herrick, *The Poetics of Aristotle in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 104. Anthony Grafton, in his brief survey of the concepts of imitation and mimesis puts Addison in touch with Batteux: “He [Addison] argues [...] that poetry in particular conjures ideas “more great, strange, or beautiful” than the actual world, “perfecting nature” and “adding greater beauties.” Addison anticipates Charles Batteaux’s *Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle* (1746), the first systematic account of the interrelations among the beaux-arts, or fine arts. Batteaux claims that such arts provide pleasure by imitating what he influentially calls (following late 17th-century French critics) *la belle nature*, a beautiful nature identified by Batteaux both with Aristotle’s things that could happen, imitated by poetry (*Poetics* 9), and with Zeuxis’s ideal beauty obtained through judicious selection” Anthony Grafton, “Imitation and Mimesis,” in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton et al (Harvard University Press, 2010), 472–75, p. 474.

³⁹² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 561.

³⁹³ Tuveson also attended to the rivalry between the two types of objects of imitation, but gave them different names: “the conflict between art as representation and art as magical impression.” Ernest Lee Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1960), 115.

³⁹⁴ Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 140.

relinquishing the poet's aspiration for creating visual images, Addison nevertheless breaks free from the mimeticist impulse to transcribe with exactness particular nature. Being farther removed from sculpture and painting in terms of its mimetic potential, literary art turns away from a strict understanding of art as imitation of empirical nature, a move motivated by recognizing the power of words:

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. The Reader finds a Scene drawn in stronger Colours, and painted more to the Life in his Imagination, by the help of Words, than by an actual Survey of the Scene which they describe. In this Case the Poet seems to get the better of Nature; he takes, indeed, the Landskip after her, but gives it more vigorous Touches, heightens its Beauty, and so enlivens the whole Piece, that the Images, which flow from the Objects themselves, appear weak and faint, in Comparison of those that come from the Expressions.³⁹⁵

The gulf between words and their (mental) representations enables literary art to suddenly emerge in relation to both sculpture and painting “as potentially their superior, and precisely *because* of its arbitrary (non-natural) signs.”³⁹⁶ But how can descriptions elicit scenes more lively not just than painting or sculpture, but than nature itself? This can be explained by an important addition to the process of imitation: imagination becomes the “organ of the poetic representation of reality” because it devises “subjective, artistic responses to empirically recognized reality,” and becomes the “medium of the subjective mastery”³⁹⁷ of nature. Functioning as a necessary intermediary between the perception of actual, empirical nature and the creation of art, the mind filters empirical reality through its imaginative operations. The actual gives way to idealized nature. The latter makes

³⁹⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 560.

³⁹⁶ Krieger, “Representation in Words and in Drama,” 197.

³⁹⁷ Hohner quoted in Gebauer, Wulf, and Reneau, *Mimesis*: 160-1.

nature analogous not to things as they objectively are, but to the subjective mind, and in so doing, challenges the Aristotelian mimetic-formal tradition.³⁹⁸ It is in light of this second acceptance that we can understand Addison's surprising statement that "the Mind of Man [...] can never meet with any Sight in Nature which sufficiently answers its highest Ideas of Pleasantness."³⁹⁹ The norms of art-making are now established according to ideal standards that exceed the potential of empirical reality to satisfy them. Framed in this way, nature as a mimetic term is not abandoned, but resurfaces as an object idealized by the subjective mind. John T. Mace perceives in this move

a new justification for emancipating the artist from "*common nature*", for freeing the imagination to create original verbal worlds: namely, the separation which the age allowed between mind and matter, and the autonomy which the separation gave to internal experience.⁴⁰⁰

What sets Addison apart from his French predecessors' use of *la belle nature* is his arrival at the notion of ideal nature precisely by subjectivizing the perception of the empirical particular. For Addison, to idealize is necessarily to subjectivize. Elioseff is

³⁹⁸ Elioseff takes note of the distinction between Samuel Johnson who adhered to a mimetic-formal theory of imitation, and Addison who only partially accepted it. Addison innovated precisely by turning his back on it while welcoming the influence of the empiricist philosophies of Locke and Hobbes: "The psychological emphases of the philosophies of Hobbes and Locke [...] encouraged the reader to examine the effects of a poem upon the mind of its reader from a psychological point of view, rather than from that of a Christian humanist or a didactic critic committed to the framework of a 'mimetic-formal' criticism, as Samuel Johnson was. [...] Addison drew more extensively upon certain elements of his culture, especially English empirical philosophy, than his contemporaries did." Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison's Literary Criticism*, 10-11.

³⁹⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 569.

⁴⁰⁰ Dean T. Mace, "Dryden's Dialogue on Drama," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25, no. 1/2 (January 1962), 87-112, pp. 110-111 (emphasis added). In much the same vein, Hagstrum comments that "Addison goes beyond the traditional view that located *enargeia* in the verbal rendering of natural objects and scenes. Under the impulses from the new psychology *enargeia* now arises from the process of seeing and no longer resides primarily in the thing seen. [...] [I]n the eighteenth century the locus has shifted from the work to the mind, from canvas and page to the imagination." Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 138-9.

right to insist that “Addison conceives of Nature as both essence and empirical reality without any question of contradiction.”⁴⁰¹ As we have seen, there is no doubt that the concept of empirical nature played an important role in his aesthetics. But insofar as the notion of essential nature is concerned, Elioseff finds evidence for it in Lovejoy’s study of nature as an aesthetic norm where the historian negligently subsumes under one and the same entry both the Platonic ideal nature and the artistic idealization of the actual.⁴⁰² The Platonic ideal nature and the general-ideal nature are two distinct conceptions that should be kept apart. In Addison’s work nature is idealized not in any recognizable Platonic sense of descending from supersensory archetypes. In a different chapter, Elioseff would return to this issue with a crucial clarification: “Essential Nature is not a Platonic ideal in a limited universe, but is a set of data to be empirically observed and ordered,” and along these lines, “[t]he printed poem and the painted canvas are evaluated upon the degree of faithfulness with which they reproduce the ‘Exemplar in the Mind,’ the poet’s or painter’s conception of his subject as ideal Nature or essence.”⁴⁰³ Opposing Shaftesbury whose Platonic ideas originate in the divine mind, Addison believes that ideas are exemplars in the human mind.

⁴⁰¹ Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 91.

⁴⁰² “‘Nature’ as the essence or Platonic Idea of a kind, imperfectly realized in empirical reality; hence, idealized type-form, la belle nature. E. g., Sidney, *Apology for Poetry*; [...] Addison, *Spectator*, 418; [...] Batteux, *Les Beaux Arts reduits*, etc..” Lovejoy, “‘Nature’ as Aesthetic Norm,” *Modern Language Notes* 42, no. 7 (November 1927): 445. Hagstrum clearly observes the distinction between the two: “If art is said to hold a mirror up to nature, the metaphor cannot, even in a context of idealization, legitimately describe a Neoplatonic process. [...]. In this respect neoclassical general nature differs from the Neoplatonic ideal.” Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 142.

⁴⁰³ Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 146, 122.

It has been argued so far that in his discussion of literary art, Addison supplements the common view of nature as actual with his conception of ideal nature. Some scholars have gone so far as to claim that ideal nature, originally developed by Addison in a literary context, also informs his views on gardening where it reflects a theory of art as corrective of the postlapsarian imperfections of the natural world. But for one, the very assertion that Addison's theory of gardening is informed by ideal nature as the object of imitation runs afoul of the previously discussed notion of *sharawadgi* which, as we have seen, conveys his belief that the gardener ultimately seeks a faithful imitation of actual nature in all its glorious wilderness. Secondly, as we shall see next, the contention that Addison views actual nature itself as a space of imperfections amenable to the reparative efforts of the artist is largely misdirected.

Fabricant has advanced the view that Addison's theory of art is aligned with the myth of a prelapsarian return: "Nature seems to have possessed a surprising number of deficiencies and blemishes in need of correction," she writes, and therefore, "[i]t is more than coincidence that Addison, celebrating the attractions of Kensington, praised the 'fine Genius for Gardening, that could have thought of forming such an unsightly hollow into so beautiful an Area' [...]." ⁴⁰⁴ To isolate a sentence which praises the formal garden at Kensington is to do injustice to Addison's overall intention in *Spectator* No. 477. No sooner had Addison's narrative persona praised the genius of Wise who managed most admirably to transform the "unsightly hollow into so beautiful an Area" than he abruptly

⁴⁰⁴ Fabricant, "Binding and Dressing," 126.

embraced the contrary viewpoint: “As for my self,” he exclaimed, “you will find, by the Account which I have already given you, that my Compositions in Gardening [...] run into the beautiful Wildness of Nature, without affecting the nicer Elegancies of Art.”⁴⁰⁵ Despite commending the formal gardening style of Wise, Addison proceeds to a defense of informal gardening which, as we have seen, is the most straightforward illustration of the concept of *sharawadgi* or beauty without order. Reflecting on the strategy of polarizing informal and formal styles, Donald Bond astutely remarks that “[a]fter praising the work of Wise at Kensington, Addison goes on to describe the more natural kind of garden which was eventually to supplant the formal tradition of Le Notre, Wise, and others.”⁴⁰⁶ Bond finds corroborating evidence in the work of garden historian David Green who suggests grasping the formal-informal style dichotomy in a diachronic manner that prevents obscuring the triumph of the latter. According to Green, what Addison was doing in *Spectator* No. 477 “was tolling the knell of the formal garden [...] while its supreme example—Blenheim's Great Parterre—had yet to be completed.”⁴⁰⁷

Murray Roston has similarly associated Addison’s theory of gardening art with the myth of an Edenic return to unfallen nature. According to Roston, one possible maxim of landscape theory in the eighteenth-century was “the intention that the newly designed gardens were to serve as re-creations of Eden upon earth, restorations of Paradise achieved by man’s removal of those blemishes introduced into nature at the

⁴⁰⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 190.

⁴⁰⁶ Bond quoted in Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 191.

⁴⁰⁷ Green quoted in Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 191.

Fall.”⁴⁰⁸ “Addison regarded the contemporary interest in landscaping,” Roston claims, “as one of the most innocent delights in human life on the grounds that a garden ‘was the Habitation of our first Parents before the Fall.’”⁴⁰⁹ Addison’s fugitive reference to the Garden of Eden needs to be understood in light of his broader statement in the same essay:

I look upon the Pleasure which we take in a Garden, as one of the most innocent Delights in Human Life. A Garden was the Habitation of our first Parents before the Fall. It is naturally apt to fill the Mind with Calmness and Tranquillity, and to lay all its turbulent Passions at rest. It gives us a great insight into the Contrivance and Wisdom of Providence, and suggests innumerable Subjects for Meditation.⁴¹⁰

The pleasure of appreciating a properly designed landscape garden is “one of the most innocent Delights in Human Life” because it satisfies the desire to return to our virtuous and sin-free condition that existed before the Fall. Hence, the association of gardening with Paradise in this excerpt, instead of signaling a decayed natural world in need of the reparative artifice of the gardener, specifically targets our sinful nature, the disarray of our faculties and “turbulent Passions” that can be improved by appreciating exemplary gardens.⁴¹¹ The proper gardening design is the informal style which “gives us a great insight into the Contrivance and Wisdom of Providence” because it is the most

⁴⁰⁸ Murray Roston, *Changing Perspectives in Literature and the Visual Arts, 1650-1820*. (Princeton University Press, 2016), 203.

⁴⁰⁹ Roston, *Changing Perspectives in Literature*, 203.

⁴¹⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 192.

⁴¹¹ This view has also been astutely voiced by Klaus Peter Mortensen: “In the labyrinthine paradise garden, man returns to the original state he lost in the Fall. Addison’s garden – unspoiled nature – is the concrete, physical place in which man can leave behind him the confusion of passions and step into a meditative peace that enables him to gain an insight into the ways of providence, this is to say into the fundamental laws governing life. Thus the garden has social, psychological and metaphysical dimensions at one and the same time. It is not in society, but in unspoiled nature that man discovers his true nature.” Klaus P Mortensen, *The Time of Unrememberable Being: Wordsworth and the Sublime, 1787-1805* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1998), 34.

faithful rendition in art of the great irregularity of the natural world itself, while simultaneously functioning as an argument for the existence of God.⁴¹² Designed to mimic as accurately as possible the irregular sublimity of the natural world, Addison's preference is opposed to the French formal style of seventeenth century which, as Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock points out, was highly informed by the ideal of undoing the postlapsarian corruption of the physical world:

French gardening theory of the seventeenth century saw no clash between nature and symmetry and was devoted to a geometric concept that stressed the possibilities of art to transform or even violate nature. This concept was grounded on the assumption of the defective state of physical nature. [...]. But this sombre view of man's physical environment was increasingly superseded by the more optimistic one of the physico-theologists, who came to the fore about the turn of the new century and had their intellectual stronghold in England. They emphasized the perfect character of nature as it really existed.⁴¹³

Part of a physico-theological tradition which included Boyle, Addison had "a notion of [external] nature as freed from the taint of imperfection."⁴¹⁴ Addison rejects the idea that any deterioration of physical nature occurred as a result of man's original sin, and believes, rather, that the target of art's restorative effects is human nature.⁴¹⁵

Addison's statement on the ability of informal gardens to restore mankind to a state of innocence is augmented in *Tatler* No. 108 by a discussion of the potential of all good art to contribute to the improvement of our degraded human condition. Addison had

⁴¹² See section 3.3 above.

⁴¹³ Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock, "The 'Englishness' of the English Landscape Garden and the Genetic Role of Literature: A Reassessment," *The Journal of Garden History* 8, no. 4 (October 1988): 97–103, p. 98. Addison differed from Gilbert Burnet who "[i]n his *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681-89) [...] still adhered to the opinion that the world had originally been geometrically designed and that nature had been in a ruinous condition since the Fall." Müllenbrock, "The 'Englishness'," 98.

⁴¹⁴ Müllenbrock, "The 'Englishness'," 99.

⁴¹⁵ See Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 101.

agreed that “*Adam and Eve*, before the Fall, are a different Species from that of Mankind, who are descended from them [...]”⁴¹⁶ After the Fall, “[a] Creature like Man” “is sensible of so many Weaknesses and Imperfections.”⁴¹⁷ This view does not commit Addison to the Hobbesian position that our postlapsarian nature is utterly corrupt, but it is essentially a mixture of good and evil: “man is a creature made up of different extremes, he has something in him very great and very mean.”⁴¹⁸ Although “[a] skilful artist may draw an excellent picture of him in either of these states,” “I must confess,” Addison writes, “there is nothing that more pleases me, in all that I read in books, or see among mankind, than such passages as representing human nature in its proper dignity.”⁴¹⁹ Instead of depreciating human nature by portraying it in its worst hypostases, artists of all sorts are called out to improve the fallen state of mankind:

The very design of dress, good-breeding, outward ornaments, and ceremony, were to lift up *human nature*, and set it off to an advantage. Architecture, painting, and statuary, were invented with the same design; as, indeed, every art and science contributes to the embellishment of life, and to the wearing off and throwing into shades the mean and low parts of *our nature*. Poetry carries on this great end more than all the rest, as may be seen in the following passage, taken out of sir Francis Bacon’s ‘Advancement of Learning,’ which gives a truer and better account of this art than all the volumes that were ever written upon it.⁴²⁰

It suffices to note that the focal point of this excerpt is not the refinement of external nature, but of “human nature,” of our mental faculties that suffered corruption as a result of the fall. This aspect is reinforced in the very last paragraph of the essay where Addison

⁴¹⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, 587.

⁴¹⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, 311.

⁴¹⁸ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Tatler: With Notes, and a General Index*. (Philadelphia: M.W. Woodward & Co, 1835), 215.

⁴¹⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Tatler*, 215.

⁴²⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Tatler*, 216 (emphasis added).

reveals that although both art and religion promise an improvement of human nature, religion offers greater advantages: “there is nothing which favours and falls in with this natural greatness and dignity of *human nature* so much as religion, which does not only promise the entire refinement of the mind, but the glorifying of the body, and the immortality of both.”⁴²¹ As I shall argue in the next section below, the theological themes of the immortality and perfection of the soul, as well as the doctrine of the glorified body emerge as significant aspects of what I call an aesthetics of afterlife that acts to neutralize the polarities of nature and art. Having a close affinity with the afterlife, as well as a fraught relationship with the concept of mimesis, Addison’s discourse of the literary fantastic must be explored next.

3.6 From the Fantastic to the Aesthetics of Afterlife

Had Addison clung to a theory of artistic creation as a faithful imitation of actual nature, he would have ultimately left no room for his discourse on the fantastic. “The more empirical view of nature,” Elioseff remarks “gives rise to a more literal interpretation of naturalness in art,” leading eventually to what Lovejoy calls “a restriction of employment of supernatural apparatus.”⁴²² The supernatural would have been evicted from a theory of art that had fully adhered to a narrow understanding of mimesis as the imitation of actual, particular nature. On the other side, ideal nature as a

⁴²¹ Addison and Steele, *The Tatler*, 216 (emphasis added).

⁴²² Elioseff, *Cultural Milieu of Addison’s Literary Criticism*, 146. Lovejoy, ““ Nature ” as Aesthetic Norm,” 447.

mimetic norm, although more welcoming to the possibility of the fantastic, did not fare well either because it “still arose from man’s contact with living, objective nature.”⁴²³ To accommodate the fantastic, thus, it was necessary for Addison to transcend even the boundaries of ideal nature by seemingly exempting the “Fairy Way of Writing” from mimetic subservience to reality:

There is a kind of Writing, wherein 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. Such are Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and departed Spirits. This Mr. Dryden calls *the Fairy Way of Writing*, which is, indeed, more difficult than any other that depends on the Poet's Fancy, because he has no Pattern to follow in it, and must work altogether out of his own Invention.⁴²⁴

In contrast with “Historians, natural Philosophers, Travellers, [and] Geographers” “who are obliged to follow Nature more closely,” “to take entire Scenes out of her,” and to “describe visible Objects of a real Existence,”⁴²⁵ writers of the fantastic lose “Sight of

⁴²³ Hagstrum *The Sister Arts*, 150. Despite his awareness of the importance of the supernatural in Addison’s oeuvre, Hagstrum refuses to associate him with anything other than an innovative psychologization of artistic creation. As such, Hagstrum pits a Renaissance model of poetry against a Baroque one to suggest that Addison only maintains an interest in the first type which he actively modifies by introducing the Lockean-psychological element: “Of the many modifications that the art of making verbal images has undergone during the long history of poetry, two have been profoundly antithetical. [. . .]. One of them, the roots of which lay in the naturalism of antiquity and the Renaissance, may be exemplified by the rhetorical and critical notion of *enargeia*, or lifelike vividness. The other, peculiarly characteristic of the medieval centuries and of the baroque seventeenth century, tended to remove the pictorial from the external and natural and associate it with the internal and supernatural.” Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*, 129. “[E]ighteenth-century *enargeia*, although conceived of as part of a psychological process, retained intact the essential lines of ancient and Renaissance fidelity to nature. The mirror was [. . .] held up to the mind; but the mind itself, as Locke and Addison strove to make clear, was in turn held up to the visible nature. Wit lay in the poet’s ability to unite widely disparate details. But those details must all come from natural reality. The wit lay in combining, not in creating, them.” Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*, 140. As I argue below, through his discourse of the fantastic, Addison gestures toward the possibility of transcending even ideal nature as a mimetic model. It seems to me that, if I were to use Hagstrum’s own vocabulary, Addison vacillates between a Renaissance and a Baroque model of art.

⁴²⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 570.

⁴²⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 574.

Nature” by inventing characters and actions that depart from the Aristotelian rules of probability and verisimilitude.⁴²⁶

Since “the fantastic refuses the external or mimetic,” thriving essentially on a two-fold abandonment of nature—both actual and ideal—as the model of artistic imitation, it has been often viewed as transgressive, “lacking serious intention or relevance.”⁴²⁷ Grappling with its low prestige, Addison offers an important apology grounding the possibility of fantastic imagery on the genuine existence of spirits:

Men of cold Fancies, and Philosophical Dispositions, object to this kind of Poetry, that it has not Probability enough to affect the Imagination. But to this it may be answered, that we are sure, in general, there are many Intellectual Beings in the World besides our selves, and several Species of Spirits, who are subject to different Laws and Oeconomies from those of Mankind; when we see, therefore, any of these represented naturally, we cannot look upon the Representation as altogether impossible [...].⁴²⁸

Because spirits are bound by “different Laws and Oeconomies from those of Mankind,” the poet “has no Pattern to follow,” “and must work altogether out of his own Invention.” Addison is ready to argue, however, that since spirits have a real existence in the world, a representation of such spirits in art can potentially satisfy the mimetic rule of probability.⁴²⁹ “Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and departed Spirits” ultimately

⁴²⁶ According to Aristotle, the object of imitation, while not required to have an actual existence, must have probability of existence. See *Poetics* 9: Aristotle and Ingram Bywater, *Poetics* (Portland, Oregon: Mint Editions, 2020).

⁴²⁷ Sandner, *Critical Discourses of The Fantastic*, 2, 10.

⁴²⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 571. Addison clearly accepted the existence of spirits: “For my own Part, I am apt to join in Opinion with those who believe that all the Regions of Nature swarm with Spirits; and that we have Multitudes of Spectators on all our Actions, when we think our selves most alone [...].” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, p. 54.

⁴²⁹ What Tuveson says of Dryden’s treatment of the fantastic is also true of Addison: “He attempts to show that the representing of apparitions is based on probability.” Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace*, 124.

have “Probability enough to affect the Imagination.” A necessary residue of mimeticism remains since spirits, Addison believes, must be “represented naturally” and this is what eventually secures the possibility of the fantastic.⁴³⁰

Despite its commitment to natural representation, the fantastic retains important ties with the genuine world of the spirit. “Humanity has a longing for another world,” Sandner points out, “and discovers itself, through estrangement, to be apart from (not a part of) ‘mere’ things, and thus ready [...] to Escape through fairy-stories to something else, perhaps the invisible world of the spirit itself.”⁴³¹ Put differently, one aspires,

⁴³⁰ A total absence of mimeticism would bring about the collapse of the distinction that Addison observes between the supernatural and the superstitious. Entirely non-mimetic imagery, if possible at all, would be classified as superstitious rather than supernatural. Therefore, as Sandner perspicaciously notes, Addison has to ward off the superstitious from the supernatural by arguing for the existence of a slight mimetic connection of the latter to nature: “his fairies talk like people of his own species...” Sandner, *Critical Discourses of The Fantastic*, 2, 7. And as Tadeusz Rachwał contends, Addison purges the superstitious from the supernatural by associating the former with the pathological: “[t]he admiration of something which has no links with nature, which is neither nature nor its representation, is dangerously close to malady or madness.” Tadeusz Rachwał, *Approaches of Infinity: The Sublime and the Social: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Writings* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1993), 32.

⁴³¹ Sandner, *Critical Discourses of The Fantastic*, 20-1. Addison warned against confusing the literary fantastic with the true existence of spirits: to make such mistake would be to blur the distinction between fiction and reality, between nature and art. Addison argues against their conflation in *Spectator* No. 12 where Mr. Spectator recounts a telling event that happened during his stay at his landlady’s house in London. The landlady’s daughters have gathered around a fire to tell “Stories of Spirits and Apparitions.” Although Mr. Spectator appreciates the aesthetic, emotional, and even physiological effects that these fantastic tales produce in the listeners, he cautiously subjects their content to the scrutiny of reason and religion which ultimately disproves their veracity: “since there are very few whose Minds are not more or less subject to these dreadful Thoughts and Apprehensions, we ought to arm our selves against them by the Dictates of Reason and Religion [...]” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, 54. His objection targets the unjustified assumption that such stories are to be taken at face value. Whereas the natural world resists the superstitious, fantastic literature may use it as a source of creative inspiration for arousing terror in the spectators. Addison goes so far as to claim that “it is impossible for a Poet to succeed in it [the Fairie way of Writing], who has not a particular Cast of Fancy, and an Imagination naturally fruitful and *superstitious*,” without being “very well versed in Legends and Fables, antiquated Romances, and the Traditions of Nurses and old Women, [so] that he may fall in with our natural *Prejudices*, and humour those Notions which we have imbibed in our Infancy.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 570. Tuveson also indicates that “Addison is deliberately defending as legitimate material for poetry that which cannot pass the rests of right reason, truth to nature, and good sense.” *The Imagination as a Means of Grace*, 126.

through fantastic poetry, to the immaterial condition of spirits that transcends what Addison calls one of the defining “Laws [...] of Mankind,” the half-material and half-spiritual makeup which determines the middle position humans occupy in the great chain of being:

In this System of Being, [...] Man [...] fills up the middle Space between the Animal and Intellectual Nature, the visible and invisible World, and is that Link in the Chain of Beings, which has been often termed the *nexus utriusque Mundi*. So that he who in one respect is associated with Angels and Arch-Angels, may look upon a Being of infinite Perfection as his Father, and the highest Order of Spirits as his Brethren, may in another respect say to *Corruption, thou art my Father, and to the Worm, thou art my Mother and my Sister.*⁴³²

Human beings are placed “at the point of transition from the merely sentient to the intellectual forms of being,”⁴³³ occupying the middle link between animals that lack intellectual capacities, on the one hand, and “Angels and Arch-Angels” who fully partake in the invisible world of the spirit, on the other.

A dissatisfaction with humanity’s material existence, I submit, lies at the core of Addison’s conceptions of ideal nature and the fantastic. In effect, the pleasures from the appreciation of actual nature rely on the capacity of sight to nourish the imagination with ideas. Through its combinatory power, however, the imagination arrives at ideas of things that exceed the potential of empirical reality to satisfy them:

because the Mind of Man requires something more perfect in Matter, than what it finds there, and can never meet with any Sight in Nature which sufficiently

⁴³² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 349 (emphasis in the original).

⁴³³ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being; A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), 190. An excellent description of dualism (which Addison accepted) is offered by Hurlbutt: “there is a generally accepted dualistic view of reality. This metaphysics conceives of reality as of two radically disparate stuffs—one material, corporeal, and dead; the other spiritual, dynamic, divine alive. The latter is identified with God, and is conceived as the intelligent cause and creator of the former, including its order and processes.” Hurlbutt, *Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument*, 87.

answers its highest Ideas of Pleasantness; or, in other Words, 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; on this account it is the part of a Poet to humour the Imagination in its own Notions, by mending and perfecting Nature where he describes a Reality, and by adding greater Beauties than are put together in Nature, where he describes a Fiction.⁴³⁴

Two categories of poets are distinguishable in this passage: the first addresses poets who, “by mending and perfecting [actual] Nature” or reality, affirm ideal nature as their mimetic model; the second category includes poets of the fantastic who, by describing “a Fiction,” momentarily lose sight of reality while making additions to it, “adding greater Beauties” to nature. He describes both kinds of poets approvingly, but the corresponding processes of idealization as well as creation of the fantastic imply an underlying dissatisfaction with actual nature which is amenable to refinement or improvement. If art improves nature, then what is the true status of the defects and blemishes of nature that art is expected to correct? As I will clarify below, art does not improve nature per se, but only our defective vision of it. The defects, Addison would maintain, are a result of the way we see the world, rather than how the world really is. Each of these two propositions needs to be examined individually.

