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THE “GOLDEN AGE” IN JOSEPH ADDISON’S ESSAY *THE VISION OF JUSTICE* (*THE TATLER*, No. 100, 102, 1709)

Liudmila Yu. Makarova

Ural State Pedagogical University (Ekaterinburg, Russia)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3962-4262>

Abstract. This article examines the essay of an early English Enlightenment writer Joseph Addison *The Vision of Justice* (*The Tatler*, 1709, No. 100 and 102), which, like many of his works, reflects an engagement with the medieval visionary tradition. The study focuses on analyzing *The Vision of Justice* in relation to this genre, a perspective that has not previously been addressed in Russian literary studies. A historico-literary review has made it possible to outline the approaches of both Russian and English-speaking literary scholars to the study of Addison’s “allegorical” essays. The review has also identified unresolved questions concerning the author’s artistic vision and his reasons for incorporating elements of the visionary tradition. The relevance of analyzing *The Vision of Justice* from this genre perspective lies in the need to deepen the understanding of the distinctive features of Addison’s essayistic style and to assess the role of the visionary canon in Enlightenment literature. The study analyzes the headline complex and identifies the reasons behind the author’s interest in the themes of justice and the forthcoming “golden age,” introduced through the epigraph – the lines from Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue. In keeping with the spirit of the era, the author aligns himself with an esteemed poetic tradition while imparting contemporary relevance to the essay. The article also examines the figure of the narrator and visionary, Isaac Bickerstaff, whose reflections, experiences, and commentaries serve to articulate the author’s perspective. Then it goes on to explore the plot and compositional structure of the essay, identifying traditional motifs characteristic of medieval visions but creatively adapted by the author to model a transformed earthly realm. The analysis of society types and their morals reveals a convergence of moral judgments about humanity in both Enlightenment and medieval “visionary” narratives. Similarly, Addison’s narrative portrays the earthly world as encompassing a tribunal that administers justice. The commentary on the scenes of the restoration of justice in the world of men and women and the final reference to the lines from the eighth canto of Milton’s poem “Paradise Lost” allows formulating an idea of the author’s ideal of virtuous and reasonable humanity, which will relive the “golden age” again. The study concludes that the tradition of the genre of vision enables Addison to highlight the flaws of existence with irony while employing a utopian approach to the idea of humanity’s moral renewal. The author’s pathos and the themes of *The Vision of Justice* reflect the evolution of the genre of vision, which, during the Enlightenment, became a framework for addressing moral and ethical issues.

Keywords: English Enlightenment; genre; vision; essay; allegory; utopia

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«ЗОЛОТОЙ ВЕК» В ЭССЕ ДЖОЗЕФА АДДИСОНА «ВИДЕНИЕ СПРАВЕДЛИВОСТИ» (*THE TATLER* № 100, 102, 1709 Г.)

Макарова Л. Ю.

Уральский государственный педагогический университет (Екатеринбург, Россия)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3962-4262>

SPIN-код: 1834-1058

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается эссе раннего английского просветителя Дж. Аддисона «Видение справедливости» (*The Tatler*, 1709, № 100 и 102), которое наряду со многими произведениями писателя являет пример обращения к средневековому видению. Исследование «Видения справедливости» в соотношении с этой жанровой традицией определило цель работы. Историко-литературный обзор позволил представить подходы отечественных и англоязычных литературоведов к изучению «аллегорических» эссе Аддисона и обозначить круг нерешенных вопросов, связанных, во-первых, с художественным замыслом автора, побудившим его задействовать приметы видения, во-вторых, с функционированием визионерского канона в литературе Просвещения. Проанализирован заголовочный комплекс и выявлена причина интереса автора к теме справедливости и грядущего «золотого века», заданной эпиграфом – строками из IV эклоги Вергилия: в духе эпохи автор приобщается к высокой поэтической традиции и придает эссе злободневное звучание. Рассмотрен образ повествователя и ясновидца Исаака Бикерстафа, чьи раздумья, переживания, комментарии способствуют выражению авторской позиции. Изучено сюжетно-композиционное строение эссе и определены традиционные мотивы, характерные для средневековых видений, но оригинально использованные автором, чтобы смоделировать картину преображенного земного круга. В ходе анализа общественных типов и их нравов увидено совпадение нравственных оценок человечества в про-

светительских и средневековых «визионерских» сюжетах; аналогично представлен в сюжете Аддисона земной мир, вмещающий в себя судилище, которое вершит правосудие. Комментарий сцен восстановления справедливости в мире мужчин и женщин и финального обращения к строкам из VIII песни поэмы Милтона «Потерянный рай» позволил сформулировать представление об авторском идеале добродетельного и рассудительного человечества, которое будет вновь переживать «золотой век». Сделан вывод о том, что традиция жанра видения позволяет Аддисону иронично высветить недолжные стороны бытия и реализовать утопический подход к идее нравственного обновления человеческого рода. Авторский пафос и проблематика «Видения Справедливости» свидетельствуют о динамике в жанре видения, который в эпоху Просвещения становится полем решения морально-этических проблем.

Ключевые слова: английское Просвещение; жанр; видение; эссе; аллегория; утопия

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In the eighteenth-century English literature, an essay, emerging in the center of the historical and literary process, attracts various genre traditions with its experimental structure, among which medieval visions occupy a significant place. The genre memory and poetics of “one of the numerous forms of medieval didactic literature” [Yarkho 2024: 31] are found to be in demand within the works of the Enlightenment writers, who encourage readers to engage in reflection, open expression of opinions, and intellectual discourse. In the works of Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, Daniel Defoe, and Oliver Goldsmith, we observe examples of the modification of the visionary tradition in the spirit of the era.

