

# JOSEPH ADDISON

1672 – 1719

Joseph Addison was born in Wiltshire to Anglican clergyman Lancelot and Jane Addison in 1672. A lifelong Whig whose commitment to state service directly influenced his literary endeavors, Addison was an unabashedly didactic writer; his poems, plays, and pamphlets champion the Whig cause with varying degrees of subtlety, their tone ranging from gentle humor to outright propaganda. Not surprisingly, his publications earned him government favor; *The Campaign* (1704), his timely poem celebrating the Duke of Marlborough's victory over the French at Blenheim, for example, ensured his appointment as a Commissioner of Appeal in Excise. Although his literary reputation has declined somewhat in the past century, Addison is still regarded as an important figure in the history of English prose, and is remembered in particular for his journalistic partnership with Richard Steele. Displaying a mastery of what Samuel Johnson labeled "an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious," the graceful and fluid style of Addison's essays is still upheld as a model of writing excellence.



Addison met Richard Steele in 1686 at Charterhouse, an exclusive school founded in London in 1611. The following year, Addison entered Queen's College, Oxford; he later moved to Magdalen College at the same university, where he took his B.A. in 1691 and his M.A. in 1693. Noted for his proficiency in Latin verse and his interest in science during his university years, Addison also published several English poems dedicated to prominent Whigs. He was awarded a fellowship at Magdalen in 1698, and soon after received a grant to travel in Europe in preparation for civil service. His grant ended with King William's death in 1702, and Addison returned to England soon after. He later fashioned his continental experiences into a travel book entitled *Remarks upon Several Parts of Italy* (1705).

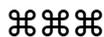
Addison soon became involved in London literary and political circles. He joined the Kit-Kat Club, a group of Whig writers (individuals who opposed the succession of James, Duke of York to the crown because he was Roman Catholic) and supporters whose members included Steele, Jonathan Swift, and William Congreve, and tried his hand at various forms of writing. Addison made several attempts to write for the stage, although only one of his plays, *Cato* (1713), was a commercial success.

Addison's first foray into elected politics was short-lived; he won the seat of Lostwithiel in Cornwall in 1708, but lost it after only a year. His next attempt was more successful: he served as Member of Parliament for Malmesbury from 1710 until his death in 1719. Late in 1708, Addison was appointed to act as secretary to Lord Wharton, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland—an alliance that would lead to roles as Irish Privy Councillor and Keeper of Records in Dublin Castle. When the Whig government was defeated in 1710, Addison's income was drastically reduced, but he again benefitted from his staunch support of the Whig cause after the government was re-established in 1715: he served as Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1715, Commissioner of Trade in 1716, and Secretary of State in 1717.

The first significant Addison-Steele collaboration was Steele's hugely popular *The Tatler*, a thrice-weekly paper launched by Steele who hoped that the journal's articles would have the effect of reforming public manners and morals. Ostensibly edited and authored by the fictional Isaac Bickerstaff, a character created by Swift, the paper appeared from April 1709 to January 1711. *The Tatler* published reports from various fashionable clubs and coffee houses around London: White's Chocolate House handled entertainment, Will's Coffee House dealt with poetry, the Grecian Club tackled education, and St. James's Coffee House covered foreign and domestic news. Addison contributed—either solely or in collaboration with others—to approximately twenty percent of *The Tatler*'s 271 issues; his main interests were generally confined to the classics, religion, and citizenship, while Steele concentrated on the theater, politics, and manners.

*The Spectator* was launched in March 1711, only a few months after the final *Tatler* issue. Published six days a week, *The Spectator* employed a fictional writer-editor (called simply Mr. Spectator) who reported on the news of the day overheard in polite society. Addison was considerably more involved with *The Spectator* than he had been with *The Tatler*, writing approximately half of the 555 issues. Addison and Steele relied on a variety of innovative literary devices to meet the demand for interesting material, including introducing a hugely popular club of fictional characters who offered different points of view to the journal's readers. Along with social criticism, *The Spectator* tackled philosophy and science, and Addison wrote essays on literary topics such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the nature of tragedy, and the pleasures of the imagination. *The Spectator* initially ceased publication in December 1712, but Addison revived the periodical between June and December 1714 with a second series consisting of 80 issues.

Addison's final significant collaboration with Steele was *The Guardian*, of which 175 issues were published between March and October 1713. Like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, *The Guardian* utilized a fictional writer-editor (this time called Nestor Ironsides) who reported on the conversations and activities of his relatives, the Lizard family. Sadly, Addison's friendship with Steele began to deteriorate late in 1713 due to differing opinions concerning George I's succession; by early 1717, their relationship was effectively severed. Addison's personal circumstances underwent a significant change relatively late in life; in 1716, he married Charlotte, Countess of Warwick, who bore him a daughter, Charlotte, in January 1719. Addison did not live to see his child's first birthday; he died in June 1719, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. A collected edition of Addison's works was published two years later in 1721.



from *The Spectator*

NO. 285,<sup>1</sup> SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1712

*Ne quicunque Deus, quicunque adhibebitur heros,  
Regali conspectus in auro nuper & ostro,  
Migret in Obscuras humili sermone tabernas:  
Aut dum vitat humum, nubes & inania captet.*

Horace<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Addison's 18 essays on Milton's *Paradise Lost* appeared in the *Spectator*'s Saturday issues starting on 5 January 1712 and ending on 3 May 1712. This essay is the fourth in the series.

HAVING already treated of the fable, the characters, and sentiments in the *Paradise Lost*, we are in the last place to consider the language; and as the learned world is very much divided upon Milton as to this

<sup>2</sup> *Ne ... captet* Latin: from Horace's *Ars Poetica*: "That none who shall be exhibited as a god, none who is introduced as a hero lately conspicuous in regal purple and gold, may deviate into the low style of obscure, mechanical shops; or, ... while he avoids the ground, affect cloudy mist and empty jargon" (227–230); *Horace* Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 BCE–8 BCE), Roman poet, author of *Ars Poetica*, an epistle on the art of poetry that greatly influenced Western poets.

point, I hope they will excuse me if I appear particular in any of my opinions, and incline to those who judge the most advantageously of the author.

It is requisite that the language of an heroic poem should be both perspicuous<sup>1</sup> and sublime.<sup>2</sup> In proportion as either of these two qualities are wanting, the language is imperfect. Perspicuity is the first and most necessary qualification; insomuch, that a good-natured reader sometimes overlooks a little slip even in the grammar or syntax<sup>3</sup> where it is impossible for him to mistake the poet's sense. Of this kind is that passage in Milton, wherein he speaks of Satan.

... God and his Son except,  
Created thing nought valu'd he nor shunn'd.<sup>4</sup>

And that in which he describes Adam and Eve.

*Adam* the goodliest man of men since born  
His Sons, the fairest of her Daughters *Eve*.<sup>5</sup>

It is plain, that in the former of these passages, according to the natural syntax, the divine persons mentioned in the first line are represented as created beings; and that in the other, Adam and Eve are confounded with their sons and daughters. Such little blemishes as these, when the thought is great and natural, we should, with Horace, impute<sup>6</sup> to a pardonable inadvertency,<sup>7</sup> or to the weakness of human nature, which cannot attend to each minute particular, and give the last finishing to every circumstance in so long a work. The ancient critics therefore, who were acted by a spirit of candour, rather than that of cavilling,<sup>8</sup> invented certain figures of speech on purpose to palliate<sup>9</sup> little errors of this nature in the

<sup>1</sup> *perspicuous* Easily understood.

<sup>2</sup> *It is requisite ... sublime* Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* Chapter 22.

<sup>3</sup> *syntax* Arrangement of words by which a sentence's meaning is established.

<sup>4</sup> *God ... shunn'd* *Paradise Lost* II.678–79.

<sup>5</sup> *Adam ... Eve* *Paradise Lost* IV.323–24.

<sup>6</sup> *impute* Consider to be caused by.

<sup>7</sup> *Such ... inadvertency* Reference to Horace's *Ars Poetica* 351–53.

<sup>8</sup> *cavilling* Petty fault-finding.

<sup>9</sup> *palliate* Excuse.

writings of those authors, who had so many greater beauties to atone for them.

If clearness and perspicuity were only to be consulted, the poet would have nothing else to do but to clothe his thoughts in the most plain and natural expressions. But, since it often happens, that the most obvious phrases, and those which are used in ordinary conversation, become too familiar to the ear, and contract a kind of meanness<sup>10</sup> by passing through the mouths of the vulgar,<sup>11</sup> a poet should take particular care to guard himself against idiomatic ways of speaking. Ovid and Lucan<sup>12</sup> have many poornesses of expression upon this account, as taking up with the first phrases that offered, without putting themselves to the trouble of looking after such as would not only be natural, but also elevated and sublime. Milton has but a few failings in this kind, of which, however, you may meet with some instances, as in the following passages.

Embryos, and Idiots, Eremites and Friars  
White, Black and Grey, with all their trumpery.  
Here Pilgrims roam ...<sup>13</sup>  
... A while discourse they hold;  
No fear lest Dinner cool; when thus began  
Our Author ...<sup>14</sup>  
Who of all Ages to succeed, but feeling  
The evil on him brought by me, will curse  
My Head; Ill fare our Ancestor impure,  
For this we may thank *Adam* ...<sup>15</sup>

The great masters in composition know very well that many an elegant phrase becomes improper for a poet or an orator when it has been debased by common use. For this reason the works of ancient authors, which are written in dead languages, have a great advantage over those which are written in languages that are now

<sup>10</sup> *meanness* Vulgarity.

<sup>11</sup> *vulgar* Common people.

<sup>12</sup> *Ovid* Latin poet (43 BCE–18 CE), author of *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Metamorphoses*, a compendium of classical myths in verse; *Lucan* Latin poet (39–65 CE), author of *Bellum Civile*, an epic that recounts the civil war between Caesar and Pompey.

<sup>13</sup> *Embryos ... roam* *Paradise Lost* III.474–76.

<sup>14</sup> *A while ... Author* *Paradise Lost* V.395–97.

<sup>15</sup> *Who ... Adam* *Paradise Lost* X.733–36.

spoken. Were there any mean phrases or idioms in Virgil and Homer,<sup>1</sup> they would not shock the ear of the most delicate modern reader, so much as they would have done that of an old Greek or Roman, because we never hear them pronounced in our streets or in ordinary conversation.

It is not therefore sufficient that the language of an epic poem be perspicuous, unless it be also sublime. To this end it ought to deviate from the common forms and ordinary phrases of speech. The judgment of a poet very much discovers itself in shunning the common roads of expression without falling into such ways of speech as may seem stiff and unnatural; he must not swell into a false sublime by endeavouring to avoid the other extreme. Among the Greeks, Aeschylus, and sometimes Sophocles,<sup>2</sup> were guilty of this fault; among the Latins, Claudian and Statius;<sup>3</sup> and among our own countrymen, Shakespeare and Lee.<sup>4</sup> In these authors the affectation of greatness often hurts the perspicuity of the style, as in many others the endeavour after perspicuity prejudices its greatness.

Aristotle<sup>5</sup> has observed that the idiomatic style may be avoided, and the sublime formed, by the following methods.<sup>6</sup> First, by the use of metaphors: such are those in Milton.

Imparadis'd in one another's arms,<sup>7</sup>  
 ... and in his hand a Reed  
 Stood waving tipt with fire; ...<sup>8</sup>  
 The grassy Clods now Calv'd ...<sup>9</sup>  
 Spangl'd with eyes ...<sup>10</sup>

In these and innumerable other instances, the metaphors are very bold but just; I must however observe that the metaphors are not thick sown in Milton, which always savours too much of wit; that they never clash with one another, which as Aristotle observes, turns a sentence into a kind of an enigma or riddle;<sup>11</sup> and that he seldom has recourse to them where the proper and natural words will do as well.

Another way of raising the language, and giving it a poetical turn, is to make use of the idioms of other tongues.<sup>12</sup> Virgil is full of the Greek forms of speech, which the critics call hellenisms, as Horace in his Odes abounds with them much more than Virgil. I need not mention the several dialects which Homer has made use of for this end. Milton, in conformity with the practice of the ancient poets, and with Aristotle's rule, has infused a great many latinisms, as well as graecisms, and sometimes hebraisms,<sup>13</sup> into the language of his poem, as towards the beginning of it.

Nor did they not perceive the evil plight  
 In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;  
 Yet to their General's Voice they soon obey'd ...<sup>14</sup>  
 ... who shall tempt with wand'ring feet  
 The dark unbottom'd infinite Abyss  
 And through the palpable obscure find out  
 His uncouth way, or spread his aery flight  
 Upborne with indefatigable wings  
 Over the vast abrupt ...<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Virgil* Roman poet (70–19 BCE), author of *The Aeneid*, an epic detailing the life of Aeneas, who embodied the Roman virtues, and *The Georgics*, poems recounting the joy of rural and farming life; *Homer* Greek poet c. 700 BCE), putative author of *The Iliad*, an account of the Greeks' war with the Trojans, and *The Odyssey*, Odysseus's journey home after the war's end.

<sup>2</sup> *Aeschylus* Greek dramatist (525–456 BCE), author of approximately 80 plays including *Prometheus Bound* and *The Oresteia*; *Sophocles* Greek dramatist and politician (c. 496–406 BCE), author of such tragedies as *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Electra*, and *Antigone*.

<sup>3</sup> *Claudian* Latin poet (c. 370–404 CE), author of several epics including *Rape of Proserpine*; *Statius* Latin poet (c. 45–96 CE), favorite of the Emperor Domitian, author of a collection of poems entitled *Silvae* and several epics.

<sup>4</sup> *Lee* Nathaniel Lee (c. 1653–92), English playwright and actor, author of such verse plays as *Sophonisba* and *Nero*, as well as the blank verse tragedy *The Rival Queens*.

<sup>5</sup> *Aristotle* Greek philosopher and student of Plato (384–322 BCE), founder of a school and library in Athens in 335 BCE, tutor to Alexander the Great, and author of such influential philosophical works as *De Anima*, *De Poetica*, *Rhetoric*, and *Physics*.

<sup>6</sup> *Aristotle ... methods* Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* Chapter 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Imparadis'd ... Arms* *Paradise Lost* IV.506.

<sup>8</sup> *and ... fire* *Paradise Lost* VI.579–80.

<sup>9</sup> *The ... Calv'd* *Paradise Lost* VII.463.

<sup>10</sup> *Spangl'd ... eyes* *Paradise Lost* XI.130.

<sup>11</sup> *enigma or riddle* Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* Chapter 22.

<sup>12</sup> *idioms ... tongues* Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* Chapter 22.

<sup>13</sup> *graecisms ... hebraisms* Features or qualities of the Greek or Hebrew language employed in other languages.

<sup>14</sup> *Nor ... obey'd* *Paradise Lost* I.335–37.

<sup>15</sup> *Who ... abrupt* *Paradise Lost* II.404–09.

... So both ascend  
In the Visions of God ...<sup>1</sup>

Under this head may be reckoned the placing the adjective after the substantive,<sup>2</sup> the transposition of words, the turning the adjective into a substantive, with several other foreign modes of speech, which this poet has naturalized to give his verse the greater sound, and throw it out of prose.

The third method mentioned by Aristotle, is what agrees with the genius of the Greek language more than with that of any other tongue, and is therefore more used by Homer than by any other poet. I mean the lengthening of a phrase by the addition of words, which may either be inserted or omitted, as also by the extending or contracting of particular words by the insertion or omission of certain syllables.<sup>3</sup> Milton has put in practice this method of raising his language, as far as the nature of our tongue will permit, as in the passage above-mentioned, *eremite*, for what is *hermit*, in common discourse. If you observe the measure of his verse, he has with great judgment suppressed a syllable in several words, and shortened those of two syllables into one, by which method, besides the abovementioned advantage, he has given a greater variety to his numbers. But this practice is more particularly remarkable in the names of persons and of countries, as *Beelzebub*, *Hessebon*, and in many other particulars, wherein he has either changed the name, or made use of that which is not the most commonly known, that he might the better depart from the language of the vulgar.

The same reason recommended to him several old words, which also makes his poem appear the more venerable,<sup>4</sup> and gives it a greater air of antiquity.

I must likewise take notice that there are in Milton several words of his own coining, as *Cerberean*, *miscreated*, *Hell-doom'd*, *embryon Atoms*,<sup>5</sup> and many others. If the reader is offended at this liberty in our English

poet, I would recommend him to a discourse in *Plutarch*,<sup>6</sup> which shows us how frequently Homer has made use of the same liberty.

Milton, by the above-mentioned helps, and by the choice of the noblest words and phrases which our tongue would afford him, has carried our language to a greater height than any of the English poets have ever done before or after him, and made the sublimity of his style equal to that of his sentiments.

I have been the more particular in these observations on Milton's style because it is that part of him in which he appears the most singular. The remarks I have here made upon the practice of other poets, with my observations out of Aristotle, will perhaps alleviate the prejudice which some have taken to his poem upon this account; though after all, I must confess, that I think his style, though admirable in general, is in some places too much stiffened and obscured by the frequent use of those methods, which Aristotle has prescribed for the raising of it.

This redundancy of those several ways of speech which Aristotle calls foreign language, and with which Milton has so very much enriched, and in some places darkened the language of his poem, was the more proper for his use because his poem is written in blank verse. Rhyme, without any other assistance, throws the language off from prose, and very often makes an indifferent phrase pass unregarded; but where the verse is not built upon rhymes, there pomp of sound and energy of expression are indispensably necessary to support the style and keep it from falling into the flatness of prose.

Those who have not a taste for this elevation of style, and are apt to ridicule a poet when he goes out of the common forms of expression, would do well to see how Aristotle has treated an ancient author, called *Euclid*,<sup>7</sup> for his insipid mirth upon this occasion. Mr. Dryden used to call this sort of men his prose-critics.

<sup>1</sup> *So ... God Paradise Lost XI.376–77.*

<sup>2</sup> *substantive* Noun.

<sup>3</sup> *The third ... syllables* Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*, Chapter 22.

<sup>4</sup> *venerable* Older.

<sup>5</sup> *Cerberean ... embryon Atoms Paradise Lost II.655, 683, 697, and 900*; Addison is not correct about Milton's coining "miscreated;" the word appears in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, I.ii.3.1.

<sup>6</sup> *Plutarch* Greek biographer (46–120 CE), author of *The Parallel Lives*, a collection of paired biographies of prominent Greeks and Romans; *The Life and Poetry of Homer* was wrongly attributed to Plutarch.

<sup>7</sup> *Euclid* Greek mathematician (c. 300 BCE), author of *Elements of Geometry*; Addison refers to Aristotle's *Ars Poetica* Chapter 22.

I should, under this head of the language, consider Milton's numbers,<sup>1</sup> in which he has made use of several elisions<sup>2</sup> that are not customary among other English poets, as may be particularly observed in his cutting off the letter Y when it precedes a vowel.<sup>3</sup> This, and some other innovations in the measure<sup>4</sup> of his verse, has varied his numbers in such a manner as makes them incapable of satiating the ear and cloying<sup>5</sup> the reader; which the same uniform measure would certainly have done, and which the perpetual returns of rhyme never fail to do in long narrative poems. I shall close these reflections upon the language of *Paradise Lost* with observing that Milton has copied after Homer, rather than Virgil, in the length of his periods,<sup>6</sup> the copiousness of his phrases, and the running of his verses into one another.

SPECTATOR NO. 414, WEDNESDAY, 25 JUNE 1712  
[NATURE, ART, GARDENS]

... *Alterius sic*  
*Altera poscit opem res et conjurat amice.*<sup>7</sup>  
Horace

If we consider the works of *nature* and *art*, as they are qualified to entertain the imagination, we shall find the last very defective, in comparison of the former; for though they may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange, they can have nothing in them of that vastness and immensity which afford so great an entertainment to the mind of the beholder. The one may be as polite and delicate as the other, but can never show herself so august and magnificent in the design. There is something more bold and masterly in the rough careless

<sup>1</sup> *numbers* Verses.

<sup>2</sup> *elisions* Alterations in pronunciation by suppressing a word's syllables or letters.

<sup>3</sup> *cutting ... vowel* In fact, Milton rarely omits the letter "y" at the end of a word, though he often omits vowels in this way (e.g. "th' shame;" "T' whom;" "th' attempt;" "th' advent'rous bands").

<sup>4</sup> *measure* Rhythm.

<sup>5</sup> *cloying* Sickening through excess.

<sup>6</sup> *periods* Complete sentences.

<sup>7</sup> *Alterius ... amice* Latin: from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, "So much does the one require the assistance of the other, and so amicably do they conspire" (410–11).

strokes of nature than in the nice touches and embellishments of art. The beauties of the most stately garden or palace lie in a narrow compass;<sup>8</sup> the imagination immediately runs them over and requires something else to gratify her; but, in the wide fields of nature, the sight wanders up and down without confinement, and is fed with an infinite variety of images, without any certain stint or number. For this reason we always find the poet in love with a country life, where nature appears in the greatest perfection and furnishes out all those scenes that are most apt to delight the imagination.

*Scriptorum chorus omnis amat nemus et fugit urbes.*<sup>9</sup>  
Horace

*Hic secunda quies, et nescia fallere vita,*  
*Dives opum variarum; hic latis otia fundis,*  
*Speluncae, vivique lacus, hic frigida tempe,*  
*Mugitusque boum, mollesque sub arbore somni.*<sup>10</sup>  
Virgil

But though there are several of these wild scenes that are more delightful than any artificial shows, yet we find the works of nature still more pleasant the more they resemble those of art. For in this case our pleasure arises from a double principle: from the agreeableness of the objects to the eye and from their similitude to other objects; we are pleased as well with comparing their beauties as with surveying them, and can represent them to our minds either as copies or originals. Hence it is that we take delight in a prospect<sup>11</sup> which is well laid out and diversified with fields and meadows, woods and rivers, in those accidental landscapes of trees, clouds and cities that are sometimes found in the veins of marble, in the curious fret-work<sup>12</sup> of rocks and grottos, and, in a word, in anything that hath such a variety or regularity

<sup>8</sup> *compass* Boundary, enclosed limits of space.

<sup>9</sup> *Scriptorum ... urbes* Latin: from Horace's *Epistles*, "The whole poetic chorus loves the groves and flees the city" (II.2.77).

<sup>10</sup> *Hic ... somni* Latin: from Virgil's *Georgics*, "Unvex'd with Quarrels, undisturb'd with Noise, / The Country King his peaceful Realm enjoys: / Cool Grots, and living Lakes, the Flow'ry Pride / Of Meads, and Streams that thro' the Valley glide; / And shady Groves that easie Sleep invite, / And after toilsome Days, a soft repose at Night" (II.467–70).

<sup>11</sup> *prospect* View of the landscape.

<sup>12</sup> *fretwork* Decorative carving consisting of intersecting lines.

as may seem the effect of design, in what we call the works of chance.

If the products of nature rise in value, according as they more or less resemble those of art, we may be sure that artificial works receive a greater advantage from their resemblance of such as are natural; because here the similitude is not only pleasant, but the pattern more perfect. The prettiest landscape I ever saw was one drawn on the walls of a dark room, which stood opposite on one side to a navigable river, and on the other to a park.<sup>1</sup> The experiment is very common in optics. Here you might discover the waves and fluctuations of the water in strong and proper colors with the picture of a ship entering at one end and sailing by degrees through the whole piece. On another there appeared the green shadows of trees, waving to and fro with the wind, and herds of deer among them in miniature, leaping about upon the wall. I must confess, the novelty of such a sight may be one occasion of its pleasantness to the imagination, but certainly the chief reason is its near resemblance to nature, as it does not only, like other pictures, give the color and figure, but the motion of the things it represents.

We have before observed that there is generally in nature something more grand and august than what we meet with in the curiosities of art. When, therefore, we see this imitated in any measure, it gives us a nobler and more exalted kind of pleasure than what we receive from the nicer<sup>2</sup> and more accurate productions of art. On this account 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 which represent everywhere an artificial rudeness<sup>3</sup> much more charming than that neatness and elegance which we meet with in those of our own country. It might, indeed, be of ill consequence to the public, as well as unprofitable to private persons, to alienate so much ground from pasturage and the plow in many parts of a country that is so well peopled, and cultivated to a far greater advantage. But why may not a whole estate be thrown into a kind of

garden by frequent plantations<sup>4</sup> that may turn as much to the profit as the pleasure of the owner? A marsh overgrown with willows, or a mountain shaded with oaks, are not only more beautiful, but more beneficial, than when they lie bare and unadorned. Fields of corn<sup>5</sup> make a pleasant prospect, and if the walks were a little taken care of that lie between them, if the natural embroidery of the meadows were helped and improved by some small additions of art, and the several rows of hedges set off by trees and flowers that the soil was capable of receiving, a man might make a pretty landscape of his own possessions.

Writers who have given us an account of China tell us the inhabitants of that country laugh at the plantations of our Europeans which are laid out by the rule and line; because, they say, any one may place trees in equal rows and uniform figures. They choose rather to show a genius in works of this nature, and therefore always conceal the art by which they direct themselves. They have a word, it seems, in their language, by which they express the particular beauty of a plantation that thus strikes the imagination at first sight without discovering what it is that has so agreeable an effect. Our British gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humoring nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in cones, globes, and pyramids. We see the marks of the scissors upon every plant and bush. I do not know whether I am singular in my opinion, but, for my own part, I would rather look upon a tree in all its luxuriancy and diffusion of boughs and branches than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a mathematical figure; and I cannot but fancy that an orchard in flower looks infinitely more delightful than all the little labyrinths of the most finished parterre.<sup>6</sup> But as our great modelers of gardens have their magazines<sup>7</sup> of plants to dispose of, it is very natural for them to tear up all the beautiful plantations of fruit trees and contrive a plan that may most turn to their own profit—in taking off<sup>8</sup> their evergreens, and the like moveable plants, with which their shops are plentifully stocked.

—1712

<sup>1</sup> *The prettiest... park* Reference to a camera obscura, a dark room or box into which light is directed through a lens; images placed on the lens would be replicated on the walls of the room or box.

<sup>2</sup> *nicer* More refined, cultured.

<sup>3</sup> *rudeness* Primitive or unrefined state.

<sup>4</sup> *plantations* Planted lands.

<sup>5</sup> *corn* Grain.

<sup>6</sup> *parterre* Formal arrangement of flower beds in a level area.

<sup>7</sup> *magazines* Storehouses for goods.

<sup>8</sup> *taking off* Selling out.