Does Addison believe that nature is imperfect? The answer depends on two possible interpretations of the notions of perfection and imperfection: one is a relational reading, the other, an intrinsic one. According to the first, the notions of perfection and imperfection acquire meanings that are relative to the position of the entity in the chain of being: “the most perfect of an inferior Species comes very near to the most imperfect, of

⁴³⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 569.

that which is immediately above it.”⁴³⁵ Consistent with this principle of gradation in nature, material, corporeal and ultimately lifeless objects occupy the lowest level on the scale, and are easily surpassed by creatures endowed with life:

Though there is a great deal of Pleasure in contemplating the material World, by which I mean that System of Bodies into which Nature has so curiously wrought the Mass of dead Matter, with the several Relations which those Bodies bear to one another; there is still, methinks, something more wonderful and surprizing in Contemplations on the World of Life, by which I mean all those Animals with which every Part of the Universe is furnished. The Material World is only the Shell of the Universe: The World of Life are its Inhabitants.⁴³⁶

Inanimate natural objects which Addison refers to as “the more bulky Parts of Nature,” such as “the Seas, Lakes and Rivers,” are placed lower in the hierarchy than the “numberless Kinds of living Creatures.”⁴³⁷ These objects often function as natural habitats for animals which are characterized as beings whose perception is superimposed on their material bodies: “Existence is a Blessing to those Beings only which are endowed with Perception, and is, in a manner, thrown away upon dead Matter [...]”⁴³⁸ Addison then, goes on to consider “the Scale of Beings” as it pertains to the animal world: certain creatures, such as shell-fish are “raised but just above dead Matter;” others “have no other Sense besides that of Feeling and Taste,” and still others have “an additional one of Hearing; others of Smell, and others of Sight.”⁴³⁹ It becomes apparent that higher levels of perfection correspond to the upper part of the scale, while imperfections become gradually more pronounced as one descends to lower levels.

⁴³⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 347.

⁴³⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 345-6.

⁴³⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 346.

⁴³⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 346.

⁴³⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 347.

If considered intrinsically, however, each level on the chain is perfect. The immaculate character of the creation may be seen even in creatures that not only lack intellectual capacities, but whose sensorial modalities are decidedly limited. The mole, for instance, is

[an] Animal which Providence has left Defective, but at the same time has shewn its Wisdom in the Formation of that Organ in which it seems chiefly to have failed. What is more obvious and ordinary than a Mole? and yet what more palpable Argument of Providence than she? The Members of her Body are so exactly fitted to her Nature and Manner of Life [...].⁴⁴⁰

Relative to the vision of higher beings on the scale, a mole's eyesight is defective. Yet, considered strictly in itself, the vision of moles is perfectly suited to their existence. For Addison, "the immediate Direction of Providence" may be seen in the fact that God "determines all the *Portions of Matter* to their proper Centres."⁴⁴¹ In other words, because the physical attributes of each species are well-adapted to the environment, the species manages to successfully fulfill its intended function "in the scheme of created matter."⁴⁴² Having dismissed the idea that moles are imperfect creatures, Addison endorses the view that they are only

Animals as *seem* the most imperfect Works of Nature; and if Providence shews it self even in the Blemishes of these Creatures, how much more does it discover it self in the several Endowments which it has variously bestowed upon such Creatures as are more or less finished and compleated in their several Faculties, according to the condition of Life in which they are posted.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, p. 495 (italics removed).

⁴⁴¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, p. 493.

⁴⁴² Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, "Addison's 'Enquiry after Truth': The Moral Assumptions of His Proof for Divine Existence," *PMLA* 65, no. 2 (March 1950): 198-220, p. 212.

⁴⁴³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, p. 496 (emphasis added).

It must be stressed that the relational and the intrinsic readings of the (im)perfections of nature are not incompatible with each other because they both point to the wisdom of God. Following Boyle,⁴⁴⁴ Addison believes that a divinely ordained hierarchy gives way to non-hierarchical diversity. On the other hand, if the principle of gradation was inoperative, the chain of being would collapse. Along these lines, Edward and Lilian Bloom have emphasized that Addison accepted all imperfections of the lower regions of the chain as part of a divine plan, and in their absence, the complete hierarchy of beings will be compromised:

The maintenance of this absolute chain of being implies a corollary proof for the existence of God. If any one species of animal were to become extinct, the perfect hierarchy and progression of living organisms would be broken. Such a possibility would necessarily violate the concept that all living matter is the handiwork of a divine omnipotence, supernally wise and good. For the essence of beneficent divinity is creation for the perpetuation of the Creator's spirit. Destruction of any link, the theorists argued, is inconceivable since it would preclude the existence of a beneficent source of all matter. That God intended an irrefragible chain of existence as the finite reflection of His own infinite goodness became for the seventeenth-century moralists an absolute certainty and, consequently, one more positive proof of His being.⁴⁴⁵

If nature fundamentally admits of no imperfections, then the origin of deficiencies must be sought elsewhere. Addison believes that they originate in the defective way humans perceive the world, in their finite and imperfect capacities to appreciate nature. This complaint lies at the core of Addison's justification for advancing the concept of idealized nature:

In this case the Poet seems to get the better of Nature; he takes, indeed, the Landskip after her, but gives it more vigorous Touches, heightens its Beauty, and

⁴⁴⁴ Peter Remien, *The Concept of Nature in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 45.

⁴⁴⁵ Edward and Lilian Bloom, "Addison's 'Enquiry after Truth'," 211.

so enlivens the whole Piece, that the Images which flow from the Objects themselves appear weak and faint, in Comparison of those that come from the Expressions. The Reason, probably, may be, because in the Survey of any Object 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. As we look on any Object, our Idea of it is, perhaps, made up of two or three simple Ideas; but when the Poet represents it, he may either give us a more complex Idea of it, or only raise in us such Ideas as are most apt to affect the Imagination.⁴⁴⁶

Addison maintains that it is not the “Objects themselves” that are “weak and faint,” but how their “Images” “appear” to us. The defects are not inherent in material nature, but stem, rather, from mankind’s imperfect perception of it, from an incomplete “Survey” “as comes in at the Eye.” Because what reaches the imagination must first pass through the eye, the appreciation of nature is fragmentary. Hence, Addison’s primary dissatisfaction is not so much with matter per se, as with humanity’s own embodied existence and sense perception that have an immutable affinity with matter. Effectively, the cause of discontent is our own embodiment which conditions our aesthetic responses by heavily limiting appreciation to the perception of actual nature.⁴⁴⁷ Whence the task of good poets to perfect actual nature by offering descriptions that attempt to enlarge our vision and ultimately enrich the idea one can form of the objects themselves.

⁴⁴⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 560.

⁴⁴⁷ Addison’s theodicean view is very close to Richard Bentley’s: “So that if it *was good* in the sight of God, that the present Plants and Animals, and Humane Souls united to Flesh and Blood should be upon this Earth under a settled constitution of Nature: these supposed Inconveniencies, as they were foreseen and permitted by the Author of that Nature, as necessary consequences of such a constitution; so they can not infer the least imperfection in his Wisdom and Goodness. And to murmure at them is as unreasonable, as to complain that he hath made us Men and not Angels, that he hath placed us upon this Planet, and not upon some other, in this or another System, which may be thought better than Ours. Let them also consider, that this objected Deformity is in our Imaginations only, and not really in Things themselves.” Richard Bentley, *A Confutation of Atheism from the Structure and Origin of Human Bodies...* (London: Printed for H. Mortlock at the Phoenix in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1693), 37.

The conception of idealized nature allows poetry to produce greater pleasures than works of nature. A similar statement can be made of the fantastic which enables readers to catch a glimpse of the world of spirit that outweighs actual nature in its aesthetic potential. Art now appears to offer pleasures greater than those afforded by nature. Before we explain the effect of this reversal of the hierarchies, it is befitting to summarize our findings in a more systematic way. So far, the aesthetic superiority of nature to art has hinged upon three main aspects:

- (1) the physico-theological perspective which sees nature as a work of divine art;
- (2) the natural sublime arises from physical extension which art is unable to properly display or reproduce;
- (3) a theory of mimesis which demands that art be an accurate imitation of empirical-actual nature.

Each of these three aspects is either subverted or complicated in its own way. As for the first, if nature defined as divine art is aesthetically superior to art, then how is it possible at all for human art to improve nature? Addison would argue that despite nature's absolute supremacy, human appreciation of it is limited by the condition of our embodiment which is strongly oriented to the appreciation of actual, material nature. As a consequence, the reception of the impressions of nature is imperfect, and hence, *for us*, nature is perceived as lacking compared to artistic products created by the imagination.

The second aspect has to do with the difficulty of art to properly display or reproduce physical vastness. This limitation prompts Addison to advance greatness of manner as an alternative means for art to compensate for its lack of physical extension. The greatness of the manner of execution as manifested in the poet's "harmonious and lively turn of the phrase" suggests that it is impossible for literature to display greatness apart from the power of words to represent or describe it. But what has been once taken

as indicative of the derivative status of art can also emerge as its forte. Saccamano is right in stating that though Addison “does at one point in the series, declare the superiority of nature over art in imaginative pleasure,” he also performs a “hierarchical inversion of nature and literary art” when he comes to recognize “the sublime force of words.”⁴⁴⁸ This amounts to an acknowledgment on Addison’s part that for poets, at least, “the Imagination can fancy to it self Things more Great [...] than the Eye ever saw.”⁴⁴⁹ In addition to its ties to the other world, and the challenges it mounts to the concept of mimesis, the fantastic itself may function, as Sandner has noticed, as a discourse of the sublime,⁴⁵⁰ so one could argue that its “secret Terreurs and Apprehensions”⁴⁵¹ compete with nature’s sublimity.

The third aspect that conveys the superiority of nature to art has been Addison’s conception of mimesis which demands that artists must imitate external, empirical nature as accurately as possible. This conception of imitation will be challenged in several ways. Addison’s theory of mimesis does not only differ from Shaftesbury’s in shifting the object of imitation from nature’s creative force to empirical nature. Fundamentally, it questions the asymmetry implied in Shaftesbury’s mimetic model which dictates that art must imitate nature, and never the other way around. Against this asymmetry, Addison allows pleasure to flow from the mutual imitation of nature and art,⁴⁵² which includes the perception of accidental resemblance of art in nature. Additionally, although Addison

⁴⁴⁸ Saccamano, “The Sublime Force of Words in Addison’s ‘Pleasures’,” 84, 85.

⁴⁴⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 560.

⁴⁵⁰ Sandner, *Critical Discourses of The Fantastic*, 2.

⁴⁵¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 571.

⁴⁵² See Myers, “Ways of Seeing,” 3, 5, 9.

applies this mimetic model to most arts, he exempts literary art from this requirement by tasking it with the idealization of the actual. And finally, by priding itself on the creation of possible worlds, fantastic literature seemingly eludes the very desideratum that art must be an imitation of nature.

It must be stressed at this juncture that this complication of the polarities of nature and art amounts less to a plain inversion of the hierarchies, but to an opposition that has been neutralized: no longer fully asserting triumph over the other, nature and art have reached a point of equilibrium.⁴⁵³ If there is any perceptible relationship that obtains between nature and art, it is none other than their complementarity. Having shown “how the Fancy is affected by the Works of Nature, and afterwards considered in general both the Works of Nature and of Art,” Addison resorts to highlighting “how they mutually assist and compleat each other, in forming such Scenes and Prospects as are most apt to delight the Mind of the Beholder.”⁴⁵⁴ The complementarity of nature and art rings out most forcefully in Addison’s recognition that the imagination is not only a faculty of receiving impressions from actual nature, but it has the creative potential to synthesize, combine, and alter them in artistically significant ways.⁴⁵⁵ Tuveson corroborates this point:

⁴⁵³ My contention could be seen an expansion of Saccamano’s view that Addison’s discourse of the literary-rhetorical sublime does not come to dominate or replace (an appreciation of) nature, but their dynamics is ultimately emphasized. The role of the inversion is “not to show that rhetoric supplants nature but to present an account of their dynamics in Addison’s text.” Saccamano, “The Sublime Force of Words in Addison’s ‘Pleasures,’” 86.

⁴⁵⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, 553.

⁴⁵⁵ Axelsson has similarly emphasized that the relationship between nature and art is one of interdependence: “Addison also recognises the interdependence between nature and art, since pleasures arising from nature increase when nature resembles art, and ‘artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their Resemblance of such as are natural’.” Axelsson, *The Sublime*, 136.

Which is superior, art or nature? Addison seems to resolve the ancient question by answering: both. [...] [T]he imagination is both a means of receiving, in all their integrity, the impressions of a nature that is an unfoldment of divinity, and, also, a creator of illusion shows after the manner of the divine art.⁴⁵⁶

Although Tuveson agrees that the opposition of nature and art has been canceled out, a more comprehensive answer to “this ancient question” might be offered; which is superior, art or nature? None. I will argue in the remainder of this section that Addison channels the focus of aesthetic appreciation away from this life to the next, insisting repeatedly that the latter affords the highest aesthetic pleasure imaginable by mankind. One important implication of this emphasis on the afterlife is that even the tasks of perfecting nature and creating the fantastic, however noble they may be at first, are ultimately unsatisfactory. He supposes that after death, when the soul will be freed from the body, it will be in a more suitable position to receive far superior aesthetic gratification than anything one can presently appreciate in either art or nature.

Addison agrees that there is evidence in this life for what the departure of the soul from the body will involve in the next: the existence of dreams serves to indicate the benefits of the soul when no longer trapped in the body. He assumes that as a faculty of the soul, the imagination can better perform its operations when no longer connected with the body. In *Spectator* No. 483, dreams are construed as liminal states (between wakefulness and death) in which the imagination produces images independently of the

⁴⁵⁶ Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace*, 115.

bodily senses, and no longer “clogged and retarded in her Operations.”⁴⁵⁷ This revealing understanding of dreams “may give us some Idea of the great Excellency of an Human Soul, and some intimations of its independency on Matter.”⁴⁵⁸ In other words, dreams give one proof in this life of the immortality and perfection of the soul (and by implication, of the imperfection of our material, bodily existence):

The waking Man is conversant in the *World of Nature*, when he sleeps he retires to a private World that is particular to himself. There seems something in this Consideration that intimates to us a Natural Grandeur and *Perfection* in the Soul, which is rather to be admired than explained.⁴⁵⁹

If in dreams one only manages to catch a glimpse of the perfection of the soul, when death occurs, “the vital Union [between body and soul] is dissolved”⁴⁶⁰ and the soul’s new existence is marked by a liberation from all corporeal constraints. During the present life in which the spiritual soul is still attached to the corporeal body, only that

⁴⁵⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 227. “When the Organs of Sense want their due Repose and necessary Reparation, and the body is no longer able to keep pace with that spiritual Substance to which it is united, *the Soul exerts her self in her several faculties and continues in Action* [...]” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 226-7. Dreams are named after Milton, “the Slumber of the body [that] seems to be but the waking of the Soul,” a state in which “the Faculties of the Mind” “are disengaged from the Body.” As a result of the soul’s temporary separation from the corporeal, the state of devotion is increased: “Devotion [...] is in a very particular manner heightened and inflamed, when it rises in the Soul at a time that the Body is thus laid at Rest.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 227.

⁴⁵⁸ This view is predicated on Addison’s praise of “the greatness of the human soul and its immortality” which, as pointed out by Edward A. and Lilian D. Bloom, was, besides his proof of divine existence, the other significant focus of his theology. Edward and Lilian Bloom, “Addison’s ‘Enquiry after Truth’,” 199-200, footnote 4.

⁴⁵⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 229. (emphasis added). On the other hand, Addison does not dismiss that in very rare circumstances, dreams are not our creation, but have been directly implanted by divinity: “there have been sometimes, upon very Extraordinary Occasions supernatural Revelations made to certain Persons by this means.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 293. “Whether such dark Presages, such Visions of the Night proceed from any latent Power in the Soul, during this her State of Abstraction, or from any Communication with the Supreme Being, or from any Operation of Subordinate Spirits, has been a great Dispute among the Learned; the matter of Fact is I think incontestable, and has been looked upon as such by the greatest Writers, who have been never suspected either of Superstition or Enthusiasm.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 229.

⁴⁶⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 229.

which is material, which reflects light and strikes the eye with its colors and shapes can constitute a possible object of aesthetic appreciation. Existence, however, extends well beyond the reach of our sensory modalities, embodied imagination and intellect, comprising “the invisible World” that will be accessible only to disembodied souls or spirits. “Part of the Pleasure which happy Minds shall enjoy in a future State,” Addison writes, is “a perpetual Succession of Enjoyments [that] will be afforded [...] in a Scene so large and various as shall then be laid open to our View in the Society of superior Spirits, who perhaps will join with us in so delightful a Prospect!”⁴⁶¹

Addison arrives at a surprisingly detailed description of the condition of the righteous after death highlighting the ways in which their potential for aesthetic gratification will infinitely supersede any engagement with the aesthetics of this world:

The Blessed in Heaven behold him [God] Face to Face; that is, are as sensible of his Presence as we are of the Presence of any Person whom we look upon with our Eyes. There is doubtless a Faculty in Spirits, by which they apprehend one another, as our Senses do material Objects; and there is no Question but our Souls, when they are disembodied, or placed in glorified Bodies, will by this Faculty, in whatever Part of Space they reside, be always sensible of the Divine Presence. We, who have this Veil of Flesh standing between us and the World of Spirits, must be Content to know that the Spirit of God is present with us, by the Effects which he produces in us. Our outward Senses are too gross to apprehend him; we may however taste and see how gracious he is, by his Influence upon our Minds, by those Virtuous Thoughts which he awakens in us, by those secret Comforts and Refreshments which he conveys into our Souls, and by those ravishing Joys and inward Satisfactions, which are perpetually springing up, and diffusing themselves among all the Thoughts of good Men.⁴⁶²

Aesthetic appreciation in this world, whether of nature or art, is only an indirect and imperfect movement from effect to cause: we may only “taste” the graciousness of God

⁴⁶¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 2, 420.

⁴⁶² Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 549.

by the pleasures that have been allowed for us (and which should be an important part of the good life). The virtuous in heaven, by contrast, will benefit by a new kind of spiritual faculty embedded in their glorified bodies.⁴⁶³ This will facilitate a direct perception of God no longer mediated by a body acting as an imprisonment for the soul: to have a body is “to be confined to a Prison, and to look through a Grate all our Lives, gives us but a very narrow prospect, and that none of the best neither, than to be set at liberty to view all the Glories of the World.”⁴⁶⁴ The “Glories of the World” can only be appreciated through a glass darkly, as it were, imperfectly, given the operation of our faculties in the world of matter. Only in the afterlife may one reach the true apogee of aesthetic appreciation. As pointed out by Nicolson, Addison agrees that

Man sees in a mirror darkly reflections of reality; God sees face to face, perceives all, realizes all. To an even greater extent than Newton and Addison intended, such a conception of the complete awareness of God's Sensorium served to emphasize still more man's limited and partial experience through his *sensoriola*. God is Pure Light; man's light is refracted, reflected, inflected.⁴⁶⁵

Addison believes that all instances of aesthetic appreciation in this life are only partial, limited and ultimately defective occurrences.

Confronted with the problem of justifying God's decision to allow us only an imperfect aesthetic appreciation of things, Addison offers a theodicean solution that glorifies the pleasures of afterlife. Although celebrating, in *Spectator* No. 487, the capacity of human beings for “Chearfulness” (the God-given ability to derive pleasures

⁴⁶³ Addison says that the soul is “endowed with several latent Faculties, which it is not at present in a Condition to exert.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 5, p. 51.

⁴⁶⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 322.

⁴⁶⁵ Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse: Newton's "Opticks" and the Eighteenth Century Poets*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 106.

from the primary qualities of matter), Addison warns that “there are many Evils which naturally spring up amidst the Entertainments that are provided for us” so that in the end there is an “Interspersion of Evil with Good, and Pain with Pleasure, in the Works of Nature.”⁴⁶⁶ But “if rightly consider’d,” he continues, this amalgamation of pleasure and pain “should be far from [...] destroying that Chearfulness of Temper.”⁴⁶⁷ He seeks to buttress this argument by quoting directly from Locke’s *Essay on Human Understanding*:

we may find another reason why God hath scattered up and down several degrees of Pleasure and Pain, in all the things that environ and affect us; and blended them together, in almost all that our Thoughts and Senses have to do with; that we finding Imperfection, Dissatisfaction, and want of compleat Happiness, in all the Enjoyments which the Creatures can afford us, might be led to seek it in the enjoyment of him, with whom there is fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand are Pleasures for evermore.⁴⁶⁸

Addison’s appropriation of Lockean theodicy encodes the notion that a mixture of good and evil informs not only the activity of sense organs, what our “Senses have to do with,” but even the objects of the intellect, our “Thoughts” and ideas. Moreover, because the imperfections are widely distributed “in all the Enjoyments which the Creatures can afford us,” they include the pleasures of the imagination.

Despite the attempts of the imagination to correct the imperfections perceived in matter, artifactual objects are a far cry from perfection, and from a theodicean perspective, Addison maintains that God intentionally placed limitations on the amount of pleasure of the imagination one can afford from both art and nature, so that one might

⁴⁶⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 454.

⁴⁶⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 454.

⁴⁶⁸ Locke quoted in Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 454 (italics removed). See Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, Chapter vii, p. 130.

sooner or later turn one's attention away from the pleasures of the present life to those of the next:

Man is a Creature designed for two different States of Being, or rather, for two different Lives. His first Life is short and transient; his second permanent and lasting. The Question we are all concerned in is this, In which of these two Lives it is our chief Interest to make our selves happy? Or, in other Words, Whether we should endeavour to secure to our selves the Pleasures and Gratifications of a Life which is uncertain and precarious, and at its utmost Length of a very inconsiderable Duration; or to secure to our selves the Pleasures of a Life which is fixed and settled, and will never end?⁴⁶⁹

While the pleasures of this world are fleeting, those of the afterlife are permanent. Our aesthetic appreciation of the "World of Nature" is contrasted with the experience of heaven after death, where God's presence will no longer be indirectly reflected "at a Distance, and only in his Works," but directly through an appropriate "Faculty in the Soul."⁴⁷⁰ In this regard, all instances of aesthetic appreciation of nature are defective in comparison to the pleasures of the afterlife: "The Light of the Sun, and all the Glories of the World in which we live, are but as weak and sickly Glimmerings, or rather Darkness itself, in Comparison of those Splendors which encompass the Throne of God."⁴⁷¹ Although reflective of both the aesthetic and the traditional reading of the design of the

⁴⁶⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 566.

⁴⁷⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 321.

⁴⁷¹ It is not the immanence, but rather the transcendence of God that is accentuated here; while God simultaneously "dwells among his Work," he "discovers himself in a more Glorious Manner among the Regions of the Blest." Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 586. "But tho' the Deity be thus essentially present through all the Immensity of Space, there is one Part of it in which he discovers himself in a most transcendent and visible Glory. This is that Place which is marked out in Scripture under the different Appellations of *Paradise*, *the third Heaven*, *the Throne of God*, and *the Habitation of his Glory*. [...] He is indeed as essentially present in all other Places as in this, but it is here where he resides in a sensible Magnificence, and in the midst of those Splendors which can affect the Imagination of created Beings." Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 582-3.

argument, the light of the sun is now equated with darkness when set against the true light of God in heaven.

Jacob Sider Jost has argued that *The Spectator* innovates the theological world of late-Stuart and Hannoverian Britain by offering an influential theory of the afterlife that re-imagines it as a continuation of the life live on earth.⁴⁷² The next world is no longer seen vertically, as it were, with heaven above and hell below, but horizontally, “an extension to its logical conclusion of a regimen of habits created in daily life.”⁴⁷³ Consequently, the afterlife is for Addison “not so properly another World,” but “a new state of Life” where, although the soul is no longer confined to the body, it will continue extending and amplifying the pleasures of this life:

The last Use which I shall make of this remarkable Property in Human Nature, of being delighted with those Actions to which it is accustomed, is to shew how absolutely necessary it is for us to gain Habits of Virtue in this Life, if we would enjoy the Pleasures of the next. The State of Bliss we call Heaven will not be capable of affecting those Minds, which are not thus qualified for it; we must, in this World, gain a Relish of Truth and Virtue, if we would be able to taste that Knowledge and Perfection, which are to make us happy in the next. The Seeds of those spiritual Joys and Raptures, which are to rise up and Flourish in the Soul to all Eternity, must be planted in her, during this her present State of Probation. In short, Heaven is not to be looked upon only as the Reward, but as the natural Effect of a religious Life.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Jacob Sider Jost, “The Afterlife and the Spectator,” *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 51, no. 3 (2011): 605–24, esp. 608.

⁴⁷³ Jost, “The Afterlife and the Spectator,” 609.

⁴⁷⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 72.

Rewards and punishments are “the natural Effect of a religious Life,” and depend, among other things, on whether this life was replete with innocent or criminal pleasures.⁴⁷⁵

Unless the pleasures of the imagination are properly exercised on earth, the pleasures of the afterlife will not produce any effects on us. He makes proper aesthetic appreciation a necessary precondition for appreciating the pleasures of the next, and if this condition is met, there will be new avenues for aesthetic gratification that await the virtuous in heaven, as Addison illustrates so vividly by availing himself of the Pauline doctrine of resurrection:

as soon as we step out of these Bodies, we step into the other World, which is not so properly another World [...] as *a new state of Life*. To live in these Bodies is to live in this World; to live out of them is to remove into the next: For while our Souls are confined to these Bodies, and can look only thro' these material Casements, *nothing but what is material can affect us*; nay, nothing but what is so gross, that it can reflect Light, and convey the Shapes and Colours of Things with it to the *Eye*: So that though within this visible World, *there be a more glorious Scene of Things than what appears to us, we perceive nothing at all of it; for this Veil of Flesh parts the visible and invisible World*: But when we put off these Bodies, *there are new and surprizing Wonders present themselves to our Views*; when these material Spectacles are taken off, the Soul, with its own naked Eyes, sees what was invisible before: And then we are in the other World, when we can see it, and converse with it: Thus St. Paul tell us, That when we are at home in the

⁴⁷⁵ Addison assumes that the pleasures and the passions of the soul will remain with it even after its separation from the body: “Plato and his Followers [...] tell us that every Passion which has been contracted by the Soul during her Residence in the Body remains with her in a separate State; and that the Soul in the Body or out of the Body, differs no more than the Man does from himself when he is in his House, or in open Air. When therefore the obscene Passions in particular have once taken Root and spread themselves in the Soul, they cleave to her inseparably, and remain in her for ever, after the Body is cast off and thrown aside.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, p. 381. Plato’s notion of the punishments endured by sinners in hell is noteworthy in that it represents an exacerbation of lust without the possibility for gratification: “In this therefore (say the *Platonists*) consists the Punishment of a voluptuous Man after Death: He is tormented with Desires which it is impossible for him to gratify, solicited by a Passion that has neither Objects nor Organs adapted to it: He lives in a State of invincible Desire and Impotence, and always burns in the Pursuit of what he always despairs to possess. It is for this Reason (says *Plato*) that the Souls of the Dead appear frequently in Cœmiteries, and hover about the Places where their Bodies are buried, as still hankering after their old brutal Pleasures, and desiring again to enter the Body that gave them an Opportunity of fulfilling them.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, p. 381.

Body, we are absent from the Lord; but when we are absent from the Body, we are present with the Lord, 2 Cor. 5. 6, 8.⁴⁷⁶

Jost has emphasized that Addison reverses Paul's account of the resurrection by downplaying the total alterity of the resurrected self, and reimagining heaven as a continuation of the virtuous habits developed in earthly existence.⁴⁷⁷ Alongside this important reorientation of the Pauline doctrine, Addison also gives it an aesthetic twist that has not received the attention it deserves. "Addison is transporting into the next life something very much like pure aesthetic experience [...],"⁴⁷⁸ Tuveson pointed out, although he did not develop this idea any further.

