As we did in the case of both Dryden and Rowe, we begin our discussion of Addison by calling attention to his attitude to Shakespeare's age and language. In doing so we find that Addison substantially shares their views in both respects; in other words, he shows the characteristic preoccupations of his age in dealing with Shakespeare's language. To quote Addison:

"The age in which the pun flourished was the reign of King James the First....... the greatest authors in their most serious works, made frequent use of puns. The Sermons of Bishop Andrews, and the Tragedies of Shakespeare are full of them. The sinner was pummed into repentance by the former, as in the latter nothing is more usual than to see a hero weeping and quibbling for a dozen lines together."

And:

"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, were guilty of this fault; among the Latins, Claudian and Statius; and among our own countrymen, Shakespeare and Lee. 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."

1. The Spectator 61, May 10, 1711,
2. The Spectator 285, 1712.
No doubt pun flourished in Shakespeare's age, but the way in which Addison refers to it and the spirit of his comment ("...... nothing is more usual than to see a hero weeping and quibbling......) hardly suggests any serious approach, far less appreciation. Our minds naturally travel back to the disapproving remarks of Rowe who said that "as for his jingling sometimes, and playing upon words, it was the common vice of the age he lived in." The words "stiff and unnatural" and "the affectation of greatness" of the second quotation from Addison are apt to remind one of Dryden's charge of Shakespeare's "serious swelling into bombast" and similar other charges.

Addison, like other Augustans and for the same reasons, laboured under a handicap in making a correct assessment of Shakespeare's age and language.

"The break in tradition" we have hitherto spoken of nearly debarred the Augustans from seeing why "no subtlety, no grandeur was beyond them (the Elizabethan authors)", why "no nicety, no vigour of language could stop them." "Their range was boundless, their idiom ready for any purpose. They did not trouble to digest the matter they offered, and often the nut was hard to crack. But the public
had good teeth, and it had a joyous appetite for everything. Hence the rich content of Elizabethan literature, its epic or its suave tone, conquering, arrogant — anything could be essayed from virtuosity to rhetoric, from eloquence to farce.

The temper had changed, and understanding, too, unfortunately ceased.

To come to another important point where, too, Addison is at one with his predecessors. Addison echoes Ben Jonson, Dryden and Rowe, among others, who went before him, in regarding Shakespeare as having sprung direct from nature and without receiving at any stage the benefits of education. He was naturally learned.

"Among great Genius's, those few draw the admiration of the world upon them, and stand up as the prodigies of mankind, who by the mere strength of natural parts, and without any assistance of art or learning, have produced works that were the delight of their own times and the wonder of posterity."

Thus Addison looks upon Shakespeare as an untutored genius who worked miracles, who achieved infinitely more than any person with the benefit of education could ever hope to do. In fact, the very fact that he had no opportunity of going through the arts and sciences stood him in excellent stead by saving him from the otherwise inevitable temptation of imitating. As Addison makes his point:

3. Modern researches have shown that Shakespeare was not as unlearned or ignorant as the Augustans thought he was. This point will be dealt with later in the chapter on Pope.
"There appears something nobly wild and extravagant in these great natural geniuses, that is infinitely more beautiful than all the turn and polishing of what the French call a Bel Espirit by which they would express a genius refined by conversation, reflection, and the reading of the most polite authors. The greatest who runs through the Arts and Sciences, takes a kind of tincture from them, and falls unavoidably into imitation."

All this reminds one especially of what Ben Jonson spoke of Shakespeare. Jonson too had saluted Shakespeare as a miraculous natural phenomenon that put into the shade "the merry Greeke, tart Aristophanes, neat Terrence, and witty Plautus." We are fortunate, says Addison, that he was "never disciplined and broken by Rules of Art," so that he could be "very much above the nicety and correctness of the moderns." Perhaps, it can be pointed out here that the Augustans' ready admission of Shakespeare's superior genius (marked, according to them, by 'wildness' and 'extravagance') went hand in hand with their constant and sharp awareness of a better civilisation that had bred them — a civilisation that had none of the wildness and extravagance of the Elizabethan and Jacobean times. Perhaps it would be pertinent at this stage to pose a question for a possible answer. How is it that there are such numerous references to Shakespeare as

