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The scholarship of the poet Gray as culminating in an enthusiasm for Gothicism

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GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF THE POET GRAY AS CULMINATING IN AN ENTHUSIASM FOR GOTHICISM

by

Olive Hildreth Mayer

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Introduction

Of Thomas Gray it has been said: "His life was his learning. The man was a poetical scholar, and a scholarly poet. His poetry twined itself around his learning, and was saturated by it. He planted himself in a bookish soil, and flowered at last into verse ... We may well suppose him, even in boyhood, to have been uniformly quiet and studious."[1] When this lifelong and habitual scholarship turned toward a development of his romantic tendencies, which few will deny had long lain dormant in his nature, is it not quite natural that he is discovered as no longer merely a profound student of ancient history and antiquities, but as what we may term a confirmed enthusiast for Gothicism, and a main propelling agent in the movement?

During the early years of his schooling, in that convention-bound Augustan era of literary wit and reason, his strong and natural love for the classics was expressed through his translations of the Latin authors, through his own Latin verses, and later through his Pindaric odes. In spite of the stiff and stilted form in much of his classical verse study, the fact remains that the subjects with which it dealt were certainly alluring to the imagination. Greek and Roman myths and legends all contain the germ of fancy, for the supernatural is constantly present, and, falling into the soil of a naturally active and creative mind, a condition approaching that of unrestrained im-

1. North American Review, April 1863, vol. XCVI, no. 199. (Article on Gray)

agination might be produced in spite of the Neo-Classical disinclination toward such a sentiment. This I believe to have been the case with Thomas Gray: he attained and retained the true spirit of those ancient writers where it had been largely missed or ignored by many of those who had sought to be more classic than the Greeks themselves.

During his after-college travels with Horace Walpole, his search for wild, mountainous districts with Mediaeval monasteries, as contrasted with Walpole's social leanings, is held by many to have been a contributing cause of the disagreement between the two friends during their Italian tour.[2]

That this taste for nature in the wild, and for its treatment in a new and unexplored type of poetry was not a taste acquired entirely in later life we shall attempt to show, together with the fact that it was not a taste encouraged or even suggested by other poets whom we class as contemporary pre-Romantics. Gray was preeminently original in his approach to and his development of his Gothic style. His intense interest in Macpherson's verses indicates the possession of a smouldering hunger for this particular kind of poetic content, a hunger which had indubitably smouldered since boyhood, and had until this period lacked sufficient food to nourish it into a Descent of Odin, or The Fatal Sisters.

It was surely no striving for popularity as a poet which led this recluse to turn whole heartedly to the romantic vein. Of this we are morally certain, for from Gray's own correspondence with Walpole we learn of the extreme reluctance with which

2. Gray and His Friends, Duncan C. Tovey, 1890 - pp. 11,12 (University Press, Cambridge)

he permitted the publication and circulation of even his immortal Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.[3] His retiring and publicity-loathing nature makes us discard this idea at once as highly absurd if not ludicrous. But even had this been true he would have been quickly discouraged as to any hope for fame or appreciation from what would be his reading public, for Mr. Stephen clearly states that Collins repaid his publisher for the loss incurred at the printing of his Odes.[4]

Mathew Arnold offers us a very helpful and feasible explanation as to the lack of popularity of Gray's poems. Mr. Arnold's famous statement asserts that they fell "... upon an age of prose ... whose task was such as to call forth in general men's powers of understanding, wit, and cleverness, rather than their deepest powers of mind and soul..."[5]

Quite indifferent to these circumstances, Gray did not hesitate to set sail within the realm of the new and the fanciful. It is possible that he may not have been conscious of any marked breaking away from traditional forms, for in some respects the transition was gradual. Nevertheless, at this point he felt that the deepest chords in his poetic nature had just been struck. It is interesting to note that Macpherson's Epic of Ossian seemed to produce a very similar effect upon him as had the ballads of Gil Morice and Chevy Chase.

Almost up to that time when he set out upon his freest creative ventures, he wrote verse which was as truly Neo-Classical as much that is found within the Eighteenth Century. It must be remembered that the Progress of Poesy came in the same year

3. Works of Thomas Gray, Mitford - vol.II, p.210 (London 1816)
4. Hours in a Library, L. Stephen - vol.III, p.106
5. Essay on Gray, M. Arnold - p.80 (cont. on following page) -

which saw the Bard begun, showing that while still writing in the accepted style, he was only to finish the latter work in a way which satisfied him, at a later date; and only under the most novel and romantic inspiration of a blind Welsh harper who might himself well have been a mediaeval minstrel. Does it not appear that the poet had been caused to produce an ostensibly Neo-Classical poem under the influence of undeniably Romantic stimuli?

His scholarship embraced nearly every field of learning, save mathematics for which he had not the least craving. But he was fully as conversant with law as he was with architecture, and quite as clever a linguist as a naturalist. Evidence that this variety of intellectual interests aided Gray in his progress toward the romantic in poetry, which formed a most important part of his learning, will here be produced. A consideration of certain phases of his learning will be made. Comparisons will often be drawn to show that the poet's scholarship reached a culmination in a whole-hearted acceptance of and participation in the Gothic movement in English literature of the Eighteenth Century.

(5 cont. - Diametrically opposed to Mr. Arnold's statement is that of Mr. T.M. Parrott, in Studies of a Book Lover, p.176 - (James Patt & Co. N.Y. 1904). Mr. Parrott's contradiction is interesting but not sufficiently illuminating upon the subject in hand to quote it here.

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF THE POET GRAY AS CULMINATING IN AN ENTHUSIASM FOR GOTHICISM

Chapter I

Early Influences from Eton and Cambridge

It is the scholar, Mr. Robert Antrobus, Gray's maternal uncle, to whom the credit belongs for having been the poet's first teacher. Mr. Antrobus had acquired fame at Cambridge as a Fellow of Peterhouse, and he well understood the importance of implanting within the child not only a love for classical knowledge, but also a taste for the study of natural history. It was he who gave to his nephew a lasting passion for minute scientific observation in nearly every division of animal and vegetable life.[1]

The poet's father, Philip Gray, who was an exchange broker by trade, entertained no ambitions whatsoever in regard to the training of his son, and even flatly refused to be financially responsible for his education. But again Thomas Gray was fortunate. At Eton, Mr. Robert and Mr. William Antrobus were assistant masters.[2] Thus he entered Eton under the eye of his uncles, where his tutor was his uncle William, who from all accounts seems to have been as gifted a scholar as his

1. Cambridge History of English Literature, Chapter on Gray, by D.C. Tovey, p. 116
2. Correspondence of Gray, Walpole, West and Ashton by Paget Toynbee, Preface XX

brother. Then from Gray's mother's side at least, came a natural liking for learning, a liking which was to stamp the future literatus as outstanding in his age.

Early in his Eton career he lived with his uncle Robert. In this way, and classed as an oppidan, he was not obliged to put up with the difficulties entailed by a life within the college walls. Here he became a firm friend of Horace Walpole, son of Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister. Soon two others, Richard West and Thomas Ashton, were added to his group of friends, and the famous "Quadruple Alliance" was formed. Each one had his quaint pseudonym. Thomas Gray was "Orosmades"; Richard West's came from a play on his name,"Zephyrus"; Horace Walpole was "Celadon", presumably either from D'Urfe's romance of "Astree", or from the Swain in Thomson's "Seasons"; Ashton was probably either "Plato" or "Almanzor", for he is spoken of under both names.

All four boys gained some little future distinction in the literary world, but it was Gray who stood out as the Alliance's shining light, and if it were not for him the other three would receive much less attention today.

Richard West was the only one of the Alliance who went from Eton to Oxford, the others all attending Cambridge. This in itself created a necessity for letter writing between the two universities, and nearly all our information as to curricula, university life etc. is gained from their correspondence.

The poet's Cambridge days began when he became a pen-

sioner at Peterhouse, and took up residence on October 9,1734. On October 17th of the same year, he became Cosin Scholar, and on June 27, 1735, he became Hale Scholar.

It is from Richard West that we get a petulant sort of criticism of Oxford. Many features of this academic life did not suit him; and this seems to have brought forth an echo of the same sort of sentiment from Thomas Gray, with much the same opinion regarding Cambridge. Both West and Gray were thorough scholars. From first to last they detested and fought against dilettantism. They approved of neither the methods of study nor the character of the student life. Upon this point West writes to Gray: "Consider me very seriously here in a strange country inhabited by things that call themselves Doctors and Masters of Arts; a country flowing with syllogisms and ale, where Horace and Virgil are equally unknown." To this Gray replied with a picture of Cambridge which was equally unalluring, critical, and quite as descriptive of a loss of scholastic dignity on the part of the University. "Surely it was of this place," writes Gray, "now called Cambridge, but formerly known as Babylon, that the prophet spoke when he said 'the wild beasts of the desert shall dwell there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall build there, and satyrs shall dance there; their forts and towers shall be a den forever, a joy of wild asses; there shall the great owl make her nest, and lay and hatch and gather under the shadow; it shall be a court of dragons; the screech owl also shall nest there, and find for herself a place to rest.'"

And then at another time he writes: "When you have seen one of my days, you have seen a whole year of my life; they go round and round like the blind horse in the mill, only he has the satisfaction of fancying he makes a progress, and gets some ground; my eyes are open enough to see the same dull prospect, and to know that having made four and twenty steps more, I shall be just where I was."[3]

Upon reading such statements we might at first be tempted to set them down as the rather hypercritical notions of youths, but well knowing the manner of man into which each developed later, we cannot hold this opinion. We cannot forget Gray's caustic Hymn to Ignorance which came from his pen in later years, showing a very lasting disdain for methods of study as well as the subjects pursued. "Educated at Eton," says Mr. James Russell Lowell, in speaking of Gray's education, "and diseducated, as he seems to think, at Cambridge."[4]

By these indications we are bound to believe that the secret of Gray's dislike for his University, as well as for the general run of its inmates, lay in the fact that he considered the scholarship of the majority to be exceedingly superficial; and that when it came to anything at all extraordinary in the way of an intellectual feat or anything approaching a profound search for knowledge calling for a display of fine scholastic powers, it was found wanting. This lackadaisical brand of inquiry was not for him; and I believe that we may attribute his complete salvation from any capitulation to it to the astute scientific foundation and outlook upon life

3. Ibid - vol.1, p.52
4. Latest Literary Essays and Addresses, by J.R. Lowell - vol. 7, p.14 (Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1891)

given him in his earlier days by Mr. Robert Antrobus.

Gray cared little for the study of mathematics, and says, "Must I pore upon mathematics? ... It is very possible that two and two make four, but I would not give four farthings to demonstrate this ever so cleverly; and if these be the profits of life, give me the amusements of it. The people I behold all around me, it seems, know all this and more, and yet I do not know one of them who inspires me with any ambition of being like him."[5] But he regretted his neglect of the subject, as a thorough scholar would be apt to do. In later life he even considered studying it, and lamented the fact of its too often being laid aside, at Cambridge, as soon as degree requirements had been fulfilled.

During his vacations he often stayed with a brother-in-law of his mother's, a Mr. Rogers, who was fond of sports of all kinds. But even here, the future poet's search was for literary company. He writes, "We have old Mr. Southern,at a gentleman's house a little way off, who often comes to see us; he is now seventy-seven years old, and has almost wholly lost his memory; but he is as agreeable as an old man can be, at least, I persuade myself so when I look at him."[6] In this same letter he speaks of a forest all his own where he may be alone; "a little chaos of mountains and precipices, ... both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the wind."

5. Paget Toynbee, op. cit., vol.1. p.113
6. Poems and Letters by Thomas Gray, Everyman Edition - p.88, (J.M. Dent & Sons, London, 1928)

"And as they bow their hoary tops relate
In murmuring sounds, the dark decrees of fate;
While visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Cling to each leaf, and swarm on every bow."[7]

"At the foot of one of these," he writes, "squats Me, I (il pensoroso) and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning."

In spite of such deep love for learning, we surely cannot describe Gray as one who was never sensitive to a need for a moderate amount of pleasure and recreation. In his letter to Walpole, written during the early part of his stay at Peterhouse he writes: "Thou dear, envious Imp, to set me longing with accounts of plays, operas, and masquerades, after hearing which, I can no more think of Logick and Stuff, than you could of Divinity at a Ball, or of Caudle and Carraway-Comfits after having stuffed at a christening."[8] By this we may judge that he had a taste for a fit balance of life-programme, at least during his younger years. Even while toiling in the deep recesses of philosophical discourse he tells Walpole, "never did anybody long for anything as I do for your masquerade; pray how d'ye design to go, as a judge, or a devil; or undisguised; or as an angel in propria persona."[9] He did not, therefore, submerge all sensitivity to or appreciation of the lighter interests in life by becoming an habitual grind, nor did he obstinately stress the pursuit of academic knowledge to the exclusion of delight in a bit of nonsense once in a while. It was not until his return to Peterhouse, many years later, that he became metamorphosed into the scholarly recluse.

At the University, the study of music claimed his attention.

7. If this is Gray's, it is his earliest verse. It is often quoted by Hazlitt.
8. Paget Toynbee, op. cit., vol.1, p.20
9. Ibid., p.23

He was quite as familiar with the Italian operas, which he heard from time to time at London with the ear of a connoisseur, as he was with the works of English composers such as Musgrave Heighton and his musical versions of the odes of Horace and Anacreon.[10] But this very subject will be treated at some length in a subsequent chapter.

Those letters, written by Gray and his friends, which we have today, seem to date from his departure from Eton and his advent at Peterhouse. The letters, however, largely concern his private interests and poetry, and it is rather difficult to trace his course of study. We do know of his insatiable love for classical literature, for modern and ancient languages, and for history. During his undergraduate days at Cambridge, his poetical productions were: A Copy of Latin Verses inserted in the Musae Etonenses; another, On the Marriage of the Prince of Wales; and A Sapphic Ode to West.[11]

As a Freshman we learn of his absorbing observation of what happened to those who were about to receive their bachelor's degrees. He gives Walpole a full account of the final ordeal to which the candidates are exposed, as at this time Walpole was preparing to enter Cambridge, but had not yet arrived. At this point, Gray seems to have had intentions of taking his degree, for he says; "... they are liable to all the impertinent questions which any Master of Arts is pleased to ask them, they must answer everything in philosophy, which is proposed to them and all this in Latin; the third day, the first Moderator takes 'em out, half a dozen at a time, into a gallery

10. Ibid., p. 36
11. Works of Gray, by Rev. John Mitford, London, 1816 vol.1, preface IV.

atop of the theatre, in sight of everybody, but out of hearing; he examines them again, as long as he will, and in what sciences he pleases; then they go all into the schools, and one fellow belonging to each of the colleges, gets into the Rostrum, and asks each of his Bachelours some strange question: ..... so then everybody must laugh, and the ceremony is ended. I tell you this, because it will be mine own case some time or other, so I hope you will excuse me for tiring you with this account."[12]

When Walpole proposed a visit to Gray at Cambridge, the latter replied with eager anticipation of the visit, and displayed that sparkling humor we enjoy in every page of his epistles, by his droll delineation of his college building, "....a thing like two Presbyterian meeting-houses," he explains to his friend, "with the back side of a little church between them, and here you must find out by sympathy, that this is Peterhouse and that I am but a little way off."[13]

It was in 1736, Gray informs West, that he has changed his mind; that he does not intend to take a degree after all, and that he rejoices that his college "impertinencies" are nearing an end. "I have endured lectures daily and hourly since I came, supported by the hope of being shortly at full liberty to give myself up to my friends and classical companions, who poor souls! though I see them fallen into great contempt with most people here, yet I cannot help sticking to them, and out of a

12. Paget Toynbee - op. cit., pp. 28, 29
13. Ibid., p. 112

spirit of obstinacy (I think) love the better for it; and indeed, what can I do else?"[14]

Here, I believe, we have arrived at the root of Gray's dislike of his Cambridge study. He rebelled against the strict and arbitrary curriculum; and seeing those classics which he so loved repeatedly dabbled in, but not mastered, aroused in him this "spirit of obstinacy" which led him to wish to devote himself unreservedly to them. His degree of proficiency in the classic languages may best be vouched for in the terms of his Oxonian friend, Richard West, in his answer to one of Gray's letters which was penned in Latin: "Seriously," remarks West, "you write in that language with a grace and an Augustan urbanity that amazes me; your Greek too, is perfect in its kind."[15]

These then were the early influences and ideals which were to produce that poet-scholar of whom his friend, William J. Temple, of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, was to write to Boswell: "Perhaps he (Gray) was the most learned man in Europe. He was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science and not superficially but thoroughly ... His time passed agreeably; he was every day making some new acquisition in science; his mind was enlarged, his heart softened, his virtue strengthened; the world and mankind were shown to him without a mask; and he was taught to consider everything as trifling, and unworthy of the attention of a wise man, except the pursuit of knowledge, and the practise of virtue, in that state wherein God hath placed us."[16]

14. Ibid., p. 112
15. Ibid., p. 177
16. Essays and Criticisms by Thomas Gray, edited by C.S. Northrup - (D.C. Heath & Co., Boston 1911) - Introduction XXI