One of the writers who turned to the genre of visions in the early eighteenth century was Joseph Addison, who published *Vision of Mirza* in 1712. The distinctive “primacy” of this early Enlightenment figure is also reflected in the ironic remark of Charles Lamb. He noted that after the publication of *Vision of Mirza*, no essayist could publish a book without including a “vision.”¹ In Addison’s personal essays, or in collaboration with Richard Steele, published in *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, he provides numerous examples of works that can be classified as “visions.” Subsequent issues of these journals explicitly referred to them as such in their titles, for example, *Vision of Table of Fame* (*The Tatler*, 1709, No. 81), *Vision of Maraton* (*The Spectator*, 1711, No. 56), and others. These “visions,” largely unknown to contemporary readers, are seldom studied. However, without examining them, any understanding of the role of the vision genre in the English Enlightenment literature would be incomplete.

This article focuses on Joseph Addison’s essay *The Vision of Justice*, published in *The Tatler* in 1709, in issues 100 and 102. The genre of vision is closely linked to the narrative, in which Isaac Bickerstaff, the well-known “mask” of Addison and Steele, recounts a vision of the goddess Justice, who heralds the return of the “golden age” on the Earth. Armed with the “mirror of truth,” the goddess restores to the wronged what was taken through fraud or theft, equalizes individuals in terms of property, finances, and rights. The first part of the vision is about the restoration of justice among the “male part of humanity.” The second part of the

vision shifts the “mirror of truth” to the “fairer half” of society. The narrative is accompanied by an epigraph from the fourth eclogue of Virgil’s *The Bucolics* and concludes with a quote from John Milton’s poem *Paradise Lost*. Of particular interest in this work is the development of the motif of divine justice, a recurring theme in visionary fiction, alongside the vivid depiction of the restoration of law and order on the Earth.

In addition to the numerous reprints of *The Tatler* throughout the eighteenth century, the essay was included into separate collections of Addison’s works in the nineteenth century, as well as in the multivolume edition *British Essayists*. It was published under the following titles such as *Goddess of Justice Distributing Rewards*, *Continuance of the Vision of the Goddess of Justice*² (1888), and *The Vision of Justice*³ (1906).

In English literary studies, research on Addison’s essays is closely linked to the examination of the essay as a genre. It was recognized as a “typically national form of English literature” [Upham 1908: 276]. However, its development in England was influenced by Montaigne’s French tradition. Scholars trace the history of the English essay from the works of Bacon, Cowley, and Dryden to its flourishing in the 19th century. They note its “extreme indefiniteness,” “incompleteness,” and “want of system” [Walker 1915: 2]. The scholars define the genre as “indeterminate” and “experimental” [Whitmore 1921: 551–552]. Despite its complexity, the essay is characterized by a “personal element” [Upham 1908; Walker 1915; Graham 1926]. David Russell writes that this feature contributed to the development of its “reflective” quality and “flexible” form. The essay maintains a direct connection to life. It provides an accurate representation of reality [Marr 1923; Humphreys 1959]. These qualities allow for various approaches to classifying essays. Such classifications are described in works like *Studies in the Early English Periodical* (1957). They also serve as a basis for analyzing the relationship between the essay and the novel. This relationship has been explored by Sutherland [2008] and Drury [1968]. The essay became an established genre in 18th-century English literature. Addison’s literary

¹ Lamb Ch. Review of the First Volume of Hazlitt’s Table Talk, 1821 (unpublished), in Lamb as Critic / ed. R. Park. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980. P. 300. Quoted by: Russel D. Tact: Aesthetic Liberalism and the Essay Form in Nineteenth-Century in Britain. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017. P. 21.

² Addison’s works. In Six Volumes. Vol. II: The Tatler and Spectator / with notes by Richard Hurd. London: Bell, 1860; The British essayists. Vol. II. Tatler // The British essayists. In 40 volumes / ed. J. Ferguson. London: J. Haddon for G. Offer, 1819. URL: <https://archive.org/details/vol2britishessayoounse/page/n3/mode/2up> (mode of access: 04.11.2024).

³ Essays of Joseph Addison / Chosen end edited by J. R. Green. London: Macmillan, 1880. 377 p.

essays played a significant role in this process. His work had many qualities that set him apart from his co-author Steele and later essayists. Marr describes Addison's essays as engaging narratives, "unity and completeness" of plots, "discussing sundry matters of passion and principle", and the decision "to attract the general reader to literary subjects, so often neglected" [Marr 1923: 34–37]. The study of Addison's short prose began in the last third of the 19th century. It continued in the 20th century in the works of Knight (1994), Elioseff (1963), Watson (1946), Lannering (1951, 1970), Mccrea (1990), Lillian D. Bloom, and Edward A. Bloom (1995). In their works, they addressed issues related to narrators, themes, and style. However, due to the evolving nature of the essay and its open structure, many aspects remain unexplored. Although a biography of the writer was published and monographs on his legacy were written, *The Tatler* was reissued in 1987¹, issues regarding the poetics of short prose remained unresolved. Despite Samuel Johnson's assertion that "Addison's works are imperishable" and the opinion of contemporary British literary scholar R. DeMaria that Addison's prose has become "part of British social discourse both linguistically and ethically," scholars generally agree that interest in Addison's legacy remains confined to a specialized academic audience. As Paul Davis observes, nowadays, *The Spectator* is more often referred to than read. This statement applies equally to the essays in *The Tatler*. The authors of the monograph *Joseph Addison: Tercentenary Essays*, [2021], published to mark the tercentenary of the writer's death, proposed a revision of the "prevailing contemporary outlook on the writer" as a moralist and defender of bourgeois civilization, advocating instead for a "in favour of a more literary and critical appreciation"². Of particular interest to scholars is *Vision of Mirza*, which has been studied from the perspective of musical reception³ and through the lens of Samuel Johnson's own "visionary" works⁴. In the essay *Vision of Table of Fame (The Tatler, No. 81, 1709)*, Addison's use of allegory is noted, a device he employed to address socio-philosophical issues and the "rational reformation of public culture"⁵. Nevertheless, the genre parameters and artistic features of Addison's "visions," particularly *The Vision of Justice*, remain largely overlooked in academic research.