1. The Spectator 160, 1711.
a product of nature? Why are these persistent attempts to explain Shakespeare's greatness in terms of nature? Perhaps the reason is that when playwrights fully conversant with the classical rules and possessing the benefits of formal education, could not produce anything of nearly as much beauty and profundity as the plays of Shakespeare which honoured the rules more by breach than observance, it was only natural to reach the conclusion that it was protean Nature that had worked through Shakespeare more than anything else; nature is prolific, various, kaleidoscopic, spontaneous, full-blooded and awe-inspiring, and Shakespeare's works are eminently so.

In one of his papers (the Spectator 592, Sept. 10, 1714) Addison even speaks with unconcealed contempt for those who would condemn Shakespeare for violating the rules prescribed by the ancients. His contention is that if Shakespeare could produce transcendent beauties without caring to conform to the rules, what was the use for a writer who would abide by all the dicta and yet could not turn out a single beauty? The same thought had been expressed by Dryden when he said, "better a mechanic rule were stretch'd or brok'n than a great beauty were omitted." And this is what Addison observes:

"Our inimitable Shakespeare is a stumbling block to the whole tribe of these rigid critics. Who would not rather read one of his plays, where there is not a single rule of the stage observed, than any production of a modern critic, where there is not one of them violated? Shakespeare was indeed born with all the seeds of poetry..."1

1. The Spectator 592, 1714.
We shall here seek to understand the psychology and motivation of such remarks. The Augustans had a touch of the superior "ego about them. The Elizabethans, they liked to imagine, were a benighted people. Nevertheless, the praise they showered on Shakespeare was entirely genuine, even when it was accompanied by reservations. Confronted by Shakespeare they became rather overawed; they just could not turn a blind eye to the titanic potency and astonishing lifelikeness of his creations. When they withdrew their gaze from Shakespeare and fixed it on themselves, they just could not escape standing face to face with the relative poverty of their own literature — however refined it might be, a literature that had neither the power nor the naturalness of the works of Shakespeare. In this connection, attention may be drawn to Joseph Warton's frank admission of the inferiority of Augustan drama in his references to "the unnatural eloquence and witticism of Dryden" and the "long and laboured speech" of Rowe.\(^1\) It is therefore clear that the major Augustan critics realised that external rules, in the case of the highest order of genius, are entirely meaningless.

\(^1\) Vide the chapter on Joseph Warton.
And they paid glowing tributes to a man who had not cared a lot for the things they were taught to hold precious. It is true that their appreciation did not go all the way. But for all its limitations, it is manly and intelligent, being capable of looking facts in the face objectively.

Addison's liberal tributes to Shakespeare are convincing proof of the relatively free and uninhibited outlook the age maintained notwithstanding the restrictive sway of the rules and dicta. To repeat what we have frequently pointed out: this uninhibited outlook was both peculiarly English and the direct result of the influence of Longinus with his emphasis on the intuitive and imaginative aspect of great literature.

And now this leads us to what may well be considered a further extension of Addison's advocacy for the freedom of genius. A genius in art, according to Addison, not only imitates nature but even paints supernatural beings. What is even more important, he must be allowed the right or freedom to do so. (It would be well to probe this claim and see whether or not Addison is supported by classical authority in the matter.) In fact, Shakespeare's greater genius, according to him, is established rather by the supernatural characters than by the ones he imitated from nature.
"It shows a greater genius in Shakespeare to have drawn his Caliban, than his Hotspur or Julius Caesar. The one was to be supplied out of his own imagination, whereas the other might have been formed upon history and tradition."\(^1\)

Again: "There is a kind of writing wherein the poet quite loses sight of nature, and entertains his reader's imagination with the characters and actions of such persons as have many of them no existence, but what he bestows on them. Such are fairies, witches, magicians, demons, and departed spirits. This Mr. Dryden calls the Fairy Way of Writing, which is indeed more difficult than any other that depends on the poet's fancy, because he has no pattern to follow in it, and must work altogether out of his invention.