Chapter II

The Poet as a Traveler

The reputation which Thomas Gray earned as a traveler was a remarkable one for a poet of the eighteenth century. His comprehensive and delightful accounts of scenes through which he passed were scholarly yet never tedious; his descriptions were worded with majesty yet never ponderously, and they have brought pleasure as well as accurate knowledge to their readers, in the intervening years, since penned by their author

In speaking of twentieth century travelers, Professor Magoffin, in a recent treatise upon archeology, says: "Every visitor to Naples spends at least one day at Pompeii ... But none but the student gets to Herculaneum ... Herculaneum was discovered accidentally in the year 1719. The Austrian governor was having a well dug at his villa and the diggers struck the walls of a house, instead of water ... The most important find from a literary point of view was that in 1750, of 5,000 rolls of blackened papyri, which barely escaped being thrown away as charcoal."[1]

This is the opinion of the celebrated archeologist, but would he not pronounce one to be a far more profound student who eagerly browsed about the remains of the buried city as early as 1740, and under difficult conditions of transportation which must have been none too conducive to investigation? We know that Gray was well acquainted with the facts of Herculan-

1. Lure and Lore of Archaeology, R. Van D. Magoffin, pp. 28,29

eum's destruction. He quotes Statius' account of the disaster in which the naturalist Pliny the Elder perished, leaving the world indebted to him for his scholarly classifications of plant and animal life.[2]

Now, there is something here which tempts us further. To read this account of the 5,000 rolls of papyri and their discovery in 1750, and then to read the letter which Gray writes to William Mason just seven years later, certainly might lead us to believe that it was perhaps to this that Gray made reference. While giving kindly criticism to Mason concerning his Caractacus, Gray mentions an extraordinarily fantastic and implied relationship between the Moon and Midnight. He writes, "... but now, I could lay my life it is all true, and do not doubt it will be found so in some Pantheon of the Druids that is to be discovered in the library at Herculaneum."[3] Was it these papyri that he had in mind? While discussing Herculaneum, he was writing about the familiar ground of his travels in 1740. We may well imagine that he followed all news of archeological explorations and discoveries with more than common interest, and it is therefore quite plausible to suppose that the letter quoted refers to the discovery of 1750. The whole incident serves to show us that hunger for the imaginative in classical allusions, that yearning for the fanciful which was always to be found in Gray, and which he was ready to encourage in younger writers, even though he had to enter the realm of the wholly speculative in order to do it. This viewpoint, to my mind, constitutes the very essence of the

2. Gray and His Friends, D.C. Tovey - p. 253
3. Essays and Crit. op. cit., p.194 (Letter to William Mason Sep. 28, 1757)

driving force which was to culminate in Gothicism, and give him that satisfying liberty in freedom for flights of creative literary thought. We have his impressions of Herculaneum, such as he found it, in which he gives quite an acceptable account of how it came to be found in 1719. He continues his epistle from Naples with a characteristically thorough report of the excavations of his day. His antiquarian instincts had been aroused, and every sense seems tingling with excitement in his vivid descriptions of bits of sculpture and samples of architecture which had been salvaged. "One descends conveniently to a depth of about 30 feet by the stone steps of a theatre, that they have found. One walks a good way by the side of one of its galleries; one sees buildings of brick with incrustations of white marble, and here and there a solid column of it, some upright, others fallen, and lying at length ... They have found an olla with rice, and dates in it. The first I saw none of, but they say it retained its hardness. The latter was as black as wood, and of a firmer consistence... Indeed the whole discovery is one of the most considerable made these many ages."[4]

At the time that Monsignor Baiardi, the antiquarian, was employed by the King of Naples to describe the antiquities of Herculaneum - which he did in five quarto volumes - Gray eagerly reviewed it and wrote his sparkling critique to Mr. Richard Stonehewer. There is a satirical touch to the manner in which the poet describes Baiardi's treatment of the controversy over the true location of the ancient Herculaneum, and of that gentleman's arbitrary disposition of the whole problem, in the end.

4. Gray and His Friends - op. cit., pp. 253-257

It takes but little reading between the lines to see that Gray did not consider this work to be either exact or exhaustive enough upon the subject, but reflected rather sarcastically, "that there is a great deal of wit, too, and satire, and verses in the book, which is intended chiefly for the information of the King, who will be greatly edified, no doubt."[5]

That love for the mountains and for wilderness, that same enjoyment which he had known during college vacations, on his uncle's estate, had grown to a passion as soon as he was able to revel in such surroundings while traveling through France. "We took the longest road," he writes to his mother, "which lies through Savoy, on purpose to see a famous monastery called the Grande Chartreuse ... from thence we proceeded on horses to the mountain of Chartreuse. It is six miles to the top; the road runs winding up it, commonly not six feet broad; on one hand is the rock, with woods of pine trees hanging over head; on the other, a monstrous precipice, almost perpendicular, at the bottom of which rolls a torrent that sometimes tumbling among fragments of stone that have fallen from on high, and sometimes precipitating itself down vast descents with a noise like thunder, which is still made greater by the echo from the mountains on each side, concurs to form one of the most solemn, the most romantic and the most astonishing scenes I ever beheld."[6]

We pause to ask if the author of this statement can possibly be a true gentleman of the eighteenth century! Yes, it is Thomas Gray, even at this early date indulging in the mood which was to make him one of the foremost in the Romantic movement

5. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., pp. 178, 179
6. Everyman Edition, - op. cit., p. 101

when the time was ripe. Upon this point, Mr. William Lyon Phelps says: "A chronological study of Gray's poetry and of the imagination and love of nature displayed in his prose remains, is not only deeply interesting in itself, but is highly important to the history of Romanticism. In him, the greatest literary man of the time, we find the best example of the steady growth of the Romantic Movement."[7]

In fact there are few other writers of the eighteenth century who seem to have traveled very widely. Locke was deterred from undertaking a contemplated trip to Rome by the terrors of the Alpine passes, and even he of Robinson Crusoe fame[*] never traveled further away than Scotland. Although there were travelers, such as Samuel Johnson and Conyers Middleton, they were neither impressed in the same way as was Gray, nor can we trace an analogy between the free and untrammeled in the scenes of nature through which they passed, and their direct effect upon the mind of the traveler. In the case of Thomas Gray, we are not only able to trace this analogy, but we see it stand out so clearly, through a consideration of his poetic philosophy, that I believe to ignore it would be unthinkable in a treatise of this kind; and to treat it lightly would be most inadvisable.

There is, however, another literary man of the eighteenth century, who did travel - Joseph Addison. He not only traveled, but he wrote about his travels. Professor Northrup has given us a very valuable comparison of the two writers, as travelers. Let us then set down, with some assistance from Professor Northrup, and with what we gain from a general perusal of the travel-

7. Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement, W.L. Phelps - p. 155, (Ginn and Co., Boston - 1893)

* W.P.Trent would here seem to oppose Professor Northrup. See W.P.Trent, Daniel Defoe, How to Know Him, pp. 6,7.

ers' correspondence, the proximity and divergence of their responses to the stimuli in their foreign travels.

Both men were scholars. Addison was of the accepted Augustan style, that comfortable, urban, eighteenth century brand; that brand which is quite open to the beauties of poetry and nature, if an appreciation of the former does not entail a radical departure from accepted standards of wit and reason, adoration for the classic writers and a snug city life; if an enjoyment of the latter necessitates no physical hardship, danger nor inconvenience. But we find that when the beauties of nature, through which it was necessary that he travel, became wild, or as he says of the Alps "that fill the mind with an agreeable kind of horror, and form one of the most irregular, misshapen scenes in the world", he speedily longs for "warm valleys covered with violets and almond trees in blossom."[8] While journeying through those same rugged mountain peaks which set Gray's pen tingling with the impassioned and inspired music of his immortal descriptions, Addison was composing his Letter from Italy, in unruffled meter, apparently either oblivious of his surroundings or purposely passing the time during a disagreeable journey by some profitable occupation, much as today we might plan to utilize a rather ordinary train ride in order to catch up in our correspondence, and thus seem to reach our destination more quickly through keeping busy and escaping the boredom of a scenery which did not interest us. He soliloquizes upon how all that he has just seen in Rome is indissolubly linked with famous quotations from the classic authors. Magnificence in architecture fascinates him,

8. Letter from Italy, Joseph Addison

if it be not "a vast Gothic pile of a building".[9] Antiquities interest him, but they must be only those which may be followed up and discovered close to the heart of civilization, and not at any time too far removed from the comforts of city life. Though quite willing to exercise the imagination under his own ideal conditions, Addison failed to wax enthusiastic while being carried through wolf-filled wildernesses or jostled over dizzy mountain peaks.[10]

Now to consider Gray. He was certainly quite as typically an Augustan writer as was Addison. He adhered to Neo-Classical standards, ideas, and verse forms. It has been virtually said by Mr. Phelps, that in the evolution of Gray's poetry, and in the study of its gradual swing away from the Neo-Classical and into the strongly Romantic, the history of the transition in English poetry of the eighteenth century, from Augustan to Romantic may be seen. But when we read Gray's wildly enthusiastic praise of the same beauties of nature which were not at all to Addison's taste, we are forced to remember that this is the man who was to write to William Mason, from Cambridge (probably in 1757) a letter of his boundless admiration for "... the old Scotch ballad on which the story of Douglas was founded ... It is divine ... Have you never seen it? Aristotle's best rules are observed in it in a manner that shews the author never had heard of Aristotle. It begins in the fifth act of the play. You may read it two thirds through without guessing what it is about; and yet when you come to the end, it is impossible not to understand the whole story."[11]

9. The Cathedral at Milan
10. Even though he grew excited enough over the Ballad of Chevy Chase to call it a favorite and to pen a critique upon it, his taste clung to milder subjects. - Spectator, No.70 - Monday, May 21, 1711
11. C.S. Northrup - op.cit., p.187

Whereupon he sends him a copy of a few of the verses.[12] I believe the same sentiment manifests itself here as that which actuated his vivid and highly colored description of the Grande Chartreuse. It is an instance of the keen love for the wild and romantic, and of stirring events taking place among those surroundings. It is the love of the fantastic coming to the surface, whether it is the letter to Mason, or the description of mountain crags. It is the future Romantic poet who paints for us that exquisite picture which has come down to us in a letter written by Gray to Richard West, from Turin, November 16, 1739. The Grande Chartreuse is situated 14 miles north of Grenoble, in the valley of the Guiers. Here St.Bruno, in 1080, founded the Order of the Carthusians. It is this place to which Gray returned on his way back from Italy, and where he penned his famous Alcaic Ode. He writes to West, "... I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation, that there was no restraining; not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument ... the savage rudeness of the view is inconceivable without seeing it."

I have found that Leslie Stephen makes the statement: "Gray was perhaps, as capable of feeling 'the impulse from the vernal wood' as truly as Wordsworth, but he would have altogether rejected the doctrine that it could teach him more 'than all the sages'."[13] It seems to me that Mr. Stephen has been a bit hasty in saying that Gray would "altogether reject" this

12. Child Maurice, Child's English and Scottish Ballads
13. Hours in a Library, Leslie Stephen, vol.3, p. 137

suggestion. It is quite possible that Gray would have declared that his world sages were indispensable to him, but had he stood ready to utterly refute the idea that there was a certain something which he could learn best from nature, would he have written the words we find in the preceding paragraph; could he have declared that it "would awe an atheist into belief without the help of other argument"?

In this same letter to West we read: "If I do not mistake, I saw you too, every now and then at a distance among the trees. You seemed to call me from the other side of the precipice, but the noise of the river below was so great, that I really could not distinguish what you said; it seemed to have a cadence like verse."[14]

So the "savage rudeness of the view" appealed to this traveler. He did not wish to pass through it as quickly and as unconsciously as possible, but to stop at every wondrous spectacle as it came within his sight. The magic of the setting proved so strong that he even whimsically fancied he saw West there. Was it possibly because Gray felt that West was delicate, knew him to be sensitive? Although probably Gray was not at all consciously influenced by this feeling, was it perhaps a vague foreshadowing of the future? After West had passed "to the other side of the precipice" I wonder if this scene at the Grande Chartreuse ever crossed Gray's mind. We do not know; but at least, it is a beautiful theme upon which to speculate.

While at Rome, the collections of incomparable paintings and sculptures did not escape him; and his notes upon them are

14. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., p.129

full of comprehensive criticisms. Every one of these is understandable, and it conveys to the reader the exact feeling which must have possessed the author. Of Carracci's Peter Going from Rome, he says that Christ's eyes and head give "as moving an idea as it is possible for painting to express."[15] We may see that Gray felt the plastic value of the work. In speaking of the Domenichino Scourging of St. Andrew, besides discussing the comic element involved, he is quick to observe the resemblance between it and the same kind of scene which we meet in Shakespeare. He says, "One of the ruffians, in straining the cord that ties his leg, has cracked it, and is fallen backwards; the others are laughing at him; the expression, though low has somewhat in it that heightens the horror of the thing. These are a sort of circumstances that Shakespeare has often made use of; one sees his murderers have their jokes in the midst of the most tragic events; and when rightly taken, such strokes are surely expressive of the character, and of the want of reflexion, that is the cause of insensibility to other's woes; yet I do not say, these things should be used at random, nor made (as here) the principle objects in a picture."[16]

All Gray's descriptions are much fuller than are Addison's. In fact, Walpole has said: "Mr. Addison traveled through the poets, and not through Italy; for all his ideas are borrowed from the descriptions, and not from reality."[17]

Now, whereas Gray loved antiquity, and constantly kept the events of the past at his instant command, yet his delight was often to combine the two. Sometimes he would allow his

15. Studies in Language and Literature - Chap. Addison and Gray as Travelers, p.420, C.S. Northrup (Henry Holt 1910)
16. Ibid., pp.421,422
17. Paget Toynbee, op. cit., vol.1, p.342

fancy to guide him in his descriptions, and to make a sublime blend of past and present as when he dines with Pompey. "I am today just returned from Alba, a good deal fatigued; for you know the Appian is somewhat tiresome. We dined at Pompey's; he indeed was gone a few days to his Tusculan, but, by the care of his Villicus, we made an admirable meal ... We drank half a dozen cyathi a-piece of ancient Alban to Pholoe's health; and after bathing and playing an hour at ball, we mounted our essedum again, and proceeded up the mount to the temple. The priests there entertained us with an account of a wonderful shower of birds' eggs that had fallen two days before, which had no sooner touched the ground, but they were converted into gudgeons; as also that the night past a dreadful voice had been heard out of the Adytum, which spoke Greek during a full half hour, but no one understood it."[18] We may see how very conversant the poet was with ancient Roman customs, and with this knowledge, coupled with brilliant imaginative faculties, he had no difficulty in easily precipitating himself into the character of a friend of the ancient Roman. He even left a catalogue of the various eatables, wines, perfumes, clothes, medicines, etc. in use in ancient Rome, together with citations from the classic poets to corroborate his statements.

Through this comparison of the travels of Addison and Gray, and the response of each to his experiences, we have repeatedly noticed marked differences, but the most considerable one has lain in the varying attitude of each toward nature. Addison, we see, appreciated nature only in her milder forms,

18. Ibid., p.304

whereas Gray from youth loved and studied nature in every aspect, shrinking from none. No personal inconvenience could deter him if it were necessary in order to view some new Alpine prospect, and nothing so filled him with delight. Professor Northrup says: "He sounded a new note in literature, a note which has not ceased to be associated with rich harmonies, when he wrote in the album at the Grande Chartreuse his famous Alcaic Ode ... I can only record my impression that Addison is somewhat more typical of the age than Gray, who seems in some respects to be in advance of his time."[19]

To this we may surely give our credence; and we find a reviewer of the next generation after Gray, writing an interesting critique upon Wordsworth's From the Lakes of the North of England, for the Gentleman's Magazine, of March 1794: "Feeling for the credit of my own University, I think we have reason to expect much from this, I suppose, first production (though by no means faultless one) of Mr. Wordsworth's muse; I trust he will restore to us that laurel to which, since Gray laid it down 'his head upon the lap of earth' and Mason 'declined into the vale of years', we have had so slight pretensions."[20]

This reference to Wordsworth leads us quite naturally to ask: "And what about Gray's journeys of later life to Scotland and northern England?" We find, according to Mitford, that Gray left for Scotland in the summer of 1765. The purpose of the journey was ostensibly to improve his health, but it may be guessed that it was also to gratify a craving for natural beauties and antiquities in that wild country. To Edinburgh, Perth,

19. C.S. Northrup, op. cit., p.437
20. Poetry and Criticism of the Romantic Movement, ed.Campbell Pyre & Weaver - p.782 - Crafts, 1932

Glames-Castle, the Highlands, Perthshire, Dunkheld, Inverness, and the pass of Killikrankie, he went. While in Scotland, he met Dr. Beattie who welcomed him cordially as a poet of promise. But when offered the Doctor of Laws degree, from the University of Aberdeen, Gray declined it lest its acceptance appear as a slight upon Cambridge University.

It was not until 1769, after he had taken the chair as professor of modern history at Cambridge, that he left upon a tour of the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland which was to become famous through his Journal of the Lakes, and next in importance to his early travels with Horace Walpole. It appears that his friend, Dr. Wharton, had been planning to accompany him but at his being obliged to return home because of ill health, Gray entered much that he saw in his journal, so that his friend might at least read about it.