The essay became known to Russian readers in the second half of the eighteenth century through translations from German and English⁶. Under the title *A Dream of Justice* («Сон о правосудии»), with reference to the issue of *The Tatler*, the essay was published, as

noted by Yu. D. Levin, "translated [from German] by V. I. Lebedev [...] in the journal *Works and Translations for the Benefit and Amusement of the Public* («Сочинения и переводы, к пользе и увеселению служащие», 1758–1762). In this version, which is close to the original, the epigraph from Virgil's *Eclogues* is omitted, and the final stanza from John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost* is rendered in prose. Under a title closer to the original, without the epigraph, and with modifications in the main body, the essay was translated anew from English by Luka Sichkaryov. He included *Vision of Justice* and *The Continuation of the Vision of Justice* into the collection *The Amusing Philosopher, or a Compilation of Various Witty and Ingeniously Constructed Tales, Surprising Dreams, and Complex Experiments for the Amusement and Instruction of the Public* («Забавный философ, или Собрание разных остроумновымышленных повестей, удивительных сновидений и замысловатых для увеселительного наставления опытов», 1766)⁷, and later in the collection *The Spectator of the World and Human Deeds* (1784)⁸. In the *Preface*, Sichkaryov explained the somewhat free nature of his translation of *The Vision* by his desire to adapt the material to "Russian customs and morals," so that the translation might serve the benefit of the people "for whose language it is presented"⁹.

Later, *The Vision of Justice* was not reissued in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nor were new translations of the essay produced. However, it was the publications in Russian periodicals and collections in the second half of the eighteenth century that stimulated literary interest of scholars such as Yu. D. Levin. Following the spirit of his era, Levin characterized *The Vision of Justice* as a work containing "social critique." According to the scholar, Addison "illustrated what a redistribution of material and moral goods would occur if 'all the wealth and estates of lawful owners were immediately returned upon the rightful demand of each,' and 'all ranks and dignities' were granted to 'individuals of great merit, extraordinary intelligence, and perfection'." [Levin 1967: 30]. Although Levin's interpretation of Addison's artistic intent as an Enlightenment writer somewhat limits the understanding of the author's concept, his observations are valuable. By using terms such as "dream" alongside with "visions"¹⁰ [Levin 1967: 30], Levin most often refers to a range of essays as "visions," based on the title of the original work. In doing so, we believe he

¹ Tatler / ed. Donald F. Bond. London: Oxford University Press, 1987.

² Davis P. Introduction // *Joseph Addison: Tercentenary Essays* / ed. Paul Davis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. P. 16.

³ Winn J. More Sensual Delights: Visual Pleasure and Musical Anxiety in Joseph Addison's Aesthetics. *Ibid.* P. 115–141.

⁴ DeMaria R. Jr. Addison, Samuel Johnson, and the Test of Time. *Ibid.* P. 251–271.

⁵ Markman E. Sociability and Polite Improvement in Addison's Periodicals. *Ibid.* P. 142–163.

⁶ Information on translations, publications, and the reception of English essays by Russian readers is thoroughly presented in the work of Yu. D. Levin: *The Reception of English Literature in Russia: Studies and Materials*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1967.

⁷ *The Amusing Philosopher, or a Compilation of Various Witty and Ingeniously Constructed Tales, Surprising Dreams, and Complex Experiments for the Amusement and Instruction of the Public* / Translated from English by L. Sichkaryov. St. Petersburg: Printing house of the Land Cadet Corps, 1766. 384 p.

⁸ The source for L. Sichkaryov was a collection of essays compiled by A. Fisher. In 1784, Sichkaryov supplemented the first edition and published a new version: *The Spectator of the World and Human Deeds*. Translated from English by L. Sichkaryov. St. Petersburg: Schnor's Printing House, 1784. 346 p.

⁹ *Ibid.* P. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* P. 30. It is worth noting that the researcher took into account the peculiarities of the "triple" translation and used the word "dream," employed in V. I. Lebedev's translation, as semantically linked to "vision."

underscores the genre tradition followed by Enlightenment writers and how they modified it in an original way. Moreover, Levin characterizes such essays as “allegories” or “allegorical ‘visions’” [Levin 1967: 9], noting not only the moral and educational significance of the work but also the peculiarities of the “allegorical language,” which, as A. Gurevich pointed out, is inherently linked to the genre of vision [Gurevich 1977: 5]. Importantly, Levin did not question the very fact that early Enlightenment writers turned to the medieval genre of vision; he highlighted the common tendency of essays to gravitate towards the vision genre, emphasizing the significance of the fact that it was precisely these allegorical essays that aligned with the “intentions and tastes” [Levin 1967: 29] of the editors and were popular with readers.

Yu. D. Levin’s commentary on *The Vision of Justice* stands as the only substantial analysis within a series of works on essays from *The Tatler* written by Russian scholars throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These studies examined the genre characteristics of English essays through the works of Steele and Addison, yet the question of the visionary tradition in relation to specific works of these authors was not considered¹.

The works of O. Yu. Polyakov, focused on the study of genre processes in the early eighteenth-century periodicals, are notable for their attention to allegorical essays. Among many genres discussed, the author examines the “essay-vision” as a object of research [Polyakov 2005]. According to Polyakov, the artistic purpose of using the allegorical technique “within the structure of literary-critical essays” lies in expressing Addison’s philosophical and aesthetic stance in the discourse on genius and imagination.

Nonetheless, several questions remain unanswered: What motivates the Enlightenment writer to incorporate features characteristic of the medieval vision genre in the essay? What kind of worldview and conception of humanity emerges through the “universal use of allegorical language” in visions, as well as through the traditional imagery and motifs of visions in the plots of “allegorical essays”? And, more broadly, what is the overall nature of the literary Enlightenment “vision”? How does the visionary canon evolve using specific literary techniques?

We believe that examining *The Vision of Justice* in the context of the visionary tradition will deepen our understanding of the genre specificity of Addison’s essays and lead to conclusions regarding the role of the vision in the genre system of English Enlightenment literature.

