

ANDRE CHENIER AND THE LATIN LOVE ELEGY:
A STUDY IN NEO-CLASSICISM

A thesis submitted for the degree of
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by

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ABSTRACT

It has long been assumed that in his cult of Antiquity André Chénier drew the major inspiration for his poetry from Ancient Greece. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that Chénier was even more indebted to Rome and to the transmission of Greek culture in its Latin form. Chénier's Elégies have been chosen to illustrate this proposition and to show how the poet, taking the Latin elegists as models, produced poetry that was both traditional and highly original.

The Elégies are examined in the context of Neo-classicism. Chénier's life highlights the development of his love of Antiquity and gives insight into the personal experiences which, for him, could only be expressed within the Classical Tradition. The depth of his scholarship and methods of assembling material from Latin sources are revealed by analysis of his library and manuscripts. Eighteenth century studies of Elegy indicate that Chénier's interpretation of the Latin elegists was greatly influenced by Abbé Souchay and others. Similarly his literary principles, for example la naïveté and imitation inventrice, are discussed in relation to the views of theorists including Winckelmann and Abbé Dubos. Finally, Chénier's poems are linked closely to the elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid, showing the renewal of Latin Elegy in thought and style. The distinctive quality of Chénier's verse is established by comparison with Le Brun, Parny, and Bertin, who imitated the same models.

This thesis puts forward three important considerations. It

underlines the unsatisfactory nature of editions of the Elégies, concluding that a new edition should enlarge the Lycoris poems, and incorporate the literary implications of G. Buisson's identification of D'.z.n - Camille. Secondly, it demonstrates that, contrary to accepted opinion, Chénier was dependent above all on Propertius. Thirdly, it challenges previous criticisms of the Elégies, suggesting that Chénier is never more original than when giving expression to the themes which form the essence of Latin Elegy.

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ABBREVIATIONS

For greater convenience the following abbreviations are used to stand for certain libraries, editions, reference works, and periodicals cited frequently in the text:

B.M.C.	Bibliothèque Municipale, Carcassonne
B.N.	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
Dimoff	P. Dimoff, ed., <u>Œuvres complètes d'André Chénier, publiées d'après les manuscrits par P. Dimoff</u> , 3 vols., Paris, Delagrave, 1908-1919
Dimoff, <u>La Vie et l'Œuvre</u>	P. Dimoff, <u>La Vie et l'oeuvre d'André Chénier jusqu'à la Révolution française, 1762-1790</u> , 2 vols., Paris, Droz, 1936
<u>R.D.M.</u>	<u>Revue des deux mondes</u>
<u>R.H.L.F.</u>	<u>Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France</u>
<u>R.L.C.</u>	<u>Revue de littérature comparée</u>
Walter	G. Walter, ed., <u>André Chénier. Œuvres complètes</u> , Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris, Gallimard, 1958

FOREWORD

Most of the critical studies of Chénier's life and work written during the nineteenth century, after the original publication by H. de Latouche of a selection of poems in 1819, are now of only a rather limited historical value. It was not until Gabriel de Chénier's edition (1874) that the complete poetical works were available to the public, and, only in 1899, that the manuscripts could be easily consulted. Nevertheless, a few names stand out from nineteenth century criticism. Saint-Beuve, in particular, has influenced subsequent thought, contributing both to the myth that surrounded André Chénier and to scholarly criticism. In six articles, (1829, 1834, 1839, 1844, 1851, 1862), he portrayed Chénier as a poet whose life was dedicated to art and to the revival of contemporary poetry by the study of Antiquity, as a highly-principled citizen showing courageous, but isolated, resistance to the excesses of the Revolution, and as a precursor of the Romantics. Leconte de Lisle's early article, 'André Chénier. De la poésie lyrique à la fin du dix-huitième siècle' (1840), reflects Sainte-Beuve's views. L. Becq de Fouquières was even more devoted to the study of Chénier. The prefaces to his editions, (1862, 1872, 1881, 1888), are full of fascinating biographical information, (though later research has rejected several details as erroneous), and display a rare insight and understanding of the poet and his work. Becq de Fouquières' Documents nouveaux sur André Chénier (1875), and his Lettres critiques sur la vie, les oeuvres, les manuscrits d'André Chénier (1881), reveal further biographical documents and enable us to understand the manuscript and editorial problems faced by nineteenth century researchers. In contrast, J. Haraszti, (La Poésie d'André Chénier, 1892), was concerned to integrate Chénier in the eighteenth century by an analysis of his ideas and style. Similarly L. Bertrand, (La Fin du Classicisme et le retour à l'Antique dans

la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, 1897), linked Chénier to the contemporary rediscovery of Antiquity. His work is useful but is heavily biased against the literary principle of imitatio, for he sees the eighteenth century as a period of decline in the arts. H. Potez, in his important study L'Élégie en France avant le Romantisme (1898), more specifically contrasts Chénier's Elégies with those of Parny and Bertin and other poetae minores in the elegiac field.

Twentieth century criticism of André Chénier has been dominated by the immense scholarship of P. Dimoff. The two volumes of his La Vie et l'oeuvre d'André Chénier jusqu'à la Révolution française, 1762-1790 (1936), have become essential to all research. Nevertheless certain aspects of Dimoff's account of the poet's life have been proved inaccurate. In addition Dimoff's analysis ends abruptly at 1790 on the premise that Chénier's life and work could be divided into two independent parts, the first dedicated to literature, the second to politics. By implication Dimoff regarded the first phase as the more rewarding. The orientation of his research explains much of the emphasis that critics have given to Chénier's Iambes and political writings. G. Walter, for example, (André Chénier, son milieu et son temps, 1947), applied his detailed knowledge of French history to examine Chénier's rôle during the Revolution and showed him as a dangerous counter-revolutionary polemicist. In contrast, G. Venzac re-examined the family documents to glean more details about the poet's youth for his Jeux d'ombre et de lumière sur la jeunesse d'André Chénier (1957). There have been two major works of synthesis. The first by J. Fabre, Chénier, (reprinted 1965), stresses Chénier's logical and heroic decision to stand against the Jacobins, and shows the development of lyricism in the Odes and Iambes as the poet's supreme literary achievement. The second by F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794 (1965), remains the most important contribution to Chénier studies by an

English critic. Scarfe also suggests that Chénier only reached intellectual and moral maturity during the Revolution, and that the Iambes are his most original creation. Other works of synthesis have been less successful: J-M. Gerbault, (André Chénier, 1958), and V. Loggins, (André Chénier, his Life, Death and Glory, 1965), both fall into the error of constructing une vie romancée, whereas G. d'Aubarède, (André Chénier, 1970), repeats certain interpretations already proved faulty.

A large number of articles have also advanced our knowledge of the life and compositions of Chénier and his contemporaries. Perhaps the most significant are the ones by G. Buisson, (R.H.L.F. 1968, 1975), which identify D'.z.n and Camille as the same person, and which overturn long-held assumptions about Chénier's mistresses. Finally, we must mention the invaluable catalogue produced by S. Balayé for the Chénier exhibition at the Bibliothèque Nationale, 1962.

Whether these nineteenth and twentieth century critics of André Chénier have a special interest in his Bucoliques, his epic poems, or his Iambes, they are unanimous in their recognition of Chénier's cult of Antiquity. They emphasize, more particularly, that André Chénier was fascinated by Ancient Greece and that he was more deeply influenced by Greek literature than most French writers. This thesis seeks to modify this interpretation, for it is my contention that André Chénier was in fact influenced to an even greater extent by Latin authors whom he saw as the heirs of Greek civilization. In my view Chénier's undeniable affiliation to Ancient Greece was more frequently expressed through Rome and, in this way, Chénier remains true to the mainstream of French Literary Tradition.

Inevitably, for practical reasons, it has been necessary to limit the scope of this thesis. I have, in consequence, confined myself to a study of André Chénier and the Latin Love Elegy and, more specifically, to an

analysis of the influence of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid in Chénier's Elégies. Whilst I acknowledge the vital importance of Catullus in this field, I have largely excluded this poet from my investigations. Although the themes of his love poetry foreshadowed and inspired the elegists, they were expressed in epigrams and lyric verse rather than in an expanded love elegy. There are, in fact, only two Catullan poems (LXVIII, LXXVI) that parallel the developed form of the Augustan Elegy.

The elegiac genre was specially selected to support our thesis for three main reasons. Firstly, it is apparent from our survey of Chénier studies that there has been no monograph published on Chénier's Elégies. Indeed these poems do not always receive a just assessment in modern criticisms and need to be reappraised. Secondly, and more importantly for our purposes, Chénier's Elégies are almost totally dependent on the Latin Tradition. Although some Greek influences on Latin Elegy can be traced through Alexandrian narrative elegies, amatory epigrams, and New Comedy, no example of a Greek 'subjective' love elegy has hereto been discovered. It seems likely therefore that the Latin poets themselves perfected this genre. Finally, a detailed comparison between the Latin elegists and the French poet has never before been undertaken. Only Becq de Fouquières, in his indispensable second edition of Chénier's poetry (1872), had noted the Latin and Greek sources of the selected elegies then known. However these were presented without any literary commentary. It is this task of analysis that we have tried to fulfil.

Research has been carried out at the British Library, at the Bibliothèque Municipale at Carcassonne, where the Chénier family papers and the poet's library can be consulted, and at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, where the manuscripts of the Elégies are held.

Since André Chénier is in many respects a typical product of his age, it is essential, in my opinion, to evaluate his writings, and particularly

his elegiac output, in the context of the Neo-classical revival which characterizes the second half of the eighteenth century. I have therefore examined the work of scholars and archaeologists such as J. Barbault, J-J. Barthélemy, and the Comte de Caylus, of aesthetes such as the Abbé Batteux, L. Racine, J.J. Winckelmann, and the Encyclopedists, of translators such as P. de Longchamps, P.A. Guys, and the Marquis de Pastoret, and of the elegiac poets Le Brun, Parny, and Bertin. In presenting André Chénier's compositions in terms of this Neo-classical background we have tried to assess his importance as part of a dynamic and idealistic cultural movement. I have deliberately avoided the long-standing debate: 'André Chénier, classique ou romantique', (F. Brunetière, R.D.M. 1898), for I do not, in this case, accept the antithesis, and the subject lies outside the scope of this study.

Comparisons with works produced by André Chénier's contemporaries have been made in order to highlight the poet's creativity in his Elégies. This thesis relies on the belief that his distinction stems from the successful intermingling of traditional and original elements in his poetry. The nature of the debt to the Latin poets and the extent of Chénier's originality can only emerge from detailed thematic and stylistic comparisons of the French and Latin texts to which the final chapters are devoted.

An appraisal of Chénier's achievement involves the careful examination of primary sources: family documents, the poet's own library, and especially the manuscripts. A major obstacle to research is the loss of the manuscripts of the most finished elegies published by Latouche. Since the poet did not publish, and the manuscripts had a chequered career after his death, accurate dating of individual poems is difficult, and there are only a few indications of how the poet would have arranged the Elégies.

The problems of editing Chénier's work in a definitive way are thus virtually insurmountable, and, in fact, none of the present editions is entirely satisfactory. This has led to a rather cumbersome reference system in this thesis for quotations from the poet's writings. It involves references to both the Dimoff and Walter editions. Each of these editions on its own proved inadequate since Walter omits the numerous elegiac fragments and notes that are essential for this research, whilst Dimoff fails to transcribe the important prose works. In addition, Buisson's research on D'.z.n-Camille and my own findings about the Lycoris elegies mean that the traditional groupings of the elegies written for Chénier's mistresses are no longer acceptable. Thus, until a new edition is published, both the Dimoff and Walter editions must be consulted in conjunction with each other.

The Latin Love Elegy is in itself a vast area for research and has an enormous secondary literature. Since the focus of this study must be on André Chénier, we cannot deal in detail with all the scholarly problems that concern the modern specialists of Latin Elegy. What this investigation calls for is an understanding of the origins, the development, the themes, and the style of this genre, as they were interpreted in the eighteenth century, together with a background of modern opinion, and a deep knowledge of the actual elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid. This again gives rise to textual problems: for practical reasons I have decided to quote the Oxford Classical Texts for all the Latin extracts, these texts being obviously more easily available than the editions actually consulted by Chénier.

This thesis, which contains a certain amount of new material, aims to re-assess and amend certain accepted ideas about André Chénier. I seek to demonstrate more specifically than heretofore that the poet was pre-disposed by his environment to immerse himself in the cult of Antiquity,

and I have likewise analyzed the personal elements - however elusive - of the Elégies. My research has provided evidence to suggest an extension of the group of poems addressed to Lycoris. This is of some considerable interest since the enlargement of this early cycle on the one hand and, on the other, the new proof that Chénier was drawing ideas from Tibullus at this early apprentice stage, appear to invalidate Dimoff's denigration of this period. In addition, I have examined G. Buisson's work on D'.z.n-Camille, and have extended his historical approach to look at the literary implications of his findings. A chapter has been devoted to eighteenth century speculation about the origins of Ancient Elegy and its evaluation of the individual Latin elegists; a comprehensive survey of discussion about the elegiac genre in the eighteenth century has never previously been attempted. The results of my comparison between Chénier's Elégies and those of the Latin authors throw considerable light on his poetry. Indeed, my survey not only demonstrates that the French poet successfully recreated all the major themes of Latin Elegy, but it has revealed, in contrast to the accepted opinion, that Chénier was dependent above all upon Propertius.

I

INTRODUCTION: THE REDISCOVERY OF ANTIQUITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF NEO-CLASSICISM IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

'André, le français byzantin'.¹ It was in this way that, on the eve of the French Revolution, André Chénier signed an essay in Latin verse.² He thus imposed upon his poems the two features he cherished above all. The title he assumed bears no sense of confrontation, but rather proclaims a feeling of unity and pride of achievement: André Chénier firmly believed that he was the representative of two glorious cultures that had fashioned both his personality and his works.

As a French poet he knew that he belonged to a nation which, by the time of Louis XIV, had already been recognized as the supreme exemplar of civilization in Western Europe. Chénier was inspired by the literature and art that was the treasured heritage of any French writer of the eighteenth century. He was also conscious of the triumphs of his own age. A zealous disciple of the Enlightenment, he upheld its Promethean advances, carried out under the Kantian banner of 'Sapere Aude',³ and identified with the intellectual turmoil and critical spirit of the Philosophes who had ushered in a new era, founded upon the canons of humanitas and virtus.

'André, le . . . byzantin' was definitely not the representative of

¹[sic] Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Vers en langues diverses', VI, 3, p.320. Walter, 'Vers en langues étrangères', III, p.617.

²The poem is dated 'Londres, 31 janvier 1789'.

³'In 1784, . . . Kant. . . offered as its motto Sapere Aude'. (P. Gay, The Enlightenment: an Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967, p.3). See also Chénier's own subtitle for 'L'Invention': 'Audendum est'.

the Constantinople that had driven a wedge through the Roman Empire, and produced the culture of Byzantium. His allegiance to Constantinople meant, in contrast, a deep devotion to Ancient Greece. However, in eighteenth century France, just as in the Renaissance, classical culture was more frequently revived in its Latin rather than in its Greek form; it was often a reflection of Greece through Rome. This is, of course, very understandable since so much of Greek literature has been lost. In some quarters it was thought that there was a marked decline in the knowledge of the Greek language, but, paradoxically, there was an ever-increasing interest in the ideas of Antiquity.¹ Latin culture, on the other hand, still encompassed Chénier's contemporaries. They were surrounded by Latin as the language of the Church, by the Roman legal and administrative systems, and more importantly, Latin language and literature were still the keystone of French education.² Although Chénier stands apart from the majority of his fellow-writers by the depth of his knowledge of Ancient Greek, nevertheless, particularly in the case of the Elégies, we may concur with H. Peyre who considers that Chénier was 'romain plus que grec'.³ Chénier recognized the truth of the Horatian adage: 'Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit'.⁴ This assimilation of Greek civilization by the Romans is crucial to our understanding of Chénier's 'français byzantin'.

¹ E. Egger, discussing the general decline of Greek, quotes M. le président Rolland of the University of Paris, who, in 1783, complained about 'l'ignorance profonde où sont de la langue grecque la plupart des jeunes gens qui fréquentent les classes'. Egger adds the important proviso: 'Cependant, chose singulière, . . . malgré l'affaiblissement de ces études, jamais les idées grecques n'ont plus vivement préoccupé l'opinion que durant ce siècle'. (E. Egger, L'Hellénisme en France, leçons sur l'influence des études grecques dans le développement de la langue et de la littérature françaises, Paris, Didier, 1869, part II, pp.264-265).

² P. Gay, *ibid.*, p.95.

³ H. Peyre, 'L'Influence des littératures antiques sur la littérature française moderne - état des travaux', Yale Romanic Studies, 119, New Haven, 1941, p.55. See also 'Pratiquement. . . il était meilleur latiniste qu'helléniste'. (J. Fabre, Chénier, *Connaissance des Lettres*, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.63).

⁴ Horace, Epistles, Lib. II, i, l.156.

It is the contention of this thesis that the encounter between classical and French cultures in a man of intense sensitivity generated an élan that stimulated creative activity. Chénier's originality indeed stems from these two complementary sources of inspiration: he restored a past culture, identified with it, absorbed its riches, and finally, breathed into it fresh life from his own personality and modernity. It is essential to counter the harsh value judgements made upon André Chénier and late eighteenth century literature, by Louis Bertrand, for instance.¹ In the opinion of this critic, who accepted the concepts of Romanticism, originality is synonymous with a unique experience, and is manifest in the revelations and torments of the individual soul; theories of universality are rejected, and new ideas extolled. From Bertrand's critical viewpoint it is inevitable that ideas of imitatio and dependence upon an existing tradition are anathema. He stigmatizes imitatio, so basic to the understanding of late eighteenth century art and literature, as the principle of a decadent and dying movement.² In contrast, we believe that it is no less creative to give new twists to conventional imagery, to explore as yet hidden analogies in universal feeling and experience, and to delve into the overflowing cornucopia of the Graeco-Roman Tradition.

The nature of Chénier's debt to the Classical Tradition is made clear by a detailed comparison between his Elégies and their Latin models. It can be noted that, although for the purposes of this thesis we have limited ourselves to a study of the Elégies, the attitudes and principles involved in them are manifest, with only minor shifts of emphasis, throughout Chénier's works. In the Elégies, as elsewhere, inspiration

¹ L. Bertrand, La Fin du Classicisme et le retour à l'Antique dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle et les premières années du XIX^e en France, Paris, Hachette, 1897.

² 'Revenir à l'antique, c'était revenir en arrière; c'était prétendre recommencer toute une évolution historique. Mais comme tous les mouvements rétrogrades, celui-ci ne devait pas aboutir. Il n'accuse que l'impuissance et la stérilité'. (Ibid., p.viii).

comes from Antiquity.

Before any attempt can be made to analyze Chénier's Elégies we must look rather more generally at the classical revival. It is a truism to note that a poet's response to his material is largely pre-determined by the historical situation, but in the case of André Chénier it should be emphasized that he lived in a period that led him forward along the very paths that he found most congenial. The zeitgeist of the late eighteenth century acted as a catalyst. It purveyed the external stimulus which moulded Chénier's enthusiasm for Antiquity and fashioned his interpretation of, and reactions to, the Graeco-Roman Tradition. Whilst recognizing the pitfalls of such strict classifications, we are nevertheless bound to follow convention in labelling this zeitgeist as Neo-classicism. It is the purpose of this introductory chapter to explore the Neo-classical ethos that encircled André Chénier, and to illustrate the important facets of the rediscovery of Antiquity in France. There can be no doubt of Chénier's affiliation to the movement. His methods of work, his literary principles, his interpretations reflect those of his contemporaries in the arts. Chénier himself affirms this as he exalts Jacques-Louis David as the 'chef de notre école'.¹ Such a proclamation denotes that there was a community of spirit linking the writers and artists of the day. A study of André Chénier and the Latin Love Elegy is indeed a study in Neo-classicism, and André Chénier takes the stand next to J-L. David as the supreme incarnation of its aspirations and ideals.

The period in which Chénier lived suited his poetic instinct since it constitutes one in a series of renaissances that Graeco-Roman civilization has undergone since the so-called Dark Ages. One thinks of Bede and Alcuin, of fourteenth and fifteenth century Italy. Such renaissances exhibit some common traits and this factor explains why we shall notice how close in many

¹Walter, 'Sur la peinture d'histoire', p.286.

ways eighteenth century French ideas and literary practice were to those of the sixteenth century. Renaissances appear to occur at a time of cultural malaise¹ and draw impetus from a desire to change society. The French Renaissance of the sixteenth century proclaimed its revolt against the Mediaeval mind, 'prenant stile apart, sens apart, euvre apart, ne desirant avoir rien de commun avecq' une si monstrueuse erreur'.² Similarly Neo-classicism, stimulated by the questioning of the Philosophes, might be seen as a reaction against the Rococo, and beyond this, as an attack on the 'monstrueuse erreur' of Christian society in general. At such times the past seems to provide an ideal society which may be plundered for exempla to reform the present. In literature and the visual arts, man can break the dimension of time: the problems of the human condition are felt at times of classical revival to be eternal and universal, and the solution to these problems valid in saecula saeculorum. Terence's celebrated line, 'Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto',³ is the consummate expression of this philosophy which enabled France in the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries to seek succour from the Ancients, whilst remaining faithful to its own modernity. Any movement relying on such tenets is finally judged on whether the present has been enriched and originality achieved, or whether the dependence on Antiquity has had a stultifying effect. The nub of our argument is whether the association of Chénier's 'français byzantin' is potentially valuable.

This then is the broad historical context to which the revival of Antiquity in the late eighteenth century may be assigned. We now look

¹ H. Peyre perhaps overstates the case: 'Ce ne sont jamais ou presque jamais les "bons élèves", les doux et les timides, qui ont subi le plus vivement l'attrait de l'antiquité latine, et surtout de la grecque. . . les adorateurs de l'antiquité sont des passionnés, des révoltés et surtout des malades'. (H. Peyre, *ibid.*, p.25).

² P. de Ronsard, 'Odes' (1550), 'Au Lecteur', in Oeuvres complètes de P. de Ronsard, édition critique avec introduction et commentaire par P. Laumonier, Société des textes français modernes, Paris, Hachette, 1914, Vol. 1, p.45.

³ Terence, Heauton Timorumenos, Act I, 1.25.

more closely at this particular renaissance. The examination is approached from three major standpoints: firstly, the eighteenth century's knowledge of Antiquity, secondly, its particular interpretation and vision of the ancient world, and finally, the creative output of the period resulting from the rediscovery of Antiquity. This schema also provides a framework for our study of Chénier's Elégies since in them he unites these three facets of Neo-classicism.

A. Knowledge of Antiquity: scholarship, archaeology, the Grand Tour

André Chénier's renewal of Latin Elegy in French poetry depended upon his considerable erudition no less than upon his poetic skills. In the process of collecting, assembling, and collating material from Antiquity, which we shall examine in chapter III, Chénier was following contemporary trends. The late eighteenth century's encounter with classical civilization was through scholarship, archaeological studies, and finally, by pilgrimages to Greece and Rome.

It would obviously be wrong to imply that before this time Antiquity was terra incognita. There had been a continuous search for knowledge since the decline of the Roman Empire. Graeco-Roman culture never fell into complete oblivion; there was no time when western civilization did not possess, albeit sometimes without the ability to comprehend, a manuscript of Vergil. The links in the chain of the Classical Tradition had never been shattered, even if they were often submitted to considerable stress. In chapter IV we demonstrate that studies of Ancient Elegy were carried out throughout the eighteenth century and are not confined to the period after 1760, even though, in the first half of the century, they were restricted to the somewhat recondite work of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. The education system throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also ensured that a certain acquaintance with the Classics formed part of the intellectual baggage of a man of culture. However, as

P. Gay has stressed, 'There was nothing strenuous about this classicism'.¹ Indeed scholarship rarely extended beyond the possession of a handbook of Latin quotations, and the smattering of political speeches with Latin tags.²

The task of reclaiming material from Antiquity had been accomplished to a great extent by the plethora of fifteenth and sixteenth century humanists throughout Western Europe. André Chénier's own erudition certainly assimilated that of the Renaissance scholars. As we hear him paying eloquent homage to these scholars, the importance that he attached to their work is evident:

Quelques hommes d'une immense lecture, d'une érudition étendue, d'un jugement droit, d'un esprit vif et facile, portèrent le flambeau de la critique, . . . rassemblèrent tous les manuscrits des auteurs et, avec une sagacité rare, s'efforcèrent de nous faire lire les ouvrages antiques tels qu'ils étaient sortis des mains qui les avaient composés.³

The already considerable scholarship was increased during the eighteenth century by scholars and philologists who continued the efforts of the Renaissance humanists. They were devoted to the search for lost manuscripts, to textual criticism and exegesis, and their annotated editions of the Classics provided material for the Neo-classical writers to interpret in their own particular fashion. It was a period of great advances in this field. Representative of these scholars was Richard Brunck of Strasbourg, whose efforts were directed towards the collation of manuscripts and the revision of Greek texts. His major publication under the title Analecta⁴ comprises epigrams from the Greek Anthology, together

¹ P. Gay, The Enlightenment: an Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967, p.40.

² Ibid.

³ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.662.

⁴ Analecta veterum poetarum graecorum, editore Rich. Fr. Phil. Brunck. Argentorati, apud Jo. Gothofr. Bauer et socium, bibliopolas, 3 vols., 1772-1776.

with works by Callimachus and the bucolic poets. J.E. Sandys notes that he also edited, 'three plays of Aeschylus, seven of Euripides, and the whole of Aristophanes (1783) and Sophocles (1786-9)'.¹ No less scholarly were the efforts of the foremost Hellenist Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard d'Ansse de Villosion, who was the first to draw attention to the great importance for Homeric studies of a manuscript and scholia in the library of St. Mark's in Venice. In addition, there were also available to the French editions of the Classics, annotated in Latin, by the Dutch scholars, Hemsterhuys, Valkenaer, and Ruhnken. André Chénier fully partook of this reawakening of classical scholarship, not only by his contact with such men as Brunck and Villosion, but by his own thorough studies. We investigate later the way in which he collected his literary materials from Antiquity, and his formidable display of erudition.² His copies of the Classics include editions by contemporary scholars as well as those of European scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Gronovius, Vossius, Lipsius, Broukhusius, Bentley, etc.). Chénier carefully weighed the merits of the various commentaries, and enjoyed textual and literary criticism. He read the Classics meticulously, not only as a poet but as a scholar.

The insight into the ancient world from such editions was for the specialist and could, of necessity, only reach certain sectors of society, yet there was a wide interest in Antiquity in a larger section of the public. This was satisfied by the increase in the number of translations of classical authors. The popularity of such translations is beyond doubt. As a commentator in L'Année littéraire complained:

Nous ne trouvons plus d'ouvrages originaux dont l'examen puisse intéresser les lecteurs & piquer leur curiosité, tandis que nous pouvons à peine suffire à la foule de traductions qu'on voit éclore chaque jour. [sic]₃

¹ J.E. Sandys, A History of Classical Scholarship, 3 vols., Cambridge University Press, 1903-1908, Vol. II, p.395.

² See chapter III below.

³ L'Année littéraire, 1777, 2, pp.248-249.

Another point must be borne in mind, namely the improvement in the actual translations; as W.T. Conroy reminds us:

Not only were the translations more numerous, but they were also more precise and more faithful to the sense of the originals. For the first time, translating was regarded as a respectable occupation, in no way demeaning or degrading to the translator. . . . The combination of more sensitive minds and of increased technical knowledge brought to bear on the text produced for the eighteenth century translations in which a more precise and more faithful image of the classical author showed forth.¹

In chapter IV we refer to the numerous translations of the Latin Love Elegy that appeared at this time and to the merits of these works. Our investigations indicate that the translations were still bound by the concepts of morality and style of their own day. It was still permissible, and indeed necessary, to adapt the text, and to omit sections that were thought improper. Although we suggest that André Chénier must have read some of the current translations, especially of the elegies, it is unlikely that he set great store by them; his approach to Antiquity was far too scholarly and purist. He points out with reference to Caro, Machetti, and Pope:

Je crois pouvoir dire que les poèmes anciens dans ces excellentes traductions ressemblent à ce vin qu'Ulysse donne au Cyclope, dont une mesure mêlée dans vingt mesures d'eau parfumait encore la bouche; mais ceux qui lisent les originaux boivent le vin pur.²

The knowledge of the Ancients that filtered through to a wider audience by means of translations was reinforced by the vogue for historical works concerning Greece and Rome. Although E. Gibbon's The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776) is the supreme achievement of

¹W.T. Conroy Jr., 'Diderot's Essai sur Sénèque', in Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, edited by Th. Besterman, Vol. CXXXI, Banbury, Oxon., 1975, pp.19-20.

²Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.646.

this enthusiasm, we may note, in France, Abbé de Mably's Observations sur les Romains (1751) and Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce (1766), C.-J. F. Hénault's Annales romaines ou Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire romaine (1756), and Cousin-Despréaux's Histoire générale et particulière de la Grèce (16 vols.), (1780-1789).

The second half of the eighteenth century thus obtained considerable information from editions and translations of the literary works of the Ancients and from modern studies. Nevertheless, the plastic qualities of André Chénier's poetry, his frequent references to the 'Emblèmes antiques' found in Ezechiel Spanheim's commentary on Callimachus, published in 1697¹ and accompanied by reproductions of ancient coins and bas-reliefs, and his enthusiasm for a Grand Tour to Greece and Rome, suggest that the rediscovery of Antiquity through its literature was not in itself sufficient. At this period there was indeed a general demand for a more concrete and physical representation of Antiquity, and this need was expressed in the growing importance of archaeology, and in the powerful appeal of Greece and Rome as centres of pilgrimage. Beyond reading, men craved for direct contact with the evidence of Antiquity in situ.

The development of archaeology had been a gradual process. L. Bertrand cites a ruling in 1706 of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres already dedicating this body to research in the discipline of

¹Callimachi hymni, epigrammata et fragmenta, ex recensione Theodori J.G.F. Graevii, cum ejusdem animadversionibus. Accedunt N. Frischlini, H. Stephani, B. Vulcanii, P. Voetii, A.F. Daceriae, R. Bentleyi commentarius, et annotationes viri illustrissimi Ezechielis Spanhemii. . . Ultrajecti, apud Franciscum Halmam, Guilielmum Van de Water, bibliopolas, 2 vols., 1697. The fact that Chénier studied Spanheim's reproductions of ancient coins and bas-reliefs is seen in his notes for 'Hermès': 'Emblèmes antiques dont on peut choisir quelques-uns pour les employer in Δ . . . La Paix couronnée d'épis: At nobis Pax alma veni spicamque teneto. Et dans une médaille que cite Spanheim sur Callimaque'. (Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', IV, iv, 3, pp.53-54. Walter, 'Hermès', ch. II, p.414). For a full discussion of this topic see Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, pp.281-286.

archaeology, and especially to the branches of numismatics and epigraphy.¹ The copious mémoires of the Académie illustrate the methods of research and the extent of the erudition. Although the dissertations reveal the popularity of studying ancient monuments, mosaics, coins, and inscriptions, the Académie also seems to have devoted time to insoluble problems, such as Larcher's Conjectures sur Cadmus (1785).² It is highly questionable whether the work undertaken by this specialist institution engendered enthusiasm amongst the general public: the style of the mémoires is often abstruse, and there is a marked concentration on minutiae rather than attempts at synthesis.³ The notable exception is the influential Abbé J.-J. Barthélemy, member of the Académie des Inscriptions and Keeper of the Cabinet des Médailles du Roi. His popular book, the Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce (1788),⁴ had the great merit of making specialized information available to a wide readership. Barthélemy chose the framework of the novel in which the Jeune Anacharsis travels through Greece for twenty-six years (363-337 B.C.), and gives his 'spontaneous' impressions of all

¹ "Elle travaillera encore sans délai à l'explication de toutes les médailles, médaillons, pierres et autres raretez antiques et modernes du cabinet de Sa Majesté, comme aussi à la description de toutes les antiquitez et monuments de France. . . . Comme la connaissance de l'antiquité grecque et latine et des auteurs de ces deux langues est ce qui dispose le mieux à réussir dans ce genre de travaux, les académiciens se proposeront tout ce que renferme cette espèce d'érudition, comme un des objets les plus dignes de leur application". (L. Bertrand, La Fin du Classicisme et le retour à l'Antique dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, Paris, Hachette, 1897, p.46).

² See M. Badolle, L'Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy (1716-1795) et l'Hellénisme en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1926, pp.166-169.

³ 'Que de pages hérissées de la plus effroyable érudition, présentée sans tact, ni mesure'. (M. Badolle, *ibid.*, p.171).

⁴ J.-J. Barthélemy, Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce, dans le milieu du IV^e siècle avant l'ère vulgaire, 5 vols., Paris, Debure, 1788.

aspects of Greek society, customs, institutions, religion, and politics. However fragmentary and artificial this device now seems, we must allow the success of Barthélemy in vulgarizing erudition, making Antiquity come to life, and giving details that only his considerable scholarship could permit. When Chénier was at the French Embassy in London, he was in close contact with the ideas of the Abbé, for the chargé d'affaires was none other than François Barthélemy, nephew of Jean-Jacques who had supervised the former's studies in Paris. It would be inconceivable that Chénier did not discuss the scholarship of the Abbé during this period.¹

Great popular excitement was aroused by the reopening by Charles III, the Bourbon King of Naples, of excavations at Herculaneum in 1738 and Pompeii in 1748. These excavations were to stimulate an interest in archaeology that extended far beyond the confines of the Académie des Inscriptions. The dramatic nature of these excavations, the unearthing of everyday objects from the past, was intensified by the aura of secrecy and intrigue surrounding the two cities.² Although the major finds had been gathered together in the Portici Museum by 1765, the 'official' publication of excavations, Le antichità di Ercolano, was only commissioned in 1757 and finished in 1792, and even then it was difficult to obtain. Moreover the sites and their treasures were jealously guarded to prevent

¹P. Dimoff believes that the description of the feast of Lycus in André Chénier's bucolic poem, 'Le Mendiant', was inspired by the Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis, Vol. II, ch. xxv. (Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.276). See also C. Kramer, 'André Chénier et le Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis', Necphilologus, 31, 1947, pp.167-172.

²M. Badolle ascribes the impact of Herculaneum and Pompeii to this sense of intrigue: 'On se serait bientôt lassé d'une découverte qui eût été sans secret; mais l'attrait du mystérieux se mettant de la partie, et aussi le plaisir de déjouer la surveillance des fonctionnaires de Portici, chacun ouvrait mieux ses yeux en visitant le fameux musée ou les chantiers d'Herculanum'. (M. Badolle, *ibid.*, p.154).

attempts to forestall this publication. Notes could not be taken at Portici until at least 1775, and then only under supervision.¹ The drawings in the publication by Cochin le Fils and Bellicard (1754) are from memory:

S'il m'avoit été permis de copier d'après nature toutes les curiosités qu'on a tirées d'Herculanum, & que l'on voit dans le Palais du Roi des deux Siciles, j'aurois fourni aux amateurs d'antiquités des desseins de plusieurs objets, dont je n'ai pu me rappeler assez exactement les formes pour leur en faire part. [sic]₂

André Chénier never visited Herculaneum and Pompeii, nevertheless he reflects the great expectations kindled by the finds:

Si les livres trouvés à Herculaneum renfermaient ces ouvrages que nous regrettons, on pourrait dire que le Vésuve ne les a ensevelis dans ses cendres et sous terre que pour nous les garder et les cacher au temps et à la main des barbares.³

Even so, for some visitors, the discoveries proved disappointing: the wall-paintings in particular did not seem to tally with the classical cult of beauty exalted by Winckelmann, and it was suggested that they dated from Nero's reign, when art was in decline.⁴ We should therefore be wary of

¹ J. Seznec, 'Herculaneum and Pompeii in French Literature of the Eighteenth Century', Archaeology, 2, Boston, Massachusetts, 1949, pp.150-158, p.151.

² Cochin le Fils et Bellicard, Observations sur les Antiquités de la ville d'Herculanum avec quelques réflexions sur la peinture et la sculpture des Anciens; et une courte description de quelques Antiquités des environs de Naples, Paris, Jombert, 1754, pp.31-32.

³ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.661.

⁴ 'Le Thésée & les autres tableaux de grandeur naturelle sont foibles de couleur & de dessein; il y a peu de génie dans leur composition, & toutes les parties de l'art y sont dans une médiocrité à peu près égale'. (Cochin et Bellicard, *ibid.*, pp.59-60).

'On doit juger. . . en comparant ces deux Statues [equestrian statues of the Balbi] avec les Peintures d'Herculanum, que l'art du Statuaire y avoit été porté à un degré de perfection bien supérieur à celui du Peintre. Tout ce que l'on y a trouvé de fragmens de Peinture, & sur-tout dans les Morceaux d'une certaine étendue, étoit, comme nous l'avons dit, en général très-foible, d'un Dessin presque toujours incorrect, & sans nulle idée de couleur & d'harmonie. . .'. (R. de Saint-Non, Voyage Pittoresque ou Description des Royaumes de Naples et de Sicile, 5 vols., Paris, 1781-1786 Vol. I, part II, p.36).

overstating the importance of Herculaneum and Pompeii. They should not be designated as the origin of the antique revival as Badolle, however grudgingly, contends:

En tout cas, les fouilles elles-mêmes ne mériteraient pas de nous retenir, si les esprits n'avaient pas été peu à peu amenés par elles à s'intéresser aux oeuvres de l'antiquité tout entière, et l'on voit bien là ce qu'il y a parfois de futilité à l'origine des modes intellectuelles ou artistiques.¹

J. Seznec seems nearer the mark when he emphasizes that:

The date of 1748 is a fatal date, in the sense that it seems to divide the century very neatly into two halves for the convenience of literary historians. In the first half, the interest and feeling for antiquity are asleep; then, suddenly, come the great discoveries, which shake the world, and the Sleeping Beauty awakes. Things are not that simple, nor that clear.²

We should rather see the discoveries as a further addition to the century's expanding knowledge of Antiquity.

The interest generated by the discoveries helped to open the way for more direct contact with the past. Increasing numbers of travellers, both scholars and dilettantes, made pilgrimages to Rome, and, for the more intrepid, to Magna Graecia, where some were awestruck by the Doric architecture of Paestum and the Sicilian temples.³ Greece also attracted visitors, but in lesser numbers. Italy, as always, provided the short-cut to Greek civilization. The evidence of the appeal of the classical world is

¹ M. Badolle, *ibid.*, p.154.

² J. Seznec, *ibid.*, p.150.

³ See R. de Saint-Non's description of the Temple of Concord, Agrigentum, Sicily: 'Cet Edifice, élevé sur une Eminence naturelle, est certainement un des plus beaux Monumens qui nous soit resté de l'antiquité, du plus grand effet sous tous les aspects, & d'une conservation rare & précieuse'. (*Ibid.*, Vol. IV, part I, p.210).

in the numerous publications, especially the engraved folios, describing the monuments of Greece and Rome, and these enabled the information, though often of varying merit, to be disseminated to a wide audience.¹ One such publication was that of the influential antiquarian, the Comte de Caylus.² As early as 1716 Caylus, seized by wanderlust, had visited Italy and Asia Minor. On his return to Paris, he began his life-long work of collecting ancient objects, culminating in the publication of his seven-volume Recueil d'Antiquités égyptiennes, etrusques, grecques et romaines. His correspondence with Le Père Paciaudi in Rome³ reveals the zeal of the antiquarians of the day, giving an insight into their methods, and into the increasing and illegal traffic throughout Europe of smuggled antiquities.⁴

¹ (1) Cochin et Bellicard, *ibid.*, 1754.

(2) Julien David Le Roy, Les Ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce: Ouvrage divisé en deux parties, où l'on considère, dans la première, ces monuments du côté de l'Histoire, et dans la seconde du côté de l'Architecture, Paris, Guerin et Delatour, 1758.