Mitford, in his Life of Gray, comments upon the clarity of style in this journal, and upon the simple yet elegant language.*

Gray kept Wharton informed as to the fascinating scenery. Of one lake, near Dunmallert, he gives a particularly fine description; one which we would be willing to hazard was his even though we did not see his name attached. "The water is almost everywhere bordered with cultivated lands gently sloping upwards till they reach the feet of the mountains, which rise very rude and awful with their broken tops on either hand; directly in front, at better than three miles distance 'Place Fell' one of the bravest among them, pushes its bold broad

* Works of Gray - Rev. John Mitford, London 1816, vol.1,xli

breast into the midst of the lake, and forces it to alter its course, forming first a large bay at the left and then bending to the right ... Saw a cormorant flying over it and fishing."[21]

Again while traveling through this country, which was to be so dear to its own Lake-School Wordsworth, Gray says: "Set out at ten for Keswick, by the road we went in 1767. Saw Greystock town and castle to the right, which lie only three miles (over the Fells) from Ulz-water. Passed through Penradock and Threlcot at the feet of Saddleback, whose furrowed sides are gilt by noonday sun, while its brow appears of a sad purple, from the shadow of clouds as they sail slowly by it."[22]

Every now and then he is obliged to pause in his treatment of landscape, and fix his attention on botany, ornithology or geology, as the recipient of the Journal in the Lakes was also an absorbed naturalist, and Gray always opens every entry with a report of the day's weather.

"October 8th. Left Keswick and took the Ambleside road in a gloomy morning; wind east and afterwards northeast; about two miles from the town mounted an eminence called Castle Rigg, and the sun breaking out discovered the most enchanting view I have yet seen of the whole valley ; behind me, the two lakes, the river, the mountain, all in their glory! Had almost a mind to have gone back again ... Came to the foot of Helvellyn,along which runs an excellent road, looking down from a little height on Lee's-water, and soon descending on its margin. The lake from its depths looks black, (though really clear as glass) from the gloom of the vast crags, that scowl over it."[23]

21. Rev. John Mitford, op. cit., vol.2, p.521
22. Ibid., p.523
23. Ibid., p.534

Is it not an easy thing to understand the Fatal Sisters issuing from the pen of one who so doted upon scowling cliffs and vast crags? All that was needed right here was the weird women themselves, and no doubt Gray's fancy peopled this landscape with all manner of supernatural creatures. Further on, while describing a huge overhanging rock, he says, "The gloomy uncomfortable day well suited the savage aspect of the place, and made it still more formidable."[24]

Surely here is description which in itself breathes an air of savagery. The Journal terminates with an expression of an intended visit to Wales during the following summer, but this was never undertaken.

Even in the light of all that we today know of Gray and of his contemporaries, I should by no means be of the opinion which was so dogmatically stated by Sir James Mackintosh; that Gray was the first of all in England to enjoy natural beauties.[25] There were others that were by no means blind to the picturesqueness of their country. There were others who traveled, as we have before admitted, and it would add nothing to my essay could I prove that Gray was "first to discover the natural beauties of England", for my aim is but to show Gray as the constantly ready recipient of nature's mystic lure and language, and a translator for mankind through the medium of his writings which increasingly expressed a complete comprehension of and preference for nature in all her forms. If this be accomplished, then my goal will have been attained.

Gray's letters from France have shown us this craving for

24. Ibid., p.545
25. Mitford quotes Mackintosh as saying this.

wild scenery, but they are still fettered with popular ideas and phrases. But after thirty years, in his Journal of the Lakes, he has over-run Neo-Classical custom. In a letter to Mason, in 1765, after his return from Scotland he writes: "... the Lowlands are worth seeing once, but the mountains are ecstatic, and ought to be visited in a pilgrimage once a year. None but these monstrous creatures of God know how to join so much of beauty with so much of horror. A fig for your poets, painters, gardeners, and clergymen, that have not been up among them; their imagination can be made up of nothing but bowling-greens, flowering shrubs, horse ponds, Fleet ditches, shell-grottoes, and Chinese rails."

Even in earlier years when visiting the gardens of Versailles, he did not care for them, and was somewhat annoyed by the conventionalism, which nature was forced to wear.

Something had happened to our poet, had grown within him every year of his life; something which later we are to call Gothicism and may claim its origin in his boyhood tastes and tendencies; and it finally works its will as it culminates in unrestrained expression from the lips of its enthusiastic devotee.

Chapter III

Varied Interests

The Library of Gray

It remains one of the greatest subjects for the regret of modern students of English literature, that the library of Thomas Gray was not preserved intact. Upon his decease, it - together with his manuscripts - passed into the possession of Mr. Mason, and later, of Mr.Stonehewer. At this point, it disintegrated. Part of it became the property of Mr. Bright of Skeffington Hall, but upon his death was sold at public auction. Other parts were repeatedly sold after 1851, until at the present time, the whereabouts of the majority of the volumes is unknown. However, from the catalogue of the second public sale we know that a copy of Plutarch's Lives was among them. This included Dacier's notes and an inscription: "E libris Thomas Gray, Scholae Eton: Alumn. Januar. 22, 1733". Pope's "Iliad" was there, with 3 volumes of Dryden's "Virgil" which were reputed to have belonged to Pope, as each volume contained: "Ex libris A. Pope, 1710". There was also a copy of Waller with favorite passages underscored. As to the classics, he had a copy of Euripides in the folio form of Joshua Barnes (Cantab. 1694), which is well worked with the poet's own notes.[1] Sophocles, Thucydides, Xenophon and Isocrates were all present. His "Decameron" was the London quarto of 1725, and was filled with Gray's notes upon those sources of information used by

1. Eighteenth Century Vignettes, Austin Dobson, p.132 - (Oxford Univ. Press - 1906)

Boccaccio, and also much as to who were his imitators. His copy of Milton was the two-volume duodecimo of 1730. This was filled with parallel Biblical passages, and also, citations from Dante and Shakespeare. His copy of Dugdale's "Baronage" he had corrected and added to. His four folio volumes of Clarendon's "Rebellion" were corrected throughout.

"His patience, accuracy, research, were not less extraordinary than his odd, out-of-the-way knowledge."[2] An instance of this is seen where, in his quarto copy of his "Voyages de Bergeron" he disagrees with the author as to the fate of a certain Muncaca or Mangu-Khanw, and makes a note to the effect that he was not drowned, as stated by the author, but really slain in China at the siege of Hochew in 1258. It seems that the scholar appeared quite as much in his element while discussing Chinese history as he was when expounding upon the usages of English metre.

The mss. of the library also included one called by Mr. Mason "Original Copy of Elegy in a Country Churchyard". Here we may read, in spite of erasures, that Cato stood originally for Hampden, and Tully and Caesar for Milton and Cromwell.[3]

"Some mute inglorious Tully here may rest,
Some Caesar guiltless of his country's blood".

And, here we find those rejected additional stanzas which were not used by Gray in the final and finished form of the poem, but which are of surpassing beauty:

"The thoughtless World to Majesty may bow,
Exalt the brave, and idolize success;
But more to Innocence their Safety owe
Than Pow'r and Genius e'er conspir'd to bless.

3. Ibid., p. 135.

2. Ibid., p. 133.

And thou, who mindful of the unhonour'd Dead,
  Dost in these Notes their artless Tale relate,
By Night and lonely Contemplation led
  To linger in the gloomy Walks of Fate:

Hark! how the sacred calm that broods around,
  Bids ev'ry fierce tumultuous Passion cease;
In still small Accents whisp'ring from the Ground,
  A grateful Earnest of eternal Peace.

No more, with Reason and thyself at Strife,
  Give anxious Care and endless Wishes room;
But through the cool sequestered Vale of Life (4)
  Pursue the silent Tenour of thy Doom.

The Reverend Mr. Cole, a familiar acquaintance of the poet in his later years, writes, "he had not only a large collection in a room on the same floor with his chamber, but hired a room or two above his apartments which were completely filled with books. I have reason to mention this for he was continually lending to me from his store."[5]

Another object of much interest in the collection is the note left by Lady Schaub and Miss Speed when they first called on Gray, ... together with the "Long Story" which the note inspired, and Miss Speed's note in which she acknowledged the poem. There was the first sketch in red crayon of Gray's Latin "De Principiis Cogitandi", and a translation of the Ugolino episode from the "Inferno", printed first by Mr. Gosse in 1884.

Other items of the library consisted of the "Strawberry Hill" edition of the "Odes by Mr. Gray". This is accompanied by those careful explanations and annotations which he at first refused to include. Gray's Note-Books of Travel and Reading were also there.

4. Ibid., p.136
5. The Poet Gray as a Naturalist, C.E. Norton - p.8 - (C.E. Goodspeed - 1903)

But that which is most delightful in the entire catalogue is that entitled "A Dialogue of Books", and was found among Gray's papers, as Mr. Dobson says, in the handwriting of Mr. Mason. But Mr. D.C. Tovey unreservedly ascribes it to Gray, as being a letter written to Richard West about the year 1742.[6] It is so witty and full of clever humour, at the same time giving such an excellent illustration of the type of book Gray cherished in his library, that I think we cannot afford to forego its perusal.

"As I know you are a lover of Curiosities, I send you the following, which is a true and faithful Narrative of what passed in my study on Saturday the 16th, instant. I was sitting there very tranquil in my chair, when I was suddenly alarmed with a great hubbub of Tongues. In the Street you suppose? No! in my Study, Sir. In your Study say you? Yes, and between my books, which is more. For why should not books talk as well as Crabs and Mice and Serpents do in Esop. But as I listened with great attention so as to remember what I heard pretty exactly, I shall set down the whole conversation as methodically as I can, with the names prefixed.

Mad. de Sevigné. Mon cher Aristote! do get a little further or you will quite suffocate me.

Aristotle. ΟὐΔΈΠΟΤΕ ΓΎΝΗ I have as much right to this place as you, and I sha'nt remove a jot.

M. Sevigné. Oh! the brute! Here's my poor Sixth to me is squeezed to death: for God's sake, Bussy, come and rescue me.

Bussy Rabutin. Ma belle Cousine! I would fly to your assistance. Mais voici un diable de Strabon qui me tue, and I have no one worth conversing with here but Catullus.

Bruyere. Patience! You must consider we are but books, and so can't help ourselves. For my part I wonder who we belong to. We are a strange mixture here. I have a Malebranche on one side of me, and a Grononius on t'other.

Locke. Certainly our owner must have very confused ideas, to jumble us so strangely together. He has associated me with Ovid and Ray the Naturalist.

6. D.C. Tovey, op. cit., p. 134-136

Virgil. 'Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musae Accipiant!'

H. More. Of all the Speculations that the soul of Man can entertain herself withall there is none of greater moment than this of her immortality.

Cleyne. Every man after forty is either a fool or a Physician.

Euclid. Punctum est cujus mulla est ....

Boileau. Peste soit de cet homme avec son Punctum! I wonder any man of sense will have a Mathematician in his Study.

Swift. In short, let us get the Mathematics banished first, the Metaphysicks and Natural Philosophy may follow them.

Vade Mecum. Pshaw! I and the Bible are enough for any one Library.

This last ridiculous egotism made me laugh so heartily that I disturbed the poor books and they talk no more."

"But", remarks Austin Dobson, in his dissertation upon the known volumes comprising Gray's library, "the two most interesting items of the catalogue are yet unmentioned. One is the laborious collection of Manuscript Music that Gray compiled in Italy while frivlous Horace Walpole was eating iced fruits in a domino to the sound of a guitar. Zamperelli, Pergolesi, Arrigoni, Galuppi - he has ransacked all, noting the school of the composer and the source of the piece selected, copying out religiously even "Regale per l'Accompagnamento'. The other ... is the famous Linnaeus exhibited at Cambridge in 1885 by Mr. Ruskin. It is an interleaved copy of the 'Systema Naturae', two volumes in three, covered as to their margins and added pages with wonderful minute notes in Latin, and illustrated by Gray himself with delicately finished pen-and-ink drawings of birds and insects".[7]

We shall then consider these two famous works, together

7. Austin Dobson, op. cit., p. 134

with other testimony and draw what inferences we may as to the poet as a naturalist, and the poet as a music-lover.

The Poet as a Naturalist

"There pipes the woodlark and the
song thrush there
Scatters his loose notes in the
waste of air." 8

"The greatest name of this period (1730-56) as an appreciator of nature is that of Thomas Gray", asserts Myra Reynolds in her Treatment of Nature in English Poetry;[9] and we find that she agrees with the opinion held by William Lyon Phelps, that his poetry falls naturally into three distinct periods, ranging from stiff Classicism to wild Gothicism, and thus proving the statement that to follow the evolution of Gray's poetry is to trace in general the changing aspect of the poetry of the beginning of the last half of the Eighteenth Century. Indeed, Miss Reynolds brings out here a point significant to my attempt at showing that the hunger for the poetry in nature, ultimately to burst forth and be known as Gothicism, was slumbering within the poet at the time of his first poetic achievements. "In the 'Ode to Eton College' the wistful pleasure with which the poet recalls his childhood is intensified by his memory of the beloved hills and fields, the silver winding stream, and the pleasant paths inseparably associated with the care-free days of his youth. In the 'Elegy' the use of Nature is highly artistic. ... We find the true romantic conception of the relation between man and Nature. The poet is represented as a

8. Works of Gray, ed. by Edmund Gosse - vol.1, p.139
9. Treatment of Nature in English Poetry - Myra Reynolds - p.133 (Univ. of Chicago Press - 1909)

shy, solitary being in communion with Nature, and drawing his inspiration from her ... A new range of sympathies, however, appears in the poems of Gray's third or purely romantic period. Here he writes of northern mythologies and superstitions or gives transcripts of Norse tales, and the pictures interwoven with the human elements are of a wild and savage character. In 'The Bard', mountain, precipice, and torrent form a setting without which the fiery denunciation of the poet would lose half its force. The storm and the whirlwind sweep through these poems ... the fatal and dreadful song of the gigantic sisters weaving 'the loom of hell'."[10]

A genuine love of the scientific in Nature - that is to say, the outlook of the wholehearted Naturalist is displayed in many of his letters. Records of the weather, of the ripening of crops, of blossoming of flowers were kept, as well as daily reports as to his state of health.

From Pembroke, Gray writes on August 5, 1763, to his scholarly friend, Dr. Wharton: "I kept an exact account of heat and cold here in the Spring; the sum and substance of which is, that (at nine in the morning) on the 18th of January, the thermometer was at 31, and the small birds were so tame you might take them up in your hand; this was the greatest cold. On the 15th of April, it was at 58, and the same afternoon at 65, which was the greatest heat from January to May 1st.

Feb.3. Snowdrops flowered
" 12. Crocus and hepatica flowered; the snow then lieing and thermometer at 45.
" 18. Chaffinch sings; bees appear.
" 21. White butterfly abroad.

10. Ibid., pp. 133-136

Feb. 25. Gnats fly, and large flies. Mezereon flowers.
" 27. Honeysuckle and gooseberry unfold their leaves.
Mar. 1. Violet flowers (in the garden); Rose opens its leaf.
" 3. Daffodil and single hyacinth flower. Spider spins.
" 5. Thrush singing.
" 6. Elder in leaf. Currant and weeping willow in leaf.
" 8. Apricot blows. Skylark singing.
" 11. Wind very high at S.E. which continues with hard frost.
" 16. Frost gone.
" 18. Apricot in full bloom.
" 19. Almond flowers. Lilac, barberry and guelder-rose in leaf.
Apr. 2. Standard apricot, and wall-pears in flower. Quince, apple, and sweet-briar in leaf. Currant flowers. Dutch elm opens its leaf.
" 4. Plumb in leaf.
" 5. Crown imperial flowers.
" 6. Plumb flowers; hawthorn, horse-chestnut, mountain-ash in leaf.
" 9. Lime-tree in leaf; jonquil and single anemone flower. Lady-birds seen.
" 11. Cowslip flowers and auriculas. Swallows appear. Young rooks caw in the nest.
" 14. Red-start appears. Cherries in full bloom.
" 15. Frontegnac vine in leaf; double wall-flower blows.
" 16. Nightingale sings. Apple blossoms.
" 19. Chaffinch and red-start sit on their eggs.
" 20. Elm, willow, and ash in flower, (with the black-thorn), hawthorn in full leaf.
" 21. Sycamore quite green. Oak puts out.
We have nothing but rain and thunder of late. 11

Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, in his essay upon Gray's studies in natural science, says, "Thus, with no strong impulse or special motive for expression, with no professional occupation and no liking for general society, Gray resorted to books and to the study of nature, and found in them employment which suited his temperament, afforded to him the mild happiness which turned his occupations to pleasures, and soothed his conscience for allowing his rare genius to lie fallow ... There are not many fields of knowledge, with the exception of mathematics and the physical sciences, which he did not make his own." 12

12. C. E. Norton - op. cit., pp. 6,7
11. Rev. John Mitford - op. cit., - vol.2, p.417

In his rooms at Cambridge he would have his window boxes filled with bright flowers, and gleefully told Norton Nicholls: "My gardens are in the window, like those of a lodger up three pair of stairs in Petticoat Lane or Camomile Street, and they go to bed regularly under the same roof I do."

Mason tells us that the poet's favorite study during the last decade of his life was natural history. It took him out into the fields and woods he loved, as well as giving him constant solace and enjoyment when at home in his rooms.