The aestheticization of the afterlife entails the projection of the three categories of pleasures of the imagination to the life to come. Addison determines that our experience in heaven will surpass the most novel, the most beautiful, and the most sublime experiences on earth. Even though the pleasures of the afterlife are modeled on the pleasures in this world, they are also conceptualized as radically different.

Underlying much of this description is Addison's transposition of the aesthetic category of novelty to the realm of the afterlife. In heaven, he writes:

There are such things as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive: Death opens our Eyes, enlarges our Prospect, presents us with a *new and more glorious World*, which we can never see while we are shut up in Flesh; which should make us as willing to part with this Veil, as to take the Film off of our Eyes, which hinders our Sight.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 321 (italics added).

⁴⁷⁷ Jost, "The Afterlife and the Spectator," 611.

⁴⁷⁸ Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace*, 94-5.

⁴⁷⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 322.

He believes that there will be “new and surprising Wonders”⁴⁸⁰ that present themselves to the soul. The glorious world of the spirit will be replete with pleasures from novelty. Having noted that “the Souls of good Men after this Life” will be “in a State of perfect Happiness,” Addison adds that one particularly pleasant “Circumstance” “in this Scheme” “is that Variety of Pleasures which it supposes the Souls of good Men will be possessed of in another World.”⁴⁸¹ A necessary condition of novelty,⁴⁸² variety is also manifested in the pleasures of reflecting on the new faculties of the soul that will enable us to have a far greater and more complete appreciation: “Besides those several Avenues to Pleasure which the Soul is endowed with in this Life; it is not impossible,” he says that “there may be *new Faculties in the Souls* of good Men made perfect, as well as *new Senses* in their glorified Bodies” and “there will be *new Objects* offer'd to all those Faculties which are essential to us.”⁴⁸³ The novel “Objects” that one will likely be encountering in paradise, include

the Raptures of Devotion, of Divine Love, the Pleasure of conversing with our Blessed Saviour, with an innumerable Host of Angels, and with the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect [...]. These and many other Particulars are marked in Divine Revelation, as the several Ingredients of our Happiness in Heaven, which all imply such a *Variety of Joys* and such a Gratification of the Soul in all its different Faculties, as I have been here mentioning.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 321

⁴⁸¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 5, p. 50.

⁴⁸² “We shall be the more confirmed in this Doctrine, if we observe the Nature of Variety, with regard to the Mind of Man. The Soul does not care to be always in the same bent. The Faculties [...] receive an additional Pleasure from the Novelty of those Objects about which they are conversant.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 5, p. 52.

⁴⁸³ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 5, p. 51 (emphasis added).

⁴⁸⁴ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 5, p. 52.

Ultimately, the novelty of pleasures of the afterlife is paradoxical: on the one hand, they are projections from the world of experience. On the other, they are so radically new and different that one is incapable of encountering them in this life:

It is very manifest, by the inward Frame and Constitution of our Minds, that he [God] has adapted them to *an infinite Variety of Pleasures and Gratifications, which are not to be met with in this Life.*⁴⁸⁵

Aside from novelty, Addison applies the category of beauty to heaven itself which he portrays as a “Habitation beautified” with “glorious Designs.”⁴⁸⁶ Paradise is envisioned as a place whose beauty will transcend everything that we have ever seen on earth:

we may be sure that the Pleasures and Beauties of this Place will infinitely transcend our present Hopes and Expectations, and that the glorious Appearance of the Throne of God, will rise infinitely beyond whatever we are able to conceive of it.⁴⁸⁷

A consideration of the physical magnitude of paradise will similarly arouse pleasures from greatness. If nature already presents itself as “inconceivably wide and magnificent,” can we even imagine the “Extent” of paradise?

As the *Glory* of this Place is transcendent beyond Imagination, so probably is the *Extent* of it. There is Light behind Light, and Glory within Glory. How far that Space may reach, in which God thus appears in perfect Majesty, we cannot possibly conceive. [...]. If he has made these lower Regions of Matter so inconceivably wide and magnificent for the Habitation of mortal and perishable Beings, how great may we suppose the Courts of his House to be, where he makes his Residence in a more especial manner, and displays himself in the Fulness of his Glory, among an innumerable Company of Angels, and Spirits of just Men made perfect?⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁵ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 5, p. 53 (emphasis added).

⁴⁸⁶ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 584.

⁴⁸⁷ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 586.

⁴⁸⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 584.

Any attempt to imagine heaven is doomed to fail due to the inherent limitations of our imagination:

This is certain, that our Imaginations cannot be raised too high, when we think on a Place where Omnipotence and Omniscience have so signally exerted themselves, because that they are able to produce a Scene infinitely more great and glorious than what we are able to imagine.⁴⁸⁹

Needless to say, the afterlife is also a place that will categorically surpass all human art in terms of aesthetic potential. Human beings are delighted by the aesthetic appeal of music which must rely on the principle of harmony to produce beauty. But in heaven, the sense of hearing will be gratified by melodies so beautiful that it is impossible to come across in this world:

if the Soul of Man can be so wonderfully affected with those Strains of Musick, which Human Art is capable of producing, how much more will it be raised and elevated by those, in which is exerted the whole Power of Harmony! [...] Why should we suppose that our Hearing and Seeing will not be gratify'd with those Objects which are most agreeable to them, and which they cannot meet with in these lower Regions of Nature; Objects, *which neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, nor can it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive?*⁴⁹⁰

Addison retells St. Paul's narrative of a man who was temporarily admitted to heaven, and then allowed to return to his worldly existence. He struggled to recount his experience in heaven, but failed: "what he heard was so infinitely different from any thing which he had heard in this World, that it was impossible to express it in such Words as might convey a Notion of it to his Hearers."⁴⁹¹ The melody of heavens was so harmonious and beautiful that it could not be expressed, let alone imitated.

⁴⁸⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 584.

⁴⁹⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 585.

⁴⁹¹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 585.

4. GILPIN: NATURE YIELDS TO ART

When William Gilpin coined the term ‘picturesque’ in 1768 and defined it as “that kind of beauty agreeable in a picture”⁴⁹² he transferred rules and conventions from pictorial art to the appreciation of the natural world. A break was imminent between typical experiences of beauty in its “natural state,” and the picturesque way of appreciating nature consciously guided by pictorial principles. “Disputes about beauty might perhaps be involved in less confusion,” Gilpin wrote in his *Three Essays*,

if a distinction were established, which certainly exists, between such objects as are beautiful, and such as are picturesque—between those, which please the eye in *their natural state*; and those, which please from some quality, capable of being illustrated in painting.⁴⁹³

Gilpin’s pursuit of pictorial qualities involved him in the process of articulating a theory of art in which the concept of artistic imitation played a central role. Because theories of imitation have tended historically to place art and nature in a hierarchical relation, changes in the concept of imitation can guide our understanding of this relation. As argued previously, Addison’s critical oscillation between the illusionistic imitation of nature, on the one hand, and idealization, on the other, was emblematic of a mimetic ambivalence working to neutralize the polarities of nature and art in his aesthetics. Gilpin completely banishes the notion of illusionistic mimeticism from his theory of picturesque

⁴⁹² William Gilpin, *An Essay upon Prints Containing Remarks upon the Principles of Picturesque Beauty, the Different Kinds of Prints, and the Characters of the Most Noted Masters* (London: Printed for J. Robson, 1768), 2.

⁴⁹³ William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: With a Poem on Landscape Painting; to Which Is Added a Poem, on Landscape Painting*. (London: R. Blamire, 1794), 3.

art creation which must concern itself entirely with the idealization of nature (section **4.1**). His exclusive reliance on idealized imitation as a mimetic norm seems to suggest, if only modestly, an impulse to further emancipate art beyond the bounds of Addisonian aesthetics. I shall argue, however, that the important mimetic innovation of Gilpin's project is to be found not strictly in his views on artistic creation, but in the novel use of imitation in his theory of picturesque nature appreciation. Although his model of appreciation starts with Addison's conviction that nature offers secondary pleasures of the imagination when it accidentally resembles human art, these pleasures from accidental resemblance are quickly superseded by the voluntary mental process of altering nature in accordance with artistic conventions. I use the phrase "voluntary resemblance of nature to art" to refer to this process according to which nature is made to look like art by a viewer attempting to fit the natural scene into a pictorial schema (section **4.2**).

Gilpin's urge to appreciate nature through the lens of an elaborate framework of preconceived expectations derived from pictorial art is concurrent with a steady decline in the experience of the natural sublime (section **4.4**). My argument that the categories of the natural sublime and the picturesque are, to a great extent, mutually exclusive must be preceded, however, by an exploration of how Gilpin's notion of the sublime is essentially permeated by skepticism about the ability of human reason to grasp God's design in the vast system of nature (section **4.3**). As an eighteenth-century Latitudinarian, Gilpin placed significant limitations on the adequacy of human reason in dealing with certain scriptural truths, but his distinctive move, I contend, lies in asserting that the limited operation of reason is also encountered in our experience of vast natural objects which

defy our capacity of perception. This analogy is at the root of Gilpin's skeptical account of the sublime which, as my argument goes, is an important causative factor in the genesis of the picturesque approach to the appreciation of nature. Shaftesbury and Addison's conceptions of the sublime made use of our cognitive limitations to argue for an immediate transcendence of them. By contrast, Gilpin's notion of the sublime presents us ultimately with our cognitive failure in relation to a vast and incomprehensible system of nature. This inability of humans to rationally grasp God's vast design in the system of nature entitles Gilpin to adapt the natural sublime to the picturesque, to reduce vastness to a manageable proportion where human beings can experience such design.

This transformation of the natural sublime into smaller picturesque scenes that are akin to artistic compositions bears an important resemblance to the adaptation of the natural to the artistic sublime in the aesthetics of Addison and Shaftesbury. For both aestheticians, pristine nature fully demonstrated the existence of God in the way that human artistic products simply could not. For Shaftesbury, art functioned only as a diminished, indirect reflection of absolute beauty, while Addison resolved that the pleasures of art only had a limited potential to demonstrate God's existence. When Gilpin discusses natural beauty and sublimity, he tends to follow his predecessors closely by incorporating such ways of appreciating nature into arguments from design. I interpret his reluctance to link the picturesque with the design argument as an indication that the picturesque aesthetic weakens the physico-theological argument for the superiority of nature to art (section 4.5).

I conclude my treatment of Gilpin's aesthetics by offering reflections on how the concept of the picturesque embodies the relation of art to nature (section 4.6). Many

scholars have deemed Gilpin inconsistent in terms of his contradictory attitude towards the relation of art to nature: on the one hand, he is praising nature as the great original, while on the other, he recommends the improvement of the natural world through the picturesque. By pointing to the limitations of our experience of the natural world, rather than denouncing any errors in God's creation, Gilpin coined the picturesque mode of appreciation as a theodicean move intended to circumvent his own skepticism about the ability of human reason to apprehend the sublime design of the natural world. If theology is acknowledged as an important factor behind the emergence of the picturesque, it follows that Gilpin must have intended through his project to preserve and further reassert the aesthetic priority of nature to art.

This theological interpretation of the picturesque solves the paradox of Gilpin's own attitude toward the relation of art to nature, but it tends to downplay the novelty of the picturesque as an aesthetic approach to landscape. My analysis of the picturesque expands the range of picturesque aesthetic values to include not only the weakening of physico-theology, but also the innovative use of the concept of imitation, as well as the picturesque's fraught relationship with the natural sublime, aspects that will receive substantial treatment throughout my analysis of Gilpin. If construed in such terms, the aesthetic thrust of the picturesque takes on a new significance for the evolution of the art-nature relation in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. My argument is that while a theological motive remains the main factor for the genesis of the picturesque aesthetic, once the aesthetic is generated, it produces changes that destabilize its own theological grounding: as the first movement in history to self-consciously model nature on the order of art, the picturesque process begins as a theodicy to buttress the natural order but ends

up with a range of complex theoretical maneuvers that come to eventually challenge this order, and reverse the hierarchies of art and nature.

4.1 Picturesque Art as Idealized Imitation of Nature

It may be recalled that Addison vacillates between a theory of imitation that ranks arts according to their potential to achieve the highest level of mimetic fidelity to nature, on the one hand, and a conception of literary art as the imitation of ideal nature, on the other. I will argue that Gilpin's theory of picturesque artistic creation relies on a notion of idealized imitation of nature devoid of any trace of illusionistic mimeticism. If Addison's mimetic ambivalence contributed to the neutralization of the polarities of nature and art in his aesthetics, Gilpin's repudiation of illusionistic mimeticism indicates a tendency to ascribe greater autonomy to art in respect to nature.

Producing the most faithful rendition of actual nature, the *camera obscura* is no longer an object of aesthetic interest for Gilpin as much as it was for Addison. Instead, Gilpin is compelled to substitute its projection with an artistic product created by the imagination according to the picturesque "rules of art:"

the power of creating, and representing scenes of fancy [...] is still more a work of creation, than copying from nature. The imagination becomes a *camera obscura*, only with this difference, that the camera represents objects as they really are: while the imagination, impressed with the most beautiful scenes, and chastened by the rules of art, forms its pictures, not only from the most admirable parts of nature but in the best taste.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 52

Gilpin makes it clear that the *camera obscura* only “represents objects as they really are,” whereas the picturesque product departs from a strict imitation of nature by working selectively with “the most admirable parts of nature.” Evidence for his critique of mimetic naturalism can be garnered from his various writings on sculpture, painting, and gardening.

In his *Observations on the Western Part of England*, Gilpin describes a statue—identified as the workmanship of a Tahiti native—as particularly striking because the head of the marble figure is “adorned with real hair.”⁴⁹⁵ He complains that “these representations [...] grossly oppose every idea of taste” since the “mixture [...] of *reality* and *imitation* is very disgusting.”⁴⁹⁶ While the “plain marble makes no pretence to anything but *imitation*,” it should never be “substituting itself for *real life*.”⁴⁹⁷

Challenging Addison’s conviction that the best art is that which almost substitutes itself for nature, Gilpin warns that “when the *art of imitation* [...] is so perfect as to produce a *real*, though *momentary illusion*, it presents, by its *near approach to life*, an image of *death*.”⁴⁹⁸ The creation of a mimetic product that can be almost mistaken for life, far from representing the most faithful image of life, has the quite opposite effect of representing an image of death. From the perspective of a theory of imitation (in statuary), Gilpin rejects illusionistic imitation as he advises that “an *art calculated to*

⁴⁹⁵ William Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: to Which Are Added, a Few Remarks on the Picturesque Beauties on the Isle of Wight*. By William Gilpin. (London: Printed for T. Cadell Jun. And W. Davies, Strand, 1808), 24.

⁴⁹⁶ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 26, 25.

⁴⁹⁷ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 25.

⁴⁹⁸ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 25. For a discussion of Addison’s theory of illusionistic imitation, see section 3.5 above.

please by an imitation of life, should, when applied to the human figure, though *necessarily imperfect*, be made *intentionally* more so.”⁴⁹⁹ He urges artists to renounce the impulse to imitate life closely, and proposes instead the rendition of figures in a way that departs from mimetic naturalism.

The misguided process of slavishly copying particular nature is also discussed with reference to sketching which occupies a privileged position in Gilpin’s picturesque aesthetic. His essays show an acute awareness that the practice of sketching had been looked down upon in terms of artistic value precisely because of its association with the “imaginary,” and its tendency to depart from the rule of mimetic naturalism: “many people will take offence at *imaginary views*; and will admit such landscape only as immediately taken from nature.”⁵⁰⁰ Landscapes immediately taken from nature affirm most forcefully the norm of mimetic fidelity to nature which Gilpin challenges by arguing that a closer imitation of nature is not necessarily the better one: the older claim that the “nearer we copy her [nature], the nearer we approach perfection”⁵⁰¹ no longer holds water. Richard C. Sha has argued that the picturesque aesthetic enshrines the sketch as a central art form which, through its very lack of finish and detail, is capable of embodying mimetic truth.⁵⁰² The sketch’s truth lies not in its literal fidelity to nature, but in imposing an ideal vision on nature’s particular arrangements by choosing only the best moment of what nature has to offer.

⁴⁹⁹ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 26.

⁵⁰⁰ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 159.

⁵⁰¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 159.

⁵⁰² Richard C. Sha, *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 54.

Besides his dismissal of mimetic naturalism in sculpture and sketching, Gilpin also problematizes its effectiveness in literature and painting. His argument is that nature's overwhelming variety poses as an insurmountable obstacle to the artist whose self-acknowledged aim is to closely imitate nature: the "variety of scenes, which nature exhibits, and their infinite combinations, and peculiarities," he notes, are those "to which neither language, nor colours, unaided by imagination, can [...] do justice."⁵⁰³ "Words may give the great outlines of a scene," he concedes, but "[t]hey cannot mark the characteristic distinctions of each scene—the touches of nature—her living tints—her endless variety, both in form and colour."⁵⁰⁴ This inability of words to render the characteristic or the individual in nature is explained by their tendency to "stand only for general ideas."⁵⁰⁵ The art of pencil can give a more accurate representation of the variety of nature as it "describes the scene in stronger, more varied terms,"⁵⁰⁶ but ultimately both literature and painting are unfit media for exact copies, an aspect that reinforces Gilpin's conviction that the task of the artist should be a re-presentation, rather than a replica of things exactly as seen in nature:

But all this, all that words can express, or even the pencil describe, are gross, insipid substitutes of the living scene. We may be pleased with the description, and the picture: but the soul can *feel* neither, unless the force of our own imagination aid the poet's, or the painter's art; exalt the idea; and picture things unseen. // Hence it perhaps follows, that the perfection of the art of painting is not

⁵⁰³ William Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland: ... By William Gilpin ...*, vol. 2 (London, Printed for R. Blamire, Strand, 1786), 17.

⁵⁰⁴ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 10. When the act of imitation is properly aided by the imagination, the resulting product will never be a close imitation of nature, but an idealization which, as I argue below, involves the abstraction of particulars of nature to arrive at general ideas of things.

⁵⁰⁵ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 9.

⁵⁰⁶ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 10.

so much attained by an endeavour to form an exact resemblance of nature in a *nice representation of all her minute parts*, which we consider as almost impracticable, ending generally in flatness, and insipidity; as by aiming to give those bold, those strong characteristic touches, which excite the imagination [...].⁵⁰⁷

Any attempt to depict “minute parts of nature” is abandoned in favor of a selective representation of nature’s “strong characteristic touches.” The appropriate mimetic relation of art to nature resembles the relation between the source and the target text in translation, with the important caveat that a free, meaning-for-meaning translation is always superior to a servile word-for-word rendition. Gilpin’s analogy between imitation and translation is occasioned by a critique of Quentin Matsys’ naturalistic portraits depicting what one contemporary called “monstrous bloated senile faces of old men and women:”⁵⁰⁸

in copying the several *objects, and passages of nature*, we should not copy with that painful exactness, with which Quintin Matsis, for instance, painted a face. This is a sort of plagiarism below the dignity of painting. Nature should be copied, as an author should be translated. If, like Horace’s translator, you give word for word, your work will necessarily be insipid. But if you catch the meaning of your author and give it freely, in the idiom or language in which you translate, your translation may have both *spirit*, and *truth* to the original. *Translate nature* in the same way. Nature has its idiom, as well as language; and so has painting.⁵⁰⁹

When Gilpin entrusts a free translation with spirit, he appears to use ‘spirit’ to refer to “the *general* effect of a masterly performance,”⁵¹⁰ and it would not be difficult to see how a painstakingly accurate depiction of faces falls short of this general effect. Along these

⁵⁰⁷ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁰⁸ Simone De Beauvoir and Patrick O’Brian, *The Coming of Age* (New York: Norton, 1996), 162.

⁵⁰⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 160.

⁵¹⁰ Gilpin, *An Essay upon Prints*, 2.

lines, in *Observations Relative to Picturesque Beauty*, he takes issue with a close imitation of individual facial expressions carried out by means of an “anatomical study of figures,” and proposes instead the representation of general shapes: “in the human figure we contemplate neither *exactness of form*; nor *expression*, any farther than it is shewn in *action*: we merely consider general shapes, dresses, groups, and occupations [...]”⁵¹¹

Enough has been said to convey the intensity of Gilpin’s distrust of close imitation as the model for picturesque art. We must return now to the beginning of this section where an affinity was implied between Addison’s theory of poetry and Gilpin’s theory of picturesque art. Costelloe has suggested that a hint which composes the picturesque may be discerned in Addison’s suggestion “that poetry idealizes and improves on nature,” but contends that “Addison and his followers, however, see art as an embellishment of nature,” an aspect “clearly rejected by writers of the picturesque who think of art as rearranging nature in the spirit of ‘improvement’.”⁵¹² Costelloe sees an irreconcilable break between two processes that underlie the creation of art, embellishment and rearrangement, but there is significant overlap between them. It will be shown that Gilpin’s conception of picturesque art remains unsurprisingly similar to Addison’s theory of poetry as idealization of nature: both art theories propose the idealization of nature through the shared Lockean operations of abstraction and synthesis of particulars from nature. Observing that Gilpin understands “artistic production and signification as a creative, yet not arbitrary, process of coherent articulation, or

⁵¹¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 44-45.

⁵¹² Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 136, footnote 3.

characterization, opposite to mere reflection or imitation,” Giorgio Bertellini employs the phrase “*picturesque mimesis*”⁵¹³ to describe this process. Although serving a different objective, Bertellini’s characterization of picturesque mimesis is worth quoting at some length as it reveals, if only briefly, the two main strategies at work in the creation of picturesque art:

[artistic] representations, including picturesque ones, related to their objects not through imitation, but through a *selective* deployment of similar and defining features. This process of characterization implies both an *abstraction* of existing traits and an employment of artful pictorial effects. A representation well characterized thus entertained a mimetic relationship with the original object not by mere replication, but by a display of similar and selected traits, resulting in a morphological similitude. An *ars combinatoria* of analysis and synthesis of single qualities provided the means to compare and distinguish between individual subjects and general [...] types.⁵¹⁴

It is my contention that Gilpin’s theory of picturesque art encapsulates a complex conception of mimesis as idealization of nature which, through the techniques of abstraction and selection, remains faithful to Addison’s theory of poetry.

Both Addison and Gilpin’s theories of mimetic idealization rely on the operation of abstraction of particulars in order to arrive at general ideas of things. A precondition for forming *general* ideas of things is the repeated encounter with particulars. Gilpin is eager to note that the process of acquiring the general idea of ‘oak-tree’ is possible through one’s experience of a fair number of individual oak-trees: “He who has seen only one oak-tree has no compleat idea of an oak in general: but he who has examined thousands of oak-trees, must have seen that beautiful plant in all it's varieties; and obtains

⁵¹³ Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 43.

⁵¹⁴ Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema*, 46 (my emphasis on the terms ‘selective’ and ‘abstraction’).

a full, and compleat idea of it.”⁵¹⁵ According to David Miall, Gilpin believes that “repeated experience allows us to *induce* the underlying laws that go to make (say) an oak tree what it is, whatever particular form a given oak tree before us may take.”⁵¹⁶

Wayne A. Davis clarifies that this process “whereby repeated perception of particulars leads the mind to focus on similarities and ignore differences” “necessarily yields *general* ideas,” and is called *intuitive induction* by Aristotle, and *abstraction* by Locke.⁵¹⁷

Locke’s definition of ‘abstraction’ in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* showcases its central role in the acquisition of general ideas:

the Mind makes the particular *Ideas*, received from particular Objects to become general [...]. This is called Abstraction, whereby *Ideas* taken from particular Beings, become general Representations of all of the same kind, and their Names general Names, applicable to whatever exists conformable to such abstract *Ideas*.⁵¹⁸

An important commonality exhibited between Addison’s theory of poetry and Gilpin’s theory of the picturesque art is that, in veering away from the ancillary task of copying particulars of nature, both rely on Lockean epistemology to arrive at and represent general ideas or types. As we have seen, Gilpin makes ample references to the process of generalization in his treatment of artistic mimesis. One example is when he reminds writers that “words stand only for *general* ideas.” In a similar way, painters must utilize

⁵¹⁵ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 51.

⁵¹⁶ D. S. Miall, “Representing the Picturesque: William Gilpin and the Laws of Nature,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 12, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 75–93, pp. 88-9.

⁵¹⁷ Wayne A. Davis, *Nondescriptive Meaning and Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 341 (emphasis added).

⁵¹⁸ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, chapter xi, 9, p. 159. See also Charles A. Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal, 1760-1920* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 36.

“a few random *general* touches of something like nature” which ultimately convey the “*general* effect” of a scene. In depicting human beings, artists should likewise “consider *general* shapes, dresses, groups, and occupations.”⁵¹⁹ Addison had used Lockean empiricism to drive home the point that one of the advantages of ideal imitation lies in its enlargement of our knowledge of ideas.⁵²⁰ David Cramer has suggested that Gilpin’s picturesque art conforms to the same epistemology, and has quoted this passage from Gilpin’s *Three Essays* to support his contention:

Having gained by a minute examination of incidents a compleat idea of an object, our next amusement arises from *inlarging, and correcting our general stock of ideas*. The variety of nature is such, that new objects, and new combinations of them, are continually adding something to our fund, and enlarging our collection: while the same kind of object occurring frequently, is seen under various shapes; and makes us, if I may so speak, more learned in nature.⁵²¹

The creation of successful picturesque art for Gilpin and the production of poetry for Addison both hinge on the artist’s ability to represent general ideas of objects or scenes obtained from nature through an inductive process which enlarges and corrects one’s mental repository of ideas.

In addition to the technique of generalization, the other important process that underlies Gilpin’s artistic idealization is represented by the doctrine of selection and synthesis of items taken from multiple individuals followed by uniting them into a coherent object or scene. Miall has insisted on the role of the imagination in arriving at

⁵¹⁹ These examples of generalization are found in: Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*, vol. 2, p. 9; Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, and Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 44-45, respectively.

⁵²⁰ “As we look on any Object, our Idea of it is, perhaps, made up of two or three simple Ideas; but when the Poet represents it, he may either give us a more complex Idea of it, or only raise in us such Ideas as are most apt to affect the Imagination.” Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 560.

⁵²¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 50. Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, 88.

general types, but has also pointed out, though not convincingly, that Gilpin's treatment of the imagination also "shows another process at work."⁵²² Without naming this process,

Miall goes on to quote this important excerpt from Gilpin:

Often, when slumber has half-closed the eye, and shut out all the objects of sense, especially after the enjoyment of some splendid scene; the imagination, active, and alert, *collects it's scattered ideas, transposes, combines, and shifts them into a thousand forms*, producing such exquisite scenes, such sublime arrangements, such glow, and harmony of colouring, such brilliant lights, such depth, and clearness of shadow, as equally foil description, and every attempt of artificial colouring.⁵²³

Concerned mostly with "the precise detail" of Gilpin's "hypnagogic state"⁵²⁴ described in this excerpt, Miall overlooks the power of this passage to illustrate Gilpin's conception of the imagination as a synthesizer of piecemeal instances of beauty. The imagination collects scattered ideas, transposes, combines, and shifts them into innumerable forms, operations that have little to do with generalization, but which denote a process of selection *par excellence*. It is not only (parts from) physical objects that are worthy of selection, but also relationships among objects, such as point of view, and foreground: hence the artist "who works from imagination, culling a distance here, and there a foreground" is praised for making "a much better landscape" than the one who makes "[e]xact copies [...] [which] can scarcely ever be entirely beautiful."⁵²⁵ Ideal nature may be arrived at also by collecting instances of perfection: thus, if a "difference is apparent between the bole of a beech [...] and that of an oak; between the foliage of an ash, and

⁵²² Miall, "Representing the Picturesque," 89.

