

HORACE WALPOLE'S LETTERS AS SOURCE MATERIAL
FOR THE LITERARY HISTORY OF
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

The "indispensable" eighteenth century, the Augustan Age of English letters, the Enlightenment, the Aufklärung--these are some of the appellations that have been given to that period of literature beginning with the Restoration and continuing through the years of Samuel Johnson. Formerly regarded without interest, and often even with distaste, by many students of literature, this period has witnessed a revival of popularity that will possibly continue because of the rich material found in its many records. Oliver Elton interestingly states the situation thus:

Of later years the literature of our eighteenth century has come back into its own: and I think the real reason to be that it expresses better perhaps than of any other time, the permanent average temper of our race, as it is found in Johnson, in Fielding, and in Captain Cook. It also expresses the Scottish and the Irish genius: there are Hume and Smollett, and Thomson; Goldsmith, and Burke, and Sheridan.¹

Coming as it did after the youthful and vigorous romanticism of the Elizabethan age, the eighteenth century naturally marked a reaction from such tendencies. Intelligence reached a new peak of activity, an age of reason rapidly developed, and common sense, not inspired endeavor, became the motivating influence in life. Moderation and conservatism mark the predominant temper of the age. As individual enthusiasm was frowned upon, there were set up in accordance with

¹A Survey of English Literature, 2 volumes, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928), I, Preface, VII.

reason and common sense, rules of conduct to which all men were expected to conform. "They tried to look alike, to write alike."²

At this period England and France had a monopoly on "the enlightenment." Between the two countries there was a constant exchange of ideas. Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau were heroes in England; no Frenchman was sufficiently traveled until he had stayed in residence on the island. Richardson, Hume, and Sterne were fads in France; travel in this country was the mark of a "finished" Englishman. The aristocracy, concerned with affairs of government, occasionally indulged in the pleasure of writing as a pastime, and took an interest in the production of less fortunate persons. But certainly they were not concerned with new ideas of conduct, of the State, or of the Universe. Toward the close of the century there did arise a tendency for free thought and free expression, but it soon passed away. "At no point in the eighteenth century was English society too fastidious in taste or too elegant in tone."² In the same manner the landed gentry was otherwise engaged, partially in management of local affairs, partially in hunting, gambling, drinking, and other super-

¹William Vaughn Moody and Robert Morse Lovett, A History of English Literature (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), p. 199.

²J. H. Millar, The Mid-Eighteenth Century, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 5.

ficial activities. The "march of intellectual progress" meant nothing to them. Likewise, the middle class, the backbone of trade and later of governmental affairs, was busy with its money-making and its fight for social recognition. In short, life was strictly a material process.

Such conditions are reflected in eighteenth century literature, and of course inevitably resulted in a literature of the classical type. With organization tending to restrict the individual, with moderation and restraint leveling all pursuits and activities, and with all standards of value based on practicality, the century could hardly do otherwise. It was, moreover, an age of prose, the literature concerning itself primarily with social manners and customs and life in the town. The eighteenth century brought forward "the mastery of prose as the vehicle for general thought."¹ But the greatest proof of the temper of the times was the agreement of writers upon rules and principles in accordance with which they should write. The acceptance of literary conventions set up by writers in the past marks the Classic Age of the eighteenth century.

¹Edmund Gosse, A History of Eighteenth Century Literature (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1899), p. 399.

²Moody and Lovett, A History of English Literature, p. 215.

It was a period in which the imagination slept, and in which the sense of the temporal realities of life was strong. It was a period of criticism rather than of creation, a period in which regularity and perfection of literary forms were of more importance than originality of thought. It was an age of interest in the development of society and of institutions rather than in the assertion of the individual.¹

Self-satisfied by settling everything according to reason, the eighteenth century was perfectly acquiescent in regard to the order of the world as it existed. Thoroughly convinced that they were living in an era of unparalleled enlightenment and culture, they settled into a mood of complacency too pronounced to admit of much self-criticism.

That the critic should make his appearance at such a stage in history and literature is, nevertheless, not surprising. That the chronicler should endeavor to record an age so rich in anecdote is still less so. In the person of Horace Walpole is found the combination of both. Living as he did over a period of eighty years (1717-1797), he was able to watch every turn and every development. Thus he was a witness to the leading literary events of his age--the passing of Pope and the Augustan Age, the reign of Johnson, the gradual decline of classicism, the beginning

¹Moody and Lovett, A History of English Literature, p. 215.

of romanticism. Likewise, connected as he was with a socially prominent family--that of the famous Whig Minister, Robert Walpole--he enjoyed its attendant privileges and pastimes, among them a gentlemanly interest in literature as patron and writer.

From early years Walpole exhibited a scholarly bent, and at Eton and Cambridge, where he received the prescribed classical eighteenth century education, he revealed some proclivity for the classical languages and a marked interest in the writing of classical poetry. His many visits to France throughout his life likewise brought him in contact with the literati of that country--among them Rousseau and Voltaire--and aroused a lasting interest in their literature. In addition, the life of a gentleman afforded Walpole not only time to read widely of the literature of his own country, but also the opportunity to cultivate the friendship of many of its contemporary writers. He was acquainted with Hume, was a personal friend of Gibbon, and corresponded with Robertson. He carried on a brief and almost disastrous business correspondence with Chatterton. William Mason and Thomas Gray, of course, were his close friends. Fanny Burney he knew and admired personally; Garrick was his neighbor. His hobby of maintaining a private press at Strawberry Hill, moreover, led him into negotiations with many other writers of the period, and aided materially in his desire to become known as

a patron of literature.

Walpole, however, enjoyed not only the title of patron of letters but that of a writer as well. With a care free pretense at casual writing, contrasted by an equally marked industry, he produced an astonishing number of works. A writer of innumerable short bits of light verse, he was likewise the author of an unusually long didactic poem called an Essay on Gardening. He was also a popular writer of essays, numbers of which appeared in the fashionable newspaper, The World. Always interested in history and antiquities, he produced two such works--namely, Historic Doubts of Richard III, and Miscellaneous Antiquities; his interest in art brought about a compilation called Anecdotes of Painting, his only work considered of much value today. His Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors shows his interest in research and in English writers belonging to aristocracy. The Mysterious Mother is his representation in the field of drama; his Castle of Otranto, in that of fiction. In consideration of these and such additional works as the Description of the Villa (an account of Strawberry Hill), his Aedes Walpolianae, and Short Notes of My Life, one can see the broad field of literary endeavor over which Walpole spread his experimentations. Indeed, few forms were left untried by him.

Today, however, Horace Walpole's fame rests upon his vast correspondence rather than upon his own professed literary attempts, the importance of which has grown less with the lapse of time. These hundreds of letters are valued today for their grace and wit, their importance as a social record of the age. Austin Dobson expresses this general consensus of opinion when he says:

For diversity of interest and perpetual entertainment, for the constant surprises of an [*sic*] unique species of wit, for happy and unexpected turn of phrase, for graphic characterization and clever anecdote, for playfulness, pungency, irony, persiflage, there is nothing in English like his [Walpole's] correspondence. And when one remembers, in addition, this correspondence constitutes a sixty-years' social chronicle of a specially picturesque epoch by one of the most picturesque of picturesque chroniclers, there can be no need to bespeak any further suffrage for Horace Walpole's incomparable letters.¹

But Horace Walpole's correspondence has still a further value. Qualified not only through his own writing which led him into the classic and the romantic field, but likewise through his constant close contact with the literary world in general, Walpole was able to comment in his letters authentically and freely upon the leading literary activities of his age. True, he assumed the fashionable at-

¹Austin Dobson, Horace Walpole, A Memoir (3rd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 336-337.

titude that the literature of the age was of little worth, that the future of literary endeavor in England was dark-- that, in fact, the next Augustan Age would dawn in America;¹ true it is that his critical comments are marked by class prejudice and worldly cynicism. Nevertheless, these letters relate, incidentally and sometimes casually, much of the literary history of the eighteenth century. In them one may trace the progress of historical writing toward modern methods of organized research; the rise of journalism and the low principles upon which it was conducted; the great height to which the art of letter writing was developed. In poetry they trace the early conflict between romanticism and classicism, reveal the general predominance of the classical ideal, and establish beyond doubt the inferior quality of the poetry of the age. In drama they disclose the popularity of the stage as a source of amusement, the interest in private theatricals, and the revival of Shakespeare. In fiction, they reveal the realistic and sentimental tendencies of the novel and Walpole's defense of his own practice in the use of the romantic in this type of literature. In short, though the value of Walpole's corres-

¹To Sir Horace Mann (Nov. 24, 1774), Peter Cunningham (ed.), The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford, 9 vols., (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1906), VI., p. 153. This edition of Walpole's correspondence will be the source of material used throughout this thesis, and hereafter will be designated under the title of Letters.

pondence is usually conceded to lie in its picture of eighteenth century social life, the purpose of this work is to show that his letters likewise provide an adequate account of the leading literary activities of the age, particularly those in the fields of miscellaneous prose, poetry, drama, and the novel.

CHAPTER I

HORACE WALPOLE'S COMMENTS UPON THE MISCELLANEOUS PROSE LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In the realm of English literature the eighteenth century is often called an age of prose. The appropriateness of this designation is easily recognizable when one considers the great variety of prose forms undertaken and practiced at this time--forms such as biography, memoirs, travel, scientific dissertations upon art, literary criticisms, letter writing, history, journalism. All these types enjoyed a merited popularity, but it was in the fields of historical writing, letter writing, and journalism that prose showed a most marked development. The correspondence of Horace Walpole comments widely and interestingly upon the miscellaneous prose literature of the day, and it is from this source that the material for this chapter is taken.

Histories in the form of chronological records have existed from the earliest times. Some of the masterpieces of ancient classical literature take the historical form. The Middle Ages produced historical writers of importance, though conditions favorable for true historical study did not exist at that time, and historical writing is mainly confined to the church, the dominating influence of the age. The humanistic movement of the Renaissance was soon checked by the Reformation, and histories of a secular nature were once

more overshadowed by the church. Of eighteenth century historical development G. A. Gooch says:

With the eighteenth century, the scope of historical study rapidly widened. While the task of collecting material was steadily pursued, a more critical attitude towards authorities and tradition was adopted, and the first serious attempts were made to interpret the phenomena of civilization.¹

And, as in all phases of activity, the century had a definite standard and code for the writing and criticism of history. Rationalism being in full power, the eighteenth century historians reasoned from an a priori theory, smugly endeavoring to prove that all principles should conform to the established theory. Any fact, any statement, any condition which could not be justified through reason was worthless. Likewise, to the historical writer, civilization was static. As Gooch expresses the thought,

The abstract and absolute standard, the failure to realise the difference in atmosphere and outlook in different ages, and the zeal for political and philosophic propaganda were hostile to patient research and disinterested investigation. The conception of continuity was the property of a few isolated thinkers.....Thus the tendency of the age encouraged writers to content themselves with superficial inquiry.²

This well illustrates the prevailing eighteenth century ignorance of the Middle Ages and the characteristic treatment

¹History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920), Introduction, p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 10.

of all things mediaeval. The age had a fair knowledge of Greece and Rome because the spirit of the age favored classical ideas and institutions. But the Middle Ages was a period unknown and ignored by all. Voltaire, Robertson, Hume, and Gibbon treat it with disdain. Research was still in its infancy, for the faculty of critical judgment in dealing with the testimony of authors was just beginning to assert itself. Yet there was no lack of interest in the history of their nation on the part of the educated classes, and historical works appeared with astounding rapidity.

From the first, Horace Walpole, equipped with a classical if rather desultory education at Eton and Cambridge and long periods of travel on the continent, was aware of the low status of historical writing in England. As early as 1734 Voltaire had written that there were no good historians in England and that a Frenchman, Rapin, had to write one for them.¹ Thirty years later the same condition still survived; Walpole lamented to Dr. William Robertson, portions of whose History of Scotland he had criticised, that "Good historians are the most scarce of all writers and no wonder! a good style is not very common; thorough information is still more rare-- and if these meet, what a chance that impartiality should be added to them!"²

¹A. W. Ward and A. L. Waller, Editors, The Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 volumes. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916) X, 316.

²(Jan. 18, 1759), Letters, III, 200.

Such conclusions Walpole was forced to draw from writers whose undesirable characteristics were constantly being revealed either through their actions or their writings. His aristocratic taste was early outraged by the mercenary tendencies of certain historians, as well as by the indifferent attitude of the layman toward the importance of historical writing. No better example is found than that of Thomas Carte, a laborious Scotch historian¹ who undertook by contract with the City of London to write the history of England. Walpole describes the situation as follows:

....Never was such an opportunity for Apollo's playing off a set of fools as there is now! The good City of London, who from long dictating to the government, are now come to preside over taste and letters, having given one Carte, a Jacobite parson, fifty pounds a-year for seven years, to write the history of England; and four alderman and six common councils men are to inspect his material and the program of the work. Surveyors of common sewers turned supervisors of literature! To be sure they think a history of England is no more than Stowe's Survey of the Parishes! Instead of having books published with the imprimatur of an university, they will be printed, as churches are whitewashed, John Smith and Thomas Johnson, churchwardens.²

As previously stated, the art of historical research was young, yet Walpole felt the need for careful study and

¹Letters, I, 315 (note).

²To Sir Horace Mann (July 22, 1744), Letters, I, 315.

accurate content. So from the very first, lack of these was one of his constant criticisms. Even Hume did not escape his censure. Twice Walpole calls him to account for carelessness in detail. First, he complains: "Mr. Hume has published his History of the House of Tudor. I have not advanced far in it, but it appears an inaccurate and careless, as it certainly has been, a very hasty performance."¹ Again in a letter to Sir David Dalrymple, a historian in his own right, he remarked somewhat superciliously that the book was very "amusing to one who knows a little of his own country,"² but that it contains little in the way of instruction for a beginner. In fact, he continued, the details were so much avoided and the whole skimmed over, that it could not have been "very carefully performed."³

A graver charge which Walpole brought against the historians of his country was that their work was undependable in the all-important matter of historical truth. This, too, Walpole constantly pointed out, was a further proof of the eighteenth century's taking a more critical attitude toward authorities and traditions. The works of the earlier historians Walpole lucidly and correctly evaluates in this manner:

¹To the Reverend Henry Zouch (Mar. 15, 1759), Letters, III, 216.

²(Nov. 30, 1761), Letters, III, 465.

³Ibid.

Yet, how are our old Histories written? By monks at fifty or an hundred miles perhaps from the metropolis; where there was no post, scarce a highway: those reverend fathers must have been excellently well-informed! I scarcely believe even a battle they relate--never their details.¹

However, modern histories, he declared, were as lacking in truth of detail. Prejudiced attitudes frequently marred the writing of most historians. Hume and Smollett could not write truthfully because their one purpose was to "whiten the House of Stuart."² In fact, he charges, all English histories revealed this weakness of prejudiced opinion; Whig and Tory principles had been the question of dispute among writers for over one hundred and sixty-six years, and still there were no signs of abatement.³ Yet, had a prejudiced attitude been the only weakness of the historian, the future of historical writing might have been brighter. But when Walpole found both a prejudiced attitude and a dull style in the writer, the case appeared almost hopeless. His favorite example of the dull and prejudiced historian is Lord Lyttelton, whom he mentions time and again in ridicule. His most interesting observation, however, is this: "Have you waded through or into Lord Lyttleton? How

¹To Sir Horace Mann (Nov. 25, 1764), Letters, IV, 293.

²To the Reverend Henry Zouch (May 14, 1759), Letters, III, 224.

³To the Reverend Williams Mason (July 4, 1778) Letters, VII, 88.

dull one may be if one will but take pains for six or seven-and-twenty years together."¹

Indeed when Walpole points out the many weaknesses of the historians of his own time--their mercenary tendencies, their carelessness, their untruths, their dulness--when he sums up the situation by charging that fame or private interest alone is their object,² there is little wonder at his concern for the validity of future historical writing. Two of many such comments are worthy of notice. The first occurs in a letter to the Reverend William Cole in which he remarks that not only were all recent books of literature made practically worthless through their inaccuracies, but that likewise the newspapers were guilty of the same offense. This weakness was certain to have its bad results, he thought, and "future history will probably be ten times falser than all preceding."³ The second comment questions not only the authenticity of future historical writing but also predicts the gullibility of its future readers. In questioning the possibility of rendering a true account of the constant Whig and Tory antagon-

¹To George Montagu (July 31, 1767), Letters, V, 58.

²To George Montagu (Nov. 21, 1765), Letters, IV, 441.

³(June 21, 1782), Letters, VIII, 234.

ism Walpole writes ironically to Sir Horace Mann: "In short, in such a season of party violence, one cannot learn the truth of what happens on the next street: future historians, however, will know it exactly, and what is more, people will believe them."¹

As Walpole's correspondence reveals the status of historical writing in England, it likewise reveals the strong influence of French historians upon this form of literature. Naturally the name of the great Voltaire is prominent throughout Walpole's letters. But before Voltaire's great work appeared, the popularity of French history had manifest itself in England. In a letter to Sir Horace Mann in 1750 Walpole enthusiastically refers to two new histories, Montesquieu's Esprit des Loix and Hainault's Abregé Chronologique de l'Historie de France. The first he describes as the best book of its kind ever written on account of its available wit and knowledge; the second, though excellent as a picture of the manners of the time, he calls far inferior because of its minute details and "Frenchisms."² That French literature should directly influence English historical writing was still more pleasing to Walpole. He notes that Hume in his

¹ (Mar. 9, 1785), Letters, VIII, 545.

² (Jan. 10, 1750), Letters, II, 187.

History of Great Britain achieved the best style of any English historian, and that he wrote "in imitation of Voltaire," a manner which was very pleasing.¹ Curiously enough, though, the popularity of the French historians dwindled. Evidently they possessed the same weaknesses as their English brethren, for Walpole himself grew quite disgusted with them. He tells the Reverend Mr. Mason that he received a very tiresome and ill-written French history called the Memoires Secrets pour servir d' l' Histoire de la Republique des Lettres en France depuis 1762 jusqu' a nos jours. He further condemned it for its lack of judgment, its partiality and cited it as an example of the low status to which French historical writing had degenerated.²

But from the appearance of his Universal History Voltaire became the dominant influence upon historical writing in both France and England. Walpole makes favorable and unfavorable comments upon him as a writer throughout his letters. In 1757 he mentions the appearance of Voltaire's seven-volume history and describes it as the best of his works, in spite of its inaccuracies and personal prejudices.³

¹To Richard Bentley (March 27, 1755), Letters, II, 428.

²(Aug. 4, 1777), Letters, VI, 463.

³To the Earl of Strafford (July 5, 1757), Letters, III, 88.

Yet this favorable opinion of Voltaire quickly changed. Walpole, mentions without emotion the order of the Swiss government to seize and burn certain of his works.¹ Also, according to Walpole, Voltaire was guilty of the same offenses in writing as preceding historians--he deliberately falsified accounts, gave false characterizations by gilding the pictures of obnoxious historical figures,² and apparently stooped so low as to accept bribes.³ So in spite of Walpole's respect for Voltaire's great wisdom and sagacity as a writer of political history, he felt that the Frenchman's methods were far from the best and regretted the precedent which he established for his successors. To the Countess of Ossory Walpole thus sums up Voltaire's methods of writing history and likewise reveals the weightiness of his influence:

....Voltaire and David Hume formed a story that would suit their opinions and raise their character as vigorous writers. For Voltaire....avowed treating history like a wardrobe of ancient habits, that he would cut, and alter, and turn, into what dresses he pleased; and having made so free with all modes, and manners, and measures, and left truth out of his regime, his journey-men and apprentices learnt to treat all uniforms as cav-

¹To George Montagu (Jan. 5, 1766), Letters, IV, 459.

²To Sir Horace Mann (Aug. 13, 1764), Letters, IV, 264.

³To Mann (Sept. 9, 1773), Letters, V. 502.

alierly; and beginning by stripping mankind of all clothes, they next plundered them of every rag, and then butchered both men and women that they might have no occasion even for a fig-leaf: a lovely history will that of their transactions be!¹

It was only natural that Voltaire and his new school of rationalistic thought should soon come in contact with David Hume, the first outstanding historian of England. Hume was first attracted to Voltaire by his stay in France during the years 1733-1737. Here he learned that historical writing could be based on the past experiences of man, and could also be endowed with literary excellence.² Walpole's letters convey a clear notion of Hume's methods of writing, his popularity, and his influence. When his History of England first appeared, Hume was considered the best historian of his country,³ and became highly popular at home and abroad. From Paris Walpole writes that Hume was the "Mode,"⁴ that he was "the only thing in the world that they believe implicitly,"⁵ that he was "fashion itself."⁶

¹(Dec. 8, 1794), Letters, IX, 450-451.

²C. H. E. L., X, 320.

³To Hume (July 15, 1758), Letters, III, 151.

⁴To the Right Honorable Lady Hervey (Sept. 14, 1765), Letters, IV, 405.

⁵To Thomas Brand (Oct. 19, 1765), Letters, IV, 426.

⁶To the Countess of Suffolk (Sept. 20, 1765), Letters, I, 489.

Yet sprinkled throughout Walpole's letters are remarks concerning Hume's faults as a historian. He is accused of falsifying his materials in order to make the materials appear new;¹ he is accused of teaching a false philosophy through his theory that "a system of wise and virtuous motives tend to produce folly and crimes;"² he is charged with atheism and bigotry; and finally he is accused of possessing a shallow mind and a love of vanity.³ But his greatest fault as a historian is his absolute ignorance of English constitutional law and government. This fault, as well as several others, Walpole points out as follows:

This was a great deal too deep for that superficial mountebank, Hume, to go; for a mountebank he was. He mounted a system in the garb of a philosophic empiric, but dispenses no drugs, but what he was authorized to vend by a royal patent, and which were full of Turkish opium. He had studied nothing relative to the English constitution before Queen Elizabeth, and has selected her most arbitrary acts to countenance those of the Stuarts: and even hers he misrepresented; for her worst deeds were levelled against the nobility, those of the Stuarts against the people. Hers, consequently, were rather an obligation to the people; for the most famous part of despotism is, that it produces a thousand despots, instead of one.... The flimsy, ignorant, blundering manner in which Hume executed the reigns preceding Henry VII, is a proof how little he has examined the history of our constitution.⁴

¹To George Montagu (Dec. 8, 1761), Letters, III, 465.

²To the Reverend William Mason (Aug. 25, 1778), Letters, VII, 115-6.

³To Governor Pownall (Oct. 27, 1785), Letters, VIII, 421.