The pages of Hudson's Flora Anglica and Linnaeus' Systema Naturae were enriched with his own personal comments. The latter work, we are told, was constantly with him. After having belonged to Mason, Stonehewer and Bright, it was finally purchased by a Mr. Penn, of Stoke Pogis, who occupied West End, Gray's uncles' house where the poet's mother died. But again it was sold at auction, and finally came into the hands of Mr. John Ruskin, who treasured it for many years. After his death it was presented by Ruskin's cousin and heir, Mrs. Arthur Severn, to Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, who has given to the world such a fine essay upon its contents.

Linnaeus was slightly older than Gray, but outlived him. The first edition of Systema Naturae was published in 1735.[13] It gave a comprehensive view of the three realms of nature: animal, vegetable and mineral. It contributed a definite order to zoological and botanical study. Students of Natural History immediately adopted it as their chief manual. But Linnaeus continued to revise it; and its tenth edition showed the benefit of

13. Ibid, p.11

twenty years of the author's constant research and thought. This tenth edition was the one which Gray used. His notes, annotations and illustrations would be sufficient to make up a volume in themselves. These are typically indicative of Gray's learning, his industry, his genius; and they greatly aid us in comprehension and evaluation of his character, as well as that of his scholarship.

Volume I of the Systema Naturae deals with the Animal Kingdom. It has eight hundred and twenty-four pages. Volume II deals with Plants, and has five hundred and sixty-six pages.[14] Both of these volumes Gray had interleaved, and by doing this doubled their size.

The first, he divided into two parts: that section dealing with Mammals, Birds, Amphibia and Fishes, and that section treating of Insects and Vermes. The first part of the volume is of three hundred and thirty-eight printed pages; and with Gray's additions it consists of sixhundred and seventy-six pages. Some of his notes came from books, but mostly were products of his own personal observation. Some of these are in English, but the larger portion are in Latin, with citations in French and Italian.[15]

The style of writing which he uses is a concise one, with excellent descriptions of the appearance of specimens. His handwriting is fine and neat.

Beside the Latin name and its equivalent in several foreign languages, which Linnaeus gives to the animal, Gray has added terms from numerous other tongues - often remote ones.

14. Ibid, p.12
15. Ibid, p.12

Names occur, then, in: English, Welsh, Erse, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portugese, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Russian, Polish, Ancient and Modern Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Mexican, Brazilian, Peruvian, and other languages, as well. His deep and wide reading is shown in his many quotations and rererences from works on Natural History, and Travel, and from Records of Learned Societies. A list of these reference books comprises nearly one hundred titles. Gray has gleaned every thing he could from the entire field, from Aristotle to Pliny, and from Pliny to Buffon.[16]

The second parts of volume I and volume II are also developed in the same way. We find they contain even a vocabulary or Termini Artis, which is a list of Latin terms of color with their English equivalents. We find entries here which seem to give a very exact record of his travels in England and Scotland. Even while living in London, in 1759 and 1760, we hear that he was catching insects in the fields of Marylebone and of Chelsea, and in Hyde Park.[17] We find also entries of his visits to Kent, Suffolk, Hampshire, Cornwall, Yorkshire, Lancaster, Durham and Hartlepool.

Although from his letters one could not fail to decide that Gray was a keen observer and lover of Nature, yet one would not necessarily guess him to have been such a deeply studious Naturalist. He never bored his friends with technical conversation or information upon subjects in which he knew they had little interest; and we cannot find that he was particularly friendly with any other student of Natural History.

16. Ibid, p. 13-14
17. Ibid, p. 15

Accompanying these notes are a great number of pen and ink drawings. The naturalist was also a draughtsman of a clever sort, for he has portrayed his specimen artistically as well as minutely, whether it be a representation of a moth, a bird, or a beetle. The characteristic features are brought out with what must have been a taste for drawing as well, on the part of the poet.

In volume I, for instance, we find full accounts of the Elephant, Fox, Cat, Mungo, Hanover Rat, and Camel besides a "List of all the Birds found in Great Britain." A bit further on we find "Names of Birds found in Scotland" and "Birds found at Hartlepool in the Bishoprick of Durham." But whether describing animal, fish or plant Gray was equally exact and precise, and this quality holds true throughout all three of the volumes of his notes.

In a letter to Mr. Nicholls, Gray's Swiss friend Bonstellen speaks of the poet's usual routine: "After breakfast", he says,"appear Shakespeare and old Linnaeus struggling together as two ghosts would do for a damned soul. Sometimes the one gets the better, sometimes the other."[18]

Thus we see "perhaps the most learned man in Europe", and explore another phase of his deep learning, finding an ever increasing esteem for his incomparable ability as we feel that which approaches reverence for his indefatigable scholastic zeal.

18. Ibid., p.18

The Poet as a Music-Lover

We now come to that part of the poet's library which we have found mentioned first by Mr. Austin Dobson in his Vignettes of the Eighteenth Century: that second item of the two he has called "the most interesting items of the catalogue."[19] It is Gray's collection of Manuscript Music.

This collection made much the same journey as did the Linnaeus, after leaving the hands of Gray, up to the point where it passed out of the possession of the Bright family. It was then purchased by a Mr. Frederickson. In 1887, the New York Tribune announced that at a sale of Mr. Charles W. Fredericksons, the previous year, the auctioneer, a Mr. Bangs, had bought these Manuscripts himself, and had given them to Mrs. C. M. Raymond. From Mrs. Raymond's hands they passed to Mr. Henry Edward Krehbiel, author of "Music and Manners in the Classical Period"; and from him many of the following details have been acquired.

"The volumes are each twelve inches long and nine inches wide and vary in thickness, containing on an average two hundred sheets of extremely heavy hand-made paper. The edges are untrimmed. The sheets are bound stoutly in hogskin covers, most of which are lettered on the back and front in the handwriting of the poet. The music has been copied as a rule in a bold style by a professional copyist, but Gray has added some airs, besides many notes, and provided each of the volumes with a table of contents ... The music consists almost exclusively of opera-

19. See page 9

tic airs from the composers who were the chief glory of the Italian school of the eighteenth century ... The music is in score - that is, the full orchestral part is written out, as well as the vocal; but inasmuch as the operatic band of the early part of the eighteenth century (the collection was made in 1740) seldom consisted of more than stringed instruments; five or six staves suffice to contain the music. ... Gray's annotations are concerned with the titles of the operas from which the airs were taken, the names of the dramatic personages who sang them, and the names of singers whom he had heard in the operas or who had identified themselves in some particular manner with the music. This point cannot be determined, though the circumstance that occasionally a date, and sometimes also the name of a city is added indicates that he intended by the notes to preserve a record of individual enjoyments."[20]

These manuscripts, like the rest of the library, seem to have had excellent care. Each of the volumes is in a beautiful wooden case covered with purple morocco with a lining of black cushions. The cases are in the shape of books, and tooled and lettered alike.

The Collection comprises nine volumes. The following list will present some idea of their contents.

Volume I contains twenty-five airs from operas. Volume II contains autograph notes by Gray, and twenty arias, two duets and one trio from "Catone", "Issipile," "Artaserse," and "Siroe" - all by Hasse. Two of the airs are in Gray's handwriting. Volume III contains twenty-five airs and one duet from the

20. Music and Manners in the Classical Period - Henry E. Krehbiel - pp. 4-6 (Charles Scribners Sons, N.Y. - 1898)

operas "Catone," "Alessandro," "Semiramide," "Demafoonte," "Andromaca" and "Artaserse," besides several other airs copied out by Gray. In all there are forty-four pages of Gray's handwriting. The singers mentioned are: Farfallino, Carestini, Farinelli, Faustina, Senesino and Cuzzoni. Volume IV contains a cantata to which Gray neglected to affix the name, but which has been proven to be "La Contesa de Mimi," composed by Vinci in 1729. Volume V has excerpts from the compositions of Leonardo Leo, who was a composer of church music as well as of operas. Volume VI contains twenty-five arias and two duets by Michele Fini. It mentions the singers Tesi, Turcotti, La Scalzi and Cuzzoni. The book begins with the "Regale per l'Accompagnamento" which are rules for playing upon a figured bass. There are also four pieces for the harpsichord, evidently used as studies. Volume VII has five opera airs, three opera duets, and the whole of Rossini's "Stabat Mater." Volume VIII comprises miscellaneous extracts of opera airs; and Volume IX contains thirty-six airs by various famous composers of the day, such as Bernasconi, Renaldo di Capua, Gaetcino, Galuppi, Orlandini, et cetera.[21]

It is thought that Gray compiled only four or possibly five of these volumes while in Italy in 1740, and that he continued to collect music after he returned to England.

Thomas Gray's friend, Mr. Mason, tells us: "The chief and almost the only one of these (i.e. Gray's) amusements (if we except the frequent experiments he made on flowers in order to mark the mode and progress of their vegetation) was music. His taste in this art was equal to his skill in any more important

21. Ibid, pp. 8-14

science. It was founded on the best models, those great masters of Italy, ... he made a valuable collection while abroad, chiefly of such of their vocal compositions as he himself heard and admired, observing in his choice of these the same judicious rules which he followed in making his collection of prints, which was not so much to get together complete sets of works of any master as to select those (the best in their kind) which would recall to his memory the capital pictures, statues and buildings which he had seen and studied ... In music he gained supreme skill in the more refined powers of expression, especially when we consider art as an adjunct to poetry. Vocal music was what he chiefly regarded. His instrument was the harpsichord, on which, though he had little execution, yet when he sang to it so modulated the small powers of his voice as to be able to convey to the intelligent hearer no common degree of satisfaction. This, however, he could seldom be prevailed upon to do even by his most intimate acquaintances."

Mr. Krehbiel here adds that, as Mr. Mason was precentor of York Cathedral, he "Knew a thing or two about music."

In all of these nine volumes, the music of Handel is not to be found. Gray did not care for him, although he was a famous operatic impresario in the London of the poet's early youth. Handel's rivals finally got possession of the King's Theatre, after much bitter operatic war, and Handel was forced to give up presenting opera. Of course, there is a broad possibility that Gray's apparent dislike for Handel arose more from a prejudice against him as an operatic impresario than as a composer.

The eighteenth century was a flourishing age for Italian opera, but today we see many of its absurd failings, and enjoy a hearty laugh with Steele and Addison through their delightful and sparkling little satirical skits.

It is true that the majority of composers named by Gray in his collection have sunk into complete oblivion. Musical taste has changed and is changing constantly, and it is quite impossible to predict today who will be the remembered and still popular composers of tomorrow. While Gray's favorites have gone into obscurity, his disliked Handel has come into his own. But Gray himself was sincere in his admiration which he tabulated in a way which makes us think he may have intended it to outlive him; and it is interesting to reflect that it is because of this sincere admiration that the names of those musicians of a bygone age are still heard - through the manuscripts of a true music-lover.

Chapter IV

Ideas About Religion, Morals and Education

After making some examination of Thomas Gray's capacity as traveler, book-collector, naturalist and music-lover, we naturally have an interest to discover what constituted the philosophical views of this poet: religiously and morally.

By no means could Thomas Gray be called a religious man. While a student at Eton and at Cambridge, he was a regular attendant of church services, and maintained the proper degree of respect for church and churchmen, but he was never a pious or ardent communicant, and never felt the urge to write upon religious subjects. But when Lord Bolingbroke came forth with his Philosophic Works stating certain religious opinions which aroused the poet's ire, he shook off the cloak of silence as to religious discussion long enough to attack Bolingbroke's philosophy, and to inform a rather surprised world that, for all his outward indifference, there were within him certain definite convictions as to the character and attributes of the Supreme Being which he chose to defend if he saw them in danger of derision from one holding opposing opinions. This defense he accomplished in his Essay on the Philosophy of Lord Bolingbroke, before lapsing again into silence as to religious affairs.

Bolingbroke asserted that man, in ancient as well as modern times, has conceived God as being in human image, and there-

fore a finite man, but that all the moral attributes are not the same in God as in man. He asserts that in such a case everything shows God's wisdom and power conforming to our human ideas. But, he says everything does not likewise show God's justice and goodness. He adds that only "artificial theology" tries to demonstrate otherwise. Bolingbroke goes on to say that the origin of evil is very poorly explained by the pagan theory of the two co-existing principles, and even less intelligently elucidated by the account of the fall of man, as this last hypothesis would "distort the moral attributes of God."[1]

It is now that the poet, Gray, for a time becomes a philosopher, and answers Bolingbroke's contentions, at least in a sincere and dignified manner.

He avers that man can "comprehend God's goodness much more easily than this wisdom and power; and if there is no analogy between God's attributes and our conceptions of them, then we can have no adequate conception of them at all."[2]

When Lord Bolingbroke attacks Mr. Wollaston's objection to considering that, having lived above the level of the beasts of the field, he will in death "only serve to furnish dust to be mingled with the ashes of these herds and plants or with this dirt under my feet," Gray says that every thinking person has had the same idea occur to him and has probably rebelled in much the same way. Gray's terminating statement upon this subject is a fine one. A touch of clever sarcasm is detectable when he explains Bolingbroke's admonition to man not to presumptuously murmur against the Almighty Author for making him a

1. Introduction, p.XL,XLI
2. Ibid, p. XLII

humble actor of little account in His drama, an actor who will ultimately mingle with the dust, just as each member of the animal kingdom has mingled with it. Bolingbroke says if man is found complaining of his fate, it only proves that he never deserved to be any higher. "Such", concludes Gray, "is the consolation his philosophy gives us, and such the hope on which his tranquility was founded."[3]

Upon purely religious hypotheses, Gray seems to have had nothing more to say. Moral issues, however, seem to have stirred this interest. He writes to his friend, Mr. Richard Stonehewer, with regard to the contensions of Lord Shaftesbury. Strangely enough, Gray does not seem to expound the philosophical doctrines of the latter; he does not denounce, as might be expected, his making "Harmony his catchword," and his well known attempt to reconcile the old and new by banishing the supernatural, whilst retaining the divine, element of religion."[4] Gray does not go into a discussion of one detail in Shaftsbury's creed, but coolly sets about formulating a few well chosen sentences which scathingly dispose of the whole matter: of both the man and his philosophy.

But here we come upon a question. Was Shaftsbury a real philosopher? Gray surely refers to him as such, for he writes in the letter previously mentioned: "You say you cannot conceive how Lord Shaftsbury came to be a Philosopher in vogue, I will tell you ..."[5] This he then proceeds to do in no uncertain terms. But Mr. Stephen gives us light upon Shaftsbury's own estimate of his own system of thought, and tells us that Lord Shaftsbury

3. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., p.12
4. History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century - by L. Stephen - vol.2, pp.26,27
5. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., p.210

considered that Philosophers are "a sort of moonblind wits who, though very acute and able in their kind, may be said to renounce daylight and extinguish in a manner, the bright visible outside world, by allowing us to know nothing besides what we can prove by strict and formal demonstration."[6] Needless to say that my Lord Shaftesbury did not care to class himself in this category - despite the opinions held through the intervening ages - and that he would not have felt flattered upon this score as well as upon others had it been possible for him to read Gray's appraisal of his contribution to English thought. But as a philosopher, Gray considered him, and as a philosopher wrote of him, and so - knowing Gray's tenaciousness - would he doubtless have called him to his face, had such an encounter not been prevented by the decease of the "philosopher" about forty years before.

The poet then continues his design of sketching the reasons why the world ever listened to the remarks of Shaftsbury. "First", asserts Gray, "he was a Lord; secondly, he was as vain as any of his readers; thirdly, men are very prone to believe what they do not understand; fourthly, they will believe anything at all, provided they are under no obligation to believe it; fifthly, they love to take a new road, even when that road leads nowhere; sixthly, he was reckoned a fine writer, and seemed always to mean more than he said. Would you have any more reasons? An interval of about forty years has pretty well destroyed the charm. A dead Lord ranks but with Commoners. Vanity is no longer interested in the matter, for the new road

6. L. Stephen - op. cit., p.24

has become an old one."[7]

Promiscuous speculation in the field of moral philosophy was not a subject which was looked upon by Gray with anything approaching a relish. For one of such marked scholastic tendencies and habits, it is to be wondered why it was that investigation in this field was a branch of study which the poet never wished to pursue. It is therefore of interest to us to ascertain his private opinions, and, if possible, to discover a reason for his distaste for any research in this direction.