⁵²³ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 54 (emphasis added).

⁵²⁴ Miall, "Representing the Picturesque," 89.

⁵²⁵ Gilpin quoted in Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1927), 115.

the foliage of a fir,” then the painter “seizes, and makes use, not only of nature’s *own* materials, but of the best of each kind.”⁵²⁶ Gilpin considers the art of gardening as an improvement of nature by juxtaposing beauties collected from disparate natural scenes, “a simple endeavour to improve nature by herself; to collect ideas of the most beautiful scenery; and to adapt them to different situations; preserving at the same time the natural character of each scene.”⁵²⁷ The process of collecting ideas of the most beautiful scenery, and then putting them together is how Gilpin envisions the informal gardening style. The same doctrine of selecting the most perfect beauties is also centrally relevant to Gilpin’s theory of painting imaginary landscapes:

There are few forms, either in animate, or inanimate nature, which are completely perfect. We seldom see a man, or a horse, without some personal blemish: and as seldom a mountain, or tree, in its most beautiful form. The painter of *fictitious* scenes therefore not only takes his forms from the most compleat individuals, but from the most beautiful parts of each individual as the sculptor gave a purer figure by selecting beautiful parts, than he could have done by taking his model from the most beautiful single form.⁵²⁸

In painting fictitious scenes or constructing fictional landscapes, the painter relies on the selection of parts not only from the best individual, but of best parts from multiple individuals.

⁵²⁶ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 160, 161.

⁵²⁷ William Gilpin, *Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain, Particularly the High-Lands of Scotland: Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1776.*, vol. 2 (London: for T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1808), 142-3. Gilpin departs here from Addison’s theory of gardening as a faithful imitation of natural wilderness.

⁵²⁸ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 161.

Gilpin's theory of idealized imitation of nature has a strong classical grounding that is apparent in an excerpt which reinforces the goal of picturesque artistic compositions to embellish nature:

“The poet's art,” says the abbé Du Bos, “consists in making a good representation of things, that *might have* happened,” and in “embellishing it with proper images.” // Du Bos speaks after Aristotle, whose principle it is, that the poet is not required to relate what has *really happened*, but what *probably might happen*; which Horace translates, when he tells us, the poet, // — ita menitur, sic veris falsa remiscet, // Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imura. // All this as exactly regulates the art of managing *fiction* in landscape, as it does in poetry. And indeed the general rules of the best critics for the direction of the drama, direct us with great propriety in picturesque composition.⁵²⁹

The Aristotelian view of imitation pervades Gilpin's doctrine of picturesque mimesis, and extends, as we have seen, to poetry, drama, and painting. Malcolm Andrews is right to insist that “Gilpin's Picturesque has a decidedly classical or neoclassical foundation in its strong compositional emphasis, its respect for the *beau ideal*, and its predominantly Claudean idiom.”⁵³⁰ What is evinced here is that landscape painting and poetry are informed by the same Aristotelian principles, among which embellishment “with proper images” occupies a privileged position. Gilpin's explicit reference to the activity of *embellishment* indicates the significant overlap between his theory of picturesque art and Addison's theory of poetry. It has become obvious now that there is no radical separation between the processes of rearrangement of nature in picturesque art, and Addisonian artistic embellishment of nature. Picturesque art seeks to embellish nature, among other things, by rearranging it. It is telling that Costelloe no longer perceives a gulf between

⁵²⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 163.

⁵³⁰ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 239. For the influence of Italian landscape painters on the picturesque tradition, see Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in 18th Century England*.

embellishment and rearrangement when he establishes an analogy elsewhere between Joshua Reynolds's theory of painting as embellishment of nature⁵³¹ and the gardening practice of improving a view by rearranging features of the landscape: "There is [...] simply a matter of [...] 'improving' nature through paint on canvas as the gardener 'improves' a view by rearranging features of the landscape: in both cases the aim is to make nature look more like a reconstructed version of herself."⁵³² This is true because embellishment is produced precisely through the synthesizing power of the imagination which rearranges the particulars of nature in novel combinations or forms.

⁵³¹ For a discussion of Joshua Reynolds's theory of imitation, see Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, especially chapter 3, "Techniques of Generalization," pp. 51-68. Cramer holds that "in the late-eighteenth century the process of abstraction was adopted as the core of classical art theory by many thinkers all across Europe. It [...] most fully related to the classical project of idealization by Joshua and the Professors of Painting at the British Royal Academy in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries." Cramer, *Abstraction*, 20. Sarah Howe has analyzed Reynolds's concept of 'general nature' as informed by the process of classical generalization: "the artist's mind [is understood by Reynolds] as a repository of materials gleaned from nature, awaiting 'combination' into a generalized ideal." Sarah Howe, "General and Invariable Ideas of Nature: Joshua Reynolds and His Critical Descendants," *English* 54, no. 208 (March 1, 2005): 1-13, p. 7. Howe demonstrates that Reynolds's theory of 'general nature' also relies on the operation of selection and synthesis of beauties: he was engaged in the act of "bringing together in one piece, those beauties which are dispersed among a great variety of individuals [...]." Howe, "General," 6. Both Reynolds and Gilpin envisioned art as idealization of nature. Giles Tillotson has commented on the closeness between Reynolds's theory of art and the picturesque tradition: "The idea that art could improve on nature through a skilful rearrangement of parts had, after all, been current in European aesthetics since the Renaissance [...] and more recently it had been introduced into English discourse, chiefly through the most eloquent medium of Sir Joshua Reynolds. As early as 1770, Reynolds had been explaining that 'Nature herself is not to be too closely copied. There are excellencies in the art of painting beyond what is commonly called the imitation of nature'; the purpose of studying nature, according to Reynolds, was to learn how to 'correct' her. The picturesque theorists' predilection for irregularity and asymmetry is sometimes characterised as anti-classical, but their belief in the perfectibility of nature through art locates them within the classical tradition of aesthetic theory (and this is scarcely surprising if it is recalled that the picturesque has its origins in a habit of examining natural landscapes in relation to the works of classical landscape painters such as Claude and Gaspard Poussin)." Giles Tillotson, *The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscapes of William Hodges* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 18-9.

⁵³² Timothy M. Costelloe, "Imagination and Internal Sense: The Sublime in Shaftesbury, Reid, Addison, and Reynolds," in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy M. Costelloe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50-63, p. 62.

Why was a close imitation of nature frowned upon whereas idealization was promoted as the sole mimetic model of picturesque art? Idealization accords with the requirement that all picturesque art must depict a harmonious unity or whole. The doctrine that requires the act of subordinating parts to a harmonious whole is explained more fully in Gilpin's *Essay on Prints*:

It is an obvious principle, that one object at a time is enough to engage either the senses or the intellect. Hence the necessity of unity or a whole in painting. The eye, upon a complex view, must be able to comprehend the picture as one object, or it cannot be satisfied. It may be pleased indeed by feeding on the parts separately; but a picture, which can please no otherwise; is as poor a production, as a machine, the springs and wheels of which are finished with nicety, but are unable to act in concert, and effect the intended movement.⁵³³

A faithful rendition of the particular is no longer a worthwhile task for artists because it has detrimental effects on achieving a coherent compositional whole. Gilpin explains that the injunction against mimetic naturalism lies in the assumption that by copying particular nature, artists undermine the possibility of accomplishing a coherent whole: “[w]hen we speak of *copying nature*,” he writes, the imitation is always concerned with “particular *objects*, particular *passages*,” and hardly with “*putting the whole together* in a picturesque manner.”⁵³⁴ In *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, he advises that “the master's great

⁵³³ Gilpin, *An Essay upon Prints*, 9-10. Macarthur has argued that the beginnings of the picturesque lie in the reception of Roger de Piles' books by English theorists, particularly Gilpin. According to Thomas Puttfarken, De Piles' theory marks an epoch in the history of painting because it is the first to conceptualize ideas of composition and pictorial surface: his idea of *coup l'oeil* represents the end of (the Italian age of) fresco which concomitantly signals the importance of understanding the pictorial work as a whole. Thomas Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400-1800* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000). The main argument advanced by Macarthur is that with De Piles, a new concept of picture as a unified whole emerged which influenced the picturesque and predated it only briefly. De Piles' influence on Gilpin is strongly felt in the latter's explicit theorization of unity in painting. John Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, 22.

⁵³⁴ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 159.

care should be, first to contrive a *whole*; and then to adapt the *parts*,” noting that “one of the great errors in painting (as indeed it is in literary, as well as in picturesque composition) [is] to be more attentive to the finishing of *parts*, than to the production of a *whole*.”⁵³⁵ He criticizes Waterloo’s forest landscapes precisely because the painter attempted a mimetic duplicate of particulars with little attention to the achievement of a compositional whole:

Waterlo delighted in these *close forest-scenes*. He penetrated their retreats; and when he found a little opening, or recess, that pleased him, he fixed it on the spot. He studied it's various forms— how the bold portuberances of an old trunk received the light, and shade—how easily the large boughs parted; and how negligently the smaller were interwoven—how elegantly the foliage hung; and what various shapes it's little tuftings exhibited. All these things he observed, and copied with exact attention. His landscape, bare of objects, and of the simplest composition, had little to recommend it, but the observance of the minutiae of nature.⁵³⁶

Gilpin’s *Observations on Forest Scenes* can further throw light on the nature of the blemishes denounced in Waterloo’s compositions. One of the rules for the depiction of forest scenes is not to render figures with botanical exactness: “however beautiful these minuter plants, and wild flowers may be in the natural scene; yet no painter would endeavour to represent them with *exactness*.”⁵³⁷ An “exact copier of nature by a nice representation of such trifles,” he complains “would be esteemed puerile, and pedantic.”⁵³⁸ He recommends that “instead of aiming at the exact representation of any

⁵³⁵ William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery and Other Woodland Views, Illustrated by the Scenes of New-Forest in Hampshire. In Three Books. ... Second Edition.*, ..., vol. 1 (London: Printed for R. Blamire, 1794), 260-1.

⁵³⁶ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, vol. 1, p. 224-5.

⁵³⁷ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, vol. 1, p. 231.

⁵³⁸ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, vol. 1, p. 231.

natural plant; he will more judiciously give the tint he wants in a few random *general touches* of something like nature.”⁵³⁹ Involved too closely in the “observance of the minutiae of nature,” Waterloo’s landscape paintings are devoid of “the simplest composition,” a deplorable aspect which stands in stark contrast with the compositionally unified landscapes of painters like Claude, Poussin, and Salvator:

On the other hand, Claude, Pousin, Salvator, and other masters, who exhibit nature *more at large*, took greater liberties. Their landscapes were generally carried into remote distance; and the beauty of their extensive scenes depended more on *composition*, and *general effect*, than on the exact resemblance of *particular objects*.⁵⁴⁰

There is no doubt that the process of generalization is integral to the depiction of artistic wholes. The implication is that general ideas cannot be expressed in the absence of such a compositional whole. For instance, in his description of his visit to Longleat, Gilpin admits that even the architectural ornaments of Gothic cathedrals “are not considered as *parts*, but are lost in *one vast whole*; and contribute to impress a *general* idea of richness.”⁵⁴¹ In other words, arriving at the general idea of richness is possible only by subordinating ornamental parts to the harmony of the whole.

Gilpin’s own artistic compositions illustrate the powerful affinity between generalization and the achievement of a compositional whole. They also clarify the relation of generalization to roughness, that “quality [...] capable of being illustrated in

⁵³⁹ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, vol. 1, p. 232.

⁵⁴⁰ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, vol. 1, p. 225.

⁵⁴¹ William Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 126.

Painting”⁵⁴² which serves as the basis for the picturesque. He describes his own drawing *Picturesque Mountain Landscape* as a “composition [that] consists in uniting in one whole a variety of parts; and these parts can only be obtained from *rough* objects.”⁵⁴³ This picturesque composition which represents the mountain’s surface as rough and rugged is set in opposition to another composition, *Non-Picturesque Mountain Landscape*, in which the mountain’s surface is depicted as excessively smooth, in uniform lighting, and programmatically reduced to a curvilinear form.

If generalization plays a central role in the accomplishment of artistic or pictorial unity, how does it square with the other important requirement of picturesque art which is referenced by Gilpin here, namely the presence of rough objects? What is, then, the relationship that obtains between the quality of roughness on the one hand, and the need for a coherent whole in picturesque compositions? Cramer has done an excellent job explaining the relationship Gilpin envisages between the two requirements of picturesque landscapes: an emphasis on roughness, and the desideratum that the work be a coherent whole.

⁵⁴² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 3. According to Gilpin, the main quality of the picturesque is roughness of surface or ruggedness in the delineation of bodies. He gives the following examples of objects instantiating this quality: a ruin, a broken ground, rugged oaks, broken edges of the walk, the rudeness of a road marked with wheel-tracks, stones and brushwood scattered around. Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 6-8.

⁵⁴³ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 19. David Martyn has analyzed the aptness of Gilpin’s description of his own drawing *Picturesque Mountain Landscape* as a composition uniting in one whole a variety of parts: he “has found a way to retain the well-rounded curves of the first version, monotonous in their regularity, but this time without sacrificing the focus on variety, intricacy, and the singular details that can make an image interesting or artistically compelling.” David Martyn, “The Picturesque as Art of the Average: Stifter’s Statistical Poetics of Observation,” *Monatshefte* 105, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 426–42, p. 432.



Figure 1. William Gilpin. *Picturesque Mountain Landscape.*



Figure 2. William Gilpin. *Non-Picturesque Mountain Landscape.*

Cramer has analyzed Gilpin's drawing *The General Idea of Keswick-lake* through the lens of some of Gilpin's own theoretical pronouncements and has shown how it conforms to the process of generalization.⁵⁴⁴ In the third of his *Three Essays*, "The Art of Sketching Landscapes," Gilpin makes it clear that the search for the picturesque starts with the need to "fix your point of view" so that you may discern "how to reduce it properly within the compass of your paper."⁵⁴⁵ Cramer notes that the *Keswick Lake* is a carefully framed composition. According to him, the Claude Glass generalizes nature because its "tinting subdues the variety of colors and the range of values" while carefully framing the whole.⁵⁴⁶ Gilpin's *Keswick Lake* "began in the empirical observation of 'particular nature' and ended [...] in a 'general idea,' and indeed Gilpin's process of deriving what he called 'Picturesque Beauty' from the English landscape conforms closely to the epistemology and techniques of classical generalization."⁵⁴⁷

The quality of roughness as well as the desideratum of a unified composition are held together by the process of generalization. Through generalization, the extremes are abstracted or abandoned, and the average or mean is derived. On Cramer's view, the chief manifestation of this process in Gilpin's theory of the picturesque is the dialectical tension between the (extreme instance of the) formal quality of roughness or irregularity (that characterizes the middle and the right screens of the Keswick Lake) and the

⁵⁴⁴ Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, 85-89.

⁵⁴⁵ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 63.

⁵⁴⁶ Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, 86.

⁵⁴⁷ Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, 85.

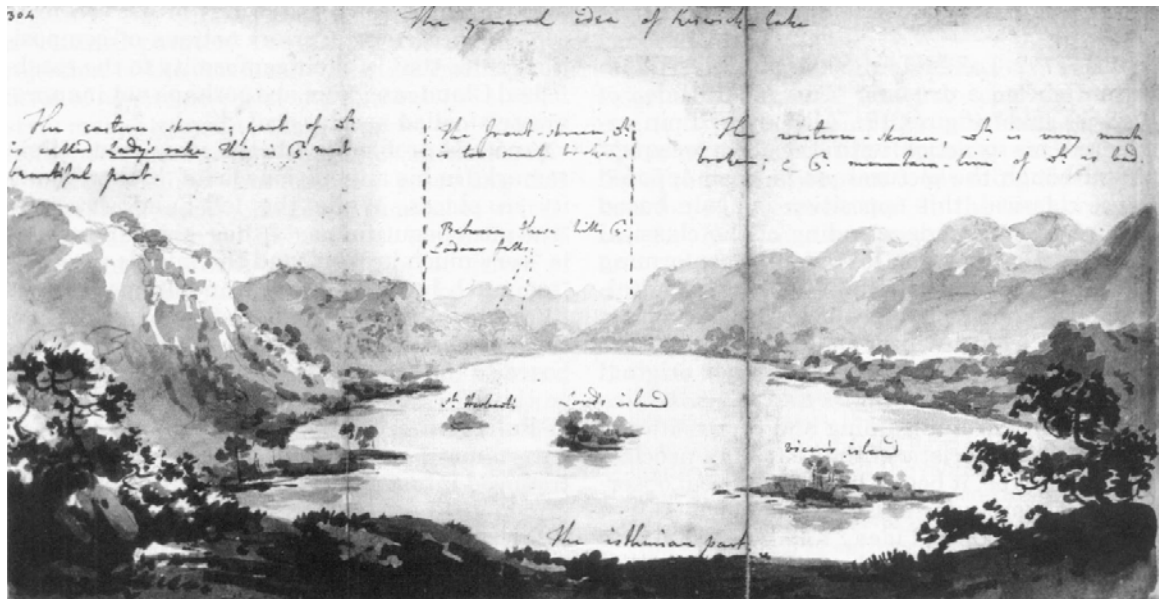


Figure 3. William Gilpin, *The General Idea of Keswick-lake*, from his MS Lakes tour notebook, 1772. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford MS. Eng. Misc. e. 488/3, drawing between fols. 303 and 304.

attainment (through the use of the Claude Glass) of a unified composition that is muted and general.⁵⁴⁸ Ultimately, for Gilpin, the practice of picturesque generalization is “a process of compensation for extremes,” a technique of “arriving at the ideal by eliminating imperfections.”⁵⁴⁹ The ideal is understood as the average compensating for two extremes: roughness individuality (of the particular) and muted generality (of the whole).⁵⁵⁰

It must be underlined that our concern so far has been exclusively with Gilpin’s theory of artistic imitation, and as I argued, the production of picturesque art relies on a theory of ideal imitation that is fundamentally similar to Addison’s theory of poetry.

Taking account of this important similarity allows us to conclude that, insofar as a theory

⁵⁴⁸ Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, 86. “So on one hand, the properly picturesque is the rough and ruffled, and on the other hand it is the muted and general: how can both be true? // Both are true because for Gilpin, the picturesque does not consist in any fixed formal value, but in a process of compensation for extremes. When Gilpin describes the picturesque as “rough,” it is a roughening of what once was smooth and symmetrical (Palladian architecture, the youthful face); and when Gilpin describes the salubrious unifying effects of the Claude Glass, it is a unification of the variety of particular nature. Gilpin’s picturesque is best described in the form of a dialectic: where the smooth regularity of Palladian architecture requires correction by way of a mallet, the broken irregularity of Keswick Lake requires correction by way of Claude; each form of extreme soliciting its opposite by way of compensation.” Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, 86.

⁵⁴⁹ Cramer, *Abstraction and the Classical Ideal*, 30, 86.

⁵⁵⁰ Martyn has argued that the picturesque is the art of the average because “true observation involves a process that lets the usual or the average come into focus by eclipsing exceptional singularities that would distract from or skew the view of the whole.” Martyn, “The Picturesque,” 427. He proceeds to show that Gilpin’s *Picturesque Mountain Landscape* obeys the rules of statistical average while simultaneously embodying variety and striking individuality: “the three evenly sloping hills in the first drawing relate to the salient details of the second like statistical bell curves to an artistic drawing that respects the truth of statistical averages without sacrificing its signature focus on striking details. The curves are true but boring and artistically unaffacting; the detailed landscape presents the same underlying truth with the force of artistic expression. Instead of giving us the true but boringly smooth form of the statistical curve, the picturesque gives us striking and interesting singularities—but singularities which, when combined, obey the law of the statistical mean.” Martyn, “The Picturesque,” 435. Essentially, the accomplishment of picturesque art is, according to Martyn, “a presentation of truth—the common or average that constitutes the type—with the affective force of expression that only a focus on the particular and the individual can provide.” Martyn, “The Picturesque,” 434.

of imitation is concerned, the novelty of Gilpin's picturesque aesthetic is not to be found in his theory of art. Rather, as I will show next, the innovation has to do with a novel application of imitation to the picturesque model of nature appreciation. In the next section below, an analysis of this model will involve us first in the task of tracing a continuity between the picturesque approach to nature appreciation and Addison's notion of the secondary pleasures of the imagination.

4.2 Picturesque Appreciation of Nature: from the Accidental to the "Voluntary" Resemblance of Nature to Art

There is a continuity between Addison's notion of the secondary pleasures of the imagination and Gilpin's concept of the picturesque. Paulson, for instance, notes that "Gilpin's aesthetics of the Picturesque, formulated in the 1780s but developed as early as the 1740s, begins with Addison's Secondary Pleasures, the area of the picturable."⁵⁵¹

Emphasizing the origin of secondary pleasures in the association of ideas, Andrew Ballantyne expands on their affinity to the picturesque:

Joseph Addison did not use the term ['picturesque'] but coined the expression [secondary] 'pleasures of the imagination' to designate the practice of associating memories of images with the scene before one's eyes. He argued that works of nature were to be preferred to works of art, but that 'we find the works of Nature

⁵⁵¹ Ronald Paulson, *The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange*, 225. Paulson suggests that "Gilpin's sense of the Picturesque as making picturable something that is beautiful or sublime goes back to Addison's *Novel* as that which 'improves what is great or beautiful, and makes it afford the Mind a double Entertainment' or 'enlivens a Prospect' (as opposed to the Beautiful, which only 'finishes')." Paulson, *The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange*, 225. Along these lines, Costelloe notes that Gilpin's "work also reveals at least some familiarity with the tradition of eighteenth-century aesthetics (he cites Burke explicitly), and he draws freely on ideas familiar from the tradition, notably that of pleasure in the 'sources of amusement' that inspire 'picturesque travel,' and the categories of variety and novelty in the form of enlarging the mind's stock of ideas to engage the imagination." Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 140.

still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art' [...]. *So nature is admired, but admired most when it resembles art.* Therefore, to fall in with Addison's sensibility, in order properly to appreciate nature one must have a knowledge of art and be able to call it to mind. Hence it follows that as the term 'picturesque' came to be used, it would mean that a natural scene evoked the work of painters, and when it was used it would be a term of approbation [...].⁵⁵²

According to Ballantyne, Gilpin's picturesque lines up with Addison's associative sensibility because it allows genuine pleasure to flow from the accidental resemblance of nature to art. I shall argue that the picturesque appreciation of nature supplements the merely accidental with the "voluntary" resemblance of nature to art pursued by the viewer who purposely alters nature mentally to make it look like artistic compositions. Before the notion of voluntary resemblance can be fully articulated, it is necessary to demonstrate that the beginnings of the picturesque appreciation of nature are found, as Paulson and Ballantyne have noticed, in Addison's theory of the associative secondary pleasures of imagination.

Addison's prototype of nature eliciting secondary pleasures of the imagination is represented by the accidental landscape figure perceived in the grotto, an example which

⁵⁵² Andrew Ballantyne, "The Picturesque and its Development," in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 116–24, p. 120. Ballantyne explains that, because the picturesque starts with associationism, it has a strong involuntary basis: "[i]n eighteenth-century aesthetic theory the role of the association of ideas was seen as important in the appreciation of any art, whether it be painting or literature. [...] 'Picturesque' had originally meant *after the manner of painters*, and an associationist would see as picturesque that which calls the work of painters to mind. What is to be gained by making such associations in the mind? It might be thought that a beautiful view would be beautiful whether or not it brought to mind the work of painters, and indeed it might arguably have been so, even in the eighteenth century, but in such a case the beauty of the scene would not have been picturesque. A picturesque scene in nature, because it brought to mind the work of great master [...]." Ballantyne, "The Picturesque and its Development," 119. It will be shown in this section that the picturesque does not only entail the passive mechanism of bringing to the viewer's mind similarities between natural scenes and the work of great masters, but it promotes the active process of changing nature to make it resemble human art.

may be conceptualized as an aesthetics of pareidolia.⁵⁵³ According to this aesthetic, the viewer takes pleasure in comparing the idea of landscape (the original) with the accidentally produced landscape in the grotto (a copy).⁵⁵⁴ As Addison's travel writings are replete with examples of nature eliciting secondary pleasures, it is necessary to pause over one such example to foreground the remarkable continuity between his category of secondary pleasures and Gilpin's picturesque aesthetic. Addison's description of the Roman Campania at Albano is worth quoting here:

There is nothing at Albano so remarkable as the prospect [...] [which] takes in the whole Campania, and terminates in a full view of the Mediterranean. You have a sight at the same time of the Alban lake, which lies just by in an oval figure of about seven miles round, and, by reason of the continued circuit of high mountains that incompass it, looks like the Area of some *vast amphitheatre*.⁵⁵⁵

John Dixon Hunt has suggested that Addison's likening of the Roman Campania to a theatre set is indicative of the way natural scenery "seem[s] to be shaped by the human imagination even when it is in fact untouched."⁵⁵⁶ And since this operation relies on the mental processes of the speaker, Hunt adds, "natural objects may look artful to those who know their art."⁵⁵⁷ The same aesthetics of weaving design in happenstance underlies the appreciation of the campagna as an amphitheater, as much as it enables experiencing the grotto fretwork as a landscape. For Addison, even though untouched, nature may accidentally give the appearance of a work of human agency.

⁵⁵³ See my discussion of 'pareidolia' in section 3.1 above.

⁵⁵⁴ "Secondary Pleasure of the Imagination proceeds from that Action of the Mind, which *compares* the Ideas arising from the Original Objects, with the Ideas we receive from the Statue, Picture, Description, or Sound that represents them." Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 560.

⁵⁵⁵ Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, 218-9 (emphasis added).

⁵⁵⁶ Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, 95.

⁵⁵⁷ Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, 95 (emphasis added).

It is the same logic of accidental resemblance that inspires the beginning of Gilpin's picturesque approach to nature. Thus, in the opening of his *Observations of the River Wye*, Gilpin announces that his work "proposes a new object of pursuit; that of examining the face of a country *by the rules of picturesque beauty*: opening the sources of those pleasures, which are derived from the comparison."⁵⁵⁸ The phrasing betrays Gilpin's familiarity with the act of comparison involved in Addison's secondary pleasures which, according to Malcolm Andrews, were of such "crucial importance for the Picturesque tourists" that they became "their primary pleasure."⁵⁵⁹ An exemplary instance of the use of accidental resemblance for the picturesque aesthetic is reflected in Samuel Rogers's exclamation on his Wales tour that he has "seen a ragged shepherd boy [...] throw himself down in an attitude that Raphael would not have disdained to

⁵⁵⁸ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye: And Several Parts of South Wales, &c. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770*, Second Edition, (London: Printed for R. Blamire, 1789), 1-2.

