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THOMAS GRAY

*A Biography*

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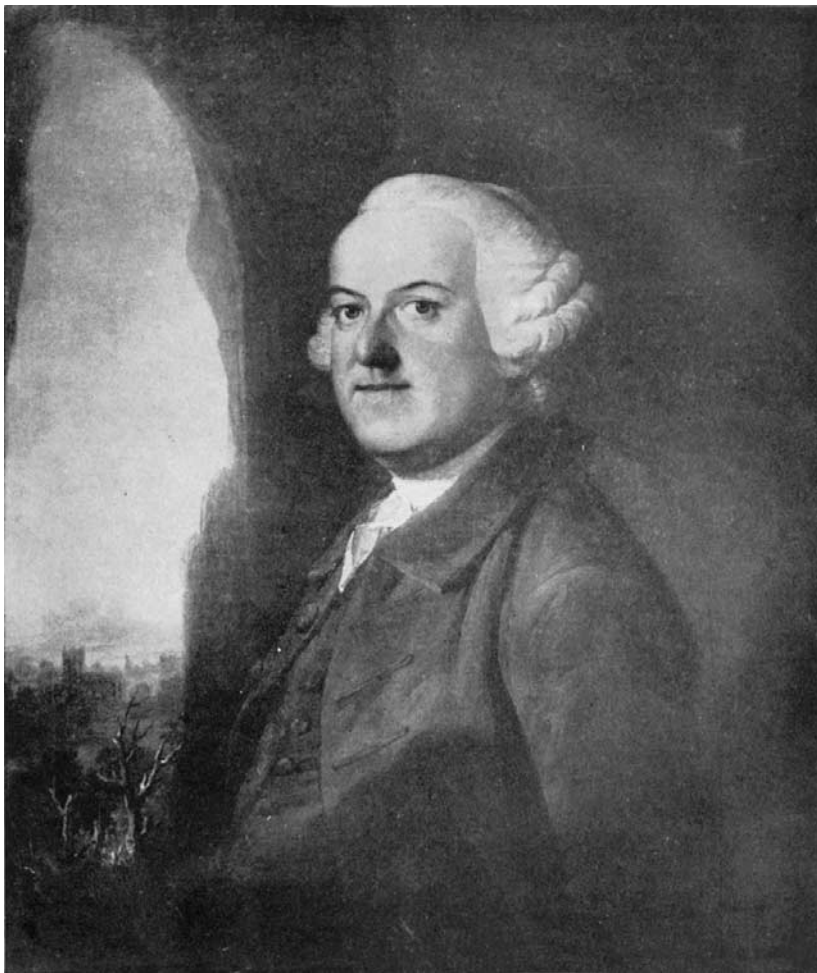
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NORFOLK PORTRAITS  
A NORFOLK GALLERY  
COUNTRY NEIGHBOURHOOD

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THOMAS GRAY

From a painting by Benjamin Wilson, in the possession of  
Sir John Murray, K.C.V.O., D.S.O.

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R.W. KETTON-CREMER

THOMAS GRAY  
*A BIOGRAPHY*



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*To the memory of*  
LEONARD WHIBLEY

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## PREFACE

### I

IN the summer of 1935 I published, in Messrs Duckworth's series of *Great Lives*, a short biography of Thomas Gray. Soon afterwards I received a letter from Leonard Whibley, who was just completing the edition of Gray's *Correspondence* on which he had been working for many years, at first in collaboration with Dr Paget Toynbee and single-handed after Dr Toynbee's death. His letter, so searching in its criticisms and so kindly in its commendations, led to a friendship which lasted until his death, and to which I shall always look back with gratitude.

Later in the same year he published the three volumes of his *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*. He had hoped, when this great work of scholarship was at last completed, to crown his labours by writing a biography of Gray. He did in fact prepare an outline of Gray's life in narrative form as far as the year 1760; but most of this was still in draft at the time of his death in November 1941. He wrote to me, a few months before he died, suggesting with his accustomed kindness that I should write the biography which he now felt himself unable to undertake; and at the same time he expressed to certain friends his wish that in the event of his death I should have access to the notes and manuscripts which he intended to bequeath to Pembroke College, Cambridge. I was unable to give him any promise at the time, and we did not have an opportunity to meet and discuss the project. But in due course, with the sanction and encouragement of the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, I determined to do my best to carry out his wishes.

I cannot over-estimate the debt which I owe to Whibley's own work on Gray. His edition of the *Correspondence* is a splendid achievement, a model of accuracy in text and foot-



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notes alike. Most valuable of all are the appendices, twenty-six in number, in which he discussed various problems of Gray's life and writings. I have drawn on these appendices perhaps even more generously than on his footnotes to the letters themselves. The notes and papers which he bequeathed to Pembroke College consist mainly of the materials used in this edition; but they contain a certain amount of *addenda* and *corrigenda*, and also include the extremely helpful biographical outline to which I have already referred. I have likewise made use of his interleaved and annotated copy of Gosse's *Life of Gray*, the pages of which are black with his remorseless corrections.

Although I wish to associate the name of Leonard Whibley as intimately as possible with this biography, I am solely responsible for its arrangement and its content. In statements of fact I have tried, perhaps in vain, to comply with the standards of that most accurate of scholars. In matters of opinion I do not think, from my recollections of the talks which we had long ago about Gray, that there is much with which he would have strongly disagreed. But it is with a sense of great humility that I inscribe my book to his memory.

### II

I am deeply grateful to the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College for allowing me to use the Gray Manuscripts in their possession, and the books and papers bequeathed to them by Leonard Whibley. In particular I would thank the Master, Mr S. C. Roberts, for his constant interest, encouragement and advice. His knowledge of Gray, of the eighteenth century, and of the past history of Cambridge has been most generously placed at my disposal, and the entire text of my book has undergone his wise and careful scrutiny. My thanks are due also to Mr Matthew Hodgart, the Librarian of the College, and to Mr Bryan King, who occupies the rooms formerly tenanted by Gray. I will not single out other

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### *Preface*

names from a society whose members have shown me such unflinching kindness and hospitality over a number of years.

At Peterhouse, Gray's earlier college, I am similarly grateful to the late Master, Mr P. C. Vellacott, and to Professor Michael Postan for their friendly help.

In matters connected with Eton, I have had the benefit of the advice of the Headmaster, Mr Robert Birley, the Librarian, Mr T. Lyon, and Mr Richard Martineau.

At Windsor I have received the kindly assistance of Sir Owen Morshead. At Stoke Poges the Rector, the Rev. D. H. Bryant-Bevan, and the present owners of the Manor House, Mr and Mrs H. Frye, have been most patient and helpful.

For the benefit of their conversation and writings on various aspects of Gray, I stand much indebted to Lord David Cecil and Professor Geoffrey Tillotson. I acknowledge a similar debt to the correspondence of Mr C. F. Bell, and to his essay *Thomas Gray and the Fine Arts*. The Warden of All Souls, Mr John Sparrow, has adorned my book with his translations of the passages which I have quoted from Gray's Latin poetry; and Monsignor Ronald Knox has allowed me to use his beautiful rendering of *O lachrymarum fons*.

For permission to inspect and in some instances to quote from manuscripts in their possession, my thanks are due to Sir John Murray (who has also allowed me to reproduce his portrait of Gray by Benjamin Wilson), Mr W. S. Lewis, and Mr Roger Senhouse. I am allowed to reproduce other portraits through the kindness of Viscount Harcourt, Lord Walpole, Dr Brian Rhodes, M. Wolfgang de Reding-Biberegg, the National Portrait Gallery and the Fitzwilliam Museum.

For help on particular points I would like to thank Mr J. W. Goodison of the Fitzwilliam Museum, and Dr George L. Lam of Yale University.

Until her death Mrs Leonard Whibley maintained her kindly interest in the progress of my work, and this has been continued by her niece Miss Pauline de Almay.

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Finally, I would like to associate this book with the memory of my friend Hugh Gatty, Fellow and Librarian of St John's College. It was always his wish that I should undertake it; and its earlier stages had already begun to benefit from his fine scholarship, and his great knowledge and love of Cambridge, before his untimely death.

R. W. K.-C.

FELBRIGG HALL  
NORWICH

*December 1954*

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## LIST OF PLATES

[See Appendix B, "A Note on the Illustrations", pp. 274–5.]

- |      |  |                     |
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