We find Gray stating that: "The mode of free-thinking is like that of Ruffs and Farthingales, and has given place to the mode of not thinking at all ..."[8]

But with Gray we are inclined to think there was - according to his reasoning - philosophy, and philosophy. It is perfectly clear that he did not consider the eighteenth century brand to be true philosophy. He quotes a Platonic description of the character of a genius truly inclined to philosophy. "It includes qualifications rarely united in one single mind, quickness of apprehension and a retentive memory, ... an invincible love of truth, and consequently of probity and justice. Such a soul will be little incl ined to sensual pleasures, and consequently temperate; ... being accustomed to the most extensive views of things, and sublimest contemplations, it will contract an habitual greatness, will look down with a kind of disregard on human life and on death; consequently, will possess the truest fortitude. Such is the mind born to govern the rest of mankind."[9]

7. C.S. Northrup - loc. cit.
8. Ibid
9. C. S. Northrup - op. cit., p.298

Of course Gray readily admits that these very endowments often lead their owner into ruinous paths, especially when accompanied by wealth. But in spite of these draw backs, he continues: "If you have ever met with the portrait sketched out by Plato, you will know it again; for my part, to my sorrow I have had that happiness. I see the principal features, and I foresee the dangers with a trembling anxiety."[10]

So the real difficulty might seem to be this: Gray the conservative, Gray the antiquarian, and admirer of the Platonic sketch, with its tinge of an aristocratic sentiment, refused to be the admirer of and subscriber to those various methods sketched in the eighteenth century which if followed were said to lead toward the ideal social life. But this social life differs greatly from that which Plato would have called ideal. In short, it savors of a radical element, a vague threat of an abrupt change in social, political and religious viewpoints. "Once," says Gray, "it was reckoned graceful half to discover and half to conceal the mind, but now we have been long accustomed to see it quite naked: primness and affectation of style, like the good breeding of Queen Anne's Court, have turned to hoydening and rude familiarity."[11]

Here speaks the true conservative of the eighteenth century. His poetic as well as his aesthetic sense received a shock from the "mode of free thinking."

As Mr. Stephen so aptly puts it in speaking of that age: "The modern philosopher who could spin all knowledge out of his brain, the sceptic who had exploded the ancient dogma, or the

10. C.S. Northrup - loc. cit.
11. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., p. 211

free thinker of any shade who rejoiced in the destruction of ecclesiastical tyranny, gloried in his conscious superiority to his forefathers... An antiquary is naturally a conservative, and men soon began to love the times whose peculiarities they were so laboriously studying."[12]

Thomas Gray was just this type of antiquary, and it may here be seen why he found himself at great variance with modern philosophy.

Mr. Warren says: "Gibbon, indeed, lamented that the poet was sometimes lost in the scholar and man of science. After quoting from the fragmentary piece '<u>Alliance of Education and Government</u>' he proceeds to ask, 'Instead of compiling tables of chronology and natural history, why did not Mr. Gray apply the powers of his genius to finish the philosophic poem of which he has left such an exquisite specimen?'"[13] But perhaps it is just as well that this never was done, as all omens would indicate that possibly Gibbon himself would have deserted the scholar-poet had he gone farther, and come into an inevitable clash with that free thinking of the day which such a philosophy entailed.

Most of Gray's later life was passed during years of growing turmoil for Europe, of comparatively silent but seething political unrest, and of a brewing storm which was not to break into the fury of the French Revolution until eighteen years after the poet's death. But the signs of the times were quite perceptible to the seeing eye; and we are led to wonder at Gray's apparent lack of interest in political affairs. Why was the alert and keen-minded scholar not more quick to read the coming trend

12.L. Stephen - op. cit., p.445
13.Essays of Poets and Poetry, Ancient and Modern - T. Herbert Warren - Chapter on Gray and Dante, p.221

of events? Was it because he voluntarily incarcerated himself within the walls of the University, and did not wish that his interminable spell of study should be disturbed? Or was it that he avoided that which his intuition told him would only prove but another form of shock to his poetic sense?

One of the strongest points in the scholar's character was an upholding of virtue. Upon hearing about a man of ability for the first time, he would frequently ask, "Is he good for anything?" But no degree of ability or genius on the part of the man could mitigate his aversion to a vicious, profligate or unprincipled individual.

Voltaire was a particular object of his detestation. Considering the time when the statement was made it sounds almost prophetic to read that he said, that no one could even conjecture the extent of public mischief which Voltaire might occasion.[14] He believed, however, in separating the character of the man from his literary accomplishments, and although he held Voltaire's political and personal views in contempt, he admired his literary ability, even as he had always done in the case of Dryden.

When a friend was going to the continent, and was bidding the poet goodbye, the latter begged him by no means to visit Voltaire. When asked what possible harm it could do, Gray warmly replied: "Sir, every tribute to such a man signifies." Such was his apprehension of Voltaire's power and influence under any semblance, whether of determined hostility, or of simulated friendship, or of pacific deportment. Mr. Mathias states that "he knew that Voltaire could in a moment fling aside the weeds of peace,

14. Observations on Writing and Character of Mr. Gray - T.J. Mathias

and that war and death were in his hand."[15]

To David Hume, the poet entertained a similar aversion, on the ground of the historian's enmity to religion. Gray asserted that such men took away all a man's consolation, and substituted nothing of any assistance, in its place. Even Walpole calls Gray: "a violent enemy of atheists, such as he took Voltaire and Hume to be."

In a letter to his friend, James Beattie, Gray says: "I have always thought David Hume a pernicious writer, and believe he has done as much mischief here as he has in his own country. A turbid and shallow stream often appears to our apprehensions very deep. A professed sceptic can be guided by nothing but his present passions (if he has any) and interests; and to be masters of his philosophy we need not his books or advice, for every child is capable of the same thing, without any study at all ... That childish nation, the French, have given him vogue and fashion, and we, as usual, have learned from them to admire him at second hand."[16]

Indeed, the only reason for his correspondence with Mr. Hume later on, was because it was upon the subject of the beloved "Ossian". Mr. Hume wrote telling him he was assured as to its authenticity, and proved it by the word of Adam Smith, another who had not been held in the highest of esteem by Gray. But Gray must be understood in his forgiving and forgetting when anything was touched upon which concerned Gothic poetry.

The two works which give us our best clues as to the scholar's educational ideas, were both published posthumously. Early

15. J. Mathias - op. cit., p.36
16. Selections from Poetry and Prose of Thomas Gray - W.L. Phelps - p.92 - (Athenaeum Press Series)

in this treatise we have seen Gray's decided dislike of not only the lack of application of the students at Cambridge University, but also the sort of degeneracy into which learning had fallen. In a poetic fragment, the Hymn to Ignorance, he satirizes the spirit of laziness which he feels infests the place. He salutes that spirit of Ignorance which he ironically terms quite a comfortable state, and warns her by no means to allow a "spark of wit's delusive ray" to break forth. But even while he addresses Ignorance in her "gloomy bowers" she slumbers and does not hear him. She "nods upon her ebon throne." It is a bitter attack upon the scholastic standards of Cambridge University, but it enables us to see, in the later life of the poet, that working out and unfolding of those same critical and rigid standards for education, which we have previously heard expressed by West and Gray in the days of their youth.

And now we come to examine the poet's most important attempt at setting down his opinions upon education and its relation to government. This is the work which Mr. Gibbon regretted that Gray had left unfinished. It is The Alliance of Education and Government.

According to Gosse, the poem was written in August of 1748, but while still composing it, Gray came upon Montesquieu's L'Esprit des Lois, and became dissatisfied with his own handling of the theme. In later years he considered completing it and prefixing to it an Ode to Montesquieu, but upon the death of the Frenchman, in February 1755, the entire idea was given up.[17]

17. Works of Thomas Gray, ed. Edmund Gosse (4 volumes) - - p.113, vol.1

Within the lines of the poem, a necessary alliance is sketched between a good government and a good form of education. He likens men without education to sickly plants. When they have lacked a well-regulated government, he likens them to unfruitful plants in inclement air. He soliloquizes upon the fact that all men have much in common: they seek pleasure, are grateful for benefits; they feel revenge, sorrow and joy. But why, then, are all the different characters among men of this world? Why are some nations industrious and others warlike; why have northern races generally prevailed over those of the south? Why has Asia been the stronghold of despotism, and Europe the seat of freedom? In other words, are we to believe that man's character is necessarily effected by the climate in which he and his ancestors have lived? It is known that mountain-dwelling people are apt to be trained for war, while plain-dwellers are often softened by lives of comparative ease; nations obliged to carry on trade by water naturally become maritime nations.

Here the poem stops, but Mr. Mason has discovered some further maxims of Gray's which seem to indicate that Gray may have meant to incorporate them in his poem at some future time. "The different steps and degrees of education," writes the poet, "may be compared to the artificer's operations upon marble; it is one thing to dig it out of the quarry, and another to square it; to give it gloss and lustre, call forth every beautiful spot and vein, shape it into a column, or animate it into a statue."[18]

Again, upon a different phase of the subject, he philosophizes: "The doctrine of Epicurus is ever ruinous to society; it

18. John Mitford - op. cit., p. 173 - vol.1.

had its rise when Greece was declining, and perhaps hastened its dissolution, as also that of Rome; it is now propagated in France and in England, and seems likely to produce the same effect in both."[19] We cannot fail to wonder if while writing these lines Gray had in mind the not very studious and pleasure-loving student body of his own University, which he had so consistently criticised from the standpoint of the scholar.

Thus, in some respects, we have seen that Gray had evolved a certain philosophy of his own, if one may call it a philosophy. It is the outlook of the scholar tinged throughout with that of the poet. He had no use, for instance, for knowledge if it was not culled from the very source, and he "considered that Encyclopedias and universal Dictionaries of various kinds ... afforded a very unfavorable symptom of the age in regard to literature, as no real or profound learning can be obtained but at the fountain head."[20] To such a scholar we may see how such volumes might seem useless, for his mind was a storehouse of information. As Mr. Woodberry explains it, "He was mentally vastly curious ... and it shows primarily in him the mind of a scholar ... and a scholar's learning is not infrequently a sort of museum. Such a museum was Gray's mind."[21] Is it any wonder that the poet found no use for Encyclopedias and other books of collected and catalogued information?

Let us turn once again to the words of Professor Phelps in his Athenaeum Press Series edition. He admirably explains the scholar-poet's mental attitude toward his theme while composing this last mentioned work, and also that mental change

19. John Mitford - op. cit., p.174
20. T.J. Mathias - op. cit., pp. 50, 51
21. Inspiration of Poetry - George Edward Woodberry - p.122

which he believes was accountable for the work never reaching completion. "The poem," writes Professor Phelps, "with its serious ethical purpose and with its Heroic Couplet form, is distinctly Augustan, and is included in this edition less on account of its intrinsic value than because of its significance in Gray's careet. The fact that he never finished it gives evidence that he outgrew it; and, indeed it is well nigh impossible to imagine the Gray of later years writing a piece like this. His friends, who were greatly pleased with such a didactic poem besought him again and again to complete it; his answer was: he could not."[22]

I believe that Gray's convictions within these fields of religious and moral philosophy, and of education, were brought about by his keen scholarship as well as through his poetic sensibilities, but even here we may plainly trace the course of the growing tide of thought. We have therefore seen one more evidence of that urge toward Gothicism.

22. Wm. L. Phelps - op. cit., p.135

Chapter V

Renewed Poetic Inspiration and Research in English Literature

The Bard is Finished

In the Introduction to this treatise we have seen that The Bard was begun in the same year in which The Progress of Poesy was written, 1754. The following year saw its exordium completed. But it was not until the year 1757 that the entire ode reached completion. When it was published, together with The Progress of Poesy, it bore simply the title "Ode II", even as the other poem was entitled "Ode I". Both poems were in the Pindaric ode form. Both poems were therefore Neo-Classical in form, but they differed in their classification from a standpoint of poetic atmosphere and content. "Ode I" was full of classical allusion, personification, allegories. "Ode II", while not breaking away entirely from the old classical style of allegory and personification, had yet a strong romantic tinge. For instance, let us consider in "Ode II", the idea which Gray took from the Northern Bards:

> "Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
> The winding-sheet of Edward's race.
> Give ample room, and verge enough
> The character of hell to trace."

These lines show us the poet's imagination was at work along new channels of creation. The fate of Edward and of his race is fashioned in the same way in which the doom of King Brian and

his warriors was to be portrayed in the Fatal Sisters which was to lose all claim to most classical characteristics. Gray seems fond of using the loom metaphor, and shows that he must have had some idea of how a web was wrought, although grave doubts are aroused as to this having been another of his many accomplishments by the fact that in weaving, we "weave the woof", but we do not "weave the warp." Samuel Johson comments upon this fact, and we are forced to admit that it is a justified criticism of him who has consistently appeared to be of such impeccable information.[2] But such uses of Northern poetic symbolism clearly prognosticate his future poetic sentiments, and show us why it was that these verses, begun in 1754 were not finished until 1757, in a manner satisfactory to their creator.

It seems to me that when Mr. Parrot gives the fact that "it took three years to write the Bard" as an indication that he dallied over writing the poem, he has overlooked the statements of many other writers upon this matter, which tell us that it was not without intention that Gray delayed the completion of this ode.[3] It must be admitted, by any unbiased student of poetry that Gray did procrastinate in bringing many of his poetic works to their terminations, but in the case of the Bard, was it not because, whether consciously or unconsciously, a change was taking place in Gray's poetic tastes? Was it not that Gray went far and waited long to find that inspiring mental Talisman which should enable him toward the consummation of this ode? Why did the poem meet with a satisfactory completion under its author's inspiration by the blind harper, if this last suggestion is not

2. "They are then called upon to 'Weave the warp, and weave the woof,"perhaps with no great propriety; for it is by crossing the woof with the warp that men weave the web or piece."- Lives of English Poets, fr. Works of Samuel Johnson - Arthur Murphy; vol.2,30.
3. Studies of a Book Lover - T.M. Parrott - p.180

true, and if Gray was not awaiting this very type of romantic stimulus?

A letter from William Mason, written in 1757, gives an account of the inspiration which fired Gray at this time. Mason writes: "Mr. Parry has been here and scratched out such ravishing blind harmony, such tunes of a thousand years old, and with names enough to choke you, as have set all this learned body a-dancing, and inspired them with due reverence for Odikle,[4] whenever it shall appear. Mr. Parry... has put Odikle in motion again."[5]

It is difficult to comprehend Mr. Stephen's meaning when he complains of the Bard, that, "... want of any central idea converts the ode into a set of splendid fragments of verse which scarcely hold together. Contemporary critics complained grievously of its 'obscurity'..."[6] According to Gosse, we understand that both editions of the poem were preceded by the "Advertisement;" - "The following Ode is founded on a tradition current in Wales, that Edward I, when he completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the bards, that fell into his hands, to be put to death."[7] It seem that an explanation of this kind ought to prove quite requisite to render the poem intelligible to its readers. But Mr. Stephen makes reference to those odes, written by a Mr. Colman, in rather caustic criticism of the poetry of both Mr. Mason and Mr. Gray. But Gray was not only equal to this situation, but wrote a very clever letter to Mason upon the subject. The absurdity of the complaint was quite apparent, as it still seems so today. The poet writes, with that scintillat-

5. Wm. L. Phelps - op. cit., p.156
6. L. Stephen - op. cit., vol. III, p. 120
7. Edmund Gosse - op. cit., vol.I, p.40
4. Gray had nicknamed his unfinished poem "Odikle".

ing humor which was so closely a part of him, "So it is ... Mr. Colman ... What have you done to him? For I never heard his name before? He makes very tolerable fun with me, where I understand him, which is not everywhere. ... and says that it is like to produce a great 'combustion' in the literary world;, so if you have any mind to combustle about it well and good; for me, I am neither so literary nor so'combustible!.."[9]

To return to the Bard, it is granted that a certain veil of obscurity clings about it, but it seems to be only that which is most appropriate and colorful in dealing with a figure of the dim past, and by no means such as would obstruct the coherence and continuity of the poem. We may admit that it has points at which we smile a bit, as Oliver Elton says: "The bards, after all wear stage beards, and the header of their spokesman into 'endless night' is too like a theatrical poster."[10] But the poem is of undeniable force and beauty, and is particularly valuable for our consideration. We may well overlook whatever shortcomings we find as to logic, for it is a first attempt at a departure into the "newly known treasures of poetry which was neither classical nor that of the Renaissance;" and, what is of highest importance to our investigations, "... the ode connects itself with his latest adaptations from the Welsh and the Norse."[11]

"The tendency of the Bard is to show the retributive justice that follows an act of tyranny and wickedness; to denounce on Edward, in his person and his progeny, the effect of the crime he had committed in the massacre of the Bards; to convince him that neither his power nor situation could save him from the nat-

9. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., p.231
10. Survey of English Literature - 1730-1780, O. Elton, vol.2,p.60
11. Ibid

ural and necessary consequences of his guilt; that not even the virtues which he possessed, could atone for the vices with which they were accompanied.

> 'Helm, nor hauberk's twisted mail,
> Nor e'en thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail.'

This is the real tendency of the poem; and well worthy it was of being adorned and heightened by such a profusion of splendid images, and beautiful machinery. We must also observe how much this moral feeling increases, as we approach the close; how the poem rises in dignity, and by what a fine gradation the solemnity of the subject ascends. The Bard commenced his song with feelings of sorrow for his departed brethren and his desolate country. This despondence, however, has given way to emotions of a nobler and more exalted nature. What can be more magnificent than the vision which opens before him to display the triumph of justice and the final glory of his cause?"[12]

As the poet's studious urge had guided him into this new conception of poetry, it is to be expected that it would move him to exert his various abilities in order that he should attain those ideals which seem to have been held so clearly in thought.

Mitford has given us a delightful record of a blending of the poet's literary genius with his musical ability. "It is well known that Dryden's Ode to St. Cecilia (sic) was set to music by Handel; and Mr. Mason says, 'Mr. Smith, a worthy pupil of Handel, intended to have set Mr. Gray's ode, The Bard to music;—and Mr. Gray, whose musical feelings were exquisite, with a knowledge of

12. John Mitford - op. cit., (Essay on Gray's Poetry) - vol.I p. CXXXVI

the art, gave him an idea for the overture, which seemed equally proper and striking.'