⁵⁵⁹ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 39. "As we have seen, one of the chief excitements for the Picturesque tourist was the recognition and tracing of resemblances between art and nature." Andrews, *The Search*, 39. There is also some textual evidence showing that Gilpin was indeed familiar with Addison's primary and secondary pleasures of the imagination. One example is his description of the vale of Matlock which indicates that nature can elicit both primary pleasures arising from direct apprehension as well as secondary pleasures from association with fantastic literature: "It is impossible to view such scenes as these [of the vale of Matlock], without feeling the imagination take fire. [...]. Every object here, is sublime, and wonderful. Not only the eye is pleased; but the imagination is filled. We are carried at once into the fields of fiction, and romance. Enthusiastic ideas take possession of us; and we suppose ourselves among the inhabitants of fabled times." Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 223. Gilpin's own distinction between the pleasure of the eye and that of the imagination appears to map onto the primary, and the secondary pleasures of the imagination, respectively. Accordingly, it is impossible to view the vale of Matlock simply as a primary pleasure of the imagination eliciting the sublime and the wonderful, without also taking secondary pleasure in comparing it to "fields of fiction and romance." Gilpin appears to follow Addison who somewhere in his imagination papers formulates the secondary pleasures in the language of romance: "our souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion, and we walk about like the enchanted hero of a romance, who sees beautiful castles, woods and meadows; and at the same time hears the warbling birds, and the purling streams." Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol.3, p. 546.

copy.”⁵⁶⁰ According to Andrews, “[t]his is life *accidentally* imitating art – the purest of Picturesque pleasures.”⁵⁶¹ The beginning of the picturesque lies in nature’s accidental resemblance to art, an aspect conveyed most unambiguously in *Observations on the Highlands of Scotland* where Gilpin offers a suggestive description of the landscape at Hackfall. It is the view of Mowbray-point from Limus-Hall that is “opened in a very natural, masterly manner,”⁵⁶² where “nature has [...] not only brought her materials together, but has composed them likewise.”⁵⁶³ The landscape at Hawick lends itself to a similar reading:

Hawick has a romantic situation among rocks, sounding rivers, cataracts, and bridges; all of which are very picturesque. When we meet with objects of this kind (*the result of nature, and chance,*) what contempt do they throw upon the laboured works of art? There is more picturesque beauty in the old bridge at Hawick, than in the most elegant piece of new-made river scenery. [...]. All I mean, is, that the picturesque eye has that kind of fastidiousness about it, that it is seldom pleased with any artificial attempts to please. It must find it's own beauties; and often fixes, as here, on some *accidental, rough object, which the common eye would pass unnoticed.*⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁰ Rogers quoted in Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 40.

⁵⁶¹ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 40 (emphasis added).

⁵⁶² Gilpin, *Observations on...the High-Lands of Scotland*, vol. 2, p. 195.

⁵⁶³ Gilpin, *Observations on...the High-Lands of Scotland*, vol. 2, p. 196. It must be added that, on Gilpin’s view, the accidentally picturesque aesthetic effect of the scenes at Hackfall is ultimately ruined by its owner, William Aislable, who added to the landscape “an awkward cascade—a fountain—a view through a hole cut in a wood.” Gilpin calls these “puerilities of improvement” showing nothing but an “absurd taste.” Gilpin, *Observations on...the High-Lands of Scotland*, vol. 2, p. 196.

⁵⁶⁴ Gilpin, *Observations on...the High-Lands of Scotland*, vol. 1, p. 49 (emphasis added). Nature may, on rare occasions, produce natural bridges: “When Nature *mimics* (if I may so speak) the works of man, for bridges are not a natural production, you see the comparative magnificence of her operations not only in their vastness, but in the careless simplicity with which they are wrought.” Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 181. Although “[a] bridge in itself is one of the most beautiful of *artificial* objects,” (Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 99, emphasis added), it can acquire a distinctive patina with age which is solely the effect of nature. Ruins also represent the effect of nature (on art): “It is the hand of nature alone, that can confer that grandeur, and solemnity in which ruins delight.” William Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire, Sussex, and Kent, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: Made in the Summer of ... 1774. [with Plates.]*. (T. Cadell and W. Davies: London, 1804), 52. Elsewhere, we are reminded of “the sacred character of ruins which, rooted for centuries in the same soil were assimilated to it and became part of it; rather than works of art they were considered works of nature.” Gilpin, *Observations...on Several Parts of England*, 188.

The rocks, rivers, cataracts, and even the bridges that compose the scene at Hawick are supremely picturesque precisely because they are “the result of nature and chance.” They are picturesque in virtue of their accidental approximation to the conventions of landscape painting. This is a case where the scene looks as if painted, where “[n]ature [is unconsciously] adapting herself to art in such a way as fully to satisfy the Picturesque appetite.”⁵⁶⁵ As Martin Price rightly remarked, the picturesque beings “with the arbitrary and the accidental,” with “a readiness to learn from and exploit accident.”⁵⁶⁶

Gilpin would contrast Hawick’s accidentally picturesque landscape with Selkirk’s unpicturesque scenery which must be altered to become picturesque. At Selkirk, the “naked mountains form poor composition” much the same way as “in history-painting, figures without drapery, and other appendages make but an indifferent group.”⁵⁶⁷ Mountains, he continues, “require the drapery of a little wood to break the simplicity of their shapes, to produce contrasts, to connect one part with another; and to give that richness in landscape, which is one of it’s greatest ornaments.”⁵⁶⁸ The contrastive relationship between the accidental and the voluntary resemblance of nature to art carries over to Gilpin’s distinction between a ‘scene of mountains’ and a ‘mountain scene’ as occasioned by his travels between the English towns of Ambleside and Keswick:

But before we enter these majestic scenes, it may be necessary to premise a distinction between a *scene of mountains*, and a *mountain scene*. // Mountainous

⁵⁶⁵ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 172.

⁵⁶⁶ Martin Price, “The Picturesque Moment,” in *From Sensibility to Romanticism; Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. Frederick W. Hilles, Frederick A. Pottle, and Harold Bloom (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 259–92, p. 285.

⁵⁶⁷ Gilpin, *Observations on...the High-Lands of Scotland*, vol. 1, p. 50.

⁵⁶⁸ Gilpin, *Observations on...the High-Lands of Scotland*, vol. 1, p. 50.

countries most commonly present only the former. The objects are grand; but they are huddled together, confused, without connection; and the painter considers them only as *studies*; and forms them into pictures by *imaginary combinations*. // We sometimes however see a mountainous country, in which nature itself hath made these beautiful combinations—where one part relates to another, and the effect of a whole is produced. This is what I call a *mountain scene*.⁵⁶⁹

In mountain scenes, nature makes involuntary combinations that look artful to the human eye, as when it presents itself to the beholder as accidentally producing an artistic whole. By contrast, scenes of mountains are compositionally incoherent unless mentally transformed by means of picturesque conventions. As these examples show, Gilpin supplements nature's accidental resemblance to art with a mode of appreciation where nature is modified to look like artistic compositions. Andrews has stressed that according to this way of appreciating nature, the "unfolding scenery is formally arrested at a point where the composition of landscape features most closely corresponds to a landscape painting."⁵⁷⁰ As I want to show next, the voluntary resemblance of nature to art, a process foreign to Addison, is integral to Gilpin's development of a landscape model of aesthetically appreciating nature.

Gilpin recommended traveling to various spots in England to "discover" the picturesque and began a series of travel publications in 1786. In *The Second Essay, on Picturesque Travel* (1794), Gilpin informs his readers that the "object" of picturesque

⁵⁶⁹ Gilpin, *Observations...on Several Parts of England*, 168.

⁵⁷⁰ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 232. Andrews underscores the contrast between Gilpin's approach to scenery and Dorothy Wordsworth's desire to "dissolve these established viewpoints back into the movement of the tour and recover the *pleasures of accidental discovery*." Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 232 (emphasis added).

travel is “chiefly that species of *beauty* [...] under the name of *picturesque*.”⁵⁷¹ As he continues, the goal is to

pursue [the picturesque] through the *scenery* of nature. We seek it among all the ingredients of landscape—trees—rocks—broken grounds—woods—rivers—lakes—plains—vallis—mountains—and distances.⁵⁷²

To appreciate nature, Gilpin develops a two-pronged landscape model whereby viewers must first “obtain a sudden glance”⁵⁷³ of nature and then examine “the beautiful scenes [...] found.”⁵⁷⁴ The first step is described as a “chace”⁵⁷⁵ or a pursuit of various beauties, and has its origins in “the love of novelty” which keeps the mind “in an agreeable suspense.”⁵⁷⁶ It involves the selection of scenes to attend to in the second stage. The second stage is the “attainment of the object”⁵⁷⁷ which consists in analyzing the scene in terms of parts and wholes. Wholes involve admiring “the composition, the colouring and light, in one comprehensive view.”⁵⁷⁸ But since nature only rarely provides us with wholes for appreciation, we might just analyze parts of scenes: “[b]ut as we have less frequent opportunities of being thus gratified [with wholes], we are more commonly employed in analyzing the *parts of scenes* [...]”⁵⁷⁹ The viewer is encouraged to put parts together and create imagined wholes, just like a painter is free to put all the elements together on canvas: “we examine what would amend the composition; how little is

⁵⁷¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 42.

⁵⁷² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 42.

⁵⁷³ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 48.

⁵⁷⁴ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 48.

⁵⁷⁵ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 48.

⁵⁷⁶ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 47-8. See the beginning of the current section for Paulson’s comment on the relation of the picturesque to Addison’s aesthetics of novelty.

⁵⁷⁷ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 48.

⁵⁷⁸ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49.

⁵⁷⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49 (emphasis added).

wanting to reduce it to the rules of art.”⁵⁸⁰ In making wholes out of parts, the viewers rely on the process of comparing real objects before them with “other objects of the same kind;—or perhaps [...] compare them with the imitations of art.”⁵⁸¹ Once the mental transformation of nature is complete, the scene becomes “well laid out, it exhibits lines, and principles of landscape.”⁵⁸² Appreciated in a picturesque manner, nature is made to display, on Costelloe’s view, an “artifice of fictional wholes that lack corresponding originals.”⁵⁸³

Gilpin’s quest for the picturesque involves searching nature for the protoartificial, thus realizing that potential for artifice by correcting nature’s defects.⁵⁸⁴ These defects must be corrected should the scene exhibit principles of landscape painting. Thus, in *Observations on the River Wye*, Gilpin remarks how a poor composer nature is:

she is seldom so correct in composition, as to produce a harmonious whole. Either the foreground, or the background, is disproportioned; or some awkward line runs across the piece; or a tree is ill-placed; or a bank is formal; or something or other is not exactly what it should be.⁵⁸⁵

Elsewhere, he is more systematic on the defects of nature, which can be of three kinds: the absence of characteristic objects displaying roughness or ruggedness (lack of variety); the scene is broken into too many parts (excessive variety); and the lack of a proper point of view: “an easy sweep of the Wye and of the *extensive* country beyond it. But it is not

⁵⁸⁰ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49.

⁵⁸¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49.

⁵⁸² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 45.

⁵⁸³ Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 142.

⁵⁸⁴ Janice Hewlett. Koelb, *Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 105.

⁵⁸⁵ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 31.

picturesque. It is marked by no characteristic objects; it is broken into too many parts; and it is seen from too high a point.”⁵⁸⁶

We must now return to my claim that Gilpin’s theory of *artistic* imitation is less consequential to the evolution of the relation of art to nature in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, than his innovative use of imitation in his model of nature appreciation. Bate has gone so far as to locate the innovation of Gilpin’s project in a total reversal of the terms of the classical mimetic model: the “picturesque was among the first artistic movements in history to throw out the Classical premiss that art should imitate nature and to propose instead that nature should imitate art.”⁵⁸⁷ As I have taken pains to show, Gilpin’s theory of picturesque mimesis is not an abandonment, but a reaffirmation of the classical premise that art should provide an idealized imitation of nature. Given this strong classical basis of his theory of picturesque art, Gilpin cannot earn the status of innovator solely for his conception of artistic mimesis. The novelty of his picturesque project is conveyed in the second half of Bate’s assertion where it is stated that for Gilpin “nature should imitate art.” It makes perfect sense to say that for Gilpin nature should imitate art because, as I have shown in this section, the appreciation of the nature relies heavily on the viewer’s voluntary modification of the natural world through the lens of artistic conventions.

Additional arguments may be given in support of my assertion that, in terms of mimesis, Gilpin’s innovation is to be found not so much in his theory of art, but in his

⁵⁸⁶ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 14.

⁵⁸⁷ Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 136.

model of nature appreciation. Kim Ian Michisaw has argued that, contrary to his successors who also theorized the picturesque, Gilpin wrote mainly for “powerless tourists” who were only capable of engaging in the imaginary, rather than the physical rearrangement of nature.⁵⁸⁸ As Michisaw’s argument goes, informed by Gilpin’s own socio-economical condition, the picturesque promoted the visual appropriation of nature by travelers like himself who did not possess any land to physically transform. Robin Jarvis has also pleaded for exploring the picturesque not so much as an art term, but “with[in] the levelling ethos of pedestrian tourism.”⁵⁸⁹ He notes that the emergent idea of tourism—which overlaps to a significant degree with the appreciation of the natural world—cannot be properly articulated if no distinction is observed between the imaginary transformation of nature, which is carried out by the picturesque tourist, and the physical transformation of land(scape), which is the task of, say, the picturesque gardener.⁵⁹⁰

Although Jarvis agrees that Gilpin’s aesthetic project relies on the preeminence of the visual transformation of nature, he appears to downplay its significance by describing it as a less radical activity than the physical appropriation of land(scape):

the picturesque tourist who razes a cottage to the ground, or turns the course of a road, in a sketch or in the mind's eye is not on a par with the monopolising landlord or the enclosure commissioner: the satisfaction he finds in aesthetic play

⁵⁸⁸ Kim Ian Michasiw, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” *Representations*, No. 38 (Spring, 1992): 76-100, p. 94.

⁵⁸⁹ Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press; New York, 1997), 54.

⁵⁹⁰ “[T]he distinction between an actual, physical transformation of the land and a merely imaginary rearrangement of its features would seem to be one worth retaining, rather than blurring, and it is certainly crucial to any attempt to articulate the picturesque with the levelling ethos of pedestrian touring.” Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*, 54.

alters nothing and displaces nobody – the only displacement such play effects is of the mental representation of the landscape-in-itself [...].⁵⁹¹

By emphasizing the tourist's involvement in a sort of light mental play, Jarvis considers the more radical activity as that which effects a material change in the natural world, rather than a purely mental one. A landscape gardener is involved in a more radical pursuit than a traveler because the former is not only visualizing nature's improvement in one's imagination but must also physically alter nature to make it resemble art. Andrews reaches the same conclusion when comparing the aims of the landscape gardener and the tourist: "[t]o place Nature under the direction of Art for the purposes of improvement is the professional role of the landscape gardener. The Picturesque tourist is *simply* carrying on this function, but in the imagination only [...]."⁵⁹²

If judged solely by its lack of physical intervention in the natural world, picturesque landscape appreciation may be properly described in deflationary terms in the manner of Jarvis and Andrews. We must resist the urge, however, to conclude that just because the visual appropriation of nature effects no material changes in the natural world, it must necessarily be construed as some sort of innocuous mental play on the viewer's part. If one pursues the relevance of Gilpin's project for the evolution of the relation between art and nature, the very reverse can be argued: the picturesque traveler is engaged in a more radical pursuit than the landscape gardener. It is already implied that the artist's aim is to create an artistic product by utilizing certain mimetic rules that

⁵⁹¹ Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*, 64.

⁵⁹² Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 55 (emphasis added).

necessarily result in either the transformation of the natural world itself, or its representation on canvas. The intention of the traveler, on the other hand, is to appreciate nature, and much of the eighteenth-century aesthetic appreciation of nature was carried out through concepts such as natural beauty, sublimity, and novelty, terms that were employed without any explicit reference to the human artistic process.⁵⁹³ The picturesque innovates because it straightforwardly transfers the language of pictorial art to the appreciation of the natural world, thus promoting an art-centric model that drives one's appreciation.

This transfer of the language of art to the appreciation of nature has been acknowledged by several scholars. Noël Carroll has perspicaciously observed that this model "looks to fine art as a precedent and invites us to contemplate nature as if it were a landscape painting, appreciating such features as coloration and design."⁵⁹⁴ Carl Barbier asserts that the term 'picturesque' made use of pictorial vocabulary to promote the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Thus, Gilpin

transferred it from the realm of art criticism and made it available as an instrument—admittedly a pictorial instrument—for the analysis, the description, and finally the representation of natural scenery. But the Picturesque is much more than that. It is a frame of mind, *an aesthetic attitude* involving man in a direct and active relationship with the natural scenery through which he travels.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹³ I am aware of the argument that, in fact, eighteenth-century aesthetics is all art-centric, and when aestheticians describe the work of nature as God's art, they are already contaminated by the vocabulary of art. I do not deny this claim, but I am arguing here for a distinctive phase recognizable in the eighteenth century whereby nature becomes explicitly, rather than only implicitly or indirectly, appreciated through artistic terms.

⁵⁹⁴ Noël Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty, and the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 244–66, p. 248.

⁵⁹⁵ Carl Paul Barbier, *William Gilpin: His Drawings, Teaching, and the Theory of the Picturesque* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 99.

Similarly, Macarthur has remarked that Gilpin is “likely to have been the first person to use ‘picturesque’ as an adjective for natural, as opposed to painted, scenery,”⁵⁹⁶ while Hussey accentuated that

[p]ictures were [...] taken as the guide for how to see, because painting is the art of seeing, and in landscape painting the visual qualities of nature are accentuated. As soon as the imagination had absorbed what painting had to teach, it could feel for itself, and the intermediate process, of proving the truth of the visual sensation by a *comparison* to painting, could be dropped.⁵⁹⁷

I only wish to draw attention to a common thread that runs through the descriptions offered by these scholars. The picturesque begins exclusively as an engagement with pictorial art which idealizes nature but ends with the appreciation of nature itself through such pictorial rules. The novelty of Gilpin’s picturesque, then, has to do with making nature’s “voluntary” resemblance to art a standalone task that came to be integral to the viewing of landscape. The emphasis is here on the viewer’s effort to mentally modify the scene according to picturesque rules and conventions. Sketching, landscape painting, and all picturesque art, for that matter, may be said to require such attitude, but when this attitude is divorced from the process of art making, its consequences are even more revolutionary. This way of appreciating nature through the lens of picturesque conventions is concurrent with a significant decline in the experience of the natural

⁵⁹⁶ Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, 34.

⁵⁹⁷ Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, 4-5 (emphasis added). A similar interpretation is offered by Macarthur: “Gilpin’s picturesque is all a matter of painting and drawing; it is a quality of pictures in pictures. [...]. Nevertheless, Gilpin loosens the connection of the discipline of painting from pictures by presenting his own drawings and thoughts about them, not as objects for emulation by painters, but as a practice of seeing and judging the world.” Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, 40. Gilpin “extends the term [picturesque] to phenomenal views,” and as such, when he “advises on the invention of foregrounds in a sketch, or the *purely mental play* of moving hills for the picturesque traveller, he is proposing that one should supply surface, boundary and frame – that is, the image-field of the picture – which is still *slightly novel in his time*.” Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, 40 (emphasis added).

sublime which, as I argue in the next section below, is traced to Gilpin's skepticism about the ability of human reason to apprehend the vast design of the natural world.

4.3 Gilpin and the Skeptical Sublime

For all three aestheticians covered in this study, the sublime lends itself to powerful experiences in which humans respond to the property of vastness in the natural world. Although all acknowledge that experiences of the natural sublime overwhelm our visual and imaginative capacities, it will be argued that for Gilpin the sublime also exceeds the grasp of reason. It is the main aim of this section to provide a more comprehensive account of Gilpin's skeptical sublime by contrasting it with the optimistic conceptions of Addison and Shaftesbury.⁵⁹⁸ Gilpin distances himself from Addison's notion of the sublime that stressed the gradual enlargement of the imagination which, in its unsuccessful attempts to grapple with vast objects, was ultimately aided by the power of reason to supply us with abstract concepts such as 'infinity' or 'God'. Gilpin departs in equal measure from Shaftesbury's version of the sublime which promoted enthusiasm as enabling the intuition of the order and harmony of the universe. Because the encounter with the sublime emphasizes the limitations of the rational self when faced with vastness,

⁵⁹⁸ I am drawing on David L. Sedley's thesis that debates about the sublime have revolved around two positions, emphasizing either the transcendence or the finitude of the self: "the sublime provides either a way out of skepticism or a way into it. Some theorists interpret human appreciation of the transcendence of understanding implicit in sublimity as indicating something beyond mere cognition and thus as anchoring epistemology and ethics. Others find in the sublime not the removal but the institution of skepticism; they take the defeat of understanding by the sublime as a sign of human incapacity for knowledge or morality." David L. Sedley, "Sublimity and Skepticism in Montaigne," *PMLA* 113, no. 5 (October 1998): 1079–92, p. 1079.

Gilpin resolves that the only appropriate way to confront vastness is by reducing it to a compositional whole dictated by his picturesque model of aesthetic appreciation. The relation of the natural sublime to the picturesque is analyzed in more depth in the next section below where I contend that the appreciation of nature through picturesque conventions, and full-blown experiences of the natural sublime are mutually exclusive. For the time being it is necessary to document the presence of the natural sublime in Gilpin's works so that his skeptical account of it can be properly canvassed.

Like many of his predecessors, Gilpin believes that the most exquisite experiences of sublimity are aroused by natural objects, such as oceans. He states that the "chief subject" of his *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire, Sussex, and Kent* is "coast scenery, [...] [where] the ideas of *grandeur* rise very high."⁵⁹⁹ He goes on to list examples of natural sublimity as varied as "[w]inding bays," "views of the ocean," "promontories," "rocks of every kind and form," "estuaries," "mouths of rivers," "islands," "shooting peninsulas," and "extensive landscapes"⁶⁰⁰ more generally. The power of the ocean to produce sublime effects is attributed to both its "stillness," as well as to "the sublimity of [its] storms."⁶⁰¹

The ocean's sublimity emerges as a relevant topic in Gilpin's *A Defense of Polite Arts*, an imagined dialogue between Lord Burleigh and Sir Philip Sidney. The two

⁵⁹⁹ Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, 3 (emphasis added).

⁶⁰⁰ Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, 3.

⁶⁰¹ Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, 4. Ocean storms create notably sublime effects when the "immense masses of water [...] [are] rising in some parts to an awful height, and sinking in others into dark abysses; rolling in vast volumes clashing with each other; then braking and flashing light in every direction." Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, 4-5.

speakers entertain different views of the sublime. “I remember,” the first interlocutor says,

when I first saw the ocean, I recoiled some paces back; my sensation was *only astonishment*; but if I had the young Lord Clifford’s pious disposition, I might have turned my astonishment into devotion.⁶⁰²

Couched in the language of “sensation,” Lord Burleigh’s sublime amounts to a physiological state of astonishment devoid of any sense of religious devotion. A similar stress on the physiological may be discerned in Gilpin’s own acknowledgment elsewhere that “[w]e rather *feel* [the sublime], than *survey* it,”⁶⁰³ a statement which underlies, on Joseph Viscomi’s view, that the sublime is “wrought with a sense of physicality” whereby “nature is experienced bodily, within hand’s reach.”⁶⁰⁴ Viscomi’s reading is corroborated by Gilpin’s assertion that “frequently what we call sublime is the effect of that heat and fermentation, which ensues in the imagination from it’s ineffectual efforts to conceive some dark, obscure idea beyond it’s grasp.”⁶⁰⁵ The sublime is, again, cast in purely physiological terms: objects too vast for our perception produce heat and fermentation in the imagination.

James Kirwan has read Gilpin’s passage on “heat and fermentation” as evidence of the idea that sublimity “is in no way the seal of the truly transcendental.”⁶⁰⁶ Kirwan’s

⁶⁰² William Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects* (London: Published by T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 402 (emphasis added).

⁶⁰³ Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, 6. See my discussion of this excerpt on page 224 below.

⁶⁰⁴ Joseph Viscomi, “Wordsworth, Gilpin, and the Vacant Mind,” *The Wordsworth Circle* 38, no. 1–2 (January 2007): 40–49, p. 45.

⁶⁰⁵ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, vol. 1, p. 263.

⁶⁰⁶ James Kirwan, *Sublimity: The Non-Rational and the Irrational in the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 23–4.

assertion was true if Gilpin had fully reduced the sublime to a physiological state of astonishment. But in addition to its bodily manifestation, the sublime becomes a mark of the transcendental by potentially inducing religious devotion in the viewer, an aspect clearly expressed in Sir Phillip Sidney's correction of Lord Burleigh's impoverished physiological account:

Perhaps a person of your Lordship's serious disposition will not accuse me of *enthusiasm*, when I speak of these *sublime* appendages of landscape, as leading the mind to the great author of them. Grandeur enters into all our ideas of the almighty; and where shall we meet with such magnificent ideas, as these scenes present? My young friend, who had a mind turned to every thing that was great and noble, and virtuous, used to say, that by studiously bringing his mind to the contemplation of grand scenes, he could raise in himself the highest fervours of *devotion*. What a temple, he would cry (turning round, and pointing to some vast amphitheatre of mountain) is this! How little does a man feel himself in the midst of it! How immense the Deity, who framed, and fills it!⁶⁰⁷

As Sidney is anxious to show, sublime landscapes function not only as arguments from design, "leading the mind to the great author of them," but are conducive to "the highest fervours of devotion." Gilpin's linkage of the natural sublime to the design argument, on the one hand, and to religious devotion, on the other, seems inspired by Addison's contention that natural sublimity raised in his "Thoughts the Idea of an Almighty Being" while improving "into the highest Pitch of Astonishment and Devotion."⁶⁰⁸ Like Addison, Gilpin entrusts physical extension—reflected in his text by qualifiers such as "vast," and "immense"—with the ability to produce an astonishing effect that culminates in religious devotion. This close resemblance between the two views should not deter us, however, from observing one crucial difference. While for Addison, the sublime

⁶⁰⁷ Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects*, 401-402 (emphasis added).

⁶⁰⁸ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 545.

highlights the dignity of reason in dealing with vast objects and scenes, for Gilpin it reinforces its finitude.

Addison describes the sublime as a process in which the limitation of the imagination in grappling with increasingly large objects calls for the assistance of reason which comes to the rescue by supplying us with such abstract concepts as ‘infinity’ or ‘God’: “the Imagination prompts the Understanding, and by the Greatness of the sensible Object, produces in it the Idea of a Being who is neither circumscribed by Time nor Space.”⁶⁰⁹ As James Noggle has observed, Addison’s approach to the sublime, while emphasizing the disproportion of vast objects to our imagination, “resolves this imbalance to the subject’s benefit,” and furthermore “resolve[s] the epistemological tension inherent in our relation to God’s incomprehensible authority with the language of the sublime [...] by positing a mysterious economy among the faculties.”⁶¹⁰ As argued by Vanessa Ryan, by connecting the sublime with the power of reason, Addison believes that “our encounter with vast natural phenomena involves a sense of being liberated from perceptual confinement,” “an expansive kind of exercise enjoyable for its own sake” that “rouses an activity of the mind, specifically in the way an image can set off a train of related ideas”⁶¹¹ which terminates with the idea of God.

⁶⁰⁹ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, p. 234.

⁶¹⁰ James Noggle, *The Skeptical Sublime: Aesthetic Ideology in Pope and the Tory Satirists* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 67.