As has been already mentioned, a distinctive feature of *The Vision of Justice*² is its epigraph, which references

Virgil’s *The Bucolics*, specifically Eclogue IV. Recourse to Virgil was a common practice in the periodical publications of Steele and Addison, in keeping with the spirit of the time, when the Roman poet was regarded as an unquestionable classical authority. It is not uncommon to encounter epigraphs from Book VI of *The Aeneid* preceding “visions.” Addison’s originality in choosing the IV Eclogue for *The Vision of Justice* lies in its association with one of the most famous prophetic stories in *The Bucolics*, which has given rise to numerous interpretative studies [Gasparov 1997: 120–121].

The epigraph consists of just one line:

“Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna”³ / “Astraea returns, returns old Saturn’s reign”

The Virgin to whom Virgil calls upon is the daughter of Zeus and Themis, or according to Ovid, the daughter of the starry sky, Astraeus, and the goddess of dawn, Eos. She is known as the “goddess of justice, sister of Modesty, who dwelt among the happy people of the Golden Age” and who left the earth due to the “corruption of human morals.” Ascending to the heavens as “the last of the immortals,” “she became the constellation of Virgo,” writes A. Takhogodi, drawing on Juvenal (Satire VI, 14–20) and Ovid (Metamorphoses, 149–150) [Takhogodi 2003: 67]. Often, Astraea is equated with another daughter of Zeus and Themis, Dike, the “goddess of truth and righteous vengeance” in the cycle of souls [Takhogodi 2003: 67]. In the Roman pantheon, the deity associated with Astraea, or Dike, is Justitia, the goddess of justice and lawfulness, a name that appears in the narrative of J. Addison’s essay.

In the poetic narrative of the Eclogues, Virgil introduces the utopian theme of the return of the “golden age” through the figure of the Virgin. But why is it a “return” rather than a mere recollection, since the “golden age” lies in the past? By the time of writing *The Eclogue* (circa 40), the “iron age” was coming to its end, and the reign of Diana, the “virgin of Lucina,” was nearing its end. According to the poet, with the commencement of the reign of the god Apollo, the “golden age” will return: “Now is come the last age of the song of Cumae; the great line of the centuries begins anew”; “[...] under whom the iron brood shall first cease, and a golden race spring up throughout the world!”⁴ In the poetic narrative, the poet expresses a deep conviction in the establishment of a world filled with justice, which is manifested through a stark contrast between the present state of “fear” and the “calm” of the “glorious age,” the heroes of the past and those of the coming time, the uncultivated land and fertility, the “former vices” and the virtues of the “better ages.” The prophetic fervor is reinforced by the poet’s faith in his own gift, with his voice seemingly echoing that of the insightful Fates, “whose wills are forever aligned with the eternal decrees of destiny.” Amidst the catastrophes and storms, and the anticipation of the collapse of the empire, the poet’s optimism had a historical

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³ Virgil T. I. Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid I–VI: in two vols. Vol. I / trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938. P. 29.

⁴ Ibid. P. 29.

¹ This includes the monograph by V. F. Lazursky (1906–1916), works by A. G. Inger (1963, 1974), L. V. Sidorchenko (1981), I. O. Shaytanov (1987), M. Epstein, V. I. Berezkina (1989), A. V. Podgorsky (1983, 1999), V. V. Khorolsky (2001, 2019), O. A. Koroleva (2007), E. A. Tsurkanova (2008), A. V. Pustovalov and Zh. N. Khamrayeva (2011), A. O. Jerusalemkaya (2016), and A. G. Gotovtseva (2019).

² Addison J. Vision of Justice // The British essayists: in 40 vols. Vol. II. Tatler / ed. J. Ferguson. London: J. Haddon for G. Offer, 1819. URL: <https://archive.org/details/vol2britishessayoounse/page/>

foundation, grounded in a series of events that inspired faith in the return of the “Saturnian reign” for the entire world: the cessation of war in Italy, the alliance between Octavian and Antony, the marriage of Antony to Octavian’s sister Octavia, and the expectation of an heir. Expressing the premonition of a “blessed age” in the eclogue, the poet resonated with his time and the prevailing mood of Roman society. As historian Yu. Chernyshov noted, “It was precisely then, during the period from the mid-2nd century before our era to the 1st century of our era, that optimistic prophecies about the advent of better times could spread, finding a talented poetic expression in Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue” [Chernyshov 2013: 66]. Moreover, “the idea of the ‘golden age’ had ultimately become a universal symbol of a prosperous era” [Ibid.: 8].

The myth of Astraea, poetically reimagined by Virgil, became widely influential in subsequent literature, inspiring works by Ovid, Dante, Ariosto, Spenser, Philip Sidney, and John Dryden. It is no coincidence that the Enlightenment writer also recalls Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue: the parallel between Virgil’s era and Addison’s work may, to some extent, appear self-evident. Joseph Addison himself belonged to the illustrious circle of “Augustan” writers, spanning from John Dryden to Samuel Johnson¹. As L. E. Elioseff observes, they were the “the heirs of Augustan Rome,” carrying into the Age of Reason such virtues as “wisdom, discipline, and liberal arts” [Elioseff 1963: 67]. Moreover, for England, the early eighteenth century – particularly the reign of Queen Anne (1702–1714) – represented a distinctive period often referred to in English history as the “Golden Age.” This designation stemmed from the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, the spread of the spirit of new philosophy, and the vital role literature played in society as a medium that “instructed and edified.”²

Yet, no matter how significant achievements of this period were, ethical issues retained their urgency, and the artistic thought of English Enlightenment writers remained focused on understanding how far society stood from the moral ideal, questioning, “Is progress possible, and to what extent is it already underway?”³. The theme of justice and the anticipated “Golden Age,” introduced through the epigraph, resonated with debates of the 1710s, in which prominent figures such as Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, and Alexander Pope participated. In addressing this theme, Joseph Addison revived the memory of Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue, aligning himself with a lofty literary tradition rooted in the Roman poet. By doing so, Addison infused his essay with a prophetic yet timely tone, further developing its narrative within the framework of the visionary genre.