"Gray said of this proposed overture:'It should be so contrived as to be a proper introduction to the ode; it might consist of two movements, the first descriptive of the horror and confusion of battle, the last a march grave and majestic, but expressing the exultation and insolent security of conquest. The movement should be composed entirely of wind instruments, except the kettle-drum heard at intervals. The da capo of it must be suddenly broke in upon, and put to silence by the clang of the harp in a tumultuous rapid movement, joined with the voice, all at once, and not ushered in by any symphony. The harmony may be strengthened by any other stringed instrument; but the harp should everywhere prevail, and form the continued running accompaniment, submitting itself to nothing but the voice."[13]

Throughout our entire consideration of the Bard we have been struck with a change in Gray, and in his poetic sense and subjects, until we find him so far swept off of his feet toward the romantic that he boldly advises as to the very musical themes and instruments which he would have accompany his verses in no very gentle fashion. The "horror and confusion of battle" in the accompaniment, and the magnificent effect which that "kettle-drum heard at intervals" might have produced, makes one's disappointment even keener when we are told that the proposed work was never executed. But we may read Gray's inspired poem, and through his stirring delineation of that music which he would have wished, we are enabled to gain a delightful conception of Thomas Gray's

13. John Mitford - op. cit., vol.I, note to p.CVIII; p.67

changing poetic outlook.

The Poet at the British Museum

The British Museum was first opened to the public on January 15, 1759. Thomas Gray was an immediate visitor and an enthusiastic student among its rare treasures. He read and transcribed those manuscripts which were collected there from the Harleian and Cottonian libraries. Later, William Mason had in his possession a folio volume of these transcripts by Gray. But of these, only the Speech of Sir Thomas Wyatt before the Privy Council was put in the second number of Lord Orford's Miscellaneous Antiquities.

When we read the words of Dr. Johnson with regard to the Harleian Library, which he catalogued and with which he was therefore very familiar, we do not wonder that it held a strong fascination for our Cantabrigian poet. Of one section of the library, Dr. Johnson writes: "The northern nations have supplied this collection, not only with history, but poetry, with Gothic antiquities and Runic inscriptions; which at least bare this claim to veneration above the remains of the Roman magnificence, that they are the works of those heroes by whom the Roman empire was destroyed; and which may plead, at least in this nation, that they ought not to be neglected by those that owe to the men whose memories they preserve, their constitution, their properties, and their liberties ... the Harleian library, perhaps, excels all others, not more in the number and excellence, than in the splendour of its volumes."[14]

14. Arthur Murphy - op. cit., vol.II, p.494

Is it any wonder that Gray found this collection to be of absorbing interest? We can but smile with a certain satisfaction when we read the Doctor's lines about the "Gothic antiquities and Runic inscriptions," for our last view of our poet showed him revelling in a new poetic sentiment, and with fairly close approach to actual Gothic atmosphere. That was in the year 1757, and now, just two years later, the British Museum offers these old northern treasures. The scholar-poet wastes no time in visiting the museum, and here he comes face to face with a most interesting one of these "Gothic inscriptions and Runic antiquities." At last we may definitely point to an analogy between his scholarly craving and his Romantic leaning, and trace from this point, a direct culmination of his scholarship, in his Gothic poetry.

A Proposed History of English Poetry

In the Mitford account of Gray's life, he speaks of that "intended publication in English literature, which Gray mentioned in an advertisement to the Imitation of the Welsh Odes, and which was an 'History of English Poetry'."[15] Alexander Pope had sketched out a method, and drawn up a little catalogue of the English poets, which pleased Gray immensely, and which he corrected in several ways. Mr. Mason agreed to assist him if he would enlarge upon Pope's plan. So Gray planned to write an introduction where he would determine the Original Rhyme; he planned to give specimens of the Provençal, Scaldic, British and

15. John Mitford - op. cit., vol.I, p.LXVI

Saxon poetry. The history of the Chaucerian school was to be begun after the various sources of English poetry were ascertained.

Toward this project, Mason contributed little. Beside the imitations of Norse and Welsh poetry which he was to write, he made "elaborate disquisitions into the origin of rhyme, and the variety of metre to be found in the ancient poets."[16] Some of these disquisitions will be treated upon farther on in this chapter. "He transcribed many passages from Lidgate, from manuscripts which he found at Cambridge, remarking the beauties and defects of this immediate scholar of Chaucer."[17]

But the poet became tired, and perhaps a bit overwhelmed by the dimensions of his projected enterprise, and when Thomas Warton engaged in a similar work, he sent him his notes, for he considered Mr. Warton to be a very able man for the execution of this plan.[18]

The letter which the poet wrote to Thomas Warton upon this project is here given in part, and followed by Gray's skeleton plan for the proposed history: "Sir," writes Gray, "Our friend, Dr. Hurd, having long ago desired me, in your name, to communicate any fragments or sketches of a design, I once had, to give a History of English Poetry, you may well think me rude or negligent, when you see me hesitating for so many months, before I comply with your request; and yet, believe me, few of your friends have been better pleased than I, to find this subject ... had fallen into hands so likely to do it justice. Few have felt a higher esteem for your talents, your taste, your

16. Ibid, p.LXVII
17. Ibid
18. Mr Warton did not use Gray's plan in his work.

industry. ... A sketch of the division or arrangement of the subject, however, I venture to transcribe; and would wish to know whether it corresponds in any thing with your own plan, for I am told your first volume is in the press."

Introduction

On the poetry of the Galic or Celtic nations, as far back as it can be traced. On that of the Goths, its introduction into these islands by the Saxons and Danes, and its duration. On the origin of rhyme among the Franks, the Saxons, and Provençaux. Some account of the Latin rhyming poetry, from its early origin, down to the fifteenth century.

Part I

On the School of Provence, which rose about the year 1100 and was soon followed by the French and Italians. Their heroic poetry, or romances in verse, allegories, fabliaux, syrvientes, comedies, farces, canzoni, sonnettes, ballades, madrigals, sestines, etc. Of their imitators, the French; and of the first Italian School, commonly called the Sicilian, about the year 1200, brought to perfection by Dante, Petrarch, Boccace, and others. State of poetry in England from the Conquest, 1066, or rather from Henry the Second's time, 1154, to the reign of Edward the Third, 1327.

Part II

On Chaucer, who first introduced the manner of the Provencaux, imported by the Italians into our country. His character, and merits at large. The different kinds in which he excelled. Gower, Occleve, Lydgate, Hawes, Gawen Douglas, Lyndesay,

Bellenden, Dunbar, etc.

Part III

Second Italian School of Ariosto, Tasso, etc., an improvement on the first, occasioned by the revival of letters, the end of the fifteenth century. The Lyric Poetry of this and the former age, introduced from Italy by Lord Surrey, Sir T. Wyat, Bryan Lord Vaulx, etc., in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Part IV

Spenser, his character. Subject of his poem, allegoric and romantic, of Provencal invention: but his manner of tracing it borrowed from the second Italian school. - Drayton, Fairfax, Phineas Fletcher, Golding, Phaer, etc. - This school ends with Milton. A third Italian school, full of conceit, began in Queen Elizabeth's reign, continued under James, and Charles the First, by Donne, Crashaw, Cleveland; carried to its height under Cowley, and ending perhaps with Sprat.

Part V

School of France, introduced after the Restoration - Waller, Dryden, Addison, Prior, and Pope - which has continued to our own times."

The letter continues: "You will observe that my idea was in some measure taken from a scribbled paper of Pope, of which I believe you have a copy. You will also see, I had excluded Dramatic Poetry, entirely; which if you had taken in, it would at least double the bulk and labour of your book."[19]

19. John Mitford - op. cit., p. LXXXVIII

Mr. Norton states that, "The ancient classics were his intimates, his knowledge of early English literature was beyond that of any of his contemporaries, with perhaps the exception of Warton, the historian of English poetry; and his familiarity with Shakespeare was that of a lover. He was a master of Italian and French, and was more or less acquainted with many other languages."[20]

The poet's authoritative knowledge upon the subject of Latin verse as related to English literature is again attested by Henry Hallam, who cites Gray's word in the following paragraph, upon the subject in hand. "It has been proved by Muratori, Gray and Turner, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that rhymed Latin verse was in use from the end of the fourth century." And his footnote to this text reads: "Gray has gone as deeply as any one into this subject; and though, writing at what may be called an early period of metrical criticism, he has fallen into a few errors, and been too easy of credence, he unanswerably proves the Latin origin of rhyme."[21]

In addition to the outline for his History of English Poetry, which has been given above, the only part of it, which is today extant, is the Metrum. This, we are told by Gosse, was written in 1761, and was part of the material which he intended to incorporate in his work. The Metrum is composed of six prose commentaries.[22]

Observations on English Metre is the first of these. It gives a short disquisition upon Anglo-Saxon grammar, as well as treating the various styles in metre which were in use in differ-

20. Chas. E. Norton - op. cit., p.8
21. Introduction to the Literature of Europe - H. Hallam, vol.I, p.53
22. Edmund Gosse - op. cit., vol.I, p.325

ent periods, their scansion, and kinds of rhyme and metre.

The Measures of Verse, is the second in this group. It is a careful study of the measures which are found principally in use among English writers. There are fifty-nine of these in all, and the scholar-poet then proceeds to give due consideration to each, as to verses, and order of rhymes.

Observations on the Pseudo-Rhythms is the next. This gives an account of the most ancient instance of rhyming verse, and of the Welsh preservation of the works of the ancient bards of the sixth century, who wrote in rhyme. Gray also traces the appearance of rhyming verses among the various races of the British Isles.

Some Observations on the Use of Rhyme, begins by citing the oldest instances which we have of rhyme in our language. The earliest date for these, Gray estimates must have been before 1051.

Additional Observations and Conjectures on Rhyme was taken from an essay entitled Cambri. These remarks were selected as relating to the subject of rhyme, and as giving some information as to the Cambrian or Welch prosody, and of its adaptation to music. Quite a space is given to observations on the Linguae Cambro-Britannicae Institutiones by Dr. David ap Rhys, and his explanation of the famous "Secret of the Poets."

Some Remarks on the Poems of John Lydgate begins by giving an idea as to the time and general sentiment of Lydgate's poetry, as well as of its quality. It is of interest to note what Mr. Courthope says in his handling of Lydgate. "What is

really interesting and historically valuable in the art of Lydgate arises from his own incapacity as a poet. He is an exceedingly lame versifier." Then he appends a note to this giving Gray's views: "It is fair to Lydgate to say that Gray's estimate of his merits is more favourable. The reader will find an admirable criticism on his works ... Gray has, however, modernized the text by the occasional insertion of syllables so as to make Lydgate's verse seem much smoother than it really is."[23]

We find Thomas Gray corresponding with Percy upon old books, and these letters are at the present time preserved in the Percy manuscript in the British Museum. In the same pages we find Gray writing to a Mr. Brocket whom he asks to look up some books at the Trinity Library - such as: Paradise of Dainty Devices, England's Helicon, W. Webbe's Discourse of English Poetrie, Samuel Daniel's Musa or Defence of Rhyme, Gawen Douglas' Palace of Honour, etc. This serves to indicate how the poet's interests were focussed upon English literature and its study.[24]

At this point in our consideration of Gray's attributes as a historian of English poetry, it is fit that we should think of what he considered his own style to be in poetic composition. We find he differs widely from Wordsworth as to language, for he says: "As to matter of stile, I have to say: the language of the age is never the language of poetry ... Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost everyone, that has written, has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivations: nay sometimes with words of their own composition or invention."[25] Professor Phelps asks us

23. History of English Poetry - W.J. Courthope, vol.I, p.326
24. D.C. Tovey - pp.189-191
25. W. L. Phelps - op. cit., p.80

to compare this statement with Wordsworth's celebrated theory, as to the language of poetry being identical with that of prose.

Of Gray's beautiful command of the English language and of his powers of description, Walpole wrote in 1775: "We rode over the Alps in the same chaise, but Pegasus drew on his side and a cart-horse on mine."[26]

Gray possessed not only a style of rare beauty, but it was a style with a purpose. This he describes to William Mason as he writes of his aim of achievement in poetry. "Extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry," declares the poet. "This I have always aimed at, and never could attain; the necessity of rhyming is one great obstacle to it: another and perhaps a stronger is, that way you have chosen of casting down your first ideas carelessly and at large, and then clipping them here and there, and forming them at leisure; this method, after all possible pains, will leave behind it in some places a laxity, a diffuseness; the frame of a thought (otherwise well invented, well turned, and well placed) is often weakened by it. Do I talk nonsense, or do you understand me? I am persuaded what I say is true in my head, whatever it may be in prose - for I do not pretend to write prose."[27]

When we read these words of Gray's with regard to the infinite care which he advises in composing poetry, we are reminded of the words of Mr. Stephen who says of him, "What little he left is so perfect in its kind, so far above any contemporary performances, because he never forgot ... that the ultimate aim

26. Letter to Cole, December 10, 1775
27. W.L. Phelps - op. cit., p.77
28. L. Stephen - op. cit., vol. III, p.135

of the poet should be to touch our hearts by showing his own."[28]

We see that Gray considered himself rather as a poet than as a prose writer, yet one could certainly never accuse him of bumptiousness. Even though he inscribed splendid prose, and was for a time willing to undertake the compilation of this History of English Poetry, he considered his prose to be unsatisfactory, and lays no claim whatsoever to laurels from that direction.

There can be little doubt that Gray possessed the ability for the successful execution of his proposed history. It is generally felt that ~~was~~ Warton was too exclusively the antiquarian, and that this one-sidedness has rendered his work faulty. But Thomas Gray, was the inspired poet, as well as the clever and eager antiquarian, who will be seen in the succeeding chapter. Therefore we may safely agree with Mr. Courthope, for in the Preface to his History of English Poetry he makes this same point, together with the expression of an earnest wish that it had been Gray instead of Warton who had carried out his plan and had written a History of English Poetry.

28. L. Stephen - op. cit., vol. III, p.135

Chapter VI

The Poet as an Architectural and Antiquarian Devotee

The knowledge and absorbed interest of Thomas Gray, where the study of architecture was concerned was well known. Authorities upon the subject sought his opinions, and conferred with him upon various phases of their study, as they would do with a colleague to whom architecture was the sole profession. He was particularly distinguished as an unusually well versed exponent of the Gothic style.

The structure of the buildings in his own country claimed his indefatigable attention. We have evidence of his industry in his compilation of notes upon the cathedrals of England, which project he carried out purely for his own amusement, and in satisfaction of his own scholarly interest as a student of architecture. These notes we find listed as: "The Several Parts of the Cathedrals Ranged According to the Time in which they were Built." Under this heading appear notes on the cathedrals of Exeter, Wells, Chester, Durham, Carlisle, Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester, Winchester, and Norwich, all of which he has grouped in the eleventh century. His treatment of the twelfth century he has divided into two parts: in the first part he mentions and discusses cathedrals of Lichfield, Landaff, Lincoln, and later constructed portions of eleventh century edifices. The latter part of the twelfth century includes: Ely, Peterborough

Chichester, Canterbury and St. David's. In the thirteenth century, a later portion of Ely is treated; then York, Salisbury, Rochester, Westminster and others are handled.

A minute description of the monuments belonging to England's royal family was drawn up by this architectural enthusiast. This is entitled, "The Monuments of the Royal Family of England, which Remain Undestroyed from the Conquest, A.D. 1066, Ranged According to the Time in which they were Erected." Fifty-three of these stones are enumerated, ranging in dates from William I, A.D. 1066, to James I, 1603.

Upon the poet's extraordinary powers of distinction as to periods and types in the art, Mitford has said. "... he could, at first sight, pronounce on the precise time when any particular part of our cathedrals was erected... He invented also several terms of art, the better to explain his meaning on this subject."[2] The biographer then continues by quoting the words of the Rev. Mr. Cole, of antiquarian fame. "After what I have said of Gray, in respect to the beauty and elegance of his poetical composition," remarks Mr. Cole, "it will hardly be believed that he condescended to look into the study of antiquities. Yet he told me that he was deeply read in Dugdale, Hearne, Spelman, and others of that class, ... Indeed, I myself saw many specimens of his industry in his collections from various manuscripts in the British Museum."[3]

Mitford then brings a most important bit of information to our notice. He says, "Some of his observations on this subject afterward appeared in Mr. Bentham's History of Ely."[4]

2. John Mitford - op. cit., vol.I, P. LVII
3. Ibid, p. LVIII
4. Ibid, p. XXXIV

Now, upon an investigation into, and a perusal of the above named work, I find that the full title under which it appears is: History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely, from the Foundation of the Monastery, A.D. 673, to the Year 1771. When stating his original purpose in composing this history, Mr. Bentham states: "I cannot help thinking that a history of what is called Gothic architecture in this kingdom; its origin, progress, and state in different periods and ages, must afford an agreeable and useful entertainment to every curious and inquisitive mind; and I am apt to flatter myself, that the notices I have given, and the questions and quotations I have made from our best and most ancient historians, and other occasional writers, relative to it, may be of use to such as may hereafter have occasion to make further inquiries into a subject, that is at present somewhat obscure, as having never yet been professedly treated of."[5]

Mr. Bentham then continues in a way which delights our eyes, for he not only acknowledges gratitude to the same Mr. Cole about whom we learn from Mitford, but to our poet himself. Mr. Bentham writes: "My grateful acknowledgements are due to the Rev. Mr. Cole of Milton, near Cambridge, to the Rev. Mr. Warren, Prebendary of Ely, and to Thomas Gray, Esquire of Pembroke Hall; for their kind assistance in several points of curious antiquities."[6] This is surely the testimony of an authority as to Gray's researches, in both architecture and antiquaries, which is not to be forgotten. It is the sincere thanks of one connoisseur to others whom he considers to have reached a high

5. History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely, from the Found. of the Monastery, A.D.673, to the year 1771 - James Bentham - Preface III
6. Ibid, preface IV

degree of attainment in his field.