"There is a very odd turn of thought required for this sort of writing, and it is impossible for a poet to succeed in it, who has not a particular cast of fancy and an imagination naturally fruitful and superstitious.

"Among the English, Shakespeare has incomparably excelled all others. That notable noble extravagance of fancy which he had in so great perfection, thoroughly qualified him...... and made him capable of succeeding, where he had nothing to support him besides the strength of his own genius. There is something so wild and yet so solemn in the speeches of his ghosts, fairies, witches and the like imaginary persons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge them, and must confess, if there are such beings in the world, it looks highly probable they should talk and act as he has represented them."\(^2\)

Indeed, if we recall the previous discussions on this point, Addison's way of thinking will not appear altogether new. Dryden and Rowe, had shown the way. Dryden justified the use of magic or the

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1. The Spectator 279, Jan. 19, 1712.
2. The Spectator 419, 1712.
marvellous on the strength of the universality and permanence of opinion. And we find Aristotelian sanction behind him. Aristotle says: "..... One has to justify the improbable by showing either (a) that the statement criticised has the sanction of opinion, or (b) that the incident which it describes was not so improbable, bearing in mind the time when it is said to have occurred; for there is a probability of things happening also against probability."²

Incidentally, Rowe seems to have anticipated Addison more precisely when he observed: "But certainly the greatness of this author's (Shakespeare's) genius does nowhere so much appear, as where he gives his imagination an entire loose, and raises his fancy to a flight above mankind and the limits of the visible world. Such are his attempts in The Tempest, Midsummer Night's Dream, Macbeth and Hamlet." Further, Rowe's appreciative comments on the astonishing naturalness of the creatures of magic ("that extravagant character of Caliban is mighty well sustained") and "Shakespeare had not only found a new character in Caliban, but had also devised and adapted a new manner of language for that character") are echoed and elaborated by Addison ("if there are such beings in the world, it looks highly probable they should talk and act as he has represented them.")

1. Vide P. 133 (The chapter on Nicholas Rowe).
As we have just seen, in his advocacy for the incorporation of the magical within the ambit of poetry, Addison is certainly not saying something novel. The thought and sanction are both already there in Aristotle's Poetics. In fact, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, Aristotle makes a rather liberal provision for the magical or marvellous in poetry, his only stipulation being that adequate care should be taken to guard against inconsistency.

It will have been seen that the accent throughout is on the legitimacy of the marvellous and, then, on the inescapable necessity of treating it in such a manner as to make it appear likely and hence acceptable. Addison, following Rowe, lauds the magical creatures in Shakespeare because Shakespeare's art has rendered them highly probable and likely and hence eminently acceptable.

During the Renaissance Sir Philip Sidney, presumably seizing upon and stretching Aristotle's statement that "the poet's function is to describe not what has happened but the kind of thing that might happen" and the other allied propositions, went so far as to turn poetic imitation into full-scale creation and thus saw the poet in the role of a

creator, a second God, the instrument of creation
in this case being the imagination.

"Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to
any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of
his own invention, doth grow in effect another
nature, in making things either better than Nature
bringeth forth, or, quite a-new, forms such as never
were in Nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops,
Chimeras, Furies, and such like; so as he goeth
hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the
narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only
within the zodiac of his own wit."1

Sidney continues:

"Nature never set forth the earth in so
rich tapestry as diverse poets have done — neither
with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling
flowers, nor whatever else may make the too much
loved earth more lovely."2

And it appears that in spite of such
arbiters of Augustan thought as Bacon, Newton,
Descartes, and Bishop Sprat and their staunch
followers with their insistence on the empirical
truth, the superiority of poetic truth and poetry's
claims on the miraculous were widely and passionately
advocated. Thus Edward Young in his 'Conjectures
on Original Composition' remarks:

"In the fairyland of fancy, genius may
wander wild; there it has a creative power, and may
reign arbitrarily over its own empire of chimeras."3

And Richard Hurd after quoting a passage from
Virgil to show how "the admirable poet has given an

1. An Apology for Poetry, in English Critical Essays
2. Ibid, P. 7.
 E.D. Jones, 1956, P. 283.
air of the marvellous to his subject, by the
magic of his expression" goes on to quote a passage
from The Tempest (Act V - Prospero's speech.....
I have bedimmed the noon-tide sun.....") to show
how "Shakespeare, on the other hand, with a terrible
sublime (which not so much the energy of his genius
as the nature of the subject drew from him) gives
us another idea of the rough magic, as he calls it,
of fairy enchantment."¹ Hurd gives more praise
to "Shakespeare's magic" than to virgil's.

The point that emerges from the foregoing
discussion is that the classical theory of imitation
of nature (Aristotle's accommodation of the marvellous
is not to be forgotten of course) had since the
Renaissance been fast on its way to being turned into
the 19th century theory of poetic creation with its
accent on the unfettered freedom, and the sovereignty
of the imagination. And Addison contributed to this
process of development perhaps more than any one else
of Shakespeare's 18th century critics. This is a
significant instance of the gradual loosening of the
hold of mere reason and of the coming into play of
imagination with its breath of emancipation.² In this

¹. *Heroic and Gothic Manners*, English Critical
Essays XVI-XVIII Centuries, W.C. ed. E.D. Jones,
1956, PP 314-315.
connection we quote below an illuminating passage
from M.H. Abram's book "The Mirror and the Lamp":

"We also find in eighteenth century
criticism the beginnings of a more radical solution
to the problem of poetic fictions, one which would
sever supernatural poetry entirely from the
principle of imitation, and from any responsibility
to the empirical world. The key event in this
development was the replacement of the metaphor
of the poem as imitation, a 'mirror of nature', by
that of the poem as heterocosm, 'a second nature',
created by the poet in an act analogous to God's
creation of the world....... This is the concept,
at the heart of much of the 'new criticism' that
poetic statement and poetic truth are utterly diverse
from scientific statement and scientific truth, in
that a poem is an object-in-itself, a self-contained
universe of discourse, of which we cannot demand
that it be true to nature, but only, that it be true
to itself.

"............ That there is some connection
between artist and divinity is, of course, as old
as the belief that poetry is sponsored and inspired
by the gods: and in classic times, the divine origin
of the world was sometimes illustrated by reference
to the activity of a sculptor or other human artisan.
But the explicit reference of the poet's invention to
God's activity in creating the universe appears to
have been a product of Florentine writers in the
later fifteenth century ...... the concept was
introduced into English criticism by Sir Philip Sidney......
Later on, the rudimentary concept that the artist is
a God-like creator of a second nature was kept alive
by Neoplatonists, Italian and English, and the term
'creation' was more or less casually applied to poetry
by writers like Donne, Dennis, and Pope. The
potentialities of this comparison, however, were
developed chiefly by those critics who were intent
on explaining and justifying the supernatural elements
in a poem which could not have been copied from life.
Gradually it became evident that it was possible to
rescue these beings from Limbo by contending that the
poetic supernatural does not imitate God's created
nature, but constitutes a second, supernature created
by the poet himself........ To Addison must go the
credit for compounding these suggestions and making
them strongly effective in the critical tradition,
in his eclectic, but endlessly suggestive, papers on 'The Pleasures of Imagination! In 'the fairy way of writing,' Addison says in the Spectator 419, 'the poet quite loses sight of nature and presents persons...... which have 'no existence, but what he bestows on them.' Far from being contemptible, such writing is more difficult than any other .......... Following the suggestion in Addison, succeeding commentators..... specifically took the creative act indoors and delegated it to the faculty of imagination.*

The foregoing discussion shows how heavily indebted Addison was to the previous criticism with both its merits and faults and yet how his distinctively individual criticism developed — a criticism which eloquently championed the cause of the freedom of the Genius of a Shakespeare from rules and which by its emphasis on the creative power of imagination as found in Shakespeare, can be said to have heralded much of the Romantic Criticism of the 19th century. It may be noted here that some of his imaginative approach is to be found in Pope, Warton and Morgan.