(3) Hugues d'Hancarville, Antiquités etrusques, grecques et romaines, tirées du Cabinet de M. Hamilton, Envoyé extraordinaire de S.M. Britannique en cour de Naples, 4 vols., Naples, 1766-1767.

(4) Jean Barbault, Recueil de divers monumens anciens répandus en plusieurs endroits de l'Italie, dessinés par feu Monsieur Barbault, peintre pensionnaire du roi à Rome, et gravés en 166 planches avec leur explication historique pour servir de suite aux monumens de Rome ancienne, Rome, Bouchard et Gravier, 1770.

(5) P.A. Guys, Voyage littéraire de la Grèce, ou Lettres sur les Grecs anciens et modernes, avec un parallèle de leurs mœurs, second edition, 2 vols., Paris, la Vve Duchesne, 1776.

(6) R. de Saint-Non, *ibid.*, 1781-1786.

(7) M.G.F.A. Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce, 2 vols., Paris, 1782, 1809.

(8) J. Barbault, Monumens antiques, ou collection choisie d'anciens bas-reliefs, et fragmens égyptiens, grecs, romains, et etrusques; représentant les cérémonies religieuses, sacrifices, mariages, bacchanales, querres, batailles, et autres objets qui ont rapport à la mythologie et à l'histoire de ces anciens peuples, . . . Rome, Bouchard et Gravier, 1783.

² Tubières de Grimoard de Pestels de Levis, Comte de Caylus, Recueil d'Antiquités égyptiennes, etrusques, grecques et romaines, 7 vols., Paris, Desaint et Saillant, 1752-1767.

³ Comte de Caylus, Correspondance inédite du Comte de Caylus avec le P. Paciaudi, théatin (1757-1765) suivie de celles de l'Abbé Barthélemy et de P. Mariette avec le même, ed. Ch. Nisard, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1877.

⁴ 25 December, 1759: 'Je vous garderai d'autant plus le secret sur les morceaux d'Herculanum, non-seulement parce que je le sais garder, mais qu'il est un moyen de faire des vols plus considérables, et pour lesquels j'ai, je vous l'avoue, la plus grande vocation'. (*Ibid.*, part I, p.114).

His was a disparate collection where the worthless mixed with the valuable. He even spurned the polished and flawless,¹ acquiring instead common articles of everyday usage, especially broken vases and potsherds, in order to fulfil his aim of investigating the techniques used in making them:

Je vous prie toujours de vous souvenir que je ne fais pas un cabinet, que la vanité n'étant pas mon objet, je ne me soucie point de morceaux d'apparat, mais que des guenilles d'agate, de pierre, de bronze, de terre, de verre, qui peuvent servir en quoi que ce soit à retrouver un usage ou le passage d'un auteur, sont l'objet de mes désirs.²

His methods were sharply attacked by the Philosophes, in particular by Diderot, who fiercely criticized the 'anticomane' for his superstitious adulation of the debris of the past, and for his lack of discernment.³

J. Seznec interprets this antagonism between Diderot and the antiquarians:

'il trouvait chez eux une conception de l'Antiquité en contradiction avec la sienne'.⁴ Diderot's own knowledge was culled from the Classical

Tradition and not from 'les antiquités', everyday trifles.⁵ André Chénier, like Diderot, focussed his attention on the literature of the Ancients but did not overlook the factual evidence that the archaeology of Caylus could provide.

¹ 28 August, 1758: 'Je vous ai témoigné du dégoût pour les morceaux de belle conservation, ses froids Apollons, ces belles prétendues Vénus, etc. . . je compare les belles antiquités aux belles dames et aux beaux messieurs dont la toilette est complète, qui arrivent dans une compagnie, se montrent et n'apprennent rien; au lieu que je retire quelquefois d'un morceau fruste, que je comparerai en ce cas à un homme crotté et qui marche à pied, le sujet d'une dissertation et l'objet d'une découverte'. (Ibid., p.9).

² 12 February, 1758. (Ibid., p.4).

³ See J. Seznec, Essais sur Diderot et l'Antiquité, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957, pp.79-96.

⁴ Ibid., p.84.

⁵ J. Seznec, 'Herculaneum and Pompeii in French Literature of the Eighteenth Century', Archaeology, 2, Boston, Massachusetts, 1949, p.154.

Due to the influence of such men as Caylus and Mariette it became essential for apprentice artists to visit Rome to finish their education. The attraction of Rome for antiquarians and dilettante travellers was, as a result, increased in the field of the arts, and Rome became the focal point for painters and sculptors from all Europe.¹ In Rome, the artists contemplated the art of Antiquity; they enthusiastically visited the numerous collections at the Museum Pio Clementino, Villa Borghese, Villa Albani, etc., measured Roman monuments, and constantly copied the immense collections of reproductions of ancient statuary.² It is important to note some of the statues that were venerated: the Laocoon (carved in Rhodes, 25 B.C.), the Apollo Belvedere (a Roman marble copy of a Hellenistic bronze), the Dying Gladiator (a Roman copy of one of the statues from a monument set up in Pergamum, 230 B.C.), and the Farnese Hercules (by the Athenian sculptor Glycon, first century B.C.). Seznec is observant in his comment:

Ce qui frappe le plus le spectateur moderne, c'est l'absence des plus belles et des plus pures oeuvres grecques, qui n'ont été découvertes que depuis.³

Indeed the eighteenth century seemed to render equal and indiscriminate homage to statuary from different periods. It was imagined that traces of Greek art were to be found everywhere in Italy, and no distinction was made between Hellenistic and Roman art, and the authentic art of Ancient Greece. Greek art was, in fact, seen through Roman copies.

Diderot knew the importance of visiting Italy for writers and for men

¹ Amongst them were G. Piranesi, A. Mengs, H. Robert, G. Hamilton, A. Canova.

² For a detailed study of this topic see, L. Hauteceur, Rome et la Renaissance de l'Antiquité à la fin du dix-huitième siècle, Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 105, Paris, 1912.

³ J. Seznec, Essais sur Diderot, *ibid.*, p.23.

of culture:

On devient rarement grand écrivain, grand littérateur, homme d'un grand goût, sans avoir fait connaissance étroite avec les Anciens. . . . Pareillement, il est rare qu'un artiste excelle, sans avoir vu l'Italie.¹

For poets and artists the knowledge accumulated from such visits could, in the 'twinkling of an eye', be converted into creative understanding. Two outstanding examples spring to mind, Edward Gibbon and Jacques-Louis David. During his stay in Lausanne, Gibbon 'read almost all the Latin Classics in prose and verse', and 'made some progress' in Greek literature',² but it was later, in Rome, that he was sufficiently moved to envisage writing The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire:

At the distance of twenty-five years I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the Eternal City. After a sleepless night, I trod with a lofty step the ruins of the Forum; each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Caesar fell, was at once present to my eye; and several days of intoxication were lost or enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute investigation.³

For Gibbon one specific moment provided the inspiration:

It was at Rome, on the fifteenth of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted fryars were singing Vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the City first started to my mind.⁴

J-L. David also felt the surge of enthusiasm that was to be the turning point in his career, an experience that he may well have recounted to his friend André Chénier. He had gone to Rome originally as a disciple of the

¹ D. Diderot, 'Salon de 1767', 1798, in Oeuvres complètes de Diderot revues sur les éditions originales. . . . par J. Assézat, 20 vols., Paris, Garnier, 1876, Vol. XI, p.241.

² E. Gibbon, The Autobiographies of E. Gibbon, printed verbatim from hitherto unpublished mss., . . . ed. J. Murray, London, J. Murray, 1896, p.297.

³ Ibid., p.267.

⁴ Ibid., p.302. A similar sense of renewal was experienced by Goethe during his Italienische Reise, 1786.

Rococo. It seems that his journey to Naples with Quatremère de Quincy (1779) produced the great master of Neo-classical art. According to Miel:

Ce séjour d'un mois avec un jeune et studieux antiquaire détermina sa vocation, ses yeux se dessillèrent et il fut un autre homme; il s'écriait à chaque pas devant chaque monument: 'j'ai été opéré de la cataracte'.¹

André Chénier participated in the general excitement; he felt the magnetism of the Grand Tour: 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce. O terres, mères des arts, favorables aux vertus'.² Although he never in fact reached Greece, he journeyed to Rome as yet another Neo-classical pilgrim. But there is a major distinction. The Grand Tour did not change Chénier's outlook. For him it brought the fulfilment of ambitions nurtured since his birth in Constantinople.

B. The interpretation of Antiquity: the Neo-classical aesthetic

André Chénier's classical scholarship required a specific interpretative framework to transform it into poetry. His particular interpretation sprang from the ethos created by the ideals of the Philosophes carried through into the arts by the Neo-classicists. He must be seen in the midst of the intellectual ferment created by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and by the artists of his time. The revival of Antiquity forms a logical conclusion to the aspirations of the loose grouping of Philosophes who, in their demands for the reform of society, were 'united on a vastly ambitious program, . . . of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom'.³ P. Gay has underlined the appeal of the Ancients for these 'modern Pagans', stressing

¹L. Hauteceur, *ibid.*, p.156, quoting Miel's comments on David (1834).

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 6, ll.1-2, p.15.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', II, ll.1-2, p.535.

³P. Gay, The Enlightenment: an Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967, p.3.

their authentic affection for the Classics and, at the same time, their willingness to exploit Antiquity to destroy, in their 'dialectical struggle for autonomy', their own Christian inheritance.¹

The society these engagés wished to establish was one where humanitas, pietas, and virtus would have pivotal importance. Their zealous pursuit of truth therefore had the strong moral dimension exemplified by Diderot. J-J. Rousseau might also have spoken for the movement, and for its later disciple, André Chénier, in his Discours sur les sciences et les arts, when he insists:

J'emploierai uniquement dans cette discussion la simplicité et le zèle d'un ami de la vérité et de l'humanité, qui met toute sa gloire à rendre hommage à l'une, et tout son bonheur à être utile à l'autre.²

Their aspirations necessitated the use of missionary zeal and confidence to eradicate the Christian ethic. Their ideals led to an onslaught against the status quo ante, against what they regarded as the centuries of Christian domination, founded upon the evils of superstition, bigotry, prejudice, and intolerance engendered by feudalism and scholasticism. Their aim was to secure the triumph of humanity in a world freed from, in André Chénier's terms, 'la plus épaisse et. . . la plus ignorante barbarie'.³

In this struggle for a modern resurgence, the Philosophes, just as Chénier was to do, turned to the Ancients for succour. Strengthened by a belief in cyclical history, they interpreted Antiquity as a previous manifestation of humanitas and reason, an age that had been conducive to the development of their own ideals. This sense of identity was with a carefully chosen Antiquity, the Antiquity of Lycurgus, Socrates, Lucretius, Cicero,

¹ P. Gay, *ibid.*, p.xiii.

² J-J. Rousseau, 'Discours sur les sciences et les arts', 'Préface d'une seconde lettre à Bordes', in Oeuvres complètes de J-J. Rousseau, ed. B. Gagnebin et M. Raymond, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 3 vols., Dijon, Gallimard, 1959-1964, Vol. III, p.107.

³ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.649.

Seneca, and the paragons of virtue in Plutarch and Tacitus.¹ It was the Antiquity of simplicity, of martyrs to the truth, of conquest over superstition, and of questioning, critical minds. It is noteworthy in this connection that Chénier could see in the past close links between virtue, moral action, and literature, as detailed in his eulogy of Cicero:

. . . toujours dans une activité laborieuse et bienfaisante, au sénat, au camp, chez lui, protégeant les bons, poursuivant les méchants, repoussant les Parthes, développant à ses lecteurs l'art de bien parler qu'il pouvait regarder comme sien, ou embellissant les préceptes de la sagesse de cette éloquence divine qui était sa langue naturelle, il ne cessa pas un seul instant de rendre service à la patrie, à la vertu, au genre humain, et de bien mériter des lettres qui avaient si bien mérité de lui.²

When Chénier describes himself as 'le citoyen Archiloque Mastigophore' in his Iambes,³ he is making explicit an identification with the Ancients that had already been expressed by the Philosophes, as in Diderot's identification of himself with Seneca.⁴

During the period of the Enlightenment humanitarian ideals, based on nature and the Ancients, pervaded every aspect of society. In politics,

¹P. Gay, *ibid.*, pp.72-126.

²Walter, *ibid.*, p.658.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Iambes', I,3, p.265.
Walter, 'Iambes', II, p.189.

⁴W.T. Conroy Jr. has investigated the nature of this assimilation and shown that Diderot's Essai sur Sénèque is 'less an attempt to recreate an historical reality than a determined effort to substantiate a preconceived viewpoint'. He argues that Diderot, by a conscious process of mitigation and omission, makes Seneca the epitome of the philosopher who is motivated by a devotion to the public weal, who is disinterested in wealth and power. Conroy stresses that it is clearly a self-apologetic work, and quotes Diderot, 'C'est autant mon âme que je peins, que celles des différents personnages qui s'offrent à mon récit'. (W.T. Conroy Jr. 'Diderot's Essai sur Sénèque', in Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, ed. Th. Besterman, Vol. CXXXI, Banbury, Oxon., 1975, pp.70 and 106).

See also J-J. Rousseau's identification with ancient heroes as he read Plutarch: 'Sans cesse occupé de Rome et d'Athènes; vivant, pour ainsi dire, avec leurs grands hommes, né moi-même Citoyen d'une République, et fils d'un pere dont l'amour de la patrie étoit la plus forte passion, je m'enflamois à son exemple; je me croyois Grec ou Romain; je devenois le personnage dont je lisais la vie'. (J-J. Rousseau, 'Les Confessions', in Oeuvres complètes, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p.9).

it gave the impetus to revolution, and Chénier himself was involved in this in his later career. This must be borne in mind although we cannot extend the scope of this thesis into such areas. In literature and the visual arts, the Enlightenment provided the stimulus for Neo-classicism where the search for truth and beauty in art was no less revolutionary in intent. When discussing Chénier's literary principles we perceive that he was constantly striving for such renewal and perfection within the elegiac genre. In this he shows himself as the consummation of the ideals of the Neo-classical reaction against the decadence of an over-refined, hedonist Rococo.

In order to achieve a definite programme of reform the first credo developed by the movement was a belief in the regenerative force provided by the return to nature. This precept meant for men of Chénier's day that art should represent the eternal laws inherent in nature and in human nature in particular. The Elégies, with an insistence on freedom, tranquillity, simplicity, and the rehabilitation of natural passions, give a poetic realization to such ideas.

Similarly we find in the Elégies that Chénier accepted the summation of the beliefs, thrashed out in Neo-classical writings, of le beau idéal. The discussions centred upon the definition of nature and argued that it should be such that it would ennoble and embellish reality. They suggested, therefore, that a process of selection and combination was necessary to achieve pure beauty in its ideal form. Abbé Batteux put forward a germane concept:

Faire un choix des plus belles parties de la nature,
pour en former un tout exquis, qui fût plus parfait
que la nature elle-même, sans cependant cesser d'être
naturel.¹

¹ Abbé Batteux, Cours de Belles - Lettres ou Principes de la littérature, nouvelle édition, 4 vols., Paris, Desaint, Saillant et Durand, 1753, Vol. I, p.9.

Louis Racine advanced the discussion by contrasting le vrai simple and le vrai idéal:

On distingue dans l'imitation deux sortes de Vrai, le simple & l'idéal. Le premier représente la nature telle qu'elle est; le second l'embellit, non en lui prêtant une parure étrangère, mais en rassemblant dans le même point de vûe sur le même objet plusieurs beautés qu'elle a dispersées sur des objets différens. C'est dans la réunion de ces deux Vrais, c'est-à-dire, dans le Vrai composé que consiste la perfection de la Poësie & de la Peinture. [sic]₁

Seznec has shown that Diderot's contribution to the debate was, to some extent, different. In Diderot's view the attainment of ideal beauty proceeds more gradually, by a process of elimination and purification:

Ils [les Anciens] ont commencé par sentir les grandes altérations, les difformités les plus grossières, les grandes souffrances Avec le temps, par une marche lente et pusillanime, par un long et pénible tâtonnement, par une notion sourde, secrète, d'analogie, le résultat d'une infinité d'observations successives, dont la mémoire s'éteint et dont l'effet reste, la réforme s'est étendue à de moindres parties, de celles-ci à de moindres encore, . . .₂

The situation was summed up by one of the most celebrated and influential aesthetes of the latter half of the eighteenth century.³ The man who exalted the cult of ideal beauty above all others was J.J. Winckelmann

¹ L. Racine, 'Reflexions sur la poësie', in Oeuvres de Louis Racine, Paris, Desaint et Saillant, 1747, Vol. III, p.253.

² D. Diderot, 'Salon de 1767' in Oeuvres complètes, *ibid.*, Vol. XI, pp.12-13. Quoted by J. Seznec, Essais sur Diderot et l'Antiquité, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957, p.25.

³ 'Nous conseillons au jeune artiste de commencer par une lecture réfléchie des excellens écrits de Winkelmann'. (Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres, mis en ordre et publié par M. Diderot. . . Paris, Panckoucke, Supplément I, 'Antiques', by M. Sulzer, 1776, p.462).

in his discussion of Greek art. Although André Chénier¹ could not read Winckelmann's work in the original, he was able to consult the translation, Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité, published by M. Huber in 1781.² There he found once more the popular theory of selecting and combining beauties drawn from various sources. As an illustration there was the image of a gardener, later adopted by Chénier in 'L'Invention':³

Le naturel a ses défauts, le plus beau corps est rarement sans défaut: il a souvent des parties qu'on peut trouver ou supposer plus parfaites dans d'autres corps. Conformément à cette expérience l'Artiste intelligent procédoit comme un Jardinier industrieux qui ente sur une tige des greffes d'une meilleure qualité . . . Ce choix des belles parties & leurs rapports harmonieux dans une figure, produisirent la beauté idéale.⁴

He defines clearly what he means by ideal beauty: its essentials are simplicity and harmony: 'Toute beauté devient sublime par l'unité & par la simplicité. . .'.⁵ In its expression there must therefore be serenity and tranquillity: 'Le calme est l'état le plus convenable à la beauté, comme il l'est à la mer. . .'.⁶ Winckelmann saw this incarnation of pure beauty in Greek statuary, and his descriptions are a proof of the sincere, passionate, and enthusiastic fervour of his vision. His description of the

¹ For a discussion of the influence of Winckelmann see P. Dimoff, 'Winckelmann et André Chénier', R.L.C., 21, 1947, pp.321-333.

² J.J. Winckelmann, Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité par M. Winckelmann, traduite de l'allemand par M. Huber, 3 vols., Leipzig, Breitkopf, 1781.

³ See chapter VI, p.258 below.

⁴ J.J. Winckelmann, *ibid.*, Vol. II, p.45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.92.

Apollo Belvedere indeed provides a fine example of the interpretative, lyrical, and emotional framework into which Antiquity was placed. It is so much a part of André Chénier's poetic ethos that it demands quotation almost in entirety:

De toutes les productions de l'Art qui ont échappé à la puissance du tems, la statue d'Apollon est sans contredit la plus sublime. L'Artiste a conçu cet ouvrage sur l'idéal . . . Sa stature est au dessus de celle de l'homme, & son attitude respire la majesté. Un éternel printemps, tel que celui qui regne dans les champs fortunés de l'Elisée, revêt d'une aimable jeunesse les charmes mâles de son corps, & brille avec douceur sur la fiere structure de ses membres. Tâchez de pénétrer dans l'empire des beautés incorporelles, cherchez à devenir créateur d'une nature céleste pour élever votre ame à la contemplation des beautés surnaturelles: car ici il n'y a rien qui soit mortel, rien qui soit sujet aux besoins de l'humanité. Ce corps n'est ni échauffé par des veines, ni agité par des nerfs: un esprit céleste, répandu comme un doux ruisseau, circule pour ainsi dire sur toute la circonscription de cette figure. Il a poursuivi le Python, . . . De la hauteur de sa joie, son auguste regard, pénétrant dans l'infini, s'étend bien au-delà de sa victoire. Le dédain siege sur ses lèvres, l'indignation qu'il respire gonfle ses narines & monte jusqu'à ses sourcils. Mais une paix inaltérable est empreinte sur son front, & son oeil est plein de douceur, . . . Semblables aux tendres rejettons de la vigne, ses beaux cheveux flottent autour de sa tête divine, comme s'ils étoient légèrement agités par l'haleine des Zephirs: ils semblent parfumés de l'essence des Dieux & attachés négligemment sur le sommet par les mains des Graces. A l'aspect de ce prodige de l'Art j'oublie tout l'univers; je prens moi-même une position plus noble pour le contempler avec dignité. De l'admiration je passe à l'extase. [sic]¹

This quotation typifies in a supremely lyrical way the Neo-classical concept of le beau idéal as accepted and put into practice by André Chénier. The acceptance is in ecstatic prose rivalling the intensity of feeling shown by Winckelmann:

Eh bien donc, prends-moi ce ciseau, amollis-moi ce bloc de marbre, fais-moi des héros, fais-moi un dieu, étends-moi les voûtes de ce front où le monde a été conçu; creuse-moi la vaste place de ces yeux qui lancent l'éclair; ouvre-moi

¹J.J. Winckelmann, *ibid.*, Vol. III, pp.195-196.

cette bouche éloquente où résident la justice et la vérité. Lance-moi ce corps divin, incorruptible, nourri d'ambrosie, ce corps tout d'esprit et de flamme. Laisse là ces rides, ces sillons, ces plis de la peau, vestiges profonds des maladies et de la décrépitude, avant-coureuses de la mort. Fais-moi un corps qui n'ait éprouvé, qui ne craigne nul changement, nul outrage des années. A travers cette chair transparente, montre-moi des nerfs, des muscles harmonieusement unis, que nul effort n'ait fatigués, pleins de cette vigueur tranquille, de ce calme inséparable de celui qui peut tout ce qu'il veut. Que j'y voie couler, non du sang, mais de cette liqueur divine, cet ichôr, dont parle Homère, qui coule dans les veines des dieux immortels.¹

Chénier and his contemporaries were convinced that the Ancients had already made the necessary selection from nature that constitutes le beau idéal and that they provided outstanding models for their artistic movement. It was an easy progression to accept the imitation of such models. This did not imply an 'artificielle ou superstitieuse imitation',² expressed in blind reverence or malicious parodies. For originality to emerge imitation had to be complemented by invention, and, without originality, imitation is reduced to plagiarism. To avoid this the poet must be imbued with the spirit of aemulatio, 'la hardiesse du génie' in Marmontel's distinction between the plagiarist and the true artist:

Ce qui fait des imitateurs un troupeau d'esclaves, servum pecus, c'est l'inertie de leur esprit, et cette basse timidité qui ne sait qu'obéir et suivre. De tous les caractères le plus essentiel à celui qui prend pour modèle un homme de génie, c'est la hardiesse du génie: et comment ressembler à celui qui ose, si on n'ose pas comme lui.³

In eighteenth century discussions on this theme, Jaucourt, in the Encyclopédie,

¹Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.651-652.

²J. du Bellay, L'Olive, 'Au Lecteur', second edition, 1550, in L'Olive. Texte établi avec notes et introduction par E. Caldarini, Textes littéraires français, Genève, Droz, 1974, p.50.

³J.F. Marmontel, 'Imitation', 'Eléments de Littérature', in Œuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition, 18 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XIV, p.133.

quotes L. Racine, 'Enrichir ce qu'on lui prend, & lui laisser ce qu'on ne peut enrichir',¹ but omits the vital idea of Racine's next sentence: 'On doit combattre contre celui qu'on imite, & tacher de le vaincre'.² Chénier did not omit this idea: it is the 'audendum est' of 'L'Invention', a sine qua non of the Elégies.

An essential technique and method needed for originality was contaminatio. This implied the eclectic process of selecting the best ideas and phrases of various ancient authors and uniting them in a new way into an original poem. This was, for Chénier, the drawing of inspiration from his models and allowing his imagination to range far and wide from their learned pages:

Là je reviens toujours, et toujours les mains pleines,
Amasser le butin de mes courses lointaines:
Soit qu'en un livre antique à loisir engagé,
Dans ses doctes feuillets j'aie au loin voyagé;
Soit plutôt que, passant et vallons et rivières,
J'aie au loin parcouru les terres étrangères,
D'un vaste champ de fleurs je tire un peu de miel.³

This method of approaching the authors was formulated in a longstanding comparison, that of the poet and the bee. The poet, according to Ronsard, 'c'est un homme, lequel comme une mouche à miel delibe & succe toutes fleurs, puis en fait du miel & son profit selon qu'il vient à propos'.⁴ The Chevalier de Jaucourt, again imitating L. Racine, draws the same parallel for the readers of the Encyclopédie: 'Il ne faut pas même s'attacher

¹ Encyclopédie, *ibid.*, Vol. VIII, 'Imitation', by Le Chevalier de Jaucourt, p.568.

² L. Racine, *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p.105.

³ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des lettres', I, i, ll.24-30, p.208.
Walter, 'La République des lettres', I, ll.13-19, p.470.

⁴ P. de Ronsard, 'Préface sur la Franciade', in Oeuvres complètes de P. de Ronsard, édition critique avec introduction et commentaire par P. Laumonier, Société des textes français modernes, Paris, Didier, 1950, Vol. XVI, p.336.

tellement à un excellent modele, qu'il nous conduise seul & nous fasse oublier tous les autres écrivains. Il faut comme une abeille diligente, voler de tous côtés, & s'enrichir du suc de toutes les fleurs'.¹

L. Bertrand has totally misunderstood the technique of contaminatio. It is trivialized in his criticism to 'la chasse aux expressions',² and the poet 'n'est plus qu'un scribe qui calligraphie les oeuvres des autres'.³ The idea of a calligrapher would have been anathema to Chénier and his contemporaries, who unanimously condemned plagiarism.

There could be no charge of mere calligraphy at the highest level of imitation inventrice. The artists of the eighteenth century required of this principle, at its best, the complete absorption of their ancient models. This involved the modern artist capturing the very essence of his model, so that it becomes a part of him and imitatio is raised to the level of subconscious reminiscence. This was frequently portrayed in metaphors of 'innutrition',⁴ which had a long literary history, and which Du Bellay uses when he advocates: 'Immitant les meilleurs aucteurs grecz, se transformant en eux, les devorant, et, apres les avoir bien digerez, les convertissant en sang et nourriture'.⁵ Chénier gives poetic treatment to the principle, leaving the reader in no doubt that the process is of vital importance in the poet's understanding of imitation inventrice:

¹ Encyclopédie, *ibid.*, p.568.

² L. Bertrand, La fin du Classicisme et le retour à l'Antique dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, Paris, Hachette, 1897, p.221.

³ *Ibid.*, p.179.

⁴ E. Faguet, André Chénier, Les grands écrivains français, Paris, Hachette, 1902, p.43.

⁵ J. Du Bellay, La Deffence et illustration de la lanque francoyse. Edition critique par H. Chamard, Paris, Fontemoing, 1904, p.99.

Comme aux bords d'Eurotas. . .
 Lorsqu'une épouse est près du terme de Lucine,
 On suspend devant elle, en un riche tableau,
 Ce que l'art de Zeuxis anima de plus beau;
 Apollon et Bacchus, Hyacinthe, Nirée,
 Avec les deux Gémeaux leur soeur tant désirée;
 L'épouse les contemple; elle nourrit ses yeux
 De ces objets, honneur de la terre et des cieux;
 Et de son flanc, rempli de ces formes nouvelles,
 Sort un fruit noble et beau comme ces beaux modèles;
 (V. Oppien, Cynég., l.1, v.357).
 ainsi je veux qu'on imite les anciens, etc.¹

C. The artistic achievement of Neo-classicism

We have examined the classical scholarship and aesthetics of the second half of the eighteenth century which form the background to André Chénier's Elégies. The most difficult task is to look at the actual artistic achievements of the poets and painters of the period. This is especially so for Neo-classicism, for Chénier was certainly not alone in his ability to recreate Antiquity in original works of art. It would be impossible to describe in detail in this context the successes in the visual arts. The stern morality of J-B. Greuze's L'Empereur Sévère reproche à Caracalla (1769), J-F-P. Peyron's Cimon, fils de Miltiade (1782), and J-L. David's series of martyr paintings, represented by Marat Assassiné (1793), together with B. Gagneraux's linear drawings based on Greek vases (1792) are some examples. In architecture the achievements include the monumental work of J.M. Peyre's L'Odéon (1782), and the geometric simplicity of C-N. Ledoux's Barrière de la Villette (1785-1789).

Similarly it would be impossible to discuss the work of all the poets who were Chénier's contemporaries. There were the dilettante poets such as Rochon de Chabannes, Verninac de Saint-Maur, and Rigoley de Juvigny, whose writings fill the pages of the Almanach des Muses and the Mercure de France, and who did not possess sufficient talent to transform their material

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Poésies diverses', IV, i, ll.1-12, p.311.
 Walter, 'Vers sans attribution précise', II, ll.1-12, pp.608-609.

from Antiquity into true poetry. But there were others who come closer to the standards reached by Chénier. In the final chapters of this thesis there will be the opportunity to make comparisons between the Elégies of Parny, Bertin, and Le Brun, and those of André Chénier, (and let us not omit to note that Le Brun was most influential in Chénier's poetic formation). These Neo-classical writers used the same Latin models and literary principles as Chénier, but there can be no doubt of the supremacy of his Elégies.

There is in fact little comment from Chénier about contemporary poets, artists, or architects, though it is inconceivable that he did not know of their work through his friendships with poets such as Le Brun and the Marquis de Brazais, and the popular art exhibitions of the Paris Salon. Chénier moved in the cultured environment of the grande bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. However, in one specific case Chénier made judgements upon a fellow artist, for he saw exemplified in the paintings of J-L. David the principles that he felt were innate in art and poetry. In David's work he recognized the qualities that he was trying to capture in his own poetry, and Chénier knew that he himself was part of a movement that linked both the visual arts and literature: he even went so far as to acknowledge David as the leader of a group of kindred spirits. Future generations have indeed been entirely justified in regarding David and Chénier as the supreme figures of Neo-classicism.

Chénier's friendship with David is well documented, and is indicated by the painting La Mort de Socrate, exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1787. This painting was commissioned by Louis Trudaine de Montigny, the elder of the Trudaine brothers, who were Chénier's closest friends.¹ The poet must have shown considerable interest in the work for he composed an epigram about it in Greek: 'J'avais fait pour le tableau de David une ép.

¹See chapter II, pp. 73-74 below.

grec. dont ensuite il n'a pas fait usage. . .'.¹ It is also often recounted that Chénier had a part in influencing the actual composition of the painting. 'It was André Chénier who found the pose for Socrates. He stretches out his hand to the cup of poison, but is too absorbed in his thoughts to take it, and so manifesting his indifference to death'.² If this is true, it is all the more interesting that, in his article, 'Sur la peinture d'histoire' (1792),³ Chénier should choose precisely the pose, 'Socrate continuant son discours et tendant le bras au hasard pour recevoir la ciguë',⁴ to emphasize the genius of David.

In the same article Chénier selects further 'grandes pensées' from David's most famous paintings:

. . . le vieil Horace armant ses trois enfants, et son petit-fils, âgé de cinq ans, se mordant la lèvre et contemplant ce spectacle avec une sorte d'envie; Brutus seul dans sa famille et comme exilé dans sa maison, et ne trouvant d'asile qu'à l'ombre de la déesse à qui il vient de faire de si grands sacrifices; . . . le Serment du Jeu de paume, une des plus belles compositions qu'aient enfantées les arts modernes, dans laquelle une multitude de figures, animées d'un même sentiment, concourent à une même action, sans confusion et sans monotonie.⁵

Chénier appreciates the energy and the stern morality of the compositions, but notes also their touches of pathos.

Chénier's eulogies are not surprising. David's painting of the Serment des Horaces (1784-1785), composed on his return to Rome, is a masterpiece of the Neo-classical ethos.⁶ The painting, as do the Elégies

¹ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Théâtre', II, iii, 5, p.273.

² A. Sérullaz in The Age of Neo-classicism, The Fourteenth Exhibition of the Council of Europe, The Royal Academy and the Victoria and Albert Museum, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972, pp.41-42.

³ Walter, 'Sur la peinture d'histoire', pp.284-288.

⁴ Walter, *ibid.*, p.287.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ For analyses of this painting see:

R. Rosenblum, Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art, Princeton University Press, 1967, pp.68-72.

H. Honour, Neo-classicism, Pelican Books, Penguin, 1968, pp.34-36.

A. Brookner, Jacques-Louis David, London, Chatto and Windus, 1980, pp.68-80.

of Chénier, subsumes the three phases of the creative rediscovery of Antiquity already noted. The first stage, the accumulation of knowledge of Antiquity, is reflected in the requirement of archaeological veracity. This is apparent in the dress, in the baseless Doric columns, and in the impression that the painting has been taken from a marmoreal bas-relief.¹ The grieving sisters of the Horatii remind one of the funeral stelae of Ancient Greece. Moreover David has synthesized the various facets of the late eighteenth century's interpretation of Antiquity and stamped upon them his own particular innovative genius. The strong didactic current of the age is the hallmark of the subject, which depicts with fervour the oath of the Horatii to sacrifice themselves pro patria in single combat with the Curiatii. Although the account of the episode is derived from Livy, the actual moment chosen by David is not mentioned by the Latin historian. The theme is therefore a forcible and absolute demand for virtus and pietas, for the denial of self in favour of the needs of the common weal, and for the ideal of strength in adversity. Dignity, courage, and determination suffuse the entire painting. At the same time the Neo-classical requirement that such exempla should have an element of pathos is fulfilled by the contrast between the father and sons' resolution and the women's grief and resignation, and by the grandson looking on in wonder, all of which so appealed to André Chénier. The painting can clearly be classified as belonging to the proselytizing zeal of Neo-classical morality, with the demand for le beau idéal both in style and subject. The human figures are idealized in their anatomy, in their expressions, and in their draperies, as everything is focussed on the supreme action of the oath. The figures of the Horatii and their father are transfixed in statuesque firmness. The moment of tension has been caught and purified in a way that would have enthused Winckelmann. The composition, the placing of the

¹ H. Honour, *ibid.*, p.36.

figures, also speaks of the simplicity, purity, and clarity so highly prized at the time. The static figures of the three Horatii, grouped on the left in stark symmetry, are isolated from the three women on the opposite side of the canvas. The walls and the floor have no decoration save the rectangular pattern of the stones and tiles. The three arches and columns exemplify the severity of Neo-classical architecture, and the primary colours intensify the clarity of the whole.

The best assessment of David's work comes from André Chénier who praised:

La grandeur et la majesté des compositions; la finesse et la vérité exquise des expressions, variées suivant l'âge et le sexe; la fidélité dans tous les détails, et cette beauté de formes, cette simplicité facile dans les draperies, cette naïveté à la fois touchante et austère, et ces grâces franches et nobles qui sont de tous les temps et de tous les lieux.¹

It would not be difficult to transfer these words to Chénier and apply them to his Elégies. They are an epitome of the principles we have come to acknowledge as Neo-classicism and they open the way to a fuller understanding of the elegiac achievement of André Chénier.

¹Walter, 'Sur la peinture d'histoire', p.287.

II

POETRY AND LIFE

There is no doubt that each of André Chénier's Elégies can be appreciated as a self-contained unit and successfully evaluated on its artistic merits alone. Yet how much greater is the enjoyment and how much more rewarding is the satisfaction to see in each creation the distillation of manifold forces - of innate poetic ability, of personal experiences, of knowledge and scholarship, and of a specific literary creed. If the Elégies are the products of such a fruitful alliance then, to do them justice, they should not be treated in isolation. In later chapters we shall show how Chénier delved into Antiquity to find themes and material for his Elégies, and examine the literary principles that fashioned his approach to his models, but initially a more general insight into his life is required. In Chénier's opinion the links between poetry and life are too important to be ignored:

Ainsi, dans ses écrits partout se traduisant,
 Il fixe le passé pour lui toujours présent;
 Et sait, de se connaître ayant la sage envie,
 Refeuilleter sans cesse et son âme et sa vie.¹

The poet's background, his heredity and environment, his parents, and also his birthplace, education, and friendships, constitute the major influences fostering and supporting his love of Antiquity and his poetic vocation. In addition, certain events of his life, his

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', X, ll.27-30, p.176.
 Walter, 'Varia', 'Epilogue', ll.27-30, p.615.

entry into Parisian society, his travels, and his mistresses, lead to the personal experiences that form the autobiographical framework - however elusive - of the Elégies.

Chénier was doubly fortunate that his natural talents as a poet were matched by his environment. Everything conspired to develop his strong vocation, and from an early age his life gave direction to his poetry and his poetry gave meaning to his life. Whether in bucolic, elegiac, or didactic vein, he constantly strove to create poems based on the Neo-classical ideals of beauty and truth, poems pervaded by sweetness and light.¹ Only at one stage of his career did events subvert Chénier from these poetic aspirations. As the French Revolution progressed poetry could no longer be the raison d'être of his existence, art could no longer be cultivated for its own sake. Instead, poetry became the vehicle for passionately held political beliefs. With the new literary form of the 'belliqueux l'ambe',² new discordant notes entered Chénier's poetry, new emotions of bitterness, cynicism, hatred, and revenge, as 'facit indignatio versum'.³ At the end of his life 'saeva indignatio'⁴ overtook him as he assumed the mantle of le poète engagé:

Contre les noirs Pythons et les hydres fangeuses
Le feu, le fer arment mes mains;
Extirper sans pitié les bêtes venimeuses,
C'est donner la vie aux humains.⁵

¹ See D.W. Welch, 'André Chénier: The Sweetness and the Light', in The Classical Tradition in French Literature, Essays presented to R.C. Knight, edited H. Barnwell et alii, London, Grant and Cutler, 1977, pp.217-227.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Iambes', I, 2, l.9, p.263.
Walter, 'Iambes', I, l.9, p.187.

³ Juvenal, Satires, I, l.79.

⁴ 'Ubi saeva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit'. (Jonathan Swift's epitaph on himself).

⁵ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.17-20.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.17-20.

F. Scarfe echoed the voices¹ of many when he suggested that Chénier 'only reached his full intellectual and moral stature during his struggle with the Jacobins',² and that in the final l'Ambe 'Chénier, arriving at last to the level of true heroism, which is self-forgetfulness, dedication against all the odds, transcended himself in his last lines, in which we see him at last not only as a great poet but a great man'.³ Indeed, critics have been tempted to speculate whether this sudden change of direction would have developed into a lasting feature of all his future poetry.⁴ In contrast, the present study is devoted to the exquisite delicacy and tenderness of the Elégies, and, consequently, this biographical survey does not advance beyond the moment when the Revolution so radically changed the nature of Chénier's poetic inspiration.

Before examining Chénier's Elégies, as they evolve from such a background, it is relevant to pause in order to clarify the implications of the complex relationship between poetry and life. There has long been a fallacious tendency in the studies of both the Latin elegiac poets and of André Chénier to confuse art and life completely. Where external evidence of the details of a poet's life is lacking, critics have too often put together a definite chronology based on scattered

¹ See, for example, J. Gausseron, André Chénier et le drame de la pensée moderne, Collection Alternance, Paris, Editions du Scorpion, 1963, and G. Walter, André Chénier, son milieu et son temps, Paris, Laffont, 1947.

² F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.92.

³ Ibid., p.355.