In Gray's letter written to Mr. James Bentham, in 1765, it is of interest to see that the historian is being thanked for the loan of notes. But Gray does not hesitate in making free subsequent criticisms, additions and remarks to Mr. Bentham as to his work.

It is to be regretted that we do not have in our possession that little book which Gray says he composed also for his own amusement, in 1758. This is the Catalogue of the Antiquities, Houses, etc., in England and Wales. This was drawn up upon the blank pages of Kitchen's English Atlas. It was printed and distributed posthumously to Gray's friends, by William Mason.[7]

The ability to see the beauty in whatever form of art the spectator contemplates, the gift of sensing its hidden technique to a sufficient degree to grasp its importance and aid in clearly comprehending it without allowing it to fetter his clear appreciation and expression of it, were those priceless qualities found in Thomas Gray. That is why even Mr. Cole was obliged to pause, and to comment upon his marvelous poetic attributes, as well as his undeniable antiquarian instincts."The drift of my present studies, "Gray writes to Dr. Wharton, "is to know, wherever I am, what lies within reach, that may be worth seeing whether it be building, ruin, park, garden, prospect, picture or monument - to whom it does or has belonged, and what has been the character and taste of different ages. You will say this is the object of all antiquaries. But pray, what antiquary

7. Mitford - op. cit., vol.I, p. XXXIII

ever saw these objects in the same light, or desired to know them for a like reason? In short ... I am persuaded that whenever my List is finished... you will think it of no small use."[8] This "List" to which Gray refers, is none other than the Catalogue of Antiquities, Houses, etc. in England and Wales of which we have heard before.

In his account of the life of the poet, Mr. Robert Carruthers avers, "His observations on art and antiquities, and his sketches of foreign manners, evince his admirable taste, learning, and discrimination."[9]

Whether the scholar is writing to James Brown, upon the Chapel of St. Sepulchre in York - which he accompanied with an excellent drawing - or whether to Thomas Wharton, upon stained glass, and its correct use, he is entirely at home and within his scope. He waxed most enthusiastic when the latter decided to give his house some "Gothic ornaments". But Gray warns him to have these on the inside rather than on the out, as he does not wish to be obliged, when visiting Wharton, to be directed to "the Gentleman's at the ten Pinnacles, or with the Church-Porch at his door."[10]

In discussing Gothic architecture with Horace Walpole, he does not hestitate to tell him that he disagrees entirely with this owner of Strawberry Hill, as to the era of greatest Gothic perfection. He asserts that he considers the nave of York Minster about as fine as may be found "in a great and simple style," and that this belongs in Edward the Third's reign.[11] Thus he proves that this era is the one most nearly

9. Life of Thomas Gray - Rob't Carruthers, p.10, from Selected Poems of Thomas Gray - ed. W.J. Rolfe (Harper Bros. N.Y.1887)
10. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., p.176
11. Ibid, p.240

approaching that of Gothic perfection, and when Gray spoke upon the subject of architecture, Walpole was quite apt to become a good listener. We are inclined to agree, I think, with Mr. Stephen that, "Walpole took to antiquarianism. Possibly he had caught the contagion from Gray."[12]

That work, upon the subject, which deserves a particularly careful consideration is of course Gray's Essay on Norman Architecture. Here he sketches the characteristics of Norman or Saxon architecture, together with the particulars which have distinguished this kind of architecture, lasting from the Conquest to the beginning of Henry the Third's reign. The first of these distinctions which he makes is the semi-circular, or round-headed arch; the second distinction is the massy piers, or pillars "either of an octagonal, round, or elliptical form, on which the arches rise;" the third distinction is the capitals of the piers and their great variety of forms; the fourth distinction is the ceilings; the fifth distinction is the ornaments in front of the arches. Gray concludes this essay with a particularly well suited and Gray-like paragraph as he speaks of the buildings of this period: "they have really a rude kind of majesty, resulting from the loftiness of their naves, the gloom of their aisles, and the hugeness of their massive members, which seem calculated for a long duration."[13]

Does this last description not remind us of passages which we have seen in Chapter II, ~~only~~ where the description was of majestic, mighty and gloomy mountains instead of architecture? Does the very point of similarity not show that whether it be

12. L. Stephen - op. cit., vol. III, p.445
13. Ibid., p. 13-20.

mountains or monasteries it is the romantic, gloomy, and "Gothic" type of subject to which Gray's nature warms, and which we are to see carried to its highest and most sublime degrees in this favorite realm of his poetry?

Mr. Stephen, in speaking of this period in English thought, has said, "The last half of the century was, as I have said, preeminently historical. As civilization progresses, as records are better preserved, ~~and~~ a greater permanence in social organization makes men more disposed to look beyond their immediate surroundings, and a tendency to historical inquiry is naturally awakened. ... Men like Malon and Stevens were beginning those painful researches which have accumulated a whole literature upon the scanty records of our early dramatists. Gray, the most learned of poets, had vaguely designed a history of English poetry, and the design was executed with great industry by Thomas Warton ... Everywhere a new interest was awakening in the minute details of the past. The antiquaries of earlier periods may have accumulated greater stores of knowledge; but they did not apply the systematic and microscopic industry to the investigation of minute points of manners, languages, or individual history. Something of the scientific spirit seems to have infected the modern school of infinitesimal research."[14]

Something of the scientific spirit of research had imbued Gray. For, as Mr. Woodberry has skillfully put it, "...he interested himself in geography; he investigated heraldry, He was an expert in the literature of the art of cooking. He was a man of comprehensive faculty and consequently of erudition."[15]

14. History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century - vol.II. p. 444
15. G.E. Woodberry - op. cit., p.123

And so we see our poet-scholar as both an architectural and an antiquarian authority, which forms one more link in our chain as we trace his evolution from an Augustan to a Romantic writer.

Chapter VII

The Poet as a Gothic Enthusiast

The Ossianic Controversy

It is the opinion of Professor William Lyon Phelps that the Romantic Movement is exemplified in Thomas Gray. This is exactly what I have been endeavoring to show throughout this entire thesis, through an examination of and investigation into some of the branches of learning into which his deep scholarship led him. "But Gray is more than half romantic in his temperament..."[1] explains Mr. Stephen, and we are inclined to believe that if this fact may not have been apparent to the world during the poet's earlier life, surely no one could fail to note it during those later years now under our consideration.

In 1755 Gray was deeply stirred by Mallet's Introduction a l'Histoire de Dannemarck. A love for Northern mythology was awakened, and he lost no time in studying it with the greatest enthusiasm.

But when in 1760, the Ossianic Fragments appeared, the poet's excitement knew no bounds.

"A few years previously, Gray had shown in The Bard ... that simple tales from a rude age had an interest of their own, and this tendency to look to the past for the materials of poetry helped in a high degree to form the character of the romantic spirit. This is everywhere present in the Ossianic poems; and a further and more effective illustration of it appeared in 1765

1. L. Stephen - op. cit., vol.II, p.366

in the Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, collected and edited by Percy."[2]

"Gray had indeed formed a high opinion of the Fragments (of Macpherson's,) Some of them had been sent to him in manuscript, and he had corresponded with Macpherson. At the beginning he expressed some doubt."[3]

He set about the task of making all sorts of inquiries, he tells Wharton, and says the answering letters which he received made him think that the external evidence seemed to prove the Fragments were counterfeit, but the internal is so strongly the other way that he decided to believe them genuine, for it was not possible to believe them written by the same man who wrote those ill-composed letters. Then on the other hand, he could not understand how so unlettered a man could have translated them so well. Cambridge University thought them spurious.

Oliver Elton says, in speaking of Gray, "What he wrongly doubted was Macpherson's talent; and in this lay the solution of the dilemma; but only the progress of scholarship could provide it."[4]

Gray especially liked the Song of the Six Bards. Here we see Gray back to the subject of bards! Macpherson sent him the manuscript, and those lines which appealed to him most strongly were:

> "Ghosts ride on the tempest tonight.
> Sweet is their voice between the gusts of wind.
> Their songs are of other worlds."[5]

Here we may see that the feelings of horror, terror, solitude and of ghostly visitors had evidently been despoiled of

2. Life and Letters of James Macpherson - Bailey Saunders, p.17
3. Ibid, p.87
4. Survey of English Literature 1730-1780 - Oliver Elton, vol.II -p.104
5. Ibid, p. 88

their dangers, and had come to appear sublime when viewed from afar. Of the above lines, from these Gaelic Fragments, Gray writes, "Did you never observe (while racking winds are piping loud) that pause, as the gust is recollecting itself, and rising upon the ear in a shrill and plaintive note, like the swell of an Aeolian harp? I do assure you there is nothing in the world so like the voice of a spirit."[6]

Many times the poet had listened to that wind, and felt within him all that those three lines so perfectly expressed. It is no wonder, then, that when he found these feelings so perfectly expressed in this new poetry, he forgot his concern over the possibility of a spurious origin; forgot the apparent illiteracy of the translator, and was willing to overlook everything for the sake of reveling in this new form of poetic satisfaction.

Of course Macpherson could only give Gray a vague, traditional account (embellished by his own speculations) as to the historical and antiquarian aspect of the poems. With this in mind, it is no wonder that his answering letters did not satisfy a man of Gray's profound and accurate learning. But this fact failed to influence Gray in his judgments.

"Men so different in mental qualities, literary aims, tastes, and capacities, as Blair, Hume, and Gray ... shared the common astonishment to the full, and ... were more eager than Macpherson himself to collect as much of it as could be found."[7]

As Leslie Stephen has said, "The interest produced by Chevy Chase and Childe Maurice was the interest of finding that

6. Ibid, p.88
7. Ibid, p.96

our ancestors had been genuine human beings, capable of exploring manly emotions in a straight-forward way, instead of an interest in their modes of dressing and swearing".[8] Macpherson's poems produced that same interest in the minds of their readers, all of which is just another way of stating the growing romanticism of the age. With Gray, the germ of this romanticism had been harbored in early years, but it reached full fruition only under a Gothic cultivation. Thus I believe we may make the statement without fear of seeming to speak a paradox, that with Thomas Gray, Gothicism brought out the best in him as truly as he sought to bring out the best in Gothicism.

Gray continued to correspond with his friends about Ossian. He even said he had "gone mad" over it, which is putting it pretty strongly for a gentleman of even the second half of that conservative eighteenth century. But this going "mad" can easily be understood when we consider what he wrote, in 1758, to William Mason. He urged him to be as wild and picturesque as possible in his Caractacus; and thus he speaks of Mallet's historic work: "I am pleased with the Gothic Elysium. Do you think I am ignorant about either that, or the 'hell' before, or the 'twilight'? I have been there, and have seen it all in Mallet's Introduction a l'Histoire de Dennmarck, and many other places."[9]

It is not only plausible but natural, when we find that Gray also writes to Mason: "But the subjects I speak of (i.e. antiquities) to compensate (and more than compensate) that unavoidable poverty, (of present knowledge) have one great advantage when they fall into good hands: they leave an unbounded

8. L. Stephen - op. cit., vol.II, p. 447
9. Edmund Gosse - op. cit., vol.II, p. 352

liberty to pure imagination and fiction (our favorite provinces), where no critic can molest or antiquary gainsay us."[10] Into these same "good hands" the Icelandic fragments were later to fall, and to have their translations issue forth through the medium of "an unbounded liberty to pure imagination." Whether enjoying Mallet's history, or translating Norse verses, Gray lived in the era and in the very atmosphere of his vivid imagination which constantly reconstructed the most superhuman and most fantastic of characters as easily as he had formerly visualized the quiet scene of the boys at their game of ball in his Ode to Eton College.

Getting back to Macpherson, there were three definite points upon which he received attacks from his enemies.[11] Briefly they were as follows: (1) He was unable to produce the text of the Gaelic verses. He professed to have collected these orally. Dr. Johnson observed that, "If the poems were really translated, they were certainly first written down." But the original manuscripts were never produced, and those manuscripts found after his death appear to be a "retranslation of parts of his own English," as Elton says. (2) His poems were wholly different from the other traditional ballads of the Highlands and Ireland, in spirit and atmosphere. Macpherson substituted haze for the brilliant picture given in the Highland verses. (3) He was charged with plagiarism, but his methods were clever ones. He even pointed out likenesses between his translations and passages from Milton and the Bible, thus forestalling much criticism on this ground. But when, in Carthon (Address to the Sun), the author

10. Letters to W. Mason, September 28, 1757
11. For an account of the Ossianic Controversy in all its details see "Life and Letters of James Macpherson" by Bailey Saunders, op. cit. - Chapter IX. Also "Celtic Revival in English Literature - 1760-1800" by Edward Snyder, p.78

seems extremely familiar with Biblical texts, and when in a subsequent poem he seems equally conversant with Gray's Bard, the question of their authenticity seems most doubtful. But this did not bother Thomas Gray.

Gray still admired these poems after the critics had launched their bitterest attacks, and hurled their best proofs as to a spurious origin. But while these critics, the majority of whom were not poets at all, were quibbling over which century produced the verses, Thomas Gray was enjoying them with his usual appreciation of poetic and romantic beauty. He said he would prefer to believe them genuine, but that if they were not, they at least were wonderful poetry; and he was almost the only one of these contemporaries who was level-headed and sensible enough to regard them in this light.

Mr. Edward Snyder actually traces an influence which Gray exerted upon Macpherson. He claims that the Bard was one of the sources of inspiration that led Macpherson to begin writing Ossian; and he also claims that our poet's favorable comments on the Scotchman's early Ossianic attempts added to the enthusiasm with which they were received by many of Gray's literary friends.[12]

It surely must have been quite engaging to Mr. Stonehewer's interest when Gray wrote to him mentioning the packet which he had received from Scotland. Though he admits it to be inferior verse, yet he calls it "full of nature and noble, wild imagination. Five Bards pass the night at the castles of a Chief (himself the principal Bard); each goes out in his turn to ob-

12. Edw. Snyder - op. cit., p. 61

serve the face of things, and returns with an extempore picture of the changes he has seen; it is an October night (the harvest month of the Highlands). ... The oddest thing is that every one of them sees Ghosts (more or less)."[13]

During Gray's visit to the Scottish Highlands in the summer of 1765, he wrote Dr. Wharton of watching the work progress on the widening of the bed of the river Deane. He said he was fascinated, and adds that which is of still more interest to us: "All the Highlanders that can be got, are employed in it; many of them know no English, and I hear them singing Erse-songs all day long."[14]

Then we have seen that whether Macpherson's own brain produced the poems of Ossian, or whether it was merely his pen which transcribed them from an ancient source, made small difference to Thomas Gray. They were Erse poems, and as such he loved them. The essence of pure beauty was what he craved, a beauty not found in the quiet well-ordered Augustan verse, but a wild, uncultivated, savage beauty which he drank with depth, satisfaction and above all, with the sincerity of the absorbed onlooker, but still of the non-partisan in the Ossianic Controversy.

13. C.S. Northrup - op. cit., p. 235
14. J. Mitford - op. cit., vol.II, p. 451

Norse Poetry

Upon the question of Gray's Norse scholarship, and ability as a translator of Runic manuscripts, there is no greater authority to whose opinion we may defer than Professor G.L. Kittredge.[15] Though he believes it quite possible that the poet learned the Norse tongue, he does not consider it at all probable that he ever mastered it. Upon this point he differs with Edmund Gosse, who asserts that Gray puzzled it out for himself, with the help of the Index Linguae Scytho-Scandicae of Verelius. Gosse adds that at this time, in the eighteenth century, save a few Icelandic scholars, no one was acquainted with this language which was supposed to have derived its roots from the Hebrew.[16]

But Professor Kittredge explodes Gosse's interesting theory by supplying the information that there were in existence at that time, two perfectly good Latin texts of those two poems which Gray is credited with having translated from the Norse. Of these poems Gray gives many literal Latin renderings. "By the use of these literal renderings," states our authority from Harvard, "Gray could have written both The Fatal Sisters and The Descent of Odin without reading a word in the original language."[17] But farther on in his consideration of the poet's Norse knowledge, he adds, "What we know of his scholarly habits and his insatiate love of investigation makes it incredible, however, that he should have contented himself with so humble a process. It is more probable that he carefully compared the Latin text with the Old Norse, and by this means made out some-

15. See Prof. Kittredge's Gray's Knowledge of Old Norse in Appendix to W.L. Phelps Selections from Poetry & Prose of T.G.
16. Edmund Gosse - op. cit., pp. 160 ff.
17. W. L. Phelps - op. cit., Appendix XLIV

thing of the originals... Since he is likely to have done this with many other interesting texts in Bartholin and elsewhere, he may perhaps have arrived at a halting knowledge of the language."[18]

It is understood that Gray intended to use his Norse poems as illustrations of parts of the text of his proposed History of English Poetry, but decided to use them simply as single poems in his new edition by Dodsley when he abandoned the idea of his history.[19]

The author of that work to which Professor Kittredge thinks Gray is indebted, was a professor at Copenhagen, and was credited with having been one of the founders of the science of Northern antiquities. He gave a Latin translation of even his notes, side by side with the Old Norse. It would therefore have been quite possible for Gray to have gained all his knowledge of the content of these Norse works from the Bartholin Latin translations. And this is also the opinion held by Mr. F.E. Farley, who maintains that Gosse has no good ground for his contentions as to Gray's Old Norse scholarship.[20] But here again the poet is given the benefit of the doubt, and it is considered highly probable, by Professor Kittredge, that the Latin translations were simply used in order to furnish the poet with a good working knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical construction, so that he might then translate from the Old Norse texts without following the Latin ones at all. Whatever the method of translating these poems may have been, we know their sublimity of Gothic atmosphere, of mythological characterization, as well as of fascinating pictorial effect.

