

UNIT-3

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

3.0 INTRODUCTION

“Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” is a poem composed by Thomas Gray, first published in 1751. Although the origin of the poem is unknown, it was partly inspired by Gray’s thoughts following the death of the poet Richard West in 1742. The poem is more of an elegy in name but not in form. It employs a style similar to that of contemporary odes, but it encapsulates a contemplation on death, and remembrance after death. The narrator uses the occasion to reflect on the lives and death of the obscure rustics buried in the churchyard. When Gray designated his work as an elegy, he placed it in a long tradition of meditative poems that focus on human mortality and sometimes reflect specifically on the death of a single person. By setting his meditation in a typical English churchyard with mounds, gravestones, and yew trees, Gray was also following a tradition. The poem is unique in the sense that it does not just lament death but also reflects on the toil, struggle and anonymity of the rustic dweller.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand what is an elegy and how it is composed.
- Appreciate the poetic expression and figures of speech
- Derive a message out of poetic expression which is largely driven by imagination.

3.2 ABOUT THE POET

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London in 1716. His father, Philip Gray, was a clerk and his mother, Dorothy Antrobus, earned by making hats for women.. He was the fifth of 12 children, and the only child of Philip and Dorothy Gray to survive infancy. Gray's mother was keen to send him to Eton College where two of his uncles worked. He recalled his schooldays as a time of great happiness, as is recorded in his “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College”. In 1734 Gray went up to Peterhouse, Cambridge but could not indulge in studies as he disliked the curriculum. His family wanted him to study law but he spent most of his undergraduate years reading classical and modern literature.

It was in 1742, mainly after his close friend Richard West died, that Gray began writing poems seriously. He moved to Cambridge and started training himself for literary study. For most of his life Gray was a scholar in Cambridge, and only later in his life did he begin traveling again. He was so self-critical and fearful of failure that he published only thirteen poems during his lifetime. Gray died in July 1771 at Cambridge, England.

Gray began writing his masterpiece, the Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, in the graveyard of St Giles parish church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, in 1742. After several years of leaving it

unfinished, he completed it in 1750. Its reflective, calm and stoic tone was greatly appreciated. It has been translated into many languages including classical languages such as Latin and Greek. It is still one of the most popular and most frequently quoted poems in the English language. Gray did not produce a great deal of poetry. The "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," however, has earned him a permanent place in the annals of literary history. The poem was written at the end of the Augustan Age and at the beginning of the Romantic period. So it has features associated with both literary periods. Whereas on the one hand, it has the ordered, balanced phrasing and rational sentiments of the Neoclassical poetry, on the other, it tends toward the melancholy, emotionalism and individualism of the Romantic expression. Added to this, it idealizes the common man.

3.3 THE POEM

3.3.1 The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,

The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
 The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
 Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
 Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;
 Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
 The moping owl does to the moon complain
 Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.
 Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
 Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
 Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
 The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

Explanation: Gray sets the scene for his private and quiet thoughts. He is far from the din of the city and looking out from a country churchyard at a rural scene. It is evening time and the flocks of animals and birds are home bound. Only the nocturnal creatures such as the owl, the cricket etc seem to be around. Although the scene is beautiful, life is not joyous, and Gray reflects that this day dies just like the one before it, as the plowman walks home wearily. The poet is alone, but he is not lonely or tired. The text gives a sense that he enjoys his solitude and stillness around. With these descriptions, Gray creates the backdrop for his melancholy reflections about eternal truths.

3.3.2 For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,

Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
 No children run to lisp their sire's return,
 Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.
 Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
 Their furrow of the stubborn glebe has broke:
 How jocund did they drive their team afield!

How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
 Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
 Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
 The short and simple annals of the poor.

Explanation: Gray uses the churchyard scene to invoke important images: the sturdiness of the elms, death as symbolized by the graves, and the comfort provided by the yews trees shading bodies that sleep entombed. The poet reflects that death for the humble and obscure folks means a cessation of life's simple pleasures: waking up to the songs of birds, sharing life with a wife and children, and enjoying the fruits of their labour. Gray ponders upon not only the untimely death of young people but on the death that comes after a normal life span. But that does not imply that these unknown people had nothing worthy. In fact the poet appeals to the resourceful ones not to look down upon the simple lives lead quietly in some far off village.

3.3.3 The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
 Awaits alike th' inevitable hour
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
 Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,
 If Memory o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,
 Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
 Can storied urn or animated bust
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
 Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
 Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of death?
 Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
 Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.
 But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
 Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
 Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of the soul.
 Full many a gem of purest ray serene
 The dark unfathom'd caves of their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
 Their glowing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
 Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
 The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
 To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
 Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride

With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
 Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
 Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
 Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
 They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
 Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
 Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
 With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
 Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
 Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
 The place of fame and elegy supply:
 And many a holy text around she strews,
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.
 an bear:
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Explanation: The lines in this stanza provide the central message of the poem: The poor are born with the same natural abilities as members of the upper classes. Who can say what humble people might have accomplished in the great world had they not been constrained by their circumstances and their innate powers not been frozen by chilling poverty. Gray implies that the innocence and beauty of these souls, wasted in their isolated rural environment, and resembling hidden deserts and ocean caves, could have flourished in better conditions. If one boasts of high position, power, beauty or wealth, it is of no value as death overpowers all human attributes. The rich may boast of elaborate memorial services and lavish tombs but these poor folks have no such memorable ceremonies performed as their remembrance. The poem reminds stoically that nothing can bring back the departed soul and no resounding glorification of the dead will revive them. The dead village folks could have possessed qualities of states men, scholars and poets, had the conditions of their lives permitted them. But poverty restrained their talent which lay hidden like a flower or a gem not appreciated by others. However some humble mounds have been made to show respect to the dead. These simple memorials ask the passer by to heave a sigh. The poet draws solace from the fact that their poverty restrained them from doing wrong deeds .

3.3.4 Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone

Their glowing virtues, but their crimes confined;
 Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
 The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
 To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
 Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
 With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
 Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
 Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
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They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
 Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
 Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
 With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
 Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
 Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
 The place of fame and elegy supply:
 And many a holy text around she strews,
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.

Explanation: Gray returns to the churchyard in this section, remarking on the graves' simple markers with their badly spelled inscriptions, names, and dates. Some bear unpolished verses or consoling biblical texts; some are decorated with "shapeless sculpture." Gray is touched that such grave markers show the humanity these dead people share with all men and women (including, by implication, the famous who took paths of glory). Those who remain can sense that the dead "cast one long lingering look" back on what they were leaving and were comforted by at least one loved one. Gray reflects that the voice of general human nature can be heard crying from these graves. The inscriptions on the graves might be simple but they instruct moral lessons to the onlooker.

3.3.5 On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
 Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
 Ev'n in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.
 For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
 Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
 If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
 Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate.

Explanation: Gray mentions an eternal and common desire shared by all humans. The dying man longs for remembrance. He desires that someone would shed tears and narrate his tale to the others. Even the ashes of a dead person ask for respect and acknowledgement. Although the inscriptions on the tombs have no rhythm and music, there is hope that some traveler will come that way and read those lines and remember the dead.

3.3.6 'One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
 Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
 Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
 Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;
 'The next with dirges due in sad array
 Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
 Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
 Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

Explanation: The farmer recounts that one morning the poet was nowhere to be seen. He was not at the hill or the heath or near the tree, the stream or the lawn and the wood. Then the farmer saw the poet's

funeral procession to a church, marked by sad faces and mournful songs. He was buried in the same church yard with simple lines inscribed on the grave beneath an old thorny tree. In this way the poet gives the message that he counts himself amongst common humanity and even died as one of them.

3.3.7 THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
 A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
 Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
 And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.
 Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
 Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
 He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
 He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.
 No farther seek his merits to disclose,
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

Explanation: Gray speaks of his grave being “upon the lap of Earth” and not inside the ornate church. He accords himself modest praise and justifies his life as worthwhile. He concedes that despite his “humble birth,” he took pains to educate himself. Although some may consider the poet’s natural melancholy a disadvantage, he himself thought it the source of his poetic sensibility . Gray describes himself as generous and sincere, for which his reward was not worldly fame or fortune (the “paths of glory”) but heavenly “recompense,” in the form of kindred souls. The epitaph concludes by advising the reader not to ask more about the poet’s virtues and frailties but to leave him to God’s care.

Check Your Progress

1. What is an elegy? Is the present poem an elegy in the typical sense?
2. What is the theme of this elegy?
3. What is an epitaph and what is its significance?
4. What is a figure of speech? Give some examples from the Elegy

3.4 Summary

An elegy is a poem which laments the dead. Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is noteworthy in that it mourns the death not of great or famous people, but of common men. The speaker of this poem sees a country churchyard at sunset, which impels him to meditate on the nature of human mortality. The poem invokes the classical idea of memento mori, a Latin phrase which states plainly to all mankind, "Remember that you must die." The speaker considers the fact that in death, there is no difference between great and common people. He goes on to wonder if among the lowly people buried in the churchyard there had been any natural poets or politicians whose talent had simply never been discovered or nurtured. This thought leads him to praise the dead for the honest and simple lives that they lived. The major subject throughout this poem is death. The poem has a dark atmosphere and takes

place in a cemetery; the author reflects on how people are remembered after their passing away. The author reminds us that all men will certainly die, and they will be remembered by their glories on earth. Gray uses sophisticated diction reflecting the neoclassic style. He also uses iambic pentameter which is a line of verse with five metrical feet, each consisting of one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable. An example of iambic pentameter in the poem: "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, their sober wishes never learned to stray; along the cool, sequestered vale of life they kept the noiseless terror of their way." Gray also uses personification in the following example : "Awaits alike the inevitable hour the paths of glory lead but to the grave."

3.5 KEY TERMS

- **Curfew:**night time
- **Knell:** sound of a bell
- **Yonder :** there (old English)
- **Ivy mantled:** covered with ivy creeper
- **Solitary:** lonely
- **Hamlet:** village
- **Sickle:** an agricultural instrument
- **Furrow:** a long line or hollow that is formed or cut into the surface of something
- **Annals:** year-wise record of events
- **Aisle:** a passage between rows of seats
- **Vault:** an arch shaped roof
- **Lyre:** a musical instrument
- **Muse:** a person or power which inspires a creative artist
- **Implore:** plead
- **Rustic:** villager
- **Ignoble:** degraded
- **Vale:** valley
- **Kindred:** relatives and friends
- **Rill:** a small stream
- **Melancholy:** sorrow
- **Bounty:** reward
- **Recompense:** make amends for loss
- **Abode:** home

3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

Answer 1: Elegy is a melancholy poem, especially for the dead or for a funeral. This poem, technically speaking is not an elegy although it is said to have been written at the death of the poet's friend. This elegy is based on despair regarding the human condition.

Answer 2: Gray criticizes the vain struggles of those who seek success and defile their virtues for the sake of ambition. He raises the stature of the humble residents of hamlets. Those people who now lie peacefully in their graves claimed no big achievements. But their

simple life was free of care and concern. However they wanted the world to remember them and made simple tombs for the dead.

Answer 3: An epitaph refers to words written for a dead person, specially inscribed on a tombstone. The epitaph in the “Elegy” is important because it reveals Gray's imaginary tombstone and informs the reader about the thoughts of the poet. He was not born into a wealthy or famous family, yet he did receive an education. He was often depressed, but he was blessed because God gave him a friend. The epitaph summarizes all these views.

Answer 4: Figurative language in the form of a single word or phrase used for rhetorical effect is called figure of speech. It can be done by addition(by expansion and repetition), omission (by subtraction and abridgement), transposition (by transferring) and permutation(substitution). Use of metaphors, similes, images, personification, alliteration are some examples of figures of speech in the “Elegy”.

3.7 SELECTED FIGURES OF SPEECH

- **Elegy:** It is a poem which is dedicated to mourning with a sad setting, tone and poetic expression. It is usually sung at the passing away of a kindred soul. The present elegy laments the hidden potential of common village folk who lived and died in anonymity.
- **Quatrain:** A quatrain is a four-line stanza. "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is written in heroic quatrains. Heroic quatrains rhyme is in an abab pattern and written in iambic pentameter. An iamb is a poetic foot consisting of one unstressed and one stressed syllable.
- **Alliteration:** It means the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of or in closely connected words. Some examples from the “Elegy” are as following: “Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre”, “Their glowing virtues, but their crimes confined”, “ was his bounty, and his soul sincere”, etc.
- **Figurative questions:** This is a literary device used by the poet to draw the reader’s attention to important issues as well as to involve the reader into finding out answers to these questions. For example:
 Can storied urn or animated bust
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
 Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
 Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of death?
- **Personification:** It refers to the attribution of human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form. For example : “The moping owl does to the moon complain” , “Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth, And Melancholy mark'd him for her own”.
- **Epitaph:** It is a phrase or words written in memory of a person who has died, especially unscripted on the grave. The Epitaph describes an obscure youth of humble birth and sad nature. This youth was enjoyed neither fortune nor fame, but he acquired much knowledge and wisdom. Though he was very sincere and generous, yet his life was full of misery and sorrow. However God recompensed him for his gifts, in the form of a true friend.
- **Metaphor:** Metaphor is a figure of speech which establishes an implicit, implied or concealed comparison between two things that are unrelated but are shown as sharing some common characteristics. For example:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
 The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
 Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

3.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What was Gray's opinion of high-born persons vis-a-vis the low-born?

Ans: Gray admired the virtues of the ordinary people and felt that their potential was not fully explored. The high-born asserted their power and position by constructing huge memorials for themselves.

2. Explain : The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Ans: When man enjoys power, he thinks he is invincible. But despite all the glorious deeds, the final resting place is still the grave.

3. What message does the “Elegy” give?

Ans: The "Elegy" asks us to honor the lives of common, unknown people and not just the rich and famous folks. This idea of glorifying mundane, everyday things becomes central to the poem.

4. What is the significance of the Epitaph in the “Elegy”?

Ans: It is an inscription on the grave. The poet imagines how the world would talk about him after reading these lines carved on his grave.

5. How is nature described in the “Elegy”?

Ans: Nature is serene and quiet and adds to the sad tone of the “Elegy”. There are few voices of nature as it is evening time and the day is coming to a close.

LONG- ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What are the chief themes of the “Elegy”?

Ans: The “Elegy” deals with various themes which have been beautifully portrayed.

- A. Death is a great equalizer .Even the proud and the mighty must one day lie in the grave, like the humble men and women now buried in the churchyard. No grand memorials and no soothing words about the dead can bring him or her back from death.
- B. Missed Opportunities : Due to poverty or other handicaps, many talented people never bet the opportunities they deserve. Their worth remains unexplored. However they should not be under estimated. Had their potential been tapped, they would have proved to be great leaders, poets and rulers. The following lines elucidate this theme through metaphors:
- C. Virtue : The “Elegy” is dedicated to the virtues of the common people. The circumstances might have limited their growth but they had many virtues. They lived a simple life contented with small pleasures. They were neither too ambitious nor cruel to other humans.

2. Identify the elements in the “Elegy” which foreshadow romanticism?

Ans: Romanticism favored nature, emotion, and imagination. The focus on nature is evident from the beginning with the country churchyard setting ."The curfew tolls the knell of parting day, the lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea, the plowman homeward plods his weary way, and leaves the world to darkness and to me". It also shows a love for nature as it is admired in its quiet and solitary form. The poem also emphasizes the melancholic emotion specifically death, which is a

salient feature of both the pre-Romantics and the Romantics: "Flattery soothe the dull cold of death." It also contains romantic ideals with the portrayal of ordinary citizens, their forgotten lives and unsung deaths. The "Elegy" is replete with symbols and images from nature. All these qualities foreshadow romanticism .

3. Why is Gray's "Elegy" considered a landmark work in literature?

Ans: "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" moves from a meditation at a particular place upon the graves of the poor to a reflection on the mortality of all humankind. It ponders upon some of the benefits of being constrained by poverty. The poem alludes to the wish of all people not to die and to the eternal wish among all to be remembered after death. Gray concludes by imagining his own death and how he hopes to be remembered. Some critics feel that this progression of thought is not entirely logical, but it is all the more understandable. One reason for the long popularity of Gray's poem lies in the universal chord he managed to touch not only with the thoughts he expressed but even more important, with the progression he gave to those thoughts. The poem also contains some of the most striking lines of English poetry which make it a remarkable work in literature.

ESSAY-TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Write about the structure of the "Elegy".

Ans: The "Elegy" has been written in quatrains. It may be divided into four sections. The first four stanzas establish the solemn meditative tone and place. The speaker is in a village graveyard at twilight. Stanzas five and six describe the events and activities in which the dead people buried there are no longer able to participate. Stanzas seven to twenty three castigate the great and instruct them not to view the poor with contempt. It is suggested that the poor, too, might have been accomplished and powerful. In fact all men are equal in death. In stanzas twenty four to twenty nine, the poet addresses himself, imagining to be observed by an inhabitant of the village, and finally describing his own death and burial. The poem closes with the speaker's epitaph, assuring that the resourceful are recompensed through their immortalizing virtues . Thus

"Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" proceeds from a meditation in the churchyard to a wider consideration of human nature and predicament of the underprivileged lot. In Gray concludes by imagining his own death and how he will be remembered by those who read his epitaph. The Elegy has been skillfully structured with a well- developed progression of thought.

Answers to Check Your Progress

1. In "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," Gray, or his speaker, certainly does not criticize educating the poor. His sentiment is that among the poor buried in the churchyard there may well be people like Oliver Cromwell (but kinder) or like ruling senators, except that they had no education. And what kept them from having education was their poverty. Penury, or poverty, is cited as what keeps poor people, like those buried in the cemetery, from achieving successes like those achieved by leaders. Thus, in the poem, the speaker certainly condemns poverty, but does not criticize educating the poor.
2. Although the initial inspiration for Thomas Gray's poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" may have been the 1742 death of his friend Richard West, the final version, published in 1751, does

not focus on mourning for any one particular person, but instead is an example of a more general meditation concerning mortality.

3. Thomas Gray employs an extended metaphor in the first 7 stanzas to compare the end of humans' life and the mourning for their loss to the end of a day. His use of colors such as grey, sounds such as animals who are readying for the night or the bell "knelling," illustrate the close of not only the day but also of a life that will never experience those colors, sounds, or images again.

Questions and Exercises

1. **What is the significance of the epitaph in the poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard?"**

The speaker in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is contemplating death. He looks upon the graves in the churchyard and he ruminates on those buried there. The poem is also the speaker's quest to find himself or a quest to understand what is important in life. And this is where the epitaph comes in. Given the implied modesty in the epitaph, we might assume that it was written by someone else; not the speaker himself. This means that another person is looking at the speaker's death in philosophical contemplation of mortality just as the speaker himself did throughout the context of the poem.

2. **How does "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" imbibe the twin features of Romanticism and Neo Classicism?**

Answer: Although Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is not considered to be part of the Romantic canon, its first twenty lines do advance some classic Romantic themes. Most notably, the first twenty lines of Gray's poem describe the kind of isolated world of natural beauty favored by most Romantics. In the first stanza, we can see that Gray sets his poem within a world of serene, pastoral beauty. With a wandering herd, an open grassland and a plowman, Gray skillfully develops a world of natural beauty and hard-working farmers. Moreover, since the world is left to the speaker of the poem, it's suggested that he is alone in this picturesque natural setting. A beautiful and isolated natural setting is a typical feature of Romantic literature, as it nurtures an ideal setting for the Romantic imagination to become manifest. At the same time, it needs to be remembered that Neo-classicism was the dominant influence in the eighteenth century English poetry. Poetry was largely based on literary models provided by Greece and Rome. In the neo-classical tradition, the tone and the rhyme scheme of a poem are measured and even, and the argument is intellectual rather than prone to emotional outpouring. While Gray does not address his elegy to a single individual, which is the standard Classical form, this poem is a moving address to those who are dead and gone but yearned to live and to be remembered after death. The poem communicates sadness, but the poet is distant from his subjects. Although it is sad that people die unmourned, but that's the way life is in the larger scheme of nature. So the Romantic traces are present all through but the voice of sane reason is insistently present. Even when Gray seems to be exalting nature in her somber form, there is an underlying restraint that curbs the free flow of the Romantic verve. However the Elegy assimilates the divergent strands effectively.