Walpole's letters, however, indicate that Hume was also a figure of great importance and influence. He was read with respectful attention when his article denouncing Lock, Algernon Sidney, and Bishop Hoadly appeared in the Critical Review.¹ He is regretfully described by Walpole as sharing with Samuel Johnson "the seats of solid argument" in the realm of literature.² And to John Pinkerton, a close observer of current events as well as a writer in his own right, he was such a man as "might have ruled a state," and one who definitely surpassed Gray in depth and understanding.³

Hume, however, was not the only outstanding historian of the classical eighteenth century. He was forced to share honors with Dr. William Robertson. According to Walpole, from the appearance of his History of Scotland, Robertson's success was assured. His work received universal approbation and he was acclaimed one of the greatest authors of Britain.⁴ Robertson is rated much above Hume by Walpole, who constantly praises his History of Scotland for its pure and easy style, its perspicuity, its unified narration,⁵ its

¹To the Reverend William Mason (Feb. 5, 1781), Letters, VII, 511.

²To Mason (Apr. 25, 1781), Letters, VIII, 30.

³To Pinkerton (June 22, 1785), Letters, VIII, 560.

⁴To Sir David Dalrymple (Feb. 25, 1759), Letters, III, 210.

⁵To Robertson 1759, Letters, III, 202.

impartiality,¹ and above all, its truth of facts--all points of excellence found too seldom in the eighteenth century history. Robertson apparently was successful in maintaining for a time such an enviable reputation. His Charles V brought a price of three thousand pounds from the publishers in spite of the charge that the book contained no new materials.² Walpole, however, considered Robertson's History of America much inferior to his previous works. In his opinion there was "only a great affectation of philosophizing without much success"; there was neither genius, shrewdness, nor penetration to be found in the work, and on the whole the reading was very dull.³ His final book, Disquisitions concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India, evidently suffered a similar reception; Walpole states that the book proved only amusing; it was far too defective in content to be considered authentic.⁴ In fact, Walpole seems quite accurately to have summed up Robertson's ability as a historian by saying:

¹To Robertson (April __, 1769), Letters, V, 155.

²To Reverend William Cole (Aug. 30, 1768), Letters, V, 127.

³To the Countess of Ossory (June 15, 1777), Letters, VI, 445.

⁴To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 23, 1791), Letters, IX, 361.

Dr. Robertson shone when he wrote the History of his own country with which he was acquainted. All his other works are collections, tacked together for the purpose; but as he has not the genius, penetration, sagacity, and art of Mr. Gibbon, he cannot melt his materials together and make them elucidate and even improve and produce new discoveries; in short, he cannot, like Mr. Gibbon, make an original picture with some bits of Mosaic.¹

The greatest of eighteenth century historians, then, had likewise already made his reputation. Of Edward Gibbon, the historian, Walpole never grew tired of speaking. One can trace in the Letters the appearance of each of his volumes by the accompanying estimate of style and subject matter. For Gibbon's vast knowledge, sound judgment, and power of judicious reflection Walpole expresses the warmest admiration, pronouncing him in these respects to be unlike both the ancient and the modern historian.² Walpole's announcement and description of the first two volumes of the famous Decline and Fall may be taken as the typical reception by critics all over England, where the work took the country by storm. To William Mason he announces:

Lo, there is just appeared a truly classic work: a history, not majestic like Livy, nor compressed like Tacitus; not stamped with character like Clarendon; perhaps not so deep as Robertson's 'Scotland' but a thousand degrees above his 'Charles'; not pointed like Voltaire, but as accurate as he is inexact; modest as he is tranchant and sly as Montesquieu without being so recherché. The style is as smooth as a Flemish picture, and

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 23, 1791), Letters, IX, 361.

²To Gibbon (Feb. 14, 1776), Letters, VI, 307.

the muscles are concealed and only for natural use, not exaggerated like Michael Angelo to show the painter's skill in anatomy; nor composed of the limbs of clowns of different nations, like Dr. Johnson's heterogeneous monsters.¹

Though Walpole was a personal friend of Gibbon, he did not shrink from pointing out the weaknesses in the History as each volume appeared. He did not hesitate to point out the futility of handling such dull subjects as Constantinopolitan history--a marked example of the eighteenth century disregard for the interdependence of human relationships; he did not hesitate to accuse Gibbon of servile flattery to his patron and of prejudice toward the Scots; he did not hesitate to tell him that his style was growing less pleasing with the appearance of each new volume.² The fourth and fifth volumes, for example, showed little improvement over the second and third. Walpole writes to Mason that Gibbon is lacking in spirit and grows obscure from an attempt to handle too much material and too many subjects. Likewise his "rhetoric diction" grows tiresome, and on the whole, the volumes are not worth the time consumed in reading.³ However, Walpole indicates that the last two volumes

¹(Feb. 18, 1776), Letters, VI, 310-11.

²To William Mason (Jan. 27, 1781), Letters, VII, 505-6.

³To William Mason (March 3, 1781), Letters, VIII, 15.

of the Decline are worthy of Mr. Gibbon's ability as a historian. Here Gibbon is handling material with which he was more thoroughly acquainted, and there is less shifting of subject-matter. From Walpole's concluding review one can trace the typical eighteenth century historian's philosophy of history: that of a love of detail, a disregard of scientific analysis and a hatred for reform. He remarks:

I finished Mr. Gibbon a full fortnight ago and was extremely pleased. It is a most wonderful mass of information, not only on history, but almost on all the ingredients of history, as war, government, commerce, coin, and what not. If it has a fault, it is in embracing too much, and consequently in not detailing enough, and in striding backwards and forwards....from one subject to another; so that without much memory and much method it is almost impossible not to be sometimes bewildered.... The last chapter of the fourth volume, I own, made me recoil, and I could scarcely push through it. So far from being Catholic or heretic, I wished Mr. Gibbon had never heard of Monophysites, Nestorians, or any such fools! But the sixth volume made ample amends; Mahomet and the Popes were gentlemen and good company. I abominate fractions of theology and reformation.¹

To mention Gibbon's Decline and Fall is to recall the famous controversy induced by the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters. These discuss the secondary cause of the progress of Christianity from the days of Nero to those of Constantine. Led by the theory that all facts must be proved by reason, Gibbon's attitude toward some of the traditions of Christianity as stated in these chapters caused

¹To Thomas Barrett (June 5, 1788), Letters, IX, 126-7.

a scandal among churchmen and laymen. Walpole naturally supported Gibbon when he was attacked by the Church. Henry Edward Davis wrote a pamphlet, "An Examination of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters of Mr. Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" in which he accused Gibbon of misrepresentation and plagiarism. Walpole, in the role of advisor, told Gibbon either to ignore both charges or to make an answer worthy of the merits of his history.¹ He could have safely ignored both charges because the misrepresentation lay in the wrong tabulation of page numbers, and because plagiarism, unintentional--as it was on his part--or not, was restricted by no legal process at that time. However Gibbon chose to answer, and there appeared his famous "Vindication of Some Passages in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters." Walpole reports it to be "the quintessence of argument, wit, temper,"² to possess "a thousand beauties," "a conscious dignity," and "delicacy of wit"³ surpassed by no other pamphlet. Should this estimate be a prejudiced one, the pamphlet apparently served its purpose, for Gibbon emerged the acknowledged victor.

¹ 1778 , Letters, VII, 158.

² To the Countess of Ossory (Jan. 14, 1779), Letters, VII, 165.

³ To Edward Gibbon 1779 , Letters, VII, 188-9.

Though the eighteenth century produced only three outstanding English historians, there were, as Walpole's letters indicate, many others engaged in this literary pursuit. Their works ranged from ancient to contemporary times and included various subjects. Walpole himself produced a history, entitled Historic Doubts on the Life of Richard III, interesting because of the unsuccessful attempts to prove Richard's innocence in the murder of Henry VI and because of his unusual source material. He writes to Sir David Dalrymple that, as part of his material, he was able to borrow from the Keeper of the Records in the Tower the original Coronation Roll¹ of Richard, a feat which many historians could not have accomplished because such records were closely guarded and examination was more often forbidden than not. Walpole also shows the deep sincerity of his desire for authentic knowledge by continuing his search for further proofs, even after the publication of his book. In this effort he called upon Gray to assist him in locating a certain pamphlet in the Cambridge Library,² and never wholly gave up the idea of attempting again the proof of Richard's innocence. Another minor historian, Sir David Dalrymple, is also men-

¹(Jan. 17, 1768), Letters, V, 81.

²(Feb. 26, 1768), Letters, V, 87-8.

tioned as producing a worthy History of the Scottish Councils¹ and another work entitled Remarks on the History of Scotland.²

Local history, as well as national history, was also coming in for its share of interest at this time. Walpole carried on a lengthy correspondence with his antiquarian friend, William Cole, and in these letters one obtains a very definite idea of the subject matter and style of this particular type of history. It seems that scarcely a country or a town escaped treatment; Walpole mentions histories of Manchester, Dorset, Kent, Gloucester, Northumberland, Worster, and others. According to his letters, an accurate account of a county must contain a list of monuments in the church, a list of pedigrees,³ and an accurate account of the site, the soil, the products, and prospects of each parish. Neither should the author concern himself too much with the ancient history of the county, as research into Roman, Saxon, and Danish times amounted to nothing more than "old woman's logic."⁴ The style of most local histories was intolerable, in the opinion of Walpole; he calls them "the

¹To Dalrymple (Jan. 1, 1779), Letters, V, 212.

²To Dalrymple (Dec. 14, 1773), Letters, VI, 27.

³To Cole (Feb. 18, 1779), Letters, VII, 178.

⁴To Cole (Dec. 27, 1779), Letters, VII, 298-9.

worst kind of writing";¹ therefore this weakness, coupled with the inaccuracies and poor subject matter, placed the local history on a very low level of scholarly and literary merit.

Contemporary histories fared no better. Swift's History of the Last Four Years of Queen Anne, Walpole announces was a disgrace to its author, and merited the cold reception which it received.² Dr. Brown's Estimate of the Manners of the Times did nothing but reveal the impertinence and inconsistencies of its author.³ Yet, however bad was the quality of writing, the spirit of recording past and present events lived on. Many were interested in the preservation of official letters and papers as a form of historical record. Walpole mentions the publication of David Dalrymple's Memorials and Letters Relating to the History of Britain in the Reigns of James I and Charles I, Lord Hardwicke's Miscellaneous State Papers, and Cole's interest in and transcription of Wolsey's letters. Two other histories reveal an interest in miscellaneous subjects. The mention of a "pre-existent" History of the World by Bryant

¹To Cole (Mar. 13, 1780), Letters, VII, 337.

²To Sir Horace Mann (March 21, 1758), Letters, III, 130.

³To George Montague (May 4, 1758), Letters, III, 130.

occurs in a letter of Walpole's;¹ and of Mrs. Rose Macaulay's History of England in another.² The latter is doubly interesting because of the sex of the writer. Women were just beginning to take a prominent part in literary pursuits.

Not only, then, was there a widespread interest in the writing of history during the eighteenth century, but historical writing was carried on in strict accordance with the spirit of the times. Walpole had his own definite ideas concerning the methods of writing history, and these he expresses frequently throughout his correspondence. First of all, he considered the primary purpose of history be that of effecting good³--one of the primary requisites of eighteenth century literature. Likewise the style should be a "flowing" one,⁴ and the diction of a most refined nature. Walpole mentions, as an example, the Italian usage of the word impudenza in the description of a royal lady. Gibbon, he explains, would never have used such a word in describ-

¹To William Mason (March 19, 1774), Letters, VI, 67.

²To William Mason (Dec. 29, 1763), Letters, IV, 157.

³To William Robertson (March 4, 1759), Letters, III, 212.

⁴To Robertson (1759) , Letters, III, 202.

ing a Pope or a Father, much less in regard to a lady.¹ In treatment of subject matter Walpole demanded, time and again, absolute truth and strict impartiality of attitude.

As for the periods most suitable for historical treatment, the contemporary, the Roman, or the age immediately preceding the present one--all except the dark ages--were suitable. However, if an author had in mind to treat such a subject as the dark ages, Walpole was ready with definite suggestions. To John Pinkerton, who was contemplating the task of writing an account of Scottish saints, he writes:

I am not overjoyed at your wading into the history of the dark ages, unless you use it as a canvas to be embroidered with your opinions, and episodes, and comparisons with more recent times. That is a most entertaining kind of writing. In general I have seldom wasted time on the origin of nations, unless for an opportunity of smiling at the gravity of the author, or at the absurdity of the manners of those ages.²

Concerning the methods for the writing of modern history Walpole is still more explicit. He advises that a mere summary of authenticated facts will only result in a most dry and uninteresting account. Likewise, a more enlarged plan will require the closest acquaintance with all characters and sources. Therefore, as the present age demands detail and anecdote, the historian must collect from the living

¹To Sir Horace Mann (Oct. 18, 1781), Letters, VIII, 98.

²(Sept. 30, 1785), Letters, IX, 19.

characters or their contemporaries as much information as possible on all particulars concerned. And in so doing the writer must observe the greatest care and patience in exhausting all possible sources. Such an undertaking, he tells Pinkerton, in conclusion, will not admit of rapidity, but will demand time for commencement, digestion, and enrichment of the plan.¹

One can see, then, on looking back over Walpole's comments upon the historical writing of his century, the great amount of activity in this particular field of literature, its defective results, and the conscious effort made through a more careful study to lift history to the level of good literary entertainment.

The intellectual and social temper of the eighteenth century was particularly favorable to the development of journalism, and journalistic endeavor absorbed much of the literary energy of the age. The pamphlet, a forerunner of the newspapers, is one of the outstanding literary contributions of the eighteenth century, a period when the pen took the place of the sword in the settlement of arguments and disputes. Consequently the pamphlet quickly took a political turn and acquired an argumentative character. Wal-

¹ (Oct. 27, 1784), Letters, IX, 516.

pole's letters reveal the course of the pamphlet in the closing year of its history; in what he has to say we see reflected its nature, its popularity, its characteristics, and finally its disappearance. From the first the pamphlet was a popular form of reading matter. For whether it concerned itself with the foibles of politics or society, the pamphlet was usually of a most scurrilous character. No quarter was given; no reputation was spared. Walpole mentions the evil practice of posting lengthy and bitter lampoons against young men and women prominent in the world of society.¹ The religious pamphlet seems not to have been so important, but, as Walpole reports it, when the agitation for Catholic rights was beginning, some of the opponents, particularly a Dr. Bagot, produced a few very "silly and empty" ones.²

The political pamphlet, to be sure, was the most popular, the most prolific, and the most vituperative. Any national crisis, such as the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution, or the French Revolution would bring it forth in teeming numbers, each party trying to outdo the other. Of its general style and character Walpole writes to H. S. Conway:

V, 506. ¹To the Countess of Ossory (Oct. 1, 1773), Letters,

²To William Mason (March 30, 1781), Letters, VIII, 23.

You bid me send you the flower and brimstone, the best things published in this season of outrage. I should not have waited for orders, if I had met with the least tolerable morsel. But this opposition ran stark mad at once, cursed, swore, called names, and has not been one minute cool enough to have a grain of wit. Their prints are gross, their papers scurrilous; indeed the authors abuse one another more than anybody else.¹

Subjects such as the right of taxation, the right of prerogative, the rights of man, and the question of Irish freedom are mentioned by Walpole as bringing forth many pamphlets. He also reports pamphlets bearing interesting titles such as "Faction Detected," "The Art of Political Lying," "Opposition Mornings," and "Political Anatomy." Since any one was at liberty to take part in the paper war, those of all ranks did so. Lord Bath and Lord Beauchamp, according to Walpole, were the authors of pamphlets; and a woolen draper wrote a very influential one on the issues of the Seven Year's War.² Even the women turned pamphleteers. Walpole writes Hannah More that for comprehensiveness and clearness of statement, her pamphlet, "Village Politics," is "infinitely superior to anything on the subject."³ Opposition to Edmund Burke's views on the French Revolution was led by Mrs. Kate Macaulay and "the Virago Barbauld," both of whom answered with most vigorous pens.⁴

¹ (Oct. 29, 1762), Letters, IV, 39.

² To Mann (Dec. 5, 1760), Letters, III, 367.

³ (Feb. 9, 1793), Letters, IX, 404.

⁴ To the Miss Berrys (Dec. 20, 1790), Letters, IX,

The two outstanding pamphleteers, however, were Burke and Thomas Paine. Burke's pamphlet against the French Revolution enjoyed a mild popularity and praise, and Paine's reply to Burke, his "Rights of Man", aroused bitter and widespread opposition. In Walpole's opinion such radical doctrines meant the dissolution of all society, as well as the enforced sharing of wealth with the indolent,--two principles that would easily antagonize the prosperous upper middle class, as well as the aristocracy.¹ However, the pamphlet as a mode of literature played its part in bringing about many useful reforms, its gradual disappearance being explained, as Walpole tells us, by the appearance of the newspaper. He writes to Mann in 1763² and again in 1779,³ that it was no longer the fashion to carry on paper warfare by writing pamphlets but by printing anonymous letters in the columns of the daily newspapers. Thus the skirmishing could be more continuous and brisk.

The pamphlet at length gave place to the magazine, which in reality was nothing more than a periodic pamphlet. Walpole reports magazines of various kinds, but all of the

¹To the Countess of Ossary (Dec. 1, 1790), Letters, IX, 290.

²(Sept. 13, 1763), Letters, IV, 114.

³(Mar. 9, 1779), Letters, 183.

same scurrilous character, and all of the same narrow bias. He wrote the Reverend Mr. Zouch, for instance, that all the magazines were "erected to depress writers of the other side."¹ He likewise expressed his horror and dread lest he find his own name or some reference to his work mentioned in such a publication.² When a statement concerning him did appear in one, he writes that he never bothered to check its truth or falsity, for magazines were incapable of telling the truth.³ That the English periodical was popular elsewhere than in its own country is also revealed by Walpole. In Italy the son of Dr. Cocchi, a Florentine physician and author, wrote and published several periodicals in imitation of Addison's Spectator, and Walpole, after reading them, reports them most excellent and worthy of their model.⁴ The most popular magazines, or rather those most frequently mentioned in Walpole's letters, are political or critical in character. The Critical Review and the Monthly Review, magazines devoted to literary criticism, are mentioned many times,

¹(May 14, 1759), Letters, III, 224.

²(Sept. 3, 1757), Letters, III, 103.

³To the Countess of Ossary (Oct. 4, 1787), Letters, IX, 113.

⁴To Sir Horace Mann (Aug. 29, 1762), Letters, IIV, 18.

and the European Magazine is cited as a new and interesting journal of the same type.¹ The political magazines were many. The Champion, of Fielding, and the Craftsman are typical examples, as Walpole describes them. In the Gentleman's Magazine, of course, is found a variety of articles on politics, literary criticism, and social life and manners. Walpole, however, mentions it most frequently in connection with literary criticism and controversy, and apparently the magazine was one of the most popular published.

It was in the eighteenth century also that the newspaper really had its beginning. It, too, was an outgrowth of the pamphlet, and a close kinsman of the magazine. Particularly was this true of the weekly newspapers as Walpole describes them in his correspondence. Party newspapers were only too abundant. For example, Walpole writes to Mann of the appearance each Saturday of two very libelous papers called the Test and the Contest, the one written against William Pitt, the other against Charles Fox. Another party paper was called the Monitor. Where possible, the identity of the editor of a political paper was always kept secret to prevent mob violence.² The famous North Briton, according to Walpole, exerted more influence than any other one

¹To Cole, (Nov. 5, 1782), Letters, VIII, 299.

²(Jan. 6, 1757), Letters, III, 54.

newspaper. It was published by the notorious John Wilkes and his successors against Lord Bute and his ministry. Most vividly does Walpole write of the checkered career of this paper, the imprisonment of its editor in the Tower on the charge of treason, the burning of the paper by the common hangman at Cheapside at the order of the Ministry, the rioting and consequent rescue of the paper. For three years the North Briton waged its war against a Tory ministry, and though its second editor was sentenced to the pillory, the paper, having the sympathy of the people, finally brought about the downfall of Lord Bute.¹ Walpole writes of two other vituperative political papers "to which the 'North Briton' were [sic] milk and honey." Because they used terms too gross to publish, they were most fittingly called The Whisperer and the Parliamentary Spy.²

As the weekly pamphlet lost in popularity, the newspaper grew in favor and in frequency of publication. Soon, according to accounts in Walpole's correspondence, morning and evening editions were appearing every day. Since they were intended to please a wide variety of taste, the content was varied in character. Advertisements for placing the paper before the people were a special feature. Walpole describes an interesting form of advertisement used

¹To Mann (May 2, 1763), Letters, IV, 73.

²To Mann (March 15, 1770), Letters, V, 229.

by the Morning Post when a rival set up a paper of the same name. The editor hired a corps of thirty or forty men, dressed them like Hussars in yellow breeches, blue waist-coats, and high caps with Morning Post written on the caps, disguised them in masks, and sent them forth upon the streets to play drums and trumpets and to hand forth hand-bills as an appeal to the town to favor his paper.¹ Advertisements in the paper were of numerous kinds, humorous as well as serious. For example Walpole quotes in one of his letters an advertisement which is directed to "all Jolly Butchers" and which states that the Papists eat no meat on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, nor during Lent;² in another he quotes an advertisement concerning the earthquakes which were believed to be threatening London in 1750. It reads: "On Monday next will be published (price 6 d.) A true and exact list of all the Nobility and Gentry who have left or shall leave, this place through fear of another earthquake."³ Various articles, of course, were advertised for sale.

Poetry also frequently appeared as a feature in the paper; Walpole himself arranged for publication in the Pub-

¹To the Countess of Ossary (Nov. 13, 1776), Letters, VI, 391-2.

²To Mann (Oct. 4, 1745), Letters, I, 395.

³To Mann (April 3, 1750), Letters, II, 202.

lic Advertiser his verses written in honor of Harry Conway.¹ Literary criticism was often a feature. Walpole writes that the Public Advertiser in one of its recent issues was most disgusting in its praise of him as an author and critic. Essays on social conduct and manners were most popular. Lord Chesterfield, so Walpole reports, was a frequent contributor to The World, one of the popular morning papers in London. Two of his best essays occurring in print were "Advice to the Ladies on their Return to the Country"² and "Civility and Good Breeding."³ As Walpole says in speaking of the contents of the newspapers: "Lessons are the fashion: first and second lessons, morning and evening lessons, epistles, etc."⁴ Letters of opinion on any subject were printed, and every daily paper had "one page of political invective at least."⁵

Naturally news of the more sensational type--that is, robberies, murders, suicides, scandals, private and public, occupied front page space. And if Walpole's correspondence

¹To Grosvenor Bedford (Nov. 1757), Letters, III, 118-9.