⁶¹¹ Vanessa L. Ryan, “The Physiological Sublime: Burke’s Critique of Reason,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62, no. 2 (2001): 265–79, pp. 272–3. Joshua Rayman has also stressed the optimistic nature of Addisonian sublimity which involves “the tension between limited imagination and limitless reason.” This tension manifests itself as follows: “[t]he imagination discovers its limits in progressing through the

Compared with Addison's optimistic theory of sublimity, Gilpin's skeptical account of the sublime emphasizes the finitude of reason. Gilpin's understanding of the relation of skepticism to the sublime comes into sharper focus in the disagreement between Sir Charles and Mr. Willis, the two protagonists of his *Dialogues on Various Subjects*:

For myself, (said sir Charles) I never could be enchanted, as many people are, with the study of astronomy. [...]. The *os sublime*, which according to Ovid, and Tully, was given us to examine the stars, I am much more inclined to fix on the surface of the earth. [...]. But as to the *starry heavens*, I can hardly guess either at their nature, or use. I go to the philosopher, and he tells me many wonderful stories of their magnitude, and distance; in which there may be some truth, and probably much conjecture. I survey them with astonishment; but I consider them only as wonders of other system. They decorate ours merely *by the way*. A gnat, or a beetle, which I understand better, is more the object of my attention; and, of course, a stronger argument to me of the Almighty power, than they are in all their vastness and magnificence.⁶¹²

Sir Charles's disenchantment with astronomy is predicated on his distrust of our ability to understand the nature and utility of the stars. Although (natural) philosophers use their reason most aptly to derive as accurate knowledge of the heavens as possible, their

comparatively greater (or smaller) magnitudes via its free play of ideas (enlarging, compounding and varying, in Addison) almost to infinity, whereupon the mind's power of reason ([...] understanding, in Addison) furnishes perfect ideas greater even than nature; the sublime is generated by the tension of apprehension and comprehension. [...] Addison [...] [is] ascribing a positive affect to the imagination's recognition of its own capacity." Joshua Rayman, *Kant on Sublimity and Morality* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), pp. 16-18 (emphasis added).

⁶¹² Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects*, 182-4. Gilpin borrows the phrase *os sublime* from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1.85: "pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram, os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus." Allen Mandelbaum has translated this excerpt in the following manner: "And while / all other animals are bent, head down, / and fix their gaze upon the ground, to man / he gave a face that is held high; he had / man stand erect, his eyes upon the stars." Ovid and Allen Mandelbaum, *The Metamorphoses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 10. Pointing to an essential difference between mankind and animals, Ovid wrote that man is the only creature on earth endowed with *os sublime* (sublime stature). See Stijn Bussels, "Theories of the Sublime in the Dutch Golden Age: Franciscus Junius, Joost van Den Vondel and Petrus Wittewrongel," *History of European Ideas* 42, no. 7 (May 17, 2016): 882-92, pp. 887-8.

investigations disappointingly take the form of conjectures rather than incontestable facts. This epistemic limitation prompts Sir Charles to replace the vast objects of “astronomy” (the cosmic sublime) with objects that are more comprehensible to us. On this showing, the “magnitude” of celestial bodies and their great “distance” to us, while producing astonishment in the spectators, cannot be invested with any serious religious value. Closely resembling Lord Burleigh’s physiological outlook on the sublime, Sir Charles’s position frames his response to the sublime solely in terms of “astonishment,” as a secularized aesthetic severed from any theological functionality. Hence, he stands as a radical skeptic concerning the potential of the (cosmic) sublime to function as evidence of God’s existence and “Almighty power.”

Gilpin’s refutation of this radical version of skepticism is evident in Willis’s disagreement with Sir Charles which takes the form of a substantial defense of the religious significance of the cosmic sublime:

But suppose [...] we knew nothing more of the starry heavens, than that wonderful appearance, which they make in a clear night; yet still I think them objects, not only of great respect, but of great utility. In all the works of God there is something beyond human comprehension, which seems intended to teach us, at the same time, the omnipotence of God, and the weakness of man. It is thus in religion. We are enabled to go a certain length—that is, as far as is necessary: but to pry into any of its mysteries is forbidden. — And as it is in religion, so it is in the works of nature. Much we are able to comprehend, but much more is incomprehensible. If we could comprehend all the works of God, our minds, like the great Creator’s, must be infinite. *If the ocean could be fathomed, our ideas of its grandeur would in a degree subside.* God might have hid the stars from us, by interposing a medium of grosser air around them, or by various other means: but he suffers them to shine, and us to gaze; that we may have such ideas of omnipotence, as we could not have if we saw nothing, but what we understood.⁶¹³

⁶¹³ Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects*, 184-5.

For Willis, the incomprehensibility of vast nature involved in our encounter with the sublime should never weaken our belief in the existence of God but serve as further proof of divine omnipotence. “[A]s it is in religion, so it is in the works of nature:” Willis goes on to establish an important analogy between the mysteries of (revealed) religion, on the one hand, and those of nature, on the other, arguing that, from a theodicean perspective, human beings must have been purposely created as incapable of comprehending these mysteries with their finite minds. Mayhew has noted that Willis’s position “has close affinities with Joseph Addison’s argument [...] that the great leads us to a sense of the divine by overwhelming the imagination.”⁶¹⁴ Notwithstanding this obvious similarity, there is a more fundamental difference between the two aestheticians’ views of the sublime that has remained unnoticed.⁶¹⁵ Rather than affirming the Addisonian triumph of the understanding,⁶¹⁶ Gilpin’s sublime accentuates the limitations of reason “to pry into any of its mysteries [which] is forbidden.” As an eighteenth-century Latitudinarian,

⁶¹⁴ Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture*, 154.

⁶¹⁵ Mayhew correctly categorizes both Addison and Gilpin as Latitudinarian, drawing attention to a common understanding of the design argument shared by members of this religious persuasion: “the design argument, in any form, had a built-in refrain concerning the limitations of science and reason in the proof of God. Because God was omnipotent and omniscient, his overall design of the universe was beyond the finite and limited comprehension of human beings, as indeed was the total design of any individual part of it, since each part linked to the whole system.” Robert J. Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000): 349–66, p. 352. Such statement is true, but it tends to obscure an important difference between the two thinkers in terms of how their individual conceptions of the sublime functioned either to transcend skepticism or to reinforce it.

⁶¹⁶ Judd Kline notes that Addison’s conception of the sublime is ultimately conditioned by the force of judgment: “[t]he aesthetic appreciation of the Sublime lay in the physical sensation of pleasure aroused by the attributes of sublimity of the object viewed possessed. However, this physical sensation of pleasure was conditioned by the controlling force of the judgment that weighed the contribution made to the aesthetic experience by the wit and the imagination and kept the irregular Sublime from straying away into the realm of confusion. With Addison the Sublime might increase the charms of an ordered beauty [...]” Judd, Kline, “The Sublime as an Aesthetic Concept in the Writings of Joseph Addison and Edmund Burke; a Comparative Study” (Unpublished Thesis, 1938), 46.

Gilpin attacked what he believed to be an excess of rationalism⁶¹⁷ when he advocated that certain revealed and natural truths were beyond reason. Thus, in his didactic writings, he insists on the need to preserve “the mysteries of religion, which he cannot accommodate to his *reason*.”⁶¹⁸ “[s]uch are the mysterious doctrines of the Trinity—of the incarnation of our blessed Lord—of his propitiation for sin—of the nature of redemption—of the mode of inspiration; and of some other points, which are wholly beyond our capacity to explain.”⁶¹⁹ Gilpin does not intend to place the whole content of scripture completely at odds with our capacity to reason: “the scripture itself, not only in its evidence, but in every thing else, *except some of its sublime truths, is an appeal to reason*, and common sense [...]”⁶²⁰ It is noteworthy that he does not only recognize that the aforementioned truths of Christianity are incomprehensible to our limited rational capacity, but he very suggestively uses the modifier “sublime” to describe them. Gilpin’s distinctive move then

⁶¹⁷ According to Mayhew, Gilpin’s Latitudinarian traits were “an opposition to excess church ornament, advocacy of toleration of Methodists and Quakers, and an attack on both the excess rationalism of deists and Socians, and on sofideism, the unqualified belief in grace over reason.” Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture*, 102-3.

⁶¹⁸ William Gilpin, *Sermons Preached to a Country Congregation with a Few Hints for Sermons* (London, 1802), vol. 1, p. 417 (emphasis added).

⁶¹⁹ Gilpin, *Sermons Preached to a Country Congregation*, vol. 1, p. 415 (emphasis added). Another important aspect which Gilpin deems as beyond our rational capacities is God’s moral governance of the world. He maintains that a difficulty to understand mysteries due to our own ignorance cannot lead to a rejection of them: “Whether he does not think it reasonable, that when God Almighty makes a revelation of his will to man, there may be some things in it, which human reason cannot comprehend? Does he clearly see God’s intention and design in every part of it? He can have no real objection, unless he clearly understand the whole subject-matter, to which he objects. If I take up a book on algebra, and do not understand the principles of science, the difficulties that arise, are not certainly objections. I must solve them in my own ignorance. But if I take up a poem, or a history, the subject which I clearly comprehend, a difficulty there becomes an objection. [...]. We reason thus in common life. In God’s moral government of the world [...] many things in it are mysterious, abstruse, and above our comprehension. But, though, these things are difficulties, we have the sense not to make them objections. How ridiculous would that man appear, who should object to his victuals, because he was unacquainted with the nature of vegetation, or of animal growth!” Gilpin, *Sermons Preached to a Country Congregation*, vol. 1, pp. 417-8.

⁶²⁰ Gilpin, *Sermons Preached to a Country Congregation*, vol. 1, p. 344 (emphasis added).

lies in making the mysteries involved in our experience of the natural sublime analogous to the mysteries of scripture. While “[s]ome people” “allow mystery in nothing,” he confesses, “I suppose mystery in every thing;” “and think that a certain degree of faith, where we cannot have complete knowledge, is as necessary *in reading nature*, as scripture.”⁶²¹ As conveyed by Willis, the limited operation of human reason is encountered not only in dealing with scriptural truths, but also in our experience of vast objects which defy our capacity of perception. Mayhew is right to insist that Gilpin highlights the “limitations of finite reason in the face of a vast system of nature designed by an omnipotent and omniscient creator.”⁶²²

The skeptical nature of Gilpin’s sublime is further reinforced by the uneasy relationship it holds to Shaftesburian enthusiasm. Because Gilpin employs the concept of enthusiasm in his discussion of the sublime, it is necessary to first outline the similarities between his understanding of the term and Shaftesbury’s. Both aestheticians agree that the enthusiastic experience involved in our appreciation of the sublime, although related to a state of divine inspiration, is fundamentally distinct from it. Shaftesbury agrees that “inspiration is a real feeling of Divine Presence and enthusiasm a false one,”⁶²³ but goes on to rescue a positive notion of enthusiasm intimately tied to the contemplation of natural sublimity. In his didactic works, Gilpin himself accepts that “the apostles were

⁶²¹ Gilpin quoted in Barbier, *William Gilpin*, 139 (emphasis added).

⁶²² Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 354.

⁶²³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 27. Shaftesbury’s conception of enthusiasm has a “subjective meaning as sentiment rather than as true or false direct divine inspiration.” Michael Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 10.

immediately inspired,” but instructs the typical believer against the expectation of such an immediate direction from the Holy Ghost.⁶²⁴ If everyone claimed divine inspiration in common religious practice, it would lead to a climate of religious fanaticism where “man discards *reason*, and [...] every enthusiastic notion becomes then immediately stamped with the character of divine truth.”⁶²⁵ Sir Philip Sidney’s concern that he may be accused of enthusiasm when speaking of the “*sublime* appendages of landscape”⁶²⁶ works to dissociate Gilpin’s understanding of the natural sublime from any pretense of divine inspiration. Accordingly, he insists that during sublime experiences, there is an “enthusiastic sensation of pleasure [that] overspreads”⁶²⁷ the soul, but such sensation is not stamped with any mark of divine presence.

So far, both aestheticians recognize the kinship between the sublime, on the one hand, and a positive conception of enthusiasm, on the other. Each entertains, however, a different view of enthusiasm which will come to shape their conceptions of the sublime. Shaftesbury construes enthusiasm as an exclusive response to natural stimuli displaying the property of vastness.⁶²⁸ Gilpin deviates from this model by allowing human artifacts to arouse enthusiasm, on the one hand, and by granting that enthusiasm may flow even from objects of considerably smaller size which would be typically classified as beautiful, rather than sublime. These two important deformations of Shaftesburian

⁶²⁴ “To wait for desultory illapses of the spirit to lead us into truth, seems to have little countenance from scripture; unless indeed we apply to ourselves such passages, as by the fairest rules of interpretation can apply only to the apostles.” Gilpin, *Sermons Preached to a Country Congregation*, vol. 1, p. 6.

⁶²⁵ Gilpin, *Sermons Preached to a Country Congregation*, vol. 1, p. 7 (emphasis added).

⁶²⁶ Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects*, 401-402.

⁶²⁷ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49-50. I will discuss the whole excerpt in section 4.4 below.

⁶²⁸ See section 2.6 above.

enthusiasm may be illustrated with an important excerpt from Gilpin's *Dialogue upon the Gardens... at Stow*, where the two participants, Polyphthon and Callophilus, exchange ideas on various aesthetic concepts, including the notion of enthusiasm. Hunt has noticed that although Polyphthon is repeatedly called an enthusiastic lover of nature who speaks against any decorations of art in the garden, he appears to contradict himself by supporting Callophilus's idea of nature improved by the human hand, as reflected no less in the idea of *ferme ornée*.⁶²⁹ Despite Polyphthon's enthusiasm for nature, the reader is only presented with Callophilus's bathetic engagement in such enthusiastic transport:

This Building stands retired in a thick woven Grove upon the Banks of the *Serpentine* River. Here Callophilus, sitting down, begged his Friend would excuse him one Moment; for he had an Inclination, he said to tempt the Genius of the Place. An agreeable Retreat, says he, always inspires me with a Kind of Enthusiasm – I must indulge the thrilling Transport. Come, my Friend, sit down; and tell me if you do not admire the Taste of these buzzing Insects, retired from a glaring Sunshine into this peaceful Shade? – Nay, said Polyphthon, if you are in this Strain, I'll leave you to invoke your Egeria alone: I never interrupt Lovers – Callophilus protested he should not stir: You mistake, says he, the Nature of my melancholy. It is not of the sequestering Kind. It never disqualifies me for the Conversation of a Friend: How indeed should it? It is not the result of a sowered Humour, but of the utmost Self-enjoyment – Take care, take care, reply'd Polyphthon, how you dally with such Self-enjoyment.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁹ John Dixon Hunt, "Introduction," in William Gilpin, *A Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (Project Gutenberg, 2012), i–x, p. ii. *Ferme ornée* derives from Stephen Swaitzer's term 'ornamental farm' which denoted an artificial farm specifically altered to allow both pleasure and use. In his *Iconographia Rustica*, Switzer provides a description of this practice: "By mixing the useful and profitable parts of Gard'ning with the Pleasurable in the Interior Parts of my Designs and Paddocks, obscure enclosures, etc. in the outward, My Designs are thereby vastly enlarg'd and both Profit and Pleasure may be agreeably mix'd together." Stephen Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, vol. 1 (London, D. Borwne, 1718), xvii.

⁶³⁰ Gilpin quoted in Mario Relich, "Platonic Style and Augustan Imitation in Shaftesbury's 'the Moralists,'" in *Interaktionsanalysen: Aspekte Dialogischer Kommunikation*, ed. Gerhard Charles Rump and Wilfried Heindrichs (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1982), 56–79, p. 74.

It is to be noted that Callophilus's enthusiastic fit is not triggered by untouched nature, but by a mixture of man-made artifacts and nature. Totally oblivious to the property of vastness, Callophilus turns his attention to the minutiae of nature; hence his engagement with the buzzing of insects.⁶³¹ His choice bewilders Polyphthon who expects his interlocutor's transport to be guided by "Egeria alone," the nymph-like Goddess of seas and oceans. The nature of the transport thus, is neither concerned with the sublimity of vast objects, such as the ocean, nor does it entail a Shaftesburian ascension from the terrestrial to the cosmic sublime,⁶³² but turns exclusively to small objects on Earth. Barbier has stressed that although this dialogue of Gilpin is modelled on Shaftesbury's 'enthusiasts' about nature, "Gilpin was too well balanced for this notion to bowl him over."⁶³³ Mario Relich has argued that by allowing human artifacts to provoke enthusiasm, Gilpin's dialogue is nothing but a parody of Shaftesbury's *The Moralists*: "Like Shaftesbury, Gilpin presents a 'genius loci' as a setting for discussion and contemplation, but *not* [...] 'enthusiastic' rapture. Shaftesbury, of course, would have disapproved of Gilpin's rather artificial but picturesque 'genius loci' situated in Lord Cobham's famed garden at Stowe."⁶³⁴ Relich aptly describes Gilpin as "less solemn than Shaftesbury," and cites as evidence, Callophilus's "polished liveliness and desultory banter" which aims at "subverting the 'sublime' *purpose* of the invocation of the 'genius

⁶³¹ Insects are not small enough to trigger an experience of the sublime, unlike the infinitely small base elements and minerals invoked by Shaftesbury.

⁶³² See section 2.6 above.

⁶³³ Barbier, *William Gilpin*, 23.

⁶³⁴ Relich, "Platonic Style and Augustan Imitation," 73.

of the place’.”⁶³⁵ Taking note of the epistemic purpose of Shaftesbury’s enthusiastic invocation allows for a reading of Gilpin’s subversion of the Earl’s sublime as reinforcing a skeptical attitude toward the power of reason.

Integrated into the fabric of the sublime, Shaftesburian enthusiasm is a rational process that serves an important epistemic function by working to dispel the subject’s skepticism about the providential governance of the world. As Philocles reports to Palemon in *The Moralists*, “[f]or though I was like to be perfectly cured of my scepticism, ’twas by what I thought worse, downright enthusiasm. You never knew a more agreeable enthusiast.”⁶³⁶ It must be recalled at this point that Theocles’s enthusiastic apostrophe to Nature entailed a tripartite process of tracing the sublime particulars of nature back to the “empowering deity” as “the source and principle of all beauty and perfection.”⁶³⁷ When God is finally made the object of the enthusiast’s contemplation, there is an imminent failure of the imagination. Although in contemplating God, “fancy gives over its flight and wearied imagination spends itself in vain,” man’s divinely-ordained capacity of reason ultimately succeeds in grasping the idea of God: “Yet since by thee, O sovereign mind, I have been formed such as I am, *intelligent* and *rational*, since the peculiar dignity of my nature is to know and contemplate thee, permit that with due freedom I exert those faculties with which thou hast adorned me.”⁶³⁸ Brett has stressed that although Shaftesbury’s account of the

⁶³⁵ Mario Relich, “The Technique of Philosophical Dialogue in the Works of Mandeville, Shaftesbury and Berkeley” (Unpublished Dissertation, 1976), 294-5 (emphasis added).

⁶³⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 246.

⁶³⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 298.

⁶³⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 298-9.

sublime “rests on the mind’s inadequacy in the face of the infinite,” “[t]he initial failure of the imagination is followed by the realization of the superiority of man’s *reason*,” so that ultimately we are reminded that “we are creatures of reason and belong to a supersensible as well as a sensible world.”⁶³⁹ Lydia Amir accurately formulates the epistemic significance of Shaftesburian enthusiasm and her conclusion needs to be quoted in some detail:

Shaftesbury’s theory of enthusiasm [...] resolves an epistemological problem. Knowing with certainty that all things work for the best presupposes a comprehension of the universe as a whole that is impossible for the finite mind to grasp. Because it is impossible to know that everything “demonstrates order and perfection,” we must rely on enthusiasm or ultimate commitment to show us the way. Human beings are able *to surmount the limitations of finitude*, and, at least at moments, to intuit the harmony of the whole universe, through ecstatic moments of faith or enthusiasm in which the mind is “caught up in vision.” Shaftesbury’s final epistemological appeal is not to evidence or logic alone, but to enthusiasm. He considers enthusiasm a rational process that does not contradict logic or evidence, but rather affords a higher vantage point from which logic and evidence derive their meaning.⁶⁴⁰

Shaftesbury solves the epistemic problem of knowing the order of the whole by engaging in enthusiasm, while Addison deploys the technique of progressive enlarging of the imagination aided by the power of reason. These two optimistic conceptions of the

⁶³⁹ Brett, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 155 (emphasis added).

⁶⁴⁰ Lydia B. Amir, *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy* (State University of New York Press, 2015), 23-4 (emphasis added). Drawing on Philip Shaw’s exposition of the Shaftesburian sublime (Shaw, *The Sublime*, 38-41), H el ene Pharabod-Ibata has reached a similar conclusion, underlining that “Shaftesbury found it more difficult to accept that the mind should lose control in the aesthetic experience. He developed a conception of the sublime as connected with beauty, both working together to raise in the mind above the limitations of sensory perception to the awareness of the cosmic order and harmony. [...]. The enthusiastic and yet controlled transport, which is presented as an experience of ‘the sublime, leads the mind above ‘the disorders of the corporeal world’ to encounter the immensity and harmony of the cosmos. In other words, sublime affect [...] is conceived as the means to elevate the mind in order to discover the rational order of the universe.” H el ene Pharabod-Ibata, *The Challenge of the Sublime: From Burke’s Philosophical Enquiry to British Romantic Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 33.

sublime may be accurately described using Frances Ferguson's statement that the "sublime aesthetic continually produces scenes in which the limitations of individual perception become attributes to the ability of human reason to think past those very perceptions."⁶⁴¹ It is a matter of irony that Ferguson's convincing description of the transcendence of reason in experiences of the sublime was originally meant to address the aesthetics of Gilpin whose skeptical account of sublimity exhibits, I submit, the finitude of reason. "[W]hen a "grand scene [...] [is] rising before the eye," Gilpin agrees that the soul is filled with "an enthusiastic sensation of pleasure," but he is anxious to point out the "pause of the *intellect*" of the spectator who is struck "beyond the power of *thought*."⁶⁴² Emphasizing the limitations of reason, the natural sublime gives way to the picturesque appreciation of nature as a more suitable way for the human self to come to terms with the vastness of God's creation. In substantiating this last claim, it is necessary first to explore the fraught relationship between the natural sublime and the picturesque.

4.4 From the Skeptical Sublime to the Rise of the Picturesque

Gilpin's descriptions of picturesque landscapes include constant references to the natural sublime. Such references have been interpreted as evidence that the "picturesque vision [does] not inhibit or cancel out other response," including a response to "grand

⁶⁴¹ Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 138.

⁶⁴² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49 (emphasis added).

scenes of nature.”⁶⁴³ Monk claimed that “the term picturesque does not exclude the sublime,”⁶⁴⁴ citing as proof Gilpin’s account of a scene at the seat of the Duke of Athol: “[t]his whole scene and it’s accompaniments, are not only grand; but picturesquely beautiful in the highest degree. The *composition* is perfect [...]”⁶⁴⁵ The existence of a scene that can be described as not only sublime, but picturesque seems to bear out Monk’s assertion. Yet, one paragraph later, Gilpin offers a more nuanced description of this scene: “[t]his grand view, which I scruple not to call the most interesting thing of the kind, I ever saw, is exhibited through the windows of a summer-house [...]”⁶⁴⁶ Gilpin is reluctant to call the scene the most interesting of its kind precisely because it is seen through the windows of the house. He explains his reasoning further:

the panes of the windows are in part composed of red and green glass; which to those, who have never seen deceptions of this kind, give a new and surprizing effect; turning the water into a cataract of fire, or a cascade of liquid verdi grease. But such deceptions are tricks below the dignity of scenes like this. Coloured glasses may be amusing; but I should rather wish to have them hung up in frames with handles to be used at pleasure, than fixed in a window, and to impose the *necessity* of looking through them. // The only picturesque glasses are those, which the artists call Claud Lorraine glasses.⁶⁴⁷

On the one hand, the windowpanes make the scene less picturesque than it would have been had it been seen through the only real picturesque glass, which is the Claude Glass.

On the other hand, his complaint that “such deceptions are tricks below the dignity of

⁶⁴³ John R. Nabholz, “Dorothy Wordsworth and the Picturesque,” *Studies in Romanticism* 3, no. 2 (1964): 118, p. 127.

⁶⁴⁴ Monk, *The Sublime*, 223.

⁶⁴⁵ Gilpin, *Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain*, vol. 1, p. 122.

⁶⁴⁶ Gilpin, *Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain*, vol. 1, p. 123.

⁶⁴⁷ Gilpin, *Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain*, vol. 1, p. 124.

scenes likes this,”⁶⁴⁸ signals the inadequacy of picturesque vision to fully capture the grandeur of the scene. It appears that the mixture of the picturesque with the sublime yields a scene in which the force of the latter is diminished.

As already suggested by this example, there is an uneasy relation between the picturesque and the sublime which can be explored further through an analysis that takes note of the dichotomy between art and nature. The dichotomy allows for a distinction to emerge between the picturesque approach to nature appreciation, and the creation of picturesque art, on the one hand, as well as that between the natural and the artistic sublime, on the other. With these distinctions in mind, the first question pertains solely to the appreciation of the natural world: what specific relation obtains in Gilpin’s aesthetics between the appreciation of nature through the picturesque, and the experience of the natural sublime? Three main answers can be immediately canvassed, ranging from the total exclusion of natural sublimity as a way of appreciating nature, to a preference for the picturesque, as well as to a position that, as we have seen, assumes the compatibility of these two aesthetic categories:

- (1) There is only one way of appreciating nature, and this is the picturesque appreciation.
- (2) The picturesque appreciation of nature is one way of appreciating nature among others, but it is the preferred one.
- (3) When nature is appreciated as picturesque, this does not cancel out or exclude the possibility of a concurrent sublime response.

⁶⁴⁸ Gilpin associated dignity with the sublime, as for instance, when he warns that should artist attempt to represent mountains in one’s “landscape in so diminutive a form, all dignity, and grandeur of idea would be lost.” Gilpin, *Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain*, vol. 1, p. 147.

The implication of the first proposition is that experiences of natural beauty and sublimity are not recognized as forms of aesthetic appreciation of nature at all. Gilpin explicitly refutes this view as he seeks to defend himself from the charge that “the face of nature [is] to be examined only by the rules of painting.”⁶⁴⁹ According to the second proposition, although other aesthetic categories are acknowledged as possible ways of appreciating nature, the picturesque is singled out as the preferred way. The picturesque is the preferred way of appreciating the natural world because, as I shall discuss below, it aligns with the theological intention of Gilpin’s project.⁶⁵⁰ In the remainder of this section, I wish to show that the third proposition is untenable by arguing that when nature is appreciated through the picturesque, a concurrent, full-fledged sublime response is impossible.

Gilpin found it necessary to preface his celebrated *Three Essays* with an acknowledgment of the power of the natural sublime on the imagination:

We speak of the *grand scenes of nature*, tho uninteresting in a picturesque light, as having a strong effect on the imagination—often stronger, than when they are properly disposed for the pencil.⁶⁵¹

Although the natural sublime has stronger effects on the imagination, it is ultimately inappropriate from a picturesque perspective. In *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, no sooner had Gilpin exemplified the notion of grandeur than he immediately went on to characterize the coast of England as reflecting it less perfectly than the continent. Unlike the “vast tracts on the continent” from where “[m]any instances might

⁶⁴⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, ii.

⁶⁵⁰ See sections 4.5 and 4.6 below for the theological aim of Gilpin’s picturesque.

⁶⁵¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, ii (emphasis added).

be brought [...] of sublime effects in all modes of landscape,” “England [...] is a country only on a small scale, [and] its scenes are more in miniature.”⁶⁵² Its “rivers,” “lakes,” “mountains,” and “plains,” “do not strike the imagination with so much grandeur,” but they are “generally more picturesque as more suited to human vision.”⁶⁵³ In other words, England, partly due to its geographical features, is more amenable to picturesque pleasures rather than sublime experiences. He accentuates this point further by contrasting the full-blown sublimity of Norway with the diminished grandeur of Britain:

Its [Britain’s] bays, rocks, and promontories are particularly picturesque. More magnificent they may be in Norway and other northern regions. But magnificence, when carried into *disproportion*, is carried too far for picturesque use. The human eye is capable only of comparing objects within a given circumference. It may indeed bring the largest within the sphere of vision by removing them to a proper distance. But this must necessarily diminish their grandeur.⁶⁵⁴

Instead of praising the property of vastness which lies at the core of sublime experiences, Gilpin equates it, rather, with disproportion, complaining that in the context of picturesque appreciation, physical extension overwhelms our limited field of vision.