Attention should be drawn to the rather elaborate exposition of an event that took place on an unusually

“freezing night”. During a solitary walk in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, immersed in distressing thoughts about “the sudden rise of many persons” and “the unequal distribution of wealth, honour, and all other blessings of life,” Isaac Bickerstaff witnessed a remarkable celestial phenomenon. His gaze was struck by the “particular glowing to the stars,” which stood out distinctly in “a bright transparent æther”, allowing him to see “every constellation”. The contemplation of this “scene so wonderfully adorned and lighted up”, prompted the protagonist to reflect on “the Author of such illustrious and amazing objects”, and this philosophical and religious meditation restored the narrator to his “usual temper and serenity of soul”. Soon after, back at home, Isaac Bickerstaff experienced “a dream” or “vision” (he “knows not which to call it”), “that seemed to rise out of my evening meditation”. The content of this “vision” is revealed in the main part of the essay and its continuation.

It is important to note that the theme of social justice, introduced in the protagonist’s reflections, is established, first, by the setting, which is historically associated with law and jurisprudence: Lincoln’s Inn, a complex of buildings originally part of the former holdings of the Knights Templar, has, since the fourteenth century, served as the location of one of the four Inns of Court responsible for the education of barristers in England and Wales and for legal practice. Second, the narrator himself appears in Lincoln’s Inn Fields due to his long-standing friendships with judges, further linking the space to the theme of law. These details – concerning the depiction of the setting, the narrator’s private circumstances, and his relatable complaints about daily life – serve as a prelude to reflections of a broader and more universal scale.

Through the image of the clear starry sky, Addison immerses the reader in an atmosphere of celestial judgment and higher law. The celestial phenomenon is described in connection with the narrator’s personal experiences, as he turns his gaze from the “transparent ether” to himself, interpreting “the figures and signs of the heavens [...] as moral lessons and allegories,” as Marsilio Ficino once wrote [quoted in: Kudryavtsev 2008: 261], or contemplating the “author of such exalted and wondrous objects,” echoing contemporary philosophers’ ideas about God’s creation of “the best of all possible worlds.” [quoted in: Gottlieb 2020: 280].

Thus, the introductory section, which combines the “protagonist’s experiences” with the description of the “setting,” is rendered in a style that reflects the tradition of medieval visionary authors, achieving “an extraordinary vividness of portrayal” [Yarkho 2024: 56]. Like those earlier writers, Addison ascribes symbolic meaning to the circumstances described in the exposition, preparing his reader to perceive the subsequent events as exceptional and extraordinary.

The “vision” experienced by the protagonist is connected to the manifestation of the goddess of Justice, who intends to “restore and appropriate to every one living what was his due”. The uniqueness of the narrative situation lies in the fact that the events unfold not in a “distant realm,” but within the familiar world of the living, transformed by the return of the Virgin. The imagery of judgment and the judge, the

¹ See, for example: Johnson J.W. *Formation of English Neo-Classical Thought*. Princeton University Press, 1967.

² I. Shaytanov writes in detail about this in the book: *England in the Pamphlet: English Journalistic Prose of the Early 18th Century*. Translated from English; compiled, with introduction and commentary by I. O. Shaytanov. Moscow: Progress, 1987. P. 7.

³ Ibid. P. 33.

theme of divine justice, and the determination of sins and virtues are all traditional motifs in medieval visions. However, as A. Y. Gurevich notes, “interest in the Last Judgment is quite limited, clearly displaced by thoughts of the rewards and torments awaiting the soul immediately after its separation from the body” [Gurevich 1977: 18]. In contrast, Addison is more interested in portraying a transformed earthly realm. He describes a realization of one of the humanity’s ultimate goals in his “vision”, as defined by Dante in his treatise “Monarchia”: “the happiness of this life, which consists in the activity of [man’s] natural powers, and is prefigured by the terrestrial Paradise”¹. The world illuminated by the light of the goddess Justice is transported from the future into the present, and like a traditional vision, Isaac Bickerstaff’s “vision” offers a unique opportunity to experience this “imminent future” [Ibid.: 19].

The “vision” begins with a majestic spectacle of the goddess descending to the Earth in the rays of light from the “azure sky” and “glorious luminaries,” which, visible to the naked eye, resemble the constellation of Libra – a symbol of Justice. On the one hand, the narrator strives for astronomical precision, noting that the constellation of Virgo lies next to Libra, while on the other hand, he conveys the powerful impression made by the intense glow: “I was looking very attentively on that sign in the heavens which is called by the name of the Balance, when on a sudden there appeared in it an extraordinary light, as if the sun should rise at midnight”. The flow of light pouring onto the Earth, the hovering shadow, the angel taking on a bodily form, and the recognizable figure of the goddess Justice, as she “is usually described” – all these elements are observed by the narrator, capturing the liminality of the image of the Virgin, as she balances between the celestial and the earthly, returning to the people. Through the technique of contrast, the portrait of the Virgin is formed: in her form, the terrifying correlates with the “exquisitely beautiful,” and the wrathful with the merciful: “her smiles transported with rapture, her frowns terrified to despair”. Addison deliberately accentuates the opposing emotions embodied by the goddess, thereby exaggerating her goal – to restore equality on Earth and direct the corrupt human nature towards virtue.

An equally grandiose image unfolds on the Earth: the setting where the action takes place is “a spacious plain,” where all the inhabitants of the Earth are gathered. The narrator is astonished to witness “all the inhabitants” assembled before him, and “a voice was heard from the clouds”. Thus, reflecting on the inherent nature of humanity, the laws and order of the world, the author encourages his seer to become a witness of the changes occurring in society. The inhabitants of the plain, experiencing “the fear and hope, joy and sorrow,” await the revelation of “extortion, fraud, and robbery”. “Secular lucre” – this is what drives people to such actions, as the sinners themselves admit in the “hell of

the damned” in *The Vision of St. Baronh* [quoted in: Yarkho 2024: 80], and as the angels explain in *The Vision of Furseus* about the “fires of passions, which disturb and exhaust the world.”² These parallels are not coincidental: in both Enlightenment and medieval “visionary” narratives, not only the moral judgments of humanity coincide, but the spatial arrangement is similarly constructed. Just as in *The Vision of Furseus*, the earthly realm in Addison’s narrative contains a judgment, where justice is administered.