²To George Montagu (Oct. 7, 1755), Letters, II, 480.

³To Mann (Mar. 21, 1755), Letters, II, 480.

⁴To Mann (Aug. 28, 1742), Letters, I, 198.

⁵To Mann (March 9, 1779), Letters, VII, 183.

gives a true picture of the day, every paper, whether the London Evening Post, the Morning Herald, The Times, or the Daily Advertiser, operated upon the lowest and vilest principles; it was the common practice to publish without reserve the most intimate and embarrassing details of private scandal or misfortune, or to give to the public a deliberately falsified version of the story. The following description, which Walpole gives in a letter to the Countess of Ossory, graphically points out the gross licentiousness and low grade of content characterizing the eighteenth century press:

Bad taste, spite, columny, pert dullness, and blundering affectation of humour have taken place of everything agreeable. I would not quote such records as the newspapers if they were not the oracles of the times, and what everybody reads and cites. Besides Macpherson's daily column of lies, is there a paragraph that is not scandalous or malevolent even in those that are set apart as a tithe for truth? Half of each is replete with error and ignorance. If a family has a misfortune of any kind, it is caste in every mold in ill-nature's shop, and the public is diverted in every way in which it can be misconstrued. Is not a country more savage than Hottentots, where all private distresses are served up the next morning for the breakfast and entertainment of the public? When you have waded through the scandal of the day, the next repast is a long dissertation on two contending pantomimes, while a mixture of losses of ships and armies and islands is a glaring mark of the insensible stupidity of the age, which is less occupied by national disgrace and calamity, than by slander that used to be confined to old maids, and follies only fit for children. A week's newspapers preserved to the end of the next century will explain why we have fallen so

low.¹

As another indication of the low character of the press, women became their particular prey. Walpole states more than once that "a pretty woman that makes, or is supposed to have made, a slip is hunted down as inveterately as a Prime Minister used to be."²

There is little wonder, then, that the newspaper was such a popular form of entertainment and such an organ of public influence--not always of the best. Walpole considered that the true function of the newspaper should be "to facilitate intelligence",³ but since, in his opinion, it did anything but that, he despised it thoroughly, and could not understand why the reading public eagerly awaited each daily issue of its favorite journal. In his letters Walpole calls the practice of reading newspapers one of the chronic maladies of the ages,⁴ and deplores their influence not only at home but abroad. In writing to Mann of the strong influence which England was exerting upon France during the second quarter of the century, he says: "I suppose the next shameful practice of ours they naturalize

¹(Jan. 7, 1782), Letters, VIII, 139-140.

²To Mann (Dec. 1, 1776), Letters, VI, 394.

³To Mann (Sept. 17, 1778), Letters, VII, 128.

⁴To Hannah More (July 4, 1788), Letters, IX, 130.

will be the personal scurrilities in the newspapers, especially on young and handsome women....."¹ It is no wonder, then, that English newspapers grew in popularity abroad and were able to command prohibitive prices.² Truly, the low principles of the English press throughout the closing years of the eighteenth century gave Walpole every right to despair of its future. Neither does one condemn him for seeking satisfaction in the fact that English newspapers were forbidden in France as a result of printing a scandal on the queen,³ and in the fact that "the circulation of fresh lies" in England was checked at least once a week through the absence of Sunday editions.⁴

Letter-writing as a form of literary expression has always been popular. As an art, it possibly reached its height during the eighteenth century. Then people had the leisure as well as the desire to set down upon paper more than just a casual comment upon the weather or the acquisition of a new wardrobe; and as a result of the thought and concentration given to each communication, the letters of eighteenth century correspondents serve as a true

¹To Mann (Dec. 1, 1776), Letters, VI, 394.

²To the Earl of Hertford (Jan. 20, 1765), Letters, IV, 314.

³To Mann (Feb. 2, 1785), Letters, VIII, 540.

⁴To the Earl of Stratford (Oct. 11, 1783), Letters, VIII, 418.

commentary of the times. It so happens that during the latter half of the eighteenth century the writing of letters became quite the fashion in both French and English society. As a typical example of the extremes to which such a fad was carried in France, Walpole describes to the Countess of Ossory a Monsieur de Pondeveylle's collection of sixteen thousand letters written to him over a period of eleven years by one woman. In the same letter Walpole also states that it was a common Parisian practice for persons to write each other as much as four times a day; in continuation, he likewise relates an amusing situation in which two lovers had a screen put between them so that the lover could write letters to his fiancée on the other side.¹ However absurd such statements may seem, one has only to consider the vast correspondence of Walpole himself to understand the popularity of letter-writing during this age. Within a period of fifty years he himself wrote over three thousand letters, addressed to one hundred and sixty different correspondents; by far the greater number, however, were directed to seven persons,² the majority to his dear friend, Sir Horace Mann.

¹(Sept. 12, 1775), Letters, VI, 255.

²C. H. E. L., X, 282.

Writing Mann, he thus describes their long correspondence:

I have been counting how many letters I have written to you since I landed in England in 1741: they amount--astonishing--to about eight hundred; and we have not met in three-and-forty years! A correspondence of near half-a-century is, I suppose, not to be paralleled in the annals of the Post-office!¹

In view of the popularity of letter writing both in England and abroad, it was only natural that the correspondence of prominent public characters should be seized upon and printed for the curious public. Walpole's letters indicate that such was the procedure, and that soon even the published correspondence of prominent continentals was making its way to England. Here again France led the way. The Letters and Memoirs of the noted Madame de Maintenon appeared in England in a five-volume edition which afforded a "very curious and entertaining" summer reading for many in the upper ranks of society.² Madame Sevignes' Letters, in Walpole's opinion, proved so superior in content and style, that he would abandon anything to read new additions to the collection.³ Montesquieu's Letters also made their appearance in England, as, to be sure, did Voltaire's Correspondence, the latter received with much eagerness. Walpole,

¹(Aug. 25, 1784), Letters, VIII, 499.

²To John Chute (June 6, 1756), Letters, III, 16.

³To Richard Bentley (Nov. 3, 1754), Letters, II, 403.

of course, read the letters of Voltaire, but not admiring the man, could say little for the correspondence.¹ Naturally Frederic of Prussia's letters to Voltaire were eagerly awaited in England on account of England's relationship with Germany during the Seven Years' War. But, as Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory, the world soon found that Frederic was a better soldier than writer.² A most interesting and genuine edition of letters concerning prominent English figures appeared when the Extracts from the Letters of the Regent's Mother to Queen Caroline were printed. Published in two volumes, the letters were highly entertaining, for the Regent Mother was noted not only as an incorrigible gossip but also as a most careless one.³

The letters of prominent literary figures of the eighteenth century also made popular editions. Pope's love letters to Mrs. Blount, Walpole reports, were too stiff and unnatural to be very effective.⁴ The two volumes of Swift's Correspondence on the whole, were "dull and abominable"; but the Journal to Stella proved valuable

¹To Miss Berry (July 9, 1789), Letters, IX, 191.

²(Dec. 26, 1788), Letters, IX, 163.

³To the Countess of Ossory (Aug. 16, 1788), Letters, IX, 140.

⁴To William Mason (May 11, 1769), Letters, V, 166.

because it pictured the "indecision, irresolution, and lack of system" of a "curious period."¹ Sterne's Letters were worth less than nothing. When the Letters of Lord Chesterfield appeared, they were received with enthusiasm by the public. In Walpole's opinion, these letters were dull, without wit, and useful only as "a most proper book of laws for the generation in which it was published."² Gray's Letters, when published by Mason, received much condemnation at the hands of the Scotch critics, but to Walpole they were charming because of their naturalness and simplicity.³

In the field of letter-writing, Walpole tells us, women also played their part. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was an avid correspondent, and the publication of her Letters in three volumes, reveals the charm of women as letter writers. Her correspondence was made readable not only by its spicey contents but by its originality, freedom of opinion, and disregard for truth.⁴ Lady Luxborough's correspondence, however, proved a disappointment through its lack of wit, spirit, and interesting subject matter.⁵ Mrs. Piozzi,

¹To George Montagu (June 20, 1766), Letters, IV, 505.

²To William Mason (April 17, 1774), Letters, VI, 75.

³Ibid. (May 16, 1778), Letters, VII, 67.

⁴To Sir Horace Mann (May 10, 1763), Letters, IV, 81.

⁵To William Mason (Nov. 27, 1775), Letters, VI, 285.

intimate friend and champion of the famous Samuel Johnson, assumed the role of editor and gave to the public a two-volume edition of her hero's correspondence, which, though interesting reading material, did little to enhance his fame.¹

Such unrestricted practice of publishing both the public and private correspondence of outstanding social and literary figures was certain to produce embarrassing situations and harmful consequences. Apparently there was little protection in the law, because letters were seized by fair means and foul. For example, the Duc de Nivernois, offended at his superiors because of his demotion from the office of Minister Plenipotentiary in England, seized and published some of their most private letters; yet he was permitted to go unpunished.² Even when the relationship between the correspondents was of a legitimate nature, the publishers with deliberate intent managed to leave a far different impression. Walpole mentions the appearance of a book called The Correspondents, the publication of which caused quite a scandal. Really the genuine and innocent correspondence of a late noble author and his future daughter-in-law, the letters had been so handled by the publishers as to imply an illicit love affair.³ Too, the publication of letters of correspondents long

¹To Hannah More (Oct. 14, 1787), Letters, IX, 115.

²To Horace Mann (April 9, 1764), Letters, IX, 218-219.

³To William Mason (July 7, 1775), Letters, VI, 228.

dead often proved embarrassing through their reference to persons still living. Such a regrettable situation Walpole continually condemned, giving for his reasons that such a practice caused the author to inflict unintentional wounds upon the persons named, caused the persons named untold embarrassment, and, above all, threatened the extinction of private intercourse. Persons, he notes, were already growing afraid to write their private sentiments to their most intimate friends for fear of seeing their names in print.¹ In fact, publishers showed such little respect for the feelings of all persons involved in any private correspondence that, where possible, the family concerned attempted to reserve certain rights of publication. Such was true in the case of Lord Chesterfield's letters. His family through a final appeal to the Chancellor, at length obtained an injunction to stop the printing of his letters, and only permitted the procedure to continue after they had reserved the rights to expunge whatever passages they so desired.²

Regardless of the evils connected with letter-writing, however, its popularity showed little signs of abatement. In truth, letter-writing in the eighteenth century became so popular that it left its definite mark upon the literature of the day. It became quite the fashion for al-

¹To Sir Horace Mann (May 30, 1767), Letters, V, 52.

²To William Mason (April 7, 1774), Letters, VI, 73.

most every type of literature to take the form of letters. Histories, such as Dalrymple's Memorials and Letters relating to the History of Britain in the Reigns of James the First and Charles the First,¹ were nothing more than a collection of state letters. Bolingbroke, so the correspondence of Walpole reveals, wrote some of his political and philosophical dissertations, such as the "Idea of Patriot King," in the form of letters.² It was only natural for Walpole to call one of his political dissertations a "Letter from XoHo."³ Travel books could easily assume such a form; Walpole reports one entitled Letters from Italy by an Englishwoman.⁴ Pamphlets quite often took the form of letters. In the famous Cibber-Pope quarrel, Cibber's attack on Pope was entitled "A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope", and Lord Bath's dull pamphlet on a plan for peace was called a "Letter to Two Great Men."⁵

Thus in reaching its prominent place in literature, the art of letter-writing naturally acquired certain speci-

464. ¹To David Dalrymple (Nov. 30, 1761), Letters, III,

²To Sir Horace Mann (May 17, 1749), Letters, II, 158.

³Ibid. (May 19, 1757), Letters, III, 76.

⁴Ibid. (April 24, 1776), Letters, VI, 332.

⁵Ibid. (Jan. 14, 1760), Letters, III, 278.

fications of subject-matter, style, and form. Definite books on the art were written; Walpole mentions the advertisement of a work entitled Every Man his own Letter-Writer.¹ Though Walpole never compiled his suggestions for acquiring this art, he does not hesitate throughout his correspondence to express his own ideas of these requirements. When he says that "letters ought to be nothing but extempore conversation upon paper"², and again that "since neither Aristotle nor Bossu have laid down rules for letters, and consequently have left them to their native wildness I shall persist in saying whatever comes uppermost...."³, one must remember that his own conversation was as interesting and as pithy as his letters. Consequently he can compliment Richard Bentley's letter for its charming passages which include a picture of a lovely family group, the description of an idol that produced hail in spite of prayers for sunshine, a philosophical discussion on misfortune as the teacher of supersition, and a literary criticism of the queen in Hamlet.⁴ Such care in choice of subject matter was typical of almost all letter writers. Walpole himself usually divides his letter into three parts, one devoted to the political situation, another to his own lit-

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Jan. 7, 1783), Letters, VIII, 321.

²Ibid. (Dec. 25, 1781), Letters, VIII, 131.

³Ibid. (Oct. 8, 1777), Letters, VI, 497.

⁴To Bentley (Dec. 17, 1755), Letters, II, 490-1.

erary activities or to criticism of the latest literary productions, and a third to current interesting social activities and gossip. Nothing escaped his keen eye; no ministry fell, no book appeared on the market, no marriage, birth, death, or scandal occurred but was recorded by his pen. And such interesting material, recounted with wit and charm, made most delectable reading.

Style, then, was also the prerequisite of a good letter. For this reason Walpole can always admire the letters of Gray about whose ability as a letter-writer he says: "No body ever yet wrote letters so well...."¹ For this reason he can compliment Bentley on his wit, his humor, and his "Spectator-hacked phrases;"² for this reason he can admire the care with which Lord Chesterfield chose his words. Chesterfield, according to Walpole, for over a period of forty years never used a word without pausing a moment to think if he could not find a better.³ And in his own letters, Walpole can be upheld as a model of style. His correspondence is full of witty observations. Pain-ridden by gout almost all his life, he never refers to his affliction

¹To William Mason (May 16, 1778), Letters, VII, 67.

²To Bentley (Dec. 17, 1755), Letters, II, 491.

³To Mason (April 17, 1774), Letters, VI, 78.

except in a humorous way. He calls it "his shocking partner in a dance", a ghost similar to the one in Hamlet because of its uncertain time and place of appearance; he calls himself the "chalkpits" because of the emission of chalk stones from his fingers in the painful course of the disease. Methodists were the pet aversion of Walpole, and he never omits the opportunity of releasing a dart in their direction. For example, he says of Lady Gertrude Hotham: "She had wit like all her brothers, but for many years had been a Methodist."¹ In speaking of his increasing age and its dulling effect on his ability to write, he cleverly remarks that his pen "is truly grown a grey goose-quill and has lost its pith."² Walpole's more serious observations are couched in equally delightful terms. Two of his philosophical remarks upon the cruelty of life are typically representative of his clever style. Concerning the approach of his next birthday he observes: "....In six weeks my clock will strike sixtyOne must take one's lot as it comes; bitter and sweet are poured into every cup."³ Again, he charmingly observes to Mann: "Life is like a chess-board,--the white space and the black are close together: it does not signify of which

¹To Sir Horace Mann (April 17, 1775), Letters, VI, 204.

²To the Countess of Ossory (July 23, 1775), Letters, VI, 231.

³To William Gole (Aug. 31, 1777), Letters, VI, 473.

hue the last square is; the border closes all!"¹

Not only, then, must the skilled letter-writer of the eighteenth century treat of interesting material in a charming manner, but he must observe certain rules of form. The introductions, and conclusions, and addresses of letters grew to be very brief, because Walpole notes to H. S. Conway that they have grown out of fashion as a result of the attempts of all writers to reduce every thing to its "quintessence".² In fact Walpole tells Mann that such a practice no longer made it necessary to study for an "ingenious conclusion" to a letter, nor to indulge compliments at the close.³ Concerning the change in style of addressing letters Walpole says:

....now it is the fashion to curtail the direction as much as possible. Formerly a direction was an academy of compliments: 'To the most noble and my singularly respected friend', etc., etc.--and then, 'Haste! haste, for your life, haste!'--Now, we have banished even the monosyllable To! Henry Conway, Lord Hertford's son, who is very insolent, and has much humour, introduced that abridgment. Writing to a Mr. Tighe at the Temple, he directed his letter only thus: 'T. Ti., Temple,' and it was delivered! Dr. Bentley was mightily flattered on receiving a letter subscribed 'To Dr. Bentley in England.' Times are altered; postmen are now satisfied with a hint.⁴

¹To Mann (July 10, 1784), Letters, VIII, 489.

²(Oct. 23, 1778), Letters, VII, 143.

³(Oct. 4, 1785), Letters, IX, 22.

⁴To Mann (Oct. 4, 1785), Letters, IX, 21-22.

In view of the many specifications for developing the art of letter-writing, it is no wonder that Walpole considered women, and only women, capable of writing good letters. And he offers some very logical reasons to support his statements. To the Countess of Ossory he writes that only women can feel and express their true emotions. Such "delicacy in sentiment", natural to the feminine sex, is utterly foreign to the nature of men. Walpole fittingly describes the situation, first in Latin, then in translation, saying:

"Pennis non homini datis!"

the English of which is, 'it was not given to man to write letters.'¹

The three types of prose literature discussed in this chapter--the development of historical writing, the rise of contemporary journalism, and the development of the art of letter-writing--are merely indicative of the great activity characteristic of eighteenth century letters in England. Walpole, as a patron of the arts and as a writer of some reputation, was keenly aware of all developments, particularly those in the realm of prose literature. Closely associated with persons engaged in these pursuits, he was able through his correspondence with them to reveal all phases of development shown by each type. History, to him,

¹ (Dec. 25, 1773), Letters, VI, 35.

had fallen into a bad state because of the writers' utter disregard for truth of fact and love of fame. Journalism suffered from the same condition--pamphlets, journals, and newspapers were conducted in accordance with the lowest principles. Even the pleasure of private correspondence, in Walpole's opinion, was threatened because of uncensored publications by unscrupulous editors. However, some histories, such as those of Gibbon and Robertson, certain magazines, such as the European Magazine, and certain letters, such as ✓ those of Gray and Madame Sévigné, were evidences of improvement. In view of the favorable impression of women in the literary field, and in view of the effort to raise the literary standards through established rules and rationalistic thinking, Walpole in his correspondence shows that prose literature, far from being static, was forging ahead into broader and more varied forms of self-expression.

CHAPTER II

HORACE WALPOLE'S COMMENTS ON THE POETIC

ACTIVITIES OF HIS AGE

Though manifestly an age of prose, the eighteenth century in England witnessed a spirited activity in the field of poetry. No poetic form escaped experimentation; no subject, however unsuitable, escaped treatment through such a medium. Regarded as a pleasing pastime, the art of poetic composition found practice throughout all ranks of society. Likewise two divergent schools of thought--classicism and romanticism--were gradually formulating their theories of poetic composition and rapidly gaining their exponents. The correspondence of Horace Walpole comments freely upon the poetic activities of the eighteenth century in England, and it is from this source that the material for this chapter is taken.

Poetic composition, according to Walpole, received little recognition throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century--perhaps because of its general inferior quality. To consider poetry seriously as a form of literary composition was certain evidence of poor taste. Richard West, in writing to Walpole, describes the poetic urge to be as contagious as small-pox, and therefore recommends immediate exposure of the victim to insure instant relief from a bad situation.¹

¹To Walpole (January 12, 1736-37), Letters, I, 11-12.

Walpole himself tells H. S. Conway that the publication of any poetic piece is but an invitation to term the author a fool,¹ and again states that the dislike of poetry is a sure "sign of wit."² In fact, in an age so devoted to prose, the practice of writing poetry almost sank into disgrace. Walpole, for example, remarks in a letter to the Countess of Ossory, that Lady Nuneham is a most gifted and capable poetess, but is as afraid of poetry as if it were a sin to make verses."³

Such an attitude, however, could well have resulted from the poor achievements of the would-be professional poets. Walpole never ceases throughout his correspondence to lament the dearth of good ones. He speaks of the insipidity of "the refiners of English verse,"⁴ of their "fustian," of their "bombast."⁵ In referring sarcastically to "the revival of wit" brought about by the literary endeavors of "the new crop of poets," he wonders if their brilliant work is not one last swan song before total destruction.⁶ The attitude of the poet toward patron and public was still less

¹To Walpole (July 24, 1746), Letters, II, 37.

²To Mann (April 29, 1742), Letters, I, 161.

³(August 9, 1773), Letters, V, 490.

⁴To Mann (March 29, 1745), Letters, I, 347.

⁵Ibid. (May 6, 1770), Letters, V, 236.

⁶To the Countess of Ossory (Sept. 17, 1785), Letters IX, 15.

complimentary. Haughtiness and impertinence were his common characteristics. "Poets," writes Walpole, "imagine they confer the honour when they are protected and they set down impertinence to the article of their own virtue, when you dare to begin think that an ode....is not a patent for all manner of insolence."¹ The office of Poet-Laureate was also looked upon with utmost scorn. The publication of Laureate Whitehead's poem "Variety", brought from Walpole the observation that the work contained no more poetry than was necessary for a Laureate.² And again he refers to the office as a "sinecure" inasmuch as the Laureate only "chants anniversaries, whether glad or sorry".³

Under such conditions the future of poetic endeavor appeared somewhat gloomy. Walpole could see little opportunity for much change, since "poetry is gone to bed or into our prose",⁴ and since all the bellmen of Oxford are being elevated into the places of poets.⁵ Writing to William Mason, he predicts somewhat sarcastically the impression which contemporary poetry will make upon future generations:

¹To George Montagu (November 17, 1759), Letters, III, 266.

²To William Mason (Feb. 18, 1776), Letters, VI, 310.

³To the Countess of Ossory (Dec. 18, 1781), Letters, VIII, 125.

⁴To Mann (May 6, 1770), Letters, V, 236.

⁵To Mason (April 25, 1781), Letters, VIII, 30.

"What a figure will this our Augustan age make; Gar-
rick's prologues, epilogues, and verses, Sir William
Chambers's gardening,.....Whittington and his cat.....
what a library of poetry, taste, good sense, veracity,
and vivacity.....The retrospect makes one melancholy,
but Ossian has appeared, and were Paradise once more
lost, we should not want an Epic Poem."¹

Yet there was some hope; and according to Walpole it lay in
the new world. Here it was that the next literary realm
would be established, and here it was that the best English
works would be transplanted. Therefore he urges Mason to
write his best poetry so that it can find a new and worthy
home across the waters.²

In compliance with the true spirit of the times,
eighteenth century poetry naturally reflected strong classi-
cal tendencies. Classical authors were not only imitated
for style, but their works were translated into the English
tongue in accordance with the strictest of classical pre-
cepts. Gray, so Walpole reports, produced in Latin several
odes equal to any of his English ones,³ and in turn one Ed-
ward Barnby Greene printed a Latin translation of Gray's
works.⁴ Further interest in the classic tongues as media
of poetic expression is shown when Walpole reports the

¹(July 21, 1772), Letters, V, 400.

²(June 26, 1778), Letters, VII, 85.

³To William Cole (Dec. 10, 1775), Letters, VI, 289-
90.

⁴Ibid.

translation of the first book of Milton into Greek by an Irish clergyman working under the supervision of Dublin University.¹ Equal interest in the translation of classic authors into English likewise prevailed. Gilbert West, for example, published his version of Pindar in very stiff verse,² and Walpole aided Richard Cumberland in his task of publishing his grandfather's translation of Lucan.³ Horace was a favorite with all, and Martial was naturally admired for his wit and epigrammatic style.

This influence, however, did not originate altogether from direct association with the classical authors; it also sprang from the English desire to imitate French classical writers. French poetry, Walpole says, had grown very popular in England. Voltaire's mock epic, Henriade, Boileau's and Rousseau's odes, and Quinault's lyrics were widely read;⁴ and in addition, French epigrams, however coarse, were widely quoted and imitated. Every would-be poet made some attempt to compose French verse, such an achievement being considered the mark of an accomplished poet. Walpole himself admits his attempted imitation of De Coulanges, a Frenchman

¹To William Mason (April 14, 1782), Letters, VIII, 210.

²To George Montagu (May 18, 1749), Letters, III, 163.

³To William Cole (Feb. 5, 1780), Letters, VII, 327.

⁴To William Mason (October 8, 1776), Letters, VI, 379.

noted for his facility in writing foolish songs and epigrams;¹ and under the inspiration of Walpole, Lady Ossory composed some commendable verses in French.²

Subject to such strong classical influences, English poetry naturally exhibited many classical verse forms. Among the most popular was that of the epigram. True to its nature, the epigram was written upon every conceivable subject, politics, particularly, coming in for its share. Jacobite epigrams, Walpole states, frequently made their appearance in the newspapers, for the Pretender was still most active in his claims to the Scotch throne.³ The faults and virtues of reigning prime ministers likewise proved fitting subjects. As a typical example, Walpole quotes an epigram written upon the occasion of William Pitt's visit to Bath in search of health. It reads:

Mistaken nymph, thy gifts withhold;
Pitt's virtuous soul despises gold;
Grant him thy boon peculiar, health
He'll guard, not covet, Britain's wealth. ⁴

Other epigrams, Walpole reports, concerned such subjects as "Dr. Shebbeare Abusing Hume Campell for being a Prostitute Advocate," Bishop Berkley's tar water, Miss Chudleigh's cry-

¹Ibid. (October 9, 1783), Letters, VIII, 415.

²Ibid. (August 24, 1777), Letters, VI, 468.

³To Mann (October 28, 1752), Letters, II, 310.

⁴Ibid. (May 5, 1757), Letters, III, 74.

ing on the death of her mother, and the observations of Patapan, Walpole's dog, the last written in the style of Martial.

Eclogues and satires also received their share of attention. As an example of some of the most polished eclogues, Walpole cites those written by Lady Ossory. Her Piscatory Eclogues he found most charming for "their polished and harmonious fishermen and fishwives."¹ The element of burlesque also proved a happy addition to the eclogue, making it more readable, in the opinion of many. Dr. Wolcote, according to Walpole, wrote, in ridicule of Boswell's Life of Johnson and Mrs. Piozzi's edition of Johnson's Letters, a most charming burlesque called an Eclogue between Bozzi and Piozzi.² The outstanding poet satirist, however, in the eyes of Walpole, was Charles Churchill. His satires were read with great eagerness, especially "The Duellist," a bitter attack upon such prominent personages as Lord Holland, Lord Sandwich and Bishop Warburton.³

The ode as a poetic form was almost as popular as the epigram. Though by nature a most dignified composition, it was used in the treatment of all manners of subjects.

¹ To the Countess of Ossory (July 18, 1780), Letters, VII, 420.

² To Mann (March 28, 1786), Letters, IX, 48.

³ To the Earl of Hartford (January 22, 1764), Letters, IV, 171.

Of the odes devoted to political events of the day Walpole mentions in various letters, for example, such titles as "A Receipt to Make a Lord," occasioned by a person's promotion to the peerage, "Verses addressed to the House of Lords," "The Capuchin," and "Nova Progenies." Outstanding politicians, particularly Lord Bath and Puttenev, occasioned frequent odes. At one time, writes Walpole, odes in honor of Lord Bath were appearing daily in the papers.¹ Gray, of course, wrote three famous odes on subjects quite foreign to the popular ode, but, in spite of Walpole's praise, received little notice from the public. Such a solemn event as a prominent marriage always produced many odes. And here Walpole, so he tells the Earl of Strafford, tried his hand, writing in honor of the wedding of Lady Lucan and Lord Althorp, the usual nuptial ode addressed to Hymen and the attendant graces.² The burlesque ode likewise made its appearance. Walpole reports, for instance, Bonnell Thornton's burlesque on Dryden's "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," but ranks it only as "hurdy-gurdy" poetry.³

The elegy, according to Walpole, was another classical form quite popular in eighteenth century poetry, and

¹ To Mann (October 23, 1742) Letters, I, 211.

² (August 31, 1781), Letters, VIII, 74.

³ To Gray (February 18, 1768), Letters, V, 85.

elegiac verse appeared in honor of all deceased animals, whether bird, cat, or poet. Of course everyone is familiar with Gray's lines to Walpole's drowned cat; and Walpole himself took pleasure in composing some lines upon the death of Lady Ossory's pet bullfinch.¹ The greatest writer of sincere elegiac verse, in Walpole's opinion, was naturally his friend Gray. He declares indeed Gray's Elegy was the only one of his poems admired by his contemporaries.² The death of Pope naturally brought forth many lines from many pens, all of which Walpole mentions, for he was a close student of Pope. As typical of the comic elegy also popular at the time, Walpole recommends in a letter to H. S. Conway "An Elegy on an Empty Assembly-Room," written by Richard Owen Cambridge and considered one of the most clever pieces of its kind.³

In contrast to the dignified classical forms of verse stood the ballad, also maintaining its popularity with high and low. Like the epigram, so the correspondence of Walpole relates, the ballad was often scurrilous in character and therefore very popular. The professional ballad mongers Walpole thoroughly hated; he charged them

¹To Mason (September 22, 1783), Letters, VIII, 410.

²To Lord Lyttelton (August 25, 1757), Letters, III, 98.

³(April 16, 1756), Letters, III, 6.

with ridicule of every act, however sincere.¹ Reams of such verse too bad to send anywhere, Walpole tells George Montague, continued to appear all the time,² and no person ever knew when he would become the subject of it. Political situations furnished rich and varied subjects; nor were all authors on such subjects found among the regular ballad writers. Walpole quotes a ballad of twenty-seven verses written, printed, and dispersed by Lord Hervey, and giving his principles of administration, if made Prime Minister.³ Lord Edgecombe, so Walpole writes Mann, also produced three very popular and scurrilous ballads, "Labour in Vain," "The Old Coachman," and "The Country Girl," the last in abuse of Pulteney's wife.⁴ Neither did the royal family escape. The vacillating character of George II was attacked in a ballad bearing the cumbersome title of "The Late Gallant Exploits of a Famous Balancing Captain,"⁵ and many years later the trip of the Dowager Princess to Germany was the theme of a ballad bearing the vulgar refrain, "the cow has left her calf."⁶

¹To the Countess of Ossory (January 29, 1774), Letters, VI, 55.

²(May 12, 1752), Letters, II, 283.

³To Mann (Oct. 16, 1742), Letters, I, 207-10.

⁴(-----, 1742), Letters, I, 194.

⁵To Mann (November 2, 1741), Letters, I, 85.

⁶Ibid. (June 5, 1770), Letters, V, 242.

Verse indeed grew to be such a popular means of literary expression that its use was carried to an extreme. The most unusual of subjects, according to the letters of Walpole, were treated in verse form. Gray, he reports, at one time began a long poem, the History of the Revival of Learning, but gave up the plan lest he be accused of "infringing" too much on some parts of The Dunciad.¹ Biographies were even cast in this mold. Walpole mentions in the Duchess of Marlborough's will a stipulation that no part of her husband's life be written in verse. In fact to carry out her demands, she provided a cash sum to pay for such a work in prose.² Epistles of all kinds were often written in verse. When, for instance, Gibbon's Decline and Fall was the subject of much comment, Walpole reports to William Mason Mr. Hoyley's three poems of criticism called "Epistles on History."³ Christopher Anstey created quite a sensation when he wrote a set of humorous letters in verse entitled the New Bath Guide.⁴ Ordinary letters of communication were often written in verse; one such from Richard West Walpole

¹(April 16, 1756), Letters, III, 6.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Jan. 29, 1774), Letters, VI, 55.

³(May 12, 1752), Letters, II, 283.

⁴(May ----, 1780), Letters, VII, 361.

compliments highly;¹ more often than not invitations were couched in rhyming lines. Though essays are usually written in prose, Pope chose the medium of poetry for his Essay on Man and won for himself fame and fortune. An anonymous parody on Pope's essay also appeared under the title, An Essay on Woman. So blasphemous and indecent a poem was it that the notorious John Wilkes was tried by the King's Bench and found guilty of its publication.² It was likewise the custom of society, as the letters of Walpole reveal, to spend many happy hours in the composition of poetic riddles and charades. Lady Ossory, Richard Fitzpatrick, and Sir Isaac Newton are cited by Walpole as clever adepts at such a pastime. Of course fables and other verse narratives were popular. Walpole refers often to Gay's Fables, and he himself made similar attempts in writing, among them, "The Entail" and "The Magpie and Her Brood."

Primarily in sympathy with the classical school of poetry, Walpole naturally comments most freely upon the poets of this group. For Dryden he had the warmest admiration and quotes from him frequently in his correspondence. Particularly, so Walpole writes George Montagu, does he enjoy

¹To George Montagu (June 20, 1766), Letters, IV, 504.

²To West (November 9, 1754), Letters, I, 1.

Dryden's keen ear for harmony,¹ and his gift of discrimination in the choice of subject matter.² In fact, he writes Hannah More, Dryden is "the standard of good sense, poetry, nature, ease."³ But Pope, of course, was the outstanding poet of the entire age. And so close a reader of him was Walpole that he seems to have known all of his works by heart. By far the majority of poetic lines quoted in Walpole's letters are from Pope, and often he cites his favorite as a model to be followed in writing. He tells John Pinkerton, for example, that the Rape of the Lock is a standard of grace, originality, and elegance, and that The Dunciad, though inferior in many ways, is likewise outstanding for its beauty of writing.⁴ However, Walpole does not fail to reveal in his letters the decline of Pope's popularity, along with a general lack of interest in the art of poetic composition. Two years before the death of Pope, he reports to Mann that though Pope has half a dozen old friends whom "he has preserved from the taste of the last century", the majority of readers are deserting him and the reading of poetry in general.⁵ In fact, these closing lines

¹(June 20, 1766), Letters, IV, 504.

²To William Mason (April 14, 1775), Letters, VI, 201.

³(November 13, 1784), Letters, VIII, 524.

⁴(June 26, 1785), Letters, VIII, 5.

⁵(April 29, 1742), Letters, I, 161.

of a poem, written on the occasion of Pope's death and clipped by Walpole from a daily paper for Horace Mann, seem most fittingly to sum up the career of the poet:

To real knaves and real fools a sore--
Beloved by many, but abhorr'd by more.
If here his merits are not full exprest, ¹
His undying strains shall tell the rest.

Two other poets, outstanding during their own age, according to Walpole, though almost entirely forgotten to-day, were Charles Churchill and Erasmus Darwin. Charles Churchill, he reports, was both feared and admired for his many biting satires, which won for him recognition at home and abroad. Churchill's best work, however, was his Rosciad, because his meteorlike career of four years was cut short by his untimely death.² The other poet to receive such warm praise from his contemporaries was Erasmus Darwin, a physician by profession. Scientifically inclined by nature and encouraged by an age fond of didactic verse, he produced three long, complex poems called the Botanic Garden, the Triumph of Flora, and the Loves of the Plants. Walpole praised in his letter all of them extravagantly.³ Today, however, such artificial material as lady flowers and their lovers, and intrigues between roses and nightin-

¹ (June 29, 1744), Letters, 311.

² To Horace Mann (November 15, 1764), Letters, IV, 291.

³ To Thomas Barrett, (May 14, 1792), Letters, IX, 372.

gales would merit nothing but derision, whereas to Walpole and his century, it meant the indication of a most promising poet.

The letters of Horace Walpole also mention the names of many of the lesser poets belonging to his century. Joseph Addison, according to Walpole, was able to accomplish "with infinite labor a few fine poems",¹ and became a master of graceful style.² Matthew Prior, court attaché, was one of Walpole's favorite writers and still retained his popularity with a few at the close of the century.³ Another court poet of a later age was Soames Jenyns, whose odes Walpole's letters report as "paltry affairs" in spite of their humor.⁴ Richard Tickell is interesting today not only because he was the grandson of Addison's friend and a poet as well, but also because his poem "The Wreath of Fashion" was a satire upon sentimental poets.⁵ Richard Fitzpatrick is complimented in several of Walpole's letters as a poet of "genteel ease," particularly noted for his poem "Royal Reflections." Walpole himself is a typical example of the gentleman who de-

¹To the Countess of Temple (Jan. 1764), Letters, IV, 175.

²To John Pinkerton (June 26, 1785), Letters, VIII, 563.

³To Mann (April 26, 1771), Letters, V, 295.

⁴To William Mason (May, 1780), Letters, VII, 359.

⁵Ibid. (April 18, 1778), Letters, VII, 53.

lighted in the pastime of composing poetic lines. It is to his credit, however, that he made no pretense of being a true poet, though his "Essay on Gardening" enjoyed a French translation, and though his friends gave him such a title. To Mason he frankly writes: "I wish I had any pretensions to that title [of poet]. It is true I early wished to be one, but soon found I was not...."¹

Several professions, so the correspondence of Walpole reveals, found representation among the minor poets of the eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson, critic and lexicographer, produced some poetry which Walpole considers of a very poor quality.² Charles Fox, the noted politician, was rather clever at composing light verse, those to Mrs. Crewe in particular becoming quite popular at the time.³ Samuel Richardson, the novelist, and William Hogarth, the painter, published poetry, but in Walpole's opinion it warranted little praise.⁴ The stage, however, was most well-represented. Walpole states that Richard Cumberland wrote some very poor odes in praise of Gray,⁵ that Garrick and Sheridan produced many

¹ (May 11, 1769), Letters, V, 166.

² To William Mason (Feb. 3, 1781), Letters, VII, 508.

³ Ibid. (June 12, 1775), Letters, VI, 90.

⁴ To Dalrymple (Dec. 11, 1780), Letters, VII, 472.

⁵ To Mason (Dec. 21, 1775), Letters, VI, 298.

prologues, and epilogues for their dramas, as well as other forms of poetry. Garrick he reports no poet at all¹, but Sheridan he terms a charming stylist.²

Though women, according to Walpole's letters, were very active in the field of poetic composition, only a few accomplished much success. The Countess of Temple and the Countess of Ossory, more or less under the tutelage of Walpole, wrote only for pleasure, and both he considered quite promising. In fact he considered the verses of the former comparable with those of other great poets³ and honored the latter with the title of "tenth Muse."⁴ The publication of Lady Mary Montagu's Eclogues, so Walpole reports to Mann, brought little praise from the public, though the verses were in his opinion of unusual merit.⁵ Two poetesses however gained wide-spread recognition. With her "Bas Bleau" and "Bishop Bonner's Ghost," Hannah More won fame and acclaim from everyone.⁶ The other poetess to win much adula-

¹To John Henderson (March 4, 1782), Letters, VIII, 172.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Oct. 8, 1777), Letters, VI, 498.

³(January, 1764), Letters, IV, 175.

⁴To the Countess of Ossory (Jan. 25, 1773), V, 431.

⁵(November 24, 1747), Letters, II, 99.

⁶(August 9, 1789), Letters, IX, 206.

tion was Mrs. Yearlsey, a lowly milkwoman who seemed to have a natural ear for harmony. Under the patronage and help of Hannah More, so Walpole relates, she quickly rose to such fame in Bristol, her native city, that she was considered much superior to Shakespeare.¹ Such foolish adulation as this caused Walpole not only to dislike the profession, but to state thus frankly his opinion of poetesses in general:

Miss Hannah More is the best of our numerous Calliopes;....Miss Seward and Williams and half-a-dozen more of these harmonious virgins, have no imagination, no novelty. Their thoughts and phrases are like their old gowns, old remnants, cut and turned.²

In conjunction with the spirited activities of the poets during the eighteenth century, Walpole reports many others busily engaged in recording the history of poetic composition, in editing representative poetic collections, and in producing critical estimates of various works. Bysshe's Art of Poetry Walpole's letters mention only once, implying it to be very dull reading.³ It is interesting to note that in a letter to George Montagu Walpole relates a plan of Gray and Mason to collaborate upon a history of the English bards, though apparently the work never took form.⁴

¹To Hannah More (Nov. 4, 1789), Letters, IX, 230-31.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 4, 1786), Letters, IX, 73.

³Ibid. (----, 1775), Letters, VI, 186.

⁴(May 5, 1761), Letters, III, 399.

The outstanding writing of the age upon this subject was the younger Thomas Warton's History of English Poetry, in four volumes. Walpole reports the reading very fatiguing, especially that of the volume discussing the poetry of the dark ages.¹ In regard to poetical anthologies Walpole mentions three--namely, John Nichols' eight volume collection of Miscellaneous Poems, Robert Dodsley's Collection of Poems, and Bell's Edition of Poetry. The first two are charged with blunders and inaccuracies;² the last is called only a republication with an addition of some of the editor's poems.³

Of the critical works on poetry, Johnson's Lives receives the most attention in Walpole's letters. Because Walpole despised the man, Johnson receives the very bitterest of condemnation. In fact, Walpole writes Mason that Johnson has neither "taste, nor ear, nor criterion of judgment, only his old woman's prejudices; where they are wanting, he has no rule at all....."⁴ Yet Walpole is forced to grant the popularity of this critical work, because he admits to Mason in another letter that this series of lives is called the "standard of biography."⁵ The correspondence of Walpole

¹To William Mason (April 18, 1778), Letters, VIII, 54.

²To Richard Bentley (March 27, 1755), Letters II, 428.

³To the Countess of Ossory (February 6, 1789), Letters, IX, 165.

⁴(February 19, 1781), Letters, VIII, 10.

⁵(April 14, 1781), Letters, VIII, 27.

also mentions two other critical works on Pope--namely, Bishop Warburton's edition appearing in 1751, and Joseph Warton's Essay, appearing in 1782.

Walpole, from practice and observation, naturally developed his own ideas concerning the principles of poetic composition. To begin with, he writes Mason, the true poet must have "genius and fire", "the first of merits in these latter ages."¹ Even with these gifts, however, the poet must be careful in his choice of subject, because it must be practical, sensible, and useful. For instance, Walpole in writing to the Earl of Harcourt, compliments the poems of Lady Harcourt as "a lecture of morality and good nature united", and expresses the desire to print them on his own press that he may "in his own generation do some good."² In another letter also Walpole remarks that the one fault of Darwin's Botanic Garden is his waste of excellent poetry on subject matter that neither "interests nor instructs."³ In fact Walpole not only advises that the "rational road to inspiration" lies in the author's strict adherence "to genuine topics of the occasion",⁴

¹ (June 25, 1782), Letters, VIII, 236.

² (September 27, 1778), Letters, VII, 131.

³ To the Miss Berrys (April 28, 1789), Letters, IX, 179.

⁴ To John Pinkerton (August 14, 1788), Letters, IX, 138-39.

but elsewhere observes that the true merit of poetry is its subject matter and humor.¹

Certain elements of style, according to Walpole, were also necessary for successful poetic composition. The common problem of harmony and diction brought forth observations from several eighteenth century authorities. In a letter to Mason, Walpole reports a remark found in Dr. Burney's History of Music that a person cannot be both a great musician and a great poet. Walpole refutes the statement by citing Gray and Mason as examples, and by calling attention to the fact that Burney's book compliments Mason on his "harmonic knowledge."² Voltaire, Walpole also observes, questioned the possibility of translating poetry from its native vernacular into a foreign tongue, basing his opinion upon the fact that music cannot be translated. And again Walpole uses Mason as an example, saying that in his English rendition of Fresnoy, he has translated prosaic verses into real poetry.³ Though Walpole himself made no pretense of being a musician, he definitely had an ear for poetry, and never hesitated to criticize any breach of har-

¹To the Miss Berrys (April 28, 1789), Letters, IV, 179.

²To Mason (February 29, 1776), Letters, VI, 313.

³(September 25, 1781) Letters, VIII, 85.

mony in the poems of his friends. In Mason's epitaph on Gray, for instance, he expresses his dislike for the repetition of the expression she heard, contending that heard is an unharmonious word and that the elision between she and heard adds to the cacophony.¹

Above all, in Walpole's opinion, the successful poet must acquire the charm of grace. Grace, as he defines it to Pinkerton, is "a perfume which will preserve from putrefaction and is distinct even from style, which regards expression. Grace....belongs to manner." It is grace of manner, he continues, which adds to the style of Virgil, Horace, Addison, Milton, and Pope. And when the element of melancholy, free of all traces of "pitiful lamentations", is added to that of grace, a writing of true elegance is possible.²

True to his classical taste, Walpole shows no hesitancy in denouncing the use of blank verse. In a letter advising Mrs. Yearsley on the principles of poetic composition, he urges that, since her ideas reveal good taste rather than flight of fancy, she abandon the use of blank verse for two reasons. In the first place, unless blank verse is marked by the "highest colouring", it will lack no distinction from

¹To Mason (September 17, 1776), Letters, VI, 375.

²(June 26, 1785), Letters, VIII, 563-67.

prose; in the second place, great learning is necessary to enrich the language of blank verse. Rich imagery, he adds, is necessary to all poetry, but particularly to poetry written in the form of blank verse. He cites as examples Milton's reliance upon his own vast knowledge in writing his poetry, the poor imitations of those who aped him in this particular, and the utter failure of those who ignored him.¹

The correspondence of Walpole is equally as candid in expressing his dislike of certain verse forms. The venerable epic he thoroughly despised. When Mason was planning an epic poem, Walpole set forth by letter his views and prejudices in an attempt to discourage Mason from his undertaking. The epic, he writes, is "that most senseless of all the species of poetic composition, and [sic] which the pedants call the chef d'oeuvre of the human mind...." Further on, he adds that epic poetry is "the art of being as long possible in telling an uninteresting story" and that its subject matter is a mixture of "History without truth and Romance without imagination." For these reasons Walpole ranks epic poetry low in the rank of literary composition and states that the "absurdity of the species" had kept all except its inventor, Homer, from succeeding. In rapid review he cites as examples epic writers of all

¹To Hannah More (November 13, 1784), Letters, VIII, 523.

the succeeding ages. Virgil, with all his beauty and harmony, has accomplished only an insipid imitation with a non-entity for a hero; Dante is absurd, extravagant, "in short, a Methodist Parson in Bedlam"; Spenser is "a John Bunyan in rhyme"; Milton, though sublime and spirited, has produced only a monster; and Voltaire, in spite of his good sense in his epic, has lost his spirit and fire. In conclusion he sums up his true opinion of the epic and its place in literature when he says:

Epic poetry is like what it first celebrated, the heroes of a world that knew nothing better than courage and conquest. It is not suited to an improved and polished state of things. It has continued to degenerate from the founder of the family and happily expired in the last bastard of the race, Ossian.¹

Neither did Walpole like the sonnet any better as a poetic form. He writes that its greatest drawback is its characteristic discordance resulting from an overcrowding of words. Likewise the sonnet is an utter failure as a poetic form in English, because English is a language barren of rhymes and composed of many words whose terminations are too "rugged, uncouth, and unmusical" for such use. Therefore, Walpole affirms, Spenser made a grave mistake in imitating the sonnet form, and particularly in adding to the length of the sonnet stanza, for in so doing he weakens the thought he would express in his endeavor to obtain his full quota of

¹ (June 25, 1782), Letters, VIII, 235-236.

lines.¹

Yet Walpole, classicist though he was, never failed to reveal through his correspondence the gradual progress of the romantic movement which arose during his century. He himself in fact shows a partial sympathy for some of its poetic theories. In a letter to Mason, for example, he complains of the dullness of the everyday world of nature as treated in contemporary poetry, and expresses a longing for an idyll or elegy the scene of which shall be laid upon Saturn or Mars. Unable to produce the prescribed work himself, he urges Mason to undertake it, and in so doing to become the peer of Milton and Shakespeare, the only two writers "who ventured beyond the visible, diurnal sphere, and preserved their intellects....."²

The observation about Shakespeare and Milton is likewise an evidence of the eighteenth century revival of interest in romantic writers of the past. Chaucer, for example, received some notice during the age, according to the letters of Walpole. He writes that Warton in his History of Poetry considers neither Pope nor Dryden to have added many beauties to Chaucer through their translations.³ Tyrrwhit also pub-

¹To William Roscoe (April 4, 1795), Letters, IX, 454.

²(1782), Letters, VIII, 159-160.

³To Mason (April 7, 1774), Letters, VI, 72.

lished his notes on the Canterbury Tales, a work which Walpole considered most tedious, for he preferred Chaucer in Dryden's translation to Chaucer in his own language.¹ Spenser was likewise receiving consideration. Walpole writes George Montagu about a new publication of Spenser with prints designed by Kent;² in his letters he himself quotes from Spenser several times and mentions the fact that he has been reading some of Spenser's works.³

Walpole's letters also testify to the contemporary revival of interest in Shakespeare and Milton. To Conway he expresses his regret that the age with all its admiration for Shakespeare can do nothing but write worse than Shakespeare ever did;⁴ and to Hannah More his disgust for those who think that they can excel Shakespeare as a poet. "Oh!" he writes, "I have not words adequate to my contempt for those who can suppose such a possibility."⁵ Voltaire's attack upon Shakespeare, Walpole attributes to envy and to the consciousness of his own inferiority as a writer. In the

¹ Ibid. (April 14, 1775), Letters, VI, 201.

² (June 13, 1751), Letters, 257.

³ To the Miss Berrys (September 4, 1789), Letters, IX, 216.

⁴ (November 14, 1769), Letters, VI, 203.

⁵ (November 4, 1789), Letters, IX, 230-231.

same letter Walpole mentions the warm admiration of Gray and Goldsmith for Shakespeare, and regrets that death prevents their opportunity to defend their master.¹ Such a defense of Shakespeare was written, however, for Walpole commends a "just attack on Voltaire," written in poetic form by Mrs. Montagu.²

Milton likewise received some favorable commendation as a poet, though the correspondence of Walpole would indicate that, as a whole, the century considered him no poet at all.³ This fact Walpole regretted, for he admired Milton warmly. In one letter to Mann he states that English literature has "no fairer epic poem than Milton's"⁴ and in another to Richard Gough he affirms that the translation of Milton into French, which occurred when his own Essay on Gardening appeared in that language, lent harmony and dignity to the French tongue.⁵ Walpole likewise reveals his romantic tendencies when he remarks concerning Milton that "there is more nature in six lines of 'L'Allegro' and Penseroso', than in all the laboured imitations of Milton."⁶ Articles in defense of Milton as a poet appeared frequently during

¹(October 8, 1776), Letters, VI, 379-380.

²To Mason (November 27, 1773), Letters, VI, 17.

³Ibid. (April 25, 1781), Letters, VIII, 30.

⁴(December 9, 1742), Letters, 219.

⁵(June 21, 1786), Letters, IX, 56-57.

⁶To the Miss Berrys (September 16, 1791), Letters, IX, 347.

the age. Walpole mentions, as an instance, that he is particularly anxious to see one appearing in the Memoirs of Hollis.¹

Of the eighteenth century romanticists Walpole's correspondence has most to say about his good friends, Thomas Gray and William Mason. The minor romantics he mentions only casually. For James Thomson he has only the greatest contempt, writing that he would not exchange the fair weather of the past week for all four of the Seasons in blank verse, and charging that Thomson lacks originality.² William Shenstone he calls a "water-gruel bard" who wrote no good poetry except "The School Mistress."³ Mark Akenside is only a "tame genius",⁴ and John Dyer is a writer of "insipid poems," though his "Ruins of Rome" has great "picturesque spirit" and his "Grongar Hill" shows traces of beauty.⁵

Gray, according to the correspondence of Walpole, was in spite of his faults one of the outstanding poets of the age. His Odes Walpole describes to Mann as "sublime",

¹To Mason (May 22, 1781), Letters, VIII, 44.

²To Miss Berry (September 16, 1791), Letters, 346-347.

³To Mason (April 18, 1778), Letters, VII, 54.

⁴To Mann (March 29, 1745), Letters, I, 347.

⁵To David Dalrymple (April 8, 1776), Letters, VI, 322.

and charming, but too "obscure", "too mysterious," and too over-burdened with strophe and epode.¹ However, they were rather coldly received by the public, which Walpole disgustedly charges, would not take the trouble to see their beauties.² George Montagu's admiration for Gray's poems, Walpole describes as most unusual in an age showing preference for Akenside and Thomson.³ In fact, Walpole declares that the general public never admired any of Gray's poetry but his Churchyard Elegy.⁴ But of all Gray's poetry, Walpole particularly liked the Eton Odes, the Progress of Poetry, The Bard and The Descent of Odin. Neither did their quarrel prevent Walpole from continuing to express the warmest of admiration for Gray, nor from furnishing Mason every possible assistance in the manner of notes, letters, and information when the latter undertook Gray's biography. And in a letter to William Cole he pays further tribute to Gray's ability by saying that "what he published during his life will establish his fame as long as our language lasts, and there is a man of genius left."⁵ Such an estimate was

¹(August 14, 1757), Letters, III, 94.

²To Lord Lyttelton (August 25, 1757), Letters, III, 96-98.

³To George Montagu (August 25, 1757), Letters, III, 99.

⁴To Lord Lyttelton (August 25, 1757), Letters, 98.

⁵(January 28, 1772), Letters, V, 372.

not the prevalent one; Johnson, of course, condemned Gray, Walpole describing his criticism as mere "blubber";¹ the editor of Letters in the English Nation, a review of contemporary authors, ranked Walpole above Gray as a poet;² one Potter, however, Walpole reports, defended Gray against Johnson in a most sensible and severe piece of writing.³

In spite of Gray's cold reception by the general public, a few writers were imitating him in style as well as in subject matter. Edward Jerningham's new poem on the doctrines of the Scandanavian bards, Walpole reports, seems to have been influenced by Gray's "Descent of Odin," though far inferior to Gray in its emotional appeal.⁴ Three Englishmen living in Italy also published a collection of mock odes, the last one obviously an imitation of Gray.⁵ But possibly the man who most sincerely tried to follow in Gray's footsteps was his friend and biographer, William Mason. Clergyman by profession, he apparently had many serious hobbies, among them poetry and painting. So similar was the style of his three-volume poetic work, English Gardening, to that

¹ To Mason (February 9, 1781), Letters, VIII, 3.

² Ibid.

³ To Mason (June 9, 1783), Letters, VIII, 376.

⁴ Ibid. (February 2, 1784), Letters, VIII, 458.

⁵ To Mann (July 8, 1784), Letters, VIII, 487.

of Gray, Walpole reports, that some readers actually thought it Gray's and therefore disapproved of it.¹ In fact the work received adverse criticism from several papers, among them The Morning Post,² but Walpole complimented Mason on his scene of the cottage children and their joys and sorrows.³ Mason's two other poetic works, according to Walpole, were an excellent translation of Fresvov's Art of Painting with notes by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the Archaeological Epistle, the latter attacking Stuart and Dean Milles on their stand in the famous Rowley controversy.

The romantic trend was also manifesting itself by a revival of interest in the past, particularly in old poems and ballads of past centuries. Walpole writes enthusiastically of a delightful three-volume publication by Dr. Percy called A Collection of Old Ballads and Poetry.⁴ He describes the edition as most "curious" and the dissertation as "sensible, concise, and unaffected."⁵ Though in Walpole's opinion, this was the best collection, he reports

¹ To Mason (July 6, 1777), Letters, VI, 453.

² Ibid. (May 16, 1778), Letters, VII, 68.

³ Ibid. (May 20, 1776), Letters, VI, 339.

⁴ To William Cole (March 9, 1765), Letters, IV, 329.

⁵ To Joseph Warton (March 16, 1765), Letters, IV, 331.

that others had been made earlier in the century. For example, he reports to William Cole that Percy got some of his material from Pepys' collection at Cambridge, and a few from three collections made thirty or forty years previous. However, he writes, these as well as other collections were marked by too much carelessness of preparation and looseness of character to be of much use.¹

The famous Macpherson and Chatterton attempts at forgery of old literature Walpole's correspondence covers in full. Macpherson's first fragments of Cssian, Walpole most enthusiastically admired, writing Dalrymple that the poem was "marked by natural imagery and elevated sentiment," and that it was evidently "written before rules were invented to make poetry difficult and dull."² Gray, he tells us, was likewise enthusiastic and interested, as well as most curious to know more about the author or authors and the antiquity of the verses, because, authentic or not, he considered the author to be a most clever person.³ Mason, Lyttelton, and others were equally gullible, Walpole reports, but the public in general was not so enthusiastic.⁴ By the time that

¹(March 16, 1765), Letters, IV, 331.

²(February 3, 1760), Letters, III, 284.

³To Dalrymple (April 4, 1760), Letters, III, 297-298.

⁴Ibid., p. 298.

Walpole was able to examine the whole volume, he too was beginning to wish that the authenticity of the work had been more thoroughly established, because he knew that the skeptical public would be demanding proofs, not assertions.¹ Still almost a year later his letter to Dalrymple states that his doubts concerning the genuineness of Fingal had vanished.²

As time passed and investigation progressed, however, Walpole's concern over the authenticity of Ossian increased. Thoroughly convinced at last, he wrote of his conviction to George Montagu, presenting two very convincing arguments to support his stand. First, so the letter contends, a poem of six books whose preservation from a pre-Christian era depended upon oral transmission could not have maintained its present uncorrupted condition; and second, it seemed most strange that during the passage of centuries no part nor measure had been lost, but remained a perfect whole with all parts intact.³ As the controversy waxed hot and cold through the succeeding years, many articles continued to be written upon the subject. As late as 1775, Walpole reports the unsuccessful attempt of a new book, the Nugae Antiquae, to establish the authenticity of Ossian;⁴ and five years later

¹ Ibid. (June 20, 1760), Letters, III, 319.

² (April 14, 1761), Letters, III, 395.

³ (December 8, 1761), Letters, III, 466.

⁴ To William Mason (April 14, 1775), Letters, VI, 202.

another called Antiquities and Scenery in the North of Scotland opened the attack again by questioning Fingal's possession of a suit of armor in an age entirely ignorant of the use of steel and iron.¹

The Chatterton-Rowley controversy, according to Walpole, attracted even more attention than the Macpherson affair; and for one so closely involved in the situation, Walpole gives through his letters a surprisingly unprejudiced account. When the blame for Chatterton's unfortunate death was laid at Walpole's door, through his refusal to aid in publishing what he considered to be forged work, the question of Chatterton's honesty was raised to a white heat. Sides were taken, articles were written, and the question of authenticity argued pro and con for the next twenty years. Walpole, however, easily clears himself of any responsibility for Chatterton's death. In a letter to William Cole, for example, he writes:

I believe Macpherson's success with 'Ossian' was more the ruin of Chatterton than I. Two years passed between my doubting the authenticity of Rowley's poetry and his death. I never knew that he had been in London till some time after he had undone and poisoned himself there.²

A year later he states in further explanation of his innocence that his correspondence with Chatterton consisted of

¹To Mason (May __, 1780), Letters, VII, 361.

²(June 19, 1777), Letters, VI, 447.

only two letters, both written in the kindest of spirit before Chatterton's departure from Bristol; that he never saw Chatterton in person; and that he would have rendered Chatterton financial aid, had he known of his presence in London.¹ When a new publication of the Chatterton poems in Bristol in 1778 brought up the controversy again, Walpole finally consented to establish his innocence through writing an account of his relationship with Chatterton to be submitted only to those most concerned in the controversy.² However he never published the article, saying that his letters would clear his name to posterity.³

The grounds upon which Walpole based his doubts of authenticity of the Rowley poems were sound. To William Cole he presents the arguments that the poetry is written in meters invented long after Bishop Rowley lived, that the verse is endowed with an elegance more characteristic of Waller and Prior than of a crude medieval monk, and that the language is more refined than that used in much later centuries.⁴ In another letter he also observes that the monk's liberal manner of thinking, as well as his familiar-

¹To William Cole (May 21, 1778), Letters, VII, 70.

²To Mason (July 24, 1778), Letters, VII, 102.

³To the Countess of Ossory (July 17, 1792), Letters, IX, 381.

⁴(June 9, 1777), Letters, VI, 447.

ity with the classics, is too inconsistent to be overlooked.¹ In fact, Walpole sums up his estimate of the poetry by saying that a mere substitution of modern words for the antique diction will result in a modern version of a poetic composition.²

Walpole likewise reveals through his correspondence others who early doubted the authenticity of the Rowley poems. Tyrrel, the noted authority on Chaucer, at first accepted Rowley as a genuine person, but finally convinced of his mistake, published an "Appendix" announcing his conviction that they were forgeries.³ Thomas Warton in his History of English Poetry, Walpole reports, rejected the Rowley poems altogether,⁴ and Dr. Percy soon acknowledged his mistake in accepting them at first.⁵

The most stubborn supporters of Chatterton, so Walpole's letters relate, and also those most responsible for the renewal of the pen war upon the subject, once it had died down, were Dean Milles, and Stuart Bryant. Bryant,

¹To the Countess of Ossory (December 30, 1781), Letters, VIII, 138.

²To Cole (June 19, 1777), Letters, VI, 447.

³To Cole (June 10, 1773), Letters, VII, 79.

⁴Ibid. (March 31, 1778), Letters, VII, 50.

⁵Ibid. (May 21, 1778), Letters, VII, 70.

Walpole says, proved a skillful, though weak, adversary and almost convinced Walpole's friend, Conway, of the authenticity of the poems.¹ Dr. Milles' book, however, was nothing but "a parade of all his knowledge," accompanied by a bombastic preference" of Chatterton to Milton, Shakespeare, Homer, Pope, Virgil, and others.² In fact, he writes, both men presented Chatterton as a boy of the most noble character, but a person of no genius at all, thus giving rise to much argument.³

Much discussion was the result. As Walpole describes the situation to Mason, "many pens are whittling," and Milles and Bryant were not being received with the deference expected.⁴ Walpole reports a quick reply from a Mr. Malone, but one which attempted too much humor to have much success.⁵ Warton's, he complains, was too weak because he failed to refute one or two of Bryant's arguments and to refute Milles' explanation of blocking the parchments.⁶ However, he happily mentions a "most sensible confutation" appearing in the

¹To the Countess of Ossory (December 22, 1781), Letters, VII, 130.

²To Mason (January 3, 1782), Letters, VIII, 139.

³To the Countess of Ossory (December 22, 1781), Letters, VIII, 130.

⁴(February 7, 1782), Letters, VIII, 149.

⁵To Mason (February 7, 1782), Letters, VIII, 149.

⁶Ibid. (March 23, 1782), Letters, VIII, 186.

Monthly Reveiw¹ and a more candid treatment of his side of the question in a new volume of the Biographia Brittannica.² The most worthy reply, in Walpole's opinion, however, was that made by Edmond Malone through the newspapers. Walpole particularly liked Malone's telling argument to the effect that Chatterton permitted Rowley not only to employ all provincial dialects but even the languages of two entire centuries.³

With this the controversy apparently rested, only to be reopened ten years later. In 1792 occurred the death of Chatterton's mother, and Walpole's two letters, found among her personal effects, were printed, only to have their authenticity denied by the Chatterton sympathizers. False reports and true meant little to Walpole at this time, for he was growing old; but his personal belief was that the Chatterton sympathizers would destroy his two letters after his death and substitute forgeries of great unkindness in their stead. Therefore he wrote the Countess of Ossory that all he could hope was absolution through preservation of the rest of his correspondence.⁴ And with this his part in the affair ended.

¹ Ibid. (April , 1782), Letters, VIII, 200.

² To Hannah More (September ---, 1789), Letters, IX, 221.

³ To Malone (February 4, 1782), Letters, 492.

⁴ (July 17, 1792), Letters, IX, 379-381.

In closing the discussion it would be, however, most unfair to Walpole not to reveal his true and just estimate of the boy Chatterton. And as his own words seem to express most sincerely and most fittingly his attitude toward the youth endowed with such "an incredible genius," they are given as follows:

"He had generally genuine powers of poetry; often wit, and sometimes natural humour.....He had a strong vein of satire....., yet the poor soul perished before he was nineteen! He had read, and written as if he was fourscore, yet it cannot be discovered when or where. He had no more principles than if he had been one of all our late administrators. He was an instance that a complete genius and a complete rogue can be formed before a man is of age."¹

The résumé of eighteenth century poetry given in this chapter reflects the vast amount of work being done in that field at the time. Though scorned as a serious profession, the art of poetic composition found favor as a pastime and attracted to its field those of all professions. Dominated at first by the classical school of writers, poetic composition soon found itself committed to the theories of rising romanticism, and thus became the subject of much experimentation and criticism in regard to forms, meters, and subjects. To Walpole the situation of modern poetry was critical. The Augustan age of poetry had practically ended with Pope; and the attempted forgeries of Chatterton and Macpherson only served to add to his contempt for the profession, and

¹To Mason (July 24, 1778), Letters, VII, 102-103.

to prove the deplorable condition into which the art had declined. The fact that he could only look to the works of Gray and William Mason for hope, and the fact that he and other classicists were evincing an interest in romantic writers of the past are definite evidence of the gradual decline of eighteenth century classical attitudes and of the gradual development of romanticism for which the late eighteenth century paved the way.

CHAPTER III

HORACE WALPOLE'S COMMENTS UPON THE DRAMA AND STAGE OF HIS AGE

Throughout the eighteenth century the drama in England maintained an active productivity. Though the quality of work did not always match the quantity of production, the stage was still sought as a source of amusement. Witnessing a great revival of popularity at the close of the age, the drama saw the erection of private theaters, the production of private theatricals and a complete change in attitude toward actor and dramatist. As a result, all forms of drama from the pantomime to the comedy of manners and the serious tragedy were written and staged. Likewise, with the rise of romanticism, Shakespeare was once more raised to his former prominence, his plays attracting popular comment not only in England but abroad. Vitally interested in the drama and stage as sources of entertainment, Walpole comments upon theatrical activities widely and frequently throughout his correspondence, and it is from this source that the material for this chapter is taken.

Some one has said that eighteenth century drama went to sleep with Congreve, not to awaken until Sheridan made his appearance. Walpole's correspondence reveals that such was the condition during the earlier part of the century. To Mann he complains that there were no good plays

at all, but only "damned ones."¹ Again he laments "that the theatre swarms with wretched translations and ballad operas, and we have nothing new but improving abuse,"² concluding elsewhere that he never expects to see a good play again.³ The lack of histrionic ability was likewise a just cause for complaint. Walpole thought little of the ability of such older actors as Betterton, Penkethman, Lord Hardwicke, or the Duke of Newcastle,⁴ and further complained that the poor troupes of actors maintained by both Drury Lane and Covent Garden prevented the decent staging of a play.⁵

Such a condition might account for the popularity of French actors in England at this time, but a more likely explanation is the utter scorn with which the profession was treated. Walpole sarcastically writes Mann that David Garrick is only an "actor" and therefore can not be trusted too much.⁶ The marriage of Lady Susan Fox to the actor O'Brian more than scandalized the social world. Walpole

¹(Dec. 13, 1739) Letters, I, 31.

²To George Montagu (Oct. 16, 1769), Letters, V, 197.

³To Earl of Strafford (Nov. 9, 1774), Letters, VI, 145.

⁴To Mann (Jan. 15, 1771), Letters, V, 279.

⁵To Mason (Oct. 8, 1776), Letters, VI, 380.

⁶(Sept. 1, 1763), Letters, IV, III.

writes that such a union--the result of permitting young ladies to act in plays--was a much more ignoble disgrace than marriage with a footman, "for the publicity of the hero's profession perpetuates the mortification."¹ The low character of actors, dramatists, and producers likewise added much to the prevailing attitude of scorn. Often forced to take to the road in order to make a living, the actors lost all sense of pride, and many times grew insulting in their demands for help. To the Countess of Ossory Walpole tells of an insolent letter directed to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland by a company of actors who resented their small gift of three guineas given in appreciation of the performance.² Dramatists were equally unscrupulous; any person was liable to be the victim of burlesque and caricature. Samuel Foote, so Walpole tells us, satirized in his comedy, The Nabob, Dean Milles and the Antiquarian Society for their nonsensical discussion of Dick Whittington and his cat;³ Fielding, still more bold, satirized in his Covent Garden Tragedy the character of General Braddock by presenting a love affair similar to one being carried on by him and his mistress, Mrs. Upton.⁴ Managers were not above any action

¹To the Earl of Hertford (April 12, 1764), Letters, IV, 220-221.

²(_____, 1773), Letters, V, 507.

³To Cole (July 7, 1772), Letters, V, 398.

⁴To Mann (Aug. 25, 1755), Letters, II, 459.

to carry their point. Walpole writes Robert Jephson that in the production of a play managers would take "liberties and often curtail necessary speeches so as to produce nonsense."¹ In their great rivalry they even resorted to underhand methods to break up an enemy's production. Such, for example, Jephson feared of David Garrick and Drury Lane, after he had turned his play over to Covent Garden for staging.²

In spite of such handicaps the theater grew steadily in popularity, attracting more and more the favor of the upper classes. As typical of the great throngs attending the theater, Walpole describes his visit to Drury Lane to see a production of Cymbeline. To obtain a good seat he went before six o'clock, only to be met by such a great crowd that he secured no better place than the fifth row, where "he was pent for five hours."³ Such popularity, according to his correspondence, continued throughout the century, great rivalry springing up among the leading theaters in their endeavor to draw the greatest audiences. For a while the Pantheon was favored by the King, the Haymarket by the Prince of Wales,⁴ the Pantheon managing to become the more popular

¹ (Jan. 27, 1780), Letters, VII, 319.

² To Jephson (Nov. 13, 1781), Letters, VIII, 107.

³ To Montagu (Dec. 8, 1761), Letters, III, 466.

⁴ To Miss Agnes Berry (Feb. 18, 1791), Letters, IX, 289.

of the two.¹ Drury Lane also came in for its share of favoritism. Walpole writes that in spite of the emptiness of the town during the hot months, Drury Lane was forced to move to the Opera House to accommodate the crowds.² In short, Walpole apparently proves the continued popularity of theater during the latter half of the century when he says in one letter that six years of war, the absence of an army of fifty or sixty thousand men and of all the squadrons, and a huge national debt of many millions had not made one alteration in the receipts at the door of a single theater.³

Actors and actresses likewise came to receive more respect as the profession rose in esteem. They were received and entertained in the best ranks of society. Walpole mentions dining and talking with Garrick, Mrs. Siddons, and Mrs. Peg Woffington many times; Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard occupied estates in Walpole's neighborhood. Sheridan sat in Parliament and was admired as an eloquent speaker. In truth, numbers of the profession often married into the highest ranks of society and were received as social equals.

¹To the Miss Berrys (Feb. 26, 1791), Letters, IX, 291.

²Ibid. (Sept. 16, 1791), Letters, IX, 346.

³To Mann (Dec. 31, 1781), Letters, VII, 482.

Another evidence of the growth in popularity of the drama was the interest in private theatricals. According to the correspondence of Walpole, it became quite the fashion for the aristocracy to erect private theaters and to act in their own productions. The Duke of York, for example, erected a "pretty little theater" at Westminster and took the part of Lothario opposite Lady Stanhope in The Fair Penitent.¹ Mrs. Hobart and family proved quite popular in staging such plays as Murphy's All in the Wrong and Sheridan's The Critic at their theater in Ham Common.² At Richmond Theater in Walpole's neighborhood, he reports the production of such plays as The Way to Keep Him,³ The Jealous Wife,⁴ The Wonder, and The Guardian,⁵ the two latter starring Lord Henry Fitzgerald and Miss Hamilton. Indeed as early as 1751 "some people of fashion" had grown so proud of their ability to act, that they leased Drury Lane in which to stage their production, Othello. So popular was the play, Walpole writes, "that the House of Commons literally adjourned at three o'clock on purpose [to see the play]," and in celebration of the oc-

¹To Mann (May 24, 1767), Letters, V, 50.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 10, 1782), Letters, VIII, 302-303.

³To Conway (June 17, 1787), Letters, IX, 100.

⁴To Countess of Ossory (Jan. 15, 1788), Letters, IX, 124.

⁵Ibid. (Dec. 16, 1787), Letters, IX, 122.

casion the footman's gallery had been draped in blue ribbon.¹ Professionals, however, were also retained or at least hired to act in certain private productions. Walpole, for instance, wrote the Countess of Ossory that if the actress who played Kitty in High Life Below Stairs were not engaged at either theater at Blenheim or Winstay, she might get a large salary and a "free benefit" at Richmond House as Ines in The Wonder.² Mrs. Jordon also attracted a large and fashionable audience when she came to act in one of the plays there.³

Even children became interested in the art of acting; and, according to Walpole's letters, the dramas which they enacted can only evoke the amazement of the reader today. Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of the Prince of Wales, though an invalid and only eight years of age, Walpole saw portray the part of Lucia in Cato. She had learned the role from hearing her brothers and sisters practice their parts, and dispatched it extraordinarily well.⁴ Of another play staged by children Walpole most interestingly writes:

I was excessively amused Tuesday night; there was a play at Holland House, acted by children; not all children, for Lady Sarah Lenox and Lady Susan

¹To Mann (March 13, 1775), Letters, II, 243.

²(Jan. 15, 1788), Letters, IX, 125.

³To the Countess of Ossory (July 1, 1789), Letters, IX, 186.

⁴To Mann (Sept. 13, 1759), Letters, III, 248-249.

Strangeways played the women. It was "Jane Shore"; Mr. Price....was Gloster, and acted better than three parts of the comedians. Charles Fox [the future statesman], Hastings; a little Nichols, who spoke well, Belmour; Lord Ofaly. Lord Ashbrod, and the other boys did the rest: but the two girls were delightful, and acted with so much nature and simplicity, that they appeared the very things they represented. Lady Sarah was more beautiful than you can conceive, and her very awkwardness gave an air of truth to the shame of the part, and the antiquity of the time..... I was infinitely more struck with the last scene between the two women than ever I was when I have seen it on the stage. When Lady Sarah was in white, with her hair about her ears, and on the ground, no Magdalen by Corregio was half so lovely and expressive.¹

Of the professional actors who gained much recognition during the century Walpole comments most widely upon David Garrick. From his first appearance Garrick was exceedingly popular. To Mann Walpole writes that "all the run now is after Garrick, a wine-merchant who is turned player at Goodman's-fields." In spite of his ability to "portray all parts" and his art of mimicry, Walpole, however, saw nothing wonderful about his acting, though it was "rank heresy" to say so.² In fact, as his career advanced, Walpole continued much of the same opinion, writing in 1772 that Garrick was only a tolerable actor who was able to delight the "mob in the boxes" as well as in the footman's gallery.³ Of his ability as a Shakespearean actor, in particular, Walpole's letters are still less complimentary. To the Earl of Hertford he writes

¹To Montagu (Jan. 22, 1761), Letters, III, 373-374.

²(May 26, 1742), Letters, I, 168.

³To William Cole (Jan. 28, 1772), Letters, V, 372.

that Garrick, though more admired for acting in Shakespeare's plays than Shakespeare ever was for having written them, was not as good as past actors in the best parts. Quin in Falstaff was as good as Garrick in Lear; old Johnson was far more natural; Garrick's Othello proved ridiculous, and his Macbeth far inferior to Quin's.¹ His ability to present readings of plays, a practice which Walpole charges that he adopted in his old age as a means of adulation, also turned out very unsuccessful.² At Garrick's death, Walpole expressed his opinion of the famous player still more freely in a letter to Lady Ossory, saying that he was a "real genius in his way" and was "never equalled in both tragedy and comedy." "Still, continues the letter, acting was not such an "astonishing" talent, and though good as Lear, Richard, and Hotspur, Garrick was poor in the characterization of a gentleman, poor in declamation, and most injudicious in provoking laughter. Furthermore his vanity, envy, and jealousy ruined him as a man, and drove some of the best actresses from the stage."³

Another young actor to win instant acclaim was a former clerk by the name of William Powell. His first appearance so impressed the audience, according to Walpole, that it

¹(March 26, 1765), Letters, IV, 335-336.

²To Mason (Feb. 27, 1777), Letters, VI, 416.

³(Feb. 1, 1779), Letters, VII, 170-1.

literally stood up and shouted its enthusiasm at the close of the play, and all the boxes in the theater were engaged for a month ahead.¹ A Frenchman by the name of Le Tèxier also became quite the fad, particularly in his readings of plays. Walpole calls him a "real prodigy" who acted every character perfectly,² had twenty times the genius of Garrick, and could "pass from laughter to tears and make you shed the latter at both."³ John Henderson Walpole knew personally also, and considered him excellent as an actor, especially in Jephson's Count of Narbonne. John Kemble he only mentions once or twice as being particularly good in Othello.⁴

About the ability of the actresses of the age Walpole's letters contain rather uncomplimentary remarks. Mrs. Kitty Clive he mentions more often as a goodnatured and witty friend, remarking, however, that she "shone" in The Clandestine Marriage.⁵ Mrs. Pritchard he admired for her decorous conduct rather than for her talents.⁶ Miss Clough, the come-

¹To Mann (Oct. 17, 1763), Letters, IV, 118-119.

²Ibid. (Dec. 23, 1777), Letters, VII, 17-18.

³To the Countess of Ossory (Feb. 1, 1779), Letters, VII, 170.

⁴To Miss Berry (April 3, 1791), Letters, IX, 302.

⁵To Montagu (March 12, 1766), Letters, IV, 489.

⁶Ibid. (Aug. 11, 1748), Letters, II, 123.

dian, he favored more, saying that she had a handsome, tall figure and spoke "very justly and with spirit."¹ Peg Woffington was much the vogue, according to Walpole, but to him proved a very bad actress in spite of her great vitality.² Mrs. Hartley was beautiful but not as sensible looking nor as good an actress as Mrs. Guinn.³ For Mrs. Porter and Madame Dumenil, he admitted real reverence,⁴ about the highest praise he gives to any of the women. Even Mrs. Siddons, famous for her Jane Shore, Desdemona, Portia, Lady Macbeth,⁵ and hailed as "the greatest prodigy that ever appeared,"⁶ won little recognition from Walpole. Her fine figure, handsome dyed red hair, and good speaking voice did not prevent his criticism of her lack of variety in action, lack of gentility in appearance, and poor modulation of tone.⁷ Her modesty and common sense in the face of such great popularity, her devotion to her family, and her refusal to take part in social functions, however, evinced warmer praise

¹Ibid. (Sept. 3, 1748), Letters, II, 126.

²To Mann (Oct. 19, 1741), Letters, I, 81.

³To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 18, 1773), Letters, VI, 13.

⁴Ibid. (Feb. 1, 1779), Letters, VII, 170.

⁵Ibid. (Jan. 15, 1788), Letters, IX, 124.

⁶To Mason (Dec. 7, 1782), Letters, VIII, 315-316.

⁷To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 3, 1782), Letters, VIII, 295.

from him¹ and finally induced in him a more favorable attitude toward her acting. Miss Farren actually won from Walpole the title of "the first of the actresses," though he only saw her once, and then when he was quite old.²

In fact, Walpole had his own explanation for the poor ability so common to actresses appearing in "genteel comedy." Only people of fashion, he thought, should act in the genteel comedy, for "actors and actresses can only guess at the tone of high life, and cannot be inspired with it." Mrs. Olafield played it well, he explains, because she not only followed but often set the fashion; Miss Farren was just as good because "she had lived with the best style of men in England"; Mrs. Abington could never get beyond the "second-rate character" of Lady Teazle because she belonged to that group of women always aping the fashion, but never achieving it.³

The correspondence of Walpole likewise reflects the extensive work of the dramatists of this age. Tragedy, so popular during the first part of the century, witnessed a steady decline, and the writers noted in their time for such productions are scarcely read today. William Mason

¹Ibid. (Dec. 25, 1782), Letters, 320.

²Ibid. (Dec. 12, 1786), Letters, IX, 81.

³Ibid. (June 14, 1787), Letters, IX, 96.

wrote three tragedies, Caractacus, Elfrida, and The Indians. The second was produced with success at Covent Garden, though, according to Walpole, the beauty of the play was ruined by the wretched acting, and the poor music.¹ Robert Jephson also received high acclaim for his Braganza and Count of Narbonne, the latter a stage adaptation of Walpole's Castle of Otranto. With its beautiful language and harmony of lines, Braganza, in Walpole's estimation, excelled any play staged within his memory²; indeed the first performance proved so good that it was received with the wildest applause and the boxes were sold out for twenty-five nights in advance.³ The Count of Narbonne was likewise acted with success at Covent Garden, Walpole complimenting Jephson for making "so rational a play out of so wild a tale."⁴ Richard Cumberland's tragedies, however, receive only condemnation in Walpole's letters. His Battle of Hastings resembles a charade in that the first part makes one cry, the latter laugh, and "the whole sleep."⁵ His Widow of Delphi Walpole sarcastically describes as a

¹To Mason (Nov. 19, 1773), Letters, VI, 13.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Feb. 1, 1775), Letters, VI, 186.

³To Mason (Feb. 18, 1775), Letters, VI, 190.

⁴To Jephson, (Jan. 27, 1780), Letters, 319.

⁵To Mason (Feb. 4, 1778), Letters, VII, 25.

"laboured and elegant drama," likely "to endanger the celebrity of Aristophenes."¹

Other writers of tragedy were likewise very active, if not so successful in their writing. Based on classical precepts, many of the plays have historical titles. Walpole, for example, mentions such tragedies as Pausanius, Gustavus Vasa, Boadicea, and Barbarosa, all written in the first half of the century. James Thomson's Tancred and Sigismunda drew the town in throngs, though to Walpole the play was quite dull, because the "refiners of the purity of the stage" were proving themselves "woefully insipid."² William Whitehead's Creusa Walpole terms the "only new tragedy" that he ever saw and liked, having an interesting plot, clear and natural in spite of its complexity.³ John Home's Siege of Aquileia and Alonzo proved uninteresting because the author's talent lay in picturing the life and manners of his own country rather than those of foreign lands.⁴ Johnson's Irene Walpole terms a "trumpery tragedy,"⁵ and Lord Carlisle's The Father's Revenge he compliments for its freedom from indelicacy and ab-

¹Ibid. (Jan. __, 1780), Letters, VII, 323.

²To Mann (March 29, 1745), Letters, I, 347.

³To John Chute (April 30, 1754), Letters, II, 382.

⁴To David Dalrymple (April 4, 1760), Letters, III, 298.

⁵To Mason (May, 1780), Letters, VII, 360.

surdity. Hagget's Villeroi is interesting in that it was a dramatization of the life of Louis XVI during the French Revolution, stressing particularly the faith of the queen at such a crisis.¹

Walpole wrote his revolting tragedy, The Mysterious Mother, in 1768, winning the approval of two rather exacting critics John Chute and Thomas Gray. However unsuited for the stage he believed it to be, he still expressed a wish to see it produced, and even wrote an epilogue to be spoken by Mrs. Clive.² And in spite of his statements to the contrary, he submitted his play to Mason for alterations, saying that any possible success enjoyed would have to be attributed to its censor.³ Though never staged, the play did prove rather popular as a closet drama. In truth, had Walpole not intervened, an extract from it would have been included in the Biographia Dramatica, a compilation of contemporary dramatists; a spurious edition did manage to appear in Ireland in spite of all efforts to prevent its publication.⁵

The leading writers of comedy Walpole comments upon freely. Samuel Foote proved extremely popular, The Minor be-

¹To the Earl of Harcourt (Jan. 7, 1794), Letters, IX, 430-431.

²To George Montagu (April 15, 1768), Letters, V, 94-95.

³To Mason (May 11, 1769), Letters, V, 165.

⁴To John Henderson (April 16, 1781), Letters, VIII, 28-29.

⁵To Sylvester Douglas (Feb. 15, 1792), Letters, IX, 370.

ing praised for its "parts and wit,"¹ and enjoying an extra popularity through the attempted banning of the play by the Archbishop of London.² His comedy entitled The Devil Upon Two Sticks also proved so popular that Walpole had to wait a full week for a reservation at the theater of its production.³ His play, The Bankrupt, however, could only be called very dull.⁴

Walpole's correspondence mentions only one play of Oliver Goldsmith--She Stoops to Conquer--and this play he condemned thoroughly in spite of its "prodigious" success.⁵ To Lady Ossory he writes: "What play makes you laugh very much and yet is very wretched comedy? Dr. Goldsmith's 'She Stoops to Conquer.' Stoops indeed!--so she does, that is, the Muse; she is dragged up the knees, and has trudged, I believe, from Southwork fair."⁶ In another letter to William Mason he complains that She Stoops to Conquer is the "lowest of farces," condemning, however, not the subject, though vulgar, but the execution. "The drift", he argues, "tends to no

¹To Conway (Aug. 7, 1760), Letters, III, 332.

²To Montagu (Nov. 24, 1760), Letters, III, 335-336.

³To H. S. Conway (June 16, 1768), Letters, V, 108.

⁴To Lord Nuneham (July 27, 1773), Letters, II, 486.

⁵To the Countess of Ossory (March 16, 1773), Letters, V, 452.

moral, no edification of any kind"; the situations, however, are "well imagined" and "make one laugh in spite of the grossness of the dialogue, the forced criticism, and the total improbability of the whole plot." And, he continues, though the characters are "very low and aim at low humour," not one says a sentence that is natural at all. In fact, Walpole charges, the play, professedly written in opposition to sentimental comedy, is as bad as the worst of them--so bad that Garrick refused to accept it.¹ Truly, Walpole had only scorn for Goldsmith and more than once called him "silly"; but at his death it is interesting to note that Walpole charged Goldsmith's friends with the shameful neglect of a "poor soul" who had "sometimes parts, though never common sense."²

Other prominent writers of comedy during the age were Cumberland and Colman. According to Walpole, Cumberland was always a dull writer, in spite of the apparent success of his plays.³ The Brothers he reports as acting better than it read, but marred by over emphasis of the comic element in the characters.⁴ Colman was fond of drawing material for his comedies from contemporary persons, The Man of Business being "so full of modern lore" that Walpole could

¹(May 27, 1773), Letters, V, 467.

²To Mason (April 7, 1774), Letters, VI, 72-73.

³To Countess of Ossory (Dec. 5, 1769), Letters, V, 207.

⁴To Montagu (Dec. 14, 1769), Letters, V, 206.

scarcely understand it,¹ and The Manager in Distress, a satire on one of the city officials who had to take action against the author for a minor legal offense.² His Jealous Wife only proved an indifferent play, saved through the acting of an excellent caste.³

For Richard Brinsley Sheridan Walpole expresses in his correspondence the greatest admiration. When Walpole first saw The School for Scandal, so impressed was he that he called it "a marvellous resurrection of the stage." In fact, he reports, there were more parts performed admirably than in almost any other play that he had ever seen, Mrs. Abington equalling any in her profession, Yates, Parsons, Palmer, and Miss Pope each shining in his role.⁴ And, in Walpole's opinion, the play had as much merit as the actors. A year later he writes that The School for Scandal is the best comedy written since The Provoked Husband, and particularly outstanding for its good situations and great wit. Its only faults are its excessive length, two or three bad scenes, and poor characterization in certain parts.⁵ For Sheridan's Critic, Walpole had less praise, complaining that

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Feb. 19, 1774), Letters, VI, 63.

²To Mason (July 15, 1780), Letters, VII, 417.

³To Zouch (March 7, 1761), Letters, III, 382.

⁴To Jephson (July 13, 1777), Letters, VI, 458.

⁵To Mason (May 16, 1778), Letters, VII, 67.

it was "wonderously flat and old,"¹ but explaining that he was too ill-versed in modern dramas to appreciate and understand the allusions.²

Upon the minor comedians of his age, Walpole likewise comments widely, if briefly. For his comedy, The Careless Husband, Cibber "deserved immortality,"³ Walpole admiring him not only as a dramatist but as an actor as well. Murphy's All in the Wrong, introduced at Drury Lane and later acted in a private theater, was "a vile thing" which involved three jealous couples.⁴ Hugh Kelly's The School for Wives, Walpole mentions as being well received under the direction of Garrick.⁵ It is also interesting to note that General Burgoyne wrote a comedy called The Heiress, which not only enjoyed an unusual success upon the stage,⁶ but also proved very delightful reading matter. Walpole, after reading it twice in one day, termed it a better com-

¹Ibid. (Dec. 11, 1779), Letters, VII, 291.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Jan. 13, 1780), Letters, VII, 309.

³To Montagu (Oct. 16, 1769), Letters, V, 197.

⁴To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 10, 1782), Letters, VII, 302-303.

⁵Ibid. (Dec. 14, 1773), Letters, VI, 29.

⁶Ibid. (Jan 16, 1785), Letters, VIII, 538.

edy than any since The Provoked Husband.¹ The Foundling by Edward More is interesting because of its similarity in plot to The Conscious Lovers. Acted by Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Woffington, it enjoyed an unusual success, though Walpole says that he liked the old Conscious Lovers "better, and that not much."²

In addition to the regular comedy and tragedy of the day, so Walpole reports, other forms of drama were written and produced. Fielding, of course, was noted for his farces, always drawing a large crowd with his facile pen. Walpole mentions his simple ballad farce, Miss Lucy in Town, which was admirably acted at Drury Lane by Mrs. Clive as Muscovita, John Beard, and Amorevoli, a noted Italian singer.³ Of the regular farces Walpole names one by the Reverend Mr. Townley entitled High Life Below Stairs⁴ and two by O'Keefe, whom he called his favorite author next to Major Scott. The first, An Agreeable Surprise, Walpole terms excellent nonsense and originality in spite of the judgment of the critics;⁵

¹Ibid. (Jan. 16, 1785), Letters, VIII, 538.

²Ibid. (Feb. 10, 1786), Letters, IX, 39.

³To Mann (Feb. 14, 1748), Letters, II, 105.

⁴To Mann (May 26, 1742), Letters, I, 168.

⁵To the Countess of Ossory (Aug. 4, 1782), Letters, VIII, 263.

the second, The Beggar on Horseback, very low, but very diverting through its originality and nonsense.¹

The letters of Walpole likewise reveal an interesting account of the growing unpopularity of pantomimes. During the middle of the century, these performances became so disliked that the galleries decided to drive them from the stage. Fleetwood, the manager of Drury Lane, however, favored them because they filled his house, particularly the pit; therefore, the resulting antagonism between the pit and the galleries resulted in serious rioting for two consecutive nights.² Neither did the pantomimes which continued to be produced warrant much commendation, according to Walpole. One, for example, called Robinson Crusoe, proved nothing more than a "heap of contradictions and violations of costume," with Friday turned Harlequin. And, complains Walpole, all were far too inferior to those of Rich which were marked by their wit, coherence, and good stories.³ Other dull pantomimes mentioned in Walpole's letters are Cymon, given at Christmas with "all of Garrick's ginger-bread double gilt,"⁴ and those depicting the horrors

¹ Ibid. (June 20, 1785), Letters, VIII, 557-558.

² To Mason (Nov. 26, 1744), Letters, I, 382.

³ To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 3, 1782), Letters, VIII, 216.

⁴ Ibid. (Jan. 14, 1792), Letters, IX, 367.

of the Bastille--most popular with the exiles of the Revolution.¹

Walpole mentions only casually the production of masques and puppet shows. The Prince of Wales, he relates, while interested in private theatricals, planned to take the part of Paris in Congreve's Masque.² Cumberland's masque Calypso Walpole terms a "prodigy of dullness," and sarcastically accuses the sentimental writer of grossness in making cantharides one of the ingredients of a love-potion for enamoring Telemachus.³ As an example of puppet show production, Walpole writes of a new one called The Maid of the Oaks, the performance of which was "as fine as scenes could make it....and as dull as the author could not help making it."⁴

Though women appear to have been less active in the field of drama than in other fields of literature during the age of Walpole, he reports a few as authors of plays. Mrs. Sheridan, the mother of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, produced a new comedy, The Dupe, which was very admirably acted, but so vulgar that it ran only three nights.⁵ A

¹Ibid. (Oct. 9, 1789), Letters, IX, 227.

²To Mann (May 11, 1745), Letters, I, 353.

³To Cole (March 28, 1779), Letters, VII, 187-188.

⁴To. H. S. Conway (Nov. 12, 1774), Letters, VI, 146.

⁵To the Earl of Hertford (Dec. 12, 1763), Letters, IV, 151.

Mrs. Griffith's play, The Platonic Wife, was equally unsuccessful, Walpole reporting that in charity to the author, it was allowed a run of three nights.¹ The noted Hannah More also wrote a sentimental play called Percy, which Walpole condemned for the heroine's superabundance of virtue and love.² The School for Graybeards, or the Mourning Bride by Mrs. Cowley was supposed to approach the plays of Mrs. Aphra Behn, in "its Spartan delicacy," but the performance only revealed a farcical and improbable plot, purged of all grossness.³ The milkwoman poetess, Mrs. Yearsley, also produced a tragedy by the name of Earl Godwin, Walpole merely mentioning its publication.⁴

Because Walpole was vitally interested in the stage and the drama, he naturally had his own ideas concerning the rules of dramatic composition, and even wrote a dissertation called Thoughts on Comedy.⁵ Confronted with the eternal problem of pleasing the public, the dramatist, so Walpole thought, faced two distinct views--that of writing to achieve durable fame and that of writing to please the pre-

¹ Ibid. (Jan. 27, 1765), Letters, IV, 319.

² To the Countess of Ossory (Dec. 11, 1777), Letters, VII, 15.

³ Ibid. (Dec. 15, 1786), Letters, IX, 82.

⁴ To Miss Berry (April 23, 1791), Letters, IX, 307.

⁵ To Jephson (July 13, 1777), Letters, VI, 458.

sent taste. Of the disastrous results which the latter choice would naturally produce upon high comedy--to Walpole the best form of drama--he thus writes: "High comedy must risk a little of its immortality by consulting the ruling taste; and thence comedy always loses some of its beauties, the transient, and some of its intelligibility."¹ The addition of low characters to the caste of a high comedy in order to please the pit he likewise regretted, saying that he hated to see a "genteel comedy abused by coarse applause."²

Perfect comedy Walpole held to be "the perfection of human composition," and the most difficult type of drama to write. Indeed he maintained that fifty Iliads and Aeneids could be written sooner than such a character as Falstaff.³ True comedy should likewise be marked by "perfect wit", which to Walpole was the highest form of humor.⁴ However, farce and satire he found highly entertaining, particularly farce. Farce, in Walpole's opinion, opened a wider field of invention to the writers for the stage in that it did not have to be so "chaste and sober", and at the same time offered an ideal opportunity for the display of originality

¹ To Pinkerton (Oct. 6, 1784), Letters, VIII, 510.

² To Hannah More (April 22, 1789), Letters, IX, 178.

³ To the Countess of Ossory (Dec. 3, 1776), Letters, VI, 395. .

⁴ To the Countess of Ossory (June 20, 1785), Letters, VIII, 558.

in "perfect nonsense."¹ In fact, next to high comedy, Walpole preferred farce. In their endeavor to instruct satire and comedy were likewise at a disadvantage, because the allusions or manners represented were likely to be temporary, and as these disappeared, the evils which the play aimed at correcting ceased to be the vogue. In truth, Walpole thought that there was an utter futility in the author's attempt at any reform, for the reader and the audience did not comprehend the point, and "only abandoned one folly for another."²

Walpole considered Congreve and Vanbrugh the model writers of "genteel comedy,"³ giving definite reasons for his choice in the matter. In a letter to Lady Ossory, he states that the small number of genteel comedies was attributable to the fact that most of them were written by men not of that social rank. Etherege, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Cibber wrote high comedies successfully because they lived in the best company. General Burgoyne was able to write the best modern comedy for the same reason. Farquhar's plays, because of his life, talked "the language of a marching regiment in country quarters"; for the same reason Wycherly, Dryden, and Mrs. Centlivre wrote as if they had

¹To Pinkerton (Oct. 6, 1784), Letters, VIII, 509.

²Ibid. (Oct. 6, 1784), Letters, VIII, 510.

³To Mason (April 14, 1782), Letters, VIII, 210.

lived at the Rose Tavern.¹ The best of these comedies, however, were not without their faults. For example, The Man of Mode and Vanbrugh, though excellent, in Walpole's opinion, were likewise too indelicate; in addition Congreve, who excelled in wit, was not always natural, and "still less simple."² The later comedy of manners, while following its early models in the use of wit, easy dialogue, and in its inattention to plot structure, was likewise too often guilty of what Walpole considered two mistakes found in all these comedies--namely, the character of a romantic old maid, and the modish aversion for the country.³

Concerning the writing of tragedy Walpole has less to say in his letters. However, the facility of writing exquisite poetry was a wonderful advantage, particularly when coupled with the ability to sacrifice charming lines that did not add to the action of the play.⁴ Likewise the procedure for constructing a tragedy was to make a rough sketch of the whole action, then to study the characters and the audience.⁵ The catastrophe must not be delayed too

¹ (June 14, 1787), Letters, IX, 96.

² Ibid. (Aug. 29, 1785), Letters, IX, 10.

³ To Pinkerton (Sept. 27, 1784), Letters, VIII, 503-504.

⁴ To Jephson (July 13, 1777), Letters, VI, 457-458.

⁵ Ibid. (Oct. 17, 1777), Letters, VI, 501.

long, nor the characters "rant" too much; and certainly matters of decorum must be observed. For example, in Jephson's Count of Narbonne, Walpole criticises a line which implies the display of a lady's wound, saying that such an act would be "shocking"; again he warns that the word Jehovah will certainly not be suffered on the stage.¹

In his attitude toward the unities and the French classicists in general, Walpole reveals a gradually growing dislike. For example, after seeing Merope and Voltaire's new tragedy Les Guebres, the plot of which was rather confusing, Walpole rather bitingly observes in a letter to John Chute that the grave-diggers in Hamlet had little chance when "a piece as pleasing as the Guebres is written agreeably to all rules and unities."² About the subject of dramatic composition as treated by Harris of Salisbury in his new but "paltry" volumes, he also observes: "He dwells on Aristotle's old backed rules for the Drama, and the pedantry of a beginning, middle, and end. Harris was one of those wiseacres whom such wiseacres as himself cried up for profound; but he was more like the scum at the top of a well."³ In fact, though he admits that in writing comedy one must observe the rules

¹Ibid. (Jan. 25, 1780), Letters, VII, 317.

²(Aug. 30, 1769), Letters, V, 184.

³To Mason (May 6, 1781), Letters, VIII, 36.

of the French, he accuses them of a "too delicate rigour,"¹ and questions the wisdom of submitting to their dictates. After seeing Beaumarchis' Marriage of Figaro, supposed to be indecent but instructive, he says that he hates "the dictatorial pertness of modern French authors" and cannot see how their rather "flimsy titles" can entitle them to such an importance.² Indeed, it seems that he would discard classic rules altogether when he states in a letter to Hannah More that the French stage has always been poor in tragedy and comedy, and can never produce an equal to Shakespeare.³

Though every eighteenth century play usually had its prologue and epilogue, Walpole disapproves of them in general. In the first place, he argued, the prologue, which opened the plot, anticipated it; if it treated any thing else--as Dryden's did of politics or any contemporary event, as Addison's did of classical authors, and Garrick's, of characterization to display his mimicry--it accomplished nothing. In short, the only plays needing prologues were those of Shakespeare, where it was necessary for the author to have some means of conveying to the audience an idea of the great amount of time and space covered in the course of the action. The epilogue was equally useless, for if the audience did not

¹ To Pinkerton (Oct. 6, 1784), Letters, VIII, 508.

² To the Countess of Ossory (Dec. 12, 1786), Letters, IX, 80.

³ (Oct. 14, 1787), Letters, IX, 116.

like the play, there was no purpose in begging their approval or of thanking their disapproval.¹ However, he concludes elsewhere, the dramatist must suit the taste of the times, and a bad epilogue could not hurt a successful play, whereas a good prologue had occasionally saved a bad one.²

The revival of Shakespeare during the eighteenth century is likewise interesting to trace in the correspondence of Walpole. Garrick, of course, was one of Shakespeare's leading exponents--such a devotee, in fact, that he erected a "grateful temple" in his honor on his Hampton estate.³ He, however, altered the plays in accordance with the dictates of the age. To Walpole's disgust his production of Hamlet omitted the grave-diggers' scene, thus violating it very much. Indeed, Walpole was surprised that "so good a courtier" would revise such a vile play as one which dealt with "the adulterous queen of Denmark," remarking, however, "that grave-diggers shock Kings and queens more than the gallantries of their relations."⁴ But Garrick was not the only producer of Shakespearean plays. In 1750 Barry staged his Hamlet in which the famous Quin refused to play the ghost

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Jan. 9, 1787), Letters, IX, 89.

²To Jephson (Nov. 7, 1781), Letters, VIII, 105.

³To Richard Bentley (Aug. 4, 1755), Letters, II, 456.

⁴To Mason (Jan. 9, 1773), Letters, I, 427.

because such a role was beneath his dignity.¹ Cumberland also produced a new Timon of Athens adapted from Shakespeare; and "marvelously well-done," writes Walpole, "for he has caught the manners and the diction of the original so exactly, that I think it is full as bad a play as it was before he corrected it."² And Shakespeare evidently continued to exert his influence. Walpole, for example, reports in 1773, a little drama called Palladius and Irene, by an unknown author, the beginning in imitation of Gray's Runic fragments, "the rest Shakespeare."³

That Walpole himself was a close student of Shakespeare and had read widely of his plays is evident throughout his correspondence. He speaks, for instance of the similarity of one his letters to a Shakespearean historical play in its relation of "insurrections, a marriage, trials, and a court pageant."⁴ He also frequently alludes to passages and characters in the various plays, the greater number, however, from Hamlet. His great admiration for the plays is likewise evident through his many statements concerning Shakespeare's unmatched superiority and his "divine" ability

¹ To Mann (Dec. 19, 1750), Letters, II, 234-235.

² To the Countess of Ossory (Dec. 14, 1771), Letters, V, 356.

³ To Mason (Dec. 1, 1773), Letters, VI, 23.

⁴ To Mann (July 6, 1780), Letters, VII, 415.

as a dramatist.¹ Some of the plays he admired less than others, among them Timon of Athens and A Mid-Summer Night's Dream. The play which he liked the least was The Merchant of Venice. To him, the story of the caskets was "silly," and except for the character of Shylock, there was "nothing beyond the attainment of a mortal." In fact, Euripides, Racine, or Voltaire might as well have written the rest.²

Of the many editors reflecting the true critical study of Shakespeare which arose during this age, Walpole mentions only three or four. And for most of these he shows only scorn and disgust. Sir Thomas Hanmer's edition of 1745 was a typical example of the absurd alterations characterizing so many of the eighteenth century editions of Shakespeare. As an example Walpole cites one made in the original Othello where Cassio is described as "almost damned by a fair wife." Because there is no further mention of Cassio's wife in the play, Hanmer altered the word wife to phiz.³ Another edition of Shakespeare in 1773 drew condemnation from Walpole because of its preface by Garrick.⁴

¹To Mason (Jan. 9, 1773), Letters, V, 427.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Jan. 15, 1788), Letters, IX, 124.

³To Mann (Jan. 14, 1745), Letters, I, 340.

⁴To Mason (Nov. 27, 1773), Letters, VI, 17.

Two most elaborate publications, however, were Boydell's, appearing in 1786, and Malone's, a series of ten thick octavos with notes, appearing in 1791. Boydell's contained engravings from pictures painted by English artists expressly for this edition, but brought unfavorable criticism from Walpole on the ground that he thought no English painter capable of depicting characters from Shakespearean plays.¹ Malone's edition, however, was admirable as "an indefatigable research through all the bad playwrights of the day," and particularly interesting because of the printed list of stage properties belonging to the Lord Admiral's company in 1598.²

Shakespeare, so Walpole writes, was likewise attracting notice in France. One of the most famous eighteenth century appraisals of the author was that of Voltaire, in which the Shakespearean methods of writing drama were vigorously attacked. Toward this criticism Walpole took a rather contradictory stand. On its first appearance he wrote a rather warm defense of Shakespeare's "barbarism and irregularity." Then in turn he wrote Voltaire a very flattering letter explaining Shakespeare's lack of a Voltaire "to give laws for the stage and to show upon what good sense those laws were founded" and declaring his own warm admiration for the great Frenchman and his excellent laws.³ When, however, a new French

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Dec. 15, 1786), Letters, IX, 83.

²To the Miss Berrys (June 14, 1791), Letters, IX, 326.

³To Voltaire (July 27, 1768), Letters, V, 112-113.

translation of Shakespeare later called forth another attack from Voltaire, Walpole attributed it to pure envy and distraction "at the just encomiums bestowed on that first genius of the world."¹ Thus in spite of Voltaire's critical remarks Shakespeare was gaining popularity in France. Walpole reports the arrangement of a French translation of Hamlet "who when his hair is cut and he is curled and powdered.... will be exactly Monsieur le Prince Oreste."² Othello had been done so well that it had enjoyed "an incredible success." In fact, in Walpole's opinion, the French translators were unusually happy in depicting the true spirit of Shakespeare through a foreign medium.³

As an additional point it is interesting to observe that Shakespeare had not only made his way to France, but even to Russia. Walpole briefly remarks to Mann of the arrival in England of "a Russian Garrick" who as the head of their theater had already translated and produced Hamlet at St. Petersburg.⁴

The problems of producing an eighteenth century drama, according to Walpole, were many and bothersome;

¹To Mann (Dec. 1, 1776), Letters, VI, 394.

²To Chute (Aug. 30, 1769), Letters, VI, 394.

³To Mason (April 8, 1776), Letters, VI, 323.

⁴(June 9, 1766), Letters, IV, 504.

and as the author of one play and the supervisor of another in its stage production, Walpole could speak with some measure of experience upon the difficulties involved. The play had first to be licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, and after this a producer secured. Almost as temperamental as the actors themselves, the producer had to be handled with finesse. Walpole had to "dicker" twelve months with Harris of Covent Garden before he would consent to stage Jephson's Count of Narbonne, all because similar offers had been made to Garrick at Drury Lane.¹ Likewise a favorable caste must be selected, jealousy among the actors making the choice still more difficult. Miss Young, Walpole complains, refused to play the part of the mother in Jephson's play after Mrs. Crawford declined it in the hope of securing the more attractive role of the daughter. Indeed, only through flattery was she finally induced to accept the part at all.² In addition, a prologue and epilogue had to be provided, a detail which often led to misunderstanding. Jephson, for example, furnished his own prologue, but following Walpole's tactful suggestion, consented to Harris' writing the epilogue. However, without notifying either of them, Jephson also asked a friend to write an epilogue, and Walpole was thus confronted with the delicate situation of an offended manager and a play with

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Oct. 26, 1781), Letters, VIII, 94-95.

²Ibid. (Oct. 26, 1781), Letters, VIII, 95.

two epilogues--a problem which he settled by suggesting that the prologues be read on alternate nights.¹

When all preliminaries had been settled and a favorable date had been set (Walpole was pleased that Jephson's play would enjoy the run of a week before the opening in Parliament),² rehearsals were in order. These were carried on under the usual discomfort of a cold theater and lasted a good three hours.³ At first only a rough rehearsal was held, after which a regular schedule of rehearsals was adopted.⁴ Often satisfactory progress was retarded by illness of the actors or by the unsuitability of the roles assigned to certain members of the caste. John Henderson, the male "lead", was ill almost until the opening night of the Count of Narbonne, and Mr. Lewis proved quite unsatisfactory in his part in the same play.⁵ Time, as usual, passed too rapidly, finding the opening night alarmingly near, the actors and scenery unprepared. Working under double pressure, the caste entered upon dress rehearsals, Walpole writing that he "had been tumbling into

¹Ibid. (Nov. 22, 1781), Letters, VIII, 95.

²To Jephson (Nov. 7, 1781), Letters, VIII, 105.

³Ibid. (Nov. 21, 1781), Letters, VIII, 118.

⁴Ibid. (Nov. 7, 1781), Letters, VIII, 105.

⁵Ibid. (Nov. 10, 1781), Letters, VIII, 106.

trapdoors, seeing dresses tried on in the green-room, and directing armour in the painting room" until he was utterly exhausted.¹

Finally the opening night arrived, bringing success or failure to both producer and author. Failure meant not only a loss of reputation but a loss of money, Le Texier, for example, suffering heavy losses on his *Pgy-malion*, and Garrick a similar loss the very following night.² It was considered improper for an author to attend the opening night of his play. Walpole bitterly condemned Richard Bentley for "acting audience to his own play, *The Wishes*," and charged that "all the impudence of false patriotism" never come up to it.³ The conduct of an eighteenth century theater audience, never too polite under any circumstances, always presented a problem. Walpole, for instance, describes the procedure before the rise of the curtain, mentioning the "riotous murmurs" of the upper galleries, the pelting of the candle snuffer, and the confusion of people taking their places.⁴ Even after the stage had been swept, the overture played, and the play started, the caste was still not sure of consid-

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Nov. 15, 1781), Letters, VIII, 110.

²To Conway (June 6, 1781), Letters, VIII, 49.

³To Montagu (July 28, 1761), Letters, III, 42.

⁴To Conway (May 6, 1781), Letters, VIII, 39.

eration from the audience. When, for example, *The Foundling* was staged, some young lords decided to break up the performance just for the sake of the disturbance. Learning, however, that the Templars, in support of the play, had come "armed with syringes charged with stinking oil, and with sticking plaster," they decided not to open the action upon that particular night.¹ The conduct at a successful play was boisterous enough, the audience applauding, huzzahing, and often rising to its feet in its enthusiasm.²

But, according to Walpole, the problem of a successful production did not end with the first night's performance. Revisions to please the audience still had to be made, and the objections of the author removed. In *The Count of Narbonne* the sudden death of Hortensia raised such objections from the pit on its first presentation that thereafter she was carried off in a swoon. The lines of certain parts likewise had to be recast, and the acting of certain actors polished up.³ In addition the author was now dissatisfied not only with the previous arrangement concerning the epilogue, but also with the decorations in the last scene in which a statue appeared

¹To Mann (March 11, 1748), Letters, II, 106.

²To Mann (Oct. 17, 1763), Letters, IV, 118-119.

³To Jephson (Nov. 18, 1781), Letters, VIII, 111.

recumbent instead of standing as originally directed.¹

Indeed, if such petty difficulties could be successfully settled, the play finally had a chance for a long run.

The comments of Walpole upon English drama and the stage serve to give only a sweeping view of the great activity in this field of literature during the eighteenth century. Through his letters, however, it is interesting to note the improvement in status of the dramatic profession, the continuous popularity of the stage as a source of amusement, the many problems attendant upon an eighteenth century dramatic production. It is likewise interesting to observe the many forms of drama produced, the decline of tragedy, and the reappearance of the comedy of manners. The revival of Shakespeare and the expressed disapproval of classical rules for dramatic composition as evinced by Walpole and other self-styled classicists are again indicative of the rise of romanticism with its plea for individual self-expression.

CHAPTER IV

HORACE WALPOLE'S COMMENTS UPON THE NOVEL OF HIS AGE

The modern novel is a distinct contribution of the eighteenth century to English literature. Decidedly a middle class product, it arose as one of the means to satisfy the needs of the new prosperous and leisured middle class, anxious to acquire a culture and refinement equivalent to its growing political and economic power. Gentleman that he was, Walpole looked with scorn upon this middle-class product; but constantly interested in all phases of literary production, he never failed to read--at least partially--all the latest novels. Likewise he developed his own theories concerning the writing of fiction and even wrote a novel in support of them. Thus was created the "Gothic romance." Though the correspondence of Walpole is more limited in its comments upon the eighteenth century novel than upon the other forms of literature, it is primarily from this interesting source that the material for this chapter is taken.

That the letters of Walpole reveal nothing but scorn for the novel is not surprising. It was in general considered one of the lowest forms of literature. An entirely new type, it was totally lacking in prestige acquired through the approval and use of standard writers of past

ages, as well as in rules and precepts of composition gradually developed through centuries of practice. Likewise, these new middle class readers, by no means refined in their preferences, were showing through their reading clubs and circulating libraries such a brisk demand for this new type of literature that hack writers of the meanest ability were able to sell their works without difficulty, and booksellers were glad to get any work resembling this type of literature. From such a situation developed the attitude that fiction was "not a serious art worth the attention of serious people,"¹ and that since it was principally read by those who needed enlightenment, it must be "studiously and heathily didactic."² With such an express purpose in mind, the leading novelists through various methods proceeded to portray human nature as it really was, to present the life of the common people, to preach the materials rewards of the good life, the suffering of an evil one. Offended, of course, that characters of middle class should occupy the limelight of the stories, that their gross speech and sordid lives should be pictured often in a most maudlin manner, fastidious Horace Walpole early expressed his disgust for the realistic trend of the modern novel. Likewise, he despised the boring similarity of all the new fiction. Thus throughout his letters run

¹Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, 7 vols., The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance (H. F. and G. Witherby, 1934), V, 20.

²Ibid.

many comments similar to the one which says that he is out of patience with "novels and sermons, that have nothing new, when the authors may say what they will without contradiction."¹ Such a condition it was which caused him in his desire for something new and entertaining in fiction, to voice in the preface to his second edition of Otranto the complaint that in the case of the novel "the great resources of fancy have been damned up by the strict adherence to common life."²

There is little wonder, then, that Walpole's letters have few complimentary remarks for the first four great English novelists, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne. Samuel Richardson Walpole despised for his sentimentalism; and his popularity in England and in France was beyond Walpole's comprehension. Of Richardson's works Walpole mentions only two--Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison. In his opinion both were "deplorably tedious lamentations," "pictures of high life as conceived by a bookseller," and "romances as they would be spiritualized by a Methodist teacher."³ Further derogatory remarks about Sir Charles Grandison say that though additional volumes continued to appear, Walpole ceased his reading with the fourth,

¹To Mason (Nov. __, 1779), Letters, VII, 278.

²Quoted from William Lyon Phelps, The Advance of the English Novel (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1916), p. 85.

³To Mann (Dec. 20, 1764), Letters, IV, 305-306.

because he grew tired "of sets of people getting together and saying, 'Pray Miss, with whom are you in love?' and of mighty good young men that convert your Mr. M.....'s in the twinkling of a sermon!" Richardson's popularity abroad, according to Walpole, was astounding. In one letter he remarks that Richardson's works have "stupefied the whole nation" of France,² and again that to pass for a learned man and a philosopher there, one had but to admire Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison.³ In fact, Walpole writes that he ruined his own reputation with the French by telling them that they had adopted the two dullest things in England--whisk and Richardson.⁴ As further evidence of Richardson's influence abroad, Walpole also mentions a novel of Madame de Beaumont, called Lettres du Marquis du Roselle. Though written under the "woeful standard" of Richardson, Walpole complimented the book as a "pretty one" which almost avoided preaching and almost "reconciled sentiments and common sense."⁵

¹To Richard Bentley (Dec. 19, 1753), Letters, II, 364.

²To Montagu (Aug. 31, 1765), Letters, IV, 396.

³To Lady Hervey (Sept. 3, 1765), Letters, IV, 339.

⁴To Thomas Brand (Oct. 19, 1765), Letters, IV, 425.

⁵To Mann (Dec. 20, 1764), Letters, III, 305-306.

Henry fielding and Tobias Smollett were writers of too much grossness to appeal to the delicate tastes of Walpole, and, as a result, they find little space in his correspondence. Fielding's novels, Walpole granted, had humor, but through lack of grace were "perpetually disgusting." His innkeepers and parsons were the most uncouth of their professions, his gentlemen entirely too awkward.¹ In fact, Walpole took greater delight in making slighting remarks concerning Fielding's low character and his fondness for coarse companions² than in talking of his novels. Smollett, also, draws more criticism from Walpole as a person than as a writer. In one letter, however, he calls the publication of Lady Vane's "Memoirs" in Smollett's Perigrine Pickle a most "profligate writing;"³ again he refers to Smollett as an "indolent" writer, typical of the literature of the day.⁴ As a person, Walpole considered Smollett a dangerous, worthless fellow," capable of any mischief.⁵

Lawrence Sterne's popularity and influence are more widely commented upon in Walpole's letters. From the first volume, his Tristram Shandy created quite favorable comment; nothing else was talked of, nothing else admired.

¹To John Pinkerton (June 26, 1785), Letters, VIII, 564.

²To George Montagu (May 18, 1749), Letters, II 162.

³To Mann (March 13, 1751), Letters, II, 242.

⁴To Mason (July 21, 1772), Letters, V, 400.

⁵To Mann (March 16, 1770), Letters, V, 231.

Indeed, it became quite "the fashionable thing" throughout England to read Tristram.¹ Equally phenomenal was the financial success of the first volume of Tristram. Walpole reports that Dodsley paid Sterne six hundred and fifty pounds for the second edition of the first volume and for the writing of two more; Lord Fauconburg, out of sheer admiration, donated an income of one hundred and sixty pounds a year; Bishop Warburton not only presented Sterne with a purse of gold, but complimented the book by recommending it to the Bench of Bishops and by calling the author a second Rabelais.² To Walpole, however, the novel was a "most insipid and tedious performance;" the humor was too forced, the characters only tolerable, the best element, a somewhat bawdy sermon, all the more amusing because its author was a clergyman.³ The publication of the second and third volumes revealed a decline in Sterne's popularity, such "dregs of nonsense" meeting, in Walpole's opinion, a universal contempt which they deserved.⁴ The appearance of his Sentimental Journey in two volumes, however, partially revived Sterne's popularity. Walpole admits his preference

¹Ibid. (May 24, 1760), Letters, III, 313.

²To Dalrymple (April 4, 1760), Letters, III, 298-299

³Ibid.

⁴To Henry Zouch (March 7, 1761), Letters, III, 382.

of it to Tristram and even commends its good-nature and strokes of delicacy.¹ In fact, at only one other time does Walpole speak favorably of Sterne as a novelist. In a letter to William Cole he says that Sterne's "capricious pertness," though too highly praised by the foreign critics, was in turn "too severely treated" by those in England.²

Only two novelists of minor importance win comment from Walpole. G. Keats wrote in imitation of Sterne a novel called Sketches from Nature, the story of which was based on an antique legend concerning a church. Though Walpole admitted certain merits in the book, he criticized it for its lack of originality and lack of antique atmosphere.³ A Mr. Wilkinson made a translation in four small volumes from a Chinese tale, calling it Hau Kiou Chooan. From Walpole the book drew very warm praise because of the "novelty of the manner" and the "genuine representation" of Chinese customs.⁴

The women writers of fiction, apparently as active as the men, draw equally as much comment from Walpole. Among the aristocracy who wrote more as an idle pastime Walpole mentions two. Lady Craven wrote a novel The Miniature

¹To Montagu (March 8, 1768), Letters, V, 91.

²(Feb. 15, 1782), Letters, VIII, 158.

³To Cole (May 21, 1779), Letters, VIII, 200.

⁴To Dalrymple (Nov. 30, 1761), Letters, III, 465.

Picture, "scarce a story, yet sort of an imitation of Voltaire." In view of this author's youth, Walpole considered the book of real merit, particularly in its simplicity, general character, and truth of incidents.¹ Lady Hervey also tried her hand at several novels, but none had unusual qualities to make it outstanding.² A Miss Knight of Italy sent Walpole her Marcus Flaminius for criticism, and though he writes that it could scarcely be called a novel, he compliments the work highly for its excellent understanding, its true classic style, and its exacting knowledge of roman character and manners. The girl had likewise written a sequel to Rasselas, though Walpole had never seen the work.³

Fanny Burney and her novel of manners, according to Walpole, enjoyed much popularity, though he admired the girl far more than he did her works. Her Cecilia, in his opinion, fell far below her Evelina, because of its "immeasurable length" and unnatural Johnsonian style. Neither did he appreciate Miss Burney's ability at characterization. For example, though some of the characters in her Cecilia warranted praise, to him the majority were inaccurate representations. He writes:

¹To Mason (Jan. 17, 1780), Letters, VIII, 315.

²To the Countess of Ossory (Dec. 26, 1789), Letters, IX, 242.

³Ibid. (Oct. 14, 1792), Letters, IX, 395-396.

The great fault is that the authoress is so afraid of not making all her dramatic personae set in character, that she never lets them say a syllable but what is to mark their character, which is very unnatural, at least in the present state of things, in which people are always aiming to disguise their ruling passions, and rather affect opposite qualities, than hang out their propensities.

The want of poetic justice in the book was likewise most offensive to him.¹ Camilla, according to Walpole, was Miss Burney's worst book, because here she did not present a true picture of society.² But evidently the public thought otherwise, for he reports its popularity as netting its author over two thousand pounds.³

Indeed, in view of the poor quality of writing carried on by other lady novelists, Walpole's estimate of Miss Burney seems to have varied. Despite his previous criticisms, to Hannah More he thus writes: "....I am nauseated by the Madame Piozzi, etc., and the host of novel writers in petticoats, who think they imitate what is inimitable, 'Evelina' and 'Cecilia'."⁴

In any discussion of eighteenth century novelists, Walpole himself deserves consideration and an importance

¹To the Countess of Ossory (Oct. 1, 1782), Letters, VIII, 285.

²To Hannah More (Aug. 27, 1796), Letters, IX, 470.

³To Miss Berry (Aug. 16, 1796), Letters, IX, 465.

⁴To Hannah More (July 12, 1788), Letters, IX, 134.

of which he possibly never dreamed. It was he who with his Castle of Otranto introduced a new type of fiction, the "Gothic romance"--the tale of mystery, terror, suspense. As his correspondence reveals, he was gradually being drawn into sympathy with the romantic movement arising at the time. He was an antiquarian of sorts, interested in old ruins and antiquities; he had built a monstrous Gothic castle, his favorite place of abode; and he was more than interested in ancient literature. Weary of the middle-class, every-day life pictured in contemporary fiction, he decided to relate a tale in which he would "blend the wonderful of old stories with the natural of modern novels"--in which he would admit the supernatural into the world of reality.

The origin of his romance was almost as unique as his plan. To William Cole he thus describes it:

"I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from adream, of which, all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story), and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down, and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it.... In short, I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening,

¹To Monsieur Elie de Beaumont (March 18, 1765), Letters, IV, 333.

I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking in the middle of a paragraph."¹

With true gentlemanly scorn for the writing profession, Walpole published anonymously in December 1764, his novel, The Castle of Otranto, a story translated by William Marshal, Gent. from the Original Italian of Onuphio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto.² In view, however, of the book's immediate success, he soon wrote (with questionable modesty) to Cole that he was no longer keeping the authorship "entirely" a secret.³ In fact so popular was the book, and so unusual in plan, that Walpole was forced to make arrangement for a second edition, in the preface of which he was able to explain the entire design of his story.⁴

In this preface Walpole takes a firm stand for the principles of romanticism. He first of all vindicates Shakespeare's mingling of the comic and the tragic elements against the laws of Voltaire. Then Walpole himself admits that in creating a new type of romance, in which he was at

¹(March 9, 1765), Letters, IV, 328.

²To George Montagu (Dec. 24, 1764), Letters, IV, 306.

³(Feb. 28, 1765), Letters, IV, 327-328.

⁴To Dr. Joseph Warton (March 16, 1765), Letters, IV, 331.

liberty to formulate an entirely new set of laws, he chose rather to follow Shakespeare as his model in his contrast of the tragic with the comic, and in his use of the supernatural.¹ In a letter to Monsieur Elie de Beaumont Walpole thus further defends his disregard for classical rules:

....how you will be surprised to find a narrative of the most improbable and absurd adventures! How will you be amazed to hear that a country of whose good sense you have an opinion should have applauded so wild a tale. But you must remember, Sir, that whatever good sense we have, we are not yet in any light chained down to precepts and inviolable laws. All that Aristotle or his superior commentators, your authors, have taught us, has not yet subdued us to regularity: we still prefer the extravagant beauties of Shakespeare and Milton to the cold and well-disciplined merit of Addison, and even to the sober and correct march of Pope.You will not, I hope, think that I apply these might names to my own case with any vanity, when it is only their enormities that I quote, and that in defence, not of myself, but of my countrymen, who have had good-humour enough to approve the visionary scenes and actors in the 'Castle of Otranto'.²

In defense of his use of supernatural, he continues by asserting that any one plan of writing grows monotonous--Richardson, for example, had made his "kind of writing unsupportable"; therefore he had added a ghost to his story because he thought that "a god, at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary to frighten us out of too much sense."³

¹Sir Walter Raleigh, The English Novel, A Short Sketch of Its History from the Earliest Times to the Appearance of "Waverley" (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 222.

²(March 18, 1765), Letters, IV, 332-333.

³Ibid., 333.

Thus Walpole gave free reign to his imagination inspired by a dream, transferred his own romantic Strawberry Castle to Italy during the twelfth or thirteenth century, and in it placed the giant ghost of a knight to preside with terrible threats and portents over the fates of two beautiful love-sickmaidens. Another mark of a theory of writing which likewise indicates Walpole's revolt against the contemporary trend of fiction was his utter disregard of the didactic purpose of the novel. In a letter to Hannah More many years after the appearance of his book, he explained that his tale was written strictly for his own age--an age when "much was known and which only needed to be amused."¹ Indeed, in his own opinion, to have succeeded in amusing the reader meant to have succeeded with the novel.²

Walpole, however, was still enough of the classicist to observe many classical common-sense traditions. Especially was this true in respect to the rule of poetic justice. Careful to observe it himself in his own novel, he was quick to criticize those who failed to do so.³ At the same time, Walpole also tried to make his heroes and

¹(Nov. 13, 1784), Letters, VIII, 524.

²To Beaumont (March 18, 1765), Letters, IV, 333.

³

heroines appear natural in all points, to keep them as close to the ordinary life as possible, for in his opinion, "the actions, sentiments, and conversations of the heroes and heroines of ancient romances were as unnatural as the machine employed to put them in motion."¹

Thus in spite of the faults of Otranto--and Walpole admits that there were many²--in spite of Clara Reeve's attempt through her novel, The Old English Baron, to disprove Walpole's theories of the romantic by writing a true Gothic romance according to the rules of common sense and thus without the use of the supernatural,³ his novel is still recognized today as a significant work. Written though it was by a dilettante with little serious intent, the book gave the romance "its machinery, its characters, its castle, and its Gothic name"⁴; it likewise paved the way for such writers of the Gothic romance as Ann Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, and Mary Shelley.

¹Preface to second edition of Otranto, quoted from Austin Dobson, Horace Walpole, A Memoir (14th ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 134.

²To Mason (April 17, 1765), Letters, IV, 343-344.

³Ibid. (April 8, 1778), Letters, VII, 56.

⁴Wilbur L. Cross, The Development of the English Novel (New York: Macmillan Co., 1909), p. 103.

It is likewise interesting to note that Walpole's interest in romantic tales did not end with his Otranto. In a letter to Cole about fifteen years later, he told of some "strange things" in his drawer, even "wilder than 'The Castle of Otranto.'" These were his Hieroglyphic Tales which, though written some six or eight years after Otranto, never received much recognition.¹ Another sign of Walpole's enduring interest in romantic literature was his great admiration for the oriental tales in Arabian Nights. To him, the story of "Sinbad the Sailor's Voyage" was superior to that of Vergil's Aeneid; and in spite of the improbability and unnaturalness of many of the tales, their "captivating wildness" and "genius" made them fascinating reading material.² Indeed, one wonders whether Walpole would have eventually become a true convert to the romantic movement, had he lived a little longer than 1797.

The brief account of the eighteenth century novel as given through Walpole's correspondence is thoroughly self-revealing. The position of the novel was of the lowest--as low in its tastes as the uneducated middle class for which it was written. The sentimental novel and

¹(Jan. 28, 1779), Letters, VII, 167.

²To Miss Berry (June 30, 1789), Letters, IX, 184.

the grossly realistic novel of contemporary life were likewise evidences on the part of the writer to attract and to instruct this same class of readers. To Walpole such a situation was disgusting. In his opinion the writer of fiction should be allowed the free rein of fancy, the privilege to get away from the sordidness of everyday life, through use of the supernatural and the ancient setting. Thus was born the famous Gothic tale of terror, mystery, and wonder; and thus was given a fresh impetus to romanticism.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this treatise has been to show that the vast correspondence of Horace Walpole has a definite value as source material for an account of eighteenth century literary development. To carry out such a study, proper consideration has been given to the fields of miscellaneous prose, poetry, the stage and drama, and fiction. In each field, likewise, the writers, the methods and forms of writing, and evidences of classical and romantic tendencies have been noted.

As a result of Walpole's aristocratic background, he looked with scorn upon literature as a profession and often gave prejudiced appraisals of many of the literary products of his age. Nevertheless, the art of writing continued to be pursued as a hobby by the aristocracy and as a serious occupation by the genuinely interested. Walpole's close association with many contemporary writers, his own hobby of dabbling in literature, and the long period over which his life extended gave him a vast knowledge of the literary activities of the age. Because the eighteenth century was definitely an age of prose, Walpole has most to say about this type of literature. The art of historical composition was badly in need of improvement because of the writers' disregard for truth in the

pursuit of fame. Yet the art of organized research was rapidly developing, and every type of history--local, ancient, and contemporary--made its appearance. The influence of the French classicists was naturally most pronounced, not only upon contemporary historians, but also upon Walpole's own conceptions of historical composition. In the journalism of the age may be traced the gradual decline of the pamphlet and the gradual rise of the newspaper. Conducted upon the lowest of principles and restricted by no forms of legislation, both soon became agents of slander and libel, and proved most powerful and deadly weapons in the world of politics and society. The magazine likewise identified itself in the same low category of journalism, and proved another powerful agent in the molding of public opinion. Letter-writing, considered quite an art and given much thought and consideration, was an activity in which Walpole was most vitally interested. Developed to its greatest height during the eighteenth century, it exerted a vast influence upon literary form. It became the popular mode of expression for histories, novels, travel books, and other literary types. Likewise, spurious and uncensored editions of the private correspondence of prominent people flooded the market. Because in this instance also no legal protection was available, the most embarrassing situations arose, and, in Walpole's opinion, threatened the entire

future of letter-writing.

Walpole comments with great freedom upon the poetic achievements of his age. Here, of course, classical tendencies were strongly in evidence. All classical forms of poetry, such as the elegy, the ode, the satire, the epigram, were very popular. Likewise, the approval of such masters as Dryden and Pope, and of many of their followers revealed the desire for strict conformity to set rules. In contrast Walpole's correspondence reveals the gradual rise of romanticism in poetic composition. Editions of old ballads made their appearance; the attempted forgeries of Macpherson and Chatterton led to heated controversies and promoted an interest in ancient literature; a revival of interest in Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser sprang up through critical articles written in their defense. Yet in view of the wide diversity of poetic interests, and in spite of the popularity of poetry as a literary form, to Walpole the future of English poetry was doubtful because of its generally inferior quality.

The stage and the drama witnessed several changes during the eighteenth century. In the first place, the social status of the acting profession went through a gradual change. Considered at first as the lowest type of person (and some of the actors came from the lowest classes of society), the professional actor rose to a position of

greatest dignity and importance. He not only married into the best of aristocratic families, but occupied positions of responsibility in regard to the welfare of the nation. Secondly, the changing taste of the theatrical audience toward the close of the period resulted in a gradual decline of tragedy and in a revival of the comedy of manners. Written according to classical rules, both these forms, however, showed that classicism had not died out entirely. The revival of Shakespeare both in England and abroad, as well as the critical appraisals and elaborate editions of his works, disclosed the growing strength of the romantic movement. That drama was becoming most popular was revealed not only by the growing attendance of the aristocracy at the theater, but also by their production of private theatricals and their erection of private theaters. Even the manifold problems of a legitimate eighteenth century dramatic production were most vividly portrayed by Walpole, to whose lot once or twice fell such an onerous task.

Walpole hated the modern novel with an aristocratic disdain for the sentimental and the grossly realistic. Such trends it had taken as a product of the middle-class--the source of its origin and the class to whom, with didactic intent, it was chiefly addressed. Therefore, the words of Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett elicit few approving comments from Walpole, in spite of their popularity

with the common reading public at home and abroad. To check the bourgeoisie tendencies in the novel, Walpole produced his own new type of fiction, the Gothic romance.

Women were just beginning to take an active part in literary endeavor during the eighteenth century, and from Walpole they always received the greatest encouragement. Among the aristocracy many wrote as a pastime, and produced much graceful light verse, a few good novels, and several ordinary plays. However, the leading women writers came from the middle class. Hannah More, according to Walpole, was the leading poetess and pamphleteer, Mrs. Yearsley, the milkwoman, a very popular versifier. Fanny Burney was the most successful novelist, though many others made their attempts. Historical composition and accounts of travel attracted the pens of a few. In Walpole's opinion, however, women excelled as letter writers--their native ability enabling them to express their sentiments more truthfully and more gracefully than men; and many an hour was consumed by them in such a pursuit.

In Walpole himself is seen the typical eighteenth century writer who is torn by the conflict between romanticism and classicism. A self-styled classicist, he preferred in poetic composition the finished style of the couplet to blank verse, the poetical forms of the ode and the elegy to that of the sonnet. Moreover he approved the didactic

intent with which eighteenth century verse was written and showed partiality for the masters of classical poetry. On the other hand, he admitted the greatness of Shakespeare's poetic gifts, and considered Gray and Mason, two professed romanticists, the future salvation of English poetry. Likewise, he was more than interested in ancient literature, his unpleasant experiences with the Chatterton and Macpherson forgeries proving his desire to revive such old works. In drama, Walpole at first approved the tragedies written according to Greek and French precepts, and even produced a tragedy molded along those lines. At last, however, he revolted, announced his preference for the Shakespearean methods of dramatic composition, and termed Shakespeare an unrivaled dramatic genius. With his novel he attempted to blend the classic and the romantic, the supernatural and the realistic. To him it seemed that the reading public needed to get away from a too-confining closeness to nature in the raw. In his mingling of the comic and the tragic and in his utter disregard for didactic purpose in writing, he broke completely with classicism. Yet he submitted to classical precepts so far as to observe strict poetic justice in the outcome of his plot. Thus he was a combination of the classic with its rationalistic and sensible attitude toward life, and of the romantic, with its desire for the strange, the remote, the wonderful,

and with the romanticist's demand for individual self-expression.

In view of the conclusive evidence submitted, it is apparent, then, that the correspondence of Horace Walpole furnishes a clear picture of the literary activities of his age, their development and problems. It is likewise apparent that Walpole, with his painstaking care in recording all these events, deserves something more than the title of social chronicler and the appellation of "in-correctible gossip."

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