The picturesque vision alters the sublime in order to bring it within the sphere of human vision. In the absence of such operation, nature’s sublimity is inimical to the picturesque landscape, as emphasized by Gilpin’s remark on the unrestrained grandeur of forests and mountains:

Between Kendal and Ambleside, the wood increases in *grandeur*; but the scenery is still *undetermined*. The whole is a sort of *confused greatness*. // As we descend to the left, we approach Windermere, where a different species of country

⁶⁵² Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 37.

⁶⁵³ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 37.

⁶⁵⁴ Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, 5.

succeeds. The *wild mountains*, which were so *ill-massed*, and of a kind so *unaccommodating* to landscape, are left behind [...].⁶⁵⁵

Gilpin makes clear that “in a picturesque view,” mountains may be considered “only as distant objects” because “their enormous size [is] disqualifying them for objects at hand.”⁶⁵⁶ It is only when the mountain’s “immensity [has been] reduced by distance,” that “its monstrous features [start] losing their deformity,” so the whole “can be taken in by the eye.”⁶⁵⁷ The picturesque is only possible if the confused, undetermined, ill-massed, and unaccommodating features of sublime scenes, once praised for their own effect, are sacrificed in the name of a greater harmonious whole capturable by the human eye. What emerges is the idea that only a diminished species of sublimity is suitable for picturesque application, namely one that is adapted to our capacity of optical comprehension. Gilpin uses the term “picturesque grandeur”⁶⁵⁸ to refer to this aesthetic quality of scenes whose grandeur has been reduced to a visually manageable proportion.

The abundance of examples in which Gilpin handles the category of the sublime in relation to the picturesque culminates in one excerpt where the fraught relation between these two concepts is more clearly indicated:

We are most delighted, when some grand scene, though perhaps of *incorrect composition*, rising before the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought—when the *vox faucibus haeret*; and every mental operation is suspended. In this pause of the intellect; this deliquium of the soul, an enthusiastic sensation of pleasure overspreads it, previous to any examination by the rules of art. The general idea of

⁶⁵⁵ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 85-6 (emphasis added).

⁶⁵⁶ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 87-8.

⁶⁵⁷ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 87-8.

⁶⁵⁸ Gilpin, *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire*, 6.

the scene makes an impression, before any appeal is made to the judgment. We rather *feel*, than *survey* it.⁶⁵⁹

The sublime is described as striking the viewer “beyond the power of thought,” and resulting in a “pause of the intellect.” The vocabulary vindicates the view that for Gilpin the sublime works by reinforcing the finitude of reason.⁶⁶⁰ Costelloe rightly identifies that this suspension of the intellect is “more than a hint of the sublime,” but asserts, inaccurately on my view, that it is also “one source of pleasure we take in the picturesque.”⁶⁶¹ Although sublimity might precede the picturesque as an appropriate response to natural stimuli displaying the property of vastness, and is the source for the quality of ruggedness or roughness in picturesque objects,⁶⁶² it is certainly not

⁶⁵⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49-50. The same contrast between the picturesque and the sublime is visible in Gilpin’s *Observations on Several Parts of England*: “Tho the *eye* therefore might take more pleasure in a view (considered *merely in a picturesque light*) when a little adorned by the hand of art; yet I much doubt, whether such a view would have that strong effect on the *imagination*; as when rough with all it’s bold irregularities about it; when beauty, and deformity, grandeur and horror, mingled together, strike the mind with a thousand opposing ideas; and like chymical infusions of an opposite nature, produce an effervescence, which no harmonious mixtures could produce.” Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 1, p. 122. Viscomi’s important commentary on the physicality and pre-analytical nature of Gilpin’s conception of the sublime needs to be quoted in some detail here: “Before judgment or reason-or rules of art-can respond; the image impresses the mind directly; this pre-analytical, unmediated moment is signified by an intensity of feeling, by the melting of soul or overspreading of ‘enthusiastic sensation.’ Seemingly dematerialized, the moment is also wrought with a sense of physicality. The printing metaphors, reinforced by the words ‘feel’ and ‘impression,’ bring into play an idea of contact or connection, because when an engraved plate presses into paper, the paper is pulled into the incised lines forming the image, so that quite literally the support receiving the image simultaneously projects something of itself into the image. The pleasure of this contact, or marriage, is short-lived, as paper and plate separate, as intellectual cognition awakens. But while it lasts, one ‘feels’ connected, as though occupying an intimate space rather than being in an open space looking out at an image, the critical and formal experience of nature suggested by ‘survey’.” Viscomi, “Wordsworth, Gilpin, and the Vacant Mind,” 45.

⁶⁶⁰ Gilpin is influenced by Burke who stresses that the passion raised by the sublime makes us unable to momentarily use reason: “The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence *reason* on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force.” Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 53.

⁶⁶¹ Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 141.

⁶⁶² See Price, “The Picturesque Moment,” 265, 266, 282.

constitutive of the picturesque. While, as Andrews has pointed out, “much of the sublimity arose from the sense of difficulty, even peril, in negotiating a way into the landscape,”⁶⁶³ the picturesque appreciation can only properly begin once the experiencer is released from the bewilderment triggered by the sublime so that an “appeal” to “judgment” is possible, and the eye is allowed “to criticize at leisure.” Nancy Armstrong has noted that the picturesque mode of appreciation renounces the emotional responses characteristic of the natural sublime in favor of a way of “[s]eeing [that] involves partitioning, taking inventory, itemizing [...], taking visual and intellectual possession of what one sees.”⁶⁶⁴ Armstrong stresses that, for Gilpin, “aesthetic pleasure is actually increased” when the sudden feelings aroused by the sublime “are brought under [the] *rational* control”⁶⁶⁵ of the picturesque. In much the same vein, Barbara Stafford has registered a sharp disjunction between the immediacy of the sublime, which absorbs the spectator, and the bemusement characteristic of the picturesque.⁶⁶⁶

Given that the natural sublime presents us with our own inability to visually contain the vastness of nature and to comprehend it as a providentially ordered whole, Gilpin introduced the picturesque appreciation as a tool for reproducing nature’s harmonious whole at the scale of human comprehension. The limitations of human vision

⁶⁶³ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque* 219.

⁶⁶⁴ Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 39.

⁶⁶⁵ Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, 40.

⁶⁶⁶ “When the traveller is suddenly absorbed [by the experience of the sublime], when he looks *at*, not *over*, the natural object, he is no longer a merely bemused spectator of the varieties of the Picturesque, rather, he cannot become anything except what he beholds.” Barbara Maria Stafford, “Toward Romantic Landscape Perception: Illustrated Travels and the Rise of ‘Singularity’ as an Aesthetic Category,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 10, no. 1 (1981): 17–75, p. 60.

in experiences of the sublime are likened by Gilpin to the inability of a fly on a column to see the whole prospect of the building it is sitting on:

Nature is full of fire, wildness, and imagination. She touches every object with spirit. Her general colouring, and her local hues, are exquisite. In composition only she fails. We speak however in this manner like the fly on the column. Her plans are too immense for our confined optics. They include kingdoms, continents, and hemispheres; and may be as elegant, as they are incomprehensible. Could we take in the whole of her landscapes at one cast; could we view the Hyrcanian forest as a grove; the kingdom of Poland as a lawn; the coast of Norway as a piece of rocky scenery; and the Mediterranean as a lake; we might then discover a plan justly composed, and perhaps beautiful even in a painter's eye.⁶⁶⁷

The phrase “fly on the column” is a reference to bishop Berkeley who compared in *Guardian* no. 70 a fly on the column of St. Paul's to a freethinker, stressing that the limitations of human reason to see the whole Biblical dispensation were akin to the fly's inability to see the whole prospect.⁶⁶⁸ Gilpin appropriated Berkeley's example to show the limitations of human perception⁶⁶⁹ within experiences of the sublime. What has not been acknowledged, however, is that the excerpt also betrays Gilpin's familiarity with the comparison Addison made in *The Spectator* between our perception of an animal's body and that of the whole universe; if we were endowed with the proper optical capabilities, the universe as a whole would be just as well contrived as the human body appears to us: “We *should* see the same Concatenation and Subservience, the same Necessity and Usefulness, the same Beauty and Harmony in all and every of its [the world's] Parts, as

⁶⁶⁷ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 175.

⁶⁶⁸ Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 360.

⁶⁶⁹ “For Gilpin, the image of the fly in the face of nature is reduced to a metaphor for human perception, [...] the fly as spectator is ‘confined’ by the limits of perception, and as an object it is dwarfed by the extent of a landscape [...]” Anna Burton, *Trees in Nineteenth-Century English Fiction: The Silvicultural Novel* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2021), 189.

we discover in the Body of every single Animal.”⁶⁷⁰ Loesberg has remarked that Addison here “sounds no note of doubt about what he would see had he a large enough comprehension,”⁶⁷¹ and his optimism is reflected no less in the use of the modal verb “should.” Gilpin chooses two very different modal verbs, “might” and “perhaps” to express a more reserved outcome of what painters would see if they had God’s all-comprehensive vision of nature. Gilpin also veers away from Shaftesbury who although similarly attributes our inability to see comprehensive design to our limited perspective, he “makes [comprehensive] design a consequence of faith rather than an evidence of divine creation.”⁶⁷² As we have seen, Shaftesbury promotes enthusiasm as ensuring an intuitive and comprehensive knowledge of the whole universe.⁶⁷³ In the absence of the optimism that underlies Addison and Shaftesbury’s approaches to the immensity of nature, Gilpin is motivated to reduce sublimity to a manageable size so humans can appreciate it. As noted earlier, the picturesque is an effort to keep the sublime firmly within the sphere of the visible.⁶⁷⁴

When the natural sublime is left entirely within the sphere of the visible, its very essence is denied.⁶⁷⁵ My argument has been that the picturesque appreciation of nature

⁶⁷⁰ Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 4, 442.

⁶⁷¹ Jonathan Loesberg, *A Return to Aesthetics: Autonomy, Indifference, and Postmodernism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 36.

⁶⁷² Loesberg, *A Return to Aesthetics*, 42.

⁶⁷³ Amir, *Humor and the Good Life*, 23-4.

⁶⁷⁴ “[T]he sublime tends toward the dissolution of limits and the evocation of the infinite,” whereas the “picturesque remains firmly within the sphere of the visible.” Price, “The Picturesque Moment,” 280.

⁶⁷⁵ As Marta Orazc has put it, “in attempting to resize this huge entity and adapt it to a small format

conflicts with a full-scale sublime response. It remains to cite corroborating evidence for my argument gleaned from a kind of secondary literature which despite its use of vocabulary associated with the sublime, hardly concerns itself with this concept. Aside from Miall's isolated remark that Gilpin "often contrasts the smallness of human aesthetic considerations to the grandeur he finds in the natural scene,"⁶⁷⁶ Andrew Spira takes Gilpin's picturesque approach to nature as a signpost for the evolution of the modern self's autonomy:

the notion of the picturesque submits the infinite, indeterminate and incomprehensible experience of nature to the capacity of the human mind; it translates it into a medium – a language, evolved by human beings to serve as a means of communication and self-understanding – in which individuals can experience it *as a function of themselves*.⁶⁷⁷

Spira observes that the picturesque is an adaptation of the infinite and incomprehensible nature, adjectives describing the aesthetic of the sublime. He goes on to say that the picturesque project represents the transformation of landscape "into a function of the personal self, rendering it more palatable, digestible and comprehensible," in effect, an

of the canvas he does harm to the scene, whose power and magnificence is in its colossal shape." Marta Oracz, "William Gilpin and Nature," *Nature(S): Environments We Live by in Literary and Cultural Discourses*, W: J. Mydla, A. Wilczek, T. Gnat (red.) (2014): 188–204, p. 193. Zoë Kinsley interprets the preference of the picturesque for contained landscapes, such as river valleys, as a reaction against earlier assertions of the desirability of expansive and unbounded landscapes scenes, such as Addison's description of the sublime horizon as an image of freedom. Zoë Kinsley, *Women Writing the Home Tour, 1682–1812* (Routledge, 2016), 87. Addison writes: "The Mind of Man naturally hates every thing that looks like a Restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy it self under a sort of Confinement, when the Sight is pent up in a narrow Compass, and shortned on every side by the Neighbourhood of Walls or Mountains. On the contrary, a spacious Horison is an Image of Liberty, where the Eye has Room to range abroad, to expatiate at large on the Immensity of its Views, and to lose it self amidst the Variety of Objects that offer themselves to its Observation." Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 540-1.

⁶⁷⁶ Miall, "Representing the Picturesque," 76.

⁶⁷⁷ Andrew Spira, *The Invention of the Self: Personal Identity in the Age of Art* (London Bloomsbury Publishing Plc Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 332.

act of “translating it from the enigmatic language of God into the human language of art.”⁶⁷⁸

Spira’s references to the “language of God” point in the direction of Mayhew’s thesis that the emergence of picturesque theory had a theological grounding as it sought to replicate God’s vision to the microscopic eye of humans.⁶⁷⁹ Yet nowhere in Mayhew’s text is the concept of natural sublime explicitly invoked, although his argument contains important references to this concept. Such is his conclusion that the picturesque “was the aesthetics of a limited being, reconstructing the *immense scenes of nature* as God might view them, thus giving the microscopic eye of man, a mere fly in the eyes of God, some idea of the beauty and harmony of the design of the whole fabric of the universe.”⁶⁸⁰ My analysis has complemented Mayhew’s thesis by arguing that a skeptical understanding of the sublime is centrally involved in the genesis of the picturesque. Gilpin’s skepticism becomes a causative factor in the emergence of picturesque theory because what he recognizes as inherent human limitations make us frame nature and flatten it into scenery in order to aesthetically appreciate it. In other words, humans cannot hope to fully appreciate nature’s vast design without turning it into a picture.

The conversion of the natural sublime to the picturesque produces a landscape which is a beautifully ordered whole, a product that echoes the Addisonian and Shaftesburian artistic sublime as necessarily invested with beauty. Gilpin agrees with his predecessors that all art, including the sublime kind, must be a beautifully proportioned

⁶⁷⁸ Spira, *The Invention of the Self*, 333.

⁶⁷⁹ Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque.”

⁶⁸⁰ Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 362 (emphasis added).

whole. If this condition is satisfied, the artistic sublime will “allow the eye to criticize at leisure,” unlike the natural sublime which exceeds that limitation, and has a stronger effect on the imagination:

This high delight [the sublime] is generally indeed produced by the scenes of nature; yet sometimes by artificial objects. Here and there a capital picture will raise these emotions: but oftener the rough sketch of a capital master. This has sometimes an astonishing effect on the mind; giving the imagination an opening into all those glowing ideas, which inspired the artist; and which the imagination *only* can translate. In general however the works of art affect us coolly; and allow the eye to criticize at leisure.⁶⁸¹

Gilpin insists that unless tamed with a degree of beauty, sublime objects in nature, as well as art, will not become picturesque:

Sublimity alone cannot make an object *picturesque*. However grand the mountain, or the rock may be, it has no claim to this epithet, unless it's form, it's colour, or it's accompaniments have *some degree of beauty*. Nothing can be more sublime, than the ocean: but wholly unaccompanied, it has little of the picturesque. When we talk therefore of a sublime object, we always understand, that it is also beautiful [...].⁶⁸²

When Gilpin employs the phrases “picturesque beauty” and “picturesque sublimity” in his writings, he does not do so to signal, as Monk and others have suggested, that the picturesque and the sublime do not exclude each other, but rather to reinforce the same conviction that unless beautifully ordered, sublime scenes cannot be picturesque. The vale of Matlock, for instance, is described as “correctly picturesque” precisely because it is “beautifully sublime,”⁶⁸³ a scene “in which the ideas of sublimity and beauty are blended in a high degree.”⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 50.

⁶⁸² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 42-3.

⁶⁸³ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 53.

⁶⁸⁴ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 218.

Gilpin inventively coins the term “sublimication” to refer to the process of adapting sublime subjects to the proportions of picturesque composition.⁶⁸⁵

“Sublimication” was not the strength of seventeenth-century Italian artist Pietro Testa whose sublime prints violated the requirement of picturesque composition. The “sublime and noble ideas” depicted in his prints were ultimately incoherent from a picturesque perspective:

We are seldom indeed to expect a coherency of design in any of them [the prints]. An *enthusiastic* vein runs through most of his compositions; and it is not an improbable conjecture, that his head was a little disturbed. He generally crowds into his pieces such a jumble of inconsistent ideas, that it is difficult sometimes only to guess at what he aims. He was as little acquainted with the distribution of light, as with the rules of design: and yet [...] [t]here is an exuberance of fancy in him, which, with all its wildness, is agreeable; his ideas are sublime and noble [...].⁶⁸⁶

Testa’s “enthusiastic” compositions are described as full of “wildness” and sublime, but they are equally incoherent compositionally. Good picturesque art as well as successful picturesque appreciation of nature both require the arrangement of scenes which can be judged as a whole:

In examining the works of man, as well as of God, we must judge from the *whole*, or our judgment will be erroneous. In architecture, for instance, should a man stand close to a column, and pronounce boldly, that it was too large, or too small, we see at once how absurd a judgment he might pass. Whereas, if he should step back a little— take a proper stand, and view the whole in one comprehensive view, he might perhaps find, that the part objected to, was in exact proportion; and the defect not in the object, but in himself.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁵ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, vol. 1, p. 263.

⁶⁸⁶ Gilpin, *An Essay upon Prints*, 90.

⁶⁸⁷ William Gilpin, *Two Sermons: The First, on Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual, Preached at the Primary Visitation of the Lord Bishop of Winchester, at Southampton, July 15, 1788; ... The Second, on the Simplicity of the Gospel, Preached ... September 13, 1780*, (London: Printed For R. Blamire, 1788), 22.

In virtue of being “too large,” the sublime precludes a judgment from the whole. The defects involved in such experiences, thus, are not in the objects themselves, but in the limitations of our perception. In other words, the errors that the picturesque traveler discovers in the natural world are not real imperfections inherent in nature, but limitations of human understanding in comprehending God’s vast design.⁶⁸⁸

Edward Nygren has claimed that “the generalization of nature championed by Gilpin,” which opposes the close observation of nature practiced by naturalists “was based on the concept of nature as imperfect, as result of man’s fall from grace.”⁶⁸⁹ This conclusion is inaccurate because, as we have seen, the picturesque foregrounds the imperfections of our perception, rather than any blemishes in nature understood as God’s creation. What the idea of the fall brought about was not the decay of external nature, but the imposition of obvious limitations on the capacities of the human mind which is inherently linked to error, as made clear by Gilpin in an important passage from his *Two Sermons*:

Error is inseparable from the mind of man. *Humanum est errare*, was the honest confession of nature; and a state of grace points out the melancholy truth with still greater force. We humbly hope therefore, that as man, and error are so closely united, God will pardon our innocent errors [...].⁶⁹⁰

Serving as evidence of the finitude of reason, the sublime as a *sui generis* aesthetic response is no longer an appropriate way for the finite self to come to terms with the incomprehensible vastness of the natural world. Despite functioning as an

⁶⁸⁸ See Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 359.

⁶⁸⁹ Edward J. Nygren, *Views and Visions: American Landscape before 1830* (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1986), 20.

⁶⁹⁰ William Gilpin, *Two Sermons*, 25.

argument from design as well as a catalyst for religious devotion, the natural sublime loses much of its force when altered to fit the rules of the picturesque. One pivotal implication of this transformation of the natural sublime is the weakening of physico-theology which once buttressed aesthetics with an important argument for the primacy of nature over art.

4.5 The Picturesque as Weakened Physico-Theology

It has been my claim in the previous section that the picturesque appreciation of nature occurs at the expense of the natural sublime which undergoes a necessary conversion to the size of man-made compositions. According to Mayhew, “picturesque landscapes were physical inscriptions of God’s view in a form that the limited human senses and intellect could comprehend.”⁶⁹¹ Because picturesque landscapes were such inscriptions of God, “the picturesque was a highly *attenuated* form of the aesthetic version of the design argument.”⁶⁹² Mayhew uses the adjective ‘attenuated’ to refer to the reduced size of picturesque landscapes which, once commensurate with our optical and intellectual capabilities, may function as arguments for the existence of God. But there is another meaning of ‘attenuated’ that needs unpacking: an attenuated design argument is a weaker, less effective argument. I shall articulate my contention that the picturesque only

⁶⁹¹ Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 360.

⁶⁹² Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 359 (emphasis added).

reflects a weak physico-theology by first responding to Hans-Ulrich Mohr's analysis of the troubled relation between the picturesque and physico-theology.⁶⁹³

Mohr has suggested that the "new coordinates of the Picturesque in the second half of the eighteenth century can be explained by the fact that the old Physico-Theology was re-examined and that its components were revaluated and rearranged."⁶⁹⁴ He defines physico-theology broadly as a worldview that precedes the picturesque, and that is grounded in "the neoclassical system of objectified reason,"⁶⁹⁵ as evidenced "in Nature, for example, in the course of the planets and in gravitation."⁶⁹⁶ The picturesque challenges this system insofar as "the meaningfulness of the world [for Gilpin] is, despite its irrationality, sought for in its aesthetic quality" borrowed "above all from painting."⁶⁹⁷ Despite my general agreement with Mohr's point, some clarifications are in order.

For one, Mohr's phrase, the "course of the planets," is redolent of the sublimity of the cosmos whose vastness Gilpin never described as irrational, but as inaccessible to human ratiocination.⁶⁹⁸ Second, Mohr's explanation for the picturesque's departure from physico-theology is wide-sweeping, but not sharp enough to do justice to the specificity of Gilpin's picturesque. Mohr suggests that the concept of the picturesque no longer

⁶⁹³ Hans-Ulrich Mohr, "The Picturesque: A Key Concept of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Klein Jürgen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 240–68.

⁶⁹⁴ Mohr, "The Picturesque," 253.

⁶⁹⁵ Mohr, "The Picturesque," 252.

⁶⁹⁶ Mohr, "The Picturesque," 251.

⁶⁹⁷ Hans-Ulrich Mohr, "Literature on Travel in Britain in the Corvey Library: Concepts, Routes, Destinations," in *The Corvey Library and Anglo-German Cultural Exchanges, 1770 - 1837 Essays to Honour Rainer Schöwerling*, ed. Werner Huber and Schöwerling Rainer (Paderborn Fink, 2004), 147–62, p. 152.

⁶⁹⁸ Kirwan has suggested that the sublime may be described as the 'non-rational', rather than the 'irrational'. Kirwan, *Sublimity*, 35.

aligns with physico-theology because it abandons the notion of objective nature in favor of understanding the natural world as the analogate of the mind. But this change that Mohr presents as the innovation of the picturesque can be already found in Addison's theory of poetry as idealization, a process that makes nature the analogate of the subjective mind.⁶⁹⁹ Returning to the point made earlier, the departure of the picturesque from physico-theology is best understood by looking precisely at the core of this kind of theology, and specifically how, in Gilpin's writings, the argument from design fares in relation to the picturesque discourse. It will be shown next that while Gilpin often incorporates natural beauty and sublimity into arguments from design, he is reluctant to include the picturesque in such arguments.

The clearest expression of the traditional argument from design in Gilpin's oeuvre is found in his rather understudied 1779 *Lectures on the Catechism of the Church of England*. Lecture II starts with Gilpin's preference for the a posteriori argument over a priori ontological arguments: "[a] few plain and simple arguments drawn from the creation of the world [...] strike us with more conviction, than all the subtilities of metaphysical deduction."⁷⁰⁰ Thus, the "existence of a deity we prove from the light of nature."⁷⁰¹

We have already seen that the aesthetic version of the design argument from vastness is operative in Gilpin's work: "these sublime appendages of landscape," his

⁶⁹⁹ See section 3.5 above.

⁷⁰⁰ William Gilpin, *Lectures on the Catechism of the Church of England* (London: Printed for R. Blamire in the Strand; Sold by R. Faulder, New Bond Street; And B. Law, Ave-Mary Lane, 1781), 27

⁷⁰¹ Gilpin, *Lectures on the Catechism*, 27.

character Sir Philip noted, are “leading the mind to the great author of them.”⁷⁰² Gilpin also considered the design argument from natural beauty, for in his *Three Essays* he made the following statement:

consider the objects of nature in a higher light, than merely as amusement. We might observe, that a search after beauty should naturally lead the mind to the great origin of all beauty; to the ‘first good, first perfect, and first fair’.⁷⁰³

Elsewhere, he urges “travellers [who] would frequent this country [England] with a view to examine it's *grandeur*, and *beauty* [...] to adore the great *Creator* in [...] his sublimer works [...]”⁷⁰⁴ Gilpin’s treatment of natural beauty and sublimity appears to signal his belonging to the same physico-theological tradition whose idiom was appropriated by Addison and oriented toward the nascent field of philosophical aesthetics at the beginning of the century.

Whereas natural beauty and sublimity attest to the indissolubility of the bond between nature and its divine creator, the picturesque approach to nature calls attention to its weakening:

But tho in theory this seems a natural climax, we insist the less upon it, as in fact we have scarce ground to hope, that every admirer of *picturesque* beauty, is an admirer also of the beauty of virtue; and that every lover of nature reflects, that:
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God.⁷⁰⁵

When Gilpin expresses his doubt that, in the context of picturesque landscape viewing, “every lover of nature reflects [...] that [n]ature is but a name for an effect [...] [w]hose

⁷⁰² Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects*, 401-402.

⁷⁰³ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 46.

⁷⁰⁴ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 67 (emphasis added).

⁷⁰⁵ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 47 (emphasis added).

cause is God,” he is witnessing a certain disenchantment of the world that shows, among other things, the limited force of the picturesque aesthetic to properly serve as a design argument. Whereas “great scenes can inspire him [the admirer] with religious awe,” he continues, “we dare not promise him more from picturesque travel, than a *rational*, and agreeable amusement.”⁷⁰⁶ The picturesque is ready to displace an aesthetic framework of natural beauty and sublimity which derived its authority from a long tradition of natural theology. It was impossible, at the beginning of the century, for Addison to speak with confidence of the possibility of such a separation of theological and aesthetic values. The intertwining of these values was warranted by the inheritance theology left to modern aesthetic theory.

It is apparent from these examples that when Gilpin engages in descriptions of natural beauty and natural sublimity, he often explicitly incorporates these categories into design arguments, but shies away from including the picturesque in such endeavor. How can this dissociation of the picturesque from physico-theology be explained? I suggest that an answer might be found in the difference between nature and art in terms of how well each function as design arguments in the aesthetics of Gilpin, as well as of his predecessors. For Shaftesbury, natural beauty and sublimity infallibly reflects the absolute beauty of the divine creator, whereas human art is only a mediated reflection of divine beauty, since it must first reflect the beauty of the artist’s mind. For Addison, art functions as a diminished form of design argument because although its secondary

⁷⁰⁶ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 47 (emphasis added).

qualities prove the existence of God who enabled them in the first place, its primary qualities only demonstrate the presence of human agency.

Although Gilpin construes art neither in terms of Shaftesbury's Neo-Platonic tripartition of beauty, nor in explicit relation to the Lockean framework of primary and secondary qualities used by Addison, there is enough evidence in his work to suggest that he does entertain the view that art, while reflective of human agency, only partially reflects the existence of God. Having inherited estates from their fathers, Mr. Willoughby and Sir James Leigh, the two protagonists of Gilpin's homonymous dialogue, are tasked with administering their properties. Depending on how well each performed, "[t]heir different dispositions began soon to appear."⁷⁰⁷ Whereas Mr. Willoughby carefully tended his estate without intervening excessively to alter the landscape, Sir James was involved in a radical improvement of the landscape in opposition to nature, an activity that mirrored the weaknesses of his mind:

Sir James Leigh was carrying on his improvements, as he called them, profusion of expence, that astonished every body. If you walked near his house, you saw groups of labourers, here, and there, and every where- removing ground-widening rivers-building bridges-or employed in other expensive operations; none of which was well considered, or was conducted with the least *taste*, or *judgment*; for he had too high an opinion to follow the advice of any one. His projects were all in opposition to nature.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁷ William Gilpin, *Dialogues on Various Subjects* (London: Published by T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 17.

⁷⁰⁸ William Gilpin, *Moral Contrasts: or, the Power of Religion Exemplified under Different Characters. By William Gilpin, ...* (London: Printed for T. Cadell Junior and W. Davies, 1799), 31. See also Mayhew, "William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque," 356.

The modification of landscape is, first and foremost, reflective of human agency, an aspect echoed in Gilpin's belief that the condition of an estate discloses the moral disposition of its owner's mind.

Gilpin's critique of the gardens at Studley Royal is likewise based on the reasoning that its owner, John Aislabie, exaggerated the improvement of the ground, and this illustrates his moral weakness. When Aislabie was forced to abandon his duties in the Parliament in 1721 after being charged with fraud, he retired to Studley to involve himself in creating the gardens in the style of French formal gardening and neoclassical architecture.⁷⁰⁹ Upon visiting the site, Gilpin complained that

the whole is a vain ostentation of expence; a mere *Timon's villa*; decorated by a taste debauched in it's conceptions, and puerile in it's execution. Not only the reigning idea of the place is forgotten; but all the great master-strokes of nature, in every shape are effaced.⁷¹⁰

By associating the gardens at Studley with Timon's villa, Gilpin echoes Pope's complaint about the villa's formal gardening style which, in his *Epistle to Burlington*, becomes the object of a satire exposing how "Trees [were] cut to Statues, Statues [were] thick as trees."⁷¹¹ Gilpin saw the formal style employed at Studley as a threat to the sublimity of the place when he remarked that the place was apt to "sooth and amuse; but not to rouse and transport; like the great scenes of nature."⁷¹² When Aislabie's "busy hands were let loose upon" "the beautiful scene," he destroyed its picturesque qualities by having "pared

⁷⁰⁹ Sarah Thompson, "Recycling Ruins," *Third Text* 25, no. 6 (November 2011): 675–86, p. 675.

⁷¹⁰ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 181.

⁷¹¹ Alexander Pope, *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington ... The Second Edition* (L. Gilliver, 1731), 10. See also James R. Aubrey, "Timon's Villa: Pope's Composite Picture," *Studies in Philology* 80, no. 3 (1983): 325–48.

⁷¹² Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 179-180

away all the bold roughness,” and having offered only “a trim polish.”⁷¹³ But perhaps the greatest blunder that Gilpin recognizes was Aislable’s attempt to “give a finished splendor to the ruins,”⁷¹⁴ a decision which justifies his punishment not in the real court, but in the court of taste:

A *legal* right the proprietor unquestionably has to deform his ruin, as he pleases.

But tho he fear no indictment in the king’s bench, he must expect a very severe prosecution in the court of taste. The refined code of this court does not consider an elegant ruin as a man’s *property*, on which he may exercise at will the irregular sallies of a wanton imagination: but as a deposit, of which he is only the guardian, for the amusement and admiration of posterity.—A ruin is a sacred thing.⁷¹⁵

Overall, the errors that Gilpin is eager to point out in the execution of Studley Royal—the improper diminution of the idea of greatness, and the unrestrained use of smoothness to the detriment of picturesque roughness—are ultimately traced to “the whimsical channel of human operations.”⁷¹⁶

A comparison Gilpin makes between art and nature in his *Observations on the Western Parts of England* further reveals that unlike nature, art only partially reflects the existence of God:

art is a mere trifler compared with Nature. The efforts of both, it is true, may be called the works of God: but the difference lies here. In the efforts of *art*, God works with those little instruments called *men*; he works in miniature. But when he works in the grand style of *nature*, the elements are his instruments.⁷¹⁷

It is no surprise that, although human art is also deemed a work of God, it is only a small instrument through which God only works indirectly. In contrast, through “the grand

⁷¹³ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 184.

⁷¹⁴ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 187.

⁷¹⁵ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 188.

⁷¹⁶ Gilpin, *Observations... on Several Parts of England*, vol. 2, p. 182.

⁷¹⁷ Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 177.

style of nature,” a distinguishable reference to the natural sublime, God works directly using elements of nature as divine instruments. By borrowing the tools and conventions characteristic of artistic idealization, the picturesque approach to the appreciation of nature is akin to a form of art made by human beings for human beings through which God only works indirectly. Sue Lovell has remarked that the picturesque attitude offers a human mediation to the natural world which instead of reflecting its divine creator, points to the “scopic power” of man:

Nature becomes nature—a spectacle lending itself to revis(ion)ing as the picturesque. [...]. Nature, as God’s creation or God Himself, remains the source of Gilpin’s aesthetic but his rules for the picturesque demand that composure leads to picturesque composition. [...]. As the picturesque, Nature has become transformed into a social domain: nature as landscape structured and constructed not by God but by humans. [...]. A landscape painting initiates perspective from a point *outside* the frame, to anchor a representation of ontological reality from within the individual rather than the Divine; so, too, for the picturesque. This is a deeply ideological position where truth is mediated through *scopic power*. It is also a *safe* position affording the viewer control over what is viewed.⁷¹⁸

H. F. Clark similarly sees in the concept of nature with which the picturesque operates a step further toward theological disenchantment: “Nature though as fervently invoked, became no longer the goddess of Addison’s and Pope’s day, but a picturesque object only, a model for water-colour painters, the muse of travelers and tourists.”⁷¹⁹

The artificiality of picturesque appreciation displaces natural beauty and sublimity while making nature altered in accordance with pictorial conventions function less

⁷¹⁸ Sue Lovell, “Vida Lahey Modest Artist Flaneuse,” in *Women Rewriting Boundaries: Victorian Women Travel Writers*, ed. Precious Mckenzie Stearns (Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 167–90, pp. 171-2.

⁷¹⁹ H. F. Clark, “Eighteenth Century Elysiums: The Role of ‘Association’ in the Landscape Movement,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 1943): 165–89, p. 189.

effectively as a *bona fide* argument for the existence of God. The picturesque sets in motion a weakened version of physico-theology that subverts the argument for the aesthetic superiority of nature. Yet, as Mayhew has observed, picturesque landscapes are ‘attenuated’ in the first place precisely to demonstrate the vastness of God’s creation in a way commensurate with our limited capacities. The picturesque aesthetic calls for an ‘attenuated’ landscape to fulfill an important theological function, only to undermine that function. These circumstances point to a paradox which holds the key to a more comprehensive interpretation of the relation of art to nature in Gilpin’s aesthetics.

4.6 Nature Yields to Art?

Our last question pertains to the significance of Gilpin’s picturesque for the evolution of the relationship between nature and art in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. Most scholars perceive Gilpin as inconsistent in terms of his contradictory attitude towards the relation of art to nature. Hussey sees Gilpin as “involved in a perpetual compromise” which produces a comical effect: “the kindly parson, first abasing himself before nature as the source of all beauty and emotion; then getting up and giving her a lesson in deportment.”⁷²⁰ Stephen Copley states that one of the most striking conflicts that mark Gilpin’s writings involves his “contradictory appeals to the natural

⁷²⁰ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 114.

and the artificial.”⁷²¹ John Whale concludes that “in Gilpin's version of the Picturesque, there seems to be no ultimate preference, no still point, only an unresolved oscillation between nature and art.”⁷²² Miall sees an “unresolvable paradox” at the core of Gilpin’s work, as he “remains ambivalent about the relation of art to nature.”⁷²³ Typically, the paradox assumes the following form: on the one hand, Gilpin praises nature as “the great original,” while providing a disparaging description of art: “[t]he more refined our taste grows from the *study of nature*, the more insipid are the *works of art*.”⁷²⁴ On the other side, he recommends the improvement of the natural world according to man-made artistic conventions, noting “how little is wanting to reduce it [nature] to the rules of art.”⁷²⁵

Mayhew has suggested that a theological rereading of Gilpin’s picturesque cuts against purely aesthetic interpretations which see him as inconsistent or paradoxical.⁷²⁶ When Gilpin sees nature as aesthetically improvable, he only points to the limitations of our experience of the natural world, rather than any correctable blemishes in God’s creation. Thus, Gilpin would appear to agree with Shaftesbury and Addison that nature is the supreme object of aesthetic appreciation. It is necessary to look more closely at how

⁷²¹ Stephen Copley, “Tourists, Tintern Abbey and the Picturesque,” in *Imprints & [and] Re-Visions: The Making of the Literary Text, 1759-1818*, ed. Peter Hughes and Robert Rehder (Tübingen: G. Narr, 1996), 61–81, p. 64.

⁷²² John Whale, “Romantics, Explorers and Picturesque Travellers,” in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*, ed. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 175–95, p. 178.

⁷²³ Miall, “Representing the Picturesque,” 83.

⁷²⁴ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, vol. 1, p. 57.

⁷²⁵ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 49.

⁷²⁶ Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 361.

this theological reading can be deployed to solve the paradox at the heart of Gilpin's work. Miall's explanation for the source of this paradox is worth analyzing here:

Gilpin's difficulties [...] spring from his attempt to represent nature as an independent and creative power separate from human interests, but also in correspondence with the feelings and kinaesthetic responses of the landscape viewer [...].⁷²⁷

What lies behind this description of nature as “an independent and creative power separate from human interests” is nothing but Gilpin's own difficulty with nature's vastness as unintelligible to our optical and rational capacities. This complaint both justifies and triggers the shift to the picturesque as the only way to bring nature in accordance with the “feelings” and “responses of the landscape viewer.” The picturesque scenes that viewers respond to function as theodicean adaptations of God's vision to the microscopic eyesight of humans.

Aside from this reading that lays stress on the theological intention of Gilpin's picturesque, Bate has also commented somewhat more explicitly on the intention of Gilpin's project when he noted that there was an inevitable “historical irony” about the emergence of the picturesque which lay “in valuing art above nature whilst pretending to value nature above art.”⁷²⁸ To pretend is to attempt to dissimulate or disguise one's true intentions. So according to Bate's logic, Gilpin pretended to hold nature above art, while his true intentions were to value art above nature. My analysis of the picturesque invalidates this conclusion. It must be stated that I do concur with Bate that the

⁷²⁷ Miall, “Representing the Picturesque,” 80.

⁷²⁸ Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 136.

picturesque is ultimately a re-envisioning of nature as art,⁷²⁹ and as I have argued at length, this re-envisioning of nature according to artistic conventions produces consequential changes in three areas of aesthetics—the theory of mimesis, the experience of the natural sublime, and the domain of physico-theology—changes which, especially when considered cumulatively, support the contention that the picturesque brings about the supersession of nature by art. But it does not necessarily follow that this supersession must have also been the intention of Gilpin’s picturesque. If the practice of viewing, drawing, and describing nature in accordance with picturesque conventions is theologically grounded,⁷³⁰ as I have suggested by elaborating on Mayhew’s important critical work, then a very different conclusion will arise regarding Gilpin’s intentions.

Gilpin had recourse to the transformation of nature according to pictorial conventions not because he deemed nature inherently inferior to art, but as a way for humans to appreciate God’s vast design in a manner that is accessible to their rational and sensible capacities. To state it differently, nature needed transformation according to artistic rules precisely to show human beings the harmony and order of the whole which is too vast to comprehend with our limited minds. Without ever doubting that such harmony exists, Gilpin saw the picturesque as a theodicy intended to address his own skepticism about the ability of human reason to apprehend the sublime design of the natural world. If religion is acknowledged as a decisive motivating factor behind the

⁷²⁹ Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 135.

⁷³⁰ Mayhew, “William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,” 359.

emergence of the picturesque, it follows that Gilpin must have intended through his project to preserve and further reassert the aesthetic priority of nature to art.

While the theological interpretation of the picturesque solves the paradox of Gilpin's own attitude toward the relation of art to nature, it tends to downplay the innovation of the picturesque as an aesthetic approach to the natural world. The picturesque has often been described as promoting aesthetic values⁷³¹ that transcend its theological roots. For instance, after emphasizing the theological importance of Gilpin's picturesque, Mayhew draws attention to its unprecedented aestheticization of the Latitudinarian theologies of his predecessors:

Although the theological grounding of both Gilpin's theory and practice of the picturesque cannot be doubted, it would also be absurd to deny that the picturesque amounted to an unprecedented "*aestheticization*" of Latitudinarian arguments when compared with Tillotson, the Boyle lecturers, or even Addison and Young.⁷³²

Mayhew recognizes two immediate signs of aestheticization in Gilpin's work. For one, he uses scriptural citations in the picturesque tours solely to foreground the aesthetic value of the places.⁷³³ Additionally, and more importantly, he employs design arguments shorn of explicit reference to their religious origins.⁷³⁴ So on the one hand, the picturesque fulfills a theological function, while on the other, it promotes aesthetic values that exceed

⁷³¹ Townsend has argued that the picturesque is pivotal in bringing about theories of disinterestedness, aesthetic distance, and natural expressiveness. Of course, a vital component of these theories is the separation of aesthetic and moral sensibility and establishing an autonomous aesthetic. Dabney Townsend, "The Picturesque," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 4 (1997). See also Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, and Mou-Lan Wong, "The Sublime as the Beautiful Dis-Placements in Edward Lear's Landscapes and Limericks," in *Landscape, Seascape, and the Eco-Spatial Imagination*, ed. Simon C. Estok, I-Chun Wang, and Jonathan White (New York: Routledge, 2016), 82–102.

⁷³² Mayhew, "William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque," 362.

⁷³³ Mayhew, "William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque," 362.

⁷³⁴ Mayhew, "William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque," 362.

the frame of such theological project. Can this recognized incongruity between aesthetic and theological values be resolved? Mayhew suggests that the aestheticization of the picturesque can be explained away as Gilpin's attempt to not "offend his readers" in an era of doctrine and dogma.⁷³⁵ My analysis has expanded the range of picturesque aesthetic values to include not only the weakening of physico-theology, but also the innovative use of the concept of imitation, as well as the picturesque's fraught relationship with the natural sublime. Construed in such terms, the aesthetic thrust of the picturesque takes on a new significance for the evolution of the art-nature relation in eighteenth-century aesthetics. The picturesque goes back to challenge its own theological grounding as it brings about important changes leading to the supersession of nature by art.

The picturesque entails significant revisions in three areas that are fundamental to the hierarchization of nature and art in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory:

- (1) In terms of a theory of imitation, Gilpin's category of the picturesque starts with Addison's conviction that nature offers secondary pleasures of the imagination when it accidentally resembles human art, but Gilpin would replace this mimetic relationship with the "voluntary" resemblance of nature to human art as a genuine source of pleasure.
- (2) Eulogistic and optimistic conceptions of the sublime, such as those of Shaftesbury and Addison, played a central role in their arguments for the aesthetic superiority of nature to art. The picturesque appreciation of nature defines itself against the natural sublime whose adaptation to human vision implies a negation of the very essence of sublimity.
- (3) The absence of explicit references to the design argument in *picturesque* description and practice suggests that unlike untouched nature, nature altered according to pictorial conventions functions less effectively as an argument for the existence of God. Thus, the picturesque weakens the aesthetic version

⁷³⁵ Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture*, 110.

of the design argument which to Gilpin's predecessors was an argument for the primacy of nature to art.

If Gilpin's aesthetic project is understood not only through the lens of authorial intentions, but through its implications or consequences, a more complex picture will emerge of how the picturesque embodies the relation of nature to art. Gilpin's preference was for nature over art which he wanted to reassert through the theodicy of the picturesque. Yet the very steps taken to carry out this project force the picturesque aesthetic to function in ways well beyond its author's intentions. The actions that Gilpin thought were necessary to vindicate the superiority of nature to art had the quite opposite effect of reversing the hierarchies of nature and art, and in effect, of announcing the victory of art.

If the picturesque justifies the ways of God to man, in writing about the picturesque, Gilpin must have fulfilled his Protestant calling.⁷³⁶ A theological motive remains indeed the main factor for the genesis of the picturesque aesthetic, but once the aesthetic is generated, it produces changes that destabilize its own theological grounding. Loesberg has articulated a paradox that can be used to describe the dynamics of the picturesque's (re)envisioning of the relation of art to nature:

when aesthetics *self-consciously* models nature on the order of art, it soon finds that the order of art is more complex than the original analogy presumed, and aesthetics winds up becoming a mode of questioning natural order as much as a way of buttressing it.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁶ See Margaret Doody, "William Gilpin: A Classical Eye for the Picturesque," in *Call of Classical Literature in the Romantic Age*, ed. K. P. Van Anglen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 35–52, p. 40.

⁷³⁷ Loesberg, *A Return to Aesthetics*, 35.

As the first movement in history to self-consciously model nature on the order of art, the picturesque begins as a theodicy to buttress the natural order but amounts to a range of complex theoretical maneuvers that come to eventually challenge this order. Religion calls for the superiority of nature to art to be reaffirmed through the picturesque mode of nature appreciation which, in turn, works to subvert this logic and assert the triumph of art.

5. CONCLUSION

In his attempt to explain the cause of the neglect of natural beauty and the subsequent narrowing down of the scope of philosophical aesthetics in the German tradition, Adorno underscored the importance of the overarching concept of freedom:

Natural beauty vanished from aesthetics as a result of the burgeoning domination of the concept of freedom and dignity, which was inaugurated by Kant and then rigorously transplanted into aesthetics by Schiller and Hegel; in accord with this concept nothing in the world is worthy of attention except that for which the autonomous subject has itself to thank.⁷³⁸

My analysis of the picturesque as a human mediation to the natural world, and as indicative of the power of humans to visually contain and control the vastness of nature dovetails to a significant degree with the story of the rise of freedom and dignity of the autonomous subject as told by Adorno. The dramatic transformation that philosophical aesthetics underwent in the beginning of the nineteenth century when it came to be identified with the philosophy of art can be understood as the triumph of an art-first position in Hegel's aesthetics. As aesthetic value came to be exclusively associated with human artistic products, the eviction of natural beauty from aesthetics was an obvious consequence. As Hegel himself writes in the preface of the first volume of his 1835 *Lectures on Aesthetics*,

By adopting this expression [*Philosophy of Art* and, more definitely, *Philosophy of Fine Art* to refer to *Aesthetics*] we at once exclude the beauty of nature. [...] [T]he beauty of art is *higher* than nature. The beauty of art is beauty *born of the spirit and born again*, and the higher the spirit and its productions stand above nature and its phenomena, the higher too is the beauty of art above that of nature. Indeed, considered *formally* [i.e. no matter what it says], even a useless notion

⁷³⁸ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 2004), 62.

that enters a man's head is higher than any product of nature, because in such a notion spirituality and freedom are always present.⁷³⁹

By showing that the supersession of nature by art was already contained within Gilpin's picturesque aesthetic of nature, my work offers an antecedent in the history of aesthetics to the more radical vision of Hegel. I have argued that the superiority of art to nature is expressed by the picturesque because it thrives on the "voluntary" resemblance of nature to human art as a genuine source of pleasure, clashes with a full-scale appreciation of natural sublimity, and ultimately eschews any explicit references to the design argument. Of the relationship between the legacy of the picturesque and Hegelian aesthetics, William Barton has very aptly pointed out:

The picturesque was the leading influence on both the popular and philosophical appreciation of nature for over a century. [...]. But its [the appreciation of nature's] eventual reduction to dependence on landscape art opened the way to a new philosophical aesthetics that favoured art as the superior object of aesthetic appreciation. Hegel's aesthetics positioned art as the highest form of expression and therefore the worthies of aesthetic attention.⁷⁴⁰

A full-fledged inquiry will be necessary, however, to explore the relationship between the picturesque and the Hegelian position in aesthetics. My notion of the paragons of art and nature can more rigorously guide such inquiry into how the areas of artistic mimesis, the sublime, and physico-theology were transformed within a kind of aesthetic theory that excludes nature from its inventory of aesthetic objects. I can only sketch a few brief answers here. In the excerpt I have just quoted from Hegel's aesthetics,

⁷³⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1 (Oxford England; New York: Clarendon Press, 2010), 1-2.

⁷⁴⁰ William M. Barton, *Mountain Aesthetics in Early Modern Latin Literature* (Taylor & Francis, 2016), 175.

he asserts not only that art is a product of human agency but celebrates such agency as a culmination of individual freedom. It follows from this commendation of art as the supreme aesthetic achievement that Hegel must find little use for the divine artisanship analogy, thus rejecting the view that because nature is the product of God, its aesthetic value must necessarily surpass that of art. Closely related to this dismissal of the divine artisanship analogy is Hegel's ban on the concept of artistic mimesis from aesthetics by abandoning the notion that the "artist's model is God's Newtonian design" in favor of the view that "nature's model is art."⁷⁴¹ There is more than a hint of the picturesque in Stephen Bungay's description of Hegel's views on imitation whereby one can regard nature as beautiful only if it can be appreciated from the point of view of art, only if it is treated as a work of art or a human product.⁷⁴² Although Hegel's silence on the sublime follows from his restriction of beauty to art,⁷⁴³ there is one statement in his 1796 travel diary to the Bernese Alps where his dismissive attitude to mountain aesthetics is clearly spelled out. "Pondering the permanence of these mountains or the kind of sublimity that people ascribe to them," he writes, "reason finds nothing that imposes it, that compels it to respond with wonder and admiration."⁷⁴⁴ Rather than responding with admiration and awe, Hegel deems the mountains monotonous and boring: "Seeing the eternally dead

⁷⁴¹ Stephen Bungay, *Beauty and Truth* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1984), 14.

⁷⁴² Bungay, *Beauty and Truth*, 15.

⁷⁴³ Hegel's silence on the sublime is mentioned in Lydia L. Moland, *Hegel's Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 72.

⁷⁴⁴ G.W.F. Hegel and Sean Franzel, "G. W. F. Hegel, Travel Diary through the Bernese Alps (1796)," in *Mountains and the German Mind* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2020), 99–120, p. 112.

masses gave me nothing but the monotonous and, stretched out, boring idea: this is the way it is.”⁷⁴⁵

If Gilpin assumes a somewhat central position in my contention that the picturesque provides a bridge to the more radical vision of Hegel, he does so only to the extent that his aesthetics develops alongside a documented tendency in aesthetic theory to establish paragons of art and nature. In this dissertation I have argued that it was right from its inception in the hands of Shaftesbury and Addison that aesthetic theory, despite its openness to include under one roof both natural and artistic objects, had framed the relation of art to nature hierarchically. The shift of emphasis from nature to art rests to a great extent on the attenuation of the discourse of physico-theology which gradually loses traction as aesthetics comes into its own.

If my conclusions carry some implicit criticism of the practice of the picturesque appreciation of nature through the lens of art, it does not follow that my narrative glorifies aesthetic theories in which the beauty of nature surpasses that of art. It is only after the paragons are cast aside that we can hope to investigate art and nature on their own terms. If, in order to survive, aesthetics of nature rids itself of the Hegelian exclusivism of art, to prosper, it needs to dispense with picturesque art-centrism as well as the physico-theology that haunted its beginnings. Nature becomes a serious philosophical puzzle for aesthetics only once its status as a divine or human artwork is suspended.

⁷⁴⁵ Hegel and Franzel, “G. W. F. Hegel, Travel Diary,” p. 112. See also Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *The Emergence of German Idealism* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 169, footnote 39.

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Summer-Fall 2022 Curriculum development for HUM 224, “Introduction to Film”

Fall 2019-present Curriculum development for HUM 105, “Introduction to Comparative Humanities”

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2023	Dissertation Completion Award Graduate School University of Louisville
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2016	Research Visit University of Aberdeen, The United Kingdom The Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, Aberdeen Sir Duncan Rice Library, Aberdeen Academic Advisors: Dr. Endre Szécsényi (University of Aberdeen) Dr. Michael Brown (University of Aberdeen)

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2015-2017	Graduate Fellowship Award Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies University of Bucharest	
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2010-2012	Undergraduate Fellowship Award English Department University of Bucharest	

SELECTED PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

2022	“Adam Smith on Beauty, Utility, and the Problem of Disinterested Pleasure,” <i>Journal of Early Modern Studies</i> 10.2, Fall 2021, 115-130. https://www.pdcnet.org/jems/content/jems_2021_0010_0002_0115_0130
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- 2017 “Theological Underpinnings of Joseph Addison’s Aesthetics”, *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 6.2 (2017), 95-117.
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- 2016 ‘It was a pleasing Reflection to see the World so prettily chequer’d’: Aesthetics of Urban Experience in the Spectator”, *University of Bucharest Review*, special issue on Cultural Representations of the City, vol. VI, no. 2 (2017), 149-157.
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BOOK REVIEWS

- 2018 Review of Simon Grote, *The Emergence of Modern Aesthetic Theory: Religion and Morality in Enlightenment Germany and Scotland*, *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 7.2 (Fall 2018), 124-127.
https://www.pdcnet.org/collection/show?id=jems_2018_0007_0002_0124_0127&file_type=pdf
- 2017 Review of Endre Szécsényi (ed.), *Francis Hutcheson and the Origins of the Aesthetic* (special issue of the Journal of Scottish Thought, Vol. 7, 2016), *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 6.1 (2017), 199-204.
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CONFERENCES, TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

- 2021 “Paragons of Art and Nature in Eighteenth-century British Aesthetic Theory”
Association of Humanities Academics (AHA), University of Louisville
October 22, 2021.
<https://louisville.edu/humanities/graduate/aha>

- 2018 “Picturesque Truth and the Rise of Aesthetics.”
The 20th Annual International Conference of the English Department,
‘Truth(s) and Alternative Facts’
University of Bucharest
June 8, 2018.
<http://engleza.ils.unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/06/Literature-and-Cultural-Studies-2018.pdf>
- 2017 “Theological Underpinnings of Joseph Addison’s Aesthetics. The
Disciplinary Implications”
46th Annual Conference of the British Society of Eighteenth-Century
Studies
University of Oxford, St. Hugh’s College
January 5, 2017.
http://bsecs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/BSECS-Draft-Schedule-2017-Annual-Conference_Nov-2016.docx
- 2016 “Some Thoughts on the Imagination in Eighteenth-Century British
Aesthetics: The Case of Shaftesbury”
‘The Janus Face of the Early Modern Imagination,’ (workshop).
Institute for Research in the Humanities, Bucharest
September 9, 2016.
<https://irhunibuc.wordpress.com/2016/08/22/the-janus-face-of-the-early-modern-imagination-september-9-10-2016/>
- 2016 Bucharest-Princeton Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy (16th
edition)
Hosted by the Catholic Institute in Alba-Iulia and the Batthyaneum
Library
July 12-16, 2016.
<https://irhunibuc.wordpress.com/2016/05/30/bucharest-princeton-seminar-in-early-modern-philosophy-16th-edition/>

- 2016 “Aesthetics of Urban Experience in The Spectator”
The 18th Annual International Conference of the English Department,
‘Cultural Representations of the City’
University of Bucharest
June 2-4, 2016.
http://engleza.ils.unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/03/01_15_05_24ACED_18_-_English_Department_Conference_Programme.pdf
- 2015 “By those secret comforts and refreshments which he conveys into our souls”: Theological Underpinnings of Joseph Addison’s Aesthetics
The 17th Annual International Conference of the English Department,
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