18. Thomas Bartholin's texts were the Latin texts in which the material of Fatal Sisters and Descent of Odin were found.i.e. "Antiquitatum Danicarum de Causis contemptae Mortis à Danis adhuc Gentilibus Libri Tres."
19. W.L. Phelps, op.cit. XLIV.
20. Scandinavian Influences Eng. Rom. Mov., F.E. Farley, Chap.3

The Fatal Sisters was written in 1761, and was built around strictly Romantic themes. Again we see the use of the loom-metaphor. This stirring eleventh century picture is one which a Native of Caithness, Scotland is supposed to have seen. The twelve sisters, weaving their horrible webs were the awful figures which his terrified eyes beheld. Gray begins his poem with a majesty, and yet with a feeling of gathering dread which is a premonition of evil forces at work. "Now the storm begins to lower" exactly describes the tone which pervades the entire poem up to the point where the climax is reached; and the frightful women rend the web, and "Each bestride her sable steed. Hurry, hurry from the field." Though the poem ends there, the reader's thoughts do not. They are carried irresistibly on with the wild steeds and their grim riders. It is a poem which calls forth every spark of the reader's vivid imagination in response to Gray's mighty portrayal of such a fantastic, emotional, and inspiring scene. Its very meter beats out the thunder of those phantom horses' hoofs. Trochaic tetrameter is the one meter in which such a poem might best have been handled; and no one knew its fitness for his purpose more surely than did Thomas Gray.

The same meter has been employed for The Descent of Odin, which Gray produced in the same year. We first see Odin riding his "coal-black steed," and realize perhaps why Gray retained the meter for this poem as well. The references to "Hela's drear abode", and to"the Dog of Darkness" lend a touch of a modified form of realism.

"While from his jaws, with carnage fill'd
Foam and human gore distill'd;
Hoarse he bays with hideous din,
Eyes that glow, and fangs that grin;
And long pursues with fruitless yell,
The Father of the powerful spell."

The Prophetess' recurrent theme echoes through the stanzas with a rhythm and a music which are almost Wagnerian.

"Now my weary lips I close:
Leave me, leave me to repose."

And when the Prophetess at last solves the riddle of the "Traveller's" identity, a ringing triumph is distinguishable in her words, as all pretense of a mutual ignorance as to each other's identity is swept aside.

"Ha! no Traveller art thou,
King of Men, I know thee now,
Mightiest of a mighty line -"

But, Odin interrupts her cry with an answer quick and sharp.

"No boding Maid of skill divine
Art thou, nor Prophetess of good;
But Mother of the giant-brood!"

Here is a dramatic situation of warmth and feeling, and of sentiments and proportions to which the Augustan Gray would have been almost a total stranger. Here the new Gray has come to the front. Where, in his earlier poetry could we imagine that the poet would for a moment have considered writing in so dramatic a fashion? He would not have done it because he could not have done it. Gray's romanticism had bided its time. Its seed was present, and had come very close to a fruition when he had avowed his full prerogatives to a free use of his imagination under Mr. Parry's inspiration for his Bard. But now he had broken forth into genuine romantic poetry only after the added

urge of further linguistic and literary research both on his own part, and on the part of others. His scholarship was again responsible for his radical change. His craving for a knowledge of Norse poetry had led him straight to the fountain head of what was to be his grandest inspiration: that free, fearless and creative spirit which pervades and encompasses old Norse poetry.

A Supporter of and Pioneer in the Early Romantic Movement

The Celtic revival, and the Gothic taste of the late century were highly important first steps in the coming Romantic Movement. They satisfied a definite desire for novelty in literary style. Many vivid images were drawn from Druidism, with its wicker baskets filled with human sacrifices, its mistletoe boughs, and its priest-craft. We have good evidence that this Druid worship, with all its weird accompaniments was fully appreciated by Thomas Gray. It not only stirred his interest in Erse poetry, but it touched his antiquarian instincts. In 1770 we find he wrote to Dr. Wharton of seeing a "Druid circle of large stones 108 feet in diameter, the biggest not eight feet high, but most of them still erect. They are fifty in number."[21]

Besides the poet's Norse productions, which we have already discussed, there were his translations from the Welsh which were very creditable ones, although they by no means held that inimitable spark of romantic genius with which his Icelandic translations are so richly imbued. Mr. D.C. Tovey speaks of

21. J. Mitford - op. cit., vol.II, pp. 531-532

Gray's remarkable receptivity to new literary tendencies. He speaks of Gray as being effected by Ossian more as a Continental than as an Englishman. Tovey gives his reason for this as being a certain shudder of presentiment which reached the poet's sensitive genius at the first breath of a reviving spirit of romance.[22]

To quote the words of Mr. Edward Snyder, "... it becomes evident that the Celtic Revival was dominated by the personality of the greatest poet, and most careful scholar of the day - Thomas Gray. His own Celtic production was meagre; but the influence of the man who wrote the Elegy, and declined the laureateship was in no way dependent upon quantity. His information was derived from a large number of sources; his influence was diffused through an even greater number of channels."[23] An illustration of this domination and literary leadership by the great poet occurs where Mr. Snyder speaks of the changing trend of the century. "Gray's Bard had few admirers when it was first published, for the simple reason that practically nobody knew who the Bards were, or what their political influence has been in the long struggle between England and Wales ... By the time the Romantic Movement was well under way, Celtic-English poetry was commonly written and universally understood."[24]

It is rather amusing to observe how Horace Walpole, regardless of his own pseudo-Gothic Strawberry Hill ideas, pokes fun at his old Cambridge friend for his Gothic taste, and his enthusiasm for Norse poetry. "Who can care," asks Walpole, "through what horrors Runic savages arrived at all the joys and glories they conceived- the supreme felicity of boozing ale out of the

22. D.C. Tovey - op. cit., p. 33
23. E.D. Snyder - op. cit., p. 68
24. Ibid, p. 194

skulls of their slain foes.[26] This has its origin in a misinterpretation of a phrase by Ole Worm. But ridicule of either friend or enemy made little impression upon Gray wherever Gothicism was concerned.

In Mr. Courthope's account of the early Romantic Movement he makes a statement of no small importance to students of this period. He says, "The Romantic Movement had, in fact, passed into the stage of pure Literary Renaissance, so that it becomes now necessary... to give some account of the Revivals (1) of Erse Legend; (2) of Scandinavian Mythology; (3) of Mediaeval English Metrical Forms."[27] All three of these branches had been admirably covered by our scholar-poet, examples of which might be seen respectively, in his works: The Triumphs of Owen, the Descent of Odin, and in existing portions of his proposed History of English Poetry. Have we not, therefore, every reason to now regard Gray in the light of a supporter of and pioneer in the Romantic revival?

"It is interesting to notice," states Professor Phelps, "the strange and strong contrast between the shy, reserved temperament of Gray, and the pronounced radicalism of his literary tastes ... that this secluded scholar, ... should have quietly cultivated tastes so distinctly Romantic. It seems to show that one-man power counts for something in literary developments."[28]

Mr. Tovey likens Thomas Gray to Coleridge from a standpoint of the two poets having produced too little poetry. However, there is a vast difference between the ages in which the two men lived. Coleridge was to come in an age which was redol-

26. W.J. Courthope - op. cit., vol.V, p. 408
27. Ibid, p. 400
28. W.L. Phelps - op. cit., p. 170

ent with inspiration, and indeed that was from whence all his enthusiasm came. But with Gray, the enthusiasm came from within the man. The inspiration was born within his own heart as he chose his own subjects.[29] "A mind searching in so many different directions ... is almost fore-doomed to give very little to the world... But what is given is a little gold instead of much silver."[30]

"He loved Spenser, and a love of Spenser implies kinship with the romantic art."[31] This is absolutely true. Gray's influence upon the age through his "Kinship with the romantic art" had made him a leader instead of a follower. Whether we have seen him as the college student, as the poet, or as the Cambridge professor,[32] he never ceased to be the careful scholar; and he gradually became the romantic scholar. "The most significant thing in the study of Gray's poetry is his steady progress in the Romantic direction. Beginning as a classicist and disciple of Dryden, he ended in a thorough-going Romanticism," remarks Professor Phelps, and we can not fail to heartily agree with him.[33]

In 1815, Mr. Mathias wrote: "Nearly 100 years have passed since the birth of Gray... So various and extensive was his command in every region of literature, and the application of his knowledge so just and accurate; so solid and unerring was his judgment; so rapid, yet so regulated, was the torrent of his imagination; so versatile was every faculty within him, whether to science, to poetry, to painting or to music; and so richly and so regally was he endowed with every liberal and kindred art and

29. D.C. Tovey - op. cit., p.28 (30) Ibid, p. 31
31. The English Lyrics in the Age of Reason - Oswald Doughty, p.162
32. While a professor at Cambridge, Gray introduced the Italian teacher, Agostino Isola, who was later to teach Wordsworth Italian. His grand-daughter, Emma Isola, became the adopted

accomplishment, that a scholar, when he reflects, can scarcely refrain from exclaiming with the philosophic bard, Hvi ΔΕΜΑΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΝ ἐν ᾧ ταδε πανθα κυκλεῖται."[34] (Lo and behold! a royal personage in whom are manifested all these fine qualities.")

Through the years of our poet's life we have traced his various branches of learning, those into which his marvelous scholarship led him. From his earliest days at Eton, while receiving from his uncle his first training in scholarly methods of academic inquiry, to those days when he searches the Icelandic texts, we have seen and appreciated a great genius. It has always been the Romanticist who has striven in a steady upward climb in his journey away from the Neo-Classical literary characteristics.

"Gray broke the way not only for Scott, but for all who since his day have turned with delight to the wild, enchanted fields of northern myth and saga."[35]

The truth of the foregoing paragraph is appreciated when we consider Gray's strong influence upon his age, and the weight of his opinions upon the thought of his contemporaries. Yet this was surely not entirely due to his accomplishments as a poet. Had he been of a less versatile scholarship he would not have possessed that ability to so influence his contemporaries in such a variety of the learned professions. His scholarly inquiry into these various walks of life led him to a singularly comprehensive view of the entire field of learning, and to choose only that which he most wanted from each. We find him consistently discriminating in favor of that which most closely approaches the romantic in thought and feeling. Ultimately he

---- daughter of Charles and Mary Lamb, and the wife of Tennyson's fellow-traveler, publisher and friend, Edward Moxon. - T.H. Warren, op. cit., p.234

33. W.L. Phelps - op. cit., p.XXII (34) T.J. Mathias - op. cit. p.1

35. T.M. Parrott - op. cit., p.203

exults in the mazes of Erse and Scandinavian poetry, and only then cries out that, "the deepest chords in my nature have at last been struck!" Upon such testimony we can not fail to concede that the scholarship of the poet Gray has at last culminated in an enthusiasm for Gothicism.

Finis

Comprehensive Summary

Throughout these chapters it has been my aim to sketch the development of certain tendencies in a man, through an examination of some of those various fields of learning into which his scholastic versatility inevitably led him. From Gray's earliest days at Eton, to his last days at Pembroke Hall, these tendencies are manifested to such a marked degree that the task of bringing them constantly to the attention of the reader has been a comparatively easy one. For instance, it was not difficult to observe that the poet's intense dislike for the unscholarly character of the student life and curriculum at Cambridge would only cause him more highly to cherish those fine ideals instilled within him by his uncles. Cambridge might dabble in the Greek and Latin authors while in reality pursuing only the frivolities of life, but that was not the sort of thing to which Thomas Gray would consent to be a party.

As a traveler, we have compared Gray with Addison, and have observed how a comparison has caused the former to stand out as the appreciator of wild and rugged scenery even when obliged to travel long distances to reach it. "Do you not think a man may be wiser (I had almost said better) for going a hundred or two miles; and that the mind has more room in it than most people seem to think, if you will but furnish the apartments."[1]

1. Gray's Letters, D.C. Tovey (Letter to Brown) vol. iii, p. 41

A man's versatility of scholarship is in no way more clearly shown than by an examination of his library. In the case of Thomas Gray we deeply regret our lack of a complete list of those volumes which constituted his literary collection; yet from our examination of those books which we know he possessed, we have been enabled to gain an adequate estimate of the poet's studious inquiry into the divers branches of knowledge herein discussed.

We have seen Gray as the naturalist. We have been able to feel how keenly he was alive "to the changes and the manifestations of the natural world, kept careful notes of temperature and weather, made elaborate lists of the arrival of birds and the leafing and budding of flowers."[2]

Through the poet's own excellent collection of manuscript music and musical notes, we have understood his taste for music, and his sensitivity to shades of difference in the voices of famous musical artists as well as in the works of great composers. Then we know at least that "he enjoyed music, and played the piano of his day sufficiently to get the richest artistic inspiration that the solitary dreamer can create for himself."[3]

With an interest approaching amusement we have witnessed his detestation of Voltaire, and of the generality of eighteenth century philosophers, together with a large portion of their religious and moral conviction. His philosophy, if we may term it as such, was purely of the Platonic variety from which all modern ideas, long since forced into a

2. Bare Souls, by Gamaliel Bradford, p. 81
3. Ibid., p. 80

recognition by the march of progress, were definitely excluded. We cannot forbear the emission of a grateful sigh when we reflect that at least the poet was never to be shocked or perhaps embittered by the excesses of the French Revolution. For religion, Gray had his own reverent, but rather narrow ideas. When radical philosophers dealt with that subject in anything approaching a sacrilegious strain, Thomas Gray was prone to condemn both the philosophers and their viewpoints from a perch of what we might term his own particular brand of Gray orthodoxy.

When the famous Hymn to Ignorance was written, it was a repetition of the scholar's earlier scorn for Cambridge University, and for her lackadaisical methods of study. He had not changed one iota in his ideals of what it really was that constituted true scholarship and scholarly methods. At times his verses have almost a Dean Swift air of satire, for he turns away in disgust as Ignorance, while he yet addresses her, slumbers hopelessly on.

That divine spark of true poetry, that vital spirit, which once awakened, we are to know as the spirit of long latent romance, comes into its own for the completion of The Bard. As we have previously seen, Mr. Parry's music would have fallen upon unfertile soil had not the poet been unconsciously awaiting this touch which was to set his creative mind alight with a new and delightful fire. This may be regarded in some ways as the turning point of his poetry, for all verse which follows is in the romantic strain.

The researches at the British Museum, and his careful examinations of the Harleian and Cottonian manuscripts filled him with a conception of a History of English Poetry, which, although never actually written, would undoubtedly have been a far better and more thorough one than Warton's.

Architecture charmed him. We find that, "Old Gothic ruins had a peculiar fascination for him and his temperament."[4] Ruinous antiquities, and creations of a past civilization were tempting subjects to write upon, as well as to explore. Gray proposed to do both, and straightway became more of a Romanticist in the process.

The Ossianic Controversy swept a whole group of famous late eighteenth century men into its warring circle. Rather a cosmopolitan gathering it was, as far as professions were concerned. The majority of them were not poets at all. But they did not hesitate to sit in judgment upon the much debated origin of the Erse poems, fretting themselves into all manner of bad humors and ugly sentiments, while Gray quietly asserted his utter indifference as to the authorship of those Fragments. The poet was actually so deeply engrossed in the love and spirit of Gothic poetry that he had the very excellent good sense to enjoy the verses for what they were, and not to contend over what people might consider they were not. Blissfully (or as blissfully as it would be possible for Gray) he launched into the study of Icelandic manuscripts. His poetic translations became filled with a fiery influx of passionate feeling, through romantic subjects. His Norse poems attained a peak in the

4. Gamaliel Bradford, loc.cit.

world of Romantic poetry which set a new rhythm in poetic thought and content ringing through his age, and marking Gray a representative of the very essence of the Romantic Movement, and as its great and sincere exponent.

Thus it is through the chapters of this disquisition that we have considered an inspiring as well as an inspired scholar. Gray, through his many channels for collecting valuable knowledge, brought to the Movement what no other man of the age was either able or qualified to bring: a profound and enthusiastic understanding of and participation in Gothicism, through the sublimity and perfection of his varied, natural, and masterful scholarship.

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