The author complicates the image of Justice by adding the detail of a “mirror of truth” – an attribute of the goddess of Truth. The mirrored light is likened to a lightning flash in daylight, and, as it approaches the Earth, “darkness and clouds” soften the brilliance and shine, blending it with “variety of milder glories.” In the hands of the goddess, the mirror is used to establish truth, revealing instances of deception, which aligns with the mythological foundation of the image. However, in the text of J. Addison, this detail seems to take on additional meanings, connected to ancient and medieval philosophy. For instance, Platon, who believes that a mirror only shows “appearance, not truly existent things” [Platon 2007], nevertheless interprets reflection as a force that prompts “contemplation of the world in the light of reason” [Melchior-Bonnet 2006: 166]. Furthermore, fire or light directed at objects helps “bring one closer to being and turn toward something more genuine,” [Platon 2007] facilitating the attainment of “a correct view.”

In the era of Augustine of Hippo, the mirror was considered in connection with the pursuit of moral perfection through knowledge: “the mirror of revelations and the mirror of self-observation and self-analysis unite to form a single whole, the mirror of wisdom” [Melchior-Bonnet 2006: 177]. Similarly, the mirror of Justice, whose rays possess the power to ignite documents that conceal deceit “buried by time, chance, or design,” brings about “a wonderful revolution among the people.” It uncovers numerous previously unknown forgeries and conspiracies, instilling in the souls of the wronged the hope for the possibility of establishing justice on Earth.

The motif of divine justice is literally realized through the image of “the Mount of Restitution.” The hyperbolic image of a mountain reaching the heavens, symbolizing the return of property and the restoration of rights, conveys the author’s irony regarding human greed. However, this mockery not only denies humanity’s propensity for “the fruits of bribery and corruption,” but also affirms the necessity of retribution and the “restoration of lost equality,” as Thomas Aquinas wrote in *The Summa Theologica*³. In the context of Addison’s essay, the Christian idea of restoring equality as

¹ Alighieri D. *The de Monarchia* / edited with translation and notes by A. Henry. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1904. P. 198. URL: http://files.libertyfund.org/files/2196/Dante_1477.pdf (mode of access: 22.12.2024).

² The Venerable Bede. *The ecclesiastical history of the Anglo peoples*. Book III, chapter XIX // *The Church History of the Anglo people* / translated from Latin, art., notes, bibliography and edict by V. V. Erlikhman; ed. by S. E. Fedorov. St. Petersburg: Aleteya Publ., 2001. P. 99–102.

³ Aquinas Th. *The sum of theology*. Part II–II. Questions 47–122 / trans., ed., note by S. I. Eremeev. Kiev: Nika-Center, 2013. Question 62. On retribution, *The Sum of Theology*. Volume VIII. Thomas Aquinas (azbyka.ru) (mode of access: 12.18.2024).

a condition for the salvation of the soul helps to express the Enlightenment belief in the inherent nobility and spiritual purity of human nature.

Addison develops the plot of the “vision” to encompass all spheres of public life – economic, familial, and others – within the framework of the “divine” establishment of equality. This analysis focuses on the edict aimed at regulating public service, where the actions of the goddess are directed primarily toward the male half of humanity. Contrasting images are arranged within the narrative of Isaac Bickerstaff. In the scene of divine testing by the mirror’s rays, the vanity of “the handsome, the strong, and the wealthy” figures is exposed. The visionary observes their frailty under the intense brilliance of the instrument of truth, metaphorically revealing the moral and civic inadequacy of these individuals, now made evident to the public.

In the next moment, the entire crowd is subjected to judgment, and in describing this process, Isaac Bickerstaff observes typical societal behavior: “it was remarkable, that every one turned away his face from it who had not distinguished himself either by virtue, knowledge, or capacity in business, either military or civil”. However, even in the case of the best representatives of society, those endowed with a sense of moral duty and grouped into the first column, the narrator refrains from idealization. On the contrary, he exaggerates such positive qualities as “humanity”, “contemplation”, and “emboldened with resolution”, referring to them as “secret habits of virtue”.

Through the technique of comic exaggeration, Isaac Bickerstaff equates the “the greatest merit, abilities, and perfection” of the worthy with the idleness of those who failed the trial and blended into the crowd. Attention should also be drawn to the paradoxical conclusion of the passage, where it is noted that the faces of the chosen were unknown not only to the crowd “but even to several of their own body”. In this passage, using gradation, Addison emphasizes the rarity of truly virtuous public figures who could serve as role models for society. Conversely, in the author’s view, a more common type is that of individuals marked by imaginary virtue, hiding spiritual emptiness beneath a mask of hypocrisy.

In the second column are grouped the “the men of knowledge” – a term Addison uses in the essay to describe those who not only seek knowledge but are also endowed with common sense, a concept that became foundational in English Enlightenment philosophy. For example, A. Shaftesbury interpreted common sense as a virtue with a moral foundation, tied to humanity and an understanding of the common good¹. Similarly, J. Swift regarded common sense alongside virtue, self-respect, and the pursuit of justice [see: Swift 1999]. A more radical perspective is offered by J. Locke. In his work called *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which by the time of Addison’s essay had become “widely known through journal and encyclopedic articles” [Gottlieb 2020: 207], Locke argued