⁴ Scarfe's claim: 'what is a lesson for our own time is to watch a poet evolving from a conception of poetry as pure intellectual activity into a poetry of commitment which, breaking down an old aesthetic, includes the germs of an anti-poetry', (ibid., p.366), has been challenged by D. Welch who attempts to show that 'Chénier does not find a truly enduring place among the moderns, that, had he lived, he might well have looked for the inspiration and the strength to renounce the forces of anti-poetry, and that his most permanent commitment lay elsewhere - to the inexhaustible source of a positive and affirmative lyricism', (ibid., p.219), and this Welch maintains is to be found in the Bucoliques.

references in the poems themselves. This method is particularly applicable in the case of the Elegy since this genre of its very nature encourages apparently autobiographical statements. V. Loggins fell into this trap when he labelled André Chénier as 'one of the most autobiographical poets of all time'.¹ But to what extent does reality underlie every seemingly autobiographical detail in the Elégies ? It is certainly dangerous, for example, to try and turn the elegies composed for Lycoris, D'.z.n, and Camille into un journal intime of their relationships, and to accept every elegy at face value. Just as it is possible to compose an epitaph without inscribing it on a tombstone, so it is possible for Chénier to assume the persona of the exclusus amator, and to compose a paraklausithyron - or locked-door serenade - without actually having spent nights of discomfort on his mistress' doorstep. Chénier so often takes traditional erotic topoi from Antiquity that too many detailed assertions about the real nature of his emotional entanglements should be avoided. On the other hand, there is a distinct danger of over-reacting against any autobiographical interpretation, and of neglecting the information that can justifiably be derived from the Elégies. These poems do not spring from the intellect and imagination alone. Many of them do stem from personal experience, but it must always be borne in mind that, for a cultivated eighteenth century poet, personal experience could never be adequately expressed without reference to the Classical Tradition. It provided the framework which enabled Chénier to explore the drama of his entanglements with his mistresses, and to communicate events and experiences, whether factual or imaginary, in a universal way. In any case, in evaluating the Elégies, questions of real experience and sincerity are irrelevant. All that matters is the poetic reality

¹V. Loggins, André Chénier, his Life, Death and Glory, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1965, p. xi.

emerging from the successful concentration of natural ability, personal experience, and classical sources. In the lines:

C'est ainsi, promené sur tout cet univers,
Que mon cœur vagabond laisse tomber des vers.
De ses pensers errants vive et rapide image,
Chaque chanson nouvelle a son nouveau langage,
Et des rêves nouveaux, un nouveau sentiment:
Tous sont divers, et tous furent vrais un moment,¹

all three are locked together in a moment of inspiration in the timeless medium of the poem, whose beauty transcends the individual elements. This special moment of insight and creation that is fixed for eternity was symbolized again by Chénier in the image of the insect caught in the amber:²

Ainsi des hauts sapins de la Finlande humide,
De l'ambre, enfant du ciel, distille l'or fluide,
Et sa chute souvent rencontre dans les airs
Quelque insecte volant qu'il porte au fond des mers;
De la Baltique enfin les vagues orageuses
Roulent et vont jeter ces larmes précieuses
Où la fière Vistule, en de nobles coteaux,
Et le froid Niémen expirent dans ses eaux.
Là les arts vont cueillir cette merveille utile,
Tombe odorante où vit l'insecte volatile;
Dans cet or diaphane il est lui-même encor,
On dirait qu'il respire et va prendre l'essor.³

A. Early life: family and education

To trace the factors in Chénier's background and environment that stimulated his love of Greece and Rome and fostered a particular approach to his reading and imitation of classical authors, the starting point is the influence of his father and, even more importantly, of his mother. Louis and Elisabeth Chénier forged within their son a

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iv, ll.37-42, p.35.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXI, ll.37-42, p.73.

² Possibly based on Daubenton's article, 'Ambre-jaune', in the Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers. . . mis en ordre et publié par M. Diderot. . . 17 vols., Paris, Panckoucke, 1751-1765, Vol. I, pp.324-326.

³ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.239-250, pp.19-20.
Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.239-250, pp.128-129.

powerful double-edged attraction for Antiquity that was to be vital for his Elégies. From his parents he acquired both an objective and a subjective vision, for his father bestowed upon him a dedication to scholarly study, whereas his mother instilled within him a vibrant, emotional attachment to the past.

When Louis Chénier, at the instigation of his uncle Pierre Vallon,¹ set out in 1742 from Carcassonne to represent a textile firm in Constantinople, he provided his future son with a most unusual and exotic homeland. André Chénier was born in Le Han Saint-Pierre, Galata, Constantinople in 1762, but was only three when the family returned to settle in France in 1765. Few, if any, memories of his early life in Constantinople can have been imprinted directly on the poet's memory. Yet Chénier brought from Byzantium a uniqueness of feeling. It was part of him, whether he was singled out at school on the Sorbonne honours list by the designation 'constantinopolitanus', or whether he hailed his homeland in an elegy:

Salut, Thrace, ma mère, et la mère d'Orphée,
Galata, que mes yeux désiraient dès longtemps.
Car c'est là qu'une Grecque, en son jeune printemps,
Belle, au lit d'un époux nourrisson de la France,
Me fit naître Français dans le sein de Byzance.²

Chénier gloried all his life in his origins, and cultivated feelings of nostalgia, pride, and belonging for a distant, idealized homeland. Ironically, he never seems to have felt any affinity for the bustling, cosmopolitan Constantinople of his day; as a poet he felt his roots lay in the Constantinople of old, and in the city that united Greece and Rome.

¹For various documents concerning the Vallons see B.M.C. R.3. 11793. Pierre Vallon was in the blanket trade and was inspector for the Carcassonne region.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 2, ll.6-10, p.29.
Walter, 'Elégies', XIX, ll.6-10, p.72.

Throughout the twenty-three years that the father remained in Constantinople, rising to co-partner in the firm in 1747, being elected official representative of the French community in 1749, and acting as the commercial attaché to the French Ambassador, M. des Alleurs, until 1755,¹ Louis Chénier showed a devotion to study and a love of reading and scholarship that was passed on to his son, and which is so clearly in evidence in the Elégies. Even when, at the beginning of his stay in Constantinople, trade was sluggish because of the war with England, a letter sent back to Pierre Vallon in October 1746, shows how Louis Chénier combatted boredom by reading and writing, and how annoyed he was by the lack of facilities for his literary distractions:

Les choses sont de façon que tous moments remplis j'en aurois encore à perdre: j'en employe partie à la lecture a laquelle je me dévoue entièrement aujourd'hui. Je fais des Reflections et j'en écris aussy; mon etat ne s'accorde point a l'envie que j'ay toujours d'avoir une teinture des Belles Lettres. Je n'ay des livres qu'autant qu'on m'en prête et il est peu de gens assez complaisants pour le faire. [sic]₂

The letter describes the famine and the precarious authority of the Sultan.³

¹In May 1754 M. des Alleurs wrote to the Ministre de la Marine underlining Louis Chénier's qualities: 'Je ne puis assés me louer de la dextérité, de l'intelligence et des attentions du Sr. Chénier, premier député en exercice. . . L'expérience que j'ai fait de ses talens, et de son discernement, me le fait regarder comme le négociant le plus consommé de cette Echelle. Il est plus au fait qu'aucun de ceux que j'aye veu icy des lois et usages turques'. [sic]. (Archives Nationales, Correspondance consulaire, Turquie, quoted by S. Balayé, André Chénier. Catalogue d'exposition, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1962, p.2).

²B.M.C. R.3. 11793.

³'La grande sechéresse et les sauterelles ont si fort ravagé la campagne des environs et de tout le levant que la Récolte du blé a été presque perdue. La disette est générale. Dans cette capitale qui fourmille de monde on a mis dans le pain du sègle et des legumes et avèc si peu de discrétion que le peuple en a témoigné du mécontentement on fait souvent dans pareil cas le mal. Le G.S. [Grand Sultan] est sans enfants et inhabille ce qui rend son throné chancelant la loy mahométane n'admettant point un règne stérille pendant sept ans celuy cy regne depuis 14 l'on craint avec raison quelque émeute dans ce cas il n'y a rien à craindre pour les étrangers'. [sic] (B.M.C. R.3. 11793).

With the death of M. des Alleurs, and the appointment of the new Ambassador, the Comte de Vergennes, it appears that Louis Chénier lost his privileged position, and his application to be Chargé d'affaires commerciales was turned down. In 1765 he returned to France, and in 1767 was appointed Consul General in Morocco, leaving his family in France. Apart from a short period, between 1773 and 1775, Louis Chénier remained in isolation until 1782. During this time he again showed his powers of observation in letters to the Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, which discuss different questions of mores, of government, of the administration of taxes, of trade, of naval and military equipment, of agriculture.¹ The letters reflect the long hours of research carried out by Louis Chénier. So serious was this devotion to duty and meticulous historical research² that on his return to France he published, in 1787, his Recherches historiques sur les Maures et histoire de l'empire du Maroc,³ and, in 1789, Révolutions de l'empire ottoman et observations sur ses progrès, sur ses revers et sur l'état présent de cet empire.⁴ Without doubt André

¹The B.M.C. R.3. 11801 contains copies of unpublished letters sent by Louis Chénier to the Minister. They are remarkable for the sombre colours painting life in Morocco: 'Tout est permis dans un gouvernement où tout appartient au despote et où la volonté du maître fait le principe et la lois. Ce système d'oppression n'a pas ici les mêmes inconveniences qu'il aurait ailleurs, parce que les peuples s'habituent au joug sous lequel ils sont nés. Ce sont des esclaves superstitieux gouvernés par l'opinion, qui respectent dans les volontés arbitraires du maître les decrets suprêmes de la providence'. [sic]. (Extract of a letter sent from Salé, 28 May 1776). For other details of this correspondence see P. Grillon, 'La Correspondance du Consul Général Louis Chénier, chargé d'affaires de France au Maroc, 1767-1782', Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, X, 1963, pp.65-76.

²Dimoff has cited the various texts used in the Recherches historiques sur les Maures: 'Le Juqurtha de Salluste, l'ouvrage de l'Arabe Léon l'Africain, les recueils de vieux récits de voyages des Italiens et des Portugais, et les relations plus récentes de Mouette et de la Martinière, l'Afrique de Marmol, traduite par Perrot d'Ablancourt, l'Origine des Cherifs de Diégo de Torrès'. (La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, pp.11-12).

³Louis Chénier, Recherches historiques sur les Maures et histoire de l'empire du Maroc, 3 vols., Paris, Bailly, 1787.

⁴Louis Chénier, Révolutions de l'empire ottoman et observations sur ses progrès, sur ses revers et sur l'état présent de cet empire, Paris, Bailly, 1789.

Chénier inherited his father's gifts of perception and especially his careful methods of study. The commentary on the elegy, 'Animé par l'Amour',¹ is as much a commentary on the debt he owed to his father as it is on the poem itself. Perhaps too the father provided the son with an example of independence, pride, and tenacity despite the lack of funds, which was to be a recurring theme in the Elégies.

It was to his mother that the son turned for a more imaginative, emotional, and lively attachment to the past. André Chénier believed implicitly that his mother was Greek, and this direct link with the ancient world was to prove crucial in his development as a poet. He was convinced that he carried within himself the inheritance of Antiquity, that through his veins ran the inspiration that would enable him to revive, and to rival, the poetic achievements of Greece and Rome. The Classical Tradition was not something to be learned, admired, and imitated from afar; it was part of his very being. Nevertheless, as in so many aspects of Chénier's career, problems of fact and interpretation give rise to different ideas as to the exact nature of the rôle that Elisabeth Chénier played. The fecund consequences for Chénier's poetry of a belief in a Greek birthright are not in question, it is the belief itself that is in doubt. The arguments as to whether Elisabeth Chénier was, as her son unequivocally claimed, '. . . une Grecque',² have raged for so long, and are of such interest, that they cannot be overlooked in a reasoned assessment of the inspiration she gave to her son.

The academic arguments apart there can be no doubt that Elisabeth Chénier felt that she was Greek, and that, exiled from the culture of her early life, she became 'more Greek than the Greeks'. The intensity of her passion for all things Greek could not but infect her son. As his mother

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, pp.40-44.
Walter, 'Notes et variantes', pp.870-873.

²See note 2 p.53 above.

considered herself to be Greek, so André Chénier accepted his inheritance. In him was inspired the sentiment that only in Greece, and even more, only in Ancient Greece, could pure beauty be found, and with that a true representation of his own spirit. In the son, love of Greece became a dedication to Greece and then to Rome, whose poets continued, developed, and rivalled their Greek inheritance. It is vital for our study to understand that, in looking at Latin authors, Chénier felt that he was remaining faithful to his Greek birthright. This is particularly important for an appreciation of his Elégies: these are in thought, in structure, and in intention, an attempt to implant into French poetry the themes, the ideas, and the forms of Greece as expressed (not without originality) by the Roman elegiac poets. As he proudly declared in an elegy to Le Brun, in which he was imitating Propertius:

J'ose, nouveau pontife aux antres du Permesse,
Mêler des chants français dans les chœurs de la Grèce.¹

When Elisabeth Chénier settled in Paris in 1773 whilst her husband pursued his career in Morocco, she was able to play on her Greek origins to gain access into Parisian society. For her guests she demonstrated her knowledge of the Greek language, both ancient and modern, and of the customs and legends of Greece, and in so doing developed a Salon which became famous for its Greek 'extravaganzas'. She sang Greek songs, accompanying herself on the mandoline, painted Greek scenes, and danced wearing flowing Greek costumes.² In our own times,³ as Elisabeth Chénier's

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, ll.3-4, p.127.

Walter, 'Épîtres', II, 3, ll.3-4, p.138.

²See the painting by Cazes fils of Mme Chénier in Greek costume: B.M.C.

³Previously Elisabeth Chénier was described as being radiant, witty, cultured, and even scholarly. See L. Becq de Fouquières who described her as 'belle, spirituelle et séduisante. . . Instruite, érudite même. . .', and spoke of the Salon as a place 'où elle brillait par son esprit à la fois juste et vif, par son imagination riche et délicate'. (L. Becq de Fouquières, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier. Edition critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, p. xxi). For a contrast see J-M.

Greek origins have come into dispute, so critics have tended to surround her with an aura of artificiality, of play-acting, and vanity, even of hypocrisy. This was not apparent to her contemporaries. The Salon attracted many famous visitors, scholars, poets, and artists. Perhaps some came for the sake of curiosity, or because Greece was in fashion, but many came not only to be entertained but to see a living demonstration of their interest in Antiquity. As Villoison wrote in 1775 inviting Charles-Augustus, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and his brother to the Salon: 'Je puis vous assurer que c'est le plus beau commentaire des pierres gravées du cabinet de M. le duc D'Orléans'.¹ Without doubt many of the aspects cultivated by Madame Chénier smack of a certain frivolity and a dedication to contemporary fashion, but the insinuation of frivolity fades as it is translated by her son into the tangible images of the Bucoliques and the Elégies. The Salon became a living expression of what John Keats could only conjecture in his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn':

What men or gods are these ? What maidens loth ?
 What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?
 What pipes and timbrels ? What wild ecstasy ?²

In the atmosphere of the Salon the classical education that Chénier was receiving at the Collège de Navarre was strengthened by his contact with some of the leading scholars and artists who were his mother's guests.

3 [contd.]

Gerbault's comments: 'Est-ce à dire qu'André eût à souffrir des habitudes un peu trop voyantes de sa mère. Rien n'autorise à l'affirmer, si ce n'est, peut-être le silence dans lequel il s'est enfermé à son sujet. Mais on le devine partagé, déchiré entre les amitiés de collègue. . . et la douceur un peu plus molle, un peu équivoque de ce foyer où des artistes, des écrivains, ont pris la place du père, et où flotte le goût musqué des choses d'Orient, attirantes et écoeurantes tout à la fois'. (J-M. Gerbault, André Chénier, Ecrivains d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, 5, Paris, Seghers, 1958, p.60). For J. Fabre, Chénier's introspection is a reaction against his mother's character: 'Sa gravité, son exigence de sincérité, sa discrétion profonde, son horreur des succès faciles, le mutisme dont il enveloppa son génie, ne pourraient-ils s'expliquer en partie comme une réaction contre ce qu'il entraînait d'un peu bruyant et factice dans la vogue de Mme Chénier ?'. (J. Fabre, Chénier, Connaissance des Lettres, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.9).

¹The letter is quoted by Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, p.77.

²John Keats, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', ll.8-10 in The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H.W. Garrod, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1939, p. 260.

On the evidence of family traditions Dimoff¹ has drawn up an impressive list of many scholars from Europe, together with artists and writers. It was possibly the Hellenist Pierre-Augustin Guys, who had known the family well in Constantinople, who introduced Madame Chénier into the literary and artistic circles of Paris. He had already published in 1771 his Voyage littéraire de la Grèce.² In his second edition, published in 1776, he added two letters written by Madame Chénier, a 'Lettre sur les danses grecques' and a 'Lettre sur les enterrements grecs'.³ The scholar and Hellenist Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard d'Ansse de Villoison, member of the Académie des Inscriptions, was also an assiduous visitor to the Salon, and he introduced several other scholars and important guests: the scholar, Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin,⁴ the numismatist, Heinrich Sanders,⁵ who provided a vivid description of the Salon, Charles-

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, p.78.

² P.-A. Guys, Voyage littéraire de la Grèce, ou lettres sur les Grecs anciens et modernes, avec un parallèle de leurs moeurs, 2 vols., Paris, la Vve Duchesne, 1771.

³ A third letter: 'Lettre d'une dame grecque à une dame de Paris sur les tombeaux des Grecs modernes' was published in the Mercure de France, 15 November, 1778, pp.126-137. It seems that Guys played a major rôle in the transcription of these letters. The B.M.C. has manuscripts, letters, and copies of Chénier's poems (B.M.C. R.3. 11812 and R.3. 11816) that show that Mme Chénier's spelling was very weak, and that she wrote in a large and heavy hand, e.g. 'La muse byzantine à son frère (il prend cette qualité dans plusieurs de ses peti poeme'. [sic] (B.M.C. R.3. 11816).

⁴ 'Le soir, M. de Villoison me conduisit chez M. . . . dont la femme et la belle-soeur sont grecques de naissance. J'ai été charmé des renseignements qu'ils m'ont donnés sur l'état actuel de la Grèce. Le véritable profil grec que j'ai trouvé à cette dame m'a singulièrement frappé'. (B.N. nouvelles acquisitions françaises 10.040, quoted by Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, p.78).

⁵ 'Madame Chénier. Encore une figure singulière. Une Grecque en plein Paris, née à Constantinople, qui parle grec, lit d'anciens poètes grecs, parle bien français, quoique lentement, sait peu d'anglais, apprend l'allemand: en somme, une femme de grande intelligence. . . Madame de Chénier est encore vêtue à la grecque de la façon la plus naturelle. . . A ma grande joie, elle déféra au voeu de M. Villoison et au mien, et nous chanta, tout à fait à la grecque, une ode d'Anacréon avec sa fille. . . Elle eut la complaisance de danser avec sa fille une danse grecque fort belle, mais fatigante et parfaitement adaptée à un costume long et flottant'. (Heinrich Sander's Beschreibung seiner Reisen durch Frankreich, die Niederlande, Holland, Deutschland und Italien, 1783, quoted by F. Baldensperger, 'Un Témoignage allemand sur la mère d'André Chénier en 1777', R.L.C., 21, 1947, pp.89-92, pp.90-92).

Augustus, hereditary Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and his brother,¹ and also, possibly, the Hellenist Richard Brunck. Then there was the poet Ponce-Denis Ecouchard Le Brun, to whom further reference will be made, and the artist who painted portraits of the Chénier family, signing them 'Cazes le fils'.² The congenial atmosphere of the Salon that helped to give Chénier an easy commerce with Antiquity fired his imagination. He could always be 'en Italie, en Grèce, . . . terres mères des arts',³ without leaving his Parisian home. Chénier's mind must have been stimulated by the discussions of Antiquity, of philology, archaeology, numismatics, of painting and literary aesthetics. Here was produced his affiliation to the ancient world and to the Neo-classical ideas that was to be continued throughout his life, and which is the keystone of his Elégies.

Initially, however, whilst his mother was slowly entering⁴ Parisian society and establishing her Salon, André Chénier, (at that time only three years of age), had been left somewhat unceremoniously in Carcassonne, possibly because of the precarious financial position of the family. It is

¹ 'Madame Chénier, cette si aimable Grecque, chez laquelle j'ai eu l'honneur de vous accompagner est son amie [Guys], et lui a adressé pour la seconde édition de cet ouvrage, une lettre fort curieuse et supérieurement écrite sur les danses grecques, qu'elle a longtemps dansées elle-même et que vous avez pu voir chez elle peintes de sa main. J'ai cru que cette lettre, qui ne sera publique de plus un an, pourrait vous intéresser; et, en conséquence, j'ai pris la liberté de vous l'envoyer ci-jointe. Vous y retrouverez les regrets d'Ariane abandonnée par Thésée, qu'elle a eu l'honneur de chanter en votre présence, avec ce ton triste que Son Altesse, Monseigneur votre frère, a si bien défini, lorsqu'il dit qu'elle faisait passer dans l'âme l'impression délicieuse d'une douce mélancolie et d'un sentiment profond'. (Letter dated 13 July 1775 from Villoison to Charles-Augustus, quoted by F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, pp. 11-12).

² See Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, p. 80, note 1, for the difficulty concerning the identity of the artist.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 6, l.1, p.15.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', II, l.1, p.535.

⁴ Walter points out that apart from Guys, no-one knew Elisabeth Chénier in Paris, that all the references to her Salon date from 1777 onwards, and that her first receptions must have been rather modest affairs: 'On peut donc supposer que, pendant les sept ou huit premières années de son séjour à Paris, Mme Chénier vivait dans une sorte d'obscurité honorable'. (G. Walter, André Chénier, son milieu et son temps, Paris, Laffont, 1947, p.33).

now generally accepted¹ that when in 1765 the family came from the Orient, they visited Carcassonne² before travelling to Paris. There they left André and the eldest son Constantin in the care of a prosperous draper, André Béraud, and his wife Marie, Louis Chénier's sister. A note by Constantin indicates that he stayed in Carcassonne for only eight months,³ whereas André Chénier seems to have stayed there, with some time spent in Limoux,⁴ until 1773 when his father, on leave from Morocco, brought him to Paris to rejoin the family. There are only two references to his childhood in Chénier's writings,⁵ and from them it is virtually impossible to estimate the influence of these years on his *Elégies*. There is no means of verifying J-M. Gerbault's modern psychoanalytical interpretation of the feelings of isolation often found in the poems:

¹For this opinion see Dimoff, Scarfe, Fabre. The early biographers were of a different opinion. Gabriel de Chénier, for example, believed that André Chénier went with the whole family to Paris, and that when he was eight, (1770), he went to spend a few months in Languedoc. (Gabriel de Chénier, ed., *Oeuvres poétiques d'André de Chénier avec une notice et des notes par M. Gabriel de Chénier*, 3 vols., Paris, Lemerre, 1874, Vol. I, pp.v-vi). This interpretation is demolished by documentary evidence; André Chénier's signature is found in a baptismal certificate dated June 12, 1771, and it is likely that he was present at the dedication of the bell of the church of Saint-Vincent, 'dédiée à M. André Béraud et à dame Marie Chénier, sous l'invocation de Saint-André'. (See F. Scarfe, *ibid.*, pp.7-8).

²Louis Chénier's family had been associated with Carcassonne and Limoux since the seventeenth century. It was in Limoux, for example, that Louis Chénier's father, Guillaume, had taken over a foundry, and in Carcassonne itself that Louis began his career in the textile trade. (See Dimoff, *La Vie et l'Oeuvre*, Vol. I, pp.3-9).

³'J'avais 7 ans. Débarqué à Marseille, mon père me conduit avec mon frère André chez sa soeur à Carcassonne. Au bout de huit mois, je suis conduit à Paris et au bout d'un mois après mis au collège Louis-le-Grand'. (B.M.C. R.3. 11798). This note also destroys Gabriel de Chénier's interpretation.

⁴The anecdote in prose 'En me rappelant les beaux pays' (Walter, 'Fragments littéraires', I, p.746) mentions a pilgrimage from Limoux to Notre-Dame de Marceille. It was perhaps in Limoux that the story recounted in the 'Essai sur les causes' (*ibid.*, pp.634-635) took place. In this Chénier mentions a 'tante Juliette', and a 'vieux père nourricier' of whom nothing is known.

⁵See previous note.

On se souciait peu, à l'époque, des ravages que pouvait exercer, dans une âme d'enfant, de tels déracinements. . . Sans doute certaines attitudes insolites de l'adulte nous deviendraient-elles transparentes si nous étions mieux renseignés sur les empreintes qui ont modelé sa jeunesse.¹

Yet the love of independence, so characteristic of the Elégies, might possibly be traced back to this period of separation. It would be pleasant, but not really plausible, to see J. Bertheroy's suggestion that 'aux rives éclatantes du Bosphore succédèrent bientôt devant ses yeux les paysages de l'Aude, vigoureux et colorés, baignés de cette lumière du midi de la France presque aussi limpide que celle de l'Orient',² reflected in the bright colours of the Elégies. The only reasonable idea, put forward by the Comtesse Jean de Pange,³ is that it was in the countryside around Carcassonne that Chénier's love of nature was awakened. As he claimed in an elegy:

Vous savez si toujours, dès mes plus jeunes ans,
Mes rustiques souhaits m'ont porté vers les champs.⁴

¹ J.-M. Gerbault, André Chénier, Ecrivains d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, 5, Paris, Seghers, 1958, p.56.

² J. Bertheroy, Eloge d'André Chénier, mémoire couronné par l'Académie française, Paris, A. Colin, 1901, pp.5-6.

³ See Comtesse J. de Pange, 'c'est devant les paysages du Languedoc qu'il a commencé à aimer les choses de la nature'. ('André Chénier, poète de l'amitié', R.D.M., 1959, pp.449-467, p.451).

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 1, ll.23-24, p.150.
Walter, 'Elégies', II, ll.23-24, p.56.

Perhaps a better understanding of Chénier's elegiac inspiration would shift this emphasis. The Latin poets Horace and Tibullus frequently revealed a longing to escape from the corruption and luxury of the town to the secluded simplicity of the countryside. It was, of course, a commonplace of classical literature. Was it not then that his experiences at Carcassonne put Chénier, at a later date, in the position of being able to understand and sympathize with such ideas ?¹

André Chénier was briefly united with his family in 1773, but almost immediately was sent away to boarding school, to the Collège de Navarre. During his holidays his imagination was kindled by the sights and sounds of his mother's Salon, but this was not enough. For a future poet who would found his beliefs on Neo-classical ideals and would produce elegies of a particular kind, a high standard of classical scholarship was vital. The Collège de Navarre provided him with this thorough grounding in classical literature and civilization. Moreover it was above all at school that Chénier's passion for Greece was extended to Rome. Greek was already under pressure in the schools, and even Rollin in De la Manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les Belles Lettres, published in 1726-1728, felt it necessary to justify the study of Greek,² while on the contrary the privileged position of Latin in the curriculum remained unchallenged.

¹The irony is that Carcassonne, which represents a phase in the poet's life which was really of no great importance for the development of his poetry, has become the centre for Chénier studies, for, although the manuscripts of Chénier's poems are housed in Paris, his library and documents concerning the family are all in Carcassonne. For details see bibliography, pp.467-468 below.

²'L'Université a bien senti que l'usage de cette langue étant maintenant réduit à l'intelligence des auteurs, sans que nous ayons presque jamais besoin ni de la parler ni de l'écrire, elle devoit principalement appliquer les jeunes gens à la traduction'. (Rollin, De la Manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les Belles Lettres par rapport à l'esprit et au coeur, 4 vols., Paris, Estienne, 1726-1728, Vol. I, p.100).

It is likely that André Chénier stayed at the Collège de Navarre until 1781. Here, in one of the most famous of the Collèges in Paris, he received the exceptional type of education¹ which was to be so crucial for his elegiac work. By the 1770's Latin no longer dominated the school curriculum² in the way that it had done since the Renaissance. In the seventeenth century all lessons had been carried out in Latin, and, in the first half of the century at least, pupils were obliged to speak in Latin. There was a strong emphasis on Latin grammar and the basic school exercises were Latin verse and prose composition. In contrast the study of French was not properly recognized, history was restricted to the knowledge of ancient and biblical times, and mathematics and such subjects as physics and natural history were taught by the teacher of philosophy. Port-Royal - fortunately for the young Racine - had been a rare exception, since pupils there read and wrote in French before Latin, and the first Latin grammar to be compiled in French was produced. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Rollin, whose educational theories had such an important effect on the Collèges of the University of Paris, advocated teaching in French, and a simplification of Latin grammar, with less time

¹For an analysis of French education and its development see: Abbé A. Sicard, Les Etudes classiques avant la Révolution, Paris, Didier, 1887; G. Snyders, La Pédagogie en France aux dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1965; D. Mornet, Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française, 1715-1787, fourth edition, Paris, A. Colin, 1947.

²The extent of the transformation varied according to the school. The Jesuit schools, for example, until their closure in 1762, had been particularly conservative, whereas the Oratorians were progressive. It is, perhaps, surprising to learn that even at the famous Collège Louis-le-Grand teaching was carried out until 1763 in Latin rather than in French.

devoted to prose and verse composition. The basic exercises were to be translation into French and analysis of texts, including questions of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and literary appreciation.¹ Although the archives from the pre-Revolutionary period at Navarre were destroyed, we may assume that this was the type of teaching in Latin that Chénier encountered, and that he would have been familiar with the authors that were most commonly studied in French schools at that time, i.e. Caesar, Cicero, Quintilian, Sallust, Plautus, Terence, Catullus, Vergil, Horace, Tibullus, Ovid, Juvenal, and Propertius. In 1778 in the concours général, an open competition for pupils of the Collèges throughout France, he gained a proxime accessit in translation from Latin into French.² Throughout his life he was to enjoy such studies, indulging not only in literary appreciation, translation, and verse composition but also in textual criticism.³

Fortunately, at the Collège de Navarre, Chénier's education was not by any means restricted to the study of the Classics. This Collège had been influenced by the spirit of the Encyclopaedists and aimed at giving an all-round education to its pupils. French was fully recognized and we know from 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe' that very early in Chénier's career,⁴ and perhaps even when he was still at Navarre, he was critically

¹ For an explication de texte ex Tuscul. Quaest., Lib. 5, no. 61, 62, see Rollin, ibid., pp.142-147. Rollin emphasizes the importance of this exercise: 'Tout ce qu'on peut desirer s'y trouve ce me semble en même tems: le fonds du Latin, l'application des regles, les mots, les pensées, les réflexions, les maximes, les faits; & un maître habile saura bien faire valoir tout cela' (p.142).

² F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, pp.15-16.

³ See chapter III, pp.153-165.

⁴ One of the notes from the commentary dates from 1781. (Walter, 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', pp.803-829).

analyzing Malherbe, and displaying a knowledge of Racan, Corneille, Racine, J-B. Rousseau, Boileau, and Voltaire. The exercise books of his brother, Louis-Sauveur Chénier show that in the teaching of history at Navarre the scepticism of the âge des lumières was prevalent.¹ The teaching of empirical philosophy had replaced the teaching of metaphysics, and Navarre could be proud of being the first school to have a class of experimental physics, in 1753. Emphasis was also placed on mathematics, astronomy, and the natural sciences. Such knowledge was obviously particularly relevant for Chénier in the composition of his poems 'Hermès' and 'L'Amérique', but it can be seen that an excellent general education of this type, which encouraged the cultivating and enquiring mind, must have had a considerable influence on his whole output.

During his time at the Collège Chénier's poetic talents began to appear. Looking back at a later date, in an elegy written to the Marquis de Brazais, he states that at sixteen he found his poetic vocation, nourished for him by nature and study:

A peine avais-je vu luire seize printemps,
 Aimant déjà la paix d'un studieux asile,
 Ne connaissant personne, inconnu, seul, tranquille,
 Ma voix humble à l'écart essayait des concerts;
 Ma jeune lyre osait balbutier des vers.²

This is confirmed by the evidence of two bucolic poems. The first, 'Le beau Xanthus succombe', is dated by Chénier to October 1778, and, as he notes, it is an 'imitation d'Homère. Il., l.IV, v. 473'.³ The second, 'Hâte-toi, Lucifer', is again dated by Chénier, this time

¹B.M.C. R.3. 11810. A comment on the Church in the eighth century claims: 'La superstition fille d'ignorance était la base de la Religion'.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, 1, ll.10-14, p.125.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', I, 1, ll.10-14, p.133.

³Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', IV, p.47.
 Walter, 'Bucoliques', XXI, pp.27-28.

to December 1778, and for this he makes a note that it is an 'imitation de la 8e Eglogue de Virgile'. At an unknown date Chénier modestly adds: 'J'avais 16 ans. Il y a quelques bons vers'.¹ It is significant that in his earliest known attempts at poetry Chénier turns to the two best-loved Greek and Roman authors. Taking the poem inspired by part of Vergil's eighth 'Eclogue', ll. 17-50, it is clear that the use of the word imitation does not mean translation: although it keeps closer to the original than many of the later poems, it can still be described as a free adaptation. This early poem contains several interesting stylistic devices indicating the way in which Chénier's poetic talent was to develop in the Elégies, and, although it has a pastoral setting, the vocabulary of betrayal in love is reminiscent of the vocabulary used in the 'autobiographical' setting of the Elégies.

The theme of both the French eclogue and its Vergilian counterpart is the same - a song of lament by a goatherd betrayed by his beloved. The first six lines of Chénier's version follow his Latin model very closely, (as is shown when various words in both are underlined), not only in thought but also in phraseology. All that is really lost is the Vergilian refrain that runs throughout the amoebaeon contest:

nascere praeque diem veniens age, Lucifer, almum,
 coniugis indigno Nysae deceptus amore
 dum queror et divos, quamquam nil testibus illis
 profeci, extrema moriens tamen adloquor hora.
 incipe Maenalius mecum, mea tibia, versus.²

Hâte-toi, Lucifer, que ta marche trop lente
 Nous ramène du jour la clarté bienfaisante.
 Trahi d'une perfide indigne de mes soins,
Dieux, quoique de son crime inutiles témoins,
 C'est cependant à vous qu'à mon heure dernière
 Je viens contre l'ingrate adresser ma prière.³

¹ Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', VI, pp.52-54.
 Walter, 'Bucoliques', VII, pp.9-10.

² Vergil, Ecloques, VIII, 17-21.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.1-6, p.52.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.1-6, p.9.

In lines 7 to 14, however, Chénier turns completely away from Vergil's Arcadian picture of nature's involvement in the loves of the shepherds:

Maenalus argutumque nemus pinusque loquentis
semper habet, semper pastorum ille audit amores
Panaque, qui primus calamos non passus inertis.¹

Instead, Chénier addresses 'Amour' directly using what seems, by comparison, rather stereotyped eighteenth century pictures of flowers and garlands:

Amour, tu me fus cher entre les immortels;
De roses mille fois décorant tes autels,
Et couronnant ton front de pieuses guirlandes,
A tes pieds j'épandis mes plus belles offrandes.
Que Mopsus, s'il le peut, t'en vienne dire autant.
Ta faveur m'était due: une ingrante pourtant
Goûte avec ce perfide une infidèle joie;
A des bras étrangers ses charmes sont en proie.²

Chénier then returns to the Vergilian text which suggests that the marriage between Mopsus and Nysa will be a symbol of unnatural union. It is not a translation for the imagery is changed and the details of Roman wedding ritual are omitted:

iungentur iam grypes equis, aevoque sequenti
cum canibus timidi venient ad pocula dammae.
Mopse, novas incide faces: tibi ducitur uxor.
sparge, marite, nuces: tibi deserit Hesperus Oetam.³

Bientôt au noir corbeau s'unira l'hirondelle:
Bientôt à ses amours la colombe infidèle,
Loin du nid conjugal, portera sans effroi
Au farouche épervier et son coeur et sa foi.⁴

The description of the hirsute appearance of the goatherd is closely followed, but then Chénier omits a beautifully wistful, nostalgic Vergilian

¹Vergil, *ibid.*, 11.22-24.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.7-14.
Walter, *ibid.*, 11.7-14.

³Vergil, *ibid.*, 11.27-30.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.17-20, p.53.
Walter, *ibid.*, 11.17-20, p.10.

scene where the goatherd first meets Nysa as she is gathering fruit:

saepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala
 (dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem.
 alter ab undecimo tum me iam acceperat annus,
 iam fragilis poteram a terra contingere ramos:
 ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error !¹

The French poet returns to his Latin forbear in his closing lines, introducing the legend of Medea, who, compelled by love, performed the inhuman act of murdering her own children.

Among the stylistic devices characteristic of Chénier's later elegies, and particularly in evidence in this eclogue, are numerous rhetorical devices whose usage he would have studied at school.² His poem uses exclamation, apostrophe, and questions, and shows a love of repetition, balance, and anaphora:

Dans le sang de ses fils, par l'Amour égarée,
 Une mère trempa sa main dénaturée,
 Une mère trempa sa détestable main.
 Mère, tu fus impie et l'Amour inhumain.³

Thus, two poems written in 1778 and 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', written in part in 1781, confirm the statement contained in a line of an elegy: 'Les délices des arts ont nourri mon enfance'.⁴ By the time the poet was nineteen, in 1781, and leaving the Collège de Navarre, his poetic vocation, and the direction it would take, seem to have been decided. The joyous dedication to the pursuit of poetic glory and, above all, to

¹Vergil, *ibid.*, ll.37-41.

²See Rollin, De la Manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les Belles Lettres par rapport à l'esprit et au coeur, 4 vols., Paris, Estienne, 1726-1728, Vol. I, pp.282-316.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.33-36.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.33-36.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 2, l.45, p.154.
 Walter, 'Elégies', I, l.45, p.55.

the composition of elegies, is triumphant in its crescendo of classical images:

Quand à peine Clothon, mère des destinées,
 A mes trois lustres pleins ajoute quatre années,
 Mon cœur s'ouvre avec joie à l'espoir glorieux
 De chanter à la fois les belles et les Dieux.
 Né citoyen du Pinde, et citoyen de Gnide,
 Avide de plaisirs, et de louange avide,
 Aux antres d'Apollon pontife initié,
 Aux banquets de Vénus convive associé,
 Au temple de Paphos, sur la lyre d'Orphée,
 Mes chants vont à Vénus consacrer un trophée.¹

B. Friends: personal and literary

André Chénier's schooldays were felicitous in yet another way for the development of his elegiac opus:

Abel, mon jeune Abel, et Trudaine et son frère,
 Ces vieilles amitiés de l'enfance première,
 Quand tous quatre, muets, sous un maître inhumain,
 Jadis au châtement nous présentions la main.²

It was at school that he made firm life-long friendships that are reflected in his Elégies. Firstly his friendships, based on mutual respect, enabled him to understand and express the theme of friendship that is found in the poetry of the Latin elegists, and provided him with addressees to whom some elegies could be dedicated, again following Roman patterns. His friends encouraged him to write poetry and they also made it possible for him to go on two tours of Europe that furnished new inspiration and materials for further elegies, since the friends that Chénier made at school were the sons of the oldest and wealthiest aristocratic families in France.

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', I, ll.1-10, p.3.
 Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', I, ll.1-10, p.544.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 2, ll.73-76, p.155.
 Walter, 'Elégies', I, ll.73-76, p.55.

There was Abel de Malartic de Fondat, to whom Chénier later addressed two elegies. The first, 'Abel, doux confident de mes jeunes mystères',¹ is an elegy in celebration of Spring. The second, 'Pourquoi de mes loisirs accuser la langueur?',² would suggest that Abel de Fondat was trying to encourage Chénier to abandon his mistress Camille and to return to the fulfilment of more serious poetic projects:

Tu veux m'ôter mon bien, mon amour, ma Camille,
 Mes rêves nonchalants, l'oisiveté, la paix,
 A l'ombre, au bord des eaux, le sommeil pur et frais.
 Ai-je connu jamais ces noms brillants de gloire
 Sur qui tu viens sans cesse arrêter ma mémoire ?
 Pourquoi me rappeler, dans tes cris assidus,
 Je ne sais quels projets que je ne connais plus ? . . .
 Au flambeau de l'Amour j'ai vu fondre mes ailes.³

Like so many of the elegies addressed to friends this poem is in fact an apology for composing love elegies:

Si je chante Camille, alors écoute, voi:
 Les vers pour la chanter naissent autour de moi.
 Tout pour elle a des vers ! Ils renaissent en foule;
 Ils brillent dans les flots du ruisseau qui s'écoule;
 Ils prennent des oiseaux la voix et les couleurs;
 Je les trouve cachés dans les replis des fleurs.⁴

Another pupil was François de Pange, son of one of the wealthiest landowners in France. He became a scholar devoting his whole life to study, reflecting the desire for encyclopaedic knowledge that prevailed in the eighteenth century. He had a passionate interest in Antiquity, and especially in Greece, and carried out lengthy research into religious and

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iv, 1, pp.141-142.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', IV, 1, p.146.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iv, 2, pp.142-145.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', IV, 2, pp.146-148.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.4-10 & 23, pp.142-143.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.4-10 & 23, pp.146-147.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.37-42, p.144.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.37-42, p.147.

social history which led him to studies of Persia, India, and China. He investigated the sciences, specializing in astronomy, and, during the Revolution, wrote pamphlets very close in thought to those written by Chénier himself. If we are to believe the Comtesse Jean de Pange, 'François de Pange ne fut pas comme d'autres, seulement le compagnon de plaisir, mais un conseiller, un guide et parfois même un inspirateur';¹ it is likely that several parts of Chénier's work were deeply influenced by contact with François de Pange, for example 'Hermès', 'L'Amérique', 'Histoire du Christianisme',² and the 'Notes sur la littérature chinoise'.³ Four elegies are addressed to François de Pange that revolve around the themes of study and pleasure. In the first, 'De Pange, le mortel dont l'âme est innocente', Chénier exalts pleasure and echoes the traditional carpe diem themes:

Si les destins deux fois nous permettaient la vie,
L'une pour les travaux et les soins vigilants,
L'autre pour les amours, les plaisirs nonchalants,
On irait d'une vie âpre et laborieuse
Vers l'autre vie au moins pure et voluptueuse.
Mais si nous ne vivons, ne mourons qu'une fois,
Eh ! pourquoi, malheureux sous de bizarres lois,
Tourmenter cette vie et la perdre sans cesse.⁴

In the second elegy Chénier gently teases François de Pange for not yielding to love and for spending too many hours in study:

Ami, va; c'est un Dieu. La force est inutile.
Cède: c'est un enfant, un enfant indocile.
Les destins ont écrit (qui voudrait les blâmer ?)
Que plus tôt ou plus tard chaque homme doit aimer.

¹ Comtesse J. de Pange, 'André Chénier, poète de l'amitié', R.D.M., 1959, pp.449-467, p.449.

² Walter, 'Histoire du Christianisme', pp.720-732.

³ Walter, 'Notes sur la littérature chinoise', pp.774-778.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 1, ll.10-17, pp.133-134.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 1, ll.10-17, p.151.

Le plus tôt vaut le mieux. Ta science ennuyeuse
 Te tue. Eteins, crois-moi, ta lampe studieuse.
 Viens savoir être heureux: c'est la première loi;
 Et loin de me gronder, viens aimer avec moi.¹

The third elegy, by contrast, encourages the friend to continue the research that he is undertaking, and the poet indulges in self-mockery:

Va, poursuis ta carrière; et sois toujours le même;
 Sois heureux, et surtout aime un ami qui t'aime.
 Ris de son coeur débile aux désirs condamné,
 De l'étude aux amours sans cesse promené,
 Qui, toujours approuvant ce dont il fuit l'usage,
 Aimera la sagesse, et ne sera point sage.²

In the last of the four,³ which is also the longest, the theme changes. François de Pange is gently reproached, for having abandoned writing tragedies, and the poem then turns to a description of the elegiac Muse.

The elegies written for de Pange should not be taken too literally, and should not give rise to a view of Chénier involved totally in hedonistic pursuits. These poems are often self-mocking and tongue in cheek in tone, yet they are themselves the results of long hours of study and toil.

Finally of the friends Chénier made at Navarre there were the Trudaines, who were later responsible for introducing him into French society where not only did he meet his future mistresses, but also valuable friends like the painter, Jacques-Louis David, the writers, Charles Palissot and Jean-Baptiste Suard, and the Italian poet, Vittorio Alfieri. The brothers, Louis Trudaine de Montigny and Charles-Michel Trudaine de la Sablière, gave him early holidays at the Château of the

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 2, ll.17-24, p.136.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 2, ll.17-24, p.153.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 3, ll.29-34, p.137.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 3, ll.29-34, p.154.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 4, pp.138-141.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 4, pp.154-156.

Trudaine family at Montigny, which, along with those he spent at the Châteaux of the Panges at Mareuil-sur-Ay and Songy, formed the theme of an elegy. This deals with poetry and friendship and recalls the refined elegance of the parks, gardens, and statues, and a way of life that fed his poetic inspiration:

Combien chez eux longtemps, dans leurs belles retraites,
Soit sur ces bords heureux, opulents avec choix,
Où Montigny s'enfonce en ses antiques bois,
Soit où la Marne lente, en un long cercle d'îles,
Ombrage de bosquets l'herbe et les prés fertiles,
J'ai su, pauvre et content, savourer à long traits
Les Muses, les plaisirs, et l'étude et la paix.¹

The Trudaines were also responsible for taking André Chénier on two Grand Tours, the first to Switzerland and the second, of greater value to the poet, to Italy. The journey to Switzerland was probably undertaken after a period of convalescence from one of the severe attacks of nephritis from which the poet suffered periodically from 1782 onwards, as indicated by the elegy:

Ah ! je ne pensais pas, faible et naissant flambeau,
Si tôt m'aller éteindre en un obscur tombeau.
De maux prématurés la foule qui m'assiège
Méconnaît de mes ans le faible privilège.
Et je vivrais, aux pleurs, aux tourments condamné,
Esclave volontaire à la vie enchaîné,
Pour maudire mon sort, mes douleurs, ma faiblesse,
Pour traîner à vingt ans une infirme vieillesse,
Dans mes reins agités quand des sables brûlants
S'ouvrent un dur passage et déchirent mes flancs !
.
Il vaut mieux n'être pas que d'être misérable.²

The reality of physical suffering and debilitation underlies the theme of premature death that haunts the melancholy elegies, such as 'Aujourd'hui

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 2, ll.14-20, pp.152-153.
Walter, 'Elégies', I, ll.14-20, p.54.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 1, ll.9-20, pp.5-6.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', II, ll.9-20, pp.544-545.

qu'au tombeau je suis prêt à descendre'.¹ Even with this background there is confirmation of Chénier's need to express, by reference to the Classical Tradition, what might seem the most intimate of biographical details.

The first of the two elegies just quoted ends with a prose note:

Finir par plusieurs pensées mélancoliques et un peu sombres, et enfin par ce mot ancien: que le premier bonheur est de ne pas naître, et le second, etc. . . .

This motif of the dying poet is already in Propertius and in Tibullus, and was, as is shown by the elegies of Le Brun and Parny,² an elegiac preoccupation of the eighteenth century after the premature deaths of Gilbert, Malfilâtre, and Chatterton.

Switzerland was an ideal location to aid Chénier's recovery from such suffering and melancholia. Two articles discussing the journey, one by C-E. Engel, published in 1962,³ and the other by P. Dimoff in 1971,⁴ have done much to rectify the assumptions made in previous biographies.⁵

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 2, pp.6-8.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXV, pp.76-77.

² E.D. de Forges de Parny, 'Elégies', Liv. III, 'Ma Mort', Oeuvres de Parny. Elégies et poésies diverses. Nouvelle édition revue et annotée par M. A.-J. Pons avec une préface de M. Sainte-Beuve, Paris, Garnier, 1873, pp.82-84.
P.D. Le Brun, 'Elégies', Liv. I, el. VIII and IX, Oeuvres de Ponce Denis (Ecouchard) Le Brun, . . . mises en ordre et publiées par P.L. Ginquené. . . 4 vols., Paris, Crapelet, 1811, Vol. II, pp.22-27.

³ C-E. Engel, 'Le Voyage d'André Chénier en Suisse', R.D.M., May 1962, pp.115-119.

⁴ P. Dimoff, 'André Chénier: le voyage en Suisse', R.H.L.F., 71, 1971, pp.585-605.

⁵ It was initially proposed that the visits to Switzerland and Italy were one journey. (See G. de Chénier, ed., Oeuvres poétiques d'André de Chénier avec une notice et des notes par M. Gabriel de Chénier, 3 vols., Paris, Lemerre, 1874, Vol. I, pp.xxxi-xxxii). L. Becq de Fouquières, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier, Edition critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, pp.xviii-xix). Dimoff's general hypothesis for the dating of the visit to Switzerland, (La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, pp.135-158), has been validated by the two articles, but not his suggested itinerary.

These articles are based on documents discovered in the Zentralbibliothek at Zürich and the State Archives in Basle. The visit can now be dated¹ with confidence to a period between the 19 September and the 26 October 1784, and documents found by Dimoff prove for the first time that there was a fourth traveller in their group, a M. Douet de Saint-Alire, maître des requêtes. It has also been possible to give details of the route they followed from Geneva to the valley of the Arve, Cluses, Magland, Mont Blanc, Trient, Lac de Thoun, Grotte de Saint Béat, Rhône glacier, Hasly, Valley of the Aar, Engelberg, Zürich, where they were received by the Swiss theologian and philosopher, Johann Caspar Lavater, who gave them letters of introduction to meet M. Muller (a theologian and Greek and Hebrew scholar) and M. de Stockar (a doctor and teacher of physics) at Schaffhausen, and M. Sarrasin (a social reformer) at Basle.²

It is perhaps strange, in the light of the popularity of La Nouvelle Héloïse, that the journey to Switzerland only directly inspired two elegies, one a lengthy and unsatisfactory poem addressed to the Trudaine brothers,³ and a second shorter elegy 'Souvent le malheureux'.⁴ From the first elegy it would appear that Switzerland impressed the poet by the way of life of its people and by its natural beauty. Switzerland is seen first as the incarnation of the elegiac ideals of simplicity,

¹ Dimoff first proposed a date, based on the absence of the Trudaines from the Châtelet, between the 19 September and the 8 November 1784, (ibid., p.137). This is given greater precision by a letter written by Chénier to Johann Caspar Lavater on the 26 October 1784 from Paris. (C-E. Engel, ibid., p.118).

² P. Dimoff, 'André Chénier: le voyage en Suisse', R.H.L.F., 71, 1971, pp.585-605. The evidence for the fourth traveller comes from a letter of introduction written by Lavater to Sarrasin, from Sarrasin's diary, and from hotel registers. The itinerary is based on details in Chénier's poetry and on the letter from Chénier to Lavater published by Engel.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elegies', V, v, pp.145-148.
Walter, 'Epîtres', V, pp.148-151.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 7, pp.160-161.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', VI, p.547.

frugality, tranquillity, and freedom, far from 'ces vaines cités':¹

Eh ! qu'il eût mieux valu naître un de ces pasteurs
 Ignorés dans le sein de leurs Alpes fertiles,
 Que nos yeux ont connus fortunés et tranquilles !
 Oh ! que ne suis-je enfant de ce lac enchanté
 Où trois pâtres héros ont à la liberté
 Rendu tous leurs neveux et l'Helvétie entière ! . . .
 Là, je verrais, assis dans ma grotte profonde,
 La génisse traînant sa mamelle féconde,
 Prodiguant à ses fils ce trésor indulgent,
 A pas lents agiter sa cloche au son d'argent,
 Promener près des eaux sa tête nonchalante,
 Du de son large flanc presser l'herbe odorante. . . .
 Une rustique épouse et soigneuse et zélée, . . .
 M'offrirait le doux miel, les fruits de mon verger,
 Le lait enfant des sels de ma prairie humide,
 Tantôt breuvage pur, et tantôt mets solide
 En un globe fondant sous ses mains épaissi,
 En disque savoureux à la longue durci;
 Et cependant sa voix simple et douce et légère
 Me chanterait les airs que lui chantait sa mère.²

Then Chénier turns to a more enthusiastic and powerful description of
 the natural beauty of Switzerland:

Je veux, accompagné de ma Muse sauvage,
 Revoir le Rhin tomber en des gouffres profonds,
 Et le Rhône grondant sous d'immenses glaçons,
 Et d'Arve aux flots impurs la Nymphé injurieuse.
 Je vole, je parcours la cime harmonieuse
 Où souvent de leurs cieux les anges descendus,
 En des nuages d'or mollement suspendus,
 Emplissent l'air des sons de leur voix éthérée.
 O lac, fils des torrents ! ô Thoun, onde sacrée !
 Salut, monts chevelus, verts et sombres remparts
 Qui contenez ses flots pressés de toutes parts !
 Salut, de la nature admirables caprices,
 Où les bois, les cités pendent en précipices.³

Two elegies, however detailed, do seem a meagre poetic reward from the

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, v, l.30, p.146.

Walter, 'Epîtres', V, l.30, p.149.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.34-39, 47-52, 63, 66-72, pp.146-147.

Walter, *ibid.*, ll.34-39, 47-52, 63, 66-72, pp.149-150.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.76-88, p.148.

Walter, *ibid.*, ll.76-88, p.150.

journey, but Lavater's advice is apt:

Voyager, pour rassembler des matériaux qui servent à nourrir et à égayer notre existence. Voyager, pour trouver de nouveaux points de comparaison pour tout ce que nous avons vu et verrons dans la suite, ce que nous avons entendu et entendrons; ce dont nous avons joui, et ce dont nous jouirons.¹

Chénier's second journey, to Italy, was far more fruitful for the progress of his elegiac work. Until recently, as for the visit to Switzerland, the precise dates eluded researchers, but a date between September and December 1786 has always been accepted.² A recently published article by E. Quillen cites a note from André Chénier to Thomas Jefferson, dated the 26 November 1786, in which the poet states that he is leaving for Nice in eight days.³ An elegy written before this date, and therefore before his departure, confirms that the Trudaines were once again to be his companions:

Ce couple fraternel, ces âmes que j'embrasse
D'un lien qui, du temps craignant peu la menace,
Se perd dans notre enfance, unit nos premiers jours,
Sont mes guides encore; ils le furent toujours.
Toujours leur amitié, généreuse, empressée,
A porté mes ennuis et ne s'est point lassée.⁴

¹ B.M.C. R.3. 11811. Lavater gave this manuscript of two hundred thoughts for travellers to his friend Schweizer. His wife Magdaleine gave it to André Chénier adding 'J'ai le pouvoir et la permission de donner ce manuscrit aux ames pure et vertueuse'. [sic]

² Again suggested by Dimoff from the Trudaines' leave of absence. (La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, pp.191-192).

³ 'Mr. Chénier de St. André a l'honneur de présenter ses compliments à monsieur Jefferson. Il le prie d'être persuadé que ce n'est ni par négligence, ni par oubli qu'il a passé si long-tems sans aller le voir, et le remercie de ses politesses. Il a été un mois à la campagne; il n'en est pas revenu bien portant, et il loge dans le quartier de Paris le plus éloigné de monsieur Jefferson. Il compte partir pour Nice dans huit jours'. (E. Quillen, 'Relations américaines d'André Chénier', R.L.C., 47, 1973, pp.556-575, p.563). Unfortunately Quillen does not give a reference. Quillen shows that Marie Cosway met Jefferson in 1786, and that Chénier was possibly introduced to him by her.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 1, ll.17-22, p.11.
Walter, 'Elégies', XVII, ll.17-22, p.70.

The exact reason for their journey, the details of their itinerary, and the full extent of its influence cannot be stated with absolute confidence for the only evidence springs from the elegies themselves, and the fragility of such evidence has already been noted. Two elegies offer reasons for the journey. First of all the renewed ill-health of André Chénier seems to have required a change of scenery: 'C'est là qu'un plus beau ciel peut-être dans mes flancs / Eteindra les douleurs et les sables brûlants'.¹ Perhaps at the same time he was seeking freedom from his mistress Camille: 'Là, j'irai t'oublier, rire de ton absence'.² There was also his constant obsession: 'Cette fureur d'errer, de voir et de connaître',³ to enlarge his knowledge, and add to his experience by visiting the sources of his artistic inspiration, 'au sein des arts vivre et mourir tranquille'.⁴ Amidst such attractions Chénier added the hope that he might find new loves: 'Là, dans un air plus pur respirer en silence. . . / La santé, le repos, les arts et les amours'.⁵ The elegy 'Vous restez, mes amis,' indicates that the travellers intended to be away for a full two years:

Si je vis, le soleil aura passé deux fois
 Dans les douze palais où résident les mois,
 D'une double moisson la grange sera pleine,
 Avant que dans vos bras la voile nous ramène,⁶

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 3, ll.33-34, p.9.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XVI, ll.33-34, p.69.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.35.
 Walter, *ibid.*, l.35.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 1, l.6, p.10.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XVII, l.6, p.69.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 3, l.31, p.9.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XVI, l.31, p.69.

⁵ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.36, 38.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.36, 38.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 1, ll.51-54, p.12.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XVII, ll.51-54, p.71.

and that they would visit not only Italy but Greece as well:

Nous verrons tous ces lieux dont les brillants destins
Occupent la mémoire ou les yeux des humains:
Marseille où l'Orient amène la fortune;
Et Venise élevée à l'hymen de Neptune;
Le Tibre, fleuve-roi, Rome, fille de Mars,
Qui régna par le glaive et règne par les arts;
Athènes qui n'est plus, et Byzance, ma mère;
Smyrne qu'habite encor le souvenir d'Homère.¹

This glorious enterprise was never to be completed and the friends were back in Paris by the end of the year. The reasons for abandoning the project and returning after a few weeks spent in Rome are not clear. Chénier's ill-health² is an obvious answer and perhaps the Trudaines were not given so long a leave of absence.³

Despite the inevitable disappointment arising from the reality of the journey, this venture nevertheless marked a high point of Chénier's early life and from it we have a long series of elegies - too many, alas, unfinished. The magnetic power of Greece and Italy could not but attract the poet. This was to be no fashionable Grand Tour, but a true pilgrimage back to his spiritual home. So great was his enthusiasm and excitement at this prospect that, before he ever left Paris, his imagination dashed forward in anticipation. The ideas, the images, the phrases of elegies were

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.27-34, p.11.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.27-34, p.70.

²Fabre's view does seem, without any evidence, to be an exaggeration: 'Après s'être soigné à Rome tant bien que mal pendant quelques semaines, il reprend le chemin de la France, vers la fin novembre, par petites étapes, à l'allure d'un convalescent'. (J. Fabre, Chénier, *Connaissance des Lettres*, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.52).

³See Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, pp.199-200, for a discussion of the reasons.

already within him. In the unfinished verse and prose draft for an elegy beginning 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce', Chénier imagines the impact that he will feel from seeing the art in Rome:

Raphaël, Jules, Corrège, etc. . . qui ont porté au plus
haut point de perfection cet art divin, mort depuis tels
et tels et
Que, de ces grands pinceaux émule inattendu,
Le pinceau de David à la France a rendu.¹

He imagines himself, for instance, in the Roman Forum and in the Senate as the great leaders pass by, Gracchus, Cincinnatus, Cato, Brutus, Germanicus. . ., and moves on to Greece to see its peoples and its heroes. Had he lived 'aux lieux où vit la liberté',² he proclaims that 'Des belles voluptés la voix enchanteresse / N'aurait point entraîné [son] oisive jeunesse'.³ Yet this draft was the product of imagination as Chénier notes: 'Tout cela doit être fait de verve et sur les lieux'.⁴ This note immediately raises the question of how much of the elegiac material connected with the journey was written beforehand. Certainly the specifically Oriental elegies, 'Partons, la voile est prête, et Byzance m'appelle',⁵ 'Salut, Dieux de l'Euxin, Hellé, Sestos, Abyde',⁶ 'Rustan peut en un mois parcourir ses sillons',⁷ and 'Trop longtemps le

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 6, 11.44-47, p.17.
Walter, 'Vers épars', XXV, 11.1-4, p.594.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, 1.30, p.16.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', II, 1.28, p.536.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.48-49, p.17.
Walter, 'Elégies', IV, 11.1-2, p.59.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.42-43, p.17.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', II, 11.39-40, p.536.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 1, pp.28-29.
Walter, 'Elégies', XVIII, p.71.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 2, p.29.
Walter, 'Elégies', XIX, p.72.

⁷ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 4, pp.30-31.
Walter, 'Vers sans attribution précise', I, p.608.

plaisir, égarant mes beaux jours',¹ together with several short prose notes, must have been composed in the expectation of a visit to Greece. It is possible - though impossible to prove - that many of the fifteen elegies whether in the form of prose notes, mixed prose and verse drafts, or verse alone, that arise from the journey to Italy, were produced beforehand.

The Italian and Oriental elegies form a group of considerable interest in which variations on the theme of love predominate. In one elegy, 'Partons, la voile est prête',² Chénier declares the joys of liberty escaping from Camille; in another he expresses mixed feelings of joy and remorse as he yields again to the power of love:

O délices d'amour, et toi, molle paresse,
 Vous aurez donc usé mon oisive jeunesse !
 Les belles sont partout. Pour chercher les beaux-arts,
 Des Alpes vainement j'ai franchi les remparts;
 Rome d'amours en foule assiège mon asile.³

Three further elegies, 'O belle (son nom; pas le véritable ?)',⁴ 'Oh ! c'est toi ! Je t'attends, ô ma belle Romaine',⁵ and 'Viens me trouver. Je languis',⁶ describe this in pictures laden with a sensuality that is reminiscent of both Ovid and Sappho. Love is then opposed to study as

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 8, p.32.
 Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', IX, pp.541-542.

²See p.81, note 5 above.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 10, 11.1-5, p.26.
 Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', VIII, 11.1-5, p.540.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 2, pp.19-20.
 Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', IV, pp.537-538.

⁵Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 3, pp.21-22.
 Walter, 'Elégies', IX, p.62.

⁶Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 6, pp.23-24.
 Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', V, pp.538-539.

in the elegy, 'Tel j'étais autrefois et tel je suis encor', and Chénier sets up what must have been a false dichotomy in real life:

Si Laure m'a fermé le seuil inexorable,
Je regagne mon toit. Là, lecteur studieux,
Content et sans désirs, je rends grâces aux Dieux.
Je crie: 'Oh ! soins de l'homme, inquiétudes vaines ! . . .
Mais. . .
Si ma blanche voisine a souri mollement,
Adieu les grands discours, et le volume antique.¹

In contrast to this two elegies, 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce'² and 'Trop longtemps le plaisir',³ appear to regret the time devoted to love and Elegy, and to desire a return to the composition of other projects:

Trop longtemps le plaisir, égarant mes beaux jours,
A consacré ma lyre aux profanes amours.
J'ai trop chanté de vers, trop suaves peut-être,
Que l'oeil de la Pudeur n'a point osé connaître.

Mais aujourd'hui que mon âge a commencé de se calmer, que les belles m'inspirent des fureurs plus tranquilles, je puis sans interruption chanter sur un ton plus austère. . . Je vais achevant mon Hermès. . . Surtout les champs de tel et tel pays m'ont vu travailler avec délices à mon poème de Susanne.⁴

There are obvious contradictions between this elegy and its talk of 'fureurs plus tranquilles' and the other sensual Italian elegies, but then Chénier himself admitted the existence of such contradictions in his poems, which nevertheless, at the time of composition, had their own poetic reality:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 9, ll.4-7, 11, 14-15, pp.25-26.
Walter, 'Elégies', XI, ll.4-7, 11, 14-15, p.65.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 6, pp.15-18.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', II, pp.535-536.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 8, p.32.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', IX, pp.541-542.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.1-10.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.1-10.

Toujours vrai, son discours souvent se contredit.
Comme il veut, il s'exprime; il blâme, il applaudit.¹

It would therefore seem unwise to take these elegies and use them to depreciate the genre and to suggest, as Dimoff has done in censorial tones,² that Chénier was wrestling against a libertine existence and that a resolve to abandon his elegiac Muse in favour of the didactic poems had wavered when he was in Rome. It would be better not to pin the poet down too closely but rather to see him as exploring the theme of love in all its elegiac variations.

There are indeed no notes of guilt in the elegy composed to mark the traveller's enthusiastic return to France. Rather we hear a Chénier rejoicing in Elegy and declaring once again his dedication and debt to Antiquity:

Tout mon cortège antique, aux chansons langoureuses,
Revole comme moi vers tes rives heureuses.
Promptes dans tous mes pas à me suivre en tous lieux,
Le rire sur la bouche et les pleurs dans les yeux,
Partout autour de moi mes jeunes Elégies
Promenaient les éclats de leurs folles orgies;
Et, les cheveux épars, se tenant par la main,
De leur danse élégante égayaient mon chemin.³

Italy - the home of Tibullus, of Propertius, of Ovid - was without doubt a powerful impulse to elegiac inspiration.

Nevertheless, despite the numerous elegies stimulated by the journey to Italy, it does appear that in 1787 Chénier's thoughts were

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', X, 11.23-24, p.176.
Walter, 'Varia', 'Epilogue', 11.23-24, p.614.

² Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, pp.205-208. F. Scarfe is even more scathing at times about the rôle of the elegies. 'The obsessions of the heart prevented him from carrying out his most important plans. . . It was perhaps the pernicious influence of Le Brun, in the first place, that tempted him to set "love" so high that it had a destructive effect on his work'. (F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.128).

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iv, 11.23-30, pp.34-35.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXI, 11.23-30, p.73.

turning more and more to his other ambitious projects, to the composition of 'L'Invention', the 'Essai sur les causes et les effets de la perfection et de la décadence des lettres et des arts', 'Hermès', and 'L'Amérique'. After all, Chénier viewed his Elégies as the songs of youth, 'enfants de ma jeunesse'.¹ From the beginning of his career he had received encouragement and support and critical advice for all his literary plans from his close circle of friends. Abel de Fondat, the Trudaines, François de Pange, Le Brun, and his own brother, Marie-Joseph, were his public:

Voilà le cercle entier qui, le soir quelquefois,
A des vers, non sans peine obtenus de ma voix,
Prête une oreille amie et cependant sévère.²

Of this literary circle the most influential figure in terms of Chénier's early development as a poet, was Ecouchard Le Brun. Some thirty years older than Chénier and already famous, he felt confident that in Chénier he had a sure disciple, and encouraged him in typically bombastic verse: 'Aime cet art céleste, et vole sur mes pas / Jusqu'aux lieux où la gloire affronte le trépas'.³

In the early days of his apprenticeship Chénier must have been filled

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, 1.59, p.129.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, 1.59, p.140.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 2, 11.79-81, p.155.
Walter, 'Elégies', I, 11.79-81, p.56.

B.M.C. R.3. 11818 contains an unpublished letter from Marie-Louis de Pange to Gabriel de Chénier (1 February 1844) in which he indicates that Chénier's audience, certainly after 1789, was larger. 'Il existait. . . une grande intimité entre lui, Mrs de Trudaine, et mon frère. Je le voyais presque tous les jours soit chez ces Mrs soit chez nous, Mrs Suart, Le Brun, Palissot et quelques autres personnes s'y réunissoient aussi. Dans ces réunions Mr votre oncle faisait souvent des lectures de poésies ou d'articles destinés à être insérés dans les journaux'.

³ H. de Latouche, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier précédées d'une notice par H. de Latouche, suivies de notes et jugements extraits des ouvrages de M. de Chateaubriand, Le Brun. . . Paris, Charpentier, 1840, p.280.

with awe and admiration for Le Brun, whose compositions ranged from Elegies, Epigrams, Hymns, Didactic verse to his widely acclaimed Odes. In an elegy¹ addressed to Le Brun in 1782, and in tones reminiscent of the older poet, Chénier hailed Le Brun's ability to write a didactic poem on 'La Nature' that would rival the achievement of Lucretius' De Rerum Natura, and, also, at the same time, compose elegiac verse:

Sans doute heureux celui qu'une palme certaine
 Attend victorieux dans l'une et l'autre arène; . . .
 Un seul a pu franchir cette double carrière:
 C'est lui qui va bientôt, loin des yeux du vulgaire,
 Inscrire sa mémoire aux fastes d'Hélicon,
 Digne de la nature et digne de Buffon.²

The eulogy of Le Brun continues in even more grandiloquent but turgid tones to praise the writing of Pindaric Odes and satirical and didactic verse:

Malherbe tressaillit au delà du Ténare,
 A te voir agiter les rênes de Pindare;
 Aux accents de Tyrtée enflammant nos guerriers,
 Ta voix fit dans nos camps renaître les lauriers.
 Les tyrans ont pâli, quand ta main courroucée
 Ecrasa leur Thémis sous les foudres d'Alcée.
 D'autres tyrans encor, les méchants et les sots,
 Ont fui devant Horace armé de tes bons mots.
 Et maintenant, assis dans le centre du monde,
 Le front environné d'une clarté profonde,
 Tu perces les remparts que t'opposent les cieux,
 Et l'univers entier tourne devant tes yeux.³

But all this rhetoric is suddenly deflated by Chénier's naïve questions:

. . . dis-moi, quelle victoire
 Chatouille mieux ton cœur du plaisir de la gloire ?
 Est-ce lorsque Buffon et sa savante cour
 Admirent tes regards qui fixent l'oeil du jour ? . . .
 Ou lorsque, de l'amour interprète fidèle,
 Ta naïve Erato fait sourire une belle . . . ?⁴

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 2, pp.130-133.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 2, pp.136-138.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.33-4, 45-48, p.131.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.33-4, 45-48, p.137.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.65-76, p.132.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.65-76, pp.137-138.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.89-92, 97-8, pp.132-133.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.89-92, 97-8, p.138.

In fact, Chénier's elegy aimed not only to flatter Le Brun but also to point out that his own talents were for Elegy:

Qu'un autre soit jaloux d'illustrer sa mémoire:
Moi, j'ai besoin d'aimer. . .¹

The other elegy addressed to Le Brun, 'Mânes de Callimaque',² written during the Camille period, again glorifies this genre. Chénier sets out to describe some of his aims and to describe Elegy, but, for the moment, the interest of this particular elegy comes from the pointed declaration of independence from Le Brun:

L'Élégie, ô Le Brun ! renaît dans nos chansons,
Et les Muses pour elle ont amolli nos sons.
Avant que leur projet, qui fut bientôt le nôtre,
Pour devenir amis nous offrît l'un à l'autre,
Elle avait ton amour, comme elle avait le mien.³

Despite these assertions it is clear that in the early 1780's Le Brun influenced Chénier. The parallels are numerous. Le Brun, for example, like Chénier, was involved in numerous literary genres, but was also determined to compose a modern epic showing the scientific discoveries and the philosophy of his day and age. Moreover, Le Brun's literary principles were exactly those that Chénier was to express: imitation of nature, imitation of the Ancients, stress on le génie, and the necessity to be bold in thought and style: if there is no difference here with a host of other eighteenth century theorists, there is,

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.1-2, p.130.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.1-2, p.136.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, pp.127-130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, pp.138-140.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.25-29, p.128.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.25-29, p.139.

however, proof that Chénier and Le Brun discussed problems of aesthetics.¹ A manuscript studied by G. Venzac provides a curious piece of evidence. Strangely enough it is the manuscript of the first elegy addressed to Le Brun quoted above, 'Qu'un autre soit jaloux. . .'. The paper had been folded into two, giving four pages, and then each page divided into two columns. In the left-hand column Chénier had written out his elegy. At the top of the right-hand column Le Brun had noted 'Elégie d'André Chénier à moi de son écriture. Il y a quelques vers corrigés de ma main'. The corrections by Le Brun had been added to Chénier's elegy and then, in the right-hand column, Le Brun had copied out the corrected version. As Venzac commented: 'Puisque le manuscrit reproduit par Latouche attribue à celui-là ce qui revient à celui-ci, n'est-ce pas que, docilement, l'élève a intégré à son devoir le corrigé du maître?'² It is ironic that an elegy written in praise of Le Brun should be corrected by him, and it perhaps explains why, in the other elegy written sometime later, Chénier was at pains to stress his independence. Certainly Chénier owes a debt to Le Brun,³ but a debt that was transformed. The pupil far outstrips the master.

In 1792 in the Almanach des Muses Le Brun published an epistle written ten years earlier: 'A M. de Chénier l'aîné, frère de l'auteur tragique. Ce jeune officier qui avait de grandes dispositions pour la poésie allait

¹ Dimoff quotes from the Marquis de Brazais, 'Discours sur la langue et la poésie française': 'Longtemps liés comme je l'ai dit, Le Brun, André Chénier et moi, l'art poétique suivant est, en partie, composé de nos études et de nos réflexions confiées'. (Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol.I, p.348). For details of Le Brun's influence on André Chénier, see Dimoff, *ibid.*, pp.339-351.

² G. Venzac, Jeux d'ombre et de lumière sur la jeunesse d'André Chénier, Vocations, VI, Paris, Gallimard, 1957, p.283.

³ Even as late as 1791 Chénier was writing in a deferential manner to Le Brun enclosing a copy of 'Le Jeu de Paume' for criticism, but the tone of the letter shows that politics had already divided them and coloured their friendship. (Walter, 'Correspondance', IX, p.791).

rejoindre son régiment'. In it he exalted Chénier's poetic genius and claimed that: 'Les Muses te suivront sous les tentes de Mars'.¹ In 1782 Chénier had left Paris to join the Angoumois regiment then in garrison at Strasbourg. It was to be only a brief stay, for he returned in less than a year, but one that helped to introduce themes of exile and solitude into his elegies. One solace² for the first few months of this exile was his friendship with the poet Ferdinand du Hamel de Brazais, also garrisoned in Strasbourg, 'Sans qui de l'univers je vivrais exilé'.³ De Brazais had known Chénier in Paris, when he had formed the third member of a triumvirate united by the love of poetry, and by a friendship that is celebrated in the lengthy 'Epître à Le Brun et à Brazais',⁴ written in Strasbourg. Once de Brazais had left, Chénier experienced the loneliness of exile from that Parisian society in which he thrived, together with an intense dislike of army life which he knew was not at all conducive to his true vocation.⁵

C. The years leading to the Revolution: England

Over four years later, in England, he was again to endure the solitude of exile with its accompanying expression of alienation and demoralization. On this occasion the personal experience of loneliness and solitude gave

¹ H. de Latouche, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier précédées d'une notice par H. de Latouche, suivies de notes et jugements extraits des ouvrages de M. de Chateaubriand, Le Brun. . ., Paris, Charpentier, 1840, p.278.

² Though it cannot be proved, it would be curious if Chénier did not spend time at the famous University of Strasbourg, and visiting scholars such as Oberlin who had been welcomed at his mother's Salon.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', I, l.4, p.179.
Walter, 'Epîtres', III, l.4, p.140.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, pp.179-185.
Walter, *ibid.*, pp.140-145.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', II, ll.42-46, p.187.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 1, ll.42-46, p.136.

rise directly to elegies that can be dated to the period of the poet's stay at Portman Square. On 6 December 1787, Chénier crossed the Channel to try once again to find suitable employment and to attempt, if possible, to remedy the precarious state of the family finances.¹ Even the Channel crossing was an inauspicious start as an elegy, 'Fait en partie dans le vaisseau, en allant à Douvres, couché, souffrant, le 6. Ecrit à Londres, le 10 décembre', vividly indicates:

Au fond du noir vaisseau sur la vague roulant
Le passager languit, malade et chancelant.
Son regard obscurci meurt. Sa tête pesante
Tourne comme le vent qui souffle la tourmente;
Et son cœur nage et flotte en son sein agité,
Comme de bonds en bonds le navire emporté.²

Once in London, Chénier took up his appointment as private secretary to the French Ambassador, M. de la Luzerne. We know of one long period of leave spent in France in the summer of 1789, otherwise Chénier remained at the Embassy until the summer of 1790, by which time his thoughts and actions were beginning to be involved in the accelerating Revolution.

The enforced exile in England seems to have been a profitable period for the progression of Chénier's total opus. His duties at the Embassy appear to have been restricted, as F. Scarfe has pointed out, to 'copying documents, arranging the Ambassador's time-table, organizing receptions, keeping visitors in conversation whilst the Ambassador was busy or absent, taking messages, and in general acting as his A.D.C.'³ This

¹The letters Chénier wrote from London to his father make frequent references to the family's lack of funds. It is clear that the poet agreed to the employment in London to help on this score: 'Quant à ce que vous me dites sur le sacrifice de mon indépendance: vous voyez bien que je l'ai fait. Ce désir-là quoique bien vif a cédé à celui de pouvoir un jour être utile à ma famille, et mon sacrifice est d'autant plus méritoire qu'en renonçant à l'indépendance je n'ai pas cessé d'en sentir le prix'. (London, 21 April, 1789). (Walter, 'Correspondance', II, p.783).

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 1, ll.3-8, p.157.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', III, ll.3-8, p.545.

³F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.74.

left the poet with a considerable amount of free time to devote to study, to poetry, and, occasionally, to pleasure. He had time to widen his knowledge of English literature and even to study Persian and Spanish. As always, many hours were given to Chénier's love of the Classics; he scoured the London bookshops for English editions of classical authors, and devoted time to philological pursuits and to discussions with one of his superiors, François Barthélemy, nephew of the famous author of the Voyage du jeune Anacharsis. His poetry also advanced. He was working on further bucolic poems, his didactic works, and the 'Essai sur les causes', and other new projects such as the various notes unified by Abel Lefranc under the title 'Histoire du pouvoir royal en Europe'.¹ There were in addition friendships to be renewed, and new ones made, at the receptions held by the Cosways.²

Despite this activity Chénier was obsessed by the idea of being an outsider in an environment that was alien to him, by his lack of funds, and his loss of independence. Although the first letter written by Chénier is now lost, we have a reply, written in Italian verse by the poet Alfieri, that underlines Chénier's sombre mood. The letter is dated 29 April 1789 from Paris, and extracts are quoted from it in the French translation of Gabriel de Chénier:

J'apprends que cette ville de Londres, où tu te trouves étranger, t'est plus amère que l'absinthe, et c'est en vérité le supplice de Mezence que d'être en un pays où personne ne vous est attaché par les liens charmants d'une joyeuse amitié ! Ah ! tu l' observes très bien, elle a des clous de fer, la nécessité, cette divinité inexorable, . . . Mais toi, que fais-tu parmi ces engourdis Bretons dont le visage sombre et taciturne augmente l'ennui de leurs épais brouillards ?... Chasse cependant toutes les pensées sombres; et ne pour écrire ne songe qu'à écrire.³

¹Walter, 'Histoire du pouvoir royal', pp.708-713.

²See p.110 below.

³B.M.C. R.3. 11816 contains the verse epistle in Italian by Alfieri, and a translation in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier.

Even more revealing of Chénier's state of mind are the reflections he committed to paper a few weeks earlier and headed: 'London, Covent-Garden, Hood's Tavern. Vendredi, 3 avril 1789, à 7 heures du soir'.¹ It is worth quoting in some detail, for here we have a confession that sheds light on the themes that are to be found in the English elegies. The exact occasion that generated Chénier's grim and cynical thoughts is not known, but it is clear that he was dining alone because he felt humiliated in some way, and was suffering from hurt pride, possibly the result of being snubbed at a social gathering. His intense dislike of pretence and hypocrisy and at the same time his acute awareness of his inferior social status are evident:

Je reverrai peut-être un jour cette rapsodie, et je ne me rappellerai pas sans plaisir. . . . la triste circonstance qui m'a fait dîner ici tout seul. . . . Il est dur de se voir négligé, de n'être point admis dans telle société qui se croit au-dessus de vous; il est dur de recevoir, sinon des dédains, au moins des politesses hautaines; . . . Ces grands, même les meilleurs, vous font si bien remarquer en toute occasion cette haute opinion qu'ils ont d'eux-mêmes ! Ils affectent si fréquemment de croire que la supériorité de la fortune tient à celle de leur mérite ! Ils sont bons si durement ! Ils mettent tant de prix à leurs sensations et à celles de leurs pareils, et si peu à celles de leurs prétendus inférieurs ! . . . Si une cuisante amertume a déchiré le coeur de tel qu'ils appellent leur inférieur, ils sont si froids, si secs ! Ils le plaignent d'une manière si indifférente et si distraite ! comme les enfants qui n'ont point de peine à voir mourir une fourmi, parce qu'elle n'a point de rapport à leur espèce. Je ne puis m'empêcher de rire intérieurement, lorsque dans ces belles sociétés je vois de fréquents exemples de cette sensibilité distinctive, et qui ne s'attendrit qu'après avoir demandé le nom. Les femmes surtout sont admirables pour cela.²

Amidst such feelings of isolation Chénier contemplates the economic necessity that forced him to give up 'son honnête et indépendante pauvreté',³

¹Walter, 'Fragments littéraires', II, pp.746-749.

²Walter, *ibid.*, pp.747, 748-749.

³'Mais ici je suis seul, livré à moi-même, soumis à ma pesante fortune, et je n'ai personne sur qui m'appuyer. Que l'indépendance est bonne ! Heureux celui que le désir d'être utile à ses vieux parents et à toute sa famille ne force pas à renoncer à son honnête et indépendante pauvreté !' (Walter, *ibid.*, p.748).

and such is his demoralization that his thoughts display an unusual cynicism that already adumbrates his future political writings:

On s'accoutume à tout, même à souffrir. . . . mais cette funeste habitude vient d'une cause bien sinistre; elle vient de ce que la souffrance a fatigué la tête et a flétri l'âme. Cette habitude n'est qu'un total affaiblissement: l'esprit n'a plus assez de force pour peser chaque chose et l'examiner sous son juste point de vue, pour en appeler à la sainte nature primitive, et attaquer de front les dures et injustes institutions humaines; l'âme n'a plus assez de force pour s'indigner contre l'inégalité factice établie entre les pauvres humains, pour se révolter à l'idée de l'injustice, pour repousser le poids qui l'accable. Elle est dégradée, descendue, prosternée; elle s'accoutume à souffrir, comme les morts s'accoutument à supporter la pierre du tombeau; car ils ne peuvent pas la soulever.¹

The elegies written in England are the poetic transcriptions of these intimate thoughts. Though transposed into verse form, and thus assimilated into a literary tradition, the elegies express the same melancholic sentiments. In one of them Chénier shows his frustration with the chores that take him away from his vocation, and a horror of the social milieu in which he was forced to mix, and he ends with the same cynical lassitude of his prose outburst:

Il ne faut point qu'il dompte un ascendant suprême,
Opprime son génie, et s'éteigne lui-même, [sic]
Pour user sans honneur et sa plume et son temps
A des travaux obscurs tristement importants. . . .
Il n'a point à souffrir vingt discours odieux
De raisonneurs méchants encor plus qu'ennuyeux;
Lorsqu'en de longs détours de disputes frivoles
Hurlent de vingt partis les prétentions folles; . . .
Il ne doit point toujours déguiser ce qu'il pense,
Imposer à son âme un éternel silence,
Trahir la vérité pour avoir le repos,
Et feindre d'être un sot pour vivre avec les sots.²

¹Walter, *ibid.*, p.747.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 2, 11.9-12, 15-18, 25-28, pp.158-159.
Walter, 'Elégies', III, 11.9-12, 15-18, 25-28, pp.58-59.

In these elegies suicide is a recurrent theme, as it had been earlier in his life, but there is also a recognition of cowardice:

Il se traîne au tombeau de souffrance en souffrance;
Et la mort, de nos maux ce remède si doux,
Lui semble un nouveau mal, le plus cruel de tous.¹

He complains bitterly about the lack of family and friends, 'Sans parents, sans amis, et sans citoyens',² and, in a draft for an elegy, about the haughty disdain shown by 'ces belles Anglaises' at a ball.³ Nevertheless, at the same time as we read this, we remember the poems Chénier wrote in Greek celebrating his liaisons with Caroline, Aglaé, and Byblis, poems that were too explicit to be written in French.⁴

D. The mistresses: Lycoris; D'.z.n - Camille; Marie Cosway

Despite the presence of threnodic motifs, eulogies of friendship, and longings for country life, the dominant theme of Latin Elegy, and hence of Chénier's elegiac poetry, is love. Each Latin elegist had his special Muse to inspire love poetry, Propertius his Cynthia, Tibullus his Delia and Nemesis, and Ovid his Corinna, and so it was that André Chénier composed elegies in celebration of his mistresses, Lycoris, D'.z.n, and Camille. In their name he explored the various aspects of elegiac motif. They were not fictitious characters but without doubt women the poet loved, and the events of his life, given in the broadest outline, show he was able successfully to blend the conventional ideas and sentiments of the Love Elegy with his personal experiences.

The earliest cycle of love poems dedicated to one mistress is

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 9, ll.22-24, pp.162-163.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXIV, ll.22-24, pp.75-76.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 4, p.159.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', XXXI, p.555.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 3, p.159.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Vers en langues diverses', VI, 7, pp.322-323.
Walter, 'Vers en langues étrangères', VII, p.619.

addressed to Lycoris.¹ Again Chénier followed his Roman predecessors in choosing a pseudonym for his beloved. Moreover the name Lycoris was deliberately chosen as a further link with the Classical Tradition, as was the name Gallus which Chénier took for himself during the Lycoris cycle of elegies. Chénier is here referring to Gaius Cornelius Gallus, poet and politician, to whom Vergil's tenth 'Eclogue' is dedicated. Although only ten lines of his poetry survive, other sources indicate that Gallus had a pre-eminent rôle in the development of the Latin Love Elegy and that, in his four lost books of elegies, poems were inspired by Lycoris, a pseudonym for the actress Cytheris.²

Whereas in the case of the Latin elegists scholars have for centuries been intrigued to discuss the real identity of the women, the situation is different with the modern Lycoris. Chénier's biographers have never thought her worthy of prolonged research. She is dismissed as an actress, or as one of the dancers of the Opera, that Chénier met sometime in 1781 and with whom he had a brief, stormy relationship until 1782, when he began his equally brief army career. The dating of the affair is reasonably secure but the only evidence for even a sketchy identification of Lycoris with an actress or a dancer comes from her pseudonym and from an interpretation of one of the elegies, 'Animé par l'Amour'. Of course the true identity of the woman concerned is marginal for the artistic appreciation of the poems, but it has led critics to make irrelevant moral judgements about the quality of the relationship between Chénier and Lycoris. Inevitably she is labelled as a woman of easy virtue, and Dimoff in particular pictures Chénier living a dissipated life in which study was relegated to 'les instants de désœuvrement que lui laissait

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', pp.36-61.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', pp.90-97.

²Itself a stage name for Volumnia. For the rôle of Gallus in the Latin Love Elegy see chapter VIII, pp.325-326.

l'amour'.¹ One wonders from this how Chénier could find sufficient time to compose his elegies if they relied on such scholarship ! Moreover, for Dimoff, relationships with dancers and actresses presented a real threat to Chénier's didactic poetry:

A partir du moment où il se fut accoutumé, en compagnie des Trudaine, à céder aux impulsions d'un tempérament exceptionnellement ardent, il ne fut plus de longtemps capable de se ressaisir: il était devenu l'esclave de son coeur et de ses sens. . . . Son esprit, hanté de fantômes enchanteurs, qui en étaient les 'doux et cruels tyrans', refusait de se plier à une besogne austère et prolongée, telle que l'élaboration de grands poèmes.²

This type of comment, based on a jaundiced view of Elegy, is all the more easy to make once Lycoris is identified with an actress, who is obviously not deemed worthy of a poet's affection.

In many of the elegies that form part of this group Lycoris remains rather a shadowy figure. After reading the four elegies, (1) 'Animé par l'Amour',³ (2) 'Ah ! qu'ils portent ailleurs',⁴ (3) 'Vois ta brillante image à vivre destinée',⁵ (4) 'Ah ! je les reconnais',⁶ we have little impression of her individual characteristics. We sense that it is the development of specific literary themes that is important, the recusatio theme in (1), the theme of carpe diem in (2), the theme of immortality through poetry in (3) and the theme of poetic imagination in (4).

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, p.90.

² Ibid., pp.88-89.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, pp.36-46.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 1, pp.90-91.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 2, pp.46-47.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 2, p.91.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 3, p.47.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 6, pp.96-97.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 4, pp.48-50.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 3, pp.92-93.

It is tempting to believe that falling in love with Lycoris gave Chénier the excuse he needed to write elegies, for the literary topos seems to be more interesting than the character of the beloved.

Other elegies, 'La Lampe',¹ 'Souvent le malheureux songe à quitter la vie',² and 'Mais ne m'a-t-elle pas juré d'être infidèle',³ still show the same reworking of traditional elegiac motifs of suspicion, jealousy, and betrayal, but the characters themselves and their feelings receive greater attention. Ironically, in commenting upon these elegies, critics have fallen into the usual elegiac trap. F. Scarfe, for example, whilst admitting that the theme of jealousy is a poetic commonplace,⁴ nevertheless claims that 'the warm tones in which Chénier handled it suggests that he was genuinely thwarted in love'.⁴ The criterion of 'sincerity' again appears. Feelings that are well-expressed must have been genuinely felt. Rather we should look for another literary viewpoint. We should not always be concerned whether a specific emotion was really experienced, but whether the persona, and the feelings of the persona the poet adopts, are portrayed with plausibility and consistency. In Chénier's case this criterion is obviously satisfied.

The second and more important cycle of love elegies is formed by the groups of poems composed for D'.z.n and Camille, which celebrate the affair between André Chénier and Mme de Bonneuil. It is essential to pause here

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 5, pp.50-56.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'La Lampe', pp.120-122.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, pp.57-59.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 4, pp.93-95.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 7, pp.59-61.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 5, pp.95-96.

⁴F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.25.

and explain in detail this special identification and the joining of two traditionally separate groups of elegies. Although a few researchers¹ have been taking tentative steps in this direction for several decades, their interpretations have always lacked the necessary proofs to sway long-held literary opinion. Recently the question has been settled beyond doubt by the work of G. Buisson,² who has set out the new evidence in two remarkable articles which should lead to a renewed interest and reappraisal of André Chénier's Elégies that have so long been abused.

As yet no new major work has been published into which Buisson's thesis has been assimilated, and because of the recent nature of the research, and therefore its unfamiliarity, a review of Buisson's investigations must be given here.³ Buisson's published research has been confined so far to a historical approach, and although he pointed to its literary implications, these have not yet been pursued. It is therefore necessary to look at the historical research and to develop its literary aspects in order to reach a fuller understanding of Chénier's love elegies. The issue is as interesting as it is far-reaching, for no longer can Camille and D'z.n elegies be placed in the previously accepted order, seen as two independent groups, and no longer can some of the traditional

¹A. Cazamian (1939), J. Fabre (1955), A. d'Anglade (1957).

²G. Buisson, 'A propos d'André Chénier: Camille et D'z.n', R.H.L.F., 68, 1968, pp.512-532, and the second and more important article, 'La Mystérieuse d'Azan, inspiratrice d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 75, 1975, pp.30-47.

³The most recent work, R.A. Smernoff, André Chénier, Twayne's World Authors Series, 418, Boston, Twayne, 1977, does not even mention Buisson's publications and summarily glosses over the problems: '... it is now believed that both sets of poems were inspired by Mme de Bonneuil and that the D'z.n. [sic] poems were composed at the beginning of the liaison' (p.93).

views of Chénier's life and poetry be maintained. A new edition and a new interpretation of the Elégies is called for.

The by now uncontroversial aspect, unmodified by Buisson's work, lies in the Camille elegiac cycle.¹ Although Becq de Fouquières² saw in Camille a composite character, including Mme de Bonneuil inter alias, and although Gabriel de Chénier³ fiercely attacked the first editor for trying to identify Camille, it has long been recognized that Camille was in fact the pseudonym for Mme de Bonneuil.⁴ Born in 1748 on the Ile Bourbon where her father was Governor, Michelle Sentuary⁵ returned to France, to Langon in Guyenne, in 1755, and, in 1767, married M. Guesnon de Bonneuil, an extremely rich landowner with estates at Bonneuil-sur-Marne, referred to in the Elégies.⁶ M. de Bonneuil's wealth and status allowed

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elegies', pp.61-80.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', pp.97-108.

² 'Toutes les élégies où se trouve le nom de Camille ne doivent pas se rapporter à Madame de Bonneuil. Il y a là une distinction délicate, qu'il n'est pas toujours aisé de faire. . . . Le nom de Camille cache plus d'une passion'. (L. Becq de Fouquières, Poésies d'André Chénier. Edition critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, p.xxviii).

³ 'Elle [Latouche's edition] le montre en proie aux charmes de Camille et saisit ce prétexte pour attribuer à cette Camille, d'après une indiscreète et douteuse révélation de M. Charles Labitte, le nom d'une famille honorable qu'elle met ainsi au pilori pour satisfaire cette cynique curiosité contemporaine, qui croit faire de l'histoire en fouillant sans pudeur dans les secrets de la vie privée'. (G. de Chénier, L'Ordre et la liberté, 48, 21 April, 1864, B.M.C. R.3. 11819).

⁴ 'Madame de Bonneuil. . . avait été la maîtresse d'André Chénier, qui l'a célébrée dans ses poèmes sous le nom de Camille'. (F-D. Montlosier, Souvenirs d'un émigré 1789-1798, quoted by F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.58), and the conversation reported by A-V. Arnault (Souvenirs d'un sexagénaire), that he had with M-J. Chénier concerning Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély: 'Quel intérêt prenez-vous à lui ? - Celui que je n'ai jamais cessé de prendre à la famille où il est entré en épousant une demoiselle de Bonneuil - Cette belle personne qui est avec lui ? - Oui, la fille d'une dame que votre frère André a éperdûment aimée', quoted by Dimoff, La Vie et l'Œuvre, Vol. I, p.160.

⁵ See A. Cazamian, 'Une Muse d'André Chénier', R.D.M., 52, 1939, pp.419-429, p.424.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 3, 1.27, p.82.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', I, 1.27, p.109.

his cultured and beautiful¹ young wife to shine in Parisian society and at court. In his article A. Cazamian² recalls anecdotes recounted about her by the artist Mme Vigée Le Brun, a great friend of Mme de Bonneuil. One of these is particularly significant in the light of Mme de Bonneuil's relationship with the poet; the occasion is a Greek evening organized by Mme Vigée Le Brun: 'La fille de Joseph Vernet, la charmante Mme Chalgrin, arriva la première. Aussitôt je la coiffe, je l'habille. Puis vint Mme de Bonneuil, si remarquable par sa beauté'.³ Mme Vigée Le Brun goes on to describe how the company, including the poet Ecouchard Le Brun, wore Greek costume. The whole scene is reminiscent of Mme Chénier's Salon. Granted the friendship between the painter and André Chénier, it is quite possible that it was she who introduced the couple, and that Chénier may well have seen Mme de Bonneuil dressed à la Grecque. If this is the case it is easy to see why she held such a fascination for the younger poet, whose idealized vision of Greece was fostered in the Greek Salon of his mother. Moreover she, like the poet, could speak with nostalgia of a distant, enchanting homeland. In her he found a seductive, exotic, creole charm, just as the poet Bertin found inspiration in his love for Michelle's sister, Marie-Catherine, the Eucharis of his

¹Mme Vigée Le Brun noted her first meeting with Mme de Bonneuil: 'En face de moi se trouvait la plus jolie femme de Paris, . . . qui était alors fraîche comme une rose. Sa beauté si douce avait tant de charme que je ne pouvais en détourner mes yeux'. (Mme Vigée Le Brun, Souvenirs, quoted by Cazamian, *ibid.*, p.424).

²*Ibid.*, p.425.

³*Ibid.*, p.425.

Elégies.¹

Chénier's affair with Mme de Bonneuil is dated from his return from Switzerland until he took up his post in London, that is 1784 to 1787: a more precise dating cannot be given. As we should expect, Dimoff underlined what he saw as the pernicious influence of this liaison, which produced elegiac rather than didactic verse.² The elegies themselves portray a strong but turbulent relationship. In contrast with the D'.z.n elegies, the Camille poems begin in medias res. The affair has already begun and Camille takes an active rôle as a dominant, imperious, but reproachful and fickle lover. The poems explore the various facets of the relationship as it moves from scenes of happiness to scenes of betrayal, which are expressed with a dramatic intensity that is not matched in the cycle devoted to Lycoris. The first elegies, 'Ah ! portons dans les bois',³ 'Va, sonore habitant',⁴ and 'O lignes que sa main',⁵ represent the poet's love for Camille as an obsession that brings both joy and suffering, the characteristic qualities of the Latin Love Elegy, and the servitium amoris:

Camille est un besoin dont rien ne me soulage;
Rien à mes yeux n'est beau que de sa seule image.⁶

The elegy 'Et c'est Glycère',⁷ shows the poet being tempted away

¹ Cazamian, *ibid.*, pp.420-424.

² 'Sous cette influence dangereuse, il abandonnait sans hésiter les traces d'Homère et de Lucrèce, pour s'égarer sur les pas de Tibulle et d'Ovide'. (Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, p.163).

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 1, pp.61-62.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 1, p.97.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 2, pp.62-63.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 2, pp.97-98.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 3, pp.63-65.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 3, pp.98-100.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 1, ll.17-18, p.62.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 1, ll.17-18, p.97.

⁷ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 5, pp.67-69.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 5, pp.100-101.

from Camille by his friends trying to persuade him to indulge in other hedonistic pursuits and he vividly imagines her wrath. It is executed with subtle humour and refreshing tones of self-mockery, as is 'Ah ! des pleurs !',¹ in which the poet pokes fun at his weak resolve to leave Camille. In contrast, the poems 'Allons, l'heure est venue',² 'Non, je ne l'aime plus',³ and 'Reste, reste avec nous',⁴ describe the disintegration of the affair. The poet, who speaks of his hopes and illusions, is humiliated and filled with self-disgust as he experiences bitter rejection and betrayal.

The Camille elegies thus offer a remarkable variety of feelings and situations, but for the incipient stages of Chénier's love for Mme de Bonneuil we must turn to the poems addressed to the mysterious D'.z.n and to G. Buisson's research. The problem, which will lead us to a new interpretation of part of Chénier's elegiac work, centres upon this enigmatic figure with her intriguing title. A group of three elegies together with several notes and fragments are placed by Dimoff after the Camille cycle. They are all dedicated to a certain D'.z.n, whose baffling title is sometimes reduced to D'.z., or even to D'....., but the position of the missing letters always indicates that the title is a disyllabic word of four letters ending in n, preceded by a particle. This seemingly trivial point is crucial to the final identification of the word, and it is surprising to see how often the title is misrepresented. Buisson⁵

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 6, pp.69-70.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 6, pp.102-103.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 7, pp.70-73.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 7, pp.103-105.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 8, pp.73-75.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 8, pp.105-106.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 9, pp.75-78.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 9, pp.106-108.

⁵ G. Buisson, 'La Mystérieuse d'Azan, inspiratrice d'André Chénier',
R.H.L.F. 75, 1975, pp.30-47, p.39.

reported, for example, that the usually meticulous Dimoff transcribed the form correctly in his edition based on the manuscripts, but in his critical work on Chénier the form has been suddenly altered to a six-lettered word D'.z.n., and we note that G. Walter, and F. Scarfe (omitting the apostrophe) follow this faulty reading.

A summary of Buisson's historical review of the problem shows how his research presents a challenge to traditional ideas.

When Gabriel de Chénier published his edition of Chénier's poems in 1874, he tried in his introduction to prevent inquiries as to the real identity of the poet's mistresses in order to avoid scandal for his own and other families. The only one to whom he allowed a historical reality was D'.z.n, but his identification of her was purposely vague; she was an unknown English courtesan. Gabriel notes the difference the poet encountered between official London society and 'les moeurs faciles de jeunes filles qu'il n'était pas impossible de rencontrer dans des réunions . . . C'est là que les chercheurs. . . trouveront celle qu'il désigne par D'...z...n'.¹

Earlier Becq de Fouquières had suggested a different reading of the title. Prevented by the jealous Gabriel de Chénier from access to the manuscripts themselves, Becq worked from a faulty facsimile of an elegy and insisted that the elegies were dedicated to a D'.r., whom he identified as a creole, a Mme Gouy D'Arsy from San Domingo. He then dated the 'affair' to 1790 to 1791,² and placed the elegies to D'.r.. after those of the Camille group. He later³ revised this initial

¹G. de Chénier, ed., Œuvres poétiques d'André de Chénier avec une notice et des notes par M. Gabriel de Chénier, 3 vols., Paris, Lemerre, 1874, Vol. I, pp.lviii-lix.

²'Il avait conçu de l'amour, très-passagèrement, il est vrai, pour une jeune femme qui ne s'en douta probablement pas, Madame Gouy d'Arsy'. (L. Becq de Fouquières, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier. Edition critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, p.xxxviii).

³L. Becq de Fouquières, Lettres critiques sur la vie, les œuvres, les manuscrits d'André Chénier, Paris, Charavay, 1881, pp.112-114. Becq

interpretation, but without altering his reading of the letters, and identified D'.r.. as Marie Cosway, dating this liaison to 1785-1786. The letters were supposed to mean 'fille d'Arno', or 'fille d'Erin', since Marie Cosway was born in Florence of Irish parentage. It is noteworthy that even as late as 1924 this version of the identification was being repeated by R. Legros.¹

As was the case in so many of the features of Chénier's life and career it was Dimoff who produced the hypothesis that has been accepted, almost without question, ever since. In his edition he grouped the named love elegies into four distinct cycles, Lycoris, Camille, D'.z.n, and Marie Cosway, and followed them by numerous 'Amours diverses' and 'Fragments et vers se rapportant à l'amour' that brought together elegiac poems and fragments on the theme of love, but which did not specify the name of the beloved concerned.² It was in 1936, with the publication of his critical work, that Dimoff expounded his thesis concerning D'.z.n. [sic], and stamped his authoritative views on the issue. His concern above all seems to have been to make the D'.z.n affair harmonize with his general interpretation of Chénier's life and poetry, particularly for the period 1783-1787. As has been noted, Dimoff envisaged the poet

3 [contd.]

de Fouquières had tentatively suggested in 1875 that D'.... was in fact Mme de Bonneuil: 'J'inclinerais à croire que sous ce nom c'est en réalité Mme de Bonneuil qui est désignée, car nous savons qu'elle était créole et née à l'île Bourbon'. (L. Becq de Fouquières, Documents nouveaux sur André Chénier et examen critique de la nouvelle édition de ses oeuvres, Paris, Charpentier, 1875, p.258).

¹ R. Legros, 'André Chénier en Angleterre', Modern Language Review, 19, 1924, pp.424-434.

² Buisson suggests that this careful arrangement of the poems in itself suggested a specific interpretation of Chénier's life and poetry: 'Il faisait apparaître "naturellement" ces morceaux [D'.z.n] comme les vestiges d'une passade galante qui, survenant à point nommé d'après d'ultimes reproches à la vénale Camille, aurait perdu tout attrait pour le poète, une fois obtenue de "D'...." la "jouissance" impatientement attendue . . . le "groupe D'.z.n" semblait n'avoir d'autre intérêt que de marquer une étape vers l'assagissement et vers l'abandon de l'inspiration érotique'. (G. Buisson, 'La Mystérieuse d'Azan, inspiratrice d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 75, 1975, pp.30-47, p.38).

as engaged in a constant struggle between pleasure and study, in which the former won, to the detriment of the poetry. He saw this especial period as being dominated by Camille, interspersed with other minor flirtations with courtesans such as Glycère, Rose, and Julie.¹ The relationship with D'.z.n is almost reduced to the latter level. It is seen as a minor caprice that Chénier indulged in during a period of separation from Camille:

J'en conclus que ce roman pourrait être contemporain des amours avec Camille, au milieu desquelles il s'intercalerait comme un simple épisode, dans la période qui va du retour de Suisse au voyage d'Italie.²

For Dimoff 'D'.z.n.' [sic] was a creole like Camille, 'et comme elle coquette',³ and he did his best to minimize the importance of the liaison:

Ce fut une aventure assez brève, mais où André Chénier se jeta avec toute l'ardeur qu'il mettait d'ordinaire dans ses passions.... A ses pieds, comme aux pieds de Camille, il a chanté ses désirs et ses espoirs. Deux canevas en prose de quelques lignes suggèrent qu'après s'être dérobée quelque temps à ses instances, D'.z.n., . . . daigna donner à son amant passionné des espérances, voire même des réalités peut-être. Nous n'en savons pas davantage: et il n'est pas certain que nous gagnerions à en savoir plus.⁴

For decades D'.z.n.'s fate was sealed by this verdict from the leading critic in Chénier studies. G. Walter, for example, followed the same order in his grouping of the love poetry. J-M. Gerbault manages to dispense with D'.Z.N. [sic] in the space of six lines and a note, (certainly a

¹ 'Il éprouvait le besoin de se détendre, dans une société plus mêlée, mais moins contrainte, de se laisser aller à des amours plus vulgaires, mais plus libres'. (Dimoff, *La Vie et l'Oeuvre*, Vol. I, p.163). He cites the elegy, 'Et c'est Glycère' to back up his thesis.

² Ibid., p.164.

³ Ibid., p.164.

⁴ Ibid., p.164.

'fugace liaison'),¹ and even as recently as 1971, G. d'Aubarède brushed aside D'z.n. [sic]:

Il est infiniment probable que nous ne saurons jamais qui fut cette autre insulaire qui inspira à notre inflammable ami une page des Amours plus brûlante encore que celles inspirées par Michèle de Bonneuil Une ou deux nuits d'insomnie loin d'un beau corps convoité, voilà tout le roman d'André Chénier et de la mystérieuse D'z.n..²

Nevertheless in 1955 J. Fabre proposed a radically different interpretation, in which D'.z.n.(incredibly !.) was to be read as an abbreviation of d'Azan:

Les géographes anciens donnaient le nom d'Azania à la côte du Mozambique et certains voyageurs modernes appellent d'Ajan ou d'Azan la partie de l'Océan indien où se trouvent les îles de France, Bourbon et Madagascar.³

His conclusion was even more revolutionary:

Le groupe des élégies D.z.n. [sic] est antérieur au groupe Camille, . . . ces 'deux' beautés créoles ne sont qu'une même personne et le choix d'un prénom, Camille, marque en quelque sorte, de la part de Chénier, une prise de possession.⁴

Unfortunately Fabre did not examine the issue further and few critics have been willing to accept this interpretation. Even F. Scarfe who claims that 'there can be little doubt that the group of poems about D.z.n. [sic] were written at the beginning of Chénier's liaison with Madame de Bonneuil, and that D.z.n. is none other than Camille',⁵ cannot resist the temptation of suggesting other identifications, for example with a Mlle Dozon, an 'opera-girl',⁶ and even with Pauline de Beaumont !⁷

¹ J.-M. Gerbault, André Chénier, *Ecrivains d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, 5, Paris, Seghers, 1958, pp.80-81.

² G. d'Aubarède, André Chénier, Paris, Hachette, 1970, pp.93-94.

³ J. Fabre, Chénier, *Connaissance des Lettres*, 42, Paris, Hatier, reprinted 1965, p.50.

⁴ J. Fabre, *ibid.*, p.50.

⁵ F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.47.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.222.

So far ideas have been too entrenched to accept the identification Mme de Bonneuil - D'.z.n - Camille. The two articles by G. Buisson have at last brought the necessary documentary information.¹ In 1968 he showed that Michelle Sentuary was called 'd'Azanne' by her family, and that her elder brother was known as 'Dozan' or 'Dasan', whereas her younger brother and sister were known as 'Grusson' (or 'Dugrusson') and 'Grussonne', and that these names came from lands that were destined for each pair of children.² By 1975 Buisson had proof in the form of signatures that the family used these titles:

Il ressort que l'aîné se présentait officiellement comme Sentuary fils, tandis que le cadet et la cadette faisaient état de leur surnom et écrivaient Grusson Sentuary, Sentuary dugrusson ou dugrusson Sentuary Quant à Michelle, avant d'épouser M. de Bonneuil, elle n'usait pas non plus de son prénom: c'est elle qui a signé Dazan Sentuary au mariage de sa soeur aînée, d'abord le 31 décembre 1766 sur l'acte notarié, puis le 1er janvier 1767 à l'église.³

This evidence furthermore confirms Buisson's hypothesis of 1968, that, if d'Azan were merely a literary pseudonym to show the creole origins of his mistress, there would be no need to abbreviate the word, the numbers of creoles in Paris making the identification vague enough, but that, if d'Azan represented a real name that Mme de Bonneuil and her family had used, there would be good reason to make identification difficult.⁴

¹ In fact as early as 1939 Cazamian had made the same connections as Buisson made independently, but without providing any references or drawing any important conclusions: 'La famille de Mme de Bonneuil, les Sentuari, possédait une terre à Dazan, près de Bordeaux. La jeune femme devait souvent prononcer ce nom devant son ami qui peut très bien s'en être servi pour dissimuler le nom aimé, au moins dans ses manuscrits'. (A. Cazamian, 'Une Muse d'André Chénier', R.D.M., 1939, pp.419-429, p.427).

² G. Buisson, 'A propos d'André Chénier: Camille et D'.z.n', R.H.L.F., 68, 1968, pp.529-530.

³ G. Buisson, 'La Mystérieuse d'Azan, inspiratrice d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 75, 1975, pp.30-47, p.46.

⁴ Ibid., R.H.L.F., 68, p.519.

It is clear that Mme de Bonneuil, D'.z.n, and Camille are one, but what of the literary implications of Buisson's research? For this we must turn to the elegies themselves. The poems addressed to D'.z.n indeed portray love in its incipient stages, and above all, in contrast to the Camille group, D'.z.n plays no active rôle in the relationship. The two elegies, '...., île charmante',¹ and '... 0 peuple des oiseaux',² show the poet looking on and paying homage to D'.z.n's beauty by reference to the island where she was born, and secondly to her head-dress. 'Hier, en te quittant' is a confession of love, as the poet indicates that he is obsessed by her beauty, but the last lines suggest that he does not yet know her feelings:

Que ne puis-je à mon tour, ah ! que ne puis-je croire
Que loin d'elle toujours j'occupe sa mémoire !³

'O nuit, nuit douloureuse !' represents the poet as having sent a billet doux to D'.z.n to declare his love, and spending a sleepless night in anticipation of her reaction:

Au retour d'un festin, seule, ô Dieux! sur ta couche,
Si cet heureux papier s'approchait de ta bouche ! . . .
Je le saurai; l'amour volera m'en instruire . . .
Et ton coeur ne pourra me faire un si grand bien
Sans qu'un transport subit avertisse le mien.
Fais-le naître, ô D'.z., alors toutes mes peines
S'adoucissent. . . .⁴

A final fragment proclaims that the poet's conquest was achieved: 'O Espérance, . . . Tu m'avais dit que je fléchirais D'.... et en effet. (Jouissance.)'.⁵

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 1, p.80.

Walter, 'Varia', 'Fragments pour D'.z.n.', I, p.602.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 2, p.81.

Walter, 'Varia', 'Fragments pour D'.z.n.', II, p.603.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 3, ll.53-54, p.83.

Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', I, ll.53-54, p.110.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 4, ll.61-62, 65, 67-70, p.86.

Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 2, ll.61-62, 65, 67-70, p.111.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 5, ll.14-16, p.87.

Walter, 'Notes et Variantes', XX, p.935.

The literary evidence of the elegies themselves reinforce the view that Chénier changed the title from D'.z.n to Camille once his love was returned for reasons of discretion, and also to give his mistress a classical pseudonym. No longer can D'.z.n be cast aside as a brief episode in Chénier's libertine life. The love elegies now show a powerful unity of inspiration and trace the full development of a relationship that dominates Chénier's elegiac creativity. This sense of unity gives to the love elegies a strength that challenges Dimoff's denigration of their poetic achievement.

A new edition of the elegiac opus is needed to rectify the previous error. It might be that, after close investigation of the manuscripts, some of the elegies which at the moment are to be found under the heading of 'Amours diverses' might be reclassified and might find their way into the D'.z.n - Camille group. Of these, 'Je suis né pour l'amour',¹ seems to provide a good case for assimilation into the new cycle. In that elegy, with a depth of feeling that is reminiscent of the Camille series, Chénier laments the loss of someone who was 'toujours l'arbitre de mon sort';² after reminding himself that his friends had stressed her infidelities, he recounts his own and cruelly claims that her beauty is due to the fire of his poetry:

De vos regards éteints la tristesse chagrine
Fut bientôt dans mes vers une langueur divine.
Ce corps fluet, débile, et presque inanimé,
En un corps tout nouveau dans mes vers transformé,
S'élançait léger, souple; ils vous portaient la vie.³

If we are right in including this elegy within the D'.z.n - Camille cycle, then this must surely have been a venomous retort to Mme de Bonneuil.

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 22, pp.106-110.
Walter, 'Elégies', X, pp.62-65.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, 1.9, p.107.
Walter, *ibid.*, 1.9, p.63.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.51-55, p.108.
Walter, *ibid.*, 11.51-55, p.64.

Moreover, other elegies, grouped by Dimoff under the heading 'Amitiés', seem to belong more naturally to this expanded Camille group. Although formally addressed to Ecouchard Le Brun, Abel de Fondat, and the Trudaine brothers, the elegies, 'Mânes de Callimaque, ombre de Philétas',¹ 'Pourquoi de mes loisirs accuser la langueur?',² and 'Amis, couple chéri, coeurs formés pour le mien',³ date from the Camille period. Within these poems Chénier investigates further aspects of his relationship with Camille and shows his preoccupation with the nature of elegiac inspiration at this time.

The only other individual celebrated in Chénier's elegies is Marie Cosway, the cultured wife of the miniaturist R. Cosway.⁴ The friendship with the Cosways dates possibly to 1785 when they were in Paris, and it is likely that David or the Trudaines introduced the poet at the receptions given there by Marie Cosway. The two elegies in which she is mentioned are very different in tone from the poetry written to Lycoris or Camille. The relationship here celebrated is of another type. Chénier shows great affection and admiration for Marie Cosway's artistic talents and charming character. He praises her gifts as a painter and musician, her aesthetic sense, and her moral qualities in a poem devoid of the sensuality expressed in the other elegies:

Et les douces Vertus et les Grâces décentes,
Les bras entrelacés autour d'elle dansantes,

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, pp.127-130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, pp.138-140.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iv, 2, pp.142-145.
Walter, 'Epîtres', IV, 2, pp.146-148.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, v, pp.145-148.
Walter, 'Epîtres', V, pp.148-151.

⁴ Gabriel de Chénier reproduces a note written by Louis-Sauveur de Chénier: 'Milady Coswai était alors une jeune dame anglaise, pleine de grâce et de candeur, qui joignit à la beauté l'amour des beaux-arts et un talent assez distingué pour la peinture qu'elle pratiquait assidûment. Elle a gravé à l'eau-forte, avec esprit et légèreté, divers sujets de sa

Veillaient sur son sommeil; et surent la cacher
 A Vénus, à l'Amour, qui brûlaient d'approcher;
 Et puis au lieu de lait, pour nourrir son enfance,
 Mêlèrent la candeur, la gâité, l'indulgence,
 La bienveillance amie au sourire ingénu,
 Et le talent modeste à lui seul inconnu;
 Et la sainte fierté que nul revers n'opprime,
 La paix, la conscience ignorante du crime,
 La simplicité chaste aux regards caressants,
 Près de qui les pervers deviendraient innocents.¹

This firm friendship made in Paris was to continue through the poet's exile in England.

When he returned to Paris from London, in 1791, it was to a very different, hostile world. In 1793, already deeply committed to politics through his pamphlets and other counter-revolutionary activities, Chénier was in hiding at Versailles, his life in danger. It was during this last year of his life that the poet was inspired by a new and rather frail Muse, 'Fanny', Madame Françoise Lecoulteux at Louveciennes. His affection for her had already inspired an elegy on the death of her child in 1792.² Now, during the final tragic months at Versailles, despite all the uncertainties of life as a suspect, André Chénier composed tender and poignant poetry of love for 'Fanny':

L'âme n'est point encor flétrie,
 La vie encor n'est point tarie,
 Quand un regard nous trouble et le coeur et la voix.
 Qui cherche les pas d'une belle,
 Qui peut ou s'égayer ou gémir auprès d'elle,
 De ses jours peut porter le poids.³

4 [contd.]

composition ou tirés des tableaux de Raphaël, Rubens et autres artistes célèbres'. (G. de Chénier, ed., Œuvres poétiques d'André Chénier avec une notice et des notes par M. Gabriel de Chénier, 3 vols., Paris, Lemerre, 1874, Vol. I, pp.243-244).

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iv, I, 11.31-42, p.88.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Marie Cosway', I, 11.31-42, pp.112-113.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VIII, 2, pp.165-167.
 Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', V, p.546.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Odes', I, i, 8, 11.31-36, p.219.
 Walter, 'Odes', VI, 11.31-36, p.184.

This time love did not give rise to elegies, but to the new poetic form of the Ode. The elegiac inspiration of Chénier's gloriously creative youth evolved as the Revolution changed his whole life and poetry.

III

THE COLLECTING OF LITERARY SOURCES

. . . Les poètes vantés,
 Sans cesse avec transport lus, relus, médités;
 Les Dieux, l'homme, le ciel, la nature sacrée
 Sans cesse étudiée, admirée, adorée,
 Voilà nos maîtres saints, nos guides éclatants.¹

The biographical survey of chapter II has illustrated that André Chénier fully partook of a society in a complex period of transition, where the frivolity of the Ancien Régime still lingered alongside growing demands for a new social awareness.² As Becq de Fouquières commented:

André Chénier a vécu au milieu de cette société du XVIIIe siècle, à la fois la plus délicate et la plus raffinée, la plus licencieuse et la plus naïve, la plus idéologue et la plus sceptique; il a traversé la plupart des salons célèbres, connu les plus illustres de ses contemporains, et passé dans le rayonnement des femmes les plus séduisantes de son époque.³

The Chénier who frequented the Salons, who was invited to the banquets given by Grimod de la Reynière,⁴ who visited the Opera, and had a series of love affairs, was André Chénier the poet, the writer of love elegies.

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, I, ll.5-9, p.125.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', I, 1, ll.5-9, p.133.

² 'Un air de gravité et de "vertu" marque les meilleurs de ceux qui ont vingt-cinq ans en 1789. . . les amis d'André ont pris la vie au sérieux, et paraissent dans le plaisir même fort éloignés de la frivolité naguère à la mode'. (J. Fabre, Chénier, Connaissance des Lettres, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.21).

³ L. Becq de Fouquières, Lettres critiques sur la vie, les oeuvres, les manuscrits d'André Chénier, Paris, Charavay, 1881, pp.106-107.

⁴ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, pp.172-175.

In these, his experiences, so typical of the late eighteenth century, rise above the level of a modus vivendi of a certain group of people at a certain period in time, and are transformed into poetic vision.

The poet himself was often at pains to assert that, in his Elégies, love provided the experience for his inspiration. He proclaims the omnipotence of love, and extols the triumph of love over all other pursuits, especially insisting that this triumph is at the expense of study:

Hélas ! contre l'Amour en est-il un tranquille ?
Si de livres, d'écrits, de sphères, de beaux-arts
Contre elle, contre lui je me fais des remparts;
A l'aspect de l'Amour une terreur subite
Met bientôt les beaux-arts et les Muses en fuite.
Taciturne, mon front appuyé sur ma main,
D'elle seule occupé, mes jours coulent en vain. . . .
Adieu donc, vains succès, studieuses chimères,
Et beaux-arts tant aimés, Muses jadis si chères.¹

This assertion, often associated with the topoi of the transience of youth and the cry of carpe diem, is unequivocally made.

Moi, j'ai besoin d'aimer; qu'ai-je besoin de gloire,
S'il faut, pour obtenir ses regards complaisants,
A l'ennui de l'étude immoler mes beaux ans ? . . .
L'amour seul dans mon âme a créé le génie;
L'amour est seul arbitre et seul Dieu de ma vie.²

Attempting to apply the somewhat spurious concept of 'sincerity', there has been a readiness on the part of students of the Augustan Elegy and French Elegy of the eighteenth century to take the poetic statements literally, and to overlook T.S. Eliot's claim that 'the difference between art and the event is always absolute'.³ The former interpretations are particularly

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 3, ll.34-40, 49-50, p.83.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 1, ll.34-40, 49-50, pp.109-110.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 2, ll.2-4, 13-14, p.130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 2, ll.2-4, 13-14, p.136.
See also the elegies addressed to François de Pange, chapter II, pp.72-73 above.

³ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in Selected Prose, ed. J. Hayward, London, Penguin, 1953, p.28.

suspect for the elegies of these periods, for, especially in this genre, the rôle of tradition and imitation is of paramount importance. The elegist adopts stock elegiac poses and assumes a persona deeply rooted in tradition. Indeed the elegy, already quoted, is full of irony, for its introduction is a close imitation of Propertius, Lib. II, elegy xxix.¹ It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Chénier was writing amusingly for readers who would fully appreciate the paradox of basing an elegy on the very study which he was renouncing. From such evidence it would be unwise to regard Chénier as an eighteenth century libertine in whose life study occupied a minor rôle. Instead we should see him as a devotee of Graeco-Roman traditions, dedicated to using them with an originality arising from his own temperament and personal experience, as expressed in his celebrated dictum: 'imitation inventrice'. A prerequisite of André Chénier's perfection in art was therefore knowledge. Only through considerable erudition could he transform and develop his sources as they impinged upon his own sensitivity. We are thus offered the portrait of a studious youth very different from the eighteenth century lover of the previous chapter.

Indeed, André Chénier's knowledge of Antiquity displays such wealth and depth that it is tempting to allow the pendulum to swing to the other extreme of interpretation and to turn him into a scholar and aesthete, in whose life mistresses were of transient and minimal importance. This interpretation was strongly urged by Gabriel de Chénier, intent on clearing his uncle of the charge of being a libertine:

On se tromperait étrangement si. . . on le supposait le disciple des licenciés courtisans de la Régence. Son imagination était d'autant plus fraîche, qu'elle ne fut jamais souillée par le spectacle des orgies comme

¹ Compare Propertius, Lib. II, elegy xxix, 'Hesterna, mea lux, cum potus nocte vagarer', and Chénier's elegy, 'Hier, en te quittant, enivré de tes charmes'. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 3, pp.81-83. Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 1, pp.108-110).

on les entend actuellement. . . . Les hommes qui réfléchissent n'ont pas besoin pour bien connaître les passions d'avoir éprouvé toutes celles qu'ils expriment. . . . Assurément il avait plutôt analysé qu'éprouvé lui-même toutes les passions qu'il a si bien peintes dans ses Elégies. Avec un coeur de poète, sans doute, il a aimé avec ardeur, et il a chanté l'amour avec transport; mais il n'a jamais été ce jeune débauché courant de Camille à Caroline, à Lycoris, de Lycoris à Glycère, à Julie, à Amélie, à Rose et à d'autres, passant ses nuits dans des banquets anacréontiques où l'ivresse des plaisirs semblait rappeler les fêtes de Bacchus.¹

Such a naïve attempt to extract the poet from his social milieu is foolish. There is no need to justify or to excuse the conduct of a man who moved in the aristocratic and intellectual circles of France on the eve of its Revolution.

As so often happens, a false dichotomy has emerged with a libertine on the one hand and a scholar on the other. The media via, in which the two aspects complement one another, provides a more equitable appraisal. André Chénier appears as a man of intense character and insight striving continuously to live life to the full, both physically and intellectually. Although at times he might despair, 'me plaignant que la vie humaine est trop courte pour pouvoir. . . cultiver tous ces amis. . . et en même temps tout apprendre, tout lire',² the effort was always made. The somewhat colourless, bland figure presented by the nephew is powerfully restored to full vigour and dignity in Becq de Fouquières' inspired retort to Gabriel de Chénier's apology for his uncle:

M. de Chénier voudrait refaire d'André un portrait de fantaisie, au physique et au moral; . . . André Chénier n'était pas une nature de demi-mesures, de demi-sentiments, de ménagements prémédités, de compromis réfléchis, mais au contraire une nature prime-sautière,

¹G. de Chénier, ed., Œuvres poétiques d'André de Chénier avec une notice et des notes par M. Gabriel de Chénier, 3 vols., Paris, Lemerre, 1874, Vol. III, pp.4-6.

²Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Amérique', I, 9, 11.5-7, p.87.
Walter, 'L'Amérique', I, 9, 11.5-7, p.419.

riche jusqu'à la prodigalité, forte, puissante, entière, et vivant de la vie des sens, aussi bien que celle de l'âme et de l'intelligence. Il ne lui avait été refusé aucune des facultés dont peut se réjouir tout être humain.¹

His love affairs and his study are of supreme importance: they should not be evaluated against each other, for they are each part of the dominant force in the life of André Chénier - his poetry. At all times he remained a poet.²

This is underlined in the very personal piece of writing, the 'Essai sur les causes et les effets de la perfection et de la décadence des lettres et des arts'.

Choqué de voir les lettres si prosternées et le genre humain ne pas songer à relever sa tête, je me livrai souvent aux distractions et aux égarements d'une jeunesse forte et fougueuse; mais, toujours dominé par l'amour de la poésie, des lettres et de l'étude, souvent chagrin et découragé par la fortune ou par moi-même, toujours soutenu par mes amis, je sentis au moins dans moi que mes vers et ma prose, goûtés ou non, seraient mis au rang du petit nombre d'ouvrages qu'aucune bassesse n'a flétris.³

The Italian poet Alfieri also emphasized Chénier's vocation in a letter of encouragement sent to his friend during the latter's stay in London, 1789:

¹ L. Becq de Fouquières, Documents nouveaux sur André Chénier et examen critique de la nouvelle édition de ses oeuvres, Paris, Charpentier, 1875, pp.7-8. This comment is in reply to Gabriel de Chénier's statement: 'De ce qu'André put, quelquefois, prendre part à des soupers où se trouvaient réunis ses jeunes amis de collège et des beautés faciles; de ce que dans ses *Élégies*, on trouve la trace de ces exceptions à ses habitudes studieuses et tranquilles, il ne faut pas en conclure que sa vie fut dissipée et livrée à des plaisirs échevelés'. (G. de Chénier, Oeuvres poétiques. . .ibid., Vol. I, p.xxi). However, even Becq de Fouquières at times seems to feel the necessity to play down the rôle of pleasure in Chénier's life: 'Toutefois ce n'étaient que de passagers éclairs de plaisir au milieu de sa vie studieuse et souvent tourmentée par la douleur'. (Becq de Fouquières, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier. Edition critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, p.xxix)

² 'Au lieu de s'opposer les deux images s'appellent et se complètent. Jusque dans la poursuite du plaisir, cette vie obéit au même principe, reste sous le signe de la même vocation'. (J. Fabre, Chénier, *Connaissance des Lettres*, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, pp.32-33).

³ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.624-625.

E allo scriver sol pensa, a scriver nato;
che non è cosa al mondo altra che duri.¹

Granted the importance of pleasure and study, let us now turn to examine the ways in which Chénier gained the erudition which was to stimulate artistic activity and produce the Elégies. We shall explore the poet collecting materials from Antiquity and later the poetry derived from these sources.

It comes as no surprise that this poet, who was both emotionally, physically, and intellectually attached to the Graeco-Roman civilization, should express his intense desire to perfect his genius by knowledge of that culture. His aim was to saturate himself in this heritage, to absorb and assimilate the great literature of the past and, finally, to use this to bring his own poetry to a level equal to his models or even to surpass them:

Dévo^t adorateur de ces maîtres antiques,
Je veux m'envelopper de leurs saintes reliques.²

Quotation after quotation may be found to illustrate this fervent desire. It could only be achieved by supreme patience and total dedication, demanding constant attention and distillation, and, above all, a care for the morrow when knowledge could become art.

Lines from one of Chénier's longer poems paint a charming picture of the confusion that reigns in his study as this process of gleaning material moves steadily forward:

¹This letter, accompanied by a translation in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier, is to be found amongst the family documents of the Donation Chénier, B.M.C. R.3. 11816. It is dated Paris, 29 April, 1789.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.133-134, p.206.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.133-134, p.160.

Mon Louvre est sous le toit. Sur ma tête il s'abaisse.
 De ses premiers regards l'orient le caresse.
 Lit, sièges, table y sont portant de toutes parts
 Livres, dessins, crayons, confusément épars.
 Là je dors, chante, lis, pleure, étudie, et pense.
 Là dans un calme pur je médite en silence
 Ce qu'un jour je veux être, et seul à m'applaudir,
 Je sème la moisson que je veux recueillir.¹

Any investigation into André Chénier's reading of Graeco-Roman authors becomes in essence an investigation into the very secrets of his art. Fortunately a selection of books from the poet's library is still available for examination and the manuscript evidence is sufficient to enable us to reconstitute the process of collecting and assimilating the Greek and Latin models. In an early work, 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', Chénier had assumed the rôle of literary critic and had occasion to note that 'Il serait quelquefois à désirer que nous eussions les brouillons des grands poètes, pour voir par combien d'échelons ils ont passé'.²

In the event this was to be the case with Chénier, tragically for the poet, since it is likely that his untimely death is largely responsible

¹ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des lettres', I, 1, 11.16-23, p.208. Walter, 'La République des lettres', 1, 11.5-12, p.470. The thought is reminiscent of Du Bellay: 'Qui veut voler par les mains et bouches des hommes, doit longuement demeurer en sa chambre: et qui desire vivre en la memoire de la posterité, doit comme mort en soymesmes suer et trembler maintesfois, et autant que notz poètes courtizans boyvent, mangent et dorment à leur oyse, endurer de faim, de soif et de longues vigiles'. (La Deffence et illustration de la lanque francoyse. Edition Critique par Henri Chamard, Paris, Fontemoing, 1904, p.198).

² Walter, 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', p.826. Chénier shows an insight and wisdom not always possessed by his later editors and critics. After the first edition of his poems by Latouche in 1819, Charles Loyson commented: 'Je n'ai rien outré, . . . en souhaitant, pour la gloire d'André Chénier qu'on pût faire rentrer dans l'oubli une moitié des écrits qui viennent d'être publiés sous son nom. De bonne foi, s'imaginerait-on servir à l'agrément des lecteurs ou à la réputation de l'écrivain, en imprimant cette foule de fragments imparfaits, d'ébauches informes qui n'avaient peut-être jamais été exposés même au regard indulgent de l'amitié'. The irony is that Latouche had already made his selection and rejected the fragments. (Oeuvres choisies de Charles Loyson, publiées par E. Grimaud avec une lettre du R.P. Hyacinthe et des notes biographique et littéraire par MM. Patin et Sainte-Beuve, Paris, Albanel, 1869, p.219. The text is taken from extracts of Le Lycée français ou mélanges de littérature et de critique, 1819, Vol. II).

for the unfinished state of his manuscripts, but fortunately for present-day researchers who are accorded a glimpse of his study, where books, notes, and jottings lie unfinished and in disarray; it is almost as if one were given the rare privilege of seeing a poet actually at work.

A. The Donation Chénier at Carcassonne.

To gain a precise idea of the way in which Chénier accrued his knowledge of Greek and Latin models we must take as our starting point the Bibliothèque Municipale of Carcassonne: this houses the invaluable Donation Chénier that includes books from the poet's own library. There is much to be learnt from the mere physical appearance and nature of these books, and such an examination is indispensable; but beyond that, to sit in the library at Carcassonne is almost to experience the direct link with the past that motivated Chénier and to understand more fully the manner in which he strove to further his Neo-classical tastes.

Indeed, a great deal of our basic appreciation of Chénier's Elégies lies in the books he used and especially those which were his own personal property. The student who is studying this library is aided by the registre d'entrées at the Bibliothèque Municipale, Carcassonne and by the only published catalogue, drawn up by P. Dimoff and found in the second volume of his invaluable work, La Vie et l'oeuvre d'André Chénier jusqu'à la Révolution française.¹ Yet any attempts to piece together a picture of the size and scope of Chénier's library are at once beset by a series of frustrating problems. Unfortunately there are no simple solutions to them, but in the search for an answer there are many indications of the poet's ideas, of his methods of working, of his knowledge and his experience of Antiquity.

The problems that surround all attempts to list the editions that belonged personally to André Chénier soon become evident when the nature

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, pp.234-248.

of the Donation Chénier is understood. This Donation was the Chénier family library and accompanying documents given to the Bibliothèque Municipale of Carcassonne. The details of the gift take us far beyond the library itself to the circumstances of the poet's death. The catalogue of Chénier's personal books, as compiled by Dimoff, reveals surprising omissions. It can be regarded as certain that the premature death of the poet prevented the completion and organization of a superb, individual collection of books. There is little doubt that many of the volumes were lost and, or, assimilated into the family library, so that there is no longer in many cases any proof of ownership. On the death of André Chénier his property, including his precious books and manuscripts, was impounded, not only at his house in Paris, but also in his prison cell at Saint-Lazare.¹ Evidence that Louis Chénier, the father, claimed restitution of his son's effects comes from a note written to 'le citoyen Chénier' asking him to 's'adresser à l'agence des domaines nationaux, demander des livres qui sont parmi ceux emportés par le citoyen Pérot lors de la levée des scellés apposé dans la maison d'arrêt Lazare, le 21 pluviôse'² [sic]. So the library passed, fully or partially, to his father. Thence it passed through a series of hands, his brothers, Constantin-Xavier, Louis-Sauveur, and Marie-Joseph, until it finally reached his nephew, Gabriel de Chénier. In such circumstances it is virtually impossible to distinguish the books that André Chénier possessed from those of other members of the family. We are left with the

¹The B.N. Catalogue No. 162 mentions the existence of the 'procès-verbal de la visite rendue au domicile d'André Chénier, 97, rue de Cléry, par le Comité de surveillance de la Section de Brutus, 14 thermidor an II-Arch. nat., F7 4645 dossier Chénier'. In a letter attached to this document, Louis Chénier asked for the restitution of his son's property, in particular 'un journal de notes littéraires'. (S. Balayé, André Chénier, Catalogue d'exposition, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1962, p.33).

²B.M.C. R.3. 11815.

best endeavours and sometimes the inadequacies of subsequent critics.

A full collection of almost two thousand books together with all the family documents formed the bequest to the Bibliothèque Municipale, Carcassonne. The details are attested in a letter written by Mme Elisa de Chénier:

M^r Gabriel de Chénier, mon mari, avait une bibliothèque composée d'environ deux mille volumes. Il aurait désiré la laisser, après notre mort à tous les deux, à la Bibliothèque de la ville de Carcassonne, dont plusieurs générations de Chéniers avaient habité le département de l'Aude. [sic],¹

As Gabriel died before finalizing the arrangement it was left to his widow to undertake the donation:

Je fis don de la plus grande partie de la bibliothèque de M^r de Chénier au mois de Juin 1880, me réservant jusqu'à ma mort les ouvrages que je n'avais pas encore lus ou que je voulais relire et qui iront rejoindre les autres quand je ne serai plus. Je joignis à ce don des tableaux de famille, craignant qu'après moi, ils ne fussent vendus à l'encan.²

The final instalment was handed over in 1892 and the Donation was complete.³

The family documents form an invaluable and easily accessible fund of material for research, but the library 'd'environ deux mille volumes'

¹ B.M.C. R.3. 11794. Letter from Mme Elisa de Chénier to Alphonse Amic, Paris, 29 August, 1888.

² Ibid.

³ 'La Bibliothèque de Carcassonne vient de recevoir, 14 oct. 1892, de Mme Gabriel de Chénier, par l'intermédiaire de M. Mazières, Inspecteur des Forêts en retraite, tous les papiers qui avaient été conservés dans sa famille. Après l'envoi, en juillet dernier, de sa bibliothèque, qui forme le complément de celle que M. Gabriel de Chénier, son mari, avait léguée à la ville en 1880, Mme Gabriel a voulu mettre le comble à ses largesses en dotant, par testament, notre Bibliothèque de documents d'autant plus précieux qu'ils permettent de connaître et d'étudier dans l'intimité de leur vie, de leurs relations, de leurs travaux littéraires, chacun des membres de cette famille célèbre'. (B.M.C. R.3. 11900).

confronts the student with unexpected disappointments. Relatively few of the books are marked out by family tradition as having belonged to André Chénier. Sometimes they are identified by a loose note written by Gabriel de Chénier and inserted into a book, or by the entry catalogue, composed at the time of the reception of the Donation at Carcassonne. The relative smallness of the list is confirmed by Dimoff, and there seems no reason to doubt the ownership of this group of books,¹ although the omission of books used regularly by Chénier indicates that the present catalogue is far from satisfactory. If one excludes from the immense Donation Chénier the editions that are designated as having belonged to André or his brother Marie-Joseph, it would seem that the remaining books were the property of his brothers Constantin-Xavier and Louis-Sauveur or of his nephew Gabriel. Dimoff has already questioned whether these three would have made a collection of the scholarly, erudite books, above all of the editions of Graeco-Roman authors which fill the shelves of the Donation. He contends:

A quiconque feuillette l'édition de 1874, il apparaît avec netteté que Gabriel de Chénier possédait du grec et même du latin une teinture très superficielle, et il semblera invraisemblable qu'un homme aussi peu versé dans la connaissance de l'antiquité classique, se soit procuré tant de volumes difficilement lisibles et peu intéressants pour lui. La même objection de principe ne saurait valoir à l'égard de Constantin-Xavier et de Louis-Sauveur Chénier: l'un et l'autre avaient, comme André et Marie-Joseph, fait leurs études au collège de Navarre; . . . Encore est-il bon de remarquer que, des quatre fils de Louis Chénier, ils étaient probablement ceux qui avaient le goût le moins prononcé pour les lettres, puisqu'ils n'ont

¹ 'Nous avons d'autant moins de raisons de suspecter la tradition de famille qui les désigne comme ayant servi à l'écrivain, que deux d'entre eux [at least] portent des annotations manuscrites de sa main, et que d'autres contenaient des fiches volantes, où il avait consigné des observations que lui en avait suggéré la lecture'. (Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.233).

jamais éprouvé le besoin d'écrire; contrairement aux deux autres, ils se sont accommodés volontiers de suivre des carrières sans rapport direct avec la littérature, le premier dans la diplomatie, le second dans l'armée.¹

Dimoff seems to judge Gabriel de Chénier somewhat harshly. His knowledge of law and his post in the Ministère de Guerre necessitated far more than any 'teinture superficielle' of Greek and Latin, and it is interesting to note that several of the books in the Donation are reference books on the subject of Roman law. Moreover amongst the family documents can be found the young Gabriel's exercise books in which he translated Vergil's Aeneid, Lib. I-IX, and Horace's Odes.² The family documents also refute Dimoff's belief that neither Constantin-Xavier nor Louis-Sauveur showed any interest in the arts and more particularly in composition. A note, dated 12 February 1837, written by Gabriel, clearly states that Constantin-Xavier, 'consacra ses loisirs à l'étude des lettres qu'il cultiva jusqu'à la fin de sa vie'.³ Any bias on the part of Gabriel is dispelled by file 11798 which contains a poem written by Constantin-Xavier in 1830.⁴

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, pp.249-250.

² See B.M.C. R.3. 11834.

³ B.M.C. R.3. 11798.

⁴ Ibid. The poem bears a striking resemblance to the ideas of Constantin's more illustrious brother.

Tu me vis naître aussi. Thrace aussi fut ma mère.
 Mais du beau nom français elle vit mon front ceint.
 La France avait produit mon cher et tendre père.
 Le chêne respecté que le Gaulois fit saint
 Vint couvrir ma naissance en ombrageant ma mère.
 Et bientôt j'habitai la terre des Français,
 Au lieu qui de mon père éclairait les[. . . ? . . .]
 [. . . ? . . .] superbe et brillante Aquitaine,
 Des Gaules autrefois l'occidentale reine.
 J'y goûtai quelque temps les plaisirs enfantins.

Constantin-Xavier alludes to his Greek birth, his family crest, and his stay in Languedoc. Parts of the manuscript are illegible.

It appears that Dimoff may have overstated his case, but his general thesis holds good, that it is very probable that many of the editions in the Donation Chénier belonged to André. The mammoth task that Dimoff urges the student to undertake,¹ of perusing the whole Donation to establish the elusive links between particular editions and André Chénier, still remains to be carried out. The amount of time required, and the slight possibility of any reward for this task, is a daunting prospect, for it would involve a lifetime's work, and another Dimoff, although it might in the end add to our knowledge of the actual literary sources behind the poet's Elégies and other works.

Nevertheless, some progress may probably be made in this direction. In his article, 'Notes inédites d'André Chénier',² published posthumously, Dimoff advanced the idea that a further five volumes should be added to his original list of books belonging to the poet. The caveat 'probably' lies in our doubts arising from this article, for Dimoff's conjectures are inextricably linked with yet another fascinating, if irritating, problem that confronts anyone surveying the Donation. The problem is raised at this point, not only to query Dimoff's most recent conjectures, but also to underline the difficulties and uncertainties that have to be faced in assessing the techniques used by Chénier as he studied and made notes on the Classics. Here is the evidence of the methods he

¹ 'Je soupçonne que bien des livres de la donation faite à la ville de Carcassonne viennent d'André Chénier lui-même, mais que Gabriel de Chénier, qui les avait trouvés, les uns dans l'héritage de son père Louis-Sauveur, les autres dans ceux de ses oncles Constantin-Xavier et Marie-Joseph, était incapable, sauf pour quelques-uns, d'en distinguer la provenance réelle. Si quelqu'un avait le loisir et la patience, après s'être familiarisé avec les écrits d'André Chénier, de scruter minutieusement le texte et les notes de tous les volumes conservés à Carcassonne, qui sont des éditions d'auteurs anciens ou qui ont rapport à l'antiquité classique, il en serait peut-être récompensé par plus d'une agréable surprise'. (Dimoff, La Vie et l'Œuvre, Vol. II, pp.250-251).

² P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 69, 1969, pp.946-964.

used to organize the quotations and ideas which he was planning to incorporate in his Elégies.

The rub is the question of the fiches volantes, or rather the absence, by negligence or even theft, of a whole file of loose notes, (file 11905), from the Bibliothèque Municipale in Carcassonne. To appreciate the enormity of this loss for the present study of Chénier's debt to the Latin elegists, we need only turn to the description of the contents of the file in the registre d'entrées - 'Notes manuscrites d'André Chénier sur certains passages de quelques uns de ses livres (19 fiches)'. The title indicates that the lost notes would be similar in form and pattern to the ones that are extant and which are inserted between the leaves of Chénier's text of Propertius¹ and which give so precious an insight into his whole attitude to the Classics. They would also have brought confirmation of the ownership of certain books.

After extensive searches at Carcassonne, carried out at Dimoff's instigation, file 11905 was eventually recovered, but gone were the invaluable manuscript notes and in their stead lay a series of classification numbers.² It was further discovered that whereas the first of these numbers referred to Chénier's edition of Propertius, the others referred to books that were part of the total Donation Chénier, but which had not been previously assigned as belonging to the poet. Inside these particular books were then found nineteen loose notes whose tantalizing feature was that they were not in the hand of André Chénier but in that of Gabriel de Chénier. Dimoff, who, as we have already seen, had always been dubious about attributing any real knowledge of the Classics to the nephew, immediately rejected the idea that Gabriel de Chénier could have been the author of such scholarly notes:

¹ See pp.139-141 below.

² P. Dimoff, *ibid.*, p.946.

De solides raisons interdisent de lui attribuer l'une d'elles au moins, où l'annotateur rapproche un vers de Virgile d'un vers d'une épigramme de Méléagre, souvenir des Analecta de Brunck. Latiniste passable, Gabriel de Chénier était un très mauvais helléniste, assurément peu familier avec les Analecta de Brunck, dont on sait de reste au contraire qu'André Chénier se plaisait à les lire et leur a fait maint emprunt.¹

Dimoff based his explanation of the loose notes on the training of Gabriel de Chénier as a civil servant accustomed to classifying books and papers. He recalls that Gabriel de Chénier decided to draw up an inventory of the family papers in view of the gift he wanted to make to the town of Carcassonne. Dimoff's hypothesis is then ingenious:

Lorsqu'il [Gabriel de Chénier] découvrit les fiches volantes intercalées dans des volumes ayant appartenu à André Chénier, il s'ingénia aussitôt à en assurer, par les moyens qu'il jugeait les plus efficaces, la conservation. Les deux notes du Properce étaient protégées par leurs dimensions mêmes: point n'était donc besoin de les abriter ailleurs. Il en allait autrement des fiches écrites sur les bouts de papier beaucoup plus petits sans doute et dont quelques-unes, portant un seul mot, ne devaient être que de modestes signets. Il les recopia. . . et colla ces copies à la place des fiches autographes; de celles-ci, il forma ensuite un dossier, en y joignant l'indication des cotes des tous les volumes renfermant ou ayant renfermé les fiches autographes.²

Using this hypothesis, Dimoff listed a further five volumes to those he had previously assigned as André Chénier's personal books. Several arguments may be adduced to justify the inclusion of these volumes into the revised catalogue of André Chénier's library that is to follow.³ It cannot be overlooked that the registre d'entrées of the Bibliothèque Municipale in Carcassonne asserts that the file 11905 does exist, and that it contained 'Notes manuscrites. . . 19 fiches'. Moreover, if the two loose manuscript notes still extant within the leaves of the edition

¹ P. Dimoff, *ibid.*, p.947.

² *Ibid.*, pp.948.

³ See pp. 134-144 below.

of Propertius, are excluded from the calculation, there are still nineteen loose notes in the editions prescribed by the classified numbers in the rediscovered file. The fact that these numbers included a reference to the all important edition of Propertius would also suggest that the other editions indicated in this way form a parallel with that edition. The conjecture that the author of the notes was André Chénier is strengthened by the points of comparison between them and the poet's work, that Dimoff, with his extraordinary knowledge of Chénier's writings, enabling him to identify seemingly insignificant notes, has been able to establish. Most convincing perhaps is the parallel he found in the loose notes inserted into the Emmenes edition of Vergil, 1680, Vol. II, p.246:

Enéide lib. i. Vers 630 p.246. Les commentateurs de Virgile, Servius et Taubmann se sont amusés à expliquer ce vers: non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco, qui s'explique tout seul et n'ont pas indiqué que cette pensée philosophique a été empruntée au poète grec Méléagre, qui a dit avant Virgile: οἶδα παθῶν ἔλαειν. Epigr. 41, vers 4. *Analecta* de Brunck, tome I, page 13.¹

This note is characteristic of Chénier's approach to the apparatus criticus, as he attacks the irrelevant notes of commentators and adds his own literary reminiscences from his precious Analecta.² It is very similar in tone to the authenticated loose note in the edition of Propertius.³ Again the idea of Gabriel de Chénier wishing to make copies of his uncle's notes no longer seems quite so implausible if the numerous files of family documents in the Donation are investigated. It soon becomes clear that Gabriel de Chénier took a great delight in making additional copies of the documents which he considered important, such as birth certificates, death certificates, and letters.⁴ Finally in

¹ See p.143 below, and P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites', *ibid.*, p.963.

² Sainte-Beuve described Brunck's Analecta as Chénier's 'livre de chevet et son bréviaire'. ('Quelques documents inédits sur André Chénier', in Les Grands Ecrivains français par Sainte-Beuve, XVIII^e siècle, Auteurs dramatiques et poètes, Beaumarchais, Florian, Chénier, ed. M. Allem, Paris, Garnier, 1930, p. 130).

³ See pp.139-140 below.

⁴ See B.M.C. R.3. 11800, 11801.

support of Dimoff's contention we must refer to my addition of Sebillet's Art Poétique François, identified in the appendix¹ as belonging to André Chénier but not noted by Dimoff. This is to be found at the library in Carcassonne, Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 96), and bears on its title page, 'notes d'André Chénier', which the catalogue elucidates as 'Copies par G. de Chénier de notes manuscrites d'André Chénier'. In effect, the loose notes scattered throughout the book are in the writing of Gabriel de Chénier, but at the end of these notes, still in the same hand, is the bracketed inscription, '(André Chénier)'.

Nevertheless doubts prevent the Dimoff theory from going beyond pure conjecture. The first difficulty that presents itself, even if we accept that it was in Gabriel de Chénier's nature to transcribe valuable documents, is that it still seems strange that, when he was sorting out the family library to donate to Carcassonne, he did not specifically assign these five editions to his uncle exactly as he had done for the other volumes. Moreover the library's catalogue, which indicates ex libris of André Chénier, is ominously silent. Dimoff's assertion that Gabriel de Chénier would not have read and made notes on such works of erudition, (including a text of Vergil), is also suspect, for if we examine another edition of Vergil in the Donation, 099.5 (Ch. 91), which was published in 1810,² we find the text is covered with marginalia in Gabriel's writing. There is even an envelope at the Bibliothèque Municipale, Carcassonne, which came to light during this research, which contains loose notes in Gabriel's hand approximately copying what he had written in the margins of the 1810 edition. These annotations are of a critical and literary nature, for example, the loose notes on the Aeneid, Lib. IX, lines 105-106: 'vers 106, liv. IX. Ovide a dit la même chose avec bien moins d'élégance. Liv. Ier fable 4, vers 179, La Fontaine, Philémon et Baucis, vers 77 & 78 l'a rendu

¹ See appendix II, pp.462-463 below.

² Publius Virgilius Maro, Bucolica, Georgica, et Aeneis, Paris, Mame, 1810.

avec une rare élégance'. The Donation Chénier, file 11784, also contains notes written by Gabriel de Chénier and entitled 'Axiomes de Droit Romain', including numerous Latin quotations especially from Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria. It would seem that, once again, Dimoff treated Gabriel de Chénier too severely. The third difficulty, one pointed out by Dimoff, arises from the 'copies' themselves: three of the remarks could not possibly have been written by André Chénier. Two of them are in the edition of Manilius, where notes inserted at page 4 and page 378 read:

I Liber I. vers 4. p.4. Manilius est le seul qui ait écrit en vers sur l'astronomie.
Chez les Grecs. Eratosthène et Aratus n'ont parlé que des phénomènes et des pronostics. (Voyez Aratus. Collection de Didot).

2 Liber V. vers 7. p.378.
Te, Luna, vagantem.
Me properare viam Mundi lubet, etc.
Semble avoir inspiré André dans cette belle pièce inédite:
Salut, ô belle nuit étincelante et sombre.¹

Dimoff managed to incorporate these inconsistencies into his general thesis by maintaining that the lines in question, 'Voyez Aratus. . .' and 'Semble avoir inspiré. . .' were interpolations by Gabriel de Chénier.

Addition de Gabriel de Chénier: l'Aratus de la Scriptorum Graecorum Bibliotheca de Didot, à laquelle il est fait référence, n'a paru qu'au milieu du XIX^e siècle Cette dernière note prise par André Chénier sur Les Astronomiques et la remarque prudente que Gabriel de Chénier y a ajoutée posent de délicats problèmes.²

It is the third note, however, that presents the insurmountable problem. It concerns the loose note in the edition of Panegyrici Veteres, 1790-1797. The note is intercalated at page 688 of volume II, 'C.X. Maximum vectigal est parsimonia Cicéron cité à la note 3',³ but volume two was published

¹ See pp.137-138 below.

² P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 69, 1969, pp.949-950.

³ See p.139 below.

in 1797, three years after the poet's death ! Dimoff can find no answer to this, but still seems reluctant to attribute authorship to Gabriel de Chénier:

Quel est alors l'auteur de cette fiche, et comment est-elle venue se mêler aux copies par Gabriel de Chénier des autres fiches, celles-ci authentiques, dues au poète ? J'ai vainement cherché à résoudre ce petit problème.¹

If this note is spurious, surely doubts have to be cast on the authenticity of the others ? It is also disturbing to realize that the style of this one is similar to the other 'authentic' loose notes. Finally, if we examine the rest of the Donation Chénier we discover that numerous volumes contain fiches volantes in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier. If Dimoff's hypothesis is correct, could it not logically be extended to the others ? It would certainly be an easy way of enlarging the library of André Chénier, but the comments of his nephew that refer to the 1810 edition of Vergil suggest a negative response.

Unfortunately the whole affair has to remain an open question until the original contents of the lost file 11905 are discovered. Until this final judgement is possible the five volumes may be included, though not without hesitation, in the proposed revised catalogue of André Chénier's library.

B. A catalogue of the poet's library

We considered that the most apposite approach to the problems of the Donation Chénier was to provide a catalogue of André Chénier's library, based upon, but amending, P. Dimoff's original version. In drawing up his list of the Greek and Roman texts used by Chénier, Dimoff had given precise instructions for the inclusion of books: they are the editions that

¹P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites', *ibid.*, p.956.

form part of the Donation Chénier and which, according to family tradition, belonged to the poet, and secondly, editions to which André Chénier regularly refers. The catalogue, compiled in this way, is indeed impressive in size and scope, as Dimoff concluded:

Si l'on prend soin de dresser avec méthode le catalogue de tous les auteurs anciens qu'il a, soit dans sa prose, soit dans ses vers, mentionnés, ou du moins imités sans conteste, ou dont on est certain qu'il possédait les oeuvres, on s'aperçoit d'abord qu'il en est relativement peu qui n'y figurent point; et l'on reste confondu par le formidable travail que représentent, dans ce domaine, ses lectures.¹

For the purpose of this thesis the catalogue included within the text will be restricted to Latin verse authors only. Nevertheless to appreciate the full extent of Chénier's scholarship and to understand the problems of the Donation Chénier mentioned above, an appendix² is required where reference can be made to the books, by Latin prose writers, and Greek and French authors, which belonged to André Chénier.

It is impossible to limit the list of Latin poets to the elegists alone. Although the Latin elegists obviously formed the dominant influence on the Elégies, Chénier's poetic techniques were eclectic. In his commentary to the elegy 'Animé par l'Amour',³ the poet clearly announces that his method of composition is based on the principle of contaminatio. The commentary specifies that the elegy has been drawn not only from the Elegies of Propertius, but also from Vergil's Georgics, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Horace's Odes, and Tibullus' Elegies. It is only by cataloguing all the Latin texts that we can begin to see just how many authors were involved and how massive was the amount of work that lay behind every elegy.

The case for the revision of Dimoff's catalogue rests on two minor

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.210.

² See appendix II, pp.447-463 below.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, ll.106-224, pp.40-44.
Walter, 'Notes et variantes', pp.870-873.

mistakes, on a new system of classification adopted at Carcassonne, on Dimoff's suggested extensions, and on my own additions. The minor errors, a typographical one where the reference number is given as 9.032 instead of 9.302,¹ and the combination of two editions of Tacitus into one,² can easily be rectified. The student at the Bibliothèque Municipale at Carcassonne will need to know the new system of classification that differs completely from that in operation when Dimoff carried out his work. Dimoff's suggested additions to his first catalogue have been discussed previously³ and have been incorporated into this list. Whilst researching for this thesis, I have discovered further loose notes in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier, intercalated into certain volumes ascribing them to André Chénier. Dimoff had ignored these books⁴ which are to be found in the appendix. In two books,⁵ also noted in the appendix, marginalia have been discovered in the hand of André Chénier; one of these volumes had been omitted from Dimoff's catalogue. Especially important for this thesis is the existence of Chénier's edition of Tibullus⁶ at the Bibliothèque Municipale, which was not seen by Dimoff. Finally I have aimed at explaining the reason for the inclusion of each of the books in the present list.

As one reads this lengthy catalogue one remembers the words of a poignant letter written by Louis Chénier after the death of his poet son:

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.237.

² See appendix II, pp.449-450 below, and Dimoff, *ibid.*, p.245.

³ See pp.125-131 above.

⁴ See Homer, Musgrave, Sebillet, and La Fontaine, appendix II, pp.455-462 below.

⁵ See Menander and Muncker, appendix II, pp. 456 & 461 below.

⁶ See p.141 below.

Dans l'âge où l'on a l'ambition de s'élever et de se faire connaître, uniquement occupé de sa culture, des lettres et de la société de quelques amis il resta constamment (tranquille chez ses amis) ignoré (du public) jusqu'à ce que des circonstances impérieuses le forcèrent à manifester (ses talents) son énergie, son courage, son attachement pour la vérité et toutes les vertus enfin qui servent à caractériser (le vray) l'homme et le citoyen. [sic],¹

C. The revised catalogue: Latin verse authors

1. Anthology

Anthologia veterum latinorum epigrammatum et poematum, sive catalecta poetarum latinorum, in sex libros digesta, ex marmoribus et monumentis inscriptionum vetustis et codicibus mss. eruta, primum a Jos. Scaligero, Petr. Pithoeo, Frid. Lindenbrogio, Theod. Jansonio Almeloveenio, aliisque colligi incepta, nunc autem ingenti ineditorum accessione locupletata, concinniore in ordinem disposita et nonnullis virorum doctorum notis excerptis illustrata, cura Petri Burmanni secundi, qui perpetuas adnotationes adjecit. Amstelaedami, ex officina Schouteniana, 1759-1773, 2 vols. 4^o.

In a loose note in his Propertius, André Chénier mentions this edition of the Anthology: 'V. aussi l'anthologie de Burmann t.I. p.540'.²

2. Ennius

Q. Ennii poetae vetustissimi fragmenta quae supersunt, ab Hieron. Columna conquisita, disposita et explicata ad Joannem filium, nunc ad editionem neapolitanam MCXC recensa, accurante Francisco Hesselio, I.C. et in ill. Roterod. Athenaeo hist. et eloquen. prof. Accedunt, praeter eruditorum virorum emendationes undique conquisitas, M.A. Delrii

¹This letter, written in 1794, is to be found amidst the family documents of the Donation Chénier, B.M.C. R.3. 11812. The sections in brackets are crossed out in the text.

²Sex. Aurelii Propertii elegiarum libri quatuor . . . 1727. B.M.C. Ref. Ms/Ma 24. The note is inserted at p. 232. See pp.139-140 below.

opinationes, necnon G.J. Vossii castigationes et notae in fragmenta tragoediarum Ennii, ut et index omnium verborum ennianorum. Amstelaedami, ex officina Wetsteniana, 1707, 1 vol. 4^o.

This edition is in the Donation Chénier at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 34), (previously 8967). There is no evidence to assign the ownership to André Chénier, since the fiche d'entrée notes 'exemplaire de M. Boissonade'. However, as Dimoff has pointed out, 'G. de Chénier, sans mentionner explicitement ce livre comme l'un de ceux ayant appartenu à A. Chénier, semble bien laisser entendre, dans les notes de son édition (t. II, p.246), que le poète s'est servi de cette réimpression de l'Ennius de Colonne'.¹ Chénier refers to a note of H. Colonne on Ennius in his notes for 'Hermès'.²

3. Horace

Quinti Horatii Flacci carmina, nitori suo restituta, accurante Steph. And. Philippe. Lutetiae Parisiorum, sumptibus A.U. Coustelier, 1746, 1 vol. 12^o.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 70) (previously 9024). The fiche d'entrée assigns the ownership to André Chénier.

4. Lucan

M. Annaei Lucani Cordubensis Pharsalia sive Belli Civilis libri decem. Cum scholiaste huiusque inedito, et notis integris Henrici Glareani, Jacobi, Micylli, Joachimi Camerarii, Hugonis Grotii et excerptis Omniboni Vicentini, Joannis Sulpitii Verulani, Jodoci Badii Ascensii, Lamberti Hortensii, Gregorii Bersmanni, Theodori Pulmanni, aliorumque.

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.243.

² 'Il faut que le sage magicien qui sera un des héros de ce bizarre poème ait passé par plusieurs métempsycoses propres à montrer allégoriquement l'histoire de l'espèce humaine. . . et qu'il le raconte, comme Pythag. dans Ovide, et Ennius, et Empédocle (v. Hier. Colonne sur Ennius au comm.)'. Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', IV, iv, 1, ll.1-5, p.52. Walter, 'Fragments et notes se rattachant à Hermès', ch. II, p.414.

Necnon Thomae Maji supplementis, & Apologia Jacobi Palmerii grentemesnili, Mosantii Briosii ac Gr. Bersmanni, & ineditis Francisci Gujeti, aliorumque observationibus. Curante Francisco Oudendorpio, qui suas adnotationes, et copiosiss. indices adjecit. Lugduni Batavorum, apud S. Luchtmans, 1728, 2 vols. 4^o.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 1) (previously 8954). Although Dimoff did not include this in his first catalogue, he assigns it to Chénier in his posthumous article,¹ basing his argument on the conjecture that the following loose notes in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier are copies of originals by André Chénier.

i. Massacres sous Marius et Sylla

Lib.2. v.70 à 233

Pages 105-123.

(A loose note affixed at page 105).

ii. Liber III, p.201, vers 224.

Sculptaque servabant magicas animalia linguas.

Un hiéroglyphe.

(A loose note affixed at page 201).

iii. Liber V, p.387, v.515 et seq.

Tempête qu'éprouve César.

(A loose note affixed at page 387).

iv. Liber X, p.799 et seq.

Vers 383 et seq.

Apologie du meutre de César.

(A loose note affixed at page 799).

5. Lucretius

a. Titii Lucretii Cari de rerum natura libri sex. Accedunt selectae lectiones dilucidando poemati appositae. Lutetiae Parisiorum, sumptibus

¹P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 69, 1969, p.957.

And. Coustelier, 1744, 1 vol. 12^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 71) (previously 9020 ch 2 bis 3), and according to the fiche d'entrée belonged to André Chénier. It contains a loose note in Gabriel de Chénier's hand: 'C'est la curiosité qui porte les hommes à spectare e terra magnum alterius laborem'.

b. De natura rerum libri sex. Londini, typis J. Brindley, 1749, 1 vol. 12^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 102) (previously 9020 ch 2 bis 6), and according to the fiche d'entrée belonged to André Chénier.

6. Manilius

a. Marci Manilii Astronomicon libri quinque. Accessere Marci Tullii Ciceronis Arataea. Cum interpretatione gallica et notis, edente Al. G. Pingré, sanctae Genovefae Canonico et Bibliothecae Praefecto, Regiae scientiarum Academiae socio, Universitatis Parisiensis Cancellario, etc. Parisiis, via et aedibus Serpentinis, 1786, 2 vols. 8^o.

As Dimoff notes,¹ Chénier alludes to the Pingré translation. After quoting Manil., Astr., Lib. V, v. 556 et seq., Chénier comments 'Le traduct. met: "Les alcyons volant autour de vous, infortunée princesse. . ." Cela ôte de la grâce'.²

b. M. Manilii Astronomicon, interpretatione et notis ac figuris illustravit Michael Fayus, Bacc. Theol. & P. Eccl. De Putangelis, Iussu Christianissimi regis, in usum serenissimi Delphini. Accesserunt V. Ill. Petri Danielis Huetii animadversiones ad Manilium & Scaligeri notas. Parisiis, apud Fredericum Leonard Regis, Serenissimi Delphini, & Cleri Gallicani Typographum, via Jacobaea, 1679, 1 vol. 4^o.

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Œuvre, Vol. II, p.244.

² Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', IV, ll.10-12, p.167.
Walter, 'Notes et variantes', IX, note 2, p.848.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 5) (previously 8944). It was included in the André Chénier library by Dimoff in the posthumous article.¹ He suggests that the following notes written by Gabriel de Chénier are copies of the originals made by the poet.

- i. Liber I vers 4 p.4. Manilius est le seul qui ait écrit en vers sur l'astronomie. Chez les Grecs. Eratosthène et Aratus n'ont parlé que des phénomènes et des pronostics. (Voyez Aratus. Collection de Didot).²
(A loose note inserted at page 4)
- ii. Liber I, vers 492, p.67.
Quis credat tantas operum sine, etc.
Le hazard n'a pas créé le monde.
(A loose note affixed at page 67).
- iii. Liber II, vers 60, p.125.
Namque canam tacita naturae mente potentem etc
Dieu est l'âme du monde, etc.
(A loose note affixed at page 125).
- iv. Liber V, vers 7, p. 378.
Te, Luna, vagantem.
Me properare viam Mundi lubet etc.
Semble avoir inspiré André dans cette belle pièce inédite:
Salut, ô belle nuit étincelante et sombre.³

7. Ovid

P. Ovidii Nasonis opera quae supersunt. Parisiis, typis J. Barbou, 1762, 3 vols. 12^o.

Volumes 2 and 3 only are to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5

¹ P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites', *ibid.*, pp.948-952.

² See p. 130 above.

³ *Ibid.*

(Ch. 66 b-c) (previously 9350). A note in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier assigns the ownership to André Chénier: 'Vient de mon oncle Constantin qui l'avait recueilli de la succession d'André. Le 1er vol. manque'.

8. Panegyrists

Panegyrici Veteres cum notis et animadversionibus virorum eruditorum maximam partem integris, quibusdam selectis. Suas addidit Henricus Joannes Arntzenius. Trajecti ad Rhenum apud B. Wild et I. Altheer, 2 vols., Vol.I, 1790, Vol.II, 1797.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 3) (previously 8947). Dimoff included this edition in his posthumous article,¹ but at the same time recognized that the inclusion was highly problematic. Volume 2 has the following loose note in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier: 'Pag. 688. C.X. Maximum vectigal est parsimonia. Cicéron cité à la note 3'.²

9. Propertius

Sex. Aurelii Propertii elegiarum libri quatuor, ad fidem veterum membranarum curis secundis Jani Broukhusii sedulo castigati. Accedunt terni indices, quorum primus omnes voces Propertianas complectitur. Amstelaedami, apud Rod. et Gerh. Wetstenios, 1727, I vol. 4^o.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: Ms/Ma 24 (previously 8813). The ownership is ascribed to André Chénier by the following two loose notes in the hand of the poet himself.

i. Inserted opposite page 232:

v. 31 Eleg. 24. lib. 2.³ Propert. page 232. cet homme qui s'appelle Gebhardus, et qui ose attribuer a properce un vers hideux, est un de ces pedans sans esprit et sans

¹ P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites', *ibid.*, p.956.

² See pp.130-131 above.

³ In modern editions of Propertius the reference is to Lib. II, el. xxxiii, l. 31.

goût, qui ont discredité la critique auprès des esprits superficiels. Je voudrais que ces barbares se fissent tailleurs de pierre ou bucherons, plutôt que de porter leurs mains de plomb sur les poètes. Je m'étonne que l'éditeur, qui était un homme de savoir et de goût, n'ait pas indiqué la source du vers de Propertius. C'est le vers que dit Antinous à Ulysse οδ. φ. οἶνος και κενταυρον ἀγακλυτον Εὐρυτιωνα ἄασεν, κ. τ. λ. Il paraît que ces vers étaient devenus une espèce de proverbe. Les poètes des deux langues y font de fréquentes allusions. οἶνος και κενταυρον - ὤλεσεν, dit Alcée le Messenien ep. 15 dans les ἀναλεκτα donnés par M^r Brunck il y a quelques années. οἶνος και κενταυρον ἀπώλεσε, dit un poète inconnu dans Aponius au mot παραβολη, à moins que ce ne soit Homère que ce grammairien a mal cité de mémoire, comme le croyait Valkenar. Le vers de prop. est une traduct. de celui d'Homère; et le second vers parlant de Polyphème je juge qu'il a eu les yeux sur l'épig. d'Alcée, où il est fait mention de Polyphème de la même manière. Occidit Eurytion stulte data vina bibendo, dit Ovide, art. am. I.v.593. v. aussi metamp. 12.v.220. Virgile semble aussi faire allusion au vers de son Homère Georg. 2. v.454. V. Ursinus Virg. Graecis collatus. Je ne puis croire que tout ce que je viens d'observer ici n'ait pas déjà été remarqué par plus d'un savant critique, ou par quelque éditeur des poètes que j'ai cités. Le docte M^r Heyne sur Virg. ou sur Apoll. s'en sera souvenu. V. aussi l'anthologie de Burmann t.I. p.540. [sic].

ii. Inserted opposite page 238:

Prop. 1.2. el.25.v. 46.¹ page 238. Antimaque avait aimé Lydé;

¹In modern editions of Propertius the reference is to Lib. II, el.xxxiv, 1.45.

il avait fait pour elle des poésies lyriques [this Chénier crossed out and replaced by 'non Elegiaques'] à ce que je crois (v. Athénée 1.VI) et il en avait intitulé le recueil Lydé suivant l'usage des poètes anciens. Outre le fragment d'Hermesianax (car c'est ainsi qu'il s'appelle et non pas hegesianax) voici une epigramme d'Asclepiade qui n'était pas imprimée lors que cette édition de Propertius a paru. c'est Lydé qui parle. [sic].

Λυδη και γενοσ εἶμι και οὐνομα των δ'ἀπο κοδρου
 σεμνοτερη πασων. εἶμι δι'ἀντιμαχον.
 γαρ εἶμι .οὐκηρισε; τις οὐκανελεξατο λυδην
 το ζυνον μουσων γραμμα και ἀντιμαχου.

10. Statius

Publii Statii Papirii Sylvarum libri quinque. Thebaidos libri duodecim, Achilleidos libri duo, notis selectissimis in Sylvarum libros Domitii, Morelli, Bernartii etc., quibus in Achilleidos accedunt Maturantii, Britannici, accuratissime illustrati a Johanne Vreuhusen. Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Hackiana, 1671, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 35) (previously 8913). A loose note in Gabriel de Chénier's hand claims 'Vient d'André', and this is confirmed by a marginal jotting by André Chénier at page 301: 'forsan actes, sive actae, id est atticae'.

11. Tibullus

Albi Tibulli equitis romani quae exstant, ad fidem veterum membranarum sedulo castigata. Accedunt notae, cum variarum lectionum libello et terni indices, quorum primus omnes voces Tibullianas complectitur (cura Jani Broukhusii). Amstelaedami, ex officina Wetsteniana, 1708, 1 vol. 4^o.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 16) (previously 8999). Although the book forms part of the Donation Chénier, there is no definite evidence that André Chénier was its owner. There is a strong possibility that this may be the case, since the edition corresponds to Chénier's notes for 'Hermès': 'Apollo pacifer. In inscript. antiq. V. Broukhus., in Tib., p.269'.¹ The existence of this volume at the B.M.C. is not mentioned by Dimoff, and this seems to be an omission on his part.

12. Vergil

a. Publii Virgilii Maronis opera, curis et studio Stephani Andreae Philippe. Lutetiae Parisiorum, sumptibus And. Urb. Coustelier, 1745, 3 vols. 32^o.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 80 a-b-c) (previously 9027 ch. 2 bis-3). The book contains a note in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier assigning the ownership to André Chénier: 'Vient de Constantin qui l'avait de la succession d'André'.

b. P. Virgilii Maronis opera, in tres tomos divisa, cum integris notis Servii, Philargyrii, nec non J. Pierii variis lectionibus et selectissimis plerisque commentariis Donati, Probi, Nannii, Sabini, Germani, Cerdae, Taubmanni & aliorum. Quibus accedunt observationes Jacobi Emmenessii, cum indice Erythraei. Lugd. Batavorum, apud Jacobum Hackium, Amstelodami, apud Abrahamum Wolfgang, anno 1680, 3 vols. 8^o.

This edition is at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 45 a-b-c) (previously 8965 a-b-c). It was not allocated to Chénier in P. Dimoff's first catalogue,² but forms part of the extra volumes that Dimoff assigned to Chénier in his posthumous article.³ The inclusion of the Emmenes Vergil

¹ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', IV, iv, 3, 11.5-6, p.53.

Walter, 'Fragments et notes se rattachant à Hermès', ch. 11, p.414.

² Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, pp.234-248.

³ P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 69, 1969, p.960.

is based on Dimoff's hypothesis that the loose notes in this volume, which are in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier, are in fact copies of original notes made by André Chénier. The loose notes may be transcribed as follows:

i. De natura agrorum.

De soli differentia.

V. 173 et seq.

(A loose note affixed at vol. I, p.356).

ii. Laus vitae rusticae.

V. 458 et seq.

(A loose note affixed at vol. I, p.423).

iii. Enéide lib. I. Vers 630 page 246.

Les commentateurs de Virgile, Servius et Taubmann se sont amusés à expliquer ce vers: non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco, qui s'explique tout seul, et n'ont pas indiqué que cette pensée philosophique a été empruntée au poète grec Méléagre, qui a dit avant Virgile: οἶδα παθῶν ἔλκειν. Epig. 41 vers 4. Analecta de Brunck, tome I, p.13.

(A loose note affixed at vol. II, p.246).

iv. Enéide lib. VI, vers 821 et sequent. Virgile juge

mal Brutus; mais il écrivait sous Auguste à qui il devait la restitution de son patrimoine, et Auguste n'aimait pas qu'on parlât avec éloge du fondateur de la liberté romaine.

(A loose note affixed at vol. II, p.1105).

Further confirmation that Dimoff may be right in ascribing this edition to André Chénier is to be found in L'Intermédiaire des chercheurs et des curieux, no. 12, August 31, 1864, when, in a letter, Gabriel de Chénier asserts:

André n'avait point de Virgile in -4^o, il avait l'édition in -8^o en 3 vol., Lug. Batav., éd. Jac. Hackius, 1680. . . qui a été possédée par mon oncle Constantin-Xavier, l'aîné des quatre frères, et qui ensuite est venue entre mes mains .¹

c. Virgilius, collatione scriptorum graecorum illustratus opera et industria Fulvii Ursini. Editioni ad exemplar Plantini renovatae accesserunt Lud. Casp. Valckenari: I. Epistola ad Mathiam Röverum; II. Iliadis Homeri liber XXII cum scholiis Porphyri et aliorum nunc primum editis; III. Dissertatio de praestantissimo codice Leidensi et de scholiis in Homerum ineditis. Leovardiae, ex officina Gulielmi Coulon, 1747, 2 vols. 8^o.

As Dimoff notes,² André Chénier refers to this edition in a loose note in his Propertius: 'V. Ursinus, Virg. Graecis collatus',³ and elsewhere alludes to the scholia of Porphyry and the Leyden manuscript: 'Tout ce que j'ai cité de Porphyre est tiré d'une dissertation de Valckenarius sur le manuscrit de Leyde des scolies d'Homère'.⁴

D. Chénier's library and his classical scholarship

The catalogue gives access to the library from which we can gain the information needed to make a critical assessment. From the physical appearance and content of the editions we can draw conclusions that give a clear insight into the poet's character, his literary technique, and dedicated search for perfection, which are part of the creation of his Neo-classical Elégies.

Even the most cursory glance at the physical appearance and condition of the books belonging to André Chénier, immediately characterizes him as a passionate bibliophile. We may imagine him throughout his brief

¹ A copy of this letter is amongst the documents of the Donation Chénier, B.M.C. R.3. 11819. It is strange, however, that the fiche d'entrée notes 'Cet ouvrage a appartenu à Marie-Joseph'.

² Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.246.

³ Sex. Aurelii Propertii elegiarum libri quatuor. . . B.M.C. Ms/Ma 24. The note is inserted at page 232. See p.140 above.

⁴ Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XV, p.767.

life collecting books with a missionary zeal, for to him they were the means of attaining the ideals he sought. We may picture him borrowing volumes from his friends, scouring the bookshops wherever he went, buying the indispensable tools of his literary trade. Nor is this characterization a flight of fancy on the part of a biased critic, for the books themselves indicate that they were being purchased throughout the poet's life and from different towns. It seems probable, for example, that his edition of the Carminum Pindaricorum fragmenta, 1776,¹ was bought during his brief military career at Strasbourg. In the later years it seems possible that to relieve the boredom of his stay in London, he acquired Aristotle's De Mundo Liber, ad Alexandrum, Glasgae, 1745, Euripides' Supplices Mulieres, Londoni, 1775, Homer's Ilias, Glasgae, 1747, Emendationes in Menandri et Philemonis Reliquias, Cantabrigiae, 1713, Cicero's De Natura Deorum Libri Tres, Cantabrigiae, 1718, Lucretius' De Natura Rerum Libri Sex, Londini, 1749, and Velleius Paterculus' Historiae Romanae quae Supersunt, Londini, 1725.²

Nevertheless a fervent bibliophile does not merely amass books indiscriminately. This is emphasized in Chénier's case by the volumes at Carcassonne, by their beautiful condition, their elegant bindings and unblemished pages. A charming anecdote, recounted by Chénier, is symptomatic of his veneration for these texts. The incident took place in 1781, revealing that already at the age of nineteen he was imbued with that profound regard for his books that was never to desert him. The book to which Chénier refers is an edition of Malherbe: Poésies de Malherbe, rangées par ordre chronologique: avec la vie de l'auteur & de courtes notes, par A.G.M.Q., nouvelle édition, revue & corrigée avec soin à Paris, Chez Barbou, rue & vis-à-vis la grille des Mathurins, MDCCLXXVI.³ The volume, as we shall see later, was annotated

¹ See appendix II, p. 457 below.

² See appendix II, pp. 448-456 below and p. 137 above. For a further example see ³ Aratus, p. 451 below.

F. J.-L. Mouret, 'André Chénier commente Malherbe', French Studies, January 1974, pp. 21-35, p. 34, note 5.

with marginalia by Chénier,¹ and after the poet's death was lost,² only to be discovered in 1842 by Tenant de Latour who published Chénier's commentary the same year in his edition of Malherbe.³ One of the notes tells of the young poet losing his temper at the lack of respect shown for his property:

J'ai prêté, il y a quelques mois, ce livre à un homme qui l'avait vu sur ma table et me l'avait demandé instamment. Il vient de me le rendre (en 1781) en me faisant mille excuses. Je suis certain qu'il ne l'a pas lu. Le seul usage qu'il en ait fait a été d'y renverser son écritoire, peut-être pour me montrer que lui aussi il sait commenter et couvrir les marges d'encre.⁴

So very early in his literary career⁵ Chénier had critically annotated his text of Malherbe in the margins, but he rarely subscribed to this technique in his later acquisition of literary sources. The poet's nephew was convinced that the reason for the paucity of marginalia was Chénier's deep concern and respect for the condition of his books, claiming that the Malherbe text alone displayed marginal comments:

¹ For a transcription of André Chénier's marginalia, commenting Malherbe, see Walter, 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', pp.803-829, and for a critical assessment see the important article by F. Mouret, *ibid.*

² J. Fabre, following Gabriel de Chénier, (Œuvres poétiques d'André de Chénier avec une notice et des notes par M. Gabriel de Chénier, 3 vols., Paris, Lemerre, 1874, Vol. I, pp.xiii-xiv, note I), believes that the loss was due to Constantin-Xavier who towards the end of his life, (d.1837), 'liquidera, à la petite semaine, sa bibliothèque, c'est-à-dire les livres d'André: en 1842, Tenant de Latour découvrira de la sorte, chez quelque revendeur, le précieux Malherbe annoté'. (J. Fabre, Chénier, Connaissance des Lettres, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.131).

³ T. de Latour, Poésies de François Malherbe, avec un commentaire inédit par André Chénier; précédées d'une notice sur la vie de Malherbe, et d'une lettre sur le commentaire, Paris, Charpentier, 1842.

⁴ Walter, 'Appendice', 'Commentaire de Malherbe', p.967, note I.

⁵ The date of 1781 given in one note of the commentary, describing the 'ink-blot' incident, (see note 4 above) provides a terminus post quem for the commencement of the annotations. The remarks were, however, written at various times, as is shown by the note 'Image moderne. . .', which a few lines later has the addendum, 'L'image des quatre derniers vers de cette seconde strophe n'est point moderne comme je l'avais cru', (Walter, 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', pp.806-807). Nevertheless the

André n'a jamais eu l'habitude d'écrire des notes sur la marge de ses livres; il ne l'a jamais fait sur aucun de ses auteurs grecs et latins. Il était trop réellement bibliophile pour cela. Il a, dit-on, écrit des notes marginales sur un Malherbe; c'est possible; mais ce serait une exception unique.¹

The case is, of course, overstated,² as so often occurs in Gabriel de Chénier's enthusiastic eulogies of his uncle.³ We need only refer back to the catalogue to find a few examples of André Chénier writing comments in his books. His edition of Aratus displays, on the verso of the title page of part two, a lengthy note written in Latin, which has the poignant conclusion, 'Scribebam Versaliae, animo et corpore aeger, moerens, dolens, die novembris undecima 1793, Andreas C. Byzantinus',⁴ thus proving that the Malherbe marginalia are not an isolated example from the poet's youth. Other marginalia are in the editions of Menander⁵ and Statius,⁶ Meursius' Graecia Ludibunda,⁷ and Muncker's Mythographi Latini,⁸

5 [contd.]

sarcastic comment on the ink-blot, 'le seul usage. . . encre', (see previous page), suggests that by 1781 a large proportion of the notes had in fact been written.

¹ Article published in L'Intermédiaire des chercheurs et des curieux, 12, 31 August, 1864, (B.M.C. R.3. 11819), in reply to the article of August 10 in which Anatole France, as a literary joke, claimed to have found ten lines of poetry written by André Chénier in his edition of Vergil.

² Becq de Fouquières put forward equally exaggerated conjectures in his contrasting assumption that 'Son Rabelais, son Montaigne, son Corneille, son Racine, devaient être couverts de notes semblables'. (L. Becq de Fouquières, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier. Edition critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, p.xxv).

³ See pp. 115-116 above.

⁴ See appendix II, pp. 451-452 below.

⁵ See appendix II, p. 456 below.

⁶ See p. 141 above.

⁷ See appendix II, pp. 460-461 below.

⁸ See appendix II, pp. 461-462 below.

but there are only seven brief notes for these four works. There is, as yet, no evidence to suggest that Chénier repeated the technique of writing a lengthy and detailed commentary, paralleling the method he used in the Malherbe, in the margins of any other text, and it still seems that he did not favour this approach. The few marginalia that do exist in the volumes at Carcassonne all portray the same neatness and care in handwriting, that had already been noted, in the Malherbe marginalia, by Tenant de Latour:

Quant au commentaire, il est écrit avec plus de soin et de netteté qu'aucun des autographes de Chénier que j'aie pu avoir sous les yeux. Il n'offre pas une seule rature, et j'aie lieu de croire qu'André Chénier commençait par faire, sur un papier à part, les brouillons de ses notes, pour les reporter ensuite sur les marges du livre qu'il commentait.¹

The desire not to deface the texts probably encouraged Chénier to prefer another technique of noting down his critical comments as he read, the use of fiches volantes intercalated between the leaves of his volumes. Gabriel de Chénier again testified to the motive behind their use:

Comme il avait écrit des notes sur un exemplaire de Malherbe, on en conclut que son Rabelais, son Montaigne, son Corneille, son Racine, devaient être couverts de notes semblables; c'est encore une erreur. André avait un véritable amour des livres. Les éditions qu'il estimait, il les conservait avec un soin tout particulier, et mettait de petites fiches de papier sur lesquelles il écrivait ses observations. J'ai plusieurs de ses livres avec les fiches dont je parle.²

If we are to judge by the only two notes that have survived in the edition of Propertius, Chénier maintained the high standards in the loose notes so carefully inserted, without blemish, into his books.

¹T. de Latour, Deux lettres à Madame la Comtesse de Ranc, Paris, Béthune, 1842. The quotation is to be found in the second letter, 'Malherbe commenté par André Chénier'. (B.M.C. R.3. 11813).

²A letter of Gabriel de Chénier published in L'Ordre et la liberté, 45, 14 April, 1864. (B.M.C. R.3. 11819).

A sharp contrast to this arises from the third technique used by Chénier; he made notes and jottings, the remnants of which are now in the manuscripts of his poems in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.¹ These are sometimes no more than single line quotations, an aide-mémoire, at other times the idea stimulated by his reading is developed into lines of poetry. They are written on scraps of paper of varying size, quality, and format; some are written fairly neatly, others in haste and covered by crossings-out and corrections. At first glance they give an air of haphazard compilation of information in which confusion reigns, but total confusion is avoided for, usually, one sheet of paper enfolds a series of memoranda, specifically grouped together and destined for use in one particular genre, with occasionally a brief indication of what is meant to be their final destination.

The notes in the files at the Bibliothèque Nationale lead away from the shelves of Carcassonne. It is back there that an assessment of Chénier's library must continue in spite of the frustrations already discussed. Working solely from the library it is difficult to argue beyond an André Chénier dedicated to a highly selective study of a fairly small number of Graeco-Roman texts. His writings prove exactly the opposite. We are left to question; could it be that friends loaned him the numerous other volumes from which he accumulated material, or is it rather that his library was dispersed, lost, or absorbed into other collections? If in this connection the catalogue of the library of his brother, Marie-Joseph, is studied, the formidable size of the collection is immediately apparent. In the section devoted to Latin poetry alone there are three editions of Lucretius, two editions of Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius combined, thirteen editions of Vergil, eight of Horace, five of Ovid, four of Lucan, three of Statius, and three of Martial, two editions combining Juvenal and

¹ Bibliothèque Nationale, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 6848-6851. See bibliography p. 467 below.

Persius, and two of Ausonius, two of Claudianus, and single ones of Tibullus, Manilius, and Prudentius.¹ It may be that André Chénier was prevented by lack of means, and obviously by his early death, from assembling a collection to rival that of his illustrious brother, founder of the Institut. The truth is that André Chénier's library extended well beyond the confines to which it has been reduced. Unless we believe that Chénier could remember everything he read, he must have possessed an edition of Catullus whom he imitated in his Elégies.² What of Terence,³ Livy,⁴ Sallust,⁵ Quintilian,⁶ Juvenal,⁷ and Martial,⁸ to name but a few, all of whom Chénier either imitates or mentions? Less surprising is the absence of French translations of Graeco-Roman texts.⁹ Chénier's superb knowledge of the Greek and Roman languages and his erudition dispensed with such a second-rate approach to the Classics, an approach which nevertheless appealed to his contemporaries, as is shown by the increase in the number of translations published during the second half of the

¹ Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque du Feu M. M-J Chénier par M^{xxx}, 1811, pp.30-35, (B.M.C. R.3. 11811). It is interesting to note that the 1744 Coustelier edition of Lucretius, the 1680 Emmenes edition of Vergil, the 1762 Barbou edition of Ovid, the 1786 Pingré edition of Manilius, and the 1671 Hackiana edition of Statius, which figure in our catalogue of André Chénier's books, also appear in Marie-Joseph's catalogue. This may be further evidence to suggest the assimilation of André Chénier's library.

² For example, 'Ah qu'ils portent ailleurs ces reproches austères' and Catullus, poem V.

Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 2, pp.46-47.

Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 2, p.91.

³ The opening of the elegy 'Ah ! des pleurs ! des regrets ! lisez, amis. C'est elle', seems to be imitated from Terence, Eunuchus, Act I, Scene I, ll.1 ff.

Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 6, p.69.

Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 6, p.102.

⁴ For mentions of Livy see 'Essai sur les causes', Walter, pp.660 and 690.

⁵ For mentions of Sallust see *ibid.*, pp.640 and 659.

⁶ For mention of Quintilian see *ibid.*, p.690.

⁷ Lines in 'O jours de mon printemps' are imitated from Juvenal, Satires, I, l.15.

Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 2, ll.75-76, p.155.

Walter, 'Elégies', I, ll.75-76, p.55.

⁸ For a reference to Martial see Walter, 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', p.807.

⁹ The only exception being the Pingré translation of Manilius, see p.137 above.

eighteenth century.

The library at Carcassonne is unable to illustrate the great width of Chénier's reading,¹ but it does demonstrate the high standards of his classical scholarship which is the sine qua non of the Elégies. Chénier was highly selective, and faithful to his constant search for truth in choosing only scholarly editions of the Graeco-Roman texts. Each of the volumes in his library bears the hallmark of outstanding learning. The texts are always accompanied by a lengthy commentary in Latin, in which interpretations of Renaissance humanists are often balanced against the views of the eighteenth century editor, in which obscure details of mythology or mores are explained, and in which an apparatus criticus is set out. Occasionally there are illustrations to embellish the text. Such editions afforded Chénier, as an enlightened and receptive reader, a stimulating opportunity for textual criticism and exegesis, with the basis for a detailed and penetrating analysis of the original text and also of the comments: 'Je m'attache, dans la retraite, à une étude approfondie des lettres et des langues antiques'.² These are not the editions for the superficial or frivolous dilettante, content to skim the

¹The emphasis of this thesis should not be allowed to hide the extraordinary catholicity of Chénier's reading. Although the catalogue lists only two editions of French writers, those of T. Sebillet (see appendix II, p. 462) and La Fontaine (see appendix II, p. 462), his writings clearly demonstrate that he was fully conversant with the literature not only of France, but also of Italy, England, and Germany. It is obvious from the 'Essai sur les causes', (Walter, pp.641-670), that amongst the authors he studied were Marot, Rabelais, Montaigne, Malherbe, Racan, Corneille, Racine, Molière, Boileau; Petrarch, Dante, Politian, Marullo, Pontano, Tassoni, Alfieri; Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, Thompson, Addison, Pope, and Richardson; and in translation, Gessner, Klöpstock, Lessing, and Wieland. He had studied French writers of his own age, appreciating the works of Bayle, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, Holbach, Helvetius, Bailly, Buffon, Condillac, and Condorcet. In his desire for encyclopaedic knowledge he had even read extracts from Chinese and Persian literature. Such wide reading was to be the basis of poems such as 'Hermès', and 'L'Amérique', rather than the Elégies deriving specially from classical scholarship.

²Walter, 'Correspondance', XVII, A M. Brodelet, dated 28 October, 1792, p.799.

surface of an author and gloss over any difficulties and weaknesses.

Chénier would no doubt have been fully in agreement with the sentiments of Edward Harwood, who, in the preface to A View of the Various Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics, with Remarks, emphasized that:

Every person, who, in early life, hath derived from his instructor a relish for the immortal compositions of Greece and Rome, and in consequence of this acquired passion deliberately forms a resolution of carefully reading thro' some of these greatest productions of human genius, must immediately be impressed with the indispensable propriety of obtaining such Editions of them, as, by their correctness, will facilitate the labour of perusal, or by the critical annotations, which adorn them, elucidate the modes of diction, and illustrate the customs and usages, which in those ancient ages prevailed.¹

Harwood was anxious to aid and promote the singular felicity of possessing correct and elegant editions of the Classics,² by publishing a catalogue of those of exceptional merit. It is noteworthy that the editions of Ennius, Lucretius (1744), Tibullus, Propertius, Cicero, Ovid, Statius, and Vergil (1680) possessed by André Chénier are all appreciated by Harwood:³ a fact that underlines the wise selection of the poet.

¹ E. Harwood, A View of the Various Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics, with Remarks, third edition, London, 1782, pp.iii-iv.

² Ibid., p.iv.

³ The following notes accompany Harwood's selection:

- (a) Ennius: 'The fragments of Ennius are here industriously collected, and very learnedly illustrated by Hesselius', (ibid., p.160).
- (b) Lucretius (1744): 'an elegant and good edition', (ibid., p.168).
- (c) Tibullus: 'I have read this Edition of Tibullus published by Broukhusius, which is very valuable; but he is a bold Editor, and has taken unwarrantable liberties with the text', (ibid., p.169).
- (d) Propertius: The edition owned by Chénier is mentioned by Harwood without comment, (ibid., p.170).
- (e) Cicero: 'I have read the second Edition in 1723 twice; and it is very correct', (ibid., p.183).
- (f) Ovid: Harwood lists all the Barbou editions together with the note 'These small Parisian classics are many of them models of beauty and elegance', (ibid., p.253).
- (g) Statius: 'I have read this Edition of Statius cum Notis Variorum, and it is well published, and the notes judiciously selected by Veenhuysen', (ibid., p.220).
- (h) Vergil (1680): noted without comment, (ibid., p.187).

A picture has thus emerged of a bibliophile with a profound concern not only for the physical appearance of his library, but also for the intellectual quality of the volumes. This alone, however, is not sufficient to earn for André Chénier the title of 'le plus érudit des poètes français'.¹ To see whether this epithet is justified, it is essential to examine the marginalia, fiches volantes, and notes where he transcribed his comments during the course of his reading. An analysis of these manuscripts will illustrate the way in which Chénier dealt with those Greek and Latin texts which are the foundation of his Elégies, and, at the same time, will provide the key to his motivation, to the driving force behind this boundless energy to undertake an 'étude approfondie des lettres et des langues antiques'.²

The evidence of the manuscripts marks out the poet as a scholar, antiquarian, and philologist, a man who delighted³ in the somewhat esoteric study of scholia and glosses, who indulged in textual criticism, who examined the commentaries of humanists culled from the Renaissance to his own day, and who was confident enough to reject, on occasion, their views, and ready to add, and substantiate, his own personal comments. His philological jottings are the result of hours of dedicated application, of years of scrupulous and meticulous research, that cannot but be admired. Some of the examples to be cited may take us beyond a direct application to the Latin Love Elegy. Nevertheless the way in which Chénier faced

¹ L. Becq de Fouquières, Poésies d'André Chénier. Edition Critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, p.iv.

² See p. 151, note 2, above.

³ It is important to stress the pleasure Chénier gained from such studies. Once again a parallel may be suggested with Renaissance thought, and Ronsard's comments in 'Au Lecteur': 'Des mon enfance j'ai tousjours estimé l'estude des bonnes lettres, l'heureuse felicité de la vie, & sans laquelle on doit desesperer ne pouvoir jamais atteindre au comble du parfait contentement'. (P. de Ronsard, Oeuvres complètes, édition critique avec introduction et commentaire par P. Laumonier, Société des textes modernes, 18 vols., Paris, Hachette, 1914-1967, Vol. I, pp.43-44).

problems of etymology and semantics was part of the discipline which he was applying to his analysis of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid.

Chénier's devotion to these philological pursuits is best illustrated in the series of manuscripts housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale (6851 fo. 251-279). Folios 251-265 contain a set of small handwritten pieces of paper, each with the same format (8.5 cm wide by 12.2 cm long), all of them edged with gold, and with the comments consigned to them in the smallest and most careful hand, lacking in crossings-out and corrections, thus suggesting that he was making neat copies. The notes are in alphabetical groupings, some headed by the capital letters (A, C, D), but, within this grouping, alphabetical order is not maintained so that the notes on 'Comices' precede those on 'Callimaque'. Folios 267-269 are papers of varying size and format, less carefully inscribed, and with no attempt at alphabetical grouping, so that fo. 267 recto contains comments on 'Bled' and 'Bailly', fo. 268 recto on 'Paulistes', and 269 recto on 'Alcée'. The last folios, 272-279, consist of a series of remarks on 'Aristophane'.¹ Thus these manuscripts suggest that Chénier may have begun to compile a philological dictionary in which he could classify the fruits of his research.² It is plausible that this dictionary was

¹ Abel Lefranc (Oeuvres inédites d'André Chénier, publiées d'après les manuscrits originaux par Abel Lefranc, Les Lettres et les idées depuis la Renaissance, III, Paris, Champion, 1914, pp.197-222) imposed the alphabetical classification within the groups upon the manuscripts that was later followed by Walter in his edition ('Notes philologiques et littéraires', pp.758-773). However Walter omits to publish several of the notes whose headings and references are as follows:

B.N. nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 6851 fo. 252 etc.

6851 fo. 252 recto-'Caton'. fo.253 recto-'Auditoire'.

fo. 259 verso-'Hipparque'. fo.266 recto-'Vertu'.

fo. 277 recto-)

fo. 278 recto-) 'Aristophane'

fo. 279 recto-)

²In his edition G. Walter rejects the possibility that Chénier was intending these notes for a major work of erudition. (Walter, 'Notes et variantes', 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', pp.962-963).

compiled late in Chénier's life, and that it is referred to as the 'journal de notes littéraires', that the poet's father claimed after the execution of his son.¹

The contents of this embryo philological dictionary, together with the marginalia, the fiches volantes, and other notes scattered throughout his works, demonstrate the way in which Chénier carried out his research. His reading was always accompanied by a fastidious review of the commentary. The interpretations of Valckenaer, Brunck, Heyne, Villoison, Ruhnken, and other scholars of the eighteenth century, are mentioned repeatedly, as are those of Bentley, Scaliger, Heinsius, and Spanheim from the seventeenth century. Chénier's intense gratitude and debt to these humanists and their 'doctes conjectures'² is expressed with reference to Heyne in a letter sent to M. Brodelet and dated 28 October, 1792:

Pourrai-je la prier [M. Brodelet's daughter at Göttingen] de faire parvenir mes respectueux compliments au savant et judicieux M. Heyne, professeur en cette ville. Je ne suis point connu de lui, mais je voudrais qu'il sût que, dans un coin de la France, il existe un homme qui, sans l'avoir jamais vu, oserait presque se dire un de ses disciples, tant il se flatte d'avoir profité à la lecture de ses écrits pleins d'une érudition immense, d'un goût exquis et d'une critique infaillible.³

Valckenaer was also described by Chénier as 'vir egregius', 'magnus Valckenarius',⁴ and 'ce. . . critique, à qui les lettres grecques étaient si familières et ont de si grandes obligations'.⁵ His commentaries were

¹ See p. 121 above.

² 'Les doctes conjectures de Bentley'. (6851 fo. 311 recto).

³ Walter, 'Correspondance', XVII, A M. Brodelet, p.799.

⁴ Walter, 'Fragments littéraires', VII, p.751. The comment is dated 1793. (See *ibid.*, VII, note 2, p.962).

⁵ Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XXI, p.770.

constantly read by the poet: 'batavo homini cuius operum assidua lectio mihi quotidie novos Graecarum musarum ac venerum recessus aperit'.¹ The guiding principle in his examination of a commentary was 'J'en vais extraire ce qui m'a paru bon'.² Consequently, in his comments on Valckenaer's introduction to his Callimachi Elegiarum Fragmenta,³ Chénier showed his appreciation of the textual emendations and notes on various Greek and Latin authors. He especially selected the emendation of an uncertain reading of line 31 of Propertius, Lib. II, elegy xxv (modern edition, Lib. II, elegy xxxiv): 'Tu potius Mimnermum et Musam imitere Philetæ', which he accepts as 'ce qui au moins forme un sens raisonnable'.⁴ Yet, despite his great respect for Valckenaer, he did not always agree with the scholar's interpretations:

Dans ses digressions, il mêle quantités de choses bonnes et curieuses, avec plusieurs corrections de poètes latins, et principalement de Properce, dont la plupart ne me plaisent point.⁵

These notes give him the opportunity to develop his own meticulous research. He questions Valckenaer's belief that Callimachus' 'ΑΙΤΙΑ was written in hexameters, and conjectures that its metre was elegiac, thus indicating his interest in Greek Elegy. Ironically, the papyri discovered later, have proved Chénier to be correct.

Il croit que le poème des Causes, 'ΑΙΤΙΑ, était écrit en vers hexamètres; je continue à le croire élégiaque et

¹Walter, 'Fragments littéraires', VII, p.751.

²Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XI, p.763.

³This work was being published when the author died. 'Son fils l'arrêta, reprit chez l'imprimeur tout ce qu'il y avait de fait et n'en garda qu'un exemplaire qu'il m'a prêté. Ce livre contient 128 pages, au bout desquelles le recueil des fragments élégiaques n'est pas encore commencé'. (Walter, *ibid.*).

⁴Walter, *ibid.*, pp.763-764.

⁵Walter, *ibid.*, p.763.

qu'Ovide l'a imité dans les Fastes 'Tempora cum causis'; il est de la même opinion, quoiqu'il ne cite point ce début. Il croit que plusieurs vers hexamètres anonymes dans l'Etymologie sont de ce poème. Pour prouver qu'il était en vers héroïques, il cite trois exemples, le 1er et le 3e d'un vers et demi. Ces deux exemples ne prouvent rien, car ἀστυρον εἰσαγεβαίνε, et αἰγυριῶ κατεπηξε, par l'éllision, peuvent très bien commencer un vers pentamètre. Pour le second exemple, qui est de trois hexamètres de suite, T.H.¹ l'assigne à l'Hécalè.²

On the very rare occasions that Chénier feels that the text of his precious Propertius has been defaced by a commentator, he brings the full weight of his caustic sarcasm to bear down upon such ignorance:

V. 31 Eleg. 24.lib 2. Propert. page 232. cet homme qui s'appelle Gebhardus, et qui ose attribuer a properce un vers hideux, est un de ces pedans sans esprit et sans goût, qui ont discredité la critique auprès des esprits superficiels. Je voudrais que ces barbares se fissent tailleurs de pierre ou bucherons, plutôt que de porter leurs mains de plomb sur les poètes.³ [sic]

¹ T. Hemsterhusius.

² Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XI, p.764. For further examples of Chénier's critical approach to the scholiasts and commentators, and his ability to form and substantiate his own conjectures, see 'Ναῖκι, Ναι, ἀπικῶς. Hésych. Cette forme était très en usage suivant le lexique de Photius qui cite les comiques Phérécrate et Hermippe. Valckenaer, dans ce qu'il avait écrit sur les élégies de Callimaque qui n'a point été publié, quoique imprimé, et que son fils m'a prêté, dit n'avoir jamais lu ce Ναῖκι dans les tragiques qui nous reste: Nusquam apud tragicos, p.24. Il ne se rappelait pas l'avoir lu dans l'Oedipe-Roi, v. 684, édit. de Brunck'. (Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XX, p.770). See also Walter, *ibid.*, Vb), pp.759-760; Ve), p.761; VII, p.761; XXI, pp.770-771; XXV, p.772; and the Latin note written by Chénier on the verso of the title page of his edition of Aratus, see appendix II, p. 451 below.

³ Fiche volante intercalated in Chénier's edition of Propertius, p.232. (B.M.C. Ms/Ma 24). See p. 139 above. He also bitterly attacks excessive and futile concentration on minutiae: 'ce troupeau de sots commentateurs fanatiques qui s'attachent à un auteur. . . Il ne faut pas oublier de rappeler et de berner Dorothee l'Ascalonite qui, selon Porphyre, passa toute sa vie à examiner un seul vers d'Homère'. (Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.655).

Chénier's great veneration and commitment to Graeco-Latin models meant that no problem, however small,¹ posed by the texts could be overlooked. The minutiae of scholarship thus assume their necessary importance;² lacunae must be filled, errors rectified, transcriptions emended, and interpretations questioned. As a true disciple of the humanists and aided by their techniques and commentaries, he was able to tackle difficulties and offer his own solutions and conjectures, founded upon his wealth of knowledge and linguistic skills. His notes show him attacking questions of etymology and semantics:

'Αἰδώς, pudeur; sans doute parce que c'est là son dernier asile. Cette dénomination a perdu de sa grâce, tant elle est devenue commune dans la langue grecque. Ce mot s'emploie en ce sens pour les hommes et pour les femmes. Les exemples sont si fréquents qu'il est inutile d'en citer aucun. Il en est de même de αἰδοίων, αἰδοία les choses de la pudeur. On croit bien traduire par les parties honteuses, et on traduit fort mal. Le mot αἰδοίος exprime une idée de respect, et n'a rien de commun avec le mot honteux. On le dit des époux αἰδοίη παρakoιτις, des parents, des dieux, principalement de Junon, etc.³

Such lexicographical discussions are often reinforced by literary reminiscences that further underline the width of Chénier's knowledge:

¹Chénier's concentration on minutiae and his constant refusal to overlook problems forms a marked contrast with Montaigne's easy approach: 'Il n'est rien pourquoy je me vueille rompre la teste, non pas pour la science, de quelque grand pris qu'elle soit. . . Les difficultez, si j'en rencontre en lisant, je n'en ronge pas mes ongles; je les laisse là, après leur avoir fait une charge ou deux. (Montaigne, Selected Essays, ed.A.Tilley and A. Boase, fifth edition, Manchester University Press, 1967, pp.76-77).

²'Dans son ardent désir de connaître à fond l'antiquité classique, le poète n'a reculé devant aucune recherche, si minutieuse et si aride qu'elle pût être, n'a négligé aucun des enseignements que les textes anciens étaient susceptibles de lui fournir, n'a pas craint enfin d'en pousser la critique et l'interprétation jusqu'à leurs extrêmes limites'. (Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.258).

³Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', I, p.758.
See also Walter, *ibid.*, II, p.758; VI, p.761; VII, p.761.

Aristophane - v.231 (de Lysistrata) - Τυροκνηστις est un couteau à râper le fromage, de τυρος fromage, et κνηστις couteau. C'est un des très nombreux dérivés du verbe κνᾶω, raser, râper, piquer, etc. Ce verbe a produit une infinité de verbes et de noms de toute espèce de formes, κνᾶω, κνημι, κνιζω, κνυζω, etc. . . , κνησμος, κνισμος, κνιδη (ortie), κνυζηθμος, le cri caressant des chiens dans Homère, enfin un nombre immense de mots pittoresques, destinés à représenter toute espèce de piqure, chatouillement, prurit, désir, pointure, etc., et qui reviennent souvent aussi dans une signification amoureuse et lubrique. Le mot composé employé par Aristophane, et par conséquent alors familier à Athènes, a peut-être dû sa naissance à un passage d'Homère, qui du moins l'explique parfaitement, c'est-à-dire, Ιλ. Λ, οὐ Εcamède. . . femme égale aux déesses, préparant le Cyceon dans la coupe de Nestor, ἐπι αἰγειον κνη τυρον κνηστι χαλκειν, y râpe du fromage de chèvre avec un couteau d'airain.¹

On other occasions Chénier's interest shifts to textual criticism, where his profound feeling for and knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages permit him to suggest emendations. In his edition of Statius (page 301)² we find in the margin: 'Forsan actes, sive actae, id est atticae', commenting on the line 'Praeterit. Hinc arcte scopuloso in limite pendens etc.'. Even in the literary commentary written to accompany the ninety lines of the elegy 'Animé par l'Amour', which Chénier wrote in 1782, he can still not resist slipping in an emendation of the two lines of Propertius:

Tum mihi naturae libeat perdiscere mores;
Quis deus hanc mundi temperet arte domum.

Peut-être faut-il lire qua Deus.³

Chénier has fully merited Becq de Fouquières' epithet in the quotation already used, 'le plus érudit des poètes français'.⁴ In this critic's eyes there was nothing derogatory in this claim. Barbey d'Aurevilly

¹Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', V c), p.760.

²See p. 141 above.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, l.172, p.43.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Notes et variantes', p.872.

⁴See p. 153 above, note 1.

chastised G. de Chénier for stressing Chénier's erudition and for turning him into 'une fourmi d'érudit et de travailleur, tirant perpétuellement et péniblement son petit brin de paille'.¹ His charge might seem justified if it were possible to restrict Chénier within the confines of the pure philologist or antiquarian or to regard him as someone who collected and compiled for its own sake. However, a second series of manuscript notes gives the answer to the driving force behind all the scholarly research that we have just mentioned. The vast scenario of erudition no longer is the mark of a pedant or a philologist taking the works of Antiquity to pieces for the sake of analysis; it no longer derives from an antiquarian interest in the remnant of a dead civilization, but denotes rather a fascination with a living culture that has supreme relevance for Chénier's poetic vision: 'Leur siècle est en dépôt dans leurs nobles volumes'.²

These manuscripts show that Chénier read the Classics above all as a poet who firmly believed that the Ancients held the secrets of his art. He drew near his ancient models as a humble disciple, as an apprentice learning his craft, noting details of style and language, but at the same time as a poet confident in his own genius, noting down passages that he would later incorporate into his own poems and touch with his own particular inspiration. His techniques can be illustrated by a comparison with the more detailed 'Commentaire de Malherbe' which presents a Chénier underlining epithets, weighing their exactitude and suitability, whether they are 'de la précision la plus heureuse et la plus poétique'.³ It indicates his love of 'images frappantes',⁴ 'expressions vives, neuves et hardies',⁵ 'la hardiesse et la force de l'expression',⁶

¹J. Barbey d'Aurevilly, XIX^e siècle (deuxième série). Les oeuvres et les hommes. Les Poètes, Paris, Lemerre, 1889, p.38.

²Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 1.99, p.15.
Walter, 'L'Invention', 1.99, p.125.

³Walter, 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', p.819.

⁴Walter, *ibid.*, p.812.

⁵Walter, *ibid.*, p.812.

⁶Walter, *ibid.*, p.820.

and his recognition of the mood, the literary and musical qualities of a given passage: 'pleine de chaleur',¹ 'belle et lyrique',² 'pathétique et inattendue',³ 'strophe pure, harmonieuse, animée, pleine de grâce et de facilité'.⁴

It was in this enthusiastic and critical way, shown in 'Le Commentaire de Malherbe', that Chénier read the Classics. He used the same technique for his literary studies as for his philological notes: 'J'en vais extraire ce qui m'a paru bon'.⁵ As he read the texts, with his Elégies in mind, he would rapidly jot down notes differing in length and development according to the moment:

Souvent des vieux auteurs j'envahis les richesses.
Plus souvent leurs écrits, aiguillons généreux,
M'embrasent de leur flamme et je crée avec eux.⁶

At times, as we have seen previously,⁷ there is only the briefest reference, sometimes a single line note, which may illustrate a point of style or mores to remember. In the following example, Chénier lists myths and legends that might be useful at a later date in his Elégies.

Ελεγ.
Fables ou histoires à employer.
Laodamie et Protésilas. - Artémise. - Nauplius et le promont. de Capharée. - Niobé et ses filles et le Sipylus.
- Les Titans aux pieds de serpents. - Ibycus et les oies.
- Vénus armée. - L'Amour armé, dans le Musaeum étrusque.⁸

Sometimes, in another mood, his reading brought lengthier reaction. Stimulated by lines from the ancient author a framework for his own poem gradually took shape. Chénier consigns his ideas to paper, noting

¹Walter, *ibid.*, p.806.

²Walter, *ibid.*, p.822.

³Walter, *ibid.*, p.816.

⁴Walter, *ibid.*, p.814.

⁵See p.156 above, note 2.

⁶Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, 11.94-96, p.205.

Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, 11.94-96, p.159.

⁷See p.149 above.

⁸Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IX, 3, 11.1-6, p.170.

The reference in the last line is to Gori's Musaeum Etruscum, Florence, 1737-43.

carefully the reference so that the whole may be expanded in a period of creative inspiration.

Ελ.

Marseille. . . . Raconter l'histoire de la fille gauloise d'un roi des Gaules. . . laquelle, dans le banquet, présente la coupe (c'était ainsi qu'on choisissait un mari) au chef de la colonie phocéenne. . . Je feindrai qu'elle a été le voir descendre. Elle était au haut d'une tour avec sa nourrice Raconter tout cela dans le goût du IV^e livre de Propertius.¹

This entry was later to be expanded further into the prose and verse draft, 'O beautés de Marseille'.²

A different poem of Propertius, Lib. II, elegy xxxi, leads to a proposal outlining the structure of an elegy by Chénier:

Ελεγ. ιταλ.

On pourrait imiter l'élégie de Propertius: quaeris cur veniam tibi tardior, de cette manière: Je suis venu tard. J'ai été arrêté à voir des statues, des tableaux sur mon chemin. . . longues descriptions. . . et enfin telle femme, telle beauté peinte par tel peintre t'a rappelée à moi et je suis accouru'.³

Yet even in this limited space the complex relationship of tradition and originality is clearly apparent, for already the wheels of creativity are in motion. Whereas Propertius devotes the whole of his elegy to a magnificent description of the new temple and portico of Apollo which has delayed him, Chénier has already seen the possibility of a humorous twist for his elegy - a beautiful painting reminds him of his beloved so he rushes back to her.

In some cases the process of creativity is taken a step beyond this, and Chénier's reading seems to evoke spontaneous lines of poetry, as in the elegy 'La Lampe'. After eight lines of alexandrines entitled 'Ελεγ. in προθυριασμ. . . .', he puts down the source of the idea, and refers to other epigrams that could be imitated in his subsequent development

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 3, ll. 1-6, p.13.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, pp.13-14.

Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', I, p.535.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 4, ll.1-6, p.22.

of the poem:

Asclépiade peut faire les frais de presque toute cette élégie. Anal., t.I, p.211. Il y a une épigr. adressée à la lampe. C'est la 25e. En voici la fin:

την δολιην ἐπαμυνον ὅταν φίλον ἔνδον ἔχουσα
παιζῆ, ἀποσβεσθεις μηκετι φως παρεχε.
Il faut traduire ces quatre vers (épigr. 9) qui comm:

Πιν', Ἀσκληπιαδη . . . Bois, malheureux Gallus;
et le commencement de la 23e et 19. Les épigr. 4, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26, 28 du même poète sont jolies et peuvent s'imiter.¹

The different techniques explained above employed by Chénier to collect source material from Antiquity for his Elégies are all united in one interesting manuscript. A large piece of paper has been folded in half, giving four sides (11.3 cm wide x 17 cm long). (Ref: 6850 fo.119 recto and verso, and fo. 120 recto and verso). The entire manuscript is covered by notes written at different times as shown by the use of different inks. These notes,² in which Chénier grouped ideas for later use in his Elégies, again vary in length and detail. One consists of the briefest detail of mores, given without a precise reference: 'Properce a parlé des éventails de plumes de paon. Il faut parler de nos éventails chinois'.³ Others quote a line or lines from an ancient author

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 5, ll.9-18, p.51.
Walter, 'Notes et variantes', 'La Lampe', p.876.

² B.N. nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 6850 fo. 119-120 contains the following order of notes, which can be found in Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', at these different references:
fo. 119 recto. . . i) 16 lines of Alexandrines, an initial draft for the ninety lines written in 1782, IV, i, 1, ll.1-16, pp.36-37.
ii) IX, 5, p.170.
iii) IX, II, p.172.
fo.119 verso. . . iv) IX, 7, p.171.
v) IV, vi, 19, p.124.
vi) IX, 8, p.171.
fo.120 recto. . . vii) IV, vi, 11, p.122.
viii) IX, 12, p.172.
ix) IX, 13, p.172.
fo. 120 verso. . . x) IV, v, 14, pp.101-102.
xi) IV, vi, 13, p.123.
xii) IX, 6, p.170.
xiii) IV, i, 6, p.56.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IX, 13, p.172.

that must have impressed Chénier as he read, and which provoke an immediate imitation or translation:

a) Crudeles divi ! serpens novus exuit annos.
Tibull., l.1, él. 4.

Cruelles destinées !
Le serpent rajeuni dépouille ses années.¹

b) Et tinctus viola pallor amantium.
Hor.

La pâle violette, emblème de l'amour.

Et la fleur de l'amour, la pâle violette.

La douce violette attirait tous ses vœux;
C'est la fleur des amants, elle est pâle comme eux.

Je vois la violette en sa douce pâleur
De l'amour langoureux affecter la couleur.²

c) Nunc et amara dies, et noctis amarior umbra.
Omnia nunc tristi tempora felle madent.
Tibul., l. II, él. 4, v.11

Il faut traduire ou imiter ces beaux vers de mon Tibulle.

. . . Le jour est amer à mon cœur.
La nuit vient, [et] plus triste et plus amère encore.
Tout meurt autour de moi du fiel qui me dévore.

Ou littér.:

Chaque instant de ma vie est abreuvé d'absinthe.³

This final example would later be assimilated as lines 9 and 10 of the elegy 'Souvent le malheureux songe à quitter la vie':

Des jours amers, des nuits plus amères encore.
Chaque instant est trempé du fiel qui me dévore.⁴

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IX, 12, p.172.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, vi, 19, p.124. The Latin reference is to Horace, *Odes*, Lib. III, poem 10, l.14.
See also Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IX, II, p.172 and Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IX, 8, p.171.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, ll.1-9, p.56.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.25-26, p.57.

Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 4, ll.9-10, p.93.

Then there are six lines of Tibullus which Chénier is content merely to copy out and to mark his intention to translate them at some stage. It may be that at the moment when he read this elegy he found its beauty untranslatable:

Ipse interque greges, interque armenta Cupido
Natus, et indomitas dicitur inter equas.
Illic indocto primum se exercuit arcu.
Hei mihi, quam doctas nunc habet ille manus !
Nec pecudes velut ante petit: fixisse puellas
Gestit, et audaces perdomuisse viros.
Tibull., l.II, él.i, v.67.

Il faut traduire ces vers charmants; et imiter toute cette élégie, qui est un des plus beaux poèmes de l'antiquité. Il est plein d'âme, d'esprit, d'érudition, et de philosophie: car les érotiques anciens ne sont pas des Dorat. J'en dis autant de la huitième élégie du livre premier.¹

The major importance of the notes as a whole is that they shed light upon the motivation behind Chénier's relentless study of Graeco-Roman writers, whether that study was philological or literary. This is made clear by the constant repetition of: 'il faut imiter. . .', 'il faut traduire. . .'.² The catalyst was obviously poetry. He was not first and foremost an antiquarian, nor a dilettante, but a poet. His thirst for knowledge, his overwhelming energy, and zest for study are explained only by this vocation. As T.S. Eliot claimed: 'The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together'.³ Chénier's lines show how, from a vast knowledge, he distilled the essence of poetry:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, vi, 11, p.122. See also *ibid.*, IX, 7, p.171.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies',
a) III, ii, 4, p.22.
b) IV, i, 5, p.51.
c) IV, i, 6, p.56.
d) IV, vi, 11, p.122.
e) IX, 7, p.171.

³T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in Selected Prose, ed. J. Hayward, London, Penguin, 1953, p.27.

D'un vaste champ de fleurs je tire un peu de miel.
 Tout m'enrichit, et tout m'appelle, et, chaque ciel
 M'offrant quelque dépouille utile et précieuse,
 Je remplis lentement ma ruche industrielle.¹

His notes reveal him as slowly filling his 'ruche industrielle' by establishing a reference system for his days of inspiration. 'Haec si perviderimus, tum vere imitabimur'.² Here was included a thorough working, practical compendium of Graeco-Roman culture, its customs, its institutions, its mythology, and above all its literary themes. His aim was to be steeped in the Classical Tradition. He was haunted throughout his life by the shades of Antiquity, shades which had to be revived if the present were to be rejuvenated. Revival of the present could only occur by such insistent attention to detail that Chénier undertook to create 'tout mon cortège antique'.³ As T.S. Eliot said of Milton 'never has a poet possessed of such great learning so completely justified the acquisition of it'.⁴ Here then was a Neo-classical poet creating poems in the confident belief that the sine qua non of art was scholarship, where genius and imagination were harnessed to study. 'Qui que tu sois enfin, ô toi, jeune poète, / Travaille',⁵ advocated Chénier and each elegy is the consummation of hours of reading, hours of commentary, linked to hours of experience.⁶ 'Hoc opus, hic labor est'.⁷ It seems

¹ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des lettres', I, 1, 11.30-33, p.208.
 Walter, 'La République des lettres', 1, 11.19-22, p.470.

² Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, ii, 27.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iv, 1.23, p.34.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XXI, 1.23, p.73.

⁴ T.S. Eliot, 'The Classics and the Man of Letters', *ibid.*, p.226.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.251-252, p.20.
 Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.251-252, p.129.

⁶ The vast extent of Chénier's knowledge has at times led to somewhat exaggerated statements by critics. See 'Il lisait et retenait tout. Jamais il ne se reposa'. (L. Becq de Fouquières, ed., Poésies d'André Chénier. Edition Critique, second edition, Paris, Charpentier, 1872, p.xxvi). 'Levé avant le jour, il n'avait d'autre ambition que de parcourir le cercle entier de la science humaine, et semblait croire qu'il ne fût pas permis d'aborder la poésie sans ce noviciat encyclopédique !'. (G. Planche, 'André Chénier', R.D.M., 13, 1838, pp.218-235, p.219).

⁷ Vergil, Aeneid, Lib. VI, 1.129.

incredible that Boissy d'Anglas could even suggest, 'On voit qu'il était né poète, et qu'il ne lui manquait que de l'application et du travail, pour obtenir un rang honorable dans la république des lettres'.¹

There have been other criticisms that we must guard against. Most common has been the idea that found popularity in the nineteenth century that Chénier's inspiration was purely imitative, that having compiled his reference system, he merely pieced together a lifeless patchwork. Leading such criticisms was Louis Bertrand:

Les mauvaises langues disaient que l'abbé Barthélemy, dans son Jeune Anacharsis, avait mis l'antiquité en petits carrés de papier. Chénier a fait la même chose et avec beaucoup moins de critique.²

Bertrand used the image of marquetry as he prepared this attack:

Il multiplie les traductions littérales et les adaptations: presque toutes ses pièces sont de marqueteries plus ou moins habilement exécutées, de sorte qu'à la longue on a la sensation de lire un centon. Ce qu'il y a de plus fâcheux c'est qu'on s'aperçoit que souvent dans la fable d'une pièce, il est guidé uniquement par le désir de placer un fragment ou une réminiscence.³

A. Michiels echoed the views of Bertrand:

Le Brun et Chénier mirent une seconde fois en honneur la mosaïque littéraire. Pleins d'une patience peu commune, ils ramassaient dans les poètes anciens tous les fragments qui brillaient à leur vue et les incrustaient dans leurs savantes marqueteries. . . . Ils les traduisaient d'avance pour les employer au besoin, comme de précieuses parcelles.⁴

¹ Boissy d'Anglas, Les Etudes littéraires et poétiques d'un vieillard, Paris, Kleffer, 1825, Vol. II, p.98.

² L. Bertrand, La fin du Classicisme et le retour à l'Antique dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle et les premières années du XIX^e en France, Paris, Hachette, 1897, p.272.

³ L. Bertrand, *ibid.*, p.262.

⁴ A. Michiels, Histoire des idées littéraires en France au dix-neuvième siècle, et de leurs origines dans les siècles antérieurs, third edition, Brussels, J. Stienon, 1848, Vol. II, p.21. See also 'L'auteur des Bucoliques nous apparaît surtout comme un habile mosaïste, expert dans

Happily voices were already raised in the nineteenth century against this general criticism. E. Manuel in his 1884 edition leads the way to a sounder judgement:

L'antiquité le remplit, mais elle a passé par son imagination en même temps que par sa mémoire; elle a subi une opération, une transfusion spéciale, une distillation savante que le XVII^e siècle n'avait pas su faire. . . . Ses vers ne sont pas, comme les rapprochements induiraient à le croire, une pure mosaïque, mais une assimilation antérieure et plus subtile, qui fait corps et âme avec le poète.¹

A true understanding of the Elégies lies in those last few words. Chénier did not piece together ancient reminiscences, his aim was total assimilation of his models. He wanted to think, to feel, to react as they did, and he considered these thoughts and feelings, as part of common experience, which could be fully absorbed into his own being and his own reality. In his poems his personal experiences fused with his literary background until we may only speak of 'poetic reality' - a total engrossment of knowledge and experience. This poetic reality, creating masterpieces within the bounds of the Neo-classical ethic, set Chénier apart from his contemporary poets,

4 [contd.]

l'art de joindre les éléments les plus divers: . . . Ces coutures invisibles, dont il était si fier, sont maintenant trop visibles et paraissent constituer le fond le plus clair de cette poésie: . . . cette poésie aura toujours le grave inconvénient de n'être pas populaire, et d'être obscure même pour les lettrés. . . . Poésie antique, soit; mais on est tenté d'ajouter: poésie d'antiquaire'. (P. Morillot, André Chénier, Collection des classiques populaires, Paris, Lecène et Oudin, 1894, pp. 110-114).

¹E. Manuel, ed., Oeuvres poétiques d'André Chénier, Nouvelle bibliothèque classique, Paris, Jouaust, 1884, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii. See also 'Depuis quelque temps on a semblé réduire Chénier au rang de "maître mosaïste", ce qui me paraît d'une suprême injustice'. (L. Petit de Julleville, Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900, Paris, A. Colin, 1898, Vol. VI, p. 658).

the Bertins, the Parnys, whose antique reminiscences smack so often of affectation and fashion.

As he relentlessly strove to perfect his knowledge, Chénier was confident in his belief that: 'Je sème la moisson que je veux recueillir'.¹ Tragically this hope was vain. When in 'L'Ennemi', Baudelaire bemoaned that 'il reste en mon jardin bien peu de fruits vermeils', at least he could conclude, 'Voilà que j'ai touché l'automne des idées'.² There was to be no autumn of ideas for Chénier. He joins the ranks of the Mozarts, the Gilberts, the Malfilâtres, and the Chattertons. The harvest of poems, fruit of so many labours, was never fully reaped.

¹ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des lettres', I, 1, l.23, p.208.
Walter, 'La République des lettres', 1, l.12, p.470.

² Baudelaire. 'L'Ennemi', ll.4 and 5, 'Spleen et Idéal', 'Les fleurs du Mal', in Oeuvres complètes. Texte établi et annoté par Y.G. Le Dantec, édition révisée, complétée et présentée par C. Pichois, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris, Gallimard, 1961, pp.15-16.

IV

THE CONCEPT OF ANCIENT ELEGY AND THE EVALUATION OF THE ROMAN
ELEGISTS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

For André Chénier the creation of elegies was inescapable. There was for him, as we have seen, an inner compulsion based on his Greek birth-right, his education and poetic temperament, which precluded him from using the genre solely as a poetic apprenticeship of the kind advocated by J-B. Le Blanc: 'N'est-ce pas par-là que débutent tous les Novices du Parnasse ? On a du moins une obligation à l'Elégie, c'est que c'est elle qui forme les Poètes'.¹ This inner compulsion was reinforced for Chénier by external pressures which helped to determine the poet's own elegiac stance. They came from the intense interest manifest in the eighteenth century into the origins and development of Ancient Elegy, and especially into the work of the Roman elegists. Chénier, a product of this age, with its literary milieu, its enlightenment, and prejudices, could not avoid responding to such pressures. It is these influences that must now be analyzed as we look at the matrix of theorists, translators, imitators, and poets.

The only detailed account of eighteenth century French Elegy, published in 1898, was written by H. Potez,² and has still not been superseded. In it he discusses the major elegiac poets, their themes and motifs, but, surprisingly, he only briefly mentions the theoretical works

¹ Abbé J-B. Le Blanc, Elégies de Mr L. B. C. avec un Discours sur ce genre de Poésie, et quelques autres pieces du mesme auteur, Paris, Chaubert, 1731, p.30.

² H. Potez, L'Elégie en France avant le romantisme, de Parny à Lamartine, 1778-1820, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1898.

that form a backcloth to their poems. Yet the theoretical studies into the origins of Elegy and the merits of Roman elegists, together with the numerous translations and imitations, are of vital importance to a comprehensive view of the Elegy in eighteenth century France. The research of this chapter provides an opportunity to fill the gap in such understanding.

It can be safely conjectured that Chénier was aware of the theoretical studies. He would have known of Le Brun's 'Discours sur Tibulle' (1763), for the guidance provided by Le Brun in Chénier's early poetic formation cannot be denied.¹ We should also remember the love of knowledge displayed by Chénier throughout his life. If his extensive investigation of the Latin elegists led him into the scholarly realm of textual criticism and the weighing of variant readings, as described in chapter III,² he must surely have known the opinions of his contemporaries on the subject of Elegy. Certainly he was always fascinated by literary history and its analysis.

The first striking feature revealed by this particular piece of our research is the amount of interest in the concept of Ancient Elegy, and in the individual Roman elegists. It is apparent that study and concern for these topics were maintained throughout the whole of the eighteenth century. A natural reaction might have been to assume that discussions emanated directly from the resurgence of Antiquity in the second half of the century. Such a conclusion would be dispelled by a chronological account of the articles on the subject, for this would show that the level of interest was constant throughout the period, but such a catalogue would be repetitive. The studies of the theorists are not all of equal value, and, even the minor thinkers amongst them produced similar ideas. This investigation must

¹ See chapter II, pp. 85-88 above.

² See pp. 153-159 above.

therefore take the form of a synthesis of ideas, reflecting a consensus of opinions. At the same time the various dissenting voices will be clearly recognized.

Before attempting such an analysis it is necessary to make certain provisos to avoid any distortion in the historical perspective, and to underline what seems to be a chronological development of thought. Thus, although articles on Ancient Elegy were being written throughout the century, differences may be detected. In the first half of the century the pre-eminent concern in several of the articles lies with eighteenth century rather than with Ancient Elegy, which is not analyzed per se, but rather as a by-product, a stereotyped introduction to the subsequent discussion of contemporary Elegy. The interpretations are inevitably superficial, and do not attempt scholarly or critical analysis; they are often content to enounce, without comment, conventional theories on the origins of Elegy and on the Roman elegists. Above all they are highly selective, choosing to stress aspects of Ancient Elegy that will suit their own particular concept of the Elegy of their own day. J-B. Le Blanc, for example, was himself an elegist, and his idiosyncratic views on contemporary Elegy necessarily affect any comments he makes on Ancient Elegy. His heroico-tragic concept of Elegy, focussing on 'cet amour furieux et désespéré',¹ leads him to uphold the tradition that the earliest ancient elegies were laments, but to reject any extension of this to portray the joys and sorrows of love, which Horace, Boileau, and the majority of eighteenth century theorists accepted. His unconventional preference for Ovid's Heroides amongst the Roman elegies, similarly derives from the parallel with his own elegies.

¹ Abbé J-B. Le Blanc, Elégies de Mr L * * C, avec un Discours sur ce genre de Poésie, et quelques autres pieces du mesme auteur, Paris, Chaubert, 1731, p.40.

Conversely, J-B. Michault's criteria for contemporary Elegy are 'l'amenité, les agréments, les tours galans, les expressions fines, enfin tout ce que nous apellons graces doit y regner sur tout'¹ [sic]. Inevitably these ideas encourage Michault to give the elegiac palm to Tibullus. In the case of Rémond de Saint-Mard² and Abbé Batteux,³ their dislike of eighteenth century Elegy results in scant, critical comments on Ancient Elegy.

Yet it would be unfair to condemn the first half of the period, and to believe that detailed studies were only carried out in the later years. The early decades produced three of the more enlightened theorists, Abbé Fraguier,⁴ Abbé Souchay,⁵ as scholars, and Barbon Mazarini Mancini, Duc de Nivernais,⁶ the poet, seeing in the Roman elegists the key to excellence.

¹ J-B. Michault, Réflexions critiques sur l'Élegie, Dijon, Auge, 1734, p.17.

² Rémond de Saint-Mard, Réflexions sur la Poésie en general, sur l'Épique, sur la Fable, sur l'Élégie, sur la Satire, sur l'Ode, et sur les autres petits Poemes comme Sonnet, Rondeau, Madrigal etc. suivies de trois lettres sur la décadence du goût en France, La Haye, C. de Rogissart et Soeurs, 1734.

³ Abbé Batteux, Cours de Belles-Lettres ou Principes de la littérature, nouvelle édition, 4 vols., Paris, Desaint, Saillant et Durand, 1753.

⁴ Abbé Fraguier, 'Mémoire sur l'Élégie Grecque et Latine', 1720, Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 1718-1725, Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1729, Vol. VI, pp.277-282.

⁵ Abbé Souchay, Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres avec les mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de cette Académie depuis l'année MDCCXXVI jusques et compris l'année MDCCXXX, Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1733, Vol. VII,

i. 'Discours sur l'Élégie', pp.335-352.

ii. 'Premier discours sur les poètes élégiaques', pp.352-384.

iii. 'Second discours sur les poètes élégiaques', pp.384-397.

⁶ Barbon Mazarini Mancini-Nivernais, 'Dissertation sur l'Élégie', 1743, in Deuvres de Mancini-Nivernois, 4 vols., Paris, Didot Jeune, 1796, Vol. III, 'Mélanges de littérature, en vers et en prose', part II, pp.257-290.

Abbé Souchay wrote perhaps the most comprehensive account of Ancient Elegy in the whole of the century, delving into its origins and characteristics, and subsequently examining the individual Greek and Latin poets, constantly acknowledging his sources, weighing arguments, and quoting from the poets themselves. Indeed his treatise was used as an authority throughout the century, and as such it is very surprising that H. Potez does not mention it in his study. In short Fraguier, Souchay, and Mancini-Nivernais stand out from the first half of the eighteenth century, and adumbrate future developments.

The second half of the century, which was marked by a revival of Antiquity in every sphere of the arts, perhaps not unnaturally witnessed a new development in the theories about Ancient Elegy. A dynamic Neo-classicism moved into the discussions as models were sought for contemporary Elegy. Mancini-Nivernais had foreshadowed this development; its application was now widespread. The theories emanating from Le Brun,¹ J-B. Milliet,² J.F. La Harpe,³ and C.H. Millevoye⁴ may not be original or treated in any greater depth than in Abbé Souchay, but the motivation was different.

¹P.D. Le Brun, 'Discours sur Tibulle', 1763, in Oeuvres de Ponce Denis (Ecouchard) Le Brun. . . mises en ordre et publiées par P.L. Ginguene. . . 4 vols., Paris, Crapelet, 1811, Vol. IV, pp.392-403.

²J-B. Milliet, Etrennes du Parnasse. Notice des Poètes Latins, contenant la vie de chaque Poète, les jugements sur ses Ouvrages, avec un choix des plus beaux morceaux, traduits ou imités en vers François, par M. Milliet, 2 vols., Paris, Fetil, 1773.

³J.F. La Harpe, Lycée ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne, 15 vols., Paris, Crapelet, 1816, Vol. I, Anciens-Poésie.

⁴C.H. Millevoye, 'Sur l'Elégie', in Oeuvres complètes de Millevoye, 2 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1822, Vol. I, pp.3-49.

There is a new spur, a new concentration on the individual Roman elegists. It is accompanied by an upsurge of translations of their work, and by a flurry of imitations by dilettante poetasters which are to be found scattered in the literary journals of the late eighteenth century.

A. Discussion of the origins and content of Ancient Elegy

From the Hellenistic grammarians to present day scholars, speculation concerning the origins of Ancient Elegy has abounded. Yet the genesis of this important genre still remains in obscurity,¹ and the fragmentary state of Greek Elegy, whether dating from the Archaic, Classical, or Hellenistic periods, unfortunately reduces much of the debate to enlightened conjecture. The earliest extant Greek elegies display a great diversity both of subject matter and mood. It is this apparent diversity, combined with the lack of definite evidence, that has led to the confusion that surrounds the elegiac genre. Nevertheless, as the Renaissance humanists had attempted before them, the theorists of the eighteenth century in France strove to enforce a unified origin onto a genre, which was paradoxical by its nature, in that it embraced in its earliest days disparate and even contradictory themes and subjects. It is by no means a minor issue, for, with the exception of Le Brun, Milliet, Marmontel, and La Harpe, who prefer to discuss individual Roman elegists, investigation into the origins of Elegy preoccupied all the theorists throughout the century.

We have noted that the major preoccupation was to rationalize a

¹ See A.A. Day, The Origins of Latin Love Elegy, Oxford, Blackwell, 1938.
 G. Luck, The Latin Love Elegy, second edition, University Paperbacks, London, Methuen, 1969.
 D.O. Ross, Jr., Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome, Cambridge University Press, 1975.
 F. Cairns, Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

See also appendix III, pp.464-466 below.

disparate literary genre. In this rationalization the theorists were above all attempting to reconcile the fragmentary evidence from the source material with the dogmatic, clear-cut definitions of Elegy proposed by the two legislators of poetic judgements, Horace and his disciple Boileau. Despite a swelling number of detractors, the latter retained a magisterial influence throughout the eighteenth century.¹

versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum,
post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos.²

La plaintive Elegie en longs habits de deuil,
Sçait les cheveux épars gemir sur un cercueil.
Elle peint des Amans la joye, et la tristesse,
Flatte, menace, irrite, appaise une Maistresse.³

Following the tradition stated in the opening lines of both the above definitions, the theorists clearly envisaged the origins of Ancient Elegy in a song of mourning and lamentation. Abbé Souchay quotes the Alexandrian grammarian, Didymus, who defined Elegy as a θρηνος, a dirge with flute accompaniment. He therefore concludes, as did Hellenistic and Roman grammarians, that the elegiac lament was performed at funeral rites, and even speculates that it was a universal form existing in the midst of bereavement:

Or, la circonstance d'estre chantée sur la flûte, me détermine à croire que l'Elégie a commencé par les plaintes ou lamentations usitées aux funérailles dans tous les temps, & chez tous les peuples de la terre.

¹See J.R. Miller, Boileau en France au dix-huitième siècle, John Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, Extra volume XVIII, Baltimore, J. Hopkins, 1942.

²Horace, Ars Poetica, ll.75-76.

³Boileau, 'L'Art Poétique', chant II, ll.39-42, in Oeuvres complètes de Boileau, introduction par A. Adam, textes établis et annotés par F. Escal, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Bruges, Gallimard, 1966, p.164.

La flûte, en effet, accommodée aux sanglots de ces femmes gagées qui possédoient l'art de pleurer sans affliction, faisoit parmi les anciens la musique des funérailles.¹

The writers emphasize that initially the laments were disordered expressions of bereavement, which nevertheless provided consolation to the living, and hence gradually assumed an art form.

Il est naturel de présumer, qu'au commencement ces plaintes furent sans ordre, sans liaison, sans étude; simples expressions de la douleur, qui ne laissoient pas de consoler les vivants, en même-temps qu'elles honoroient les morts: comme elles estoient tendres & pathétiques, elles remuoient l'âme; & par les mouvements qu'elles luy imprimoient, elles la tenoient tellement occupée, qu'il ne luy restoit plus d'attention pour l'objet même dont la perte l'affligeoit. De-là vient que l'on fit un art de ces plaintes, & qu'elles furent bien-tost aussi liées & aussi suivies que le permettoit l'occasion qui les faisoit naistre ou plustost, le sujet à l'occasion duquel elles estoient composées.²

As all the theorists note, in Archaic Greece the formalized structure given to the laments was that of the elegiac distich, 'en vers Pentamètres & Héxamètres entre-lacez'.³

¹ Abbé Souchay, 'Discours sur l'Elégie', Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. . . Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1733, Vol. VII, p.337. See also C.H. Millevoeye, 'Sur l'Elégie', in Oeuvres complètes de Millevoeye, 2 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1822, Vol. I, pp.3-4, and J-B. Michault, Réflexions critiques sur l'Elégie, Dijon, Auge, 1734, pp.1-2.

² Abbé Souchay, *ibid.*, pp.338-339. See also C.H. Millevoeye, *ibid.*, pp.4-5, quoting from Abbé Barthélemy, and for an exact repetition of Souchay, see the Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres, mis en ordre et publié par M. Diderot. . . 17 vols., Paris, Panckoucke, 1751-1765, Vol. V, 'Elégie', by M. le Chevalier de Jaucourt, 1755, p.487.

³ Abbé Fraguier, 'Mémoire sur l'Elégie Grecque et Latine', 1720, Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 1718-1725, Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1729, Vol. VI, p.277.

The theorists attempted to reinforce these somewhat vague assumptions by etymology. The Alexandrian grammarians and antiquarians, with their passion for αἴτια and often spurious etymology, had, in fact, suggested the derivation most commonly accepted in the eighteenth century: ἔλεγος < ἔ' ἔ' λεγειν, to cry woe, woe. The confidence with which the Abbé Souchay adopts this etymology is present in the majority of his contemporaries:

Simplic.in Epictet. J'adopteray avec Vossius celle de Didyme, comme la plus simple & la plus propre à faire connoître la nature de l'Elégie. Ce mot donc, selon Didyme, vient de ἔ' ἔ' λεγειν, dire hélas, & l'Elégie fut ainsi nommée, parce qu'elle estoit remplie de l'exclamation lugubre ἔ' ἔ', si familière aux poëtes tragiques, & qui échappe si naturellement aux personnes affligées. . . . elle est donc, suivant sa véritable étymologie, un poëme consacré aux gémisséments & aux larmes.¹

The only dissenting voice is that of Abbé Fraguier, who selects a slightly different etymology, though the meaning remains the same:

Le mot Elégie veut dire une plainte, une lamentation, un discours propre à émouvoir la compassion; ἔλεον λεγειν, miserabiliter dicere, en est l'étymologie.²

With hindsight it may seem strange that Abbé Souