

A TREATMENT OF PLANT LIFE
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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quirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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To

R.B.H., M.L.H., J.B.S.

... γὰρ δὲ κέει Πίστις, ἔλπις, ἀγάπη...

Hope is like a harebell trembling from its birth,
Love is like a rose the joy of all the earth,
Faith is like a lily lifted high and white,
Love is like a lovely rose the world's delight.
Harebells and sweet lilies show a thornless growth,
But the rose with all its thorns excels them both.

--Christina Rossetti.

PREFACE

The writer of this thesis makes no pretense at its being a masterpiece. In the first place, it was both assembled and composed by snatches of time over a period of two years. In the second place, its breadth of subject--a study of the poetry of a hundred years--made the work almost beyond comprehensive treatment, especially by a novice in the field of English literature.

In writing this thesis, W. G. Campbell's Form Book for Thesis Writing (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939) has been followed, except where explicit instruction from the professor has been otherwise. The need for more uniformity in thesis writing at this University may be felt by a brief comparative study of the theses presently shelved in the Library.

On the following page, the writer expresses his appreciation for the guidance, encouragement, and sympathy he received while this thesis was in progress.

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I wish to express my appreciation to the following persons who have been helpful to me in the preparation of this thesis:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

A critic of English literature, writing about nature in poetry, has said that the subject-matter of poetry may be divided into three main groups: man, God, and nature.¹ This paper is primarily concerned with the last division, and more especially with a treatment of plant life in eighteenth-century poetry. Such a treatment must of necessity require wide reading and careful selection of the material to be covered, since the chief aim of the writer is to present the subject in such a manner that it is representative of the whole period of English poetry from 1700 to 1800.

British poets always have been sensitive to the natural beauty which surrounded them. Almost any poet from Chaucer onward may be cited to show that men were never insensitive to the beauty of nature!² the blossoming of flowers, the coming of spring, the majesty of a thunderstorm, the calm of a sunny day, the splendor of the sunset, and the gladness of dawn.

Although these poets experienced a genuine delight in nature, they generally embodied their feelings in the conventional

1 J. C. Shairp, On Poetic Interpretation of Nature (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1877), p. 12

2 Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), p. 118.

forms of poetic expression. Whenever they conversed with imaginary shepherds and allegorical knights in romantic forests, natural scenery was used only as a means of adding brightness to the subject.³

Under the influence of the Classical school of poetry, of which Pope may be considered the central and greatest exponent, the meaning of nature reached a much narrower, though more clearly defined, connotation. To Pope, "return to nature" meant to be natural, to utter the emotions natural to one in the forms natural to him; that is, so long as the forms are in the accepted canons of good literary taste and if the literature is produced by the class which represents the vital and most powerful currents of thought of the period. But more specifically, to Pope "return to nature" meant: (1) get rid of pedantry, (2) be thoroughly rational, and (3) take for one's guide the bright common sense of the wit and scholar.⁴ The aim of poetry was to embody some philosophy of human nature, and mere description of natural objects struck him as not being acceptable as good poetry unless a moral of some sort was attached thereon. No poet of Pope's school would condescend to give a mere catalogue of plants and rivers and mountains.⁵

3 Ibid., p. 119.

4 Ibid., pp. 202-203.

5 Ibid., p. 119.

But the concept of nature changed in poetry until in the poems of George Crabbe we find the first clear-cut realist in dealing with nature. Crabbe sought to interpret nature from the standpoint of fact rather than from tradition or fancy. As such he stands midway between the Classical school and the Romantic school of poetry.

In the poems of Wordsworth, who announced as his special principle that poetry should speak the language of nature,⁶ we find nature reaching the point in English literature where it is consciously the object of poetry and where nature condemns civilization as being artificial and corrupt.⁷

The various changes in eighteenth-century England brought about corresponding changes in the type of poetry acceptable to the popular taste. In religion, among the intellectuals at least, deism, which appealed to the head rather than to the heart, to reason rather than to the emotions, and in which the personal God of Christianity faded to a formless First Cause,⁸ was widespread, even reaching into the American literature of Franklin, Jefferson, and the international revolutionist Thomas Paine. The Church, however,

6 Ibid., p. 205.

7 Ibid., p. 125.

8 J. P. Blickensderfer, The Eighteenth Century (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), v.4, p. x.

remained a towering institution, although it was considered by the deists and the deistically inclined to be no more than an establishment aiding in the preservation of order. Theology was no longer the "queen of the sciences,"⁹ although the existence of Christian mysticism of the period evidenced itself in William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1728), and in the hymns of Isaac Watts (1674-1748) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788). The religious revival which gave rise to Methodism came in this period under the leadership of John Wesley (1703-1791).¹⁰

The eighteenth century was also marked by materialism and sentimentalism. Materialists held that science was both the savior of mankind and the final authority in all matters. The sentimentalists stressed the innate goodness of man as opposed to the traditional Christian doctrine of the nature of man.¹¹ The basis of morality was correspondingly a subject of speculation and was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Hobbes, the empiricist, who could find no rational standard of the good, only a "sentiment" which approved the good in the standards of morality.¹²

9 A. D. McKillop, English Literature from Dryden to Burns (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 123.

10 R. F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), p. 268.

11 P. H. Houston, Main Currents of English Literature (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1926), p. 226.

12 McKillop, op. cit., p. 133.

The social changes, which resulted in the abridgment of the power of the Crown when William and Mary accepted the throne of England in 1689, gave new influence to the middle classes and to the growing democracy. The aristocratic class was gradually pushed aside, and its conventions ceased to represent the ideals of the most vigorous part of the population--that of the middle class. For example, the patronage of literature descended from the cultivated nobleman to the more humble and commercial bookseller.¹³

Throughout the eighteenth century, gardening was a fashionable and popular art, but by the middle of the century there was a reaction against the formal garden, with its symmetrical pathways, sculptured foliage, temples of friendship and death, and artificial "ruins," and the English garden which was called "natural" began to take its place. The invention of the ha-ha, or sunken fence, by Bridgeman sealed the fate of the formal garden.¹⁴ The new attitude toward nature was that nature was superior to art, and the man of genius realized that all arts consisted of "imitation and study of nature."¹⁵

13 Blickensderfer, op. cit., p. xvii.

14 Ralph Dutton, The English Garden (New York: Scribners, 1938), p. 76.

15 Stephen, op. cit., p. 116.

Towards the end of Pope's career, a distinct change began to come over the face of English poetry. When Pope's prestige was at its height, the strongest of the younger poets ceased following him; first, because of their despair of surpassing him in his peculiar excellences; and, second, because of their response to an alteration in the popular taste in poetry.¹⁶

These younger poets, which included one great man of letters, Gray, and at least two poets of the second order, Thomson and Collins, possess historical importance out of proportion to their popularity among the average present-day students of English literature. And some of these poets enjoyed a reputation in their own time which was unwarranted by the merit of their works. Consequently, a large number of them are practically unknown to the average student with a general knowledge of English literature. These poets mark the beginning of the Romantic Movement of the early nineteenth century, which may be conveniently referred to as the Pre-romantic Movement. The Pre-romantic Movement had its hardly recognizable beginnings in such poems as John Pomfret's "The Choice" (1700), John Gay's "Rural Sports," Lady Winchilsea's "Nocturnal Reverie," and John Dyer's "Grongar Hill."¹⁷

¹⁶ Edmund Gosse, A History of Eighteenth Century Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1901), p. 207.

¹⁷ Ernest Bernbaum, Guide through the Romantic Movement (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1930), p. 25.

Further study of nature received considerable encouragement from the newly-fostered appetite for the ballad, represented by Allan Ramsay's "Scots Songs," Hamilton's "Braes of Yarrow," and Mallet's "William and Mary."¹⁸

The love of nature was first effectively expressed in eighteenth-century poetry in The Seasons by James Thomson (1700-1748), the most original and influential poet between Alexander Pope and Thomas Gray. He influenced nearly every verse writer between 1725 and 1750. The Seasons first appeared in 1730, each book, except "Autumn," having been published inversely to its present order: "Winter" in 1726, "Summer" in 1727, "Spring" in 1728. "Autumn" completed the poem and made its first appearance in the first edition of The Seasons.¹⁹ The poem was quite an innovation, coming as it did in the trail of Classicism. Although it was didactic as well as descriptive, and was strengthened by a whole group of impulses of the emotional order,²⁰ the treatment of nature in The Seasons was essentially the type of "pure description" which Pope condemned in principle. In "Spring" we find plants so vividly and cleverly blended into their natural surroundings that it takes a critical

¹⁸ Gosse, op. cit., pp. 208-209.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 223.

²⁰ Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamain, History of English Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 847.

and analytic eye to see that they are merely a catalogue. But already the popular taste had accepted the "plain direct transcript of natural objects for which the wit had been too dignified and polished."²¹ Thomson, then, may be considered the first poet to give expression to the changing conception of nature in poetry. At the age of thirty, he was the leading poet of the younger generation and heir apparent to the throne of Pope. But he began to decline. Although he wrote abundantly, his poetry suffered from a kind of sterility.²² Thomson, however, became a universal favorite, and all England went into mourning when he died at the relatively early age of forty-eight.

The new attitude toward nature during the first twenty years before Thomson was less effectively expressed in the poems of John Philips (1676-1709), Ambrose Philips (1675-1749), Thomas Parnell (1679-1718), William Pattenon (1706-1727), Robert Riccaltoun (1691-1769), John Armstrong (1709-1779), and a few others.²³

During the twenty-five years immediately following Thomson, the poets who aided in the development of the new

²¹ Stephen, op. cit., p. 122.

²² Gosse, op. cit., p. 224.

²³ Myra Reynolds, The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), p. 59.

conception of nature included William Somerville (1675-1742), William Shenstone (1714-1763), Matthew Greene (1696-1737), William Collins (1721-1759), William Hamilton (1704-1754), Edward Young (1683-1765), Mark Akenside (1721-1770), Thomas Gray (1716-1771), and the three Wartons.²⁴

Of these, Thomas Gray and William Collins were representative poets. Gray was the outstanding poet between Pope and Wordsworth, and was perhaps the most learned man in Europe in his time.²⁵ His masterpiece is the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," whose intrinsic value sets it apart as one of the most popular poems in English literature. Its treatment of plant life, however, is little more than conventional, although the tenor of the poem is far from classical.

Collins, a friend of Thomson, published his "Persian Eclogues" in 1742. His poetry was clear-cut and direct, and more spontaneous, though less intellectual, than Gray's.²⁶

"The Complaint," or "Night Thoughts," of Edward Young (1681-1765) is generally considered the connecting link between the Classical school and this group of Pre-romantic poets.²⁷

24 Ibid., p. 112.

25 Gosse, op. cit., p. 240.

26 Ibid., p. 235.

27 Ibid., p. 209.

The richest poetry of the latter half of the century embodies the influences for the love of nature already in operation, although more diversified in its expression. James Macpherson (1736-1796), James Beattie (1735-1803), Robert Burns (1759-1796), William Cowper (1731-1800), William Blake (1757-1827), Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), and George Crabbe (1754-1832), are the major contributors. Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) is less important. Lesser poets would include Christopher Smart (1722-1771), John Logan (1748-1788), William Julius Mickle (1735-1788), James Grainger (1724-1766), Michael Bruce (1746-1767) and John Scott (1730-1783).²⁸

Of these Cowper and Crabbe more than the others stimulated what may be called the "return to nature." Cowper gave interest to the flat meadows of the Ouse, and Crabbe painted with unrivalled fidelity and force the flat shores and tideways of his native East Anglia.²⁹ Burns, Scotland's greatest poet, revealed throughout his poetry a genuine love of nature. William Blake, lost in his realm of symbolism, became almost unintelligible, and caused sentimentalism to suffer a temporary reaction.

Under the new leadership of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and

²⁸ Reynolds, op. cit., p. 147

²⁹ Stephen, op. cit., p. 193.

Southey the movement progressed, and their fame soon dimmed the memory of the pioneers in the eighteenth century who had undermined the Classical school of poetry and slowly built up the new concept of nature which reached its culmination in the poetry of Wordsworth.³⁰

In this paper the writer hopes to make a study of the majority of the poets of the eighteenth century to determine to what extent they expressed their love for the outdoor world. This he purposes to do, first, by making a study of the description of some of the plants found in some of the poems; second, by making a study of some of the "crude" plants; and third, by making a similar study of the "exotic" plants. A final chapter will be devoted to the treatment of plants as stock poetic epithets, similes, and the like.

In the preparation of this paper the second chapter of Myra Reynolds' The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth was used as a sourcebook. All the poems mentioned therein were read except eight or ten which were not procurable from any of the local libraries. The majority of these poets may be found in Chalmers' Works of the English Poets. The source of most of the poems in this paper, however, was The British Poets which, including

³⁰ Bernbaum, op. cit., p. xxxviii.

translations, is in one hundred volumes, and was published in 1822.³¹

The one outstanding poem which Myra Reynolds did not mention in her book was The Botanic Garden of Erasmus Darwin.³² This work was suggested by Dr. Lewis F. Ball and was consulted in the Library of Congress.

In reading one hundred and fourteen poems of fifty-three poets between Pomfret and Wordsworth, inclusive, the writer has compiled a list of all the poems read. The list of poems is found in the Appendix.

³¹ See F. W. Bateson (ed.), Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1941), v.II, pp. 259-60, for other collections.

³² Erasmus Darwin, The Botanic Garden (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1799).

CHAPTER II

ON THE DESCRIPTION OF PLANTS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETRY

In this chapter a study is made of the descriptive abilities of the eighteenth-century poets. The poems of the period have been divided into several groups according to the various types of poetry. Of these, the main divisions include the pastorals, place poems, excursion poems, long didactic poems, and the contemplative poems.

As was stated in the previous chapter, the eighteenth century began with the classical tradition of poetry in the ascendancy, and it is therefore to be expected that the description of nature in these poets is rather superficial.

This classical attitude toward nature is best illustrated in the pastoral poems of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. In the pastorals of Pope and his contemporaries we find nature as an integral part of the poems but primarily as necessary "stage settings." This school of poets was not unappreciative of nature; they just considered it secondary to human thought and action.¹

¹ Myra Reynolds, The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), p. 53.

Ambrose Philips, for example, gives us a description of a shady spot where shepherds may relax in the surrounding beauty. The scene is lovely, but one readily perceives that the shepherd, not the scenery, is the important thing:

This place may seem for shepherds' leisure made,
So close these elms inweave their lofty shade;
The twining woodbine, how it climbs; to breathe
Refreshing sweets around on all beneath;
The ground with grass of cheerful green bespread,
Through which the springing flower uprears the head:
Lo, here the king-cup of a golden hue,
Meddled with daisies white and endive blue,
And honey-suckles of a purple dye,
Confusion gay! bright waving to the eye.²

In Philips' "Pastorals," however, we find the mingling of first-hand observation with tradition:

My piteous plight in yonder naked tree,
Which bears the thunder-scarf, too plain I see:
Quite destitute it stands of shelter kind,
The mark of storms, and sport of every wind.
The riven trunk feels not the approach of spring,
Nor birds among the leafless branches sing:
No more, beneath thy shade, shall shepherds throng,
With jocund tale, or pipe, or pleasing song.³

The pastorals of Alexander Pope, on the other hand, are highly imitative of Vergil's Eclogues. He even goes so far as to imitate the riddles in Vergil's "Third Eclogue" in his first pastoral, "Spring."⁴

² Ambrose Philips, "Pastoral Poems," The British Poets, v. 34, p. 34.

³ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴ Alexander Pope, "Pastorals," The British Poets, v. 40, p. 176.

Five years after the publication of Pope's and Philips' pastorals (1709) John Gay published his "Shepherd's Week" as a friendly satire upon these classical poems. The "Shepherd's Week" was anything but classical. Gay attempted to picture the rustic life of the peasants rather than shepherds piping on oaten reeds. In his pastoral, "Friday," Grubbinol says that nature suffers when Bumkinet (cf. the classical Phyllis and Chloris) is absent: the oak leaves turn yellow, and "from the tall elm a shower of leaves is borne, and their lost beauty riven beeches mourn."⁵

Although they are in the classical tradition, John Scott's "Moral" and "Amosbean Eclogues" belong in a class to themselves insofar as their descriptive qualities are concerned. Both are rich in their description of plants and their environments.

The following is a valley scene on a summer afternoon:

The fertile soil, profuse of plants bestow'd
 The crowfoot's gold, the trefoil's purple show'd,
 And spiky mint rich fragrance breathing round,
 And meadsweet tall with tufts of flowerets crown'd,
 And comfry white, and hoary silver weed,
 The bending osier, and the rustling reed.⁶

The whole of Part I, or "Rural Scenery," of the "Amosbean Eclogues" could well be quoted if space permitted. One should read all of this part of the poem to appreciate its excellence

⁵ John Gay, "Shepherd's Week," The British Poets, v. 33, p. 55.

⁶ John Scott, "Moral Eclogues," The British Poets, v. 70, p. 44.

in portraying with vivid accuracy vistas of rural scenery. These poems appeared around 1760.

The first outstanding poet of the eighteenth century to emphasize a "return to nature" was James Thomson (1700-1748). His Seasons (1726-30) was the beginning of a new emphasis in nature poetry which had its culmination in the poetry of Cowper and Wordsworth. This does not mean, however, that Thomson rebelled against the classical tradition. On the contrary, the classical influence on Thomson is greater than most readers recognize.⁷

The Seasons was divided into four parts. In each part the subject-matter was appropriate to the particular season.

Thomson rejoices at the coming of spring:

The hawthorne whitens, and the juicy groves
Put forth their buds, unfolding by degrees,
Till the whole leafy forest stands display'd
In full luxuriance.⁸

Spring also brings "the snow-drop and the crocus first," the daisy, the primrose, the violet, and "the polyanthus of unnumber'd dyes."⁹ Other flowers of spring include "the tulip race, where beauty plays her idle freaks, hyacinths of purest virgin in white, the narcissus fair, the broad carnation, and the gay spotted pinks."¹⁰

7 See Chapter V, p. 58, below.

8 James Thomson, The Seasons (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1853), p. 50.

9. Ibid., pp. 67-68.

10. Ibid., pp. 69.

Summer follows with its fast-growing plants and their developing fruits. Thomson mentions the sunflower in Summer as

...the follower of the sun,
Sad when he sets, shuts up her yellow leaves,
Drooping all night; and, when he warm returns,
Points her enamor'd bosom to his rays.¹¹

Autumn is the season of the harvest. The orchard invites us:

The breath of orchard big with bending fruit...
From deep-loaded bough a mellow shower
Incessant melts away. The juicy pear
Lies in a soft profusion scatter'd round.¹²

There is also the fragrant store of apples, "the downy peach; the shining plum; the ruddy, fragrant nectarine; and dark, beneath his ample leaf, the luscious fig."¹³ Late autumn brings on the decline of plant life when one sees with a sense of sadness "the ragged furze, the stony heath, the thistly lawn, and the wither'd fern."¹⁴

Thomson deals with more philosophical matters in Winter. He does not, for example, treat of the dormant plants and their beauty when encased in ice or burdened with snow. Winter is rather to be considered a miscellany of short poems on serious matters than a description of plants in the last season.

11 Ibid., p. 114.

12 Ibid., p. 226.

13 Ibid., p. 226.

14 Ibid., p. 217.

During the eighteenth century several place poems of importance were composed, describing the special attractions of the respective locations. Pope wrote of Windsor Forest (1713), John Scott depicted Amwell, John Dyer described Grongar Hill (1727) and Jago sang of Edge Hill (1767). Goldsmith is famous for his "Deserted Village" (1770). Bruce gave us "Lochleven" in 1766, and near the end of the century Crabbe gave us sketches of scenes of the village (1783). Other poets set forth their chosen vistas in poems of varying length and worth.

Dyer gives us a view of nature as seen from the crest of Grongar Hill:

Below me, trees unnumber'd rise,
 The gloomy pine, the poplar blue,
 The yellow beech, the sable yew,
 The slender fir, that taper grows,
 The sturdy oak, with broad-spread boughs.¹⁵

Jago, in "Edge Hill," takes us down to the stream below the hill where

Along the' indented bank the forest tribes,
 The thin leaved ash, dark oak, and glossy beech
 Of polish'd rind, their branching boughs extend,
 With blended tints and amicable strife
 Forming a checker'd shade.¹⁶

¹⁵ John Dyer, "Grongar Hill," The British Poets, v. 53, p. 119.

¹⁶ Richard Jago, "Edge Hill," The British Poets, v. 55, p. 160.

John Scott describes Amwell with its

...groves

Of broad umbrageous oak, and spiry pine,
Tall elm, and linden pale, and blossom'd thorn,
Breathing mild fragrance, like the spicy gales
Of Indian islands.¹⁷

Goldsmith, in the "Deserted Village," is primarily interested in the people of "Sweet Auburn," not in its natural environment. The classical spirit prevails throughout the poem. His use of nature is inseparably associated with man:

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild,
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.¹⁸

George Crabbe was not traditional in the subject-matter of "The Village" even though he employed the heroic couplet in his poem. His description of an oak illustrates his realistic attitude toward nature:

As the tall oak, whose vigorous branches form
An ample shade and brave the wildest storm,
High o'er the subject wood is seen to grow,
The guard and glory of the trees below;
Till on its head the fiery bolt descends,
And o'er the plain the shatter'd trunk extends;
Yet then it lies, all wond'rous as before,
And still the glory, though the guard no more.¹⁹

17 John Scott, "Amwell," The British Poets, v. 70, p. 24.

18 Oliver Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village," The British Poets, v. 64, p. 216.

19 George Crabbe, "The Village," The Poetical Works of George Crabbe (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 40.

The influence of the Latin poets on the eighteenth century poets was quite extensive, but often the classical forms were retained while most of the classical spirit was lost. This is not true of Dr. Johnson's odes. He was fond of Horace's Odes and imitated them in his own. Johnson is clearly in the classical tradition in his ode on autumn:

What bliss to life can Autumn yield,
 If glooms, and showers, and storms prevail;
 And Ceres flies the naked field,
 And flowers, and fruits, and Phoebus fail?²⁰

His odes on the three other seasons are in like vein; one senses Johnson's nearness to Horace, not to nature.

Several poems of the type of Pomfret's "The Choice" appeared throughout the century. Most of them reflected a sense of longing for and a keen appreciation of the rural life. Bampfylde gave us a short poem, "Written in a Country Retirement," which is reflective of Pomfret's "Choice." It does, however, contain more descriptive, though less philosophical, verse than the latter:

Around my porch and lonely casement spread
 The myrtle never sere and the gadding vine,
 With fragrant sweetbriar love to intertwine;
 And in my garden's box-encircled bed,
 The pansy pied, and musk-rose white and red,
 The pink, the lily chaste, and sweet woodbine,
 Fling odours round; thick woven eglantine
 Decks my trim fence...²¹

²⁰ Samuel Johnson, "Odes," The British Poets, v. 67, p. 180.

²¹ John Bampfylde, "Written in a Country Retirement," The British Poets, v. 73, p. 191.

A second type of descriptive poem which was very popular with the eighteenth-century poets is the "excursion" poem. Probably the two most famous poems of this type are Wordsworth's "Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches," although the excursive poem is found in much earlier poems than those of Wordsworth. At a much earlier date (1727) John Dyer wrote his "Country Walk" in which he expressed that "every neighboring hedge I greet, [was] with honeysuckles smelling sweet."²²

The "Excursion" (1728) of Mallet and Richard Savage's "Wanderer" (1729) would fit into this classification. Savage gives us an unusual description of a winter scene in his poem:

Thick on this top o'ergrown, for walks are seen
 Grey, leafless wood, and winter-greens between!
 The reddening berry, deep-tinged holly shows,
 And matted mistletoe the white bestows!
 Though lost the banquet of autumnal fruits,
 Though on broad oaks no vernal umbrage shoots;
 These boughs the silenced, shivering songsters seek!
 These foodful berries fill the hungry beak.²³

In the poem he also gives us a view of an open field and a description of a wild scene.²⁴

The two concluding sections of William Cowper's "Task" (1785) are descriptive sketches of excursions: Book V is a description of a winter morning walk, while Book VI deals with a winter walk at noon. In the last section the poet

²² John Dyer, "Country Walk," The British Poets, v. 53, p. 124.

²³ Richard Savage, "Wanderer," The British Poets, v. 35, p. 121.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 164-165 and p. 166, respectively.

observes the dormant plants but remarks, "...let the months go round, a few short months, and all shall be restored..."²⁵ Then he describes the "naked shoots" which shall put "their graceful foliage on again."²⁶ These "shoots" include the syringa, the rose, the cypress, yew, the lilac, the woodbine, "and luxuriant above all the jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets."²⁷

Robert Burns wrote a short excursion poem in which he described a rose-bud:

A rose-bud, by my early walk
Adown a corn-inclosed bawk,
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,
All on a dewy morning.²⁸

The most famous descriptive poems of the excursive type are Wordsworth's "Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches." On his evening walk Wordsworth notes the "willowy hedge-rows," the "emerald meads," and the "holly-sprinkled steeps."²⁹ More rustic scenery include the "broad-spread oak," the "withered briars that o'er the edge recline."³⁰ Wordsworth is even appreciative of the

²⁵ William Cowper, The Poetical Works of William Cowper (London: Bell and Daldy, n.d.), v. II, p. 163.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 164

²⁸ Robert Burns, The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Burns (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1897), p. 213.

²⁹ William Wordsworth, The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), v. I, p. 13.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

...naked waste of scattered stone,
 By lichens grey, and scanty moss, o'ergrown;
 Where scarce the foxglove peeps, or thistle's beard;
 And restless stone-chat, all day long, is heard.³¹

The trunks of the birch and chestnut trees merit mention because they softly reflect from their sides the sun's rays onto the "tremulous stream."³² Near the end of the poem Wordsworth describes the lake with its graceful swans, and gives a vivid description of the swan's nest on the islet.³³

In the "Descriptive Sketches" the plants form an integral part of the poem. Wordsworth mentions the "files of road-elm, high above my head in long-drawn vista, rustling in the breeze," and the "cloud-piercing pine-trees [that] nod their troubled heads."³⁴

The long didactic poem reached its height during the eighteenth century. The subject-matter of this type of poems ranged from hunting in England to the growing of sugar-cane in the West Indies. Many of these poems were concerned with practical matters, as farming, gardening, making cider, preparing wool, and preserving one's health. Some of these poems include John Philips' Cider (1706), Somerville's The Chase (1735), Mickle's Syr Martyn (1767), John Dyer's The Fleece (1757),

31 Ibid., p. 16.

32 Ibid., p. 17.

33 Ibid., p. 22.

34 Ibid., p. 36.

Armstrong's Art of Preserving Health (1744), Smart's Hop-Garden (1752), Dodsley's Agriculture (1754), Grainger's Sugarcane (1760), Mason's The English Garden (1772-82), and Darwin's Botanic Garden (1789). Poems of lesser worth would include Green's The Spleen (1737) and Thompson's Sickness (1745). Of these long didactic poems the English Garden is to be preferred in this context because it deals almost exclusively with the development of a real English Garden, not an imported one:

Nor are the plants which England calls her own
 Few or unlovely, that, with laurel join'd
 And kindred foliage of perennial green,
 Will form a close knit curtain. Shrubs there are
 Of bolder growth, that, at the call of Spring,
 Burst forth in blossom'd fragrance: lilacs robed
 In snow-white innocence or purple pride;
 The sweet syringa yielding but in scent
 To the rich orange; or the woodbine wild
 That loves to hang on barren boughs remote,
 Her wreaths of flowery perfume. These beside
 Myriads, that here the Muse neglects to name,
 Will add a vernal lustre to thy veil.³⁵

Mason was in favor of the restoration of the "natural" garden to take the place of the highly developed--and distorted--formal garden of the earlier part of the century.

Grainger's Sugarcane has little or no references to plants native to England, although many boys and girls in England were expected to read the poem for its instructive and moral values.

Erasmus Darwin claimed that Part II of the Botanic Garden, "The Loves of the Plants," was a treatment of plant-life

³⁵ William Mason, "The English Garden," The British Poets, v. 77, pp. 192-3.

From giant oaks, that wave their branches dark,
To the dwarf moss that clings upon their bark.³⁶

This theoretically includes all plant life, and Darwin describes ninety-nine plants as illustrative of their classification. His descriptions are sometimes rather vague, but probably this is because he often portrays plants which he himself never saw. He pictures the honeysuckle which "winds round the shady rocks, and pansied vales, and scents with sweeter breath the summer gales."³⁷ He describes the delicate mimosa tree (see Chapter IV, p. 53). Of the parasitic dodder he writes: "...with sly approach they spread their dangerous charms, and round their victim wind their wiry arms."³⁸ The poem is rather restricted in that it treats of all the plants in the same fashion, according to the Linnaean system of plant classification, but Darwin's genius for verse-writing makes the poem quite readable.

The contemplative poem has its appeal in any age, and it found expression in the eighteenth century in the poems of several of the minor poets. There was Parnell's "Night-Piece" and "Hymn to Contentment" (c. 1715), Hamilton's "Contemplation" (1739), Young's "Night Thoughts" (1742-45), Akenside's "Pleasure of Imagination" (pub. 1744), Cooper's "Power of Harmony" (1745), and the poetry of the three Wartons.

³⁶ Erasmus Darwin, The Botanic Garden (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1799), Part II, p. 11.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

Hamilton expected to find contemplation

where some holy aged oak,
A stranger to the woodman's stroke,
From the high rock's aerial crown
In twisting arches bending down,
Bathes in the smooth pellucid stream.³⁹

Joseph Warton, in "The Enthusiast," (1744) longs for the

thrush haunted copse, where lightly leaps
The fearful fawn the rustling leaves along,
And the brisk squirrel sports from bough to bough,
While from a hollow oak, whose naked roots
O'erhang a pensive rill, the busy bees
Hum drowsy lullabies.⁴⁰

Among the poets of the latter part of the century such was the general attitude of longing to be near nature. It is far removed from the classical attitude of abhorrence for anything rustic in nature. Among these poets of the last half of the century nature was regarded as the teacher of poets rather than the classical attitude of "to copy nature is to copy them."⁴¹

With the going of the pastoral poems went the last stronghold of classicism, as far as nature in poetry is concerned. Poets were no longer content to produce imitations when first-hand observation offered a much wider range of poetic expression. The poets who led in this revolt against the

³⁹ William Hamilton, "Contemplation," The British Poets, v. 57, p. 25.

⁴⁰ Joseph Warton, "The Enthusiast," The British Poets, v. 68, p. 256

⁴¹ J. A. K. Thomson, The Classical Background of English Literature (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948) p. 202.

classical tradition were Blake, Burns, Cowper, and Crabbe. Of these, only Cowper was well versed in the classics.⁴² These poets gave rise to the new attitude in poetry which anticipated Wordsworth and Coleridge. It was this attitude toward nature which gave us Wordsworth's "Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches."

In this chapter a brief study was made of the descriptive abilities of the eighteenth-century poets. The division of the poetry into (1) pastorals, (2) place poems, (3) excursive poems, (4) long didactic poems, and (5) contemplative poems shows that the poets revealed their appreciation for nature through the various types of poetry. Of the various types, the pastorals were the most superficial in the description of plant-life. The contemplative poems were richer in their description of nature in general, but the excursive poems contained more description of plants than any of the other types of poetry.

⁴² Ibid., P. 209.

CHAPTER III

A TREATMENT OF THE CRUDE PLANTS MENTIONED IN SOME OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS

The purpose of this chapter is to show to what extent the poets of the eighteenth-century revealed their appreciation for the so-called crude plants through the medium of their poetry.

Plants are crude only by our thinking them so. Just because a particular plant does not prove to be directly beneficial to man it should not be assumed that it is malevolent in all its relationships with the other plants and animals. It is, then, somewhat unfair to the botanical world to classify some of its members as being more crude than others. But man being what he is, we must satisfy ourselves to look at things from the general standpoint of the species and let it go at that.

By the crude plants the writer means those plants which one does not desire to have growing about his doorway, in his garden, on his lawn, in his grain fields and pastures, or along his paths or highways. His objection to the plant is because of some physical characteristic of the plant which makes it directly or indirectly irritable, harmful, or even dangerous to man, as, for example, the sharp spikes of the

thorn, the keen thorns of the briar, or the poisonous juice of the nightshade or some similar plant. Included, too, are those plants which are harmful to other plants, such as dodder because of its parasitic nature, and the mayweed, because of its profusion of growth which crowds out the more delicate and more desirable plants.

Because a plant is not always harmful, it is evident that the writer cannot be altogether consistent in the classification of the crude plants. But once a plant has been so classified, it may receive further treatment even though it may be regarded most favorably by a poet for some definite benefit which it renders to man, beast, or flora.

With one exception, only those poems of the eighteenth century which have references to the crude plants are included in this chapter.

In 1709 appeared the pastoral poems of two poets, Ambrose Philips (1671-1749) and Alexander Pope (1688-1744), which were so much alike that each poet was accused of imitating the other. The reason was that the poems of both poets were highly imitative of Virgil's Eclogues.

In Philips' "Pastorals" the use of nature was always determined by his attitude toward some pastoral nymph or swain. When the Beloved was absent everything went wrong. Even nature was unproductive and cruel. The thorns and thistles seem to

have appeared because of the negligence of the shepherds who spent all their time bemoaning the absence of the beloved swain:

Since, thou, delicious youth, didst quit the plains,
The' ungrateful ground we till with fruitless pains,
In labour'd furrows sow the choice of wheat,
And, over empty sheaves, in harvest sweat;
A thin increase our fleecy cattle yield;
And thorns, and thistles, overspread the field.¹

In Philips' "Fourth Pastoral" we find that the bramble bush is a haven to the goldfinch, speckled thrush, the green linnet, and the blackbird. Philips evidently does not have an intimate knowledge of nature, or he would not have us listen to four birds, each of a different species, singing in one bramble bush!²

In the same pastoral we learn of fair Stella's death and to bemoan her passing we must:

Throw by the lily, daffodil, and rose;
Wreaths of black yew, and willow pale, compose,
With baneful hemlock, deadly nightshade, dress'd.³

The components of the wreaths are all symbolic of death and sorrow. This is the extent of Philips' treatment of the crude plants and they are used in a classical context.

Pope does no better in his "First Pastoral" when he has his Daphnis propound the following riddle:

¹ Philips, "Third Pastoral," The British Poets, v. 34, p. 32.

² Ibid., p. 35.

³ Ibid., p. 38.

Nay, tell me first, in what more happy fields
 The thistle springs, to which the lily yields:
 And then a nobler prize I will resign;
 For Sylvia, charming Sylvia, shall be thine.⁴

Here Pope, allegorizing, is alluding to the device of the Scottish monarchs, the thistle, and to the arms of France, the fleur-de-lys. Also the inclusion of the riddle in the poem is an imitation of Vergil's Third Eclogue. It is no mere description of a real, prickly, true-to-life thorn.

Anne Finch, Lady Winchilsea (c. 1660-1720), in her "Nocturnal Reverie," mentions the bramble-rose, but this plant must be an ornament, not a pest.

In John Gay's Shepherd Week (1714) we find the first attempt at a real study of nature, although the poem itself is a "good-natured satire" on the pastorals of Philips and Pope. Gay depicted the "rustic life with the gilt off." "Thou wilt not find my Shepherdesses," he says, "idly piping upon oaten reeds, but milking the kine, tying up the sheaves, or, if the hogs are astray, driving them to their styles."⁵

What Gay did as a satire, Allan Ramsay of Scotland (1686-1758) did as a labor of love. In his Gentle Shepherd (1725) we find few references to the crude plants, although he does mention briars, nettles, docks, and the hemlock tree.

⁴ Pope, "Pastoral I," The British Poets, v. 40, p. 178.

⁵ T. H. Ward, The English Poets (New York: Macmillan, 1901), v. 3, p. 146.

Although James Thomson (1700-1748) is the outstanding poet who wrote of nature in the first half of the eighteenth century and who mentioned fifty-seven different kinds of plants in his Seasons (1730), there is not a reference to any of the crude plants in his poem! This is hardly to be expected in a poem which deals with so many different kinds of plants and by a poet who is greatly extolled for his close observation of nature. He does mention the woodbine and the yew, but both are in a favorable context ("Spring" l. 977; "Autumn" l. 116).

In The Wanderer (1729) of Richard Savage we find the treatment of nature remote from reality. Most of his descriptions are tame, classical imitations. The crude plants are protectors of the more delicate species:

The native strawberry red-ripening grows,
By nettles guarded, as by thorns the rose,

and

'Twixt ferns and thistles unsown flowers amuse
And form a lucid chase of various hues.⁶

The Chase (1734) of William Somerville is a bold, didactic poem of four books in which he gives detailed information on the breeding, training, and habits of dogs. His use of nature is only incidental to the development of his theme, but we

⁶ Savage, "The Wanderer," Book I, The British Poets, v. 35, p. 166.

do find thickets and thorns playing a part in the selection of hunting dogs:

. . . But here a mean
Observe, nor the large hound prefer, of size
Gigantic; he in the thick-woven covert
Painfully tugs, or in the thorny brake
Torn and embarrass'd bleeds.⁷

Small dogs, on the other hand, should not be chosen because they get "moiled in the clogging clay" or they "shivering creep benumb'd and faint beneath the sheltering thorn" for a resting period, oblivious to the desires and entreaties of their masters.

In selecting the best dogs for breeding purposes the individual dog should be chosen which is:

. . . first to climb the rock,
Or plunge into the deep, or thread the brake
With thorns sharp-pointed, splash'd and briers inwoven.⁸

William Shenstone (1714-1763) reveals no love for the wilder aspects of nature in his ode on Rural Elegance (1750), although he does mention the "horrid bramble's room" where "careless groups of roses bloom." He must just be referring to a rose-bush.⁹ His writing is of the artificial-natural style which later on Cowper learned from him.¹⁰

7. Somerville, "The Chase," Book I, The British Poets, v. 36, p. 29.

8 Ibid., p. 70.

9 Shenstone, "Rural Elegance," The British Poets, v. 48, p. 28.

10 Ward, op. cit., p. 272.

The subject-matter of Green's The Spleen (1737) does not lead to much use of nature as such, but we do find that the necessity of arbitrary restrictions among men is regarded as essentially evil:

Law, grown a forest, where perplex
The mazes, and the brambles vex.¹¹

This simile is quite appropriate when one becomes familiar with the legal "red-tape" of any age, especially that of the twentieth century.

John Dyer's The Fleece (1757) is also an instructive poem, devoted to the description of sheep-raising, shearing, and the preparation of the wool for market. The author is primarily interested in the welfare of the sheep, and unfriendly plants, as well as animals, should be destroyed:

Nor prickly brambles, white with wooly theft,
Should tuft thy fields. Applaud not the remiss
Dimetians, who along their mossy dales
Consume, like grasshoppers, the summer hour,
While round them stubborn thorns and furze increase,
And creeping briars.¹²

In addition to these pests, plants of lesser stature and crudeness but equally harmful must be carefully guarded against:

Nor taint-worm shall infect the yearling herds,
Nor penny-grass, nor spearwort's poisonous leaf.¹³

11 Green, "The Spleen," The British Poets, v. 54, p. 220.

12 Dyer, "The Fleece," The British Poets, v. 53, p. 154-5.

13 Ibid., p. 173.

These plants should not be allowed to spread over the grazing lands, because they will surely cause the death of some prized sheep.

The thorn in John Cunningham's Pastorals provides a haven for Philomel (the nightingale) "where she prates at night."¹⁴

Nathaniel Cotton's Fables reveal that thorns and thistles follow in the wake of neglect.¹⁵

William Julius Mickle's Syr Martyn would logically follow Somerville's The Chase because herein we find the hunters closing up on Reynard the Fox when:

. . . from the thicket bush he slylie leapt,
And wary scuds along the hawthorne shade,
Till by the hill's slant foot he earths his head
Amid the briarie thicket . . .¹⁶

where he is safe from the dogs, which work their way out of the thorny entanglement of briars to rejoin the disappointed hunters.

The Grave (1743) of Robert Blair and Thomas Gray's Elegy (1750) are both examples of "graveyard poetry." Blair makes use of certain crude plants to add a sense of somber reality to the scene. The graveyard lies in his pathway from home to school:

¹⁴ Cunningham, "Pastorals," The British Poets, v. 64, p. 68.

¹⁵ Cotton, "Fable VI, The Farmer and the Horse," The British Poets, v. 72, p. 240.

¹⁶ Mickle, "Syr Martyn," The British Poets, v. 66, p. 171.

The school-boy, with his satchel in his hand,
 Whistling aloud to bear his courage up,
 And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones,
 (With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown,
 That tell in homely phrase who lie below

 Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him,
 Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows.¹⁷

In Gray's "Elegy" we find the grave overgrown with a
 stern protector and the poets bids us to:

Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
 Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.¹⁸

Another didactic poem is William Mason's English
 Garden (the first book appeared in 1772, the last in 1782)
 in which, for a fence, he directs us to:

Plant thy thick row of thorns, and, to defend
 Their infant shoots, beneath, on oaken stakes,
 Extend a rail of elm.¹⁹

The rail will ward off the trampling feet of the farm animals
 until the thorn hedge is large enough and thorny enough to
 take care of itself and to serve its purpose.

The whole subject-matter of James Grainger's Sugarcane
 (1763) is foreign to native England. It is a long didactic
 poem dealing with the cultivation of sugarcane in the West
 Indies.

¹⁷ Blair, "The Grave," The British Poets, v. 58, p. 205.

¹⁸ Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," The
 British Poets, v. 55, p. 73.

¹⁹ Mason, "The English Garden," The British Poets, v. 77,
 p. 177.

One of the enemies of the sugarcane is the rat, which causes great destruction to the crop. As a kind of rat repellent, Grainger tells us that one should:

. . . mingle nightshade's juice
With flour, and throw it liberal 'mong the canes;
They touch not this; its deadly scent they fly.²⁰

Grainger also claims that the seeds of the yellow thistle made an excellent emetic for the slaves.²¹

Another pest on the sugar plantation is the cowitch and must be rooted out:

The cowitch also save; but let thick gloves
Thine hands defend, or thou wilt sadly rue
Thy rash imprudence, when ten thousand darts,
Sharp as the bee-sting, fasten in thy flesh,
And give thee up to torture.²²

The Negro slaves have been known to set fire to the canes to save themselves from the torture of the cowitch.

John Scott's Amwell (1776) is of especial interest because of his close and abundant observation of natural facts. Among the other green trees of Ware Park's lawn he observed the "blossom'd thorn, breathing wild fragrance, like the spicy gales of Indian islands."²³

His Amosbean Eclogues are richer in the study of nature. Summer brings its weeds as well as its flowers:

²⁰ Grainger, "Sugarcane," The British Poets, v. 59, p. 73.

²¹ Ibid., p. 74

²² Ibid.

²³ Scott, "Amwell," The British Poets, v. 70, p. 24.

Then soon gay Summer brings his gaudy train,
 His crimson poppies deck the corn-clad plain;
 There scabious blue, the purple knapweeK rise,
 And weld and yarrow show their various dyes.²⁴

He also observes the vacant lots in the village:

There oft rank soils pernicious plants produce,
 There nightshade's berry swells with deadly juice.²⁵

Who has ever visited a small town and not seen the vacant
 lots thus overgrown?

The second part of the poem, "Rural Business," is more
 didactic. The farmer is warned against living the life of
 the grasshopper, because he:

Who spends too oft in indolence the day
 Soon sees his farm his base neglect betray;
 His useless hedge-greens docks and nettles bear,
 And the tough cammock clogs his shining share.²⁶

The roots of the cammock, or restharrow, are said to be so
 strong that they will stop a plow drawn by several horses.

Certain plants surreptitiously raise their flowering
 heads from among the cultivated grain of the farmer:

Much will rank melilot thy grain disgrace,
 And darnel, fellest of the weedy race:
 To' extirpate these, might care or cost avail,
 To' extirpate these, nor care nor cost should fail.²⁷

24 Scott, "Amoebian Eclogues," The British Poets, v. 70.
 p. 52.

25 Ibid., p. 54.

26 Ibid., p. 59.

27 Ibid., p. 60.

And

When the foul furrow fetid mayweed fills,
The weary reaper oft complains of ills.²⁸

Sometimes a stroke in time will save thousands the
following year:

Weild oft thy scythe along the grassy layes,
Ere the rude thistle its light down displays;
Else that light down upon the breeze will fly,
And a new store of noxious plants supply.²⁹

Scott also informs us that the presence of brakes
and briars indicates the best type of soil for growing the
"deep-fringed leaves of the yellow carrot."³⁰

William Cowper (1731-1800) was a genuine lover of
nature. He saw the inherent beauty in what most men would
call the unbeautiful. He wrote:

A garden in which nothing thrives, has charms
That soothe the rich possessor; much consoled
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerion, grace the wall
He cultivates.³¹

Cowper was also very religious and it is not at all surprising
that we find in his poem "Winter Walk at Noon" a reference
to the Suffering Christ, and affirms that He "Who wore the
platted thorns with bleeding brows, rules universal nature."³²

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

³¹ Cowper, The Poetical Works of William Cowper (London:
Bell and Daldy, N. D.), v. II, p. 122.

³² Ibid., p. 167.

The Village, by George Crabbe (1754-1832), appeared in 1783. Crabbe took the realistic viewpoint toward plant life. He saw the perpetual struggle between the farmer and the unfriendly weeds for survival, and expressed it realistically in verse:

Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye;
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war;
There poppies nodding, mock the hope of toil;
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,³³
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade.

The two outstanding nature poems by Wordsworth written before the end of the century are his "Evening Walk" (1787-8) and "Descriptive Sketches" (1791-2). Both were first published in 1793. "Evening Walk" contains two references to crude plants, both of which are purely descriptive. He observes that:

. . . the subtle sunbeams shine
On withered briars that o'er the crags recline.³⁴

He also was appreciative of the:

. . . naked waste of scattered stone,
By lichens grey, and scanty moss, o'ergrown;
Where scarce the foxglove peeps, or thistle's beard.³⁵

³³ Crabbe, "The Village," The Poetical Works of George Crabbe (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 35a.

³⁴ Wordsworth, "Evening Walk," The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), p. 15.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

In both cases the descriptive verse shows a real appreciation of the plants for their own sake.

In his "Descriptive Sketches," Wordsworth mentions the milk-thistle, but in a friendly sense. There is no other reference to a crude plant in the poem.

With the early poems of Wordsworth our study of the eighteenth-century poets comes to a close. In this study we have made the following general observations concerning the crude plants:

(1) There is a general trend from the appreciation of the crude plants in a classical setting to that of an appreciation of the plants for their own sake.

(2) A particular plant may be considered crude by one poet and beneficial by another.

(3) The crudeness of the individual plant varied with the different poets according to whether they were chiefly influenced by economics, tradition, or personal taste.

CHAPTER IV

A TREATMENT OF THE EXOTIC PLANTS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY

In the present chapter a study is made to see to what extent the eighteenth-century poets expressed their appreciation for plants not native to the British Isles. Only those poems with direct references to exotic plants are given treatment in this chapter. A more complete treatment, to be sure, is desirable, but the scope of this paper is more limited. Such a treatment of the subject might be material for a doctor's dissertation. As in Chapter Three, most of the quotations in this chapter are taken from The British Poets, published in 1822. When other sources are used, the publisher and date are indicated.

The love of their homeland did not blind the eyes of several of the eighteenth-century poets to the beauty of things in foreign lands--plants as well as animals and other items which the culture of England appreciated and, in many instances, demanded. For instance, Britons did not always drink tea, but Americans can hardly think of Britons without associating the drinking of tea with their culture.

The poets, however, did not confine their praise to the virtues of tea alone, but sang of many other plants not native to England as well. In fact, the tea plant ranks very

poorly in the list of exotic fruits and plants.

The earliest poet of the eighteenth century to write of plants not native to England with any considerable definiteness was John Philips (1676-1709. In his Cider he sings of the joyful harvest season in the various parts of the world:

Autumn to the fruits
 Earth's various lap produces, vigour gives
 Equal, intenerating milky grain,
 Berries, and sky-dyed plums, and what in coat
 Rough, or soft rind, or bearded husk or shell,
 Fat olives, and pistachio's fragrant nut,
 And the pine's tasteful apple: autumn paints
 Ausonian hills with grapes, whilst English plains,
 Blush with pomaceous harvests, breathing sweets.¹

The references to "the pine's tasteful apple" and "pomaceous harvests" are to the pineapple and to the apple respectively. What Philips is saying in effect is that, while the other parts of the earth boast of their peculiar harvests, England can consider the apple as being her own.

While not denying the values of good apple cider, Philips is aware of better drinks imported from distant realms:

More happy they born in Columbus' world,
 Carybbs, and they whom the cotton plant
 With downy-sprouting vests arrays: their woods
 Bow with prodigious nuts, that give at once
 Celestial food and nectar; then at hand
 The lemon, uncorrupted with voyage long,

¹ Philips, "Cider," Book II, The British Poets, v. 26, p. 239.

To vinous spirits added, (heavenly drink!)
 They with pneumatic engine ceaseless draw,
 Intent on laughter; a continual tide
 Flows from the exhilarating fount.²

The "prodigious nuts" evidently means the cocoanut, which produces food in both solid and liquid forms. The other drink referred to is lemonade, made from the juice of lemons mixed with other ingredients. Also one should note the reference to the cotton plant, which is not native to England.

The first outstanding poet of nature in the eighteenth century was James Thomson (1700-1748). In Book II, or "Summer," of his Seasons we find Thomson yearning to be among the inviting beauty and comforts of the tropical plants and to partake of their liberal and delicious fruits. One needs to go no further to find a British poet who does not lack in his appreciation of plants beyond the British shores. In the following excerpt alone, we find mention of thirteen different plants: the lemon, lime, orange, tamarind, locust, Indian fig, cedar, palmettos, cocoanut, palm, pomegranate, wild berries, and the pineapple! Over one-fourth of all the plants referred to by Thomson in the Seasons appear in this one passage! The whole passage is as follows:

² Ibid., p. 246.

Bear me, Pomona! to thy citron groves;
 To where the lemon and the piercing lime,
 With the deep orange, glowing through the green,
 Their lighter glories blend. Lay me reclined
 Beneath the spreading tamarind, that shakes,
 Fann'd by the breeze, its fever-cooling fruit.
 Deep in the night the massy locust sheds,
 Quench my hot limbs; or lead me through the maze,
 Embowering endless, of the Indian fig;
 Or, thrown at gayer ease, on some fair brow,
 Let me behold, by breezy murmurs cool'd
 Broad o'er my head the verdant cedar wave,
 And high palmettos lift their graceful shade.
 Or, stretch'd amid these orchards of the sun,
 Give me to drain the cocoa's milky bowl,
 And from the palm to draw its freshening wine!
 More bounteous far than all the frantic juice
 Which Bacchus pours. Nor, on its slender twigs
 Low bending, be the full pomegranate scorn'd;
 Nor, creeping through the woods, the gelid race
 Of berries, oft in humble station dwells
 Unboastful worth, above fastidious pomp.
 Witness, thou best Anana, thou the pride
 Of vegetable life, beyond whate'er
 The poets imaged in the golden age:
 Quick let me strip thee of thy tufty coat,
 Spread thy ambrosial stores and feast with Jove!³

In *The Wanderer*, Richard Savage (1698-1743) has a
 Hermit say that good is to be found in all things, and as
 an example says that:

. . . Afric's wastes appear
 Cursed by those heats, that fructify the year;
 Yet the same suns her orange-groves befriend,
 Where clustering globes in shining rows depend.
 Here, when fierce beams o'er withering plants are roll'd,
 There the green fruit seems ripen'd into gold.⁴

³ Thomson, *The Seasons* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1853), pp. 131-133.

⁴ Savage, "The Wanderer," Canto II, *The British Poets*, v. 35, p. 164.

The Hermit's theme is on perseverance in this transitory life where "we pass through want to wealth, through dismal strife to calm content, through death to endless life."⁵

The subject of The Chase of William Somerville (1675-1742) is not limited to hunting in England alone. Nor is the fox always the object of the chase or hunt. The poet describes at length the method of trapping elephants in East Africa. Tropical plants and fruits play an important role in the art of trapping the gigantic creatures:

On distant Ethiopia's sun-burnt coasts,
 The black inhabitants a pitfall frame,

 Then boughs of trees they cut, with tempting fruit
 Of various kinds surcharged; the downy peach,
 The clustering vine, and of bright golden rind
 The fragrant orange. Soon as evening grey
 Advances slow

 The stately elephant from the close shade
 With step majestic strides, eager to taste

 The rich repast, unweeting of the death
 That lurks within; and soon he sporting breaks
 The brittle boughs, and greedily devours
 The fruit delicious. Ah! too dearly bought;
 The price is life.⁶

John Armstrong, M. D., wrote a lengthy poem on The Art of Preserving Health (1744), in which he observed that in Libya and India:

⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

⁶ Somerville, "The Chase," Book III, The British Poets, v. 36, pp. 57-58.

. . . in livid ripeness melts the grape;
 Here, finish'd by invigorating suns,
 Through the green shade the golden orange glows;
 Spontaneous here the turgid melon yields
 A generous pulp; the cocoa swells on high
 With milky riches; and in horrid mail
 The crisp ananas wraps its poignant sweets,
 Earth's vaunted progeny: in ruder air
 Too coy to flourish, e'en too proud to live;
 Or hardly raised by artificial fire
 To vapid life.⁷

Armstrong is also observant of the northern regions where the deer "crops the shrubby herbage on their meagre hills."⁸ Here man's life is little more than a continuous struggle for existence, especially when compared with the easy life of the tropics.

In William Thompson's Sickness (1746), which follows Armstrong's Art of Preserving Health chronologically, if not naturally, the poet makes reference to the cedars of Lebanon, to spikenard, aloe, myrrh, and balm, but they all are in a classical setting.⁹

John Dyer (1700?-1758), in The Fleece, is interested in the raising of sheep and the production of wool above everything else. The cooler climates are better suited to the growth of wool than are the warmer zones:

⁷ Armstrong, "The Art of Preserving Health," Book II, The British Poets, v. 67, p. 44.

⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

⁹ Thompson, "Sickness," Book IV, The British Poets, v. 54, p. 61.

. . . no fleeces wave in torrid climes,
Which verdure boast of trees and shrubs alone,
Shrubs aromatic, caffee wild, or thea,
Nutmeg, or cinnamon, or fiery clove,
Unapt to feed the fleece.¹⁰

Coffee and tea and spices have their places, Dyer says, but the woolly sheep need a simpler and more palatable--as well as staple--diet.

There are, to be sure, substitutes for wool, but none render as much warmth as does the fleece from the sheep. Batavia may produce its flax; Suma, its cane; Peru, its grass; and Persia, its silk:

And every sultry clime the snowy down
Of cotton, bursting from its stubborn shell
To gleam amid the verdure of the grove

But : : : : : none yield such warmth,
Such beauteous hues receive, so long endure;
So pliant to the loom, so various, none.¹¹

As articles of trade the "sultry clime" produces balm, coffee, gum, and "opium's lenient drug," while Bombay's wharfs pile up blue indigo and from Ternate and Tidore (two smallest of the Spice Islands) come the fragrant clove and nutmeg. Because moth repellents, such as paradichlorobenzene, had not yet been employed to kill clothes moths, the merchant ships brought from Java and Sumatra the "fiery pepper, that destroys the moth in woolly vestures."¹²

¹⁰ Dyer, "The Fleece," Book I, The British Poets, v. 53, p. 159.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 190-191.

¹² Ibid., p. 234.

Dyer was not unaware of the fertility of the "green savannahs and the plains of Carolina, where thick woods arise of mulberries, and whose water'd fields up springs the verdant blade of thirsty rice."¹³ The poet also writes at length of "fertile Virginia," but chiefly of its rivers and Indians, who "quit their feathery ornaments uncouth for wooly garments."¹⁴

William Mason (1725-1797) gives us a rich description of a scene in the Lebanon region of Palestine. Its accuracy may be questioned, but its vividness is hardly surpassed in British poetry:

Close was the vale and shady; yet ere long
 Its forest sides retiring, left a lawn
 Of ample circuit, where the widening stream
 Now o'er its pebbled channel nimbly tripp'd
 In many a lucid maze. From the flower'd verge
 Of this clear rill now stray'd the devious path,
 Amid ambrosial tufts where spicy plants,
 Weeping their perfumed tears of myrrh and nard,
 Stood crown'd with Sharon's rose; or where, apart,
 The patriarch palm his load of sugar'd dates
 Shower'd plenteous; where the fig, of standard strength,
 And rich pomegranate, wrapp'd in dulcet pulp
 Their racy seeds; or where the citron's bough
 Bent with its load of golden fruit mature.
 Meanwhile the lawn beneath the scatter'd shade
 Spread its serene extent; a stately file
 Of circling cypress mark'd the distant bound.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 240.

¹⁵ Mason, "The English Garden," Book II, The British Poets, v. 77, pp. 184-185.

In this lyrical passage we have reference to at least seven exotic plants.

William Cowper, as has been stated in Chapter III, was a genuine lover of nature. Equally well did he love human nature. His poetic treatment of the "gentle savage," Omai, a native of Otaheite [now Tahiti] who was brought to England by Captain Cook in 1774, deserves attention. Cowper anticipated dissatisfaction on his part when Omai should return to his native island:

The dream is past; and thou hast found again
 Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
 And homestall thatched with leaves. But hast
 thou found
 Their former charms?¹⁶

The answer was in the negative. Omai was taken back to his native land by Captain Cook on his third voyage, loaded with presents from many Englishmen, including George III. He died a few years afterwards, and the distribution of his presents occasioned a war between two of the native tribes.¹⁷

The subject of greenhouses found poetic treatment in at least two of the eighteenth-century poets, one of them being Cowper. On the subject he remarks:

¹⁶ Cowper, "The Task," Book I, The Poetical Works of William Cowper (London: Bell and Daldy, n. d.), v. 2, pp. 29-30.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too.
 Unconscious of a less propitious clime,

 The ruddier orange and paler lime,
 Peep through their polished foliage at the storm,
 And seem to smile at what they need not fear.
 The amomun there with intermingling flowers
 And cherries hangs her twigs. Geranium boasts
 Her crimson honours; and the spangled bean,
 Picoides, glitters bright the winter long.
 All plants, of every leaf, that can endure
 The winter's frown, if screened from his shrewd bite,
 Live there, and prosper. Those Ausonia claims,
 Levantine regions these, the Azores send
 Their jessamine, her jessamine remote
 Caffraria; foreigners from many lands,
 They form one social shade, as if convened
 By magic summons of the Orphean lyre.¹⁸

The other poet, William Mason (vid. supra), elaborates upon the greenhouse "where rare and alien plants might safely flourish; where the citron sweet, and the fragrant orange, rich in fruit and flowers, might hang their silver stars."¹⁹

The Sugarcane (1764) of James Grainger contains a number of references to plants not native to England. Sugar cane is not grown as far north as the British Isles, and is therefore itself foreign to that country. The poem was written in the West Indies, where the production of sugarcane is quite common. Grainger gives adequate notes describing the various exotic plants in his poem. The notes themselves make interesting reading. He mentions such fruits as the pineapple, lemon, orange, lime, fig, banana, tamarind, and

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

¹⁹ Mason, op. cit., pp. 215-216.

the papaw. Many trees of the West Indies are described either in the poem or in the notes. Such vegetables as the okra, yam, rice, maize, and potato are referred to in the poem.

Grainger could not decide whether yams improved the soil or not, for he writes:

Some of the skilful teach, and some deny,
That yams improve the soil. In meagre lands
'Tis known the yam will ne'er to bigness swell;
And from each mould the vegetable tribes,
However frugal, nutriment derive:
Yet may their sheltering vines, their dropping leaves,
Their roots dividing the tenacious glebe,
More than refund the sustenance they draw.²⁰

Many other plants native to the West Indies receive similar treatment, but their inclusion in this paper would give the poem treatment disproportionate to its importance in eighteenth-century poetry.

For the most part, poets looked to the warmer climates for the subject-matter of their compositions when it came to exotic plants, but Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) was less conventional in his outlook. His Botanic Garden (1789) was a systematic classification of plants.²¹ The poem consists

²⁰ Grainger, "Sugarcane," Book I, The British Poets, v. 59, p. 46.

²¹ "Linnaeus divided the vegetable world into twenty-four classes; these classes into about 120 orders; these orders contain about two thousand families, or genera; and these families about twenty thousand species, besides the innumerable varieties, which the accidents of climate or cultivation have added to these species." /From the Preface to the Loves of the Plants./

chiefly of a "scientific" description of the attributes of the various representative plants. Many of the plants he describes are not native to England, as one would expect from such a scheme of classification. Darwin's description of the mimosa tree is illustrative of his poetic ability:

Weak with nice sense, the chaste Mimosa stands,
 From each rude touch withdraws her timid hands;
 Oft as light clouds oppose the summer glade,
 Alarm'd she trembles at the moving shade;
 And feels, alive through all her tender form,
 The whisper'd murmurs of the gathering storm;
 Shuts her sweet eye-lids to approaching night,
 And hails with freshest charms the rising light.
 Veil'd with gay decency and modest pride,
 Slow to the mosque she moves, an eastern bride;
 There her soft vows unceasing love record,
 Queen of the bright seraglio of her Lord.
 So sinks or rises with the changing hour
 The liquid silver in its glassy tower.
 So turns the needle to the pole it loves,
 With fine librations as it moves.²²

Our last poet is Wordsworth, who sings of the virtues of English rural life in his Descriptive Sketches (1791-2).

Then he enters the world of imagination where:

. . . . fair Locarno smiles
 Embowered in walnut slopes and citron isles:
 Or seek at eve the banks of Tusa's stream,
 Where, 'mid dim towers and woods, her waters
 gleam.²³

The walnut slopes could be almost anywhere and the citron groves could be on almost any island within the torrid zone.

²² Darwin, The Loves of the Plants (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789), Part II, pp. 29-30.

²³ Wordsworth, "Descriptive Sketches," The Complete Works of William Wordsworth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), v. 1, p. 40.

The main emphasis is on the pleasure of the imagination, a theme which Wordsworth enlarged upon in several of his later poems, especially his "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." Wordsworth's love of nature is usually restricted to that scenery which he observed first-hand, not some far-away vista. Modern psychologists would probably say that his love of nature was little more than ego-extension. At any rate, he did not write of exotic plants in his early poems.

But in this respect he is not by himself, for of the fifty-three poets studied in connection with this chapter, only twelve of them made any reference to any of the exotic plants to any appreciable extent. This does not mean that they were ignorant of the foreign plants, nor does it mean that they were not interested in them; it only means that they did not write about them. Granting them poetic license, these poets should neither be condemned or commended for including or excluding references in their poems to the plants not native to their own homeland.

In this chapter, we have made the following general observations concerning the poetic treatment of exotic plants in eighteenth-century poetry:

- (1) The exotic plants, in most instances, were appreciated for their nutritive value, as food, spices, or beverages.

(2) Second in importance was the appreciation of plants from which clothing could be made: cotton, flax, and so on.

(3) While most of the exotic plants mentioned by the poets grew in the warmer climates, a few references were made to plants in the colder regions.

(4) The plant most admired for its beauty and its nutritional value was the orange.

(5) The pineapple was generally accepted as the most delicious of the exotic fruits.

CHAPTER V

A TREATMENT OF PLANTS AS POETIC EPITHETS, METAPHORS AND SIMILES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY

Poets of all ages have used plants, and their blossoms especially, in metaphors and similes as means of poetic expression. Certain plants, because of the poetic expressions concerning them, have become in themselves symbols of some abstraction.

In this chapter an attempt is made to give illustrations of the use of plants as similes and metaphors in the poetry of the eighteenth century. Instead of treating each poet separately as in the preceding chapters, the various plants will receive treatment in proportion to its importance in the poems studied.

John Ingram's Flora Symbolica; or, the Language and Sentiment of Flowers (London, Frederick Warne and Company, 1869) is probably the most complete work on the subject ever published. The book treats of about one hundred different plants, a few to some length. A brief history of the appreciation of the individual plant begins each chapter, which is well interspersed with quotations from poets of all ages, including original verses presumably by himself.

The longest chapter is devoted to the rose, with less space given to the hawthorn and the myrtle. Each of the remaining plants has, on the average, two pages devoted to it.

The last five chapters deal with miscellaneous items connected with the subject, such as emblematic garlands, holy flowers, and the like. The book is comprehensive enough, but is of little critical value.

The poetry of the eighteenth century, though strongly influenced by the classical tradition, had for the most part lost most of the classical spirit although it retained the classical forms. The poets, with the exception of Gray and Cowper, knew little or no Greek. It was a Latin century. Horace was the chief Latin writer whose works most influenced the writers of this period. Hardly a prose work or a poem appeared in the century without a direct quotation or an allusion to Horace in it.¹ Catullus was read but infrequently quoted.² Virgil's Pastorals (Eclogues) and Georgics were imitated by verse-writers throughout the eighteenth century. Pope and the poets of the classical tradition especially based their pastorals on Virgil's Eclogues.

¹ Caroline Goad, Horace in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), p. 7.

² Ibid., p. 4.

Virgil's Georgics served as a model for most of the long didactic poems of the eighteenth century.³ In a learned treatise on the influence of Virgil's Georgics on these poems, Dr. Wilfred P. Mustard, an eminent classicist of the past generation, says that:

In all these poems the model followed is professedly, or at least manifestly, Virgil; and throughout the series there is a careful imitation of the Georgics in structure and tone, and in many a fancy and precept and phrase.⁴

In the same paper, Mustard devotes several pages to a careful study of the influence of the Georgics on Thomson's Seasons. Of the Seasons he writes, "Many of his 'nature' passages were written with Virgil definitely in mind, or with the page of Virgil literally open before him." Mustard gives about forty concrete illustrations of borrowings from the Georgics which he found in the Seasons.⁵

In the same article, Mustard shows the influence of the Georgics on the outstanding poets of the eighteenth century, as well as poets before and after. In short, it is a comprehensive treatment of the influence of Virgil's Georgics on British poetry from Chaucer onward.

³ W. P. Mustard, "Virgil's Georgics and the British Poets," The American Journal of Philology, v. 29, p. 9.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 13-19.

Plants, like music, have a language of their own--a language that is not limited to designated channels of expression. It would be quite impossible to determine how much direct or indirect influence these Latin poets had upon the symbolic treatment of plants in eighteenth century poetry. Because a reference is made to a plant in Virgil, for example, that is not enough evidence that the poets of the eighteenth century got their references to the same plant from Virgil. The most logical assumption is that the symbolic treatment of plants is the common heritage of all the ages. This does not deny the direct influence of any earlier poets upon the eighteenth-century poets, but it does recognize the fact that flowers can speak symbolically for themselves.

Of all the plants, the rose is probably the favorite subject of poetic expression among the eighteenth-century writers, as well as writers of other centuries. The rose is symbolic of beauty--and usually conscious beauty at that. Cooper, in his Power of Harmony, spoke of the "beauty on the splendid rose as conscious of her form."⁶ Mason considered the rose "the garden's queen,"⁷ and most poets seem to agree

⁶ John Gilbert Cooper, "The Power of Harmony," The British Poets, v. 72, p. 84.

⁷ William Mason, "The English Garden," Book IV, The British Poets, v. 77, p. 223.

with him.

The rose was also regarded by the poets as a symbol of freshness. A newly-opened rosebud enveloped in the early morning's dew is worthy of being used as the symbol of freshness and purity. In this same vein, poets compared their "blushing maidens" with the purity and freshness of the rose. "Her form was fresher than the morning rose," one poet wrote.⁸ Most of us are familiar with Robert Burns' "My love is like a red, red rose."⁹ Conversely, several poets wrote of the rose in terms of the "blushing maiden." James Beattie wrote of the garden where "many a rosebud rears its blushing head,"¹⁰ and Mason referred to "some rose of maiden blush."¹¹

Other poets wrote of their maidens, describing their beauty in terms of the rose. "Her cheek he mistakes for the rose" and "I kiss'd the ripe roses that glow'd on her cheek" are examples.¹²

⁸ James Thomson, The Seasons (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1853), p. 209.

⁹ Robert Burns, "A Red, Red Rose," The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Burns (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1897), p. 250.

¹⁰ James Beattie, "The Minstrel," Book I', The British Poets, v. 78, p. 154.

¹¹ William Mason, "Written in a Church-Yard in South Wales," The British Poets, v. 77, p. 91.

¹² John Cunningham, "Pastorals," The British Poets, v. 64, pp. 80-81.

The lips have been compared with the rosebud or budding rose by several of the poets. "Thy ripe lips outblush the open rose," wrote Tickell in his poem, "To a Lady, with a Present of Flowers."¹³ James Thomson referred to "the parted lip, like the red rosebud moist with morning dew."¹⁴

Robert Blair compared the death of "the young green virgin" with a rose cut before it is fully opened.¹⁵

The perfume of the rose also made it desirable and won for itself such poetic comments as "sweet as the rose." Few flowers make an appeal to both the eye and the nose as does the rose. It is therefore quite natural that we find it foremost among the plants used symbolically in eighteenth-century poetry.

Next to the rose, the lily is preferred by the poets and is the symbol of chasteness and purity. Thomson spoke of the lovely young Lavinia as being "unstain'd as pure as is the lily or the mountain snow."¹⁶

¹³ Thomas Tickell, "To a Lady, with a Present of Flowers," The British Poets, v. 27, p. 230.

¹⁴ James Thomson, op. cit., p. 184.

¹⁵ Robert Blair, "The Grave," The British Poets, v. 58, p. 219.

¹⁶ James Thomson, op. cit., p. 209.

The lily is often referred to as being "fair" because of its whiteness or pale color. Robert Burns, in his crude poetic style, wrote:

The lily it is pure, and the lily it is fair,
And in her lovely bosom I'll place the lily there.¹⁷

Thomas Tickell wrote likewise of the lady to whom he gave a present of flowers: "The lily's snow betrays less pure a light, lost in thy bosom's more unsullied white."¹⁸

Armstrong refers to the "tender lily" in the Art of Preserving Health.¹⁹ Thompson, in his Sickness, addresses the lilies, saying, "Ye lilies, rise immaculate..."²⁰

Thompson also wrote, "Fair is the lily," in his Hymn to May.²¹

Bruce considered the lily the "queen of flowers" rather than the rose.²² He also made reference to a saying of our Lord Christ when he wrote: "The lilies of the field put on the robe they neither sow'd nor spun."²³

¹⁷ Robert Burns, "The Posie," op. cit., p. 243.

¹⁸ Thomas Tickell, op. cit., p. 230.

¹⁹ John Armstrong, "Art of Preserving Health," The British Poets, v. 67, p. 33.

²⁰ William Thompson, "Sickness," Book II, The British Poets, v. 54, p. 36.

²¹ Ibid., p. 106.

²² Michael Bruce, "Lochleven," The British Poets, v. 60, p. 250.

²³ Ibid., p. 248. (Conf. Matt. 6:28; Luke 12:27).

The lily is the emblem of France and has been referred to unfavorably in several of the eighteenth-century poets, including Alexander Pope²⁴ and John Cunningham.²⁵

Because of its symmetrical form in art, the lily is used for more humble purposes than for the device of France. In Gay's Shepherd's Week, he wrote of Blouzelinda the milkmaid who "rolls the butter round, with the wooden lily prints the pound."²⁶ Other figures were used for printing butter, but the lily, as well as the rose, was widely used because of its symmetrical shape.

No tree native to England is more appreciated by the Britons than is the oak, the symbol of strength. Cunningham considered the oak "the king of the grove,"²⁷ and Bruce agreed when he wrote that it is "from age to age the monarch of the wood."²⁸ England's emblem of power is a wreath of the oak tree.²⁹

²⁴ Alexander Pope, "Pastorals," The British Poets, v. 40, p. 176.

²⁵ John Cunningham, "On the Forwardness of Spring," The British Poets, v. 64, p. 38.

²⁶ John Gay, "Shepherd's Week," The British Poets, v. 33, p. 57.

²⁷ John Cunningham, "Pastorals," The British Poets, v. 64, p. 82.

²⁸ Michael Bruce, "Lochleven," The British Poets, v. 60, p. 250.

²⁹ John Cunningham, "Shepherd's Week," The British Poets, v. 64, p. 38.

James Beattie, in his Minstrel, wrote of the oak tree as the symbol of strength:

Mark yonder oaks! Superior to the power
Of all the warring winds of heaven they rise,
And from the stormy promontory tower,
And toss their giant arms amid the skies,
While each assailing blast increase of strength supplies.³⁰

The oak tree was much admired for its spreading branches which afforded shade to cattle and sheep: "...their feeders sought the shade a venerable oak wide-spreading made," wrote Ambrose Philips.³¹ Wordsworth wrote of the "broad-spread oak."³² William Mason, in his English Garden, spoke of the

...crystal lakes,
O'er which the giant oak, himself a grove,
Flings his romantic branches, and beholds
His reverend image in the' expanse below.³³

The oak, in addition to being a symbol of strength, is a symbol of age. It is referred to as "ancient," "antique," and "venerable." Mason expressed his sentiment for the oak when he wrote: "My soul holds dear an ancient oak, nothing more dear; it is an ancient friend."³⁴

³⁰ James Beattie, "Minstrel," The British Poets, v. 78, p. 153.

³¹ Ambrose Philips, "Pastoral Poems," The British Poets, v. 34, p. 40.

³² William Wordsworth, "Evening Walk," The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), p. 14.

³³ William Mason, "The English Garden," The British Poets, v. 77, p. 151.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 156.

The oak is the traditional home of the nymphs. This Matthew Green mentioned in his poem, The Spleen.³⁵

Ivy is prominent in the list of plants favored by the eighteenth-century poets. The ivy vine is generally thought of as being symbolic of fidelity. It is constant in its appearance and hardy in its adaptation to the most adverse environment. It may well have become an appropriate symbol of perseverance, if such a quality could be attributed to plants.

Cooper speaks of the "venerable ivy," probably because of its perennial greenness, or because of its association with old buildings.³⁶

The ivy vine is often viewed negatively because it is generally thought of as parasitic in nature. Unless it is cut periodically, the ivy tends to cover other plants and, by cutting off their access to the sun, cause their death. Langhorne observed the "treacherous ivy's shade, that murder'd what it most embraced."³⁷ Parnell likens the close friendship of an old hermit and the youth to clinging

³⁵ Matthew Green, "The Spleen," The British Poets, v. 54, p. 231.

³⁶ John Gilbert Cooper, "The Power of Harmony," The British Poets, v. 72, p. 75.

³⁷ John Langhorne, "Fables of Flora," The British Poets, v. 65, p. 34.

ivy on the aged elm.³⁸

George Crabbe lamented the fact that "half our ancient customs [are] changed or left; few sprigs of ivy are at Christmas seen." He also laments that "not at the altar our young brethren read the decalogue and creed ...in their desks they stand, with naked surplice, lacking hood and band."³⁹

The laurel is the symbol of fame. Several poets, including James Thomson, James Mason, Mark Akenside, William Collins, Matthew Green, and William Thompson, mentioned the laurel in their poems. Such phrases as "laurels crown'd," "early laurels crown'd," "laurel on each brow," "hoary locks with sacred laurel twined," and "fame's unfading laurel" are to be found in the poems of the eighteenth-century poets.

If you do not have a laurel wreath, an olive wreath will do. The olive is associated with Plato⁴⁰ and Solon,⁴¹ and apparently with other philosophers as well. The olive seems to be the appropriate wreath for one's brow if he has immortalized himself in the realm of philosophy.

³⁸ Thomas Parnell, "The Hermit," The British Poets, v. 34, p. 136.

³⁹ George Crabbe, "The Borough," The Poetical Works of George Crabbe (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 118a.

⁴⁰ Mark Akenside, op. cit., p. 132.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 176.

The "pale willow," symbolic of sorrow, is mentioned in several of the poets. Hamilton, in Braes of Yarrow, has the sorrowing bride, who grieves for her husband lover, say:

Take off, take off these bridal weeds,
And crown my careful head with willow.⁴²

The weeping willow has been the symbol of sorrow since the earliest times. The psalmist of the Babylon captivity of the Jews mentioned the willow as the symbol of sorrow:

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst
 thereof
For there they that carried us away captive required
 of us a song.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?⁴³

It is not remarkable, then, that we find the willow so treated in the poetry of the eighteenth century.

The yew tree, symbolic of death, is often associated with the churchyard where the departed are laid to rest. It is natural, then, that Robert Blair should give the yew special attention in The Grave:

⁴² William Hamilton, "Songs," The British Poets, v. 57, p. 149.

⁴³ Psalm 137: 2-3.

Well do I know thee by thy trusty yew,
 Cheerless, unsocial plant! that loves to dwell
 Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms,
 Where light-heel'd ghosts, and visionary shades,
 Beneath the wan cold moon (as fame reports)
 Embodied, thick, perform their mystic rounds.
 No other merriment, dull tree! is thine.⁴⁴

Mickle wrote that the "weeping yews o'ershade the letter'd stones."⁴⁵ Cooper thought that the yew tree gave off an "immedicable poison."⁴⁶ Parnell described it as the "black and funeral yew."⁴⁷ Thompson mentioned the "bitter yew, the church's shade."⁴⁸ Sometimes the willow, yew, and hemlock trees are mentioned in conjunction with one another as the traditional symbols of death and are found together in the English churchyard among the gravestones.

Like the yew tree, the hemlock is often associated with death and the grave. Ambrose Philips wrote of the "baneful hemlock" as an appropriate component of the funeral wreath. The hemlock was, as one might expect, a favorite shrub for the graveyard. Cooper referred to the "ruined

⁴⁴ Robert Blair, "The Grave," The British Poets, v. 58, p. 204.

⁴⁵ William Julius Mickle, "Pollio," The British Poets, v. 66, p. 44.

⁴⁶ John Gilbert Cooper, "The Power of Harmony," The British Poets, v. 72, p. 79.

⁴⁷ Thomas Parnell, "A Night-Piece on Death," The British Poets, v. 34, p. 144.

⁴⁸ William Thompson, "Sickness," Book II, The British Poets, v. 54, p. 29.

tomb...where deadly hemlock chills the' unfruitful glebe."⁴⁹

[The hemlock the leaves of which Socrates drank was apparently the poisonous hemlock of the carrot family, not the hemlock which is a member of the pinaceous family of trees. I do not, however, have any evidence as to which kind of hemlock it was.]

The cypress is frequently mentioned in connection with the yew. Its shade is usually characterized by such epithets as "solemn," "of [a] solemn sort."⁵⁰ Cooper wrote of the cypress "with funeral horror shades,"⁵¹ and William Thompson refers to the "cypress' melancholy boughs."⁵²

The "deadly" nightshade is found in a number of the eighteenth-century poems. It is considered an enemy to man because of its poisonous nature.

The woodbine is considered "wanton" by John Armstrong;⁵³ and Mason wrote of "the gadding woodbine" although he is fond of the phrase "woodbine bower."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ John Gilbert Cooper, op. cit., p. 75

⁵⁰ William Mason, "The English Garden," The British Poets, v. 72, p. 229.

⁵¹ John Gilbert Cooper, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵² William Thompson, "Sickness," The British Poets v. 54, p. 15.

⁵³ John Armstrong, "Art of Preserving Health," The British Poets, v. 54, p. 33.

⁵⁴ William Mason, op. cit., p. 161. See also pp. 214, 215, 217, and 222 for examples.

The bay is probably the emblem of poetry. Thomson mentioned the "poet's bay."⁵⁵ Pope referred to adding a "wreath of ivy to thy bays."⁵⁶

The "patriarch palm" is appreciated for "his load of sugar'd dates shower'd plenteous."⁵⁷

The myrtle is considered the plant symbolic of love. James Thomson wrote of "the lover's myrtle."⁵⁸ George Crabbe emphasized that love is not enough when he wrote:

Can poets soothe you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles round your ruin'd shed?⁵⁹

In social matters as well as literary, Crabbe took an objective, realistic attitude.

The daisy represented joy and simplicity in the various poems. Jago wrote of the "smiling daisies" in Edge Hill.⁶⁰

Another plant which belongs to this general classification is the primrose, which is widely mentioned by the eighteenth-century poets.

⁵⁵ James Thomson, The Seasons, p. 176.

⁵⁶ Alexander Pope, "Pastorals," The British Poets, v. 40, p. 177.

⁵⁷ William Mason, op. cit., p. 185.

⁵⁸ James Thomson, op. cit., p. 176.

⁵⁹ George Crabbe, "The Village," op. cit., p. 35a.

⁶⁰ Richard Jago, "Edge Hill," The British Poets, v. 55, p. 145.

Although the daffodil is not frequently mentioned in the eighteenth-century poets, it is generally thought of as a joy-evoking flower.

In our discussion of the various symbolic plants we must not overlook the "delicate" pansy. Mason mentioned the "pansy pale, that drinks its daily nurture from that rill, but breathes in fragrant accents to thy soul."⁶¹

The various plants and flowers used symbolically in eighteenth-century poetry which we have commented on are: the rose, lily, oak, ivy, laurel, olive, willow, yew, hemlock, cypress, nightshade, woodbine, bay, palm, myrtle, daisy, daffodil, and the pansy. Of course, not all the references to these plants--not to mention minor references to others--are given in this paper. Such a catalogue is unnecessary and undesirable. The general conclusion to the study made in this chapter is that the poets of the eighteenth century were not unusual in their use of plants as poetic similes and metaphors from the poets of any corresponding period in the history of English literature. One might observe, though, that the use of trees as symbols exceeds those of the other plants, and that plants symbolic of sorrow and death seem to outweigh the plants which represent joy and gladness.

⁶¹ William Mason, "The English Garden," The British Poets, v. 77, p. 206.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The results of this research may be considered more appreciative than informative. To be sure, the writer learned much about eighteenth-century poetry, but this study has increased his appreciation of the best poets of English literature because by studying so many inferior poets--as well as a few great ones--he has come to appreciate the really great poets all the more.

Other suggested studies in eighteenth-century poetry, if they have not been undertaken, would include a study of the animals and the appreciation of the poets for animals as revealed through their poetry. Also a study of the topography in the poems--mountains, rivers, valleys, etc.--may prove fruitful to some scholar of English literature.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

LIST OF POEMS READ IN PREPARATION FOR THESIS

- Ake'side: Imagination
- Armstrong: Art of Preserving Health
Day
- Bampfylde: Written in a Country Retirement
- Beattie: Minstrel
- Blair: The Grave
- Blake: Poetical Sketches
Song of Experience
- Bruce: Lochleven
- Burns: Brigs of Ayr
Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie
To Mary
On Cessrock Banks
The Sodger's Return
On a Bank of Flowers
To Mary in Heaven
The Blude Red Rose at Yule May Blaw
The Carle of Kellyburn Braes
(Others)
- Chatterton: Eclogues
- Coleridge: Lines on an Autumnal Evening
The Faded Flower
On Observing a Blossom on the First of February,
1796
To a Primrose
- Collins: Liberty
Evening
Oriental Eclogues
- Cooper: Power of Harmony
- Cotton: Fables

- Cowper: The Task
- Crabbe: The Village
The Borough (1810)
- Cunningham: Landscape
On the Forwardness of Spring
The Violet
The Narcissus
Pastorals
- Darwin: The Botanic Garden
- Dyer: Grongar Hill
Country Walk
The Fleece
- Fenton: Florelia
- Gay: Shepherd's Week
Rural Sports
- Goldsmith: Traveller
Deserted Village
- Grainger: The Sugarcane
- Gray: Elegy
Ode on Spring
- Greene: The Spleen
- Hamilton: Contemplation
Rhone and Arar
Braes of Yarrow
- Jago: Edge Hill
The Blackbird
The Goldfinches
The Swallows
- Johnson: Summer
Autumn
- Jones: Arcadia
- Langhorne: Fables of Flora

- Logan: Cuckoo
Written in Spring
Ossian's Hymn to the Sun
- Lovell: The Decayed Farm-house
- Mallet: Amyntor and Theodora
Excursion
- Mason: Written in a Churchyard
English Gardens
- Mickle: Pollio
Syr Martyn
- Parnell: Hermit
Night-piece
Hymn to Contentment
Health
The Flies
- Philips, A.: Pastoral Poems
- Philips, J.: Cider
- Pomfret: The Choice
The Fortunate Compliant
Strephen's Love for Delia
Pastoral Essay
- Pope: Pastorals
Windsor Forest
- Ramsay: Gentle Shepherd
- Savage: Wanderer
- Scott, J.: The Garden
Anwell
Moral Eclogues
Amoebian Eclogues
- Shenstone: Written in Spring
Rural Eloquence
Pastoral Ode
- Smart: The Hop-garden

Somerville: Rural Sports
Hobbinol
The Chase

Southey: The Holly-tree
Autumn

Thompson: Sickness
Hymn to May

Thomson: The Seasons

Tickell: To a Lady before Marriage
To a Lady with a Present of Flowers

Warton, J.: Enthusiast

Warton, Th. Sr.: Retirement

Warton, Th. Sr.: First of April
Approach of Spring
Morning

Winchilsea, Lady: To the Nightingale
The Tree
Nocturnal Reverie

Wordsworth: Evening Walk
Descriptive Sketches

Young: Ocean
Seapiece

VITA

William Melvin Maxey, oldest son of Bennie Wyatt and Ruby Wilson Maxey, was born July 5, 1927, at the home of his paternal grandfather, Joseph Wyatt Maxey.

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