that the progression of the mind must be guided by reason: “Reason should be our last judge and guide in everything” [Locke 1985: 184–185]. Perhaps with a touch of irony toward the rationalist approach to thinking, yet aligning with Locke’s views, Addison incorporates the idea of balance between intellect and common sense into the imagery of his “vision”. In portraying “the men of knowledge”, he distinguishes between different types: geniuses who possess both intellect and common sense; a group dependent on the “the thoughts and writings of others”; “in the rear of the column were men who had more wit than sense, or more learning than understanding.” Through this nuanced classification of “the men of knowledge”, Addison expressed criticism of those lacking one of the essential qualities of thought, emphasizing the need to strive for a harmonious union of “reasoning and argumentation and some mental work” [Gottlieb 2020: 180], particularly in justifying the validity of moral principles. However, the author, through the persona of Isaac Bickerstaff, avoids idealizing geniuses, noting the stubbornness of their dispositions and the discord within their ranks. Gentle irony is also directed toward the literary community: all prominent authors of the era are assigned to one of the described groups, alongside those unrelated to creative pursuits. In this way, writers are deprived of any special status as “the teachers of life”². Isaac Bickerstaff expresses even greater astonishment at the status of “a great body of editors, critics, commentators, and grammarians”. On the one hand, the visionary observes the disdain that “the men of knowledge” feel toward those involved in literary and journalistic pursuits. On the other hand, he notes the arrogance that characterizes this group as well – a crowd reminiscent of the “hired scribblers from Grub-Street”³, whom Swift mocked during the same period, now disguised by the goddess’s decree as “lackeys of the learned”.

By depicting the comical metamorphosis in the “social” status and deliberately diminishing the role of those who professionally wield words and are capable of “spread reasonable ideas and correct morals”⁴, Addison appears to suggest that society is still far from the “civilized and reasonable” state described by J. Locke in his *Two Treatises of Government*. All the changes that have occurred, Addison implies, must be viewed as lessons, particularly by those in “cities and palaces” [Locke 1985: 181], who claim to embody examples of worthy and noble deeds that should have become a reference point for imitation⁵.

Isaac Bickerstaff refrains from detailing the character of the third column, which unites the “men of business” engaged in military and civil service, alt-

¹ Shaftesbury E. Aesthetic experiments. The history of aesthetics in monuments and documents. Shaftesbury / editorial Board: M. F. Ovsyannikov (prel.) and others. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1975. P. 297.

² Zykova E. P. Literary life and literary mores in England in the XVIII century: the art of life in the mirror of letters, diaries, memoirs. M.: IMLI RAS, 2013. P. 6.

³ Rak V. A. Preface // Swift D. *Izbrannoe*. L.: Fiction, 1987. P. 6.

⁴ Trykov V. P. Introduction to world journalism. M.: IMPE named after A. S. Griboyedov, 2007. P. 34.

⁵ Simkina O. M., Merkulova M. G. The Educational Function of Art in English Journalism and Literature of the First Half of the 18th Century // *Philological Sciences: Questions of Theory and Practice*. 2023. No. 9. P. 2685. <https://doi.org/10.30853/phil20230423>.

though he does note the rivalry among them. Greater attention is given to describing the process by which citizens are assigned roles in public service based on their adherence to morality, pursuit of knowledge, and entrepreneurial spirit. The narrator observes a dynamic scene in which “honour, dignity, and profit” positions are filled by individuals of varying ranks who possess all three qualities, two, or just one. This process is described with rational precision, resembling the operation of a mechanism that brings society into harmony and establishes truth.

Nevertheless, Addison does not forget irony, noting at the end of the passage a discrepancy between appearance and reality: not all members of the male populace were genuinely worthy. Instead, “multitude [...] had any appearance of these excellences, or were recommended by those who possessed them in reality”.

At the conclusion of the first part of the “vision”, the narrator, reflecting on his impressions, experiences a mix of emotions: he marvels at previously unknown individuals unexpectedly elevated to prominent positions and genuinely rejoices in meeting friends who, as in a medieval vision, serve as living examples of restored justice and enduring virtue. These friends have either retained their posts or been appointed to higher ones.

On the one hand, following the visionary, we observe the strictness of the goddess, whose edicts firmly establish reason and moral integrity as the principal virtues that determine one’s role in public service. On the other hand, Isaac Bickerstaff himself is distinguished by a tone of irony and “earthly tolerance.”¹ He is not solely marked by moral rigor, as he acknowledges the imperfections of human nature. As a man of the world, he demonstrates leniency and kindness, particularly when assured of the favorable outcomes in the careers of his gentlemanly acquaintances.

In the continuation of *The Vision of Justice*, Isaac Bickerstaff narrates the changes taking place among the female portion of society. Just as the “the male part of mankind” was ordered through “the mirror of truth” and the goddess’s edicts, the goddess Justice now turns her gaze to the “the fair sex”, which, according to the visionary, only appears to be her heavenly entourage descended to earth. “Innumerable disputes”, “tumult”, and “claims” characterize the behavior of women who regard “birth, beauty, wit, or wealth” as their primary values. “Were words that rung in my ears from all parts of the plain,” the narrator observes with irony.

Isaac Bickerstaff provides a detailed account of the competitive dynamics among women regarding virtues tied to their family position, wealth, and the achievements of their husbands or parents. He particularly focuses on the prideful rivalry in the “the art of irresistibility”, which, in his view, creates an impression of artificial and illusory grandeur but often has a profound effect on “the hearts of reasonable creatures”. This introduces an antithesis in the vision’s narrative between the worlds of women and men.

¹ This quality is identified by Hugo Friedrich in his essay on Dante’s “*Divine Comedy*”: Friedrich, Hugo. *Dante: Essay / H. Friedrich*. M.: Des Esseintes press, 2024. P. 45.

Addison frequently commented on the virtues and shortcomings of women, their education, and their societal roles in his essays for *The Spectator*². Although his reflections on female conduct did not form a systematic theory, the author’s idea is clear: natural beauty, inseparable from moral virtues, defines the ideal image of a woman. Such a woman, while not equal to a man in rights or reason, has the capacity to make him happy. In the narrative of the vision, Addison approaches this idea through a contrast between false, external beauty and true, internal beauty. Just as with the men, it was important for the author that all women undergo a moment of “epiphany”. According to the command of the goddess, who declared that beauty determines a woman’s place among others, “every one should take place according as she was more or less beautiful”. However, the author warns against the subjectivity that distorts self-perception and breeds vanity: “the mirror of the truth” possessed a unique property to banish all false appearances, and show people what they are. Those who mistook their manners and grace for true beauty saw themselves in “the mirror of truth” in an entirely different light, revealing features of withering, aging and ugliness. This unmasking provoked corresponding emotions in the vain heroines, who beheld their reflections in the forms of “a harpy” or “a sphinx”: fear, anger, and fury overtook the women who had forgotten taste, tact, and virtue. Observing this transformation, the visionary himself experiences not only dismay and disappointment but also a sense of joy for those heroines who, by contrast, were modest and discovered their charm. These women, “who had lived in the retirement and severity of a vestal, shone forth in all the graces and attractions of a siren”. The narrator’s irony is unmistakable, directed both at “a vestal” with the soul of “a siren” and at himself, enchanted by “the sight of a particular image in the mirror”. The image of a remarkable beauty, surpassing those around her in her qualities, captivates the visionary. Her grotesquely exaggerated blush (described as “the mark of health as of immortality”), the light emanating from her eyes, and her “her stature, and her mien”, which distinguish her from other women – all these details draw Isaac Bickerstaff’s attention. However, the comedic paradox lies in the fact that the object of his admiration is the reflection of an elderly woman, as enchanting in the mirror as she is wholly unaligned with this image. Nonetheless, the narrator is charmed by her and cannot help but express his admiration and desire to discuss marriage. This detail in the character of the visionary again highlights him as a profoundly human figure, one possessing not only strengths of spirit but also weaknesses. He can demonstrate nobility, acknowledging his error in a rash passionate attraction, and embracing the possibility of appearing ridiculous in typical – and not always virtuous – situations.

In the final part, Isaac Bickerstaff, like many visionaries, derives a lesson from his journey through the earthly world transformed by the will of the descended Justice. Reflecting on “the partiality and ex-

² For example, in No. 15.45, 261 in 1711.

travagance of [...] vision”, which “not done justice to the sex”, the visionary formulates his understanding of virtue as inherent to both men and women: “If virtue in men is more venerable, it is in women more lovely”. To support this assertion, the narrator references lines from Book VIII of John Milton’s poem *Paradise Lost* [Milton 2005: 192–195, lin. 546–559]¹. This excerpt is part of Adam’s monologue during his conversation with the archangel Raphael, where Adam, fully aware of his own significance as God’s first creation, extols the virtues and beauty of Eve, “As one intended first, not after made / Occasionally” (555–556).

Adam’s reflection initially aligns with biblical notions of the creation of the first humans, asserting that “Of nature her th’ inferior in the mind / And inward faculties which most excel, / in outward also her resembling less / His image who made both and less expressing / The character of that dominion given / O’er other creatures.” (541–545) However, Milton’s protagonist proceeds to portray Eve in a radiant aura of epithets: “Her loveliness so absolute she seems / And in herself complete” (547–548). Adam admires not only her “the charm of beauty’s powerful glance.” (533), but also her moral perfection, as well as her actions and words, which he describes as “wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.” (550)

Adam’s enchantment with the essence of Eve, according to A. N. Gorbunov, may foreshadow the impending tragedy of “committing sin and [...] knowing Good and Evil” [Gorbunov 2006: 619]. It is no coincidence that at the conclusion of Book VIII, the archangel Raphael seeks to shield Adam from the lapse of reason and warns him of the necessity to resist passion, which does not constitute true love in the Christian understanding: “Stand fast! To stand or fall / Free in thine own arbitrement it lies.” (640–641)

However, in this localized passage, the visionary’s admiration for the “Greatness of mind and nobleness” of Eve becomes essential to understanding his

thought. This greatness is expressed through her wisdom, reason, and “higher knowledge” (551). Praising the harmony between Eve’s inner nobility and her “graceful acts” (600), Adam continues his monologue by celebrating their union as an “Harmony”, characterized by “unfeigned / Union of mind or in us both one soul” (603–604).

Thus, by referring to lines from Milton’s poem, Isaac Bickerstaff summarizes the vision of how the world of men and women should be on the Earth to which he belongs. This is why the narrative of the “vision” includes references to London streets, creating an illusion of realism and plausibility, as well as to the time in which he and those close to him live, who also appear in episodes of the “vision.” The narrator’s optimism reflects Addison’s own confidence in the possibility of realizing the Enlightenment ideal: humanity will once again experience a “Golden Age” by recognizing the destructiveness of false values and the necessity of transforming the world based on justice, equality, virtue, and harmony. In addressing the issue of humanity’s moral renewal through his utopian approach, Addison draws upon the visionary tradition, whose genre memory “guides the writer’s creative thought” [Leyderman 2010: 85]. This tradition enables him to highlight the flaws of existence with irony while simultaneously presenting the possibility of a harmoniously organized society on Earth. The depiction of an ostensibly realized future – a “Golden Age” that has arrived – contains elements of utopia, which, in allegorical form, reveals the author’s ideal. Analyzing the title, epigraph, the figure of the visionary, the spatial-temporal structure, and the associative background reveals how the utopian contours of a rationally organized society “take root” within the genre structure of the vision.

Addison’s pathos and the themes of *The Vision of Justice* lead to conclusions about the evolution of the visionary genre itself. In the Middle Ages, as B. I. Yarkho noted, “visions developed in an artistic rather than a philosophical direction” [Yarkho 2024: 62]. However, during the Enlightenment, the visionary genre became a framework for addressing moral and ethical issues.

¹ Quote from this edition with the indication of lines: Milton J. *Paradise Lost*. Book VIII // Milton J. *Paradise Lost: an authoritative text, sources and backgrounds, criticism* / ed. by G. Teskey. New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005. P. 192–195.

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Данные об авторе

Макарова Людмила Юрьевна – кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры литературы и методики ее преподавания, Уральский государственный педагогический университет (Екатеринбург, Россия).

Адрес: 620091, Россия, г. Екатеринбург, пр-т Космонавтов, 26.

E-mail: zeppelin2302@yandex.ru.

Author's information

Makarova Lyudmila Yurievna – Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of Department of Literature and Methods of Its Teaching, Ural State Pedagogical University (Ekaterinburg, Russia).