The Personality of Lady Winchelsea as Revealed in Her Poetry

by

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INTRODUCTION

SCOPE OF TREATMENT

Strange indeed are the ways of Destiny! Hidden away in one of the lovely rural sections of England lived a poetess named Anne Finch, who, at the age of fifty-four, became Countess of Winchelsea. It was not until almost the end of her life that the English reading world became aware of her existence. There was a brief flicker of fame, and then the dust of oblivion settled down and completely covered up traces of her memory. Suddenly, after the passage of almost a century, Fate called upon a famous poet to make a sweeping and somewhat inaccurate statement, and thereby restore to posterity one of the most interesting and delightful women that have ever emerged from the musty archives of literature.

For, in 1815, in an essay attached to the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth declared that "excepting the Nocturnal Reverie of Lady Winchelsea, and a passage or two in the Windsor Forest of Pope, the period intervening between the publication of the Paradise Lost and the Seasons does not contain a single new image of external nature, and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be in-
ferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon
his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to
work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination."(1)

It was thanks to this misstatement, which
omitted to take cognisance of Gay's Shepherd Week and Rural
Sports, and the Irish poet Parnell's Nightpiece and Content-
ment, that an interest in the work of Lady Winchelsea was
awakened.

For students of literary history, Ar-
delia's contribution had a particular significance. They
recognized in her a very vital and important factor as one
of the earliest links that connected the pseudo-classic
period of Dryden and Pope with the romantic revival.

Connoisseurs of poetry admitted the wrong
done to the neglected memory of Lady Winchelsea, and all
testified to the need and desirability of collecting a com-
plete edition of her poems, but no steps were taken to
achieve this result.

Finally, in 1903, the honor of such a
volume seemingly fell to Myra Reynolds of the University of
Chicago. But Professor Dowden in 1910 revealed that the com-
plete edition is still to be collected. Miss Reynolds'
erudite and scholarly work will undoubtedly endure as an
excellent foundation for further study in a field where the
slightest effort yields pleasure. Her essay occupies itself

mainly with establishing Lady Winchelsea's importance as a nature poet, and she touches only briefly on other characteristics disclosed by the verses.

It is chiefly upon a close analysis of tendencies in Lady Winchelsea's poems, of which the nature poems form only a part, that this essay seeks to make a point of departure from Miss Reynold's very admirable work.

Even a most superficial glance at the verses will reveal that there are many angles of appeal, not only for the student but for the general reader. The themes include those old, universal topics which have occupied the minds and hearts of men from the beginning of time. Briefly stated, they are death, love, change of fortune, birth, the swift fading of beauty, the relations of the sexes, religion, social conditions, the position of woman, education, nature, the vanity of earthly ambition, parentage, illness of loved ones, fables, drama, royalty, solitude, jealousy, hate, sorrow, the animal world, and many others.

To variety of mood is joined variety of subject matter, indicating a woman of many interests. One cannot read very much of Lady Winchelsea's poetry without being convinced that she possessed an unusual personality. She had a profound capacity for feeling and thinking united to a gentle, loving nature, and a firmness of character which enabled her to maintain not only a clear outlook on life, but an independent attitude toward all the questions that agitated her day.
It is the personality of Lady Winchelsea, as revealed in her poems, which this paper wishes to study. By examining closely the varied aspects of her poetry, we hope to enlist the reader's interest and attention in a songstress who is a genuine source of pleasure to all who read her lines.

SURVEY OF CRITICAL EVALUATION OF HER WORK

Wordsworth's statement regarding Lady Winchelsea, and his emphasis upon her treatment of external nature had a very distinct effect in shaping the direction in which interest in her verses was manifested. This consisted almost entirely in the reading of her nature poems, which began making sporadic appearances in British anthologies. Such a result was only too natural, in view of the poet's authoritative pronouncement.

But, even though so distinguished an authority as Wordsworth had championed the cause of Lady Winchelsea, or Ardelia, as she preferred to be called, still, the interest in her poems was confined mostly to The Nocturnal Reverie, the one example which the poet had cited.

If, however, Ardelia's admirers were limited in number, they were decidedly conspicuous as to quality and eminence in the literary world. They included such outstanding names as Nicholas Rowe, who, in his Epistle
To Flavia, admiringly calls her a "divine nymph" and declares "she is the only rival of Pindar short of the celestial choirs". In gratitude for these high praises Ardelia wrote the prologue to Rowe’s play Jane Shore.

Jonathan Swift (1) comments most sympathetically upon the succession of Mr. Heneage Finch, Ardelia’s husband, to the depleted estate of the Earl of Winchelsea. Swift, whom we know in later life as cynical and embittered, indites a poem to Ardelia bearing the complimentary title of "Apollo Outwitted". In it Swift acknowledges that though Apollo was charmed into endowing Ardelia with the lyric gift, nevertheless, he did not succeed in winning from her the slightest token of her affections.

The great Alexander Pope, a younger contemporary of the Countess, was not at all averse to accepting her poem of gentle raillery on his satiric treatment of women in his famous Rape of the Lock. He answered graciously with the Impromptu, in which, with a gallantry quite exceptional for him, she was flatteringly named the queen of women writers. Lady Winchelsea was already known to the public, for she had been honored by Gildon with a prominent place in his Miscellanies of 1701 and 1713. Also, her ode The Spleen had achieved considerable recognition. It was, therefore, no unknown poetess whom Pope was aiding to obtain recognition, when he prefaced his collected works of 1717 with her eulogistic tribute added to six others.

1. Letters To Stella, 1710.
Of this incident, Myra Reynolds, one of Lady Winchelsea's recent commentators caustically remarks: "Either Pope liked the lady, or he liked the lady's verses, or he liked to have a countess speak well of him, even if her admiration found but bald and prosaic expression."

The National Dictionary Of Biography (1) has the following revealing statements on the matter:

Pope's Impromptu contained in the Miscellanies (2) "declared" that "Fate doomed the fall of every female wit" before "Ardelia's talent".

Pope included Ardelia's poem in two successive editions, but later on he discarded it completely. He rewarded the friendship of the Countess by collaborating anonymously with Gay and Arbuthnot in a farce called Three Hours After Marriage. In this play, Ardelia was depicted as a slatternly blue-stockings, utterly devoid of womanliness and charm, and was undeservedly held up to the public as an object of ridicule and mockery. One's sense of justice is soothed by the thought that the farce was a complete failure, and had to be withdrawn within a few nights of its production. Pope suffered no little embarrassment when his share in this fiasco became known. His was an unworthy thrust at a woman whom the libel in no way resembled.

Cibber, in his Lives Of The Poets, (3)

2. 1727.
3. 1763.
comments on Ardelia's lines to Pope as "rather more exquisite than the lines of Mr. Pope; he is foiled at his own weapons, and outdone in the elegance of compliment." In Birch's Dictionary Cibber adds that her "poetical compositions are executed with spirit and elegance", and he regrets that "her station in life was such as to exempt her from the necessity of more frequently exercising a genius so furnished by nature to have made a great figure in that divine art". Cibber ends with warm praise of her ode The Spleen, which he concludes would accord her "a very high station among the inspired tribe".

The redoubtable Samuel Johnson, in his Rasselas, briefly alludes to "Lady Winchelsea's horse in the twilight, the best part of the century earlier".

Southey in his Specimens of 1807 briefly praises her.

Next in point of chronology comes Wordsworth, who had seen a brief notice of her by Horace Walpole. In a manuscript volume sent as a birthday gift to Lady Mary Lowther, in 1820, was transcribed a collection of the verses of unknown women poets, among them selections from Lady Winchelsea. The poems were accompanied by the euphonious comment that the donor had "culled his store of lucid crystals from a Parnassian Cave seldom trod".

Nine years later, we have records of a
correspondence between the Reverend Alexander Dyce and the poet, who had inadvertently come upon the reverend doctor's Specimens of British Poetesses (1).

After offering to collaborate on a second edition, Wordsworth adds "There is one poetess to whose writings I am especially partial, the Countess of Winchelsea. I have perused her poems frequently, and should be happy to name such passages as I think most characteristic of her genius, and most fit to be selected."

In 1830 Wordsworth wrote another letter full of suggestions and copious discussion of Ardelia's poems. Later in the same year came a second communication testifying to Wordsworth's deep interest. He asserts that "her style in rhyme is often admirable, chaste, tender, vigorous and entirely free from sparkle, antithesis and that overculture which reminds one by its broad glare, its stiffness and heaviness, of the double daisies of the garden, compared with their modest and sensitive kindred of the fields."

We learn through other letters that Wordsworth had intended following Dr. Dyce's suggestion that he issue his own collection of the poems of "this very interesting woman", as the poet calls her. But the grateful enterprise, due to lack of original manuscripts, never came to fruition.

I. 1825.
Mr. J. Middleton Murry, in his volume of selections from Lady Winchelsea’s poems (1) humorously states that he is carrying out the pleasant task which Wordsworth had neglected to perform for Ardelia.

Christopher North (2) expresses his appreciation of Ardelia’s Nocturnal Reverie.

Leigh Hunt in Men, Women, and Books (3) speaks of her as "one of the numerous loves we possess... such as keep fresh with us forever."

It is thanks, however, to the discovery made by Edmund Gosse of a manuscript of Lady Winchelsea’s works, that knowledge of Ardelia’s poetry began to filter through to the public at large. Mr. Gosse was instrumental in having five of her selections included in T. H. Ward’s English Poets, (4) which is an anthology of minor poets. When this book was read by Matthew Arnold, he declared that nothing had served as such a complete revelation and given him such aesthetic delight as Lady Winchelsea’s poems. (5)

In the prefatory article to Lady Winchelsea’s poems in the Ward collection, Mr. Gosse affirms that: "she was a poetess of singular originality and excellence; her lines To The Nightingale have lyrical qualities scarcely approached in her own age, and would do credit

1. 1928.
2. Blackwoods, March, 1837.
3. 1847.
4. 1880.
the best, while her odes and more weighty pieces have a
strength and accomplishment of style which makes the least
interesting of them worth reading."

Mr. Gosse adds further tributes in his
Eighteenth Century Literature (1). "At a period when the
study of external nature was completely excluded from poetry,
Lady Winchelsea introduced into her verses novel images taken
directly from rustic life as she saw it round about her."
He again refers to her with the statement that "Lady Win-
chelsea's temper was so foreign to the taste of her own age,
that she achieved no success among her contemporaries, al­
though Swift admired her, and from a line of hers, Pope
borrowed one of his most celebrated phrases."

In his entertaining Gossip in a Library (2)
Mr. Gosse devotes several pages to an essay on Ardelia. He
comments on the fact that "Lady Winchelsea is not a command-
ing figure in history, but she is an isolated and a well-de-
finied one. She is what one of the precursors of Shakespeare
calls "a diminutive excelsitude."

In America, Lady Winchelsea's first appear-
ance in print occurred in 1853 when some excerpts of her work
appeared in Woman's Record, a book published in New York by
Mrs. Hale. Then followed Myra Reynolds' fine work, Poems
of Anne, Countess of Winchelsea (3), which was believed to

1. 1889.
2. 1913.
3. 1903.
be the first complete edition of Ardelia's work. It con-
tains an excellent prefatory essay giving a comprehensive
view of the life and poetical achievements of the Countess.

In 1910, however, Professor Edward Dowden
of the University of Dublin published his book, Essays Modern
and Elizabethan. In it he regretfully stated that Miss
Reynold's collection was not complete because it did not
include manuscripts of poems Lady Winchelsea had written in
the last years of her life. After declaring how gladly he
would have yielded the necessary knowledge had he known of
Miss Reynold's plans, Professor Dowden commends her essay
as a scholarly piece of research. In the brief sketch en-
titled "A Noble Authorress", he proceeds to render an account
of these later poems, which he claims suffer nothing from
comparison with the rest of Ardelia's work. Though Professor
Dowden intimates that Matthew Arnold has been excessive in
his praises of Ardelia, nevertheless his words are full of
warm commendation of her personality and her work.

The latest volume on Lady Winchelsea
consists of a few favorite selections from her verses com-
piled by John Middleton Murry, the eminent English critic.
With unstinted admiration he informs the reader that "she is
a minor poet of delicate individuality". He adds discern-
ingly that "Wordsworth, whose genius finally created the
taste for delicate emotional simplicity, enjoyed that qual-
ity in her work. The simplicity is the simplicity of dis-
tinctly felt emotions. The Countess of Winchelsea's contemporaries were not interested in distinct emotions, but in distinct ideas. Great poetry was not being written in her day. But here, at the best, was authentic poetry of distinct emotion."

Mr. Murry then quotes as an example of interesting lines from the Spleen:

"Now the Jonquille o'ercomes the feeble brain,
We faint beneath the aromatic pain---"

and adds this highly significant comment. "It has already been noticed, I think first by Sir Edmund Gosse, that Pope borrowed the phrase for his famous line,

"Die of a rose in aromatic pain."

But what I suspect is that Pope's line came wholly from the Spleen, and that he, with his notable flair for the excellent combined in his memory the two memorable phrases

"Faintly the inimitable rose---"

and 

"Faint beneath the aromatic pain---"

to make his more spectacular but less lovely line.(1)

In view of such unacknowledged borrowing, Pope's behavior in the matter of his contribution to the malicious satirical farce calumniating Countess Winchelsea is all the more reprehensible, and does nothing to lessen the disrepute which clings to many of his actions.

Having briefly surveyed the imposing symposium of encomiastic tribute to the poetic gifts of

1. "Die of a rose in aromatic pain---"
the charming Ardelia, we may now turn to a consideration of other matters.

LIFE OF LADY WINCHELSEA

Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, was one of the three children of Sir William Kingsmill, a descendant of a noble family that traced its ancestry as far back as the twelfth century. Anne was born in 1660, but some authorities claim 1661 as the year of her birth.

Her father died a few months after she arrived in the world, leaving, beside herself, a sister and a brother. Her mother remarried in 1662, her second husband being Sir Thomas Ogle, by whom she had a daughter in 1663. This marriage lasted only two years, for in 1664 the hand of death robbed Anne of her mother. The children remained in the custody of their step-father.

When, seven years later, Sir Thomas Ogle died, the orphans were taken by relatives to be brought up. But apparently the children did not stay together long, for there are certain definite allusions to separation. These are specifically expressed in the poem written by Anne to her beloved step-sister Dorothy, whom she addresses by the euphonious name of Teresa.

Mr. M. M. Murry (1) points out that "none

of her childhood connections have any place in her poetry; we may imagine that she was none too happy as a girl; and the very depth of her devotion to Mary of Modena, to whom she became maid-of-honor in 1683, suggests the fatherless and motherless girl found in her Royal Mistress an object of which her affections had previously been starved."

Both of Anne's sisters died in their young womanhood. Her brother died at the age of forty-one, leaving a young son.

At the Court of the Duke of York, husband to Mary of Modena, Anne met the famous lady-in-waiting, Anne Killigrew, whom Dryden celebrated with an ode, and whose early death he lamented in verses expressing deep grief.

A friendship soon sprang up between the two girls based on their common life at Court, their mutual love of poetry, and the kindred nature of their souls.

This relationship and her love for her royal masters formed a little foothold of affection in the sea of vice which swirled about the disillusioned girl, who had believed Court would prove an earthly Paradise. Daily she witnessed the intrigues that worldly ambition employs to blast the souls of men. She saw depravity in all its vile manifestations; it is a wonder that, in the inexperience of her youth, she did not in some manner succumb, or that the daily spectacle of the "Comedia Humaine" did not make of her a cynic and a skeptic.
But Anne had too established a faith in the essential goodness of mankind, coupled with a fine fund of common sense, to be led astray from her own convictions. In a life that encompassed seven successive reigns, she stood quietly by, observing and learning, sifting the chaff from the wheat of her experiences. One may well say of her what Bossuet said of Queen Henrietta Maria, "Elle-meme a su profiter de ses malheurs et de ses disgraces plus qu'elle n'avait faite de toute sa gloire".

At Court, she had the good fortune of meeting the cultured Colonel Heneage Finch, who, Miss Reynolds states, "was almost her only unquestioned source of happiness aside from her love for her mistress." Colonel Finch, who served the Duke of York in the capacity of gentleman of the bedchamber, was a man of extremely modest fortunes. But, as he was heir to the title of the Earl of Winchelsea, in accordance with the materialistic spirit of Court etiquette, he was warmly received everywhere. Being himself of a studious nature, it was a foregone conclusion that he would be interested in the well-educated young maid-of-honor. He soon discovered that she not only read omnivorously the books of her own country, but was well versed in the French language and literature.

Add to propinquity and youth a communion of tastes, a beauty of face and figure that Anne's contemporaries attest, and the total is a combination that is
irresistible. At any rate, so Heneage Finch found it. After a somewhat difficult courtship to which Ardelia alludes as "the way to win a stubborn and ungrateful heart", we learn that in 1684 they married.

The young couple no longer lived at Court, but the husband continued in service there, taking on added responsibilities and obligations when the Duke of York became King James II in 1685. In 1688 came the Bloodless Revolution, and James and Mary fled to France. The Finches, who remained faithful to the Stuart cause through life, as is evinced by Ardelia's poems, went to live with the young Earl of Winchelsea to whom Anne's husband was uncle and heir.

Apparently the young Earl was very amiable and fond of the young couple, for he received them warmly and made their stay pleasant. He favored the Muses, and Anne enjoyed reading her poetry to him, as she affectionately acknowledges in her verses.

Here, in the fine old castle at Eastwell Park, with its rich, green lawns, its romantic forest peopled with wild deer and other creatures of the woods, Anne and her husband spent their peaceful, uneventful lives in congenial pursuits. Anne was free to indulge in her writing and to wander along the shores of the quiet lake and the thick overgrown paths of the lovely English countryside. Her husband occupied himself in undisturbed zeal in mathematical studies and antiquarian research, in which he
attained some local fame.

Ardelia formed several social ties and friendships. Miss Reynolds declares that Anne "walked in the footsteps of the matchless Orinda in her capacity for devoted attachments, and were it not for the disguise of fanciful names, we would be introduced through her poems to a wide circle." There is, however, a difference between Ardelia and Orinda that Miss Reynolds has not noted. Ardelia was a much more balanced person. Her friendships were of a more permanent character than those of her famous predecessor. They were based not upon impulses and vagaries of the moment, but were the outcome of contacts that had withstood successfully the differences of personality. As a result, there are no records, like Orinda's, of constant and frequent disappointments and disillusionments which arose from connections hastily and ill-advisedly entered into. Rather, with Ardelia, we have frequent testimony in her poetry, of the depth, and constancy, and cordiality of her relationships with people.

After a comparatively placid life, during which she never strayed farther from home than London or Tunbridge Wells, and some neighboring health resorts, Lady Winchelsea died in 1720.

Though the beginning was somewhat stormy, Anne had been fortunate in enjoying a truly happy existence. Her marriage was based on mutual respect, and a deep abiding
love. It had developed the finest qualities in husband and wife, and led to an affectionate companionship that grew with the years, and ended only with death. Her husband's private diary gives mute but significant testimony of his love.

His sentiments, jotted down on the thirty-ninth anniversary of their wedding, read briefly, but eloquently: "May 15, 1684. Most blessed day." (1)

It is from this same journal that the public obituary notices of Ardelia's death are culled. An excerpt states: "To draw her Ladyship's just character requires a masterly pen like her own. We shall only presume to say she was the most faithful servant to her Royall Mistresse, the best wife to her noble Lord, and in every other relation public and private so illustrious an example of all moral and divine virtues: in one word a Person of such extraordinary endowments both of Body and Mind that the Court of England never bred a more accomplished Lady nor the Church of England a better Christian." (2)

The Earl's appreciation of this public estimate of his wife is contained in this same valuable notebook, in which is written: "My Dear Wife's just character finely drawn by ______ and published in the public prints after her Decease."

He survived his wife by six years.

1. Poems of Anne, Countess Of Winchelsea - Edited by Myra Reynolds, p. XXV.
2. Ibid., p. 21.
SALIENT FEATURES OF WORK

SOCIAL ASPECTS

Attitude toward writing

What the 17th century thought of the position of women in general is only too clearly expressed by Milton, who represented the more chivalric element of writers. He characterizes Eve as

"Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir'd, The more desirable." (1)

In the same book Milton, speaking in the words of Adam, voices his open declaration of the inferiority of woman to man:

"at least on her bestow'd
Too much of ornament, in outward show
Elaborate, of inward less exact.
For well I understand in the prime end
Of Nature her th'inferior, in the mind
And inward faculties, which most excel." (2)

That woman, the lesser creation of God and the weaker in intellect, would presume upon the male prerogative of writing, would have seemed preposterous to Milton.

He very definitely prescribed her sphere of activity:

"for nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote." (3)

2. Paradise Lost, Book VIII, pp. 537 - 543.
Milton was voicing the sentiments of his age in this particular.

Over in France, whence was derived the inspiration for educational opportunities for women, conditions were somewhat different. Women had succeeded in achieving a higher cultural level than their English sisters, particularly in the aristocratic classes. But the preciosity that developed from the nucleus of Madame de Rambouillet's learned circle was given the apotheosis of satiric treatment in Molière's Les Femmes Savantes in 1672.

Small wonder, then, with this knowledge of society's attitude toward females who presumed to follow in the footsteps of the Muse, that Ardelia should conceal her brain children with a solicitude that was savagely maternal.

In that excellent satire of contemporary life, Ardelia's Answer to Ephelia, the silly coquette superciliously mocks:

"Now what's that thing, she cries, Ardelia, guessse? A woman sure--

Ay, and a Poetesse,
They say she writes, and 'tis a common jest.
Then sure she has publickly the skill profess'd,
I soon reply, or makes that gift her pride.
And all the world, but scribblers, does deride." (1)

In The Spleen, which Wordsworth aptly

1. Ardelia's Answer To Ephelia, Ii. 194 - 200.
says is "the most celebrated of these poems, but far from the best", Lady Winchelsea voices a feeling of deep dejection because public prejudice forces her to conceal her writing.

"My Lines decry'd, and my Employment thought
An useless Folly, or presumptuous Fault."(1)

Appended to a fragment of octosyllabic couplets, Ardelia congratulates herself upon her wisdom in having refrained from yielding to the temptation of appearing in print and thus subjecting herself to contemporary prejudice. In vigorous prose that exhibits a complete innocence of paragraph structure, Ardelia rejoices that "it is still a great satisfaction to me, that I was not so far abandon'd by my prudence, as out of a mistaken vanity, to lett any attempts of mine in Poetry, shew themselves whilst I liv'd in such a publick place as the Court, where every-one wou'd have made their remarks upon a Versifying Maid of Honour; and far the greater number with prejudice, if not contempt. And indeed, the apprehension of this, had so much wean'd me from the practice and inclination to itt."

But, likening herself to the parched traveller who staggers toward a stream after wandering across the blistering desert sands, Ardelia says,

"no more can he, whose mind
Joys in the Muses, hold from that delight,
When Nature, and his full thoughts, bid him write."(2)

1. The Spleen, Ll. 79 – 81.
2. Preface, Ll. 5 – 8.
She cannot understand the folly that
commends a woman for spending her time in silly pleasures,
and condemns her for seeking to do that which is beautiful
in life or in art. She asks in aggrieved tones:

"'Tis true I write and tell me by what Rule
I am alone forbid to play the fool
To follow through the Groves a wand'ring Muse
And fain'd Ideas for my pleasures chuse
Why should itt in my Pen be held a fault
Whilst Mira paints her face, to paint a thought?"(1)

Or, in a forcible comparison which makes reference to one
of the gentle practices of her day:

"Why should we from that pleasing art be ty'd,
Or like State Pris'ners, Pen and Ink deny'd?"(2)

The poetess sees only too clearly that her sex has not
progressed far from the threshold of the harem. Still de­
pressed, she hopelessly repeats:

"How are we fal'n, fal'n by mistaken rules?
And Education's, more than Nature's fools,
Debar'd from all improve-ments of the mind
And to be dull, expected and designd;---"

Ardelia scorns the type of versifying
in which poetasters and rhymsters indulge. Her song must
flow from a full heart and be spontaneous and free;

"Come, and attend, how as we walk along,
Each cheerfull bird, shall treat us with a song,
Not such as Fopps compose, where witt, nor art,
Nor plainer Nature, ever bear a part
The crystal springs shall murmure as we passe."(3)

Ardelia "pleaded an irresistible impulse

3. An Invitation to Deinie, Ll. 47 - 50.
as my excuse for writing"(1) and
"Writt for her pleasure and not for the Bays."(2)

That "poetry is the spontaneous overflow
of powerful emotions" was the firm conviction of Lady
Winchelsea, as it has been of every inspired poet before
and after Wordsworth pronounced his famous dictum. Always,
she stresses the spontaneity of poetry, its inspirational
quality. She is not of those who belong to the school of
deliberate art.

Her inclinations are all in the direction
of romanticism. She loved Tasso, whose sentimental love
poetry she always carried about with her during her early
years as a poetess. She even translated him, albeit at
secondhand, through the medium of a French translation.(3)
The mainspring of her poetry lay not in the intellect, but
in the emotions, and, as such, Ardelia felt verse could be
genuine only when inspired by irrepressible feeling. In
the exquisite Nightingale, she addresses the bird thus:

"Free as thine shall be my Song
As thy Mischick, short, or long.
Poets, wild as thee, were born,
Pleasing best when unconfin'd
When to Please is least design'd,
Soothing but their Cares to rest;
Cares do still their Thoughts molest,
And still th'unhappy Poet's Breast,
Like thine, when best he sings, is plac'd against
a Thorn."(4)

1. Preface.
2. Circuit Of Appollo, L. 44.
3. Anne Countess of Winchelsea, Edited by
   Myra Reynolds, XCV
4. The Nightingale, Ll. 5 - 14.
Lady Winchelsea has apparently drunk deep of the bottomless well of Platonism, for she contends that the poet is divinely inspired, and is really only a medium of expression for a hidden Deity.

"And let the Poet after God's own Heart Direct our Skill in that sublimer part, And our weak Numbers mend!" (1)

Another Platonic echo, which declares that the poet's achievement is but a feeble imitation of the divine beauty he has glimpsed reads:

"No syllables the most sublimely wrought Can reach the loftier Image of his thought, Whose Judgment plac'd in a superior height All things surveys with comprehensive sight." (2)

Poets, Ardelia says, are the perpetuators of mortal fame, which else would die with the body of him whom they celebrate. (3)

The Poet boasts that:

"Wit shall last (the vaunting Poet cries) Th'immortal Streams that from Parnassus flow, Shall make his never-fading Lawreles grow,—"

In words and tones very similar to Pope's statement on the same theme, Ardelia reminds the poet that fame means nothing to him who lies mouldering

"in the Darkness of the abject Grave". (4)

The decision to write for herself and her small circle of friends is embodied in the words:

1. A Pinderick Poem, ll. 201 - 304.
2. To the Honorable Lady Worsley, ll. 76 - 81.
3. Upon The Death Of King James II, ll. 30 - 37.
4. All Is Vanity, ll. 165 - 169.
"Be caution'd then my Muse, and still retir'd,
Nor be dispis'd, aiming to be admir'd."(1)

Nor was this determination shaken until 1701, when some of her poems were submitted, for the first time, for public approval in Gildon's Miscellany. The ode The Spleen was at once acclaimed. It reached such popularity and was considered so good a study of the disease, that it was incorporated by a London physician into a scientific treatise.(2)

The eighteenth century, however, no less than the preceding age, railed against any attempt of woman to venture outside of her traditional sphere of activity. A female who dared to write was impugned as a freak of nature, a pedant, and an unwomanly blue-stocking. No opportunity to jeer and mock her was left untouched. This universal contempt was unceasingly reiterated in society, literature, and on the stage.

Seizing upon the now openly acknowledged writing proclivities of Lady Winchelsea as a splendid target for scurrilous wit, an infamous farce, with her prototype as protagonist, was produced in 1717 at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. Though it purported to be the work of the unscrupulous Gay, it was, in reality, the result of the joint authorship of Gay, Arbuthnot, and Pope, who skulked

1. Introduction, ll. 51 - 60.
2. Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, Edited by Myra Reynolds, p. XLIII.
anonymously in the background.

Poor Lady Winchelsea saw herself cruelly maligned, defamed and distorted into a hideous caricature that possessed not the slightest semblance of truth. Naturally, though all London knew whom this affront was aimed at, Ardella had no means of redress. And this malicious libel was unfortunately the last public notice of her work.

Three years later she was dead.

Knowledge of court life

Since the records show that Ardella began writing after she became a maid of honor to Mary of Modena, it might be well to examine what were her reactions to her life at court. She had ample opportunity to study all types of men and women playing out the drama of life in a brilliant social environment. She observed the behavior of diplomats, and what she thought of the chicaneries and utter selfishness of statecraft, she discloses in no undecided terms:

"For yet the World has ne'er that Statesman known Who for his Prince's interest wav'd his own."(1)

Over two centuries have passed since this tragicomedy was written, and her words still hold true. That abuse of position and privilege was indecently common, is attested by Dryden's lines on the same topic:

"As we say of a court favorite, that whatsoever his office be he still makes it uppermost, and most beneficial to himself."(1)

Ardelia goes further in her contempt for politicians:

"Statesmen there are (she cries) whom I can show That bear the kingdoms cares on a bent brow; Who take the weight of politicks by grains, And to the least, know what each scull contains, Who's to be coached, who talk'd to when abroad, And when this is the utmost of their skill, 'Tis not much wonder, if affairs go ill."(2)

Certainly this displays a fine scorn for the pettiness of officialdom.

In Love And Innocence, the poetess records a conversation between two courtiers who are scheming to ruin the honor of a nobleman. Their victim has hitherto enjoyed an unblemished reputation. Briefly and dramatically, Ardelia gives the nucleus of the situation.

"Riv. Think therefore, how 'twould please ye to destroy What more than life, he ever has esteem'd, And yet be safe, to see, and to rejoice in't.

Sin. How itt wou'd please, is sure, not to be told; But he's so fenc'd about with fame, and friends, With fortune, and the fawning of the world, That, to my eye, no part appears unguarded, Where we may fix a wound that would be fatal." (3)

These lines contain the essence of what wickedness and envy have schemed and plotted wherever man has envied what another possessed. They bear an unmistakable stamp of genuineness, and have a universality that has been encountered in all

1. A Discourse Concerning Satire - J. Dryden.
   Book Of Seventeenth Century Prose, by Coffin and Wither- 
   spoon.
2. Ardelia's Answer To Phelicia, Ll. 230 - 238.
3. Love And Innocence, Act I, Scene 1, Ll. 241 - 249.
the dramas of the world, written and unwritten.

Of the flatterers and hangers-on at court, Ardelia has a quick sense of discernment. Speaking allegorically, like the faithful watchdog who guards his master's home, she contemptuously states:

"But since to me there was by Nature lent
An exquisite Discerning by the Scent;
I trace the Flatt'rer, when he fawns and leers,
A rallying Wit, when he commends and jeers;
The greedy Parasite I grudging note
Who praises the good Bits, that oil his Throat."(1)

Ardelia has gazed often upon the spectacle of the ebb and flow in the tides of fortune attendant upon the uncertain life of court satellites. More than once has she witnessed the bursting resentment that could not silence its futile rage as it was cast out into despair:

"The Cristall springs shall murmure as we passe
But not like Courtiers, sinking to disgrace."(2)

When Anne was young, the Court had appeared to her youthful eyes as the epitome of all that Providence and the noblest efforts of man could achieve. All the pomp and glitter and pageantry of royalty dazzled the eyes of the girl brought up amid the quiet surroundings of a provincial Anglican estate. She had imagined that earthly courts were but an imitation of the Heavenly realms. Milton, only a generation before, had given utterance to the same thought. It was a very decided Platonic echo of the imitation of the ideal.

In simple, almost naive fashion, Ardelia

2. *An Invitation to Defnis*, Ll. 51 - 53.
confesses that

"Ambition next allur'd her tow'ring Eye;
For 'Paradise she heard was plac'd on high,
Then thought, the Court with all its glorious Show
Was sure above the rest, and Paradise below.
There plac'd too soon the flaming Sword appear'd
Remov'd those Pow'rs, whom justly she rever'd
Adher'd too in their Wreck, and in their Ruin shar'd."

Such faithful adherence on the part of
Anne Finch and her husband to their unpopular sovereigns
is a tribute to the sentiment of loving loyalty which James
and his consort Mary were able to win from their retinue.

What the outside world thought of this
reign is unsparingly recorded by the able historian, Carlton
Fays. He describes how James II, in a brief reign of three
years, succeeded in arousing the deep antagonism of all
classes of society. The Tories, supporters of the royal prero-
gative, opposed him because he attempted "to create a standing
army commanded by Catholics"; this they feared because of
their experience with Cromwell's forces. "The Whigs, too,
were driven from sullenness to desperation by James' re-
ligious policy and despotic government." The crux of the
matter lay in England's great fear that she would be ruled by
"papist despots". So an invitation was despatched to William
of Orange, Anglican husband of Mary, James' Protestant daughter,
to cross over into England. When his army was received with
rejoicing in London, James fled to France, and William and
Mary were crowned sovereigns.(1)

1. A Political and Social History of Modern Europe, by
Carlton J. H. Hayes, New York, 1931.
It is from this Court that Anne and her husband, their fortunes ruined, went to Eastwell Park to live upon the bounty of relatives. Contrary to what is usually the case when such a situation arises, the Finches were never made to savor the bitterness of poor dependents. Indeed, the change from the fevered and miasmatic atmosphere of the royal household to the quiet and friendly circle proved in every way to be advantageous to the young people.

To return to Ardelia's Court life, we are given a glimpse of the disillusionment that awaits those who rely upon the loyalty of their miserable parasites. These, like leeches, feed upon the substance of their patrons, and, when they have sucked their very blood, desert them with complete indifference as to their fate. In a couplet fairly sizzling with indignation Anne storms:

"Curs'd sycophants! How wretched is the Fate
Of those who know you not, till 'tis too late!"(1)

And now we hear a dirge intoned by the loving friend. In the guise of a loyal subject, Anne laments the death of her deposed king who died "in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes". In tones of utmost wretchedness, Ardelia pictures how differently the people would have borne themselves had James died while still in power. Her words are a mournful commentary on the shameful desire of men to ally themselves under the banner of success, no matter at what price.

1. The Eagle, The Sow, And The Cat, ll. 66 - 68.
"If the Possession of Imperial sway
Thou hadst 't by Death unhappy Prince resign'd
And to a mournful Successour made way
Whilst All was uncontested, All combin'd,
Now had the streets, how had the Palace rung,
In praise of thy acknowledg'd Worth;
What had our num'rous Writers then brought forth,
What melancholy Dirges had they sung,
What weeping Elegy's prepar'd,
If not from loyal grief, yet to obtain reward."(1)

Later, when Anne left court life forever,
and was safely esconced in her far-away secluded retreat,
she viewed her hectic past with extreme distaste. Address­
ing her husband, upon whom she bestowed the Greek shepherd
name of Dainis, she says:

"Lett us my Dainis, rural joys persue,
And Courts or Camps, not ev'n in fancy view."(2)

And after Ardella had tasted the quiet
joys that composed her uneventful but happy days at East­
well, we can almost imagine her heaving a gentle sigh of
recollection, and murmuring

"Some other Voice may be won to sail,
Give me a certain Fate in the obscurest Vale."(3)

In concluding this phase of Lady Win­
chelsea's life, it is interesting to note that it offers a
close parallel with the experience of the young Wordsworth.

Ardelia had undergone a great spiritual
and material crisis at the upheaval of the Court of James II.
She was restored to mental calm, and capacity for intensive

1. Upon The Death of King James The Second, ll. 1 - 10.
2. An Invitation to Dainis, ll. 63 - 65.
3. The Shepherd And The Calm, ll. 57 - 59.
work by both the loving solicitude of her husband, and the healing power of Nature.

Wordsworth, on the other hand, had suffered complete disillusionment and despondency due to the French Revolution. This overwhelming destruction of his most fervent beliefs, coupled with the sterility of William Godwin's philosophy, had thrown his soul into a turmoil. His entire being was reduced to a state of lethargic despair. From this demoralizing condition, he was led back to a new faith and a profounder realization of life by the unceasing devotion of his adored sister Dorothy, and his beloved friend Coleridge. (1)

Contemporary Life

Lady Winchelsea's keenness of observation and capacity for penetrating analysis manifests itself in her recording of the contemporary scene.

The weaknesses, silly aims and pretensions that follow in the train of the Restoration are exhibited with an understanding that strikes with "an arrowy vitality" at the very heart of things. Conditions are disclosed sometimes in indignation, sometimes with urbanity, or in pity, and not seldom in an amused contempt, but always in a spirit that is broad and sweeping in its comprehension. A picture

is given not only of the manners of the day, but of the general attitude of the age toward the existing state of affairs.

One of the fashions that Ardelia particularly derides is the debasement of the Grand Tour, so current till the late nineteenth century. The prevailing idea was that, no matter how imperfectly endowed mentally, anyone could return from a trip abroad, a person of knowledge and polish.

In a delightful fable, Ardelia turns her devastating satire upon the Jeunesse Dorée and mercilessly reveals their silly pretensions:

"Among Mankind a Thousand Fops we see,
Who in their Rambles learn no more than Thee;
Cross o'er the Alps, and make a Tour of France
To learn a paltry Song, or antick Dance
Bringing their Noddles and Valizes pack'd
With Mysteries, from Shops and Taylor's wreck'd;
But what may prejudice their Native Land,
Whose Troops are raising, or whose Fleet is mann'd,
Ne'er moves their Thoughts, nor do they understand."(1)

Ardelia is outspoken in her indignation at the vulgar expectation that the poet debase poetry to please the empty-headed fashionables who know nothing of art and care less.

The haughty city lady, in Ardelia's satire, points out a passing writer to her visitor from the country. She airs her doubts as to his poetic capacity

1. The Young Rat And His Dam, ll. 70 - 78.
in these supercilious lines:

"But noble Piso passes—
he's a witt,
As some (she sais) would have itt, tho as yeitt
No line he in a Lady's fan has writt,
N'ere on their dresse, in verse soft things wou'd say;---"

and, as Ardelia's sympathies as a poetess rise in anger, she asks:

"Must Piso, then! be judg'd by such as these,
Piso, who from the Latin Virgil frees?"

And she forcibly concludes with:

"Scarce cou'd I in my breast my thoughts contain
Or for this folly, hide my just disdain."(2)

There is in Lady Winchelsea very frequently a contempt for the pleasures of the Beau Monde. The serious-minded woman in Ardelia is speaking when she comments:

"Evening Beaux are met
O'er Billet-doux and Chocolate." (3)

Wax shows were all the fashion, as were exhibitions of strange creatures brought from afar:

"To see this Monster, or that wax work Show,—"(4)

The gay world drove in aimless circles around the park, then went to the theatre, which was experiencing its greatest period of licentiousness. The plays were not of the calibre that met with Ardelia's approval for she advises her brother:

"To the Fops and the Beaux
Leave those dull empty shows,

2. Ardelia's Answer to Ephelia, ll. 133-138; 157-159.
3. To Mr. Finch Now Earl Of Winchelsea, ll. 49 - 51.
4. Ardelia's Answer To Ephelia, ll. 40.
And see here what is truly delighting,—"(1)

In an era which had witnessed the execution of one king, the deposing of another, a revolution, religious upheavals and shifting national and world policies, it was but natural that the uncertainty of the times would work upon the fears and credulity of the people. Ardelia tells us of the common practice of consulting gypsies which flourishes to this very day in our own land.

"Though Fate itsef does not unfold
Is by Prognosticators told,
And some have spent their days in Terrors
Of what has sprung from canting error
From Gypsies who their speech confounding
Have threaten'd Hanging, Horn or Drowning."(2)

Marriage naturally would not escape so discerning a commentator. Fun was being poked at that institution in all the comedies, which were merely a reflection of the age. Marriage was alluded to as a galling yoke, a burden, a disillusionment of love. Though Lady Winchelsea herself was most happily married, as her life, her letters, her poetry, and her husband's private diary attest; still she realised that marriage as it then existed placed women at great disadvantage. She reflects, somewhat plaintively,

"Marriage does but slightly tye Men
While't close prisoners we remain
They the larger Slaves of Hymen
Still are begging Love again
At the full length of all their chain."(3)

1. A Song, Ll. 3 - 7.
2. Upon Ardelia's Return Home, Ll. 3 - 8.
3. The Unequal Fetteres, v. 5.
Marriage for money Ardella despised, as well as the attendant formalities that concealed the cold, mercenary calculation for which the wedding served as a pretext. She imagines an ideal place

"Where no Dowry e'er was paid,
Where no Jointure e'er was made."(1)

The power of parental control in the matter of marriage, as contrasted with the claims of love, are reproachfully set forth.

"Where Hands are by stern Parents ty'd,
Who oft, in Cupid's Scorn,
Do for the widow'd State provide,
Before that love is born!"—"(2)

One of the most striking illustrations of Lady Winchelsea's power of analysis is splendidly demonstrated in her comments upon the behavior of the sexes under the stress of passion. Her words seem to anticipate Mrs. Bertrand Russell's The Right To Be Happy, in which the authoress makes a plea for a rational acceptance of the limitations of the loved one. Ardella says:

"And, tho in heat of Love we swear
More than perform we can;
No Goddess, You, but woman are,
And I no more than Man."(3)

Ardella states that since conjugal happiness is scoffed at, married lovers must conceal their bliss from a sneering world. (4) Her firm belief is that love is

1. Love, Death And Reputation, ll. 27 - 29.
2. The Cautious Lovers, ll. 13 - 17.
4. To Mr. Finch, ll. 91 - 97.
Our chiefest Happiness below."(1)

The poetess laments the century's
cynicism toward the "best of Human Joys" and recalls another
age when love was the honored theme of England's great poets.

"How chang'd is Britain to the blooming fair,
When Spenser, Sidney, and when Waller lov'd,
Who with soft numbers wing'd successful darts,
Nor thought the passion less'ning to their parts."(2)

Her portrayal of the sweeping lack of
restraint that characterized the Restoration proves that
Lady Winchelsea possessed an instinct for history that en­
abled her to render graphically the spirit of an entire
period of time, as, for instance,

"When Charles was swaying,
When all was Riot, Masking, Playing;
When witty Beggars were in fashion."(3)

She contrasts the tragedies of the gentle
Otway with the "new crop of tawdry follies", and advises
the following:

"Ottaways heroick thoughts rehearse;
Love in his Lines, and dye in his smooth Verse."(4)

Ardelia's reaction is voiced by the visitor
from the country, who expresses a taste for the theatre
completely at variance with that of her London hostess.
The latter, in astonishment, bursts forth with

"She likes no witt, that's now in use,
Disdains Courtly Vice, and plainly saith,
That sense and Nature shou'd be found in Plays

1. A Song, L. 2.
2. Fragment At Tunbridge Wells, Ll. 18 - 21.
3. The Miser and Poet, Ll. 31 - 36.
4. A Prologue to Don Carlos, Ll. 11 - 13.
And therefore, none will 'ere be brought to see
But those of Dryden, Etheridge, or Lee
And some few Authors, old and dull to me."(1)

which gives us a clear notion of the difference in the
matter of taste.

Lady Winchelsea voices a wholesale condem­
nation of the period, the spirit of which she feels is ut­
terly decadent. She calls it "this base and most degen­
erat age", (2) and, since a woman's voice will go unheeded,
she declares her decision to remain a silent witness for
"A woman's way to charm is not by writing."(3)

By thus expressing herself as against the
opinions of her age as regards marriage, the status of
woman, the stage, the profession of writing, the fripperies
of the social whirl, Lady Winchelsea's poetry reveals an
independence of position and judgment that is unique in her
times. She was one of the earliest forerunners of feminism
in England, and, as is the fate of pioneers the world over,
helped groove the channels through which the floods of
modernity swept, regardless of the labor which had made their
passage possible.

Religion

No study of Lady Winchelsea would be

1. Ardella's Answer to Ephelia, Ll. 70 - 76.
3. Prologue to Aristomenes, L. 32.
complete without giving due prominence to religion, which so profoundly influenced her thoughts, feelings, and entire behavior. From her earliest years, Ardelia had been brought up in an environment that was Anglican in its faith, and Puritanic in its leanings, though not rigidly ascetic. Being a girl of a serious turn of mind, it was quite natural that the reserved orphan should mature into the meditative woman who viewed life earnestly. Not that Anne was by any means a glum and austere personage. The most casual reading of her archly humorous fables and lighter poems would disprove completely such a false supposition. But superficialities could never hold her attention long, and she turned to a deeper contemplation of life as instinctively as an infant to the light.

Anne was born in 1660, a most significant date from the standpoint of English history and religion. The terrific antagonisms arising from questions of state policy and religion that had rent the very vitals of the country, were still agitating the nation and disorganizing all ranks of society. In times fraught with uncertainty, people turned to the sure refuge afforded them by the promises of religion. Their God offered them a quiet haven from the tribulations that encompassed their daily existence. He mercifully provided them with the necessary strength to meet the trials of life with true fortitude and resignation.
Lady Winchelsea believed, in addition, that the afflictions sent by God to try the soul were just, since they developed man morally, and led him nearer to the state of perfection. She repeatedly scatters throughout her verses tenets which breathe a profound and unquestioning reverence for her Maker; this attitude is so different from the sceptical, irreligious state of mind that followed in the wake of the Restoration.

Her trusting submission is simply and feelingly presented in these lines:

"This hope makes all afflictions light, Directs my heart, and actions right, My cloud by day, my fire by night." (1)

She meditates upon that unknown and inscrutable power that propels man into a life, of which he knows not the reason, nor whence he came, nor when shall be the day of his returning:

"Chance made the World, and the same hand of Chance Does blindly man, into that world advance; And when the date of certain expires, As he had never been, he back retires---" (2)

It is the old enigma of life and death which has been endlessly pondered on from the beginning of time. It is man's realization of utter helplessness before some tremendous and inexplicable force.

In *The Hymn*, the poetess sings a paean of

praise to the Almighty and celebrates him as the loving and omnipotent Creator of all the elements and living things. She exhorts all creation to join in songs extolling his glory.

Ardelia never loses her faith in the bounty of the Supreme Being, who has intended mankind to enjoy his stay on earth. She grants that religion is wrapped in much that transcends reason, yet her common sense prevents her from accepting the narrow restrictions that bigotry has placed upon the Word. The courageous declaration which embodies her belief is a remarkable proof of her independent thinking on so vital a question. She affirms:

"By Thee, Religion, all we know,
That should enlighten here below,
Is veil'd in Darkness, and perplex't
With anxious Doubts, with endless Scruples vex't
And some Restraint imply'd from each perverted Text,
Whilst Touch Not, Taste not, what is freely giv'n
Is but thy niggard Voice, disgracing bounteous Heaven."(1)

That Lady Winchelsea was conservative in her reference for established authority, both in State and Church, is demonstrated when the irreligious aristocrat is reproached.

"Nor can I longer a re-proof forbear
When sacred things nor Persons she would spare."(2)

She never questioned the essence of the traditional tenets of faith. She warned against a prying into the workings of the Infinite. (3) Despite the fact that the scientific spirit

1. The Spleen. Ll. 116 - 122.
of investigation and research was beginning to be under­
way in the seventeenth century, there were many who accepted
the old medieval domination of religion, which was antagonis­
tic in the matter of science. Little more than a decade
previous to Ardelia's, the blind bard Milton, speaking in
the words of the angel, says:

"Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid;
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;---"

and admonishes him further

"heaven is for thee too high
To know what passes there, be lowly wise,
Think only what concerns thee and thy bidding.”(1)

Ardelia was echoing these same sentiments.

God was for her the lofty Image whose com­
prehensive vision embraced with merciful understanding the
fragilities of his creatures. (2)

Lady Winchelsea's Preparation To Prayer
vibrates with spiritual reverberations from the Old Testa­
ment prophets, who incessantly thundered forth the warning
that God was not satisfied with animal sacrifices and lip
service, and would punish the disobedience of his laws. The
poem contains two lines that Shelley might have been aware of,
for he uses the identical image. Ardelia intimates:

"That Cherubims, are in his sight afraid,
And with enfolded wings their glorious faces shade.”(3)

Lady Winchelsea embodies many of her re-

2. To Lady Worsley At Longleate, Ll. 74 - 84.
3. A Preparation To Prayer, v. 2.
ligious principles in her splendid paraphrases of the Psalms and parables. She believes that afflictions are visited upon mankind to restrain it from sin (1); that the will of the Lord is founded not on arbitrary power, but on "sacred truth"(2). Divine Wisdom visits sorrows upon man that his soul may be purified in the fires of adversity and so attain nearer to perfection.(3)

Despite her Court experiences, which might have crippled a less sanguine nature with a life long skepticism concerning the essential worth of mankind, Lady Winchelsea retained an unshaken faith in the capacity of human beings for goodness. This is more than proven by her unswerving devotion to James II and his consort, by the enduring sweetness of her companionship with her husband, her affectionate relations with his people, her lifelong friendships, and her sympathy for all human beings.

She believed, as did the later Rousseau, that the artificial life of cities and Courts poisoned the naturally good instincts of man. But she differed from him in the cure. He postulated the theory that a return to primitive ways of living would automatically bring to the surface all that was good and noble in the soul. Lady Winchelsea, on the contrary, declared that man's hope was in God; that religion would aid him in redeeming his better self, and help him cast

1. The 10th Part Of The 119th Psalm Paraphrased.
2. The 146th Psalm Paraphrased.
off his baser elements.

This offered a constructive hope for nobler living and relates Lady Winchelsea to those poets who have, instinctively or otherwise, concerned themselves with the spiritual welfare of mankind.

Professor Gingerich, in his essays on the romantic poets, expresses much the same sentiment when he states that: "a conviction of the innate worth and greatness of our human nature, which is truly the only worthy basis to postulate man's immortality, is a fundamental characteristic of the faith of the creative and constructive thinking poets of the world. (1)

In summing up the religious beliefs of Lady Winchelsea, we note an unquestioning faith in the existence of God, in his goodness and loving solicitude for the happiness of mankind, which he placed upon a world abounding in beauty. She believes in the evolution of the soul toward perfection, which is attained through the struggle with adverse circumstances. Man has a right to happiness here, but he must accept personal responsibility for his behavior. And, finally, man's happiness is the outcome of his direct and loving communion with God.

Woman

One of the traits which sets Lady Win-

chelsea apart from other women of her age is her very em-
phatic stand on the question of education for her sex. In
the reaction from the gloomy asceticism of the Puritans,
women, following fast in the footsteps of the men, dedi-
cated themselves to a life of inane frivolities and pleasure.
They spent their days, much as does the social butterfly of
today, in adorning themselves, in a round of social functions,
in silly amusements, and in light lovemaking. They flitted
from one gayety to another in a feverish restlessness that
betrayed a lack of any real interest and an incapacity to
entertain serious thought.

At first Lady Winchelsea observed this
behavior with contempt for the shallowness that prompted it.
But as she matured and studied life more closely, she re-
alized that it was not entirely owing to a temporary condi-
tion rising out of the political upheavals that had so shaken
the country. It was that society, as a whole, was at fault
in its attitude toward women. In not permitting them to in-
form their minds, and so find worthwhile interests that would
have changed their entire outlook on life, society had left
woman merely the role of the doll, and she was playing it
with all the blasé weariness of a spoiled child.

Ardelia felt an infinite pity for this
waste of womanhood, which she believed was capable of a-
chieving great heights, if only its dormant possibilities
were aroused and encouraged to develop. It was well for her hopes concerning her sex that she could not have foreseen how long it was destined to be before these conditions would be changed. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Ibsen, in his Doll's House, forced the world to listen and acknowledge the wrong, by finally taking steps to liberalize education for both sexes. At any rate, Lady Winchelsea has expressed herself in no unequivocal terms on the subject. Her lines reveal not only the contemporary situation but her own uniqueness and individuality of outlook.

Here is a picture of what was considered desirable in a lady of breeding:

"They tell us, we mistake our sex and way; Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dress, play Are the accomplishments we should desire; To write, or read, or think or to enquire You'd cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time, And interrupt the conquests of our prime; Whilst the dull drudge, of a servile house Is held by some, our utmost art, and use." (1)

Another way to spend the leisure hours is satirized thus by Ardelia:

"My Hand delights to trace unusual Things, And deviates from the known and common way; Nor will in fading Silks compose Faintly th'inimitable Rose, Fill up an ill-drawn Bird, or paint on Glass The Sov'reign's blurr'd and undistinguish'd Face." (2)

Ardelia laments the fall of her sex from their high state of the Old Testament days when Deborah's

1. Introduchont, Ll. 3-21.
counsels led the nation:

"How are we fal'n, fal'n by mistaken rules? And education's, more then Nature's fools, Debarr'd from all improve-ments of the mind, And to be dull, expected and designed; And if someone, would soar above the rest, With warmer fancy, and ambition press't, So strong, th'opposing faction still appears, The hopes to thrive, can ne'er outweigh the fears."(1)

An allusion to the pastime of love-making is lightly made:

"This flattery, my Lord, breeds more suspicion, But curiosity, our sexes frailty Will yatt prevail, to make one hear you farther."(2)

Ardelia tells us that she, too, indulged for a time in fashionable life:

"So here confin'd, and but to Female Clay, Ardelia's Soul mistook the rightful Way: Whilst the soft Breeze of Pleasure's tempting Air Made her believe Felicity was there, And basking in the warmth of early Time, To vain Amusements dedicate her Prime."(3)

Ardelia has no wish to join in the general cynicism that considers itself clever and sophisticated when it achieves a witticism at the expense of those whose lives are not animated by so-called genteel pretensions:

"To passe a gen'rall censure on mankind; To call the young, and unaffected, fools; Dull all the grave, that live by moral rules."(4)

The reader is given a biographical insight into Lady Winchelsea's mode of living, when her

1. Introduction, L. 51 - 59.
4. Ardelia's Answer To Ephelia, L. 13 - 16.
fashionable friend gossips with an acquaintance about Ar-
delia's appearance:

"Ardelia came to Town some weeks ago,
Who does on books her rural hours bestow,
And is so rustic in her cloaths and mean,
'Tis with her ungenteel but to be seen,
Did not a long acquaintance plead excuse."(1)

Ardelia is a shrewd observer of all kinds
and conditions of women, and understands their psychology
well. Her description of the fading coquette is a fine,
penetrating bit of analysis.

"There is a season, which too fast approaches,
And every listening beauty nearly touches;
When handsome Ladies, falling to decay,
Pass thro' new epithets to smooth the way:
From fair and young transported by confess'd,
Dwindle to fine, well-fashion'd, and well-dress'd.
Then as their fortitude extremest proof,
To well as yet; from well to well enough;
Till having on such weak foundation stood.
Deplorably at last they sink to good.
Abandon'd then, 'tis time to be retir'd."(2)

The earnest, thoughtful woman speaks in
the lines:

"Such are th'Effects, when Wine, nor loose delights,
Devour the Day, nor waste the thoughtlesse Nights,
But gen'rous Arts, the studious Hours engage,
To bless the present, and succeeding Age."(3)

The poem To My Sister Ogle voices Ar-
Ardelia's early separation from her sister, and the hope that
life will grant them the joy of renewing the pleasures of
their youth and ending their years together. It is full of
the tenderness that was so much a part of Lady Winchelsea.

1. Ardelia's Answer To Ephelia, Ll. 66 - 70.
3. To My Lord Winchelsea, Ll. 68 - 73.
Another manifestation of Ardelia's affectionate nature is evinced in her displeasure with the artist who has painted a picture of a beloved friend that does her great injustice. She says:

"'Tis vain to boast of Rules or Labour'd Art;  
I miss the Look that captivates my Heart,  
Attracts my Love, and tender thoughts inspires;  
Nor can my Breast be warm'd by common Fires;  
Nor can Ardelia love but where she first admires."(1)  

This poem is an indication of Ardelia's originality and independence. The Age in which she lived was known as the Age of Reason, and correctness was the ideal of the artist. Yet here is a lone voice holding forth against the type of art which relies on mechanical rules and regulations instead of creative imagination for its inspiration.

Ardelia's extreme loyalty to those she loved was shown in her warm espousal of the lost cause of James II. All the material hopes of herself and her husband had been centered in him, and they shared his ruin. When James died in France, deposed and abandoned, and no one said a word in his behalf, Ardelia hastened forward with:

"Though with thy latest Breath such Prospects fled  
And all who saw thee Dye now wish themselves as dead,  
Yett shall a free disinterested Muse  
In chosen Lines perform that Task  
Which does an abler Writer ask---"(2)  

Among the verses contained in the manu-

1. On An Ill-Drawn Picture Of Cleone, Ll. 5 - 11.  
2. Upon The Death Of King James Second, Ll. 21 - 29.
script in the possession of Mr. Edward Dowden, is a poem written in 1718, two years before the end of Ardelia's life. It is written to commemorate the death of Mary of Modena, the widow of the deposed James.

Though Mary had long passed out of importance as a social figure, and though she was, to the nation, a hated Roman Catholic, yet Ardelia's personal affection and devotion remained constant and undiminished. Professor Dowden quotes several of Ardelia's lines, in which she recalls the Queen at the acme of her glory. Mary is receiving foreign ambassadors with regal pomp that fades away before the splendor of her gracious loveliness:

"The Roman accent, which such grace affords
To Tuscan language, harmonized her words;
All eyes, all listening sense, upon her hung,
When from her lovely mouth th'enchantment sprung."(1)

Lady Winchelsea had learned quite early in life that to be a spiritual parasite is a shameful quality in a human being. She anticipates Matthew Arnold's Self-Dependence when she says:

"For sure, that Heart shall ne'er know Peace,
Which on another's do's depend."

Glimpses such as these only serve to heighten our respect for her moral strength and independence of character.

And yet Ardelia's is not the austere

strength of the solitary pine that grows on the lonely
mountain top. Rather is it like a hardy flowering bush that
oasts its fragrance on the blossoms that spring up at its
feet.

Her tender forcefulness is admirably
summed up in the lines that read:

"Who leaves a Passage free to Love,
   Shall let in all the rest;
   In such a Heart soft Peace will live.
   Where none of these abound."

Love

That a woman of Lady Winchelsea's extreme
sensitivity would be shaken to the depths of her being by
love is a foregone conclusion. Though her happy courtship
and still happier marriage spared her from personally ex­
periencing the miseries and torments of love, her life at
Court and in London society was sufficient to enable her
to witness innumerable instances of misplaced affections
and abuse of love. She knew all the subtle nuances of love,
from its first tender budding to its rapturous burst into
full bloom.

Ardelia speaks, in the Preface, somewhat
timidly and apologetically, concerning the "grand passion".
She observes "For the subjects, I hope they are at least
innoffensive; tho' sometimes of Love; for keeping within

1. Moral Song.
those limits which I have observ'd, I know not why it
should be more faulty, to treat of that passion, then of any
other violent excursion, or transport of the mind. Tho'
I must confess... my desire not to give scandal to
the most severe, has often discourag'd me from making use of
itt, and given me some regrett for what I had writt of that
kind." (1)

Let us examine Ardelia's treatment of love
in its early, happy aspects. She tells us that all ani-
mate creation feels the mighty power of love. After refer-
ing to the beasts and the bird whose song

"Love, love, love, is all her Ev'n'ning Note"
she informs us that the very plants are visibly affected
by its presence (a distinctly Wordsworthian note):

"See how those Willows mix their am'rous Boughs;
And how that Vine clasps her supporting Spouse:" (2)

But we will leave her nature references for consideration in
another part of this essay.

In lines full of exquisite emotional sim-
plicity Ardelia maintains that love can never conceal its
existence from a lover's eyes.

"Oh! not if Love be there; it cannot be;
Silence can ne'er last long, nor yet conceal it,
A thousand ways 'twill speak without a Voice,
And, whilst it struggles to obtain that Freedom,
Betraying Sighs will 'scape, and more declare it;
'Twill speak in list'ning to the Lover's Tale.

1. Preface, p. 10.
2. Five Pieces Out of Tasso, Ll. 20 - 23.
And say, 'tis Sympathy that makes it pleasant."(1)

It is small wonder that the girl of noble birth, to whom these lines are addressed, says, with great agitation

"He shakes my Soul, whilst thus he do's describe it:--" (2)

Ardelia vibrates under the fascination and spell of early love (3). She alludes to that emotion as "that soft enchantment", "Love, and all thy gentle pow'rs;" "the mighty joys of love; a mighty rapture, and a new born passion". (4)

No lines descriptive of tenderness can breathe a greater charm than these:

"Softer, than numbers can express,  
Softer than love, softer than light  
When just escaping from the night—  
Softer than air, or flying clouds—"(5)

Ardelia pronounces love the greatest thing in life, which, before its arrival, "like a dull, empty scene, is all discard'd". (6)

Wordsworth remarks that, though Lady Winchelsea was most efficient in tracing the gentler phase of love, her inhibitions would have hindered her from rendering successfully the turmoil and violence that passion produced in the soul. He believes that "She seems to have made

1. Aristomenes, Act III, Scene II.
2. Ibid.
4. Aristomenes.
5. The Bird, Ll. 7 - 11.
it a moral and religious duty to control her feelings lest they should mislead her. (1) That Ardelia feared to betray the ardor of her temperament cannot be disproved in the light of her own statements. (2) Yet scattered through her verses are ample proofs that she could not entirely control the expression of an emotion, which swayed her tremendously throughout her life. Her language conveys an intensity of feeling that bursts all bounds of restraint and frequently verges on the extravagant. She lets one of her ardent young women characters admit:

"That now I love you, more than Misers wealth,
Then women courtship, or then Tyrant's pow'r." (3)

In another act, no less than the queen herself, on the verge of suicide, tells her confidante to proclaim her love to all her Court.

"Tell 'em, that I forgave him all my wrongs,
Tell 'em, Clarilla, that I mourn'd his fall,
May tell 'em (since in death, there's no dissembling)
I loved him, more, than liberty or Empire." (4)

Such passages as these, of which there are innumerable examples, entirely disprove Miss Reynold's statement that Lady Winchelsea's plays are classical in treatment and in spirit. It is true that the unities are preserved, but the essence of the dramas is absolutely romantic, in the insistence on the individual, the predominance of emotion over

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1. Anne, Countess of Winchelsea.
2. Preface.
4. Love And Innocence, Act IV, Scene I, Ll. 72 - 76.
intellect, the extreme sentimentality, lack of restraint, and the extravagance of the language.

Another example may be quoted to sustain this position, and to show how Ardelia could not repress her naturally ardent temperament. The very stage directions indicate a highly romantic situation.

(Enter Queen, disordered, in all the transports of a violent passion. Riccio follows endeavoring to speak to her)

"Queen: Preach to the winds, thou dull, thou doating statesman, Go to that storm, that plays with all my hopes, And try if thou can'st calm itt with a speech, Tell itt of interest, politics, caution, And if for these, 'twill bate one angry bellow, Then mayst thou hope to talk me into patience, Fool that I was, to list'n to thy counsell---"(1)

Love is, with Lady Winchelsea, always the expression of the uttermost feeling of which the human being is capable. She expresses it euphoniously thus:

"Oh! Harmony, beyond the Thracian Lyre No words e're fell so soft, or pierc'd so deep."

That Lady Winchelsea experienced the fullness of love and the zenith of happiness is joyously attested by her in A Letter To Defnis. This is a poem written to her husband in his absence and displays a heart overflowing with love and tenderness. In an age which mocked not only marriage, but love itself, it is a tribute to both Lady Winchelsea and her husband, that their love was so beautiful, that it blended their lives and served as an inspiration

1. Love And Innocence, Act IV, Sc. 1, 58 - 64.
to those who had the rare privilege of coming in close contact with them.

Since the poem embraces all that constituted the love-life of Lady Winchelsea, it may not be amiss to quote it in its entirety.

"This to the Crown, and blessing of my life, 
The much lov'd husband, of a happy wife. 
To him, whose constant passion found the art 
To win a stubborn, and ungrateful heart; 
And to the World, by tend'rest proof discovers 
They err, who say that husbands can't be lovers. 
With such return of passion, as is due, 
Daphnis I love, Daphnis my thoughts persue, 
Daphnis, my hopes, my joys, are bounded all in you 
Ev'n I, for Daphnis, and my promise sake, 
What I in women censure, undertake. 
But this from love, not vanity, proceeds; 
You know who writes; and I who 'tis that reads, 
Judge not my passion, by my want of skill 
Many love well, though they express itt ill; 
And I your censure con'd with pleasure bear, 
You'd you but soon return and speak it here."(1)

It is evident from the quotations submitted that Ardelia was well qualified, and did speak of all phases of love, tenderly, movingly, sincerely and successfully.

Lady Winchelsea is a true romanticist in her extreme sentimentalism that certainly anticipates Rousseau, the Werther of young Goethe, Hugo's Rrnnani, and all the impassioned train, who felt that the authenticity of their emotions depended for expression on high-flown and extravagant language. Nothing can be more romantic in character than is the speech of the abandoned, lovelorn girl

1. A Letter To Daphnis, Ind. 1865.
in *Love And Innocence*:

"Yes, were he mine, as holy vows oblige him, 
And lay unmindfull of the fleeting hours, 
Stretch'd at my feet, 'till Phoebus left the skye, 
Breathing out sighs, soft as the southern winds, 
And, printing on my hands, a thousand kisses 
Then, ou'd I tell my soul in full delight, 
That this was pleasure, fitt for the immortals." (1)

Ardelia asks from life a quiet retreat 
lost among the trees, "where the World may ne'er invade;"
her companion shall be one that prefers her above fame and wealth. Her ideal of a lover's Paradise is located where
lovers

"in some Grove, or flow'ry Lawn, 
Spent the swiftly flying Time, 
Spent their own, and Nature's Prime 
In Love; that only Passion given 
To perfect Man." (2)

In *The Change*, Ardelia breathes that exquisitely tender and eternally moving line (3)

"Strong are the Bands of Death, but stronger those of Love."

In another poem she tells us

"The Wings of Love were tender, too." (4)

Lady Winchelsea has apparently known
the pangs of jealousy, for she reproaches with

"Vain Love, why do'st thou boast of Wings, 
That cannot help thee to retire! 
When such quick Flames Suspicion brings."

and she adds

"Still Swift to come, but when to go

2. *Petition For An Absolute Retreat*, Ll. 117 - 121.
Thou shou'dst be more—Alas! how Slow."(1)

She affirms that

"Love, thou art best of Human Joys,
Our chiefest Happiness below."(2)

A sigh, we are told, strikes "full upon
the list'ner's heart". It is also called

"Safest Messenger of Passion
Stealing through a crou'd of spys."(3)

Philosophers and political economists
have imagined Utopias where mankind will dwell in peace and
harmony with all God's creatures. But Ardelia yearns for a
Utopia for lovers, where all is devised and contrived for
the furtherance of their happiness. She tearfully ques-
tions,

"Is there no happy Land,
Where only Love, and its kind Laws prevail?
Where the false Trumpet flatters not to Death.
Nor the more noisy Drum outories the Dying?" (4)

Myra Reynolds chooses the following lines
as most characteristic of Lady Winchelsea:

"But are there none, none that do live and love?
That early meet, and in the Spring of Youth,
Uncross'd, nor troubl'd in the soft Design,
Set sweetly out, and travel on to Age
In mutual Joys, that with themselves expire?"(5)

This seems to be a most happy choice, and an excellent il-
ustration of the indisputable fact that love is undoubtedly
the keynote to Ardelia's entire personality, which is indeed

1. Jealousy.
2. A Song.
3. A Sigh.
5. Ibid., Ll. 153 - 159.
rich and colorful in its variety.

Music

As might be expected of one whose aesthetic sensibilities included a deep interest and knowledge of the art of painting, Ardelia loved music, and referred to it frequently. She fondly believed its melody was heard during the creation of the spheres; she was stirred by the imaginary songs of wild Pan; she was exalted by solemnly sweet religious strains; she melted at languishing love-notes; for her, all Nature was attuned to music. She frequently either invoked or referred to it. We hear her call, as did the poets of old:

"Begin my Muse, begin the tender song,
   Let thy Muse attempt that Nobler song,..." (1)

Music runs like a lyric refrain throughout her works.

The pastoral note is struck in lines such as,

"But ne're by me, their voyces be compar'd
   To Pan's own notes, when on the mountains heard."

Or, with reference to the dawn of creation, we are informed

"Th'untun'd Creation (by the fall of man)
   Shall move harmomiously as itt began." (2)

The classic goddess Urania makes her melodious appearance:

"Hark! sure I hear Urania play,

1. A Pastorall, ll. 56 and 64.
2. A Pastorall, ll. 88 - 90; 118 - 120.
I hear her tune the heavenly strings,
Some wondrous tidings, sure she brings." (1)

Ardelia's idea of voluptuous bliss could not be complete without music:

"And soft harmonious airs, about us play,
Diffusing as we passe, luxuriant Bliss." (2)

The songs of birds cheer and delight her.

"And cheerfull birds, that feel itt in the air,
Sing to that happy state, their softest carolls." (3)

Music is the handmaid of love, of which the tender Ardelia says:

"Musick without Thee is but Noise" (4)

and "Musick, which tunes the Soul for Love
   And stirs up all our soft Desires." (5)

Music soothes and comforts the human being:

"With tuneful Instruments design'd
   To soften, and subdue the stubborn Mind." (6)

Sometimes music is melancholy, at other times merry, but always the person listening is affected.

"Music but soothes thee, if too sweetly sad,
   And if too light, but turns thee gayly Mad." (7)

Sad memories, says the sympathetic Ardelia, are such

"Which fond recollection pleases, whilst it pains,
   Like penetrating Notes of sad Harmonious Strains." (8)

2. The Chapter Begins, ll. 48 - 50.
4. A Song
5. A Song
6. All Is Vanity, ll. 138 - 140.
8. On The Death Of The Honorable James Thynne, ll. 96 - 98.
Surely, Heaven for Ardella also had its share of music. She speaks of

"those Blissful seats
Whence all harmonious Sounds and lofty Numbers flow." (1)

Ardella hears the "seraphic sound" of "heavenly layes" and these, to her, are divine.

"This sacred Musick, in my ear,
I cry, transported, God is here."

And, among the joyous Cherubim, clustered innumerable about the heavenly throne, intoning praises to God, Ardella hopes that she, too, will be permitted to be present:

"Mongst whom, my searching Faith can see
A voyce, and Lyre, bestow'd shall be,
And Hallelujah's sung by mee."

The reader can only hope that Ardella, long since gone to her heavenly reward, has attained that beautitude so earnestly desired by her.

Humor

One of the most engaging qualities of the many-faceted personality of Lady Winchelsea is her wonderful sense of humor. When she is in gay mood she can seize upon a situation and invest it with a mock seriousness that renders it irresistibly funny. She senses the comic possibilities in the most seemingly solemn matter, and turns upon it a merry banter and laughing raillery that is absolutely

infectious in its results. Such a trait must have won her many admirers.

Take, for instance, her poem to Mr. Finch. Nothing can be more expressive of arch humor and a sense of gentle irony than this little jewel of wit. The songstress tells us that, her husband being away from home, she had decided to send him some loving message embodied in a poem. Finding herself lacking in inspiration, she calls upon the Muses for aid, but when they learn that her verses are intended for her husband, they openly voice their astonishment.

"A Husband! echo'd all around: And to Parnassus sure that Sound Had never yet been sent; Amazement in each Face was read, In haste th' affrighted Sisters fled, And into Council went."

They hold a solemn conclave, in which it is pointed out that not since the ancient days of Troy, and the Medieval Ages when Griselda needed them, had such a thing been heard of. After much deliberation, (rendered by Ardelia with due appreciation of all the inherent comic possibilities,) out of consideration for their friendship for Ardelia, the Muses send the following delightful excuses:

"That Pegasus of late had been So often rid thro' thick and thin, With neither Fear nor Wit; In Panegyrick been so spurr'd, He could not from the Stall be stirr'd, Nor wou'd endure the Bit."

To which is added that Melpomene has promised to write only of war and strife, that Thalia has accepted fees and is
therefore bound to the patentees, and lastly, that Urania couldn't "thwart the publick Voice". Hurt by such whole-sale refusal, Ardella looks into her heart, and sees all her loving tenderness silently resting there. So she withdraws it from its hiding place and sends it forth in a poem that the scoffing world will never know of.

"For since the World do's so despise Hymen's Endearments and its Fees, They shou'd mysterious be." (1)

Another amusing bit is a poem bearing the jolly title of The Man Bitten By Fleas.

Ardelia tells of the "Peevish Fellow" who lay down all warm and snug on the downy pillows,

"But Animals of slender size, That feast on human Gore, From secret Ambushes arise Nor suffer him to snore."

The poor wretch scratches and swears and calls upon Jupiter with his thunders, and Hercules with his club, to wreak vengeance "on the pests". He is being "massacred by Fleas" and reminds the gods that sickness and revolution will seize the mortals crazed by lack of sleep. Whereupon the heathen deities laughingly advise the "shatter-headed Fop" to use ordinary common sense, and clean the place thoroughly.

Ardelia portrays a lusty tippler who is offered a share of the spoils of a ship, with the proviso that he must not spend the gains in drink. To which, with-

1. To Mr. Finch.
out a moment's hesitation, the half-drunk soldier replies,

"Take it again! my Lord if drinks deny'd
I know no use, either of gold or silver.
Oh! world ungrateful world, to spurn att Blessings
What mighty good, has not been done by drink,---"(1)

In The Circuit Of Apollo, Ardelia again displays her merry roguery. She tells us that Apollo, passing through Kent, was aggrieved to find there were so few poets there, those few being women. So, to encourage others, he sent forth word that she who wrote best would be crowned with a wreath. Only four poetesses answered his summons.

Phoebus listens to each in turn, and is charmed by all. He is about to deliver an address previous to bestowing the prize. In a delicious satire upon what was apparently then the very latest mode in oratorical posture, Ardelia says:

"And now, he was going to make an Oration,
Had thrown by one lock, with a delicate passion,
Upon the left foot, most gently did stand,
Had drawn back the other, and wav'd his white hand,
When calling to mind, how the Prize altho' given
By Paris to her, who was fairest in Heaven,
Had pull'd on the rash, inconsiderate Boy,
The fall of his House, with the ruin of Troy.
Since in Witt, or in Beauty, itt never was heard,
One female cou'd yield t'have another preferr'd,
He changed his design, and divided his praise
And said that they all had a right to the Bays,
And that t'were injustice, one brow to adorn,
With a wreath, which so fittly by each might be worn.
Then smil'd to himself, and applauded his art,
Who thus nicely had acted so subtle a part."(2)

Apollo very craftily ends the delicate situation by informing the female bards that time is passing and he must proceed

2. Circuit Of Apollo, Il. 52 - 68.
on his way. But he promises to refer the decision to the Muses, since he claims only one of their own sex can rightly judge their respective merits. This poem represents Lady Winchelsea in one of her lightest and gayest moods.

As for her fable The Young Rat And His Dam, it is positively most hilarious in spirit. An old and sage matron of a rat is solicitously admonishing her "Young Rattlehead" of a son to be more prudent when he ventures forth into the dangerous night. When he returns to the maternal shelter all sleek and "the Bel-air did every way confess", the relieved and delighted mother bids her offspring relate where he gathered this "savoir faire". The gay young blade of a rat tells her of a terrifying adventure he had with "a noisy Rake", who "terribly in his own Language swore". He describes the creature whose "feathered Arm came out from either side, which loud he clapp'd, and Combatants defied". But near him was a furry creature "of a more exalted Race",

"Tho' humble Meekness beautify'd his Face:  
A purring Sound compos'd his gentle Mind."

The rat explains that he was just about to greet the "Creature I admired" when suddenly "that rude Clown begun his hectoring cry", and he fled home in terror.

Indignant at such utter stupidity the "shiv'ring Beldam" said,

"Thou base, degenerate Seed of injur'd Rats,  
Thou variest Fool (she cry'd) of all my Brats;
Would'st thou have shaken Hands with hostile Cats,—"

and heaps insult upon insult by informing him that any fool
of a rat knew that when the cock is lustily crowing, that
was just the time to steal his oats, barley, and meal.

Lady Winchelsea uses this fable to illustrate the folly of hoping that natural born fools will ever learn to profit by experience.

Naturally, the fables with their possibilities of narration offer greatest scope for humor, but Lady Winchelsea is not limited to fables, as the other poems previously quoted amply demonstrate. The limits of this brief survey do not permit us to quote other specimens of her capacity for humor, which is always spontaneous, unforced, and scintillating with brilliant, witty lines.

Attitude toward Towns

One of Lady Winchelsea's strongly-voiced displeasures is her intense dislike of towns. In this, as in so many things, she differs entirely from the prevailing taste in the matter. An age which stressed Reason and Enlightenment, was bound to be a period when men would collect in large cities, which emphasized the cultivated, rather than the natural needs of man. Reason sought, generally speaking, the polishing and perfecting of knowledge already attained, rather than a searching for the discovery of new wisdom. Pope summed it up according to the prevailing fashion of formula
and rule:

"Those Rules of old discovered, not devis'd,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodized." (1)

In France, predominating Reason was expressed at greater length by Marie-Joseph Chénier:

"C'est le bon sens, la raison qui fait tout,
Vertu, génie, esprit, talent et gout,
Ou est-ce vertu? Raison mise en pratique;
Talent? raison produite avec éclat;
Esprit? raison qui finement s'exprime;
Le gout, n'est rien qu'un bon sens delicat;
Et le génie est la raison sublime." (2)

Naturally, women could enjoy little or no participation whatsoever in such intellectual pursuits. Their interests were purely a cultivation of the social graces, in which they displayed a superficial adroitness not devoid of charm.

Small wonder, then, that the sensible Ardelia fled from the dubious delights of an urban existence. She speaks of charmed haunts

"Far from th'infected air of Towns and Courts."(3)

The superficial relationships of towns, where the rush and bustle of aimless activity has no time to spare for friendship, Ardelia decries:

"No, dear Ephelia, me, in vain you court
With all your pow'rful influence, to resort
To that great Town, where Friendship can but have
The few spare hours, which meaner pleasures leave."(4)

2. Readings In European Literature, p. 693-Seboyar and Brosius.
4. Ardelia's Answer To Ephelia, Ll. 1 - 5.
The society lady marvels at Ardelia's patience in being immured in the country:

"And wonders, how so far I can remove,
From the beaux monde, and the dull country love."(1)

In the same satire Ardelia, bored with the silly vanities of the town, sighs: (2)

"Oh! for my groves, my Country walks, and bow'rs."

After a short stay, Ardelia gladly shook the dust of the town and,

"the next day, with haste and pleasure went
To the best seat of fam'd and fertile Kent
Where lett me live from all detraction free."(3)

There is frequent mention of the joys of quiet country life to which the lover of nature has fled; she

"Flyes to some still retreate and shunn's the City's noise." (4)

Ardelia begs from "indulgent Fate"

"A sweet, but absolute Retreat,
'Mongst Paths so lost, and Trees so high,
That the World may ne'er invade."

A secluded life close to the heart of Nature, the loving comaraderie of her husband, a few tried and devoted friends, books and music, was what a truly "indulgent Fate" granted the deserving and fortunate Ardelia.

1. Ardelia's Answer To Ephelia, ll. 32 - 35.
2. Ibid., ll. 130.
3. Ibid., ll. 242 - 245.
ROMANTICISM

Lady Winchelsea's age was decidedly classic. It had passed from the violent storms that had stranded it on the bleak shores of Puritanism to the falsely smiling haven of the Stuart Restoration. The Ship of State lay resting in harbor, and the nation gave itself over to a delirium of joy and thanksgiving. When the rioting and feasting were over, and the carnival spirit had died down, the people became sober-minded and began to go about their daily affairs.

There was now a need for clear-headed thinking and planning for a regular, established routine. A pattern of life was finally evolved that solved the essential needs of existence, and was easy to conform to outwardly. There were no more illusions about anything. Everything was calmly and coldly surveyed, and deliberately disposed of.

Emotion was frowned down in such a scheme. What was emphasized was Reason and Enlightenment, logic, and the rationalization of the processes of human nature and intellect. Only what was obvious to the senses, and could be classified according to rule or formula was given consideration. There was no faith in the vague promises of religion, but the reasoned syllogisms of philosophy indicated the mile-
posts of sensible conduct.

The stage reflected society, as it does in every age. There was the servile imitation of the classic French drama, with its insistence on the unities, on the enthronement of reason, of rhetorical bombast, and of characters dominated by logic.

Literature mirrored the functioning of the intellect, and was unlit by any warm glow of the imagination. It decried the expression of the emotions as an indication of naïveté and a lack of cultivated taste, and as an outlet for the ignorant and uneducated. External nature was interesting only as it could furnish the scenic backdrop for man.

In such an age, then, lived Lady Winchelsea, and though she could not help partaking of it in some degree, nevertheless, she remained apart in a manner that proves her clearly the precursor of another period.

For Lady Winchelsea was a decided romanticist. She believed in freedom from restraint in art as in life. She emphasized the emotions above the intellect; she believed in the importance of the individual, and felt he could develop best away from the artificial life of cities. She was intensely interested in external nature for its own sake, and she recognized that man is closest to his truer self when he is in intimate communion with the physical world. Ardelia preached equality of the sexes, and the liberaliza-
tion of cultural opportunities for women.

She was preoccupied with death and the immortality of the soul, but she did not linger, ghoul-like, around the churchyard and the grave, as did the later school of the Graveyard Poets. Moreover, she was not content to remain within the domain of the obvious and the control of reason and the senses. The fascination of the unknown and inexplicable captivated her imagination.

These were all characteristics of the romantic school, of which she was clearly a decided though unrecognized forerunner.

Death

Lady Winchelsea's treatment of death indicates that she had thought long and deeply on the subject. All that life, literature, religion, philosophy, and even science had to say, had been cast into the crucible of her intellect, and was fused by the fires of her personal experiences. The result emerged as a sombre-hued product of her imagination.

We see death, now as that gloomy region of classics, peopled by shadows, where even the heroic Achilles had preferred the life of the meanest wretch on earth to Elysium. Again, death is that other world where loved ones will rejoin each other, never again to be parted; where love
will find new joys to share. Death is almost never expected, but is always inevitable, sometimes cruel and implacable, sometimes friendly, even kind. Ardelia occasionally evokes the pomp and pageantry of death. Other times it is the solitary and lone path that leads each man to the tomb. The terror, the pathos, the majesty, the pity, the anguish, the torture and the release of death find expression in the lines always full of deep and sincere emotion.

All the uncertainty, the shifting vicissitudes of life, the struggle, the turmoil, the disappointments, and then, finally, eternal peace are spoken by Lady Winchelsea in the concluding couplets of her tragedy Aristo-
tomene:

"Since Man, by swift returns of Good and Ill,
In all the Course of Life's uncertain still;
By Fortune favoured now, and now opprest,
And not, 'till Death, secure of Fame or Rest."

The inevitability of death to which all animate creation must succumb is given in one of the religious poems:

"O King of Terrors, whose unbounded sway
All that have Life, must certainly obey."(l)

The transitoriness of human existence is frequently reiterated:

"Death, hastens on, all human things to seize."

Life is alluded to as "that active fire that animat's the heart," but soon

1. Death, ll. 1 - 3.
"By some contending Element oppressst,
Extinguish't fails, and quitts the darkn'd breast,
The Vapour, in our nostrills, steals away,
And all that now remains is common clay.
Time, preys upon our memory, and name,
And deep oblivion, swallows up our fame;
Like a swift cloud, we passe unheeded by,
No track is left, no mark where itt did fly.
Nor shall itt ere return, to shade the sky."(1)

Death as the arch-enemy, defeated and
robbed of power is described as:

"Death of his old invenon'd spear
Behold disarm'd, and Conquer'd here;---"(2)

As contrasted with death, the foe of man-
kind, love says:

"In Tryumph we'll together go;---"
and, in highest exaltation of spirit declares:

"'Tis worth our pains, and fears to dye;
To learn new misteries of Love." (3)

Sleep is invoked to come and relieve care

"'till kinder Death supplys thy place,
The surer Friend, tho' with the harsher face." (4)

Death is the realm of the "eternal shades", where Grief does
"cloath ev'n love himself, in thy dark livery---" Death
is addressed as follows:

"To thee, great Monark, I submitt,
Thy Sables, and thy Cypresse bring,
I own thy Pow'r, I own thee King." (5)

Death is also "Eternal Day", "Shades of
Death", and

1. The Chapter Begins, Ll. 5; 28 - 36.
2. On Easter Day, stanza 2.
3. To My Sister.
5. A Song On Greife, Ll. 11 - 16.
"That Future State, which Darkness yet involves, Known but by Death, which ev'ry Doubt resolves." (1)

Death is referred to as "the gloomy Tyrant", "Greedy Death", "Death's cold feet", "Shades of Death", "Death's long night".

The indifference of the world, of nature itself, on the untimely passing of his young warrior son prompts Aristomenes to mournfully lament:

"The Sun will keep his pace, and Time revolve, Rough winters pass, and Springs come smiling on; But Thou dost talk of Never, Demagetus; Yet ere Despair prevails, retract that word Whose cloudy distance bars the reach of Thought Nor let one Ray of Hope e'er dawn beyond it. Never, Oh never!" (2)

It is clear that religion has taught Lady Winchelsea to submit with resignation to the Divine Will. She submits, but prays that the process of physical disintegration will be as speedy and painless as possible. She states calmly to the implacable monarch Death:

"My Name is on thy Roll, and sure I must Erase thy gloomy Kingdom in the Dust. My soul at this no Apprehension feels, But trembles at thy Swords, thy Racks, thy Wheels.

\[ \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \]

Spare these, and let thy Time be when it will; My business is to Dye, and Thine to Kill. Gently thy fatal Sceptre on me lay, And take to thy Cold Arms, insensibly, thy Prey." (3)

Night

One of the favorite subjects of poets,

3. To Death, Ll. 5 - 17.
from the infancy of literature, has been the night. Amorous poets have seen in it the most appropriate setting for love; meditative poets have considered it as the natural period when man rests from the activity of the day and is most receptive to contemplation. Religious poets have seized upon the character of change that comes with the departure of the sun, as an appropriate symbol for the passing of man into another, more mystic life. Imaginative poets have welcomed the manifold variety of impression that the mysterious character of the night spreads over the earth.

As one of the genuine nature lovers of the world, Lady Winchelsea early yields to the magic spell of the night.

Myra Reynolds, after a painstaking and laborious research in English literature insists that "the love of the night sky and of night itself is first found in Lady Winchelsea, and for close observation and delicate feeling there is nothing better throughout the century."(1)

Ardelia captures the solemnity of the quiet night in the phrase which she addresses to the moon:

"Thou gentler Guide of silent Night"(2)

She voices man's irrepressible awe at the sight of the night sky.

"In such a Night, when passing Clouds give place, Or thinly vail the Heav'ns mysterious Face." (3)

2. The Hymn, stanza 3.
Again the lonely, solitary character of night is stressed in that marvelously suggestive phrase,

"Silent, as a Midnight Thought;---" (1)

Another wonderful image is presented to the imagination in

"Night, in her sable mantle wrapt her head,
And with unusual haste, to lower Worlds she fled."(2)

Night is an empress who willingly abdicates in favor of the sun:

"Night, has resign'd her rule to rising day,"(3)

A highly romantic description that is for readers of the twentieth century reminiscent of Burns in his imbibing moods reads:

"Doubtful the moon each varying object brings,
Whence goblin stories rise and fairy rings,
Misshapen bushes look like midnight elves,
And scarce we know our shadows from ourselves."(4)

To receive a full impression of the beauty of night in the English countryside, one can do no better than turn to the exquisite Nocturnal Reverie, which is too lengthy for complete inclusion in this essay. The brooding, tender overtones suggest what, in music, Robert Schuman rendered so beautifully in his "Traumerei".

Mountains and Sea

Miss Reynolds informs us that "until Wordsworth there was no love of mountains. They were called

1. The Petition For An Absolute Retreat, L. 19.
2. A Pastorall, Ll. 92 - 94.
3. Ibid., Ll. 140.
4. A Noble Authorress, Essays Modern And Elizabethan, E. Dowden.
"wild, vast, undigested heaps of stone and earth—great ruins". Johnson, in 1773, calls the Scottish Highlands "this wide expanse of hopeless sterility". Marvel, the nature lover, calls them "ill-designed excrescences that deform earth and frighten Heaven." Milton alludes to them as "high, huge-bellied mountains—"

"Mountains on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest."

Lucretius calls them "the unartful contrivance of the world" and "earth's dishonor and encumbering load." Even James Thomson called the Alps "dreadful, horrid, vast"—later, he called them sublime, but he did not express much feeling or description." (1)

It is rather surprising to learn that Shelley, one of the most pronounced of the later romanticists, shares this same attitude toward mountains. In a chapter devoted to the Shelley's treatment of nature, Dr. M. T. Solve informs the reader that: "The discords in the social scheme of his day were painfully apparent to Shelley; and while he found in external nature a refuge from the hostility of men, he was in his maturity aware of discords there too. Mount Blanc, with its accumulated steeps is

'A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly and scarred and riven." (2)

Ardelia makes few references to mountains.

2. M. T. Solve — Shelley, p. 70.
and, at first, she shares the sentiments of her age toward them, for she says:

"So lies this Hill, hewn from its rugged height,
Now levelled to a Scene of smooth delight." (1)

But later she achieves a true imaginative magnificence in these eloquent lines:

"Praise Him, ye native Altars of the Earth,
Ye Mountains of stupendous size."(2)

With regard to the sea, Lady Winchelsea's contemporaries regarded it as a fearsome element that inspired terror into the hearts of beholders. Milton's conception of the ocean was still current; he describes it as

"the vast immeasurable abyss
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds
And surging waves, as mountains, to assault Heaven's Hight."(3)

Lady Winchelsea had the same general awe of the ocean that she felt for mountains. She did not respond particularly to the spectacular in nature, preferring its gentler manifestations. She makes few references, but all bear indications of an interest not at all shared by her age. She speaks of stemming

"The waves of Life's tempestuous Sea,---" (4)

Elsewhere, she alludes to "the boundless Deep," and she conjures up an imaginary blissful sea for the voluptuary:

"Where a new Bun of radiant Diamonds shin'd,
Where the enamel'd Earth, and scarce discern'd Air

2. To The Hymn
4. To The Honorable Lady W. At Longleate, Ll. 89.
With a transparent Sea were seen,
A Sea composed of the Em'rald's Green,
And with a golden Shore encompass'd round."(1)
The ocean in its storm tossed aspect terrifies, yet lingers
in Ardelia's mind:

"High was their Rage as Billows in a Tempest;---" (2)
But she has also seen the ocean in a gentler mood, and ap­
preciatively describes that rare occasion when

"Smooth it lay, as if one single Wave
Made all the Sea, nor Winds that Sea cou'd heave."(3)

These few citations serve to indicate that
an interest in these vast phenomena of nature was alive and
stirring in the poetry of Lady Winchelsea long before it
reached popularity.

Sentimentality

Despite what Lady Winchelsea says about love
and control of the passions in her Preface, she does not, in­
deed, can not, deny place in her writings to the emotions,
which strongly impregnate all her work. Frequently, however,
she is swept uncontrollably forward in an unrestrained tor­
rent of sentimentality. Often, she seems to continue the
medieval conventions of the "dolce stil nuovo" in her por­
trayal of romantic love. Her lovers always bear all the out­
ward tokens of the disturbing passion; which never burns with

1. All Is Vanity, Ll. 216 - 221.
3. The Philosopher, The Young Man And The Statue, Ll. 21 - 23.
a quiet, steady glow. It is always the transports of love that she describes; the ardent emotion of the fervid kisses and the extravagant speeches. An unrequited lover is made to say:

"Oh! rather say to death, and to despair; So long, already, have I trod the path, The solitary path of silent wishes, That rather than I still will wander there, I’ll boldly leap the precipice before me, And perish in attempting to be free. (he kneels)

If you deny his suit, the wretched slave---" (1)

Or else, in early anticipation of the overwrought hero in the Sorrows of Werther, Love is accompanied by sadly-sweet tears and heaving sighs, as:

"His speech was gentle and his looks were sad, My sighs he echo’d, and to stop my tears, Told me, if that I left not yet the shore, He would retrieve the fortune of the day, And give me back my Kingdom for a smile." (2)

The romanticist loved a wild, secluded spot where he could indulge his melancholy sentimentality. Lady Winchelsea was of this train of writers. She preferred that settings conducive to the "mighty passion" convey an overtone of melancholy. She probably was strongly influenced in this respect by the "delicate Ottaway", whose sentimental love tragedies she devoured avidly. As a true romanticist she loved the dark mysterious night, and listened eagerly for Philomel, that bird so dear to lovesick beings. Sentimental outpourings were more appropriate to romantic retreats than

1. Love And Innocence, Act II, Scene 1, Ll. 74 - 83.
2. Ibid., Ll. 46 - 52.
to the gilded salons of crowded palaces. Ardelia, faithful to all these preferences, asked the nymph eooho:

"Where is that secret Sylvan seat,
That melancholy, sweet retreat,
From whence, thou dost these notes repel
Thy hollow, leafy mansion tell." (1)

The caverns and winds of romance are balanced by Zephyrs and the nightingale:

"In such a Night, when every louder Wind
Is to its distant Cavern safe confin'd;
And only gentle Zephyr fans his Wings,
And lonely Philomel, still waking, sings;---" (2)

Ruins of old buildings rise from the bosom of thick groves in pure romantic fashion:

"When darken'd groves their softest Shadows bear,
And falling Waters we distinctly hear;
When thro' the Gloom more venerable shows
Some ancient Fabrick, awful in Repose,---" (3)

Romantic settings served as an artistic background for Ardelia's sentimental outpourings, which, however, never had that sickly, morbid cast that characterized so many of the later Romanticists, particularly those of the French school. Nor did this extravagance of emotion prevent Ardelia from being capable of deep sentiment when the occasion aroused it.

The Unknown

The pronounced interest in the unknown,

1. To The Rooho, Ll. 2 - 7.
2. Nocturnal Reverie, Ll. 1 - 5.
untrodden paths of thought and feeling is another link which
binds Lady Winchelsea to the romantic school of poets.

There were definite practicalities which
demanded a certain amount of observance, but there was a
faculty that went beyond every limitation and restraint, and
refused to be circumscribed. This was the imagination, and
it beguiled Ardelia past the exigencies of reality, up to
the very portals of the world beyond life. This region was
invested by her fancy with visions of unearthly radiance
and glory, which exalted Ardelia to a mood of religious
ecstasy:

"Praise Him, ye wondrous Heights to us unknown,
Praise Him, ye Heavens unreach'd by Mortal Eyes." (1)

Her imagination lured the unsusisting Ar-
delia into the jungles of the subconscious mind, and she
wandered fascinated through its fantastic, dimly-lit wilder-
ness. She was quite modern in her interest in the psychology
of dreams. She loved to dwell on the strange activity that
creates those weird phantasies that torment the restless
sleeper into nightmares:

"On Sleep intruding dost the Shadows spread
Thy gloomy Terours round the silent Bed,
And crowd with boading Dreams the Melancholy Head,
Or, when the Midnight Hour is told,
And drooping Lids thou still dost waking hold,
Thy fond delusions cheat the Eyes,
Before them antick Spectres dance,
Unusual Fires their pointed Heads advance
And airy Phantoms rise." (2)

1. The Hymn, Ll. 3 - 6.
2. The Spleen, Ll. 11 - 20.
She is eager to lose herself in the delightful and uncharted realms of the dream world. She awakens to consciousness of harsh realities with a pang of infinite regret for the beauties she was compelled to leave behind in the land of shadows:

"Where is that World, to which the Fancy flies, / When Sleep excludes the Present from our Eyes; / Whose Map no Voyager cou'd e'er design, / Nor to Description its wild parts confine? / Yet such a Land of Dreams we must allow, / Who nightly trace itt, tho' we know not how; / Unfetter'd by the Days obtruded Rules, / We all enjoy that Paradise of Fools; / And find a Sorrow, in resuming Sense, / Which breaks some free Delight, and snatches us from hence." (1)

A desire to probe the untried cannot be resisted:

"in the Muses path I stray, / Whilst in their Groves, and by their secret Springs / My Hand delights to trace unusual Things, / And deviates from the Known, and common way." (2)

Finally, not only do the immeasurable spaces of the infinite exist, but a controlling power selects chosen mortals to study truths too deep for the understanding of ignorant mankind:

"Him the observing Master do's design / For search of darken'd Truths and Mysteries Divine."

1. The Mussulman's Dream, Ll. 1 - 11.
2. The Spleen, Ll. 81 - 85.
LOVE OF NATURE

Introduction

Although the bulk of Lady Winchelsea's poems on external nature is small in proportion to the rest of her work, it is of so arresting a quality, and is so unique a manifestation in her own period, that it forms an element whose significance cannot be overlooked. In addition to poems specifically devoted to the expression of the outdoor world there are scattered, throughout her writings, allusions and references to the physical world which indicate a deep and profound love for it.

Lady Winchelsea's intimate knowledge of nature came at a period when she was already a mature woman. Wordsworth, the most outstanding of the nature poets, had been familiar with the physical world from early childhood. He, like Shelley, had spent his youth amid surroundings of great natural beauty, and had stored up a world of impressions, which enriched his entire poetic life. Ardelia, on the contrary, first came close to Mother Earth after she had lived at Court, when the ruin of the King's fortunes made it necessary for her and her husband to seek shelter on the

1. Shelley, M. T. Solve, p. 68.
rural estate of Mr. Finch's nephew, the young Earl of Winchelsea. The charm of Ardelia's personality soon won for her the affectionate regard of the little circle at Eastwell. She was made to feel herself a welcome addition to the family, and came to consider herself completely at home.

She loved to wander amid the quiet, green lanes and densely wooded paths of the fine, old estate. Gradually, her spirits began to cast off the black burden of oppressive thoughts that benumbed them. Little by little, she yielded to the strangely potent and soothing influence of her secluded environment. As she grew more calm, she began to realize the beneficent aspect of Nature, the great healing force. Attracted ever more deeply, she soon learned to appreciate it for its own sake. From this attitude, it was but a step toward perceiving the relations between the physical and the spiritual world, and to their interpretation.

It is the sensitive, close perception, and delicate observation of nature for its own sake, and not merely as the setting for man's actions and thoughts, that marks Lady Winchelsea off from the poets of her own age. Her work links her with the romanticism of the later 18th and nineteenth century, of which she is the most outstanding forerunner.

Just how necessary it is, not only to the justice due a neglected poetess, but to the scientific accuracy of literary history, that Lady Winchelsea's significance and position be correctly estimated, appears from a
statement by so earnest a scholar as J. G. Shairp. In his valuable book, *The Poetical Interpretation of Nature*, he makes an absolutely incorrect and misleading statement. After affirming that description of outdoor scenes began to have a significance apart from their relation to man, he erroneously declares: "But the first poem devoted to natural description appeared while Pope was yet alive, in the very midst of a vigorous town poetry. It was *The Seasons*, by Thomson." As a matter of record, Thomson wrote *The Seasons* in 1730, ten years after Lady Winchelsea's death, twenty-seven years after she had written her pindaric ode "On The Hurricane," which used images of external nature that later became poetic property. Whether Thomson knew of her work, which is not at all unlikely, considering that Ardelia was his contemporary, though much older, does not matter. The point is, that she wrote her nature poems long before the outstanding figures of romanticism ever conceived the idea of treating external nature as a poetic theme.

That Mr. Shairp is not alone in his misconception is evinced by another error committed to writing by Mr. A. Strong. (1) He states that imaginative interpretation of Nature "first achieved full consciousness in him (Wordsworth)." And this in the face of the fact that Lady Winchelsea's *On The Hurricane*, *The Bird*, *The Tree*, *Nocturnal Reverie*, and *The Nightingale* had been given to the public.

in the early years of the eighteenth century. These men are not alone in their error. Such a universal ignoring of Lady Winchelsea’s work reveals a gap in literary records that cries out for correction.

Just how important Lady Winchelsea’s contribution to nature poetry is, we realize when we read what that noted scholar, Mr. Gosse, informs us when he says, “From Cowley to Darwin, all the poets made oratorical effect take the place of the observation and inspired interpretation of Nature.” (1) This is certainly not true of Lady Winchelsea, who let no artificial rhetoric stand between her and the natural objects she was describing. She was led to write by an inspired enthusiasm, a sincere and profound love and deep appreciation of the natural beauties of the scenes among which it was her rare good fortune to spend her life.

Nothing can be more indicative of the exquisite artistic sensitivity of Lady Winchelsea than her uniquely personal and acutely observant descriptions of Nature.

General Character of Nature Observation

A glance at Lady Winchelsea’s capacity for observation of the out-door life reveals how close and accurate her study is. She often speaks in images simple and common to experience, as:

"Thick flew his Gold, as swarms of Summer-Bees"(1) or, when the hero tells how he made his escape by digging his way out of prison,

"As comes the Mole, by painful working upwards, Till the sweet Air beat on my clammy Brows."(2)

Still further, we have the light-hearted allusion,

"Gay as the spring, gay as the flowers, When lightly strew'd with pearly showers."(3)

She tells of the deer frightened by a storm,

"Taking the Winds, that vary in their Notes, For hot pursuing Hounds with deeply bellowing Throats." (4)

The aspect of the powerful oak-trees is briefly touched on:

"Should Pan pronounce it, in a Voice so loud 'Twou'd rive the knotty Oaks, that shade his Altars." (5)

A lovely day is described as

"Warm without Sun, and shady without Rain, Penn'd by an air, that soarsly bent the flowers, Or wav'd the woodbines, on the summer bowers."(6)

Ardelia knows Nature, not as the casual observer, but as the fond and intimate friend. Witness how closely she has assisted at Nature's "sly rites". Speaking of the willows, she tells us,

"Strait the Boughs, and smooth the Rinds, Moist each Fibre, and each Top."(7)

In the same poem we are told of

---

2. Ibid., Act III, Sc. 1, Ll. 45-47.
3. The Bird, Ll. 16-17.
6. Invitation To Dainis, Ll. 2-5.
7. The Petition For An Absolute Retreat, Ll. 137-139.
"a lonely stubborn Oak,  
which no Breezes can provoke,  
No less Guests persuade to move,—" (1)

And further we are informed about the whirlwind which

"Rivell'd the distorted Trunk,  
Sapless Limbs all bent, and shrunk—" (2)

Its companion is a helpless vine

"Unsupported on the Ground,  
Careless all the Branches spread,  
Subject to each haughty Tread,  
Bearing neither Leaves, nor Fruit,  
Living only in the Root." (3)

Lady Winchelsea's close communion with

Nature lent to her imagination a highly sympathetic quality which enabled her to detect the animating principle of the life and spirit of the natural world. She knew intuitively how to express with simple vividness, the principle of motion in nature.

Matthew Arnold says that "poetry interprets in two ways: it interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outer world, and it interprets by expressing with inspired convictions, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature." (4)

Lady Winchelsea certainly possesses this "magical felicity" for nature which, with her, is not only expressed in its most general and specific aspects, but is shown actively participating in a life peculiarly vibrant with mo-

1. The Petition For An Absolute Retreat, Ll. 142 - 145.
2. Ibid., Ll. 148 - 150.
3. Ibid., Ll. 153 - 158.
tion. She speaks of "dancing leaves"; of storms that "have worn themselves away" (1); of "gentle Zephyr fans his Wings" (2); of "the waving Moon and trembling Leaves (3); of the time

"When fresh'n'd Grass now bears itself upright (4) Whence springs the Woodbine, and the Bramble-Rose." (5)

Everywhere Nature is manifest as a living, active principle of existence.

Birds

It was natural that so keen a lover of the great world of out-of-door life should have been captivated by the song of the nightingale, the bird that has bewitched a listening humanity from the very first time its melodious outburst was ever heard.

Myra Reynolds, speaking of The Nightingale, The Tree and Nocturnal Reverie, says they "are earliest eighteenth century poems in which Nature is frankly chosen as a theme, and they show a personal knowledge that must have been the accumulated result of many experiences." (6)

Ardelia addresses the nightingale as "sweet Harbinger of Spring", and says its wild, free notes shall inspire her own spontaneous song. Poets, she asserts, also

1. The Tree, Ll. 8; 12.
2. Nocturnal Reverie, Ll. 3.
3. Ibid., L. 10.
4. Ibid., L. 11.
5. Ibid., L. 13.
folt that songs that arose from their deepest emotions must be unhampered and free. In a beautifully poignant comparison she confesses that

"still, th' unhappy Poet's Breast
Like thine, when best he sings, is plac'd against a Thorn."

Ardelia does not attempt to read her own joy or grief into the song of the bird, and in this respect, as in so many others, she differs from her predecessors and the poets of her day. She laments her utter inability to translate into words the ineffable beauty of the bird's musical perfection.

"Sweet, oh! sweet, still sweeter yet
Can thy Words such Accents fit,
Canst the syllables refine
Melt a sense that shall retain
Still some Spirit of the Brain
Till with sounds like these it join."

Lady Winohelsea succeeds, with consummate artistry, in capturing the intensity and piercing sweetness of the enchanting song. All the sadness, and mellifluous melancholy of the nightingale is summed up in her tender and eloquent lines.

Myra Reynolds has performed a most interesting bit of research on the treatment of the nightingale by famous English poets. Milton refers to its melody as the "sweetest, saddest plight", and its "amorous power", or, as "most musical, most melancholy". Shelley calls its notes a
"melodious pain", a "storm of sound", and alludes to it as the "voluptuous nightingale". Keats mentions "plaintive anthem", also, "pouring forth thy soul abroad in such an ecstasy". Matthew Arnold terms it a "wild, unquenched, deep sunken, old-world pain", an "eternal passion" and "wanton song". Coleridge speaks of "pity-pleading strains", and "the merry nightingale". Chaucer names "the lusty nightingale", and "the loud riot-ing." Wordsworth expresses the "tumultuous harmony". The only attempts at actual description of the bird are Matthew Arnold's "tawny-throated", Keat's "full-throated", Coleridge's "bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full". (1)

Ardelia has noted the gentleness of the dove's song, and, like Milton, has perceived the amorous quality of the nightingale's tones. She remarks:

"Observe the gentle Murmurs of that Dove, And see, how billing she confirms her Love! For this, the Nightingale displays her Throat, And Love, Love, Love, is all her ev'ning Note."(2)

We are discerningly informed that the lark is "harmonious" and,

"When near the earth, contracts her narrow Throat And warbles on the Ground." (3)

Ardelia's favorite nightingale appears and

"from this neigh'ring Grove are heard the Notes Of that sweet Bird, that warbles to the Night, Now telling us her Shadows are approaching."(4)

2. Five Pieces Out Of First Act of Aminto Of Tasso, Ll. 8-12.
3. All Is Vanity, Ll. 71 - 74.
Lady Winchelsea always expresses a feeling of affectionate regard for the winged creatures of the air, and an artistic admiration of their free, untrammelled existence.

Trees

The stately old trees of England have long enjoyed fame in the literature of their country, and visitors, to this very day, confirm the reports which have been brought to us in an unending succession of admiration. Lady Winchelsea was most fortunate, in that her home was located in Kent, one of the garden-spots of England. The region enjoys a luxuriance of Nature, which is partly displayed in its magnificent spreading trees. Some of these flourished during the very life-time of Ardelia, and she might often have enjoyed their pleasant shelter. She was filled with an enthusiastic appreciation of their loveliness, to which her poems make frequent and fond reference.

In her poem The Tree, Lady Winchelsea voices her personal affection, and the gratitude of man and birds for the shelter and protection it has afforded them. And when old age has withered this magnificent old ruin that withstood the centuries, she begs that no profane hand may level it to the ground. She pleads that the
"fierce winds, that vainly strive
To shock thy Greatness whilst alive,
Shall on thy lifeless Hour attend
And to the Clouds proclaim thy Fall."

At the end Ardelia fondly trusts that it shall

"like ancient Heroes, burn,
And some bright Hearth be made thy Urn."(1)

Ardelia has observed that during a severe storm the cedars have been struck, and,

"As the lythe Osiers twisted round,—"(2)

Or she mentions a capacity akin to self-determination:

"who solitary stood;
Or you, whose numbers formed a Wood;
You, who on Mountains chose to rise."

Trees, like human beings, have a gregarious tendency:

"whom Valleys late did hold
In flexible and lighter Mould;
You numerous Brethren of the Leafy Kind."

The Beech has an appeal to the mercy of the storm that is almost human:

"with out-stretch'd Arms,
Deprecates th'approaching Harms."(3)

The idea of "leafy brethren" who share a community life is contained in:

"the Willows, on the Banks,
Gather'd into social Ranks,
Playing with the gentle Winds,
Straight the Boughs, and smooth the Rinds,
Moist each Fibre, and each Top.
Wearing a luxurious Crop." (4)

1. The Tree, Ll. 23 - 27 - 35.
2. Fiddarick Poem, Ll. 32.
3. Ibid., Ll. 13: 31 - 38; 52.
4. Ibid., Ll. 134 - 140.
Trees feel the full potency of love:

"See how those Willows mix their Am'rous Boughs;
And, how that Vine clasps her supporting Spouse!
The silver Firr dotes on the stately Pine;
By Love those Elms, by Love those Beeches join.
But view that Oak; behold his rugged Side;
Yet that rough Bark the melting Flame do's hide."(1)

We are shown a picturesque old spot, a

"Well, o'erhung with shade,
Amidst those neighb'ring Trees of dateless growth."(2)

An oak is "stately". (3) There are trees that are "buffle-headed" and

"tap'r'ing Yews here court the Breeze,
That, like some Beaux whom Time does Freeze,
At once look Old and Green." (4)

Ardelia conveys her interest always in
terms that leave no doubt as to the depth and sincerity of
her feelings for her beloved world of the out-of-doors.

Odors

Among the elements that went to make up
Lady Winchelsea's love of nature was her extreme sensitivity
to the odors and fragrances of the natural world. In this,
she bears a close resemblance to Milton, throughout whose
poems are scattered innumerable references to odor.

In her lovely Nocturnal Reverie, which gives

2. Fanscomb Barn, Il. 113 - 113.
4. The Lord And The Bramble.
a unified impression of the pastoral beauties of the night
we learn that:

"Odours, which declin'd repelling Day,
Thro' temp'rate Air uninterrupted stray." (1)

On the fatal river Cydnus, that imperious
beauty, Cleopatra, reclines in a magnificent burnished galley
whose

"purple Wings disperse the balmy Air.
Hov'ring Perfumes ascend in od'rous Clouds,
Curl o'er the Barque, and play among the Shrouds." (2)

Ardelia asks from Fate no luxuries, but
the simple gifts of Mother Nature:

"Cloath me light, and fresh as May:
. . . . . .
Such as, when sweet Zephyrs fly--
. . . . . .
No Perfumes have there a Part,
Borrow'd from the Chymists Art;
But such as rise from flow'ry Beds,
Or the falling Jasmin Sheds!" (3)

There is a lovely old English garden where the nature
lover may trace his steps at night by his recognition of
the various fragrant flowers that lead in perfumed paths to
the castle.

"Swift Thought o'ere Terasses that lead the way
To flow'ry Groves where evening Odours stray
To Lab'rinth's into which, who fondly comes,
Attracted still and wilder'd with Perfumes,
Till by acquaintance he their stations knows
Here twists a Woodbine, there a Jasmine grows,
Next springs th'Heesperian Broom and last th'Assyrian
Rose,

1. Nocturnal Reverie, Ll. 21 - 23.
2. All Is Vanity, Ll. 133 - 136.
3. The Petition For An Absolute Retreat, Ll. 65 - 69; 71-75.
Shall endless Rove nor tread the way he went
No Thread to guide his steps, no Clue but ravish'd Scent." (1)

The scent of flowers, to one susceptible to their aroma, can cause an ecstasy of delight that overcomes the reasoning faculties during its sway:

"Now the Janquille o'ercomes the feeble Brain;
We faint beneath the aromatic pain." (2)

It is interesting to note that odor has played a significant part in arousing the emotions throughout the centuries. Montaigne, in his essay Of Smells And Odors (3) informs us that "Physicians might (in mine opinion) draw more use and good from odours than they do. For myself have often perceived that according to their strength and quality they change and alter, and move my spirits, and work strange effects in me: which makes me approve the common saying that, the invention of incense and perfumes in Churches, so ancient and far-dispersed throughout all nations and religions, had an especial regard to rejoice, to comfort, to quicken, to rouse, and to purify our senses, so that we might be the apter and readier unto contemplation."

Montaigne wrote these words about the middle of the sixteenth century. And in 1821 our modern Shelley writes: "The wind, the light, the air, the smell of a flower affects me with violent emotions." (4)

1. To The Honorable Lady Worsley At Longleate, ll. 60 - 69.
2. The Spleen, ll. 40 - 42.
3. Readings In European Literature, Saboyar and Brosius.
Lady Winchelsea is in decidedly good literary company. Her keenly developed sense perception contributes, in no small degree, to the delight of the attentive reader.

Nature in Subordination to Man

Lady Winchelsea is often guilty of what Johnson calls "those senseless syllables of dolour", and what Ruskin, somewhat more mercifully names "the pathetic fallacy". This consists in bestowing human qualities of personification upon inanimate objects. And yet, in Ardelia's case, this subjective unity underlying the world of nature and man is due to the stress of strong feeling, rather than an attempt to deliberately simulate an emotion that is not felt.

In the tragedy Aristomenes, the royal maiden, who has been separated by the hatred of hostile fathers from her beloved, sees in Nature the reflection of her misery. She laments touchingly:

"Oh! 'tis all dismal, now that Love is absent,
Faded the Flow'rs, and with'ring Ev'ry Branch;
Whilst thro' the Leaves the sad, and sighing Winds,
Methinks, all say, the Hours of Bliss are past;
And here, we ne'er shall meet each other more."

Myra Reynolds in Nature In English Poetry maintains that "when it (personification) is the outgrowth

2. P. 32.
of a supreme passion compelling the phenomena of nature into apparent sympathy with its own grief or joy, the expression is sure to bear the mark of inner conviction or strong emotion."

Love, the great principle which animates all human life, is made to possess a similar force in the physical world. Eternal nature is made subordinate to the joyous emotions of man.

In Love And Innocence, the disguised shepherdess inadvertently confesses her love within the hearing of her noble lover, who rapturously shares his outburst of joy with all nature, in true pastoral fashion. He cries:

"From those fair Lips no sooner fell that word, But all the neigh'ring Echoes caught the Sound, And sent it doubl'd to Climander's Bosom; The am'rous Streams have borne it down their Banks, And the glad Plains breathe nothing, since, but Love. Oh! Speak it once again, and the fond Vine Shall with a stricter grasp embrace the Elm, Whilst joyful Birds shall hail it from the Branches." (1)

It is most interesting to note how, by almost a century, Lady Winchelsea antedates Wordsworth in his Luoy poem, one of his most famous. She voices the sad recognition that sorrowing humanity wishes to compel nature, by some outward token, to share its almost unbearable burden of grief. She poignantly laments:

"But oh! in vain, things void of sense, we call, In vain, implore the murmuring sound Of hollow groans, from underneath the ground;

Or court the loud laments of some steep water's fall;
On things inanimate, wou'd force,
Some share of our divided grief,
Whilst Nature (unconcern'd for our relief)
Persues her settl'd path, her fixt, and steady course."

Almost a hundred years later Wordsworth comments no more
pointedly upon the supreme indifference of Nature to human
misery. He speaks of Lucy's body

"Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees." (2)

Surely no closer similitude of thought or feeling could be
expressed than here. This is one of the many close points
of resemblance that Lady Winchelsea bears to the greatest
of all nature poets, Wordsworth.

Spiritual Kinship with Wordsworth

Even without having been informed about
Wordsworth's deep interest in Lady Winchelsea's poetry, the
reader cannot help being struck by a sense of similarity
that exists between them.

Both have gazed deep into the unfathomable
recesses of human souls and have turned away in despair at
the sight. Both have pondered long and profoundly on the
meaning of existence and the future of man. Bruised and dis-
illusioned by their contact with realities, both have turned
to the tender ministrations of Nature, the healer and re-

1. Upon The Death Of Sir William Twisden, Li. 21 - 29.
2. Lucy - Excursion.
storero, for renewed faith in life. Wordsworth expresses this clearly in Tintern Abbey:

"oh! then
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me
And these my exhortations."

Ardelia's Petition For An Absolute Retreat is one of her many poems that embody the identical sentiment. Both poets came soon to realize that Nature harmonizes man with life.

The very manner in which they regarded the physical world possessed mutual resemblances. Both were not content to observe Nature merely in her general aspects. They desired to render a closer; a more specific portrayal.

According to Samuel Johnson, both were wrong. He observes in his Rasselas that "the writer must examine "not the individual but the species"; general properties and large appearances. He does not number the streaks of the tulip or describe the different shapes in the verdure of the forest, but must "exhibit prominent striking features" neglecting "minuter discriminations". . . . . Convention, familiarity, generalization--these are the keys to the poetical kingdom of heaven." (1)

French criticism also condemned their respective poetic practice. Buffon insists that "le style est l'homme meme. L'attention à ne nommer les choses que par les termes les plus generieux." (2)

2. Discours Academiques, p. 519.
Neither school took cognizance of the fact that a truly close communion with Nature, such as Lady Winchelsea and Wordsworth profoundly experienced, demanded an interpretation that would adequately render this sense of intimacy. Johnson referred contemptuously to "the streaks of the tulip," but probably the smoke-filled air of his beloved coffee shops prevented him from ever truly beholding the loveliness of the "streaks".

Another trait that both poets shared in common was their love for the gentler phases of external nature, for the beauty of the green, secluded lanes, for the pastoral aspect of rural England. They both possessed the capacity of being deeply stirred by simple, quiet loveliness.

Wordsworth himself tells us that "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants. . . . one being is elevated above another in proportion as he possesses this capability." (1)

Lady Winchelsea's poems accord perfectly with these sentiments. Whether it is human nature she is describing or the external world, neither the mood nor the object described is violent, although the emotions underlying the writing are always strong, and deeply stirring.

Nature, with these two poets, separated

by a century, was a vibrant, moving force, never a scenic background for action or thought.

Professor S. F. Gingerich articulates this principle in his assertion that "Nature is far from being a mere symbol, a static emblem, a mere reflection of something other than itself. Nature contains an active principle that works similar to the active principle in man, only in a less degree... What distinguished Wordsworth was... that from the beginning, he pictured Nature not statically, as the older poets were wont to do but rendered her dynamically... as an active principle at the heart of life."(1)

This attitude and mode of treatment is precisely the one adopted, so early in the history of nature poetry, by Lady Winchelsea. Like Wordsworth she grasped intuitively the truth and significance of the meaning of movement in Nature. Both possessed what Shairp designates as the "highest function of poetry", that is, its interpretive function, when it "exercises one of its finest offices of mediation between the soul of man and Nature." (2)

Wordsworth's conception of the divine origin and immortality of the soul as expressed in his Intimations of Immortality are anticipated by Ardelia.

"Fitly might the Life of Man
Be indeed esteem'd a Span
If the present Moment were
Of Delight his only Share;
If no other Joys he knew
Then what round about him grew:

But as those, who stars wou'd trace
From a subterraneous Place,
Through some Engine liit their Eyes
To the outward, glorious skies;
So th'immortal Spirit may,
When descended to our Clay,
From a rightly govern'd Frame
View the Height, from whence she came;
To her Paradise be caught,
And things unutterable taught."

The sense of some strange but powerful force in Nature that exalts the soul of man and penetrates his being with a sense of the spiritual unity of the universe is voiced by Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey:

"I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
"Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

Ardelia, his spiritual sister, utters the same truth in her own individual manner:

"When a sedate content the Spirit feels,
And no fierce Light disturb, whilst it reveals;
But silent Musings urge the Mind to seek
Something, too high for Syllables to speak;
Till the free Soul to a compos'dness charmed,
Finding the Elements of Rage disarm'd,
O'er all below a solemn Quiet grown;
Joys in th'inferiour World, and thinks it like her Own."

The tie that relates Lady Winchelsea to Wordsworth is of a twofold nature. Spiritually, they shared

1. Petition For An Absolute Retreat, 264 - 280.
2. Tintern Abbey, Ll. 93 - 99.
3. A Nocturnal Reverie, Ll. 39 - 47.
in common a nature that was of an earnest, contemplative, and profoundly moral essence. Artistically, they interpreted the natural and spiritual world with a directness and an emotional simplicity that has its sources in the noblest instincts of the human race.
CONCLUSION

An attempt to disengage the personality of Lady Winchelsea through an analysis of tendencies in her poetry leads to a two-fold conclusion. The first is a consideration of her contribution to English literature; the second concerns the personal reaction of the reader.

Literary history must inevitably yield to Lady Winchelsea the place to which she is rightfully entitled among the minor poets who were the forerunners of the romantic revival of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

She contributed a fresh viewpoint on all the leading issues of her day, even on the question of monarchy, of which she was an adherent. For, to Ardelia, monarchy meant not an institution, but individuals, to whom she reacted emotionally, in true romanticist fashion. In addition to a new angle of approach, she was the first to place a personal and intimate emphasis on communion with nature, in the Wordsworthian sense. She was also the first to introduce the element of feminism into poetry, and was among those who were most successful in handling the fable as a medium of verse. Her lines contain a wide emotional range and an excellent portrayal of the manners of the period;
they also indicate clearly the stage of language development and usage. And, most important of all, her unique imaginative gift, deepened by a sense of spiritual values, adds to English literature another melodious note in its richly-orchestrated symphony of sound.

As to the reader, certain it is, that whether his curiosity has been attracted by her unfamiliar name, or by a provocative word or phrase, he will be held a willing captive under Ardelia's spell. And spell it unmistakably is; for, though he may put the poems aside, believing that other authors have more pressing claims on his attention, he will return to them again and again. Questions will arise in his mind that he cannot evade. He will ask himself, wherein lies the fascination of this poetess? Does it consist in the force and originality of her ideas, or in the beauty of the lines? Is it spiritual or ethical truth he has responded to? Or is it the suggestive quality conveyed in meaning or sound? It is all these things and more.

For many of the ideas that agitated Lady Winchelsea have long been conceded as established facts. Changes in Church, State, and Society have out-moded much that was vital in her day.

The reader's interest cannot lie purely in the beauty of her lines, for her writing is often unequal in quality, a tendency toward didacticism weighing down her
verses. And also, she is not always free of that curse of her century, the avid desire to rationalize everything. Why, then, does her poetry so persistently cling to the memory?

It is because she makes such a distinct appeal to the emotions, and reaches with a sure, gentle, but unerring touch, the very deepest and most submerged feelings.

R. P. Cowl lucidly declares that: "the domain of art is not the intellect, but the emotions—not thought, but feeling; it occupies itself with thoughts only as they are associated with feelings." (1)

It is precisely the very intensity of emotion with which Ardélia recorded her thoughts, that lures the modern reader. For, though the outward pattern of life shifts rapidly from generation to generation, the underlying fundamentals of feeling remain unchanged, because they are inherent in the instincts of the race. Just as Ardélia was profoundly stirred by thoughts of life, death, love, creation, and all the other vital matters that are the very stuff of life, so we today struggle and strive to achieve some little gleam of light in the same inexplicable riddle we call existence.

Her language is surcharged with an imaginative glow, that makes luminous and suffused with passionate feeling the least of her words.

She wrote as she lived, quietly, sincerely, never afraid to say exactly what she thought, no matter how firmly rooted in convention and authority the subject under discussion was.

Johnson, in his dicta concerning the functions of an author states: "It ought to be the first endeavor of a writer to distinguish that which is established because it is right from that which is right only because it is established; that he may neither violate essential principles by a desire of novelty, nor debar himself from the attainment of beauties within his view by a needless fear of breaking rules which no literary dictator had authority to enact." (1)

Lady Winchelsea wrote from irresistible impulses which persisted throughout her entire life. She recorded her own reactions, independent of what were the prevailing literary fashions, in a manner that leaves no room for doubt as to her capacity for originality of expression and outlook. She reveals herself throughout her works as a woman of fine intelligence, excellent judgment, and keen artistic sensibilities. Her profound spirituality manifests itself in all of her pages in a clear, quiet, but firm and convincing fashion that is always moving.

The reader is conscious of being face to

face with a rich, colorful personality capable of the entire range of emotions. Lady Winchelsea's tender nobility of character attains a vitality that assumes definite form and vigor. An undeniable charm and the grace of another age lingers in the quaintly spelled lines, and rises, like the fragrance of an old-fashioned nosegay, to delight the reader.