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*A New Romantic Canon:
‘Enlightened Romanticism’.
Addison’s Rejection of Innatism
and The Pleasures of the Imagination (1712)*

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**A NEW ROMANTIC CANON:
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ABSTRACT: My article proposes a revision of the periodization and the canon of Romanticism by going back to the roots of key elements of this literary period, in linking together the imagination to the pivotal assumption of the Enlightenment, i.e. the debunking of innatism, as Locke had proposed it. Joseph Addison reworks his theory of the imagination accordingly, in particular, in his Journal «The Spectator», with a series of essays called *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1712). Here he affirms that the *tabula rasa* of the mind is modelled by the sensations we acquire via the senses, which write on the ‘blank slate’, producing our distinguished and unique understanding of the world. The faculty of the imagination is thus revolutionarily seen not as an innate gift of the gods to geniuses, but simply as a faculty each human being possesses. Each and every human being could, from then on, imagine a different world, fostering thus what I consider the major asset of all Romanticisms of the world: romantic individualism. Therefore, I propose to link these two only seemingly different cultural periods of time, the Enlightenment and Romanticism, together, to give their due both to the empiricists and to the romantics, who jointly permitted an evolution of humankind, in ‘authorising’ all human beings in the use of their imagination, just as artists, scientists, and so-called geniuses had done in the past, i.e. to become ‘artists’ themselves, assuming upon them the accountability towards reality. ‘Enlightened Romanticism’ synthesizes this revolutionary synergy created by the dismissal of innatism and the rise of the imagination.

RIASSUNTO: L’articolo propone una revisione della periodizzazione del canone e del periodo romantico rintracciando alcuni elementi di questo periodo letterario nelle sue radici illuministe e, nella fattispecie, nelle rivoluzionarie proprietà dell’immaginazione proposte da Joseph Addison e anticipate dal quadro filosofico del rifiuto dell’ipotesi innatista di Locke.

Sarà, infatti, Joseph Addison a teorizzare l’immaginazione in questa chiave interpretativa, nel 1712, nel suo giornale «The Spectator», nella serie di saggi, che intitolerà: *I piaceri dell’immaginazione*. Qui, riprendendo Locke, Addison affermerà che sono i sensi (non per caso ridefiniti ‘piaceri’) a modellare plasticamente la *tabula rasa* della mente, producendo il nostro distintivo e unico modo di acquisizione e di comprensione del mondo.

L'immaginazione è quindi letta non come dono innato consegnatoci da esseri superiori, ipotesi base dell'innatismo e di conseguenza anche del creazionismo, ma semplicemente come una facoltà che, ora, tutti gli esseri umani posseggono.

Tale affermazione cambierà il significato stesso dell'immaginare, da una parte autorizzando tutti all'uso della facoltà, ma anche creando al contempo il caposaldo fondamentale di tutti i romanticismi del mondo: l'autorizzazione ad essere liberi e del tutto singoli esercitando l'individualismo romantico, tratto distintivo di ogni Romanticismo.

Il saggio propone, quindi, da una parte, di unire Illuminismo e Romanticismo, periodi che in apparenza paiono opposti, essendo l'uno votato alla scienza e l'altro alla creatività, suggerendo la loro unione attraverso l'icastica formula di un 'Romanticismo Illuminato', e dall'altra di anticipare il canone romantico. L'immaginazione di Addison ha infatti permesso un'evoluzione della specie, autorizzando ogni essere umano ad esercitare questa potente facoltà della mente, come artisti, poeti, e scienziati avevano da sempre fatto. È, infatti, nel diventare 'artisti' che tutti gli esseri assumono su di sé la responsabilità dei cambiamenti immaginati e da realizzarsi nel mondo reale. Il 'Romanticismo Illuminato' sintetizza quindi questa sinergia straordinaria che il rifiuto dell'innatismo e la difesa dell'immaginazione hanno reso possibile.

KEY WORDS: Enlightenment, Innatism, Romanticism, imagination, *tabula rasa*, genius, individualism, artist, 'Enlightened Romanticism', *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, John Locke, Joseph Addison, David Hartley, the invention of Northern Aesthetics.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Illuminismo, Innatismo, Romanticismo, immaginazione, *tabula rasa*, genio, individualismo, artista, *I piaceri dell'immaginazione*, John Locke, Joseph Addison, David Hartley, invenzione dell'estetica nordica.

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*This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
without Imagination, which, in truth
is but another name for absolute power
and clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
and Reason in her most exalted mood.*

W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, XIV

1. Aims of this Essay

This essay aims at interpreting the Romantic Period as the result of a rhizomatic philosophical cross-fertilization with the Enlightenment. Instrumental to this affirmation is Joseph Addison’s series of essays, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1712), in that this work posits the imagination as a faculty of the mind present in all humankind, in direct contrast to the theory of ingeniousness considered as the innate gift of exceptional geniuses only. In this case, Addison is following Locke, as Hume would later do, who had demonstrated that all people possess an imaginative capacity.¹

The English Enlightenment, through a concentration on experiment and material proofs – typical traits of the inductive empiricist Baconian method – and via an unprecedented focus on the senses, challenged the previous merely deductive, syllogistic, rational thinking, which was aimed

¹ I have developed these concepts in Yvonne Bezrucka, *The Invention of Northern Aesthetics in 18th-Century English Literature*, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars, 2017, pp. 1-25; the book will hereafter be referred to in the text as [Bezrucka: 2017](#) and references; all my books mentioned in this essay are present in the given link.

at recovering a so-thought pre-existing innate knowledge of the mind, a theory which came from Plato.

As a unifying capacity, and as the origin of all knowledge, the imagination was championed as the basis of all new ideas including forms of scientific insight.

For the likes of Locke and Hume, this creative faculty of imagination challenged notions of innatism, and its connected notions of genius and 'ingeniousness', seen as innate gifts of the gods to the chosen ones. The empiricists' attacks on innatism and the concomitant defence of the imagination, would be fundamental in 'authorizing' all human beings in the use of their imagination, just as artists and so-thought geniuses had done in the past. However, the philosophical dispute about innatism brought with it a secular religious orientation, compelling people to make a choice between faith and science, an issue crucial to European Romanticism's understanding of itself, notably in Germany. The study of the imagination was thus – unexpectedly – a direct result of a thoroughly empirical reading of the mind.

As we draw out these links between the imagination and new empiricist readings of the capacity of the mind, we can begin to recognise a Romantic reading of the Enlightenment characterised not only by an emphasis on individualism, but by the autonomy Romanticism bestows on the artist in the negotiation of religion, innate ideas, and the world they inhabit, which will in due course lead to the characteristic climax of romantic individualism.

I thus see individualistic Romanticism best represented in the proto-romantic W. Blake, in the philosophy of Coleridge, and for what concerns a pragmatic ethics by Percy Bisshe Shelley's «negative capability» and by Byron's active, engaged, involved, and interventionist work and life.² Wordsworth's work on an 'ante-litteram' ecological concentration on nature is invaluable for reminding us that we are only parasites on this planet, and Keats' nostalgic backward look in search of the classical Southern Aesthetics confirms the openness and variety Romanticism could reach in anticipating post-modernist positions of syncretism and variety, a realm already anticipated by the fertile cosmopolitanism which the 18th century had itself championed.³

2 On this topic cf. Jane Stabler, *The Artistry of Exile. Romantic and Victorian Writers in Italy*, Oxford, OUP, 2013.

3 Cf. Oliver Goldsmith, *Letters from a Citizen of the World to his Friends in the East*,

2. Periodization

When, as critics, we talk about Romanticism and its periodization we usually subdivide the Romantic period into two or three major phases: Pre-Romanticism, Romanticism proper, and the Second Romantic generation. Pre-Romanticism is usually related to the works of Blake (1757-1827) and his anti-authoritarian unorthodox Christianity. Romanticism proper we usually link with the First Romantic generation, that we identify with Wordsworth and Coleridge,⁴ and their anti-Augustan stance and attack on the 'poetic diction' of previous authors,⁵ in specific terms the authority of the past, exemplified in Pope's conclusion of his *Essay on Man*: «whatever is, is right» and in Dryden's critical work.⁶ The Second Romantic generation, poets who die before the first Romantics, comprises both revolutionary poets like Shelley and Byron but also aesthetically speaking, reactionary ones, like Keats, testifying to the differences among their fully personal and individual artistic choices. During this last phase the emphasis passes from the more introspective and affective *niveau* of Wordsworth and Coleridge to the direct social engagement of Byron and Shelley. If we take, for the moment, only poetry as the genre of attention, and as the evaluation criterion with which to judge both stylistic and content features of Romanticism, this autotelic periodization may seem to be a corroborative and consistent hypothesis.

London, J. Bungay and R. Childs, 1820 [1762], and the works of the Antiquarians of the age.

- 4 Cf. The *Preface[s]* (1798, 1802, 1805) to Wordsworth & Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones eds., II ed., London, Routledge, 1991, see pp. 7-9, and pp. 241-272. The differences between the first *Advertisement* and the two editions of the *Prefaces* are cleared at p. 241. See also Samuel Taylor Coleridge & William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1800*, Michael Damer and Dahlia Porter eds., Toronto, Broadview, 2008, pp. 31-36.
- 5 See also David Duff's discussion of the «anti-generic hypothesis» in *Romanticism and the Use of Genre*, Oxford, OUP, 2009, p. 1, and his analysis of didactic and anti-didactic trends in Romanticism, pp. 95-118.
- 6 Pope, accepting Leibniz's Design Theory in his *Theodicy* (1710), develops the same theory in his *Essay on Man*, and concludes Epistle 1, devoted to the nature of the universe, with the self-evident words: «Whatever is, is Right». Dryden, although one of the first critics to exempt Shakespeare from the criticism of not respecting the classical unities, nevertheless does not accept deviation from the normative control of affects and passions, exemplary is his rewriting of Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* in his *All for Love, or the World Well Lost*, a moralistic adaptation of the former play, being for him, too passionate.

In reality, however, this is not so, as the title of my essay anticipates. In particular, I am convinced that we need to broaden our studies and periodization of the Romantic Age to include not only the scientific epistemic revolution of the Enlightenment (Bacon, Locke, Hume, and De Mandeville)⁷ but also the empiricists' rejection of innatism present in John Locke's *An Essay on Human Understanding*.⁸ I consider the dismissal of innatism to be the core pivotal element which authorizes us to revise and unite these two periods of time more tightly, periods of time which only in appearance seem to be characterized by totally different agendas, i.e. a scientific and a creative one.⁹

I thus propose a definition of Romanticism as 'Enlightened Romanticism' basing my contention on the crucial rejection of innatism, the idea that the mind possesses from birth all knowledge, which, as in Plato's cave, needs only to be recovered or remembered, in other words, a circular authorization of the idea that 'someone' has put that knowledge there. The challenge to innatism was set by the concurrent rise of the related theory of the 'imagination', that Locke launches, as we shall see, and that Joseph Addison will defend and popularize via a series of essays in his journal «The Spectator» (1712) under the title of *The Pleasures of the Imagination*.¹⁰

- 7 Cf. Y. Bezrucka, *Beehive-Images and Politics in Bernard De Mandeville's The Fable of the Bees: Empiricism vs Innatism*, «[The Cardozo Electronic Law Bulletin](#)», The Cardozo Institute, May 2016, pp. 1-23.
- 8 See J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, Penguin, 1997 [1690], hereafter referred to as JL and references.
- 9 The same intent has been applied to the genre of the romantic novel by Miriam L. Wallace (ed.), *Enlightening Romanticism. Romancing the Enlightenment. British Novels from 1750-1832*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009.
- 10 Cf. Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, «The Spectator», Donald F. Bond ed., Oxford, OUP, 1987 [1965], 4 vols., here vol. 3 (but internally pertaining to vol. 6 of the Journal collection), pp. 535-58, covering nos. 411, June 21st – July 3rd 1712, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, hereafter referred to in the text as JA, volume, essay, and page number. I have examined Addison's *Pleasures* in detail both in Yvonne Bezrucka, *Genio e immaginazione nel Settecento inglese*, Dipartimento di Anglistica, Università degli Studi di Verona, 2002 (https://www.academia.edu/29961097/Genio_ed_immaginazione_nel_Settecento_Inglese_ISBN_8885033687), pp. 88-108, hereafter referred to in the text as Bezrucka: 2002, where I determine that Addison invites us to recreate mythopoetically the world via the filters of our imagination and our senses, and in particular our sight; and in a synthetic form, amongst other authors and in the line of a concise history of ideas perspective, in Yvonne Bezrucka, *A Synopsis of English Literature*, Verona, QuiEdit, 4th ed. 2017 [2015], pp. 84-109, 150-172.

Addison's explanation follows Locke's empiricist analysis of sensory experiences, seeing the senses as the vehicle for our apprehension of the world, and thus elements which write on the *tabula rasa* of the mind (JL: bk. 2, ch. 1, § 2), where it is also said that the imagination derives from experience, and in book 2, ch. 2, § 3, Locke distinguishes between imagination and reason, setting the imagination as a faculty that, in exercising wit, unites and composes similar ideas, thus having a synthetic power; whereas judgement is a faculty that divides and separates similar ideas (JL: book 2, ch. 11, § 2). This means that neither Locke nor Addison rely on necessary causes (as the non-casual result of cause and effect) nor, and most importantly, on the efficient causes (for Aristotle the hidden motor or agent of things) on which innatists insisted. Both, that is, decline to find a teleological explanation for things and for the presence of beauty in them. Addison clearly declares that: «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», he concludes that what is left to do is to «reflect on those Operations of the Soul that are most agreeable» limiting oneself to effects and neglecting their causes in a thoroughly empiricist spirit, given that the «efficient cause cannot be definitely determined». (JA: 4, 413, 63)

Even though one of the most relevant conceptualisations of the faculty of the imagination is to be found in the works of I. Kant, in his definition of the Reflective Judgement, an '*als ob*' systems of thought, which tries to explain the world 'as if', i.e. hypothetically, it had been holistically conceived – a possibility Kant denies as a possible 'determinant' origin –¹¹ he is formulating a new synthesis and rewording of previous thought, specifically by Locke. Locke's theory emphasized the enormous differences between sensation and reflection, focussing on the capacity the mind has for enlarging what it acquires through the senses, and its ability to create all kinds of unembodied forms, which are the products of 'reflection' and its specific capacity for enlargement, i.e. what we now call the imagination, which corresponds also to what Kant would later call the '*als ob*' cognitive modality.

I base my contention that Addison became the populariser of Locke on the fact that he is the one who will underline the 'creative' ability of

11 See Bezrucka: 2002, footnote 1 p. 133, where I examine in detail the above conceptualization, and see also Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 1991 [1790], §§ 33-34, 81 and specifically pp. 414, 66-68.

the imagination: first, by considering the imagination as a powerful faculty able to envisage a non-existent reality, second, by warning that this creative capacity should address non-existent reality only to foster pleasures. Indeed, he is warning people never to lose «sight of Nature», which is what happens with «superstitious» people, who «fall in with our natural prejudices» and who, «very well versed in legends and fables, antiquated romances», make «fairies, witches, magicians, demons, and departed spirits [...] talk like people of his own species, and not like other sets of being», which live only in a world created by the artist «out of his own Invention» (JA: 4, 419, 84-85), but which does not correspond to reality. Addison, that is, is justifying only magical creatures for literary aims, but not other supernatural or preternatural creatures often instrumentally used as vehicles to spread existential fears. It is this last specific understanding of the imagination, that will produce the dismantling of the genius theory.¹²

3. Major Tenets for the Merging of the two Literary Periods into One

It is exactly the undermining of innatism¹³ and the concomitant and related emphasis on personal understanding, creativity, and innovation, rather than a dutiful respect for the authority of previous forms and rules, which are the distinguishing characteristic traits of Romanticism.¹⁴

This battle against canonical authority had been anticipated by «La querelle des Anciens et des Modernes» in France, but it had missed the emphasis on the cognitive faculty of the imagination.¹⁵ In England, a work

12 Cf. Bezrucka: 2017, pp. 16-18, and Bezrucka: 2002, pp. 17-60 and *passim*.

13 I have worked on this from a philosophical point of view in Bezrucka: 2017, chapter 1: *Innatism vs Empiricism* (free for download from Academia.edu or from the editor's site: Cambridge Scholars).

14 Cf. René Wellek, *The Concept of 'Romanticism' in Literary History. II: The Unity of European Romanticism*, «Comparative Literature», Vol. 1, 2, Spring 1949, pp. 147-172, where Wellek speaks of the imagination as a rejection of reason which the Enlightenment had insisted on, nevertheless not taking into due account that Addison's theory of the Imagination derives directly from Locke, who posits in very anti-elitist and thus egalitarian terms that not only poets but all men possess this faculty and that it should, accordingly, be used by all, which is exactly what Addison says and aims at with the publication of these philosophical papers in his journal «The Spectator».

15 The beginning of the debate is marked, in France, by Charles Perrault's 1687 attack on classicism with his *Poème du siècle de Louis le Grand*, in Id., *Parallèle des anciens et*

defending the Ancients had appeared even before this famous French quarrel, by Henry Reynolds (1632, r. 1972), *Mythomystes, wherein a Short Survey is Taken of the Nature and Value of True Poesie, and Depth of the Ancients above our Moderne Poets*.¹⁶ It was followed by another, later, important work, by Sir William Temple (1690), *An Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning*.¹⁷ In 1704, Jonathan Swift, who had been secretary to Temple, published his own ideas on the matter in *The Battle of the Books*.¹⁸

The English resumption of the battle, in the first half of the 18th century, was concentrated on how to interpret ingeniousness and originality, a fight that was, in the end, to attach equal importance and dignity to the Moderns as had been accorded to the Ancients in the past. Amongst the works that promote originality we find: Edward Young (1759), *Conjectures on Original Composition in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison*,¹⁹ and William Duff's (1767) *Essay on Original Genius*.²⁰

However, while all of these books may contribute to the 'philosophical' victory of the moderns, my contention is that Joseph Addison's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1712) remains the most relevant for the reader of those times. This is an *ante litteram* work of aesthetics that, at that time, did not exist as a branch of studies of its own.²¹ Addison needs thus to be

des modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences, avec le Poème du siècle de Louis le Grand et une Épître en vers sur le génie, 4 vols., Paris, Coignard, 1692.

- 16 Henry Reynolds, *Mythomystes, wherein a Short Survey is Taken of the Nature and Value of True Poesy, and Depth of the Ancients above our Moderne Poets*, Menston, Scholar Press, 1972 [1632].
- 17 William Temple, *An Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning* [1690], in Id., *Miscellanea*, Part II, London, Simpson, reprinted in Id., *On Ancient and Modern Learning and on Poetry*, J.E. Spingarn ed., Oxford, Clarendon, 1909.
- 18 Jonathan Swift, *The Battle of the Books*, Dublin, E. Ponsonby, 1901 [1697]. Further works that need to be examined for this topic are: John Dryden, *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, New York, Irvington, 1982 [1668], and for the background of the *querelle*, Anne Eliz Burlingame, *The Battle of the Books in its Historical Setting*, New York, Bilo and Tannen, 1969 [1920].
- 19 Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison* [1759], in Edmund D. Jones (ed.), *English Critical Essays, XVI-XVIII Centuries*, Oxford, OUP, 1934 [1922], pp. 315-364.
- 20 William Duff, *Essay on Original Genius*, London, Routledge/Thoemmes, 1994 [1767]; for Duff and these authors, cf. Bezrucka: 2002, pp. 22-63, where I point out that, if Duff sees ingeniousness sometimes as a «divine quality» (p. 25) but to be activated only via external perceptions.
- 21 The birth of aesthetics has indeed been made to coincide with the publication of

granted an outstanding place among the Fathers of the Enlightenment – the masters of the empiricist tradition and their works: i.e. from Bacon (1620) to Hume (1739).²² Furthermore, this claim rests also on Addison's role as divulger of the empiricist tradition in his journal «The Spectator». Let us thus first examine this work in detail, and then we will determine how Samuel Taylor Coleridge absorbs it in his own critical essays on the imagination, in his *Biographia Literaria. Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions* (1817)²³, without quoting his source, Joseph Addison.

We will then briefly come to the consequences of this rhizomatic intercultural development which is characterized by the romantic triumph of the variety of stances amongst the Romantics themselves, and thus a celebration of their strong 'romantic' individualism.

4. Addison's Theory of the Imagination

The first critical and *ante litteram* attack on the classical Southern European Aesthetics, the Latin and Greek works of reference for the arts and their theories of beauty, was launched by Joseph Addison. When he published in his journal «The Spectator» a series of 13 papers with the title *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, Nos. 411-421 (21st June - 3rd July 1712),²⁴ he was likely unaware of the long-standing revolution in aesthetics that he was ushering into English literature and in general in the European panorama as well.²⁵

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's work *Aesthetica*, Hildesheim, Olms, 1961 [1750], which defined aesthetics as a new philosophical science of beauty.

²² Dates, within parentheses, refer to the publication of their major works.

²³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria. Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, London, Dent, 1956 [1817], hereafter referred in the text with STC: ch. and p. no.

²⁴ Joseph Addison, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, in «The Spectator», 4 vols., G. Gregory Smith ed., London, Dent, 1907 [1711-1714], here vol. 3, pp. 54-96, hereafter referred to in the text as JA, vol., essay, page no. What I present here is a summary of the readings of the single essays in Bezrucka: 2017, 27-54, to which I refer my reader for a more detailed analysis.

²⁵ Addison, with his papers, authorizes an idiosyncratic focus that could be seen as an anticipation of what we today could dub a seer's response criticism on the basis of Iser's formula of a reader-response criticism, or as an affective turn (see Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*, Stuttgart, UTB, 1976, r. 1994).

The title is, significantly, self-explicit. Focusing on the word «pleasures», Addison evokes the Horatian *delectare*, and eludes the morally edifying *docere niveau* of the ethics of knowledge that art had, up to then, protected, to move towards the examination of subjective feelings and direct, i.e. emotional, reactions nature and art also might produce, such as pleasure, disgust or even pain, *de facto* anticipating Burke's treatise on the *Sublime* (1757) by nearly half a century. Authorising pleasures as such, Addison opens the precincts of art and aesthetics to new subjects and topics.²⁶ In this way, and this is the foremost advance of Addison's aesthetics, he legitimises all kinds of idiosyncratic pleasurable responses in aesthetic matters, anticipating and authorizing a sort of 20th-century reception theory concerning the aesthetic apprehension of art, in the line of the pragmatists.²⁷

This early move from ethics to aesthetics is the result of the application of the empiricist method, strictly based on the senses, to the domain of art and literature. The new aesthetics, focusing both on emotions and rationality, favours the specific feelings of 'embodied' people, and not of spiritual entities. The new sensory focus produced two results: besides inaugurating, little by little, the deconstruction of the so-called universal imagology of people – abstract and 'unembodied', as to hide their differences into a fictitious paragon – the second result was the progressive move towards the artistic representation of these peculiar and even unedifying characters, that were, idiosyncratically, who they were: unique individuals leading unique lives, permitting thus indirectly the birth of the new genre, the novel. This shift is the focus of Ian

Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, in his *Addison's Theory of the Imagination as 'Perceptive Response'*, «Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters», xxi, 1935, pp. 509-30, focuses exactly on this perceptive response, which we could also define as being emphatic and affect-oriented.

26 In his emphasis on bodily sensations, he takes his place with the examiners of hedonism: cf. Walter Pater's theory of the multiplied consciousness, and its critique in Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*. See also Friedrich Nietzsche's Dionysian principle and, for the 18th century, also De Sade's transgressive focus on sexuality; for this last work, see also Susan Sontag, *The Pornographic Imagination*, «The Partisan Review», Spring 1967, pp. 181-212.

27 His attitude of reading the effects on the senses, places him, in the line of the pragmatist philosopher like C.S. Peirce, W. James, J. Dewey, R. Shusterman. For the analysis of reception-theory cf. also Hans-Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, tr. Timothy Bahti, Minneapolis, Minnesota UP, 1982.

Watt's canonical work on mimetic realism (1957) and of McKeon's²⁸ amplification of the panorama, seeing realism as one amidst other coexisting plural forms of the 18th century: idealism, empiricism and scepticism. These are trends that climax in the individual poetry of the poets and writers of the canonical, end-of-century Romantic Age: the ingenious, graphic artist and writer William Blake representing the early symbol and synthesis of all McKeon's 'novelistic' tendencies, transposed and applied to poetry, a sort of matrix of what was to follow and thus to be considered the *par excellence* proto-romantic. The Romantics can thus be seen as artists that ideally complete Addison's bodily perspectival focus on the world, that is, a world subjectively seen through «the Eye of the Beholder» (JA: vol. 3, 412, 61).

Indeed, it is to defend novelty and the Moderns, that Joseph Addison ingeniously devised a new understanding of aesthetics based on the application of Locke's senses-apparatus, able to authorize a bodily and therefore subjective understanding of the meaning of beauty and reality. He thus holds, pragmatically, like Locke and later Hume, that perception precedes reflection: «It is but opening the eye and the scene enters» (JA: 3, 411, 57); senses being the filter through which human beings apprehend the world and the means for the inscription in the *tabula rasa* of the mind, as Hume would later rename what Locke had defined «the white paper» or the blank slate of the unprejudiced mind of children that «receives any character» (JL: 88, Bk. 1, ch. 3, §22), because it is «void of all characters» (JL: 109, Bk. 2, ch. 1, § 2, 109), cancelling at a stroke innatistic knowledge.

For Francis Bacon, the senses were the building bricks of knowledge: only observation and experiment could be considered guarantees of truth. The consequence of this was his notorious and influential move of setting the scientific value of induction (material proofs) over deduction (rational syllogistic reasoning). Only facts, in contrast to deductive reasoning, were useful to predict hypotheses which had then to be confirmed by experiments as to be guaranteed in their scientific truth.²⁹ All empiricist philosophers focus their attention on the ideas that result from perception – the filter through which we apprehend reality – activated by looking, tasting, hear-

28 Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins UP, 1987, pp. 1-3.

29 As Bacon says in *The New Organon* (Lisa Jardine, Michael Silverthorne eds., Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2000 [1620]), which is the extant part of his uncompleted *Instauratio Magna* (1620).

ing, touching and smelling, rather than focusing on the final principle that would have activated or created the senses in the first place.

To summarise: why is it that all these philosophers deem it so important to debunk innatism? Because innatism was the hardest stronghold and core of the Design theory, and of the idea of the *Natura Naturata*, or created nature, that had been used, via the formula *Natura Codex Dei*, to justify creationism. This last result was – and, unfortunately, still is – used as the premise for the various declinations into a variety of religious beliefs that all claim their unique divine rightfulness and their own finalities at the same time. In Addison's times, this idea was also, most importantly, strictly linked with royal claims to be the 'anointed' by God, i.e. using God's authority to justify their 'human' powerful choices, pretending to be God's representatives on earth.³⁰ But innatism was also to be found in the theory of the 'natural genius' which reads ingeniousness as an inborn gift of the Gods, or as directly inspired by God, via his intermediary, or, in secular versions, via the divine Muses.³¹

As a result of Addison's theory, imagination was finally seen as a shared bodily faculty of the mind, and while it was one of the faculties of the mind, it was the one that provided the greatest possibilities for change and understanding. Via this new conception of the imagination humankind were finally being made accountable for their actions, and by extension for the world itself, as the poet Shelley would say in *Queen Mab*, speaking of the «*omnipotence of mind*».³² The imagination was no longer the innate gift of a superior Being, rather it was activated by the sensations that the senses provided to the mind. Nature itself was no longer a cyphered symbol that imposed a filter to its epistemological interpretation via the master premise of a creator, a superimposition on the objectivity of facts, but thus, circularly, upholding creationism. In the words of Meyer H. Abrams:

Some Neoclassic critics were also certain that the rules of art, though empirically derived, were ultimately validated by conforming to that objective structure

30 Cf. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1958.

31 For the genius theory see «The Spectator», vol.1, No. 160, for its relation to climate; *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (411-421 *passim*) and JA: 1, 59, 219-23; JA:1, 61, 228-231; JA: 1, 141, 213-16; JA: 2, 279, 104-109; JA: 4, 590, 119-23.

32 Cf. Percy Bisshe Shelley, *Poetry and Prose*, Donald.H. Reiman, Sharon B. Powers eds., New York, Norton, 1977, p. 63, my emphasis.

of norms whose existence guaranteed the rational order and harmony of the universe. In a strict sense, as John Dennis made explicit what was often implied, Nature «is nothing but that Rule and Order, and Harmony, which we find in the visible Creation»; so «Poetry, which is an imitation of Nature», must demonstrate the same properties.³³

Artistic works, using la *belle nature* (only), re-enforced the message of this being God's 'open book'. Addison, therefore, describes God as «the great sovereign of Nature» (JA: vol. 4, 531, 211), implying a deistic stance that nevertheless is not always convincing and sometimes even debunked. In this essay in «The Spectator», Addison summarises Locke almost *verbatim* and quotes him specifically on the idea of God:

If we consider the Idea which wise men, by the light of reason, have framed of the Divine Being, it amounts to this: That he has in him all the perfection of a spiritual nature; and since we have no notion of any kind of spiritual perfection but what we discover in our own souls, we join Infinity to each kind of these perfections, and what is a faculty in an human soul becomes an attribute in God. *We* exist in place and time, the Divine Being fills the immensity of space with his presence, and inhabits eternity. *We* are possessed of a little power and a little knowledge; the Divine Being is Almighty and Omniscient. In short, by adding Infinity to any kind of perfection we enjoy, and by joining all these different kinds of perfections in one Being, we form our idea of the great Sovereign of nature. (JA, 4, 531, 211)

and then he quotes Locke directly:

Though every one who thinks must have made this observation, I shall produce Mr. *Locke's* authority to the same purpose, out of his essay on human understanding. If we examine the *Idea* we have of the incomprehensible supreme Being, we shall find, that we come by it the same way; and that the complex ideas we have both of God and separate spirits, are *made up* of the simple ideas we receive from reflection: v. g. having from what we experiment in our selves, got the ideas of existence and duration, of knowledge and power, of pleasure and happiness, and of several other qualities and powers, which it is better to have,

33 Meyer H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, Oxford, OUP, 1953, p. 17. See also Abrams' other book, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, New York, Norton, 1971.

than to be without; when we would *frame* an idea the most suitable we can to the supreme Being, *we enlarge every one of these with our idea of infinity; and so putting them together, make our complex idea of God.* (*Ibid.*, my emphases)

He then concludes: «I have here only considered the Supreme Being by the Light of Reason and Philosophy. If we would see him in all the Wonders of his Mercy, we must have Recourse to Revelation» (JA, 4, 531, 212-13), this being a «theory which falls under every one's Consideration» (JA, 4, 531, 213).

Devotion and religious worship, he said, «must be the effect of a Tradition from some first Founder of Mankind, or that it is conformable to the Natural Light of Reason or that it proceeds from an Instinct implanted in the Soul it self» (JA: vol. 2, 201, 123), proposing thus all possible explanations for the creationist hypotheses: the religious, the rational, and the innatist.³⁴

In conclusion, concerning Addison's attitude towards religion, one must consider one of his final essays on this issue. Addison says:

there was never any System besides that of Christianity, which could effectually produce in the Mind of Man [...] Virtue. [...] Religion bears a more tender Regard to humane Nature [...] It prescribes to every miserable Man the Means of bettering his Condition; nay, it shews him, that the bearing of his Affliction as he ought to do will naturally end in the Removal of them: *It makes him easie here, because it can make him happy hereafter: Upon the whole, a contented Mind is the greatest Blessing a Man can enjoy in this world.* (JA: 4, 574, 69; my emphases)

Previously, nevertheless, he had undermined, without directly mentioning it, Leibniz's *Theodicy* (1710), another system providing a theological and teleological answer about life, telling us that:

whatever Evil befalls us is derived to us by a fatal Necessity, to which the Gods themselves are subject; [...] others very gravely tell the Man who is miserable, that it is necessary he should be so as to keep up the Harmony of the Universe, and the Scheme of Providence would be troubled and perverted were he otherwise. *These, and the like Consideration, rather silence than satisfie a Man.* They may show him that his Discontent is unreasonable, but are by no means

³⁴ Addison's thoughts on religion, besides those referred to in the quoted essay, are analysed in «The Spectator», essays Nos.: 213, 292, 356, 447, 459, 471, 483, 492, 574.

sufficient to relieve it. *They rather give Despair than Consolation*, (JA: 4, 574, 69; my emphases)

remarking, in my opinion, that humble contentedness is no viable option any more, pointing to the specific anti-authoritarian stances that all romantic poets will assume. Specifying that these are «Pleasures of the Mind», that are far from the those of the senses, like the contentedness and acquiescence religion asks of us, he remarks that these, like those of the Rosicrucian, which are being based on «the contracting of Desires» (JA: 4, 574, 66-67), are part of what

Men of Sense have at all times beheld with a great deal of Mirth this silly Game that is playing over their Heads, and by contracting their Desires, enjoy all the secret Satisfaction which others are always in quest of. The Truth is this ridiculous Chace [chase] after imaginary Pleasures cannot be sufficiently exposed, as it is the Source of those Evils [religions?] which generally undo a Nation (JA: vol. 4, 574, 67, my brackets)

where the inversion of the previous «bodily» – because based on the senses – «Pleasures of the Imagination» should be noted.

To summarise: in Essay No. 4, 590, 4, he says that the Supreme Being

is indeed a Thought too big for the Mind of Man, and rather to be entertained in the Secrecy of Devotion, and in the Silence of the Soul, than to be expressed by Words. *The Supreme Being has not given us Powers or Faculties sufficient to extol and magnifie such unutterable Goodness*. It is however some Comfort to us, that we shall be always doing what we shall never be able to do, and that a Work which cannot be finished, will however be the Work of an Eternity. (JA 4, 590, 123, my emphasis)

Let us now come then to *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, which, being related to the senses, produce immediate pleasures, and not future ones, and allow us to make inferences «dictated to us by the Light of Reason» (JA 4, 590, 121).

5. The Pleasures of the Imagination

Essay No. 411 focuses on the senses, mainly on sight. Imagination and fancy activate primary pleasures originating from the sense of sight, and secondary pleasures by recalling objects in our mind. The imagination is seen a faculty as powerful, and as «transporting» as reason, and Addison recommends its use for good health. This pleasure is then distinguished from merely sensual, hedonistic pleasures.

Essay No. 412 defines the three sources that please the imagination: «novelty or uncommonness, greatness, and beauty», linking them to nature and its grandeur, made of a «rude kind of magnificence» and its «wide and undetermined prospect». Burke used these descriptions later for his definition of the natural sublime,³⁵ but they had also been used earlier in the deists' view of nature, as, for example, in Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (Latin 1681; English 1684).³⁶ Horror is introduced, for the first time, as a tolerable feeling, if delight ultimately prevails. Beauty is a concept Addison relates to the various species (animal and human); it is evoked by «a just mixture and concurrence» of «gaiety or variety of colours [...] symmetry and proportion». To sight, he adds the other senses. A most important notation implicit here is Addison's focus on the nurture element connected with beauty, neglecting its Platonic and Neoplatonic innatism. He says: «There is not perhaps *any real beauty or deformity more in one piece of matter than another*, because we might have been so made, that whatsoever *now* appears loathsome to us, might have shown itself agreeable», implying that such judgement is only a matter of custom, education and «polite taste», i.e. it is a historical and *cultural issue, as Francis Grose would, soon after, recognize becoming the first aesthetic regionalist.³⁷

Essay No. 413 speaks of the final and efficient causes of beauty that I have commented on, prefaced by Ovid's motto: *Causa latet, vis est notis-*

35 Cf. the recent relevant study on the early historical interpretation of the sublime by James I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

36 Thomas Burnet, *Telluris Theoria Sacra, The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, London, R. Norton for Walter Kettilby, Saint Paul's Churchyard, 1690 [1681 and 1684].

37 Cf. the chapter on Francis Grose, as the first «aesthetic regionalist», in Bezrucka 2017: 147-171.

sima. Addison asks that we restrain ourselves from «reflect[ing] on [...] the necessary and efficient causes [the Agent that produces effects]» of the pleasures connected to what is «Great, New, and Beautiful», rather than expanding on the «Final Cause» [for Aristotle the finality or goal of the causes] of its effects. The hypothetical final causes «lie more bare [...] tho' they are not altogether so satisfactory » in that they only seem to provide us with the «Occasion of admiring the Goodness and Wisdom of the first Contriver» who «has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness». However, Addison offers this last explanation as a hypothesis and not as a certainty: «supernumerary ornaments to the universe», he says, have been added for us to «discover *imaginary* glories in the heavens and earth» (my emphasis); glories that subject us «in a pleasing *delusion*», able to produce – only delusional – «ideas in the mind», like those of colours, which Newton explained scientifically and Locke «explained at large» (JA: 3, 413, 64-65, my emphases).

Essay No. 414 compares the «strokes of Nature» to the «Touches and Embellishments» of art since the latter is always inferior to the former. Works of nature are, nevertheless, the more pleasing as they resemble those of art, either originals or copies, that present: «Design in what we call the Works of Chance». Chance is a word, I must underline, that a deist would not have used in this context, and art is most pleasing if it resembles the beauty of nature. For the first time, Addison mentions the climate element of clouds, a northern topic which was to become a standard subject for Gainsborough in the 18th century and later in Constable's studies and paintings up to the 19th century. In this essay, he also speaks about the English garden, expressing an opinion that later critics contested by overturning his argument completely:

Our *English Gardens* are not so entertaining to the Fancy as those in France and Italy, where we see a large Extent of Ground covered over with an agreeable Mixture of Garden and Forest, much more charming than the Neatness and Elegancy which we meet with in those of our Country. [...] Our *British Gardeners* [...] 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 Scissars upon every Plant and Bush [...] trimmed into a Mathematical Figure. (JA: 3, 414, 68, my emphases)

This view was contested by Pope in his poem *Windsor Forest* (1713), where he refers to «order in variety» (v. 15). In Essay No. 477 (JA: 4, 477,

14-17), Addison, through the ploy of an admirer's letter, comments on his own garden, stating his preference for «a natural Wilderness», with «compositions [...] after the Pindarick Manner», that respects «the beautiful Wildness of Nature without affecting the nicer Elegancies of Art» (JA: 4, 16). This matches exactly the general praise that the English 'picturesque' garden obtained soon after. A consequence of this neglect of Southern aesthetics, produced, we have to remember, the domestic, internal tourism, in search of the Picturesque, as exemplified in the writings of Reverend Gilpin (Bezrucka 2017: 105-117).

Essay No. 415 examines architecture, the art «which has a more immediate Tendency, than any other, to produce [...] primary Pleasures³⁸ of the Imagination». Its «Greatness» is, indeed, related to the «Bulk and Body [...] or to the Manner in which it is built». Regarding bulk and body, for Addison, the Ancients, amongst whom he mentions the Egyptians and the Chinese, are «infinitely superior to the Moderns». He then comments on geographical and climate issues reverting to standard cultural readings speaking of the advantage that warm climates have in presenting «small Interruptions of Frost and Winters, which make the Northern Workmen lye half of the Year idle». Having studied Freart's *Parallel of the Ancient and the Modern in Architecture* and being initially a classicist, Addison admires the magnificence of the structures of the Ancients, which «open the Mind to vast Conceptions [...] because everything that is Majestic imprints [...] Awfulness and Reverence», which «strike[s] in with the Natural Greatness of the Soul». The greatness of manner, what we today would call style, is, he says, even more powerful. Whenever present, even if in a small building, style wins. To confirm his thesis, he compares the smallness of the Pantheon to a bigger but meaner «Gothick Cathedral», thus paying homage to the first, contrary to his later ideals. He quotes Freart's opinion that «ornaments divide and scatter [...] Sight», producing «Confusion». He then presents his ideas about the different control sight has on convex (lesser) or concave (greater) forms: in a concave form, like the inside of a dome, sight has central dominion over the whole circumference, and arches, Addison says, are beloved for this reason. From the outside, sight

38 Primary Pleasures are for Addison the pleasing effects objects produce *in praesentia*, Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination are produced via recalling them in the mind, *in absentia*, as in beloved memories, that we can reproduce from previous sensory effects, or by 'creatively' envisaging pleasing visions of real or imaginary events and objects.

can surround a dome but cannot dominate it with «one uniform idea»; the same happens with a «square pillar [...] and in a square concave». Hogarth later takes this up in his *Analysis of Beauty* (1753), and all this was instrumental in the development of his aesthetics of the «Line of Beauty», which comprises the antithetical union of the two visions representing variety and its implied ethics (cf. Bezrucka: 2017, 125-134).

Essay No. 416 deals with the secondary pleasures of the imagination that the mind either activates of its own, or are prompted by external visions or representations through the capacity of the imagination to see analogies and resemblances, and its power to «enlarge, compound, and vary them at her own Pleasure». Addison speaks then of wit, and comments on ideas produced by words and their power, addressing also «Painting and Statuary». Words, he says, can produce more lively ideas than those activated by sight, an understandable observation reminding us of the readers' response capacity. Differences in the constructions of the imagination come from the different quality of perfection of each person's imagination, or from the different – culturally-shaped – meanings they affix to words: an interesting anticipation of Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic theory.

Essay No. 417 deals with the circumstances that may lead the imagination to a whole variety of images. This provides Addison with the opportunity to engage with Descartes regarding the structural and systemic processes of the mind. These last work through traces activated in the mind by the «animal spirits», what we today call nerve reactions. Addison underlines that the imagination can and should be «formed» through exercise and cultivation, so to «enlarge» it – a process everybody can undertake, as demonstrated by the man of taste, who, by his acquisition of standards, is one of the ideal exemplars of the age. He then praises the writers of the past through a garden metaphor: Homer's *Iliad* activates the imagination with what is «Great», connecting it with those 'cold' qualities that Burke would categorise as sublime: «it is like travelling through a Country uninhabited, where the Fancy is entertained with a thousand Savage Prospects of vast Desarts, wide uncultivated Marshes, huge Forests, misshapen Rocks and Precipices». Feelings of beauty, on the contrary, are stirred by Virgil's *Ænid*, which Addison describes as a «Beautiful» and «well ordered Garden». Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for their part, evokes the «Strange», «enchanted Ground, and [...] Scenes of Magick» As Addison says: «In a word, Homer fills his Readers with Sublime Ideas» of heroes and gods and «God-like and Terrible» persons; Virgil admits beautiful persons and he-

roes; Ovid «describes a Miracle in every Story [...] and some new Creature at the end of it [...] something we never saw before, and shews Monster after Monster» (No. 417).

Having set the holy trinity of the Southern aesthetics, he is now ready to conclude his argument by inserting Milton. He defines the poet as «a perfect Master in all these Arts». His *Paradise Lost* is so «Divine a Poem, in English [...] a stately Palace built of Brick, where one may see Architecture in as great a Perfection as in one of Marble, tho' the Materials are of a coarser Nature». He then enumerates «the Battle of the Angels» and the «Creation of the world, the several Metamorphoses of the Fallen Angel and the surprising Adventures their Leader meets with in his Search after Paradise», locating them in the artful but unreal realm of the «Strange».

In **Essay No. 418**, Addison addresses the Secondary Views of the Imagination, which he widens to comprise – within the territory of the great, beautiful and strange – what is «Disagreeable» but «please[s] us», this being a «new Principle of Pleasure» that covers what Burke later categorised within the territory of the Sublime. These are, for Addison, smaller instances of a new territory that «may be properly called the Pleasure of Understanding», that please through an action of the mind – the mind compares the ideas that arise from words, or ideas created by the mind, with the real objects evoked by words, for example, the description of a dungeon. Descriptions of this kind comprise «what is Little, Common, or Deformed». An instance of this is Milton's Hell – even though most people would prefer Milton's Paradise, both are equally perfect in their description. These raise «a secret Ferment in the Reader», which works «with Violence, upon his Passions» (No. 418) tolerable in that they are only described and not witnessed. Thus, as Addison says, they become «more Universal, and in several ways qualified to entertain us» due to our detachment. This is what Burke wrote in 1757: «When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are, delightful, as we every day experience».³⁹

This «rational» distance is exactly what Kant would later interpret as the salvific upper hand of reason, which checks and directs what otherwise would be an authorisation for uncontrollable individualistic and sub-

39 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, London, Dodsley, 1767 [1757], Part I, sect. VII, p. 60.

jective openings that Kant does not want to approve. Nevertheless, the prominence Addison gave to the senses and the influence these exercised in Burke's treatise, as was to be expected, led, in its most extreme version, to an aesthetics of ugliness, such as the one produced only much later, in the 19th century, by Karl Rosenkrantz,⁴⁰ which would have constituted an inadmissible result for the creator of the categorical imperative. Kant, indeed, takes great pains to rationalize and check this kind of possibility in his deontological system of ethics (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 1785).

Addison had already defined the two leading passions that could become universal: «Terror and Pity», and asked himself «how comes it to pass, that we should take delight in being terrified or dejected by a Description, when we find so much Uneasiness in the Fear or Grief which we receive from any other occasion?». Let us read Addison's answer:

If we consider [...] the Nature of this Pleasure, we shall find that it does not arise so properly from the Description of what is Terrible, as from the Reflection we make of ourselves at the time of reading it. When we look on such hideous Objects, we are not a little pleased to think we are in no Danger of them. We consider that the more frightful Appearance they make, the greater is the Pleasure we receive from the Sense of our own Safety. In short, we look upon the Terror of a Description, with the same Curiosity and Satisfaction that we survey a dead Monster. (JA: 3, 418, p. 82)

In short, we look from the perspective of the triumph of rationality over the unknown, as Kant, who knew Addison's work, in translation since 1745, was to repeat nearly in the same terms in 1798.

The whole gamut of emotions inhabiting this spectrum is represented and literally depicted in the Gothic novel. They are also found, partly, in the a-religious Graveyard Poetry, which developed these issues though mainly to disparage, from an enlightened English standpoint, those places of Europe (epitomised by Italy and France) where people could still believe in spirits and acquiesce to the fears of damnation that permitted religions (and Catholic kings) to control them in an authoritari-

⁴⁰ Karl Rosenkrantz, *Ästhetik des Hässlichen*, Leipzig, Reclam, 1990 [1853]. Nevertheless, it is not only the influence of Addison which is of relevance here but also the disharmony and intricacy of Gilpin's 'picturesque' thoughts which converge towards the acceptance of non-normative, but pleasing, forms of beauty or ugliness as happens in Burke (1757).

an way. In a way, if Gothic Graveyard Poetry rationalizes fears by seeing cemeteries as mere places where the dead lie, the scientific Gothic novel ridicules those same fears and superstitions, downplaying them as rather silly irrational beliefs.

A detour is needed here, in that it is exactly in the opposition between Catholic and Protestant countries that the dichotomy of North vs. South is identified, as defined by one of the most important intellectuals of Romanticism, Madame de Staël.⁴¹ She contrasts Italy and France, the lands of authority, mainly, with the Northern countries where Protestantism reigns: England, Germany and Holland (partly), where emphasis is laid on individualism and, as we know, the dichotomy invested also aesthetics. In more recent time Bertrand Russell referred to this same interpretation in *A History of Western Philosophy*.⁴² He writes: «The conflict between Church and State was not only a conflict between clergy and laity; it was also a renewal of the conflict between the Mediterranean world and the northern barbarians» (BR: 33). Accordingly, Russell reads the history of European thought as dominated and moulded by the Reformation: «The Reformation was a complex many-sided movement, and owed its success to a variety of causes. In the main, it was a revolt of the northern nations against the renewed dominion of Rome. Religion was the force that had subdued the North» (BR: 33), which is also the point of my reading of Shakespeare's use of the autochthonous, mainly Celtic, irreverent, magical creatures that first of all have a limited power, and secondly defy all types of authority in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and in *The Tempest*. These works I consider as literary works that exemplify via an antireligious fairylike way of writing, that also Addison praises, as the first works that pose attention to elements that I would rubric under the 'Invention of the North' perspective and its new aesthetics.⁴³ Addison says: «the Genius of our Country is fitter for this sort of Poetry. For the English are naturally Fanciful, and very often disposed by that Gloominess and wild Melancholy of Temper, which is so frequent in our Nation, to many wild Notions and Visions, to which others are not so liable» (JA: 4, 419,

41 On Madame de Staël, see Bezrucka 2017: 87-92.

42 Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1972 [1945], hereafter referred to in the text as BR and page number of the Apple Book digital edition.

43 See Bezrucka 2017: 225 ff., 54-80 and 94-96 for Shakespeare, and *passim*, where I have developed this hypothesis along the lines of English literature and its aesthetics.

86), «wild Notions» the Gothic novel was to poke fun at, notions which, in a different way, also the invented fake-works by James Macpherson, in his *Poems by Ossian*, testify to. Seen from this perspective the Gothic novel is a mock-heroic genre set against all kinds of supernatural beliefs, a distinguished result of the Enlightenment, which declares its war against all religions that proclaim obedience or reference to a higher authority beyond that of one's personal beliefs.

In this sense, Addison's aesthetics anticipates the stance of Romanticism in defending the imagination, free will and the freedom of the new Prometheuses able to envisage by themselves new utopian worlds, as in Blake's *Milton* (1804-1811) or in his *Jerusalem* (1820-1827). Walter Pater, a late romantic himself, absorbed all this and transposed it in his book *The Renaissance*, in his *dictum* that «Beauty is relative».⁴⁴ In this form it reached Pater's pupil Oscar Wilde, who stated again the complete relativity art had reached being simply the response of the unique appreciator, a response that Addison had called «taste», and that Wilde rewrites in his maxim that «It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors».⁴⁵ Not by chance Wilde makes the first chapter of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* a catalogue of the reception of the five senses put into action: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell are all there and evidenced. But let's conclude this aside here.

On the other hand, the most anti-pragmatic counter-ideology to Joseph Addison's theory, can be found in Mark Akenside's only spiritual reading of the imagination, on which a work on which I have commented elsewhere.⁴⁶ «Representations», as Addison says, can either «teach us to set a just Value upon our Condition and make us prize our good Fortune, which exempts us from the like Calamities» or «to humour the Imagination in its own Notions, by mending and perfecting Nature where he [the artist] describes a Reality, and by adding greater Beauties than are put together in Nature, where he describes a Fiction. [...] In a Word, he [the artist] has the modelling of Nature in his own hands» (JA: 3, 418, 83), something which Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley put into practice in her *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818).

Indeed, Romanticism, like *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, assembling and collecting together the most varied stances and viewpoints, features, in contrast to the *coteries* of Germany, no shared beliefs, apart from the

44 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, Oxford, OUP, 1986 [1873], XXIX.

45 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985 [1891], p. 22.

46 Cf. Yvonne Bezrucka, [Genio e immaginazione](#), cit., pp. 88-109.

mentioned attack in the *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads*, nor a single philosophical stance, a fact that confirms Addison's transversal declaration of independence from tradition, asserting only the liberty and the opportunity for everyone to become the sole proprietor, stakeholder, and thus artist and moulder of their own life, testifying to the taking back of the accountability of individual choice and 'free will'.

Essay No. 419, which deals with the «fairy way of writing» and promotes the use of the Celtic magic creatures common to all the Celtic regions of the island, is discussed on its own in Bezrucka: 2017 (54-62), a reading of the topic to which I refer my reader. According to my studies, this is a cornerstone of the «Invention of Northern Aesthetics» which will be played in contrast to the prevailing Southern, classical elements. Addison's essay in proposing a recovery of these autochthonous Celtic elements, spread as they are among the Island's four nations' cultural heritage, proposes what will become a strong unifying Northern element.⁴⁷

Essay No. 420 deals with those writers who observe «Objects of a real Existence»: «Historians, natural Philosophers, Travelers, Geographers, and, in a Word, all who describe visible Objects». Of the historian, Addison anticipates our topical historiographic self-consciousness and conundrum when he says that they «shew more the Art than the Veracity of the Historian», something which the romantic Walter Scott will try to challenge with his new genre, the historical novel: *Waverley; or 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814). Addison also anticipates a contemporary understanding of science, saying that nobody enlarges the imagination more than the authors of the new philosophy – science – who show us worlds hanging one above another, and the possibility of different species of living creatures, and in «discover[ing] in the smallest particle of this little World a new inexhausted Fund of Matter, capable of being spun out into another Universe», exactly what quantum physics claims today. He then posits the possibility that beings of a higher nature exist and that the

47 By this expression we refer to those studies that see the United Kingdom as the union of internally divided regions: England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, which nevertheless present the possibility of being united via their Celtic cultural heritage: see Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2006 [1989], pp. 13-27; Naomi Lloyd-Jones, Margaret Scull (eds.), *Four Nations Approaches to Modern 'British' History: A (Dis)United Kingdom?*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 135-60; Frank Welsh, *The Four Nations*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2011; Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation*, London, Pimlico 2003 [1992].

soul of man will be infinitely more perfect in the future when imagination will keep pace with understanding by creatively envisaging «in it self distinct Ideas of all the different Modes and Quantities of Space», i.e. imaginary worlds, that remind us of the leaps of creativity that make science progress, as Einstein and Heisenberg demonstrated, in jumps rather than through the accumulation of information.⁴⁸

Essay No. 421, the last of Addison's series, enlarges *The Pleasures of the Imagination* to address linguistics, with a consciousness that anticipates the framings of language that we study today, arts that the «Polite Masters of Morality, Criticism and other Speculations abstracted from Matter», whose use of figurative speech, like similitudes, metaphors, allegories and allusions, that may affect the imagination, defines what we would call style, eristics, and rhetoric. The concluding part of the essay, not by chance, marks the fact that what has been studied in the collection is also manipulative eristics «the Influence that one Man has over the Fancy of another [...] to transport the Imagination with beautiful or glorious Visions [...] or haunt it with such ghastly Spectres and Apparitions [that can] ravish or torture the Soul [...] to make the whole Heaven or Hell of any finite Being»; a mastery, that is, like the manipulation of fears or beliefs, often used to control humankind and, often, only for the controllers' personal ends. This is an anticipation of the consciousness of the artificiality and limits of speech acts and language, that often impede and obstruct the working of the imagination altogether.

6. The Romantic reception of Addison: an Instance

We can insert at this point an instance of the Romantic reception of Addison's aesthetics. I refer to Thomas Love Peacock's essay on *The Four Ages of Poetry* which he saw as the evolution from an age of iron, into an age of gold, into an age of silver, and, finally, into a brass age.⁴⁹ Remarkable is the fact that the development of the passages challenges the reader both with a positive and a sort of retrograde evolutionary development. Specifically, from the initial iron age, characterized by primitive concerns

48 Cf. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, Chicago UP, 1962.

49 Thomas Love Peacock, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, in Henry Cole (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, 3 vols., London, Bentley and Son, 1855 [1820], vol. 3, pp. 324-37, hereafter as TLP and page no.

of the bards and their folk ballads, we pass, abruptly, into a golden age of the masters of poetry like Dante and Milton, to develop into the silver, imitative, phase of the poetry of Pope and Dryden. Finally, we pass to a brass age which, as I have myself pointed out, is characterized by the individualism of the romantic poets, which Peacock considers negative. In particular, this brass age is characterized by a recovery of the ballads of the Scottish border and its past (Scott), by a Byronic exile to Greece and its pirates, by Wordsworth's attention for the cultural heritage of the countryside and its past, and, on its own, as a sort of outsider, Coleridge's dive into German metaphysics. In his words:

While the historian and the philosopher are advancing in, and accelerating, the progress of knowledge, the poet is wallowing in the rubbish of departed ignorance, and raking up the ashes of dead savages to find gewgaws and rattles for the grown babies of the age. Mr. Scott digs up the poachers and cattle-stealers of the ancient border. Lord Byron croizes for thieves and pirates on the shores of the Morea and among the Greek Islands. Mr. Southey wades through ponderous volumes of travels and old chronicles, from which he carefully selects all that is false, useless, and absurd, as being essentially poetical; and when he has a commonplace book full of monstrosities, strings them into an epic. Mr. Wordsworth picks up village legends from old women and sextons; and Mr. Coleridge, to the valuable information acquired from similar sources, superadds the dreams of crazy theologians and the mysticisms of German metaphysics, and favours the world with visions in verse, in which the quadruple elements of sexton, old woman, Jeremy Taylor, and Emanuel Kant are harmonized into a delicious poetical compound.

To this attack Shelley responded with his *A Defence of Poetry or Remarks Suggested by an Essay entitled 'The Four Ages of Poetry'*.⁵⁰ In this essay he distinguishes between imagination and reason in the very first lines of his essay, considering that the imagination has a «light» of its own that holistically summarizes perceptions, in contrast to reason which, on the contrary, subdivides it (SDP: 480). The poet finds the good between «existence and perception; and secondly between perception and expression» (SDP: 482), language is thus «produced by the Imagination and

50 Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, in Id., *Poetry and Prose*, cit., p. 478-508, in the text as SDP and page no.

has relation with thoughts alone» (SDP: 483). Supreme poets (as Dante, Homer, and Milton) are thus «philosophers of the very loftiest powers» (SDP: 485). Interestingly enough we find in this essay a description of Shelley's most important concept of the «negative capability» that he explicitly connects with the imagination:

The great secret of morals is Love: or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. [...] he [the poet] must put himself in the place of another; the pains and pleasures of species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination. (SDP: 487)

Poets can change the world, testified by the fact that: «the Christian and the chivalric systems of manner and religion [...] created forms of opinion and actions never before conceived» (SDP: 495), and «the obscurantism of the Christian and the Celtic nations» did not produce ignorance which, rather, «sprung from the extinction of the poetical principle» (SDP: 496). Poets, in Shelley's vision, were diminished in their role once Utility set in, when reason was deemed more useful than the imagination. Economists and mechanists only «abridge» (SDP: 501) producing «inequality» (SDP: 503), poetry produces «the beautiful and the good [...]. Poetry is indeed something Divine [...] from within [...] an inspiration [...] the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own» (SDP: 503-04). Poetry, and by extension, the imagination «transmutes all that it touches» laying «bare the naked and sleeping beauty of the world», beating «mere impressions» (SDP: 505). Poetry, nevertheless, differs from logic which as a consequence makes of «Poets [...] the unacknowledged Legislators of the World» (SDP: 508). If poetry expresses a diviner nature this is produced by an all secular imagination, like that of the female magic creature, Queen Mab, which gives him the opportunity to express his atheism, which costed him the «rustication» from Oxford (1811), the worst instance of indirect censorship that the English academia could, and still can, resort to.

7. Coleridge's Plundering of Addison

The attention that Addison devoted to the faculty of the imagination is of major importance not only for the writers and poets of the 18th century but also for later generations, and specifically, as we have anticipated,

the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who capitalises on the early but unequivocal affirmations of Addison, without mentioning him, mainly «desynonymis[ing]», as he says, fancy and imagination.⁵¹

Coleridge reworks, in his *Biographia Literaria*, Addison's idea of the primary and secondary imagination, i.e. imagination activated by the sight of beautiful scenes and art, and the autonomous creative capacity of the imagination. He qualifies Addison's «fancy» as a primary associative theory, as the philosopher David Hartley had affirmed in his *Observations on Man* (1749), who is mentioned in the *Biographia* 23 times, and restricts the properly creative theory that he calls «esemplastic» or «plastic» to the synthetic capacity of the secondary imagination to create inexistent forms, beings and fanciful unreal things:

Esemplastic. The word is not in Johnson, nor have I met with it elsewhere. [...] I constructed it myself from the Greek words [...] i.e. to shape into one, because, having to convey a new sense, I thought that a new term would both aid the recollection of my meaning, and prevent its being confounded with the usual import of the word *imagination*. (STC: X, 91)

The Primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite of the eternal act of creation of the infinite I AM. The Secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. [...] Fancy [...] has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode or memory emancipated from the order of time and space, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will which we express by the word choice. (STC: XIII, 167)

Addison's words were as follows:

[W]e 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 [...]. There are few words in the English language which are employed in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense than those of the *Fancy* and the *Imagination*. I therefore thought it necessary to

51 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, London, Dent, 1956 [1817], ch. IV, p. 50, hereafter referred in the text with STC: ch. and p. no.

fix and determine the Notion of these two Words [...] by the Pleasures of the Imagination, I mean only such Pleasures as arise originally from Sight, and that I divide these Pleasures into two Kinds: my Design being first of all to discourse of those Primary Pleasures of the Imagination, which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes; and in the next place to speak of those Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination which flow from the Ideas of Visible Objects, when the Objects are not actually before the Eye, but are called up into our Memories, or formed into agreeable visions of Things that are either Absent or Fictitious. (JA: 3, 41, 57)

In chapter XII of the *Biographia Literaria* (STC: XII, 160), Coleridge distinguishes and elevates this faculty of the mind as the highest ability possible: «imagination, or shaping or modifying power; [...] fancy, or the aggregative and associative power», taking a stance against Wordsworth, who thought the distinction «too general». Coleridge further specifies that «the aggregative and the associative, I continue to deny that it belongs at all to the imagination» (*Ibid.*). Thus, as demonstrated by the latter part of the sentence, he directly recovers the definition of Fancy from the 18th-century theory of Addison, who is never mentioned in the *Biographia*, which was elaborated later, in 1749, in David Hartley's associationist theory,⁵² a distinction set more precisely in Addison's quoted distinction between the primary and secondary imagination and fancy (STC: XIII, 167).

Addison's essays affirmed thus everybody's right to imagine things creatively, not a guaranteed option in the 18th century if people did not see themselves as among those gifted by the Gods. But this had another consequence: it signified that art no longer had to be confined within the frame of reference set by the Ancients and their imitative models and prosodic cages. Accordingly, new and original topics, as well as matters, designs, forms, and most importantly sensations and feelings, were all allowed to find a place in art and could be reworked into and considered as works of art. In this sense, it is not by chance that the battle for invention, creativity and, as derivatives, for autochthonousness and originality, like the Northern aesthetic model, was fought in reviving, during the 18th century, the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, which had occu-

52 For David Hartley (see *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty and his Expectations*, 2 vols., London, S. Richardson, 1749), complex thoughts are elementary sequences of sense impressions, derived from a cause-effect process.

pied the Académie Française during the 1690s, with Boileau as the foremost champion of 'des Ancients'. In England, champions of the Moderns were the editors Richard Bentley and the critic William Watton, followed in the 18th century by Addison and Edward Young, who opposed, amongst others, Jonathan Swift's defence of the Ancients in his work *The Battle of the Books* (1704), not considering Swift's magnificent imaginative capacity, demonstrated in his masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

Many of the champions of the Ancients believed that human nature was innate and universal in its standards, and thus unchangeable, asserting that its knowledge was inborn but then forgotten⁵³ rather than the result of an ongoing experiential, historical learning process, as Locke maintained. Consequently, they promoted the imitation of the Ancients as the best model, a principle to be pursued through the study of the great works of the literature of the past that, in turn, were followed as the best examples for the creation of new ones. Homer was their most outstanding representative model. This static belief had severely limited creativity and not all artists complied with the dicta that prescribed simply the imitation of canonical forms. Artists felt they had something of their own to say, something that was underived from precedents.

The same point is being made by Addison in Essay No. 61, where he says that «the seeds of punning are in the minds of all men [...] and [...] will be very apt to shoot up in the greatest Genius that is not broken and cultivated by the Rules of Art» (JA: vol.1, 61, 228), and when he affirms that the «first Race of Authors [...] excel greater Writers in Greatness of Genius» (JA: 1, 61, 229), implying that by not having to follow prescribed rules they do not fall in imitative patterns. Addison calls them «the Masters of great Learning, but no Genius» (JA: 1, 59, 220). The imagination was a faculty of the mind that all people, in minor or major quantity, possessed, Natural geniuses are thus those who work by «mere Strength of natural Parts and without any Assistance of Art or Learning» and «were never disciplined and [thus] broken by the Rules of Art» (JA: 1, 160, 283).

In «The Spectator» (No. 62), speaking of Locke, Addison defines the abilities of the imagination by separating them clearly from reason: «*Wit* lying most in the Assemblage of Ideas, and putting those together with Quickness and Variety, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures and agreeable Visions in the Fancy. *Judgement*, on the contrary, lies quite on the other

53 So for David Hartley, *op. cit.*

Side. In separating carefully one from another, Ideas wherein can be found the least Difference, thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude, and by Affinity to take one thing for another» (JA: 1, 62, 231, my emphases).

Democratically, like William Duff,⁵⁴ Addison sees imagination as a common-to-all faculty, present in each human being and there to be mined and used as a treasure that must be activated to be rendered productive in its creative function, i.e. to 'esemplastically' change the world: a faculty able to proactively imagine new utopian solutions and changes. If, as Paul Hunter says, the Reformation created a new reader, meant to self-interpret the quintessential text, the Bible,⁵⁵ Addison's concept of the imagination, we can clearly state, created the utopian revolutionary, as Blake was later to testify with the creation of his own imaginative world system.

The new emphasis placed on the imagination was to shift the key for the interpretation of the world, and of one's place in it, from an outside creationist authority: «the great Sovereign of Nature» (JA: 4, 531, 211), – God and those who thought to be his representatives on earth, the king and the clergy – to the internal authority of each person's imagination and capacity of change.

This subversive reading of the imagination corresponds exactly to what the empiricists asserted. All of them believe that genius and ingeniousness are the results of an imagination improved through exercise, like reason, to produce for John Locke «complex ideas of mixed modes [...] [b]y invention, or voluntary putting together of several simple ideas in our own minds» (JL: 265, Bk. 2, ch. XXII, § 9). So, too, it is for Addison, who elaborated Locke's concepts.

The finality to which sensations may lead could well be a theological reading of the world but as Addison explains, this teleology cannot be considered the motor of the universe as, for example, Lord Shaftesbury believed. The same points were repeated and enforced by David Hume in his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, written in 1739 after Addison had written his *Pleasures*, where he affirms:

54 William Duff, *Essay on Original Genius*, London, Routledge/Thoemmes, 1994 [1767], turns the concept of ingeniousness into that of invention, giving prominence to the imagination and its ability to create and invent new original forms and thoughts. Cf. Bezrucka: 2002, pp. 25-54.

55 J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels. The Cultural Contexts of the Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*, London, Norton, 1990.

For 'tis remarkable, that the present question concerning the precedency of our impressions or ideas, is the same with what has made so much noise in other terms, when it has been disputed whether there be any innate ideas, or whether all ideas be derived from sensation and reflexion. We may observe, that to prove the ideas of extension and colour not to be innate, philosophers do nothing but shew, that they are conveyed by our senses. To prove the ideas of passion and desire not to be innate, they observe that we have a preceding experience of these emotions in ourselves. Now if we carefully examine these arguments, we shall find that they prove nothing but that ideas are preceded by other more lively perceptions, from which they are derived, and which they represent.⁵⁶

Also remarkable is the subtitle of Hume's *Treatise: Being an Attempt to introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*, a specification that clarifies his addressees, the Deists and Neoplatonists.⁵⁷

It is by positing the imagination as a faculty present in all human beings, even though in different quantities, that Addison undermines the theory of genius and ingeniousness as being an innate, or inborn gift of the gods and therefore present only in some chosen people.

The new concept of imagination, seen as a faculty that all human beings possess and could improve through exercising it, represented a foray towards egalitarianism and democracy, unlike the conception of the visiting *daimon* – the intermediary between God and humankind – in Plato's *Timaeus*.

Without the dismantling of the theory of ingeniousness seen as a gift of God, no Romantic revolution would have occurred. The transformation of a gift bestowed on an élite by the gods into a faculty shared by everyone and that one only needed to exert to become a genius oneself is indeed the foremost revolutionary move of the 18th century. It is comparable to the re-enactment of Prometheus's myth that Shelley, not by chance, rewrote in his *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) and which, in turn, revived the *non serviam* formula of Milton's Satan: «Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven»⁵⁸ that represented the same possibility of freedom from the hier-

56 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*, L.A. Selby-Bigge ed., Oxford, Clarendon, 1965 [1739] p. 7, hereafter mentioned in the text as DH: and p. no.

57 On Neoplatonism see [Bezručka 2017](#), 1st chapter.

58 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, William Kerrigan, Stephen M. Fallon, John Rumrich eds., New York, Modern Library, 2008 [1667], Bk. 1, vv. 262-64, p. 24. On Shelley cf. Mark

archical fetters of antiquity. Milton, accordingly, interpreted the fall of Eve and Adam as a *felix culpa*, providing them with tools that would become standard during the Enlightenment: free will and free choice, representing autonomous reasoning and personal accountability.

This is also, in my interpretation, the hidden meaning of the, Masonic,⁵⁹ symbolic cypher of the Miltonic serpent, present in Hogarth's etching *Variety* (1753).



William Hogarth, *Variety* (1753)
Image in the public domain

Hogarth, in putting this symbol of liberty, under a glass pyramid, the highly symbolic Masonic image of God, the Great Architect, reminds the initiate of the Order and of earth's hierarchies – symbolised by God's *praesentia in absentia* on top. On the other hand, though, through the symbolism of the Miltonic serpent, Hogarth reminds the initiates, and us all, of the highly critical attitude they should exercise in order not to remain stuck in a rank and degree frame, like that of the *Scala Naturae*, or by their superiors' orders. The movement from one side to the other of the serpent, reminded Hogarth's readers or viewers, of his shell aesthetics ([Bezrucka 2002](#)), of the concave and the convex side and sights of matters, of different time and place contexts necessitating of a variable capacity to adapt to the new situations, without relying on a fixed, once and for all, truth. This was also Hogarth's way of testifying and paying homage to the complex relational and dialogical reality of the new social complexity of the 18th cen-

Kipperman, *Macropolitics of Utopia: Shelley's Hellas in Context*, in Jonathan Arac, Harriet Ritvo (eds.), *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 86-101.

59 For the Masonic elements in Hogarth's work see Elisabeth Soulier-Détis, 'Guess at the Rest': *Cracking the Hogarth Code*, Cambridge, Lutterworth, 2010.

tury which the romantics will have to deal with at the close of the century. It is exemplified in the double, triple or infinite perspectives each beholder can choose for their epistemological interpretation of each historical vision, a feature, of the double vision, underlined by Addison in his essays on architecture.⁶⁰ Hogarth with his historical and *ante litteram* graphic art, and Fielding, the historical painter, in their joint artistic project pursued a merely mimetic and not an embellished, or belittling caricature focus, as set out in the Manifesto of the «new epic-comic-poem in prose», the novel, in the *Preface* to Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742).⁶¹ The *Preface* to this novel exemplifies this stance, and is to be read concomitantly with the etching *Characters & Caricaturas* (1743), the subscription ticket for *Marriage à la Mode* (1743-1745), where Hogarth and Fielding grin at each other in the lower middle part of the etching: avoiding to aggrandize ugliness via the use of caricatura, and limiting themselves to register the people around their London, as they really 'are' and were.



William Hogarth,
Characters & Caricaturas (1743)
Subscription Ticket
for *Marriage à la Mode* (1743-1745)
Image in the public domain

⁶⁰ See JA: 3, 415, 69. I have analysed perception, perspective and cognition extensively also in modern literature through Calvino's *Palomar* and Virginia Woolf's works (cf. Yvonne Bezrucka, *Regimi scopici e tassonomie visuali: da Virginia Woolf a Italo Calvino*, in Chiara Battisti (ed.) *Parola e visione*, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2010, pp. 92-104, and Yvonne Bezrucka, *Virginia Woolf: Life Living and Life Writing – Collage, 'Planes, Parallels, Montage and Design'*, in Angelo Righetti (ed.), *The Protean Forms of Life Writing. Auto/Biography in English, 1680-2000*, Napoli, Liguori, pp. 213-28, both available at Academia.edu.

⁶¹ Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, London, Dent, 1983 [1742].

As it was after the fall of humankind, reality could once more be changed, made adherent to one's dreams and imagination. If everyone possessed the faculty of the imagination, then everyone could become an artist. The climax is indeed the capacity to 'romanticize' the world in order to foster real changes and actuate them, as the French Revolution would soon confirm.

Romanticism is indeed the victory of the idiosyncratic imagination and the variety of thoughts and ideals. The works produced during the Romantic age testify that Romanticism is the triumph of the imagination, and imagination is the triumph of the liberty of interpreting the world in a utopian way; the climax of free will, as one likes and intends to propound, without risking being taken to trial for it, as Godwin reminds us with his novel, *Things as They Are: or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) or through a different focus, as Henry Mackenzie testifies in his *The Man of Feeling* (1771) who is a new human being who registers all that happens around him via his delicate 'senses', his mind being an affect-barometer.

Joseph Addison introduced this tremendous revolution, making all human beings into artists, granting to everyone, without any race, class, gender or difference restraints, the opportunity to read and interpret the world through the exercise of one's imagination. Addison's message should thus be considered the primary anti-authoritarian message of the age, giving back to humankind the option of choice, creation and interpretation without having to conform to ready-made visions of the world. Disembodied forms had no power anymore and were substituted by the embodied imaginative and creative powers of people's minds.

In doing so, Addison not only undermined innatism,⁶² which was the milestone for the rationalists' theory of deduction (blind faith in reason as such), but also emancipated all people by rendering them accountable for making good use of their capacity to imagine the world anew. He gave everyone the chance to express new mythopoetic visions of life in utopian and revolutionary ways, capable of expressing personal and unconventional desires or ideals, a model that was later followed by science itself. In this sense, William Blake, with his mythopoetic recreation of the world, as we have seen, is the epitome of Romanticism, not last, even because of his cryptic system.

62 For the detailed treatment of the difference between the faculty of the imagination and innatism I have to refer to the ch. *Empiricism Applied*, in Bezrucka 2017: 27-62.

In his celebration of the power of the imagination and of one's mind, Blake can be considered the climax of the reflexions laid down by Addison. Romanticism, as a logical consequence, should be considered the triumph of the possibility of being 'romantic' (read idiosyncratic), which develops into the plurality of views and interpretations that make up the complex and prismatic nature of English Romanticism. If we only think of Keats' return to the harmonious beauty of the South, of Shelley's atheism, or Wordsworth's celebration of nature as the place of contradictions, of Coleridge's inventive capacity and potent symbolism, or of Byron's protesting stance, we can see that variety might eventually reign and that humans can not only invent new concepts and ideas, but also develop into new humans that do not think as they did before.

8. The Romantic Artist

Romantic subjective particularism represented also the dismissal of the strategic essentialism⁶³ of the literary invention of a Northern Aesthetics, which had united and freed the English artists from the imitation of the Southern aesthetic models, along the lines of an essentialism aimed at the cultural survival⁶⁴ of those peoples' histories that, as Patrick J. Geary (2003) warns us, get easily overwhelmed by an amnesia of what had created them in the first place: «the processes of ethnogenesis and migrations».⁶⁵ That is, forgotten via «Semi fiction [...] or forger[ies]» as Hobsbawm calls them,⁶⁶ which, we must not forget, function both at a grand national unifying level, but also at a strategic regional, dissenting, one. Murray G.H. Pittock reminds us: «many of the histories of eighteenth-century Britain are written from a centralising "core" perspec-

63 Sara Danius, Stefan Jonsson, *An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, «boundary 2», vol. 20, n. 2, Summer 1993, pp. 35 and *passim*.

64 Cf. my essay on the strategic essentialism of South Pacific literature: Yvonne Bezrucka *Albert Wendt's 'Flying-Fox in a Freedom Tree': Contagious Infection and 'Regional' Dissenting Bodies*, in Angelo Righetti (ed.), *Theory and Practice of the Short Story: Australia, New Zealand, The South Pacific*, Verona, Università di Verona, 2006, pp. 245-63, downloadable at Academia.edu.

65 Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 2003, hereafter referred to in the text as GP and p. no.

66 Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1992, p. 7.

tive»⁶⁷ over the internal resistance of «the four nations [England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland] and many regions that make up these islands».⁶⁸ The corrective of «viewing differing groups in their own terms should allow the uncertainty and provisionality of British identity in the period to emerge – as they appeared to contemporaries»,⁶⁹ i.e., avoiding paring them down into the formula of «the people as one», as Homi Bhabha synthetically puts it in his study on nationalism.⁷⁰

Strategic essentialism includes thus something that happened in the 18th century when English thinkers felt trapped in the cage of a Southern aesthetics that did not correspond to their characteristics. Rejecting this normative prison for an alternative mythology more adherent to their national characteristics gave them the opportunity to free themselves from the yoke of the South, by inventing a Northern aesthetics, which compacted, provisionally, Britons within their both national and regionalist country.

Once this provisional unity had been reached, at an aesthetic level, the later generation of the Romantics, as artists, were free to assume the typical subjective particularism which characterizes them as ‘free’ and as ‘romantic’ human beings: artists with strong individual traits.

The Arthurian myth, in the simplicity and directness of folklore, provided an essential mythological link to what the kingdom considered to be its elements of national pride: that of being the most advanced and modern nation in the world, where power was shared with the people, where liberty and a less, but still authoritarian religion reigned, and where, through equity and the Common Law, the supremacy of a pliable law over the authority of the written one had been established.

Even where mythology is concerned, Joseph Addison is again central; another essay in *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, No. 419, was to become the foundational essay of the new English autochthonous mythology and aesthetics. Having theoretically emancipated the people and recast them into potential artists, Addison also created the basis for what would become the mythology of the new Northern aesthetics, focusing on the magic creatures of England, in championing the «fairy way of writing».

67 Murray G.H. Pittock, *Inventing and Resisting Britain. Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685-1789*, London, Macmillan, 1997, pp. 1-2.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

69 *Ibid.*

70 Cf. Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, London, Routledge, 1990, pp. 3, 299, 301.

9. Conclusion

To defend novelty and the Moderns, Addison ingeniously devises a pragmatic understanding of aesthetics based on the application of Locke's senses-apparatus which *de facto* authorizes all 'personal' readings of reality, and of beauty. He thus held, like Locke and later Hume, that perception precedes reflection: «It is but opening the eye and the scene enters» (JA:1, 11, 57); senses being for him the filters through which we apprehend the world and also the means for the inscription in the *tabula rasa*, the «blank slate» of the mind, as Hume would later rename what Locke had defined «the white paper» that «receives any character» (JL: 88, Bk. 1, ch. 3., §22), or the «white paper, void of all characters» (JL: 109, Bk. 2, ch. 1, § 2, p. 109). As we have seen, in concomitance with Swift's 18th century *Battle of the Books*, the revolutionary pragmatist cognitive system inaugurated by the empiricists was extended to a larger public through Addison's papers on *The Pleasures of the Imagination*. But, via Addison's praise of the imagination, that he interprets with Locke as an anti-elitist faculty which, in minor or major quantity, is for him present in all humankind and not as a prerogative of God's 'gifted' geniuses, he authorizes us readers of today to unite under a single rubric two only in appearance opposite movements, scientific Enlightenment and literary Romanticism, into a formula and a hypothesis that expresses its revolutionary agenda: Enlightened Romanticism.⁷¹

This tying together of apparently opposed conceptions focuses on the positive element of hybridization and rhizomatic cross-fertilization provided by the *trait d'union* which can be established between these two periods of time. Indeed, the rejection of innatism, the privileging of induction rather than deduction, and the scientific orientation which characterizes the Enlightenment, represent, all of them, a revolutionary and pivotal epistemic change which constituted the basis for individualism and liberty that are the typical and revolutionary traits of Romanticism. A perfect expression of this is Wordsworth's outlook in these rhymes about the imagination: «Another name for absolute power / And clearest insight, amplitude of mind, / and Reason in her most exalted mood».⁷²

71 Cf. Bezrucka: 2017, ch. 2.

72 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, in Id, *Wordsworth Poetical Works*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 1985, XIV, vv. 189-191, p. 585.

The consequences of the debunking of innatism have been so far reaching, both for what concerns cognitive theories and literature, that the two literary periods cannot be judged singly but need to be comprised within a longer time-span comprising both the Enlightenment and the Romantic panorama. If we do so, and I hope I have demonstrated why it is consistent to do so, Romanticism can be seen as the direct bloom of the Enlightenment. It is indeed, this complex series of pragmatic changes that undermined once and for all Plato's theory of forms that had dematerialized reality to spiritual ideas only.

The attack on innatism can also be considered the premise for what I have termed the «Invention of a Northern Aesthetics» the strategic essentialism adopted by authors and poets, Warton, Blake, Burns, Gray, Percy, Macpherson, to quote some, but also artists as Hogarth, or writers like Fielding or Smollett to contrast the primacy of the theories of beauty and perfection of the past and of the classical and symmetrical Southern mythology of appeasing beauty that was privileged during the Renaissance. This was achieved by a concentration of the 18th century sublime, melancholy poets and poems (Thomas Warton, Gray, Goldsmith) and also those concentrated on the northern geographical settings of the nation (Johnson, Smollett, Wollstonecraft) and their characterizing ideas of aesthetics (Gilpin's picturesque) and the related new tourist destinations of the Domestic picturesque Tour in contrast to the Grand Tour, focusing on a common return to their, complex, sublime, Northern places and past, and their Reformed religion (cf. Bezrucka 2017: 142-43 for a taxonomical table).

John Locke and Addison, with their emphasis on the creative capacity of the imagination to envisage 'inexistent' systems, invited and fostered people to examine reality and to take direct action in order to change reality. The view of Nature changed accordingly: the previously static image of a *Natura Naturata*, given once and for all, which upheld the deistic frame of reference and its notorious double standard, trying to connect religion and science, was superseded by a scientific, biologically living *Natura Naturans*, in constant making and in need of constant reinterpretation, a move which marks the passage from a holistic to a fragmentary new episteme.⁷³

The new outlook encourages us to propose a revision of the periodization of Romanticism, which should be considered as starting in 1712,

73 Cf. Marcello Pagnini, *Introduzione*, in Id., *Il Romanticismo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986, pp. 7-23.

concomitantly with the publication of Addison's *The Pleasures of the Imagination*. Accordingly, these series of essays should be considered the Romantic Manifesto in that they promoted a new proactive personal attitude towards an interpretation of reality fitted to defy the previous acquiescent and compliant teleological ones. To revise Romanticism as Enlightened Romanticism, would force us to comprise, in particular, Addison's imagination, Gilpin's picturesque, Hogarth's aesthetics, and Thomas Warton's poetry, and would render also the individualism of Blake more understandable. It would also justify our definition of the major Romantic Poets as great individualists, which indeed they are.

The consequence of the rejection of innatism is a too belittled connection even in ground-breaking studies of Romantic theory, such as the one by Meyer H. Abrams (1973),⁷⁴ who sees: «the secularization of inherited theological ideas», as an «assimilation and reinterpretation [...] from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference» (1973: 12); what Abrams calls a «Natural Supernaturalism» that tries «to save the [...] cardinal values of [...] religious heritage».⁷⁵ I disagree with using 'Natural Supernaturalism', as a terminology, in that the cardinal religious values were not saved, people were, on the contrary, faced with a choice between belief or other more sceptic positions which the rejection of innatism, in challenging the creationist hypothesis, brought with it. Indeed, if we consider Romanticism as an age of individualism, subjective liberation, and creativity, we must enclose within its periodization what in reality made dreaming, change, and dissenting anti-authoritarianism possible.

The roots of the afore mentioned subjective stances need to be connected to the revolutionary understanding of the imagination as a result of the new ideas of the Fathers of the Enlightenment, the Empiricist philosophers and their tradition. These philosophers prepared the conditions for the revolution connected to the utterly new conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa* subject to changes induced by sensory impressions and their rationalization. Addison, whom I consider to be the spokesperson of Locke, condenses it in his *Pleasures*. Attaching an unprecedented importance to personal reception and its analysis he could be seen as the initiator of English Romanticism. The new standpoints were later linked to William Hartley's associationist-theory, which reinvigorated the battle be-

74 Meyer H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, Oxford, OUP, 1973.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

tween innatism and empiricism, Hartley being himself a disciple of Locke and thus contrary to pre-existing Platonism and Scottish Neoplatonism (Shaftesbury) and the Cartesian philosophy which again tried to produce a hiatus between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.

Through the imagination, as Addison affirms, «the artist has the modelling of Nature in his own hands» (JA 3, 418, 83). Romanticism takes over this responsibility directly: in England, Romanticism collected the most varied stances and viewpoints – avoiding continental coteries of shared beliefs and shared philosophical stances – aiming at being a transversal declaration of independence of both the imagination and the artists. In stating the liberty and possibility for everyone to become the sole stakeholder and creator of one's own life, it took 'free will' back from religion. Accordingly, as a new English secular Renaissance, it celebrated a new humanity that uses free will, freedom and the imagination to envisage the new utopian worlds of the future, like Blake's *New Jerusalem* (1820-1827).

The revolt of the empiricists against the rationalists was based on an attack on various fronts: religion, free will, induction, the imagination, which climaxed in the affirmation of an English 'Northern' aesthetics based on an invented and thus constructed, chthonic, democratic mythological past (King Arthur and the Common Law), against the hypotactic, hierarchical and authoritarian Southern one, founded in religion, politics and ethics, ingrained and safely exported abroad in the Greek and Roman literary tradition and its Southern aesthetics of beauty.

The Northern aesthetics was concentrated on an unprecedented centrality of the senses: sight, taste, smell, hearing, touch, and its distinguished and unique mode of perception. This turn from the world of ideas to a bodily and though experimental conception of reality is comparable only to the contestation of the deductive method, that Francis Bacon's *Novum Organon* (1620) had set. Like in this work, which demolished deductive reasoning in order to give priority to the scientific inductive method, in short «The Enlightenment» reality was now filtered, also in literature, by the senses, via perception, which gave to subjectivity an unprecedented pre-eminence.

The centrality of Locke, via Addison as a filter for Romanticism, is due to his contestation of the innatism of ideas on which Plato and all Scottish Neoplatonists, Shaftesbury in particular, insisted upon. After the appearance of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) the epistemic evaluation of outside reality changed forever: perception and its evaluation produced various intellectual stances, giving rise to different

epistemic filters: deism, creationism and empiricism were now all plausible alternatives readings of the world, Locke having clearly said that: «In Propositions [...] whose certainty is built upon clear perception [...] we need not the assistance of revelation» (JL: 609-610, Bk. 4, ch. 18, § 5).

To come to a more recent time, Bertrand Russell, in his *History of Western Philosophy*, summarizes the importance of the religious issues, into a formula useful also for Enlightened Romanticism: «They [Luther and Calvin] rejected the doctrine of Indulgences, upon which a large part of the papal revenue depended. By the doctrine of predestination, the fate of the soul after death was made wholly independent of the actions of priests» (BR 1467) and this he calls the «Northern Renaissance» which: «was in many ways very different from that of Italy [...]. It was much interested in applying standards of scholarship to the Bible, and in obtaining a more accurate text than that of the Vulgate» (BR 1441) coming to his conclusions: «Protestants who took seriously the individualistic aspects of the Reformation were as unwilling to submit to the king as to the Pope» (BR: 1240); «For all these reasons, Luther's theological innovations were welcomed by rulers and peoples alike throughout the greater part of Northern Europe» (BR: 34). In my opinion, another aspect, and not one to be belittled, which contributed strongly in promoting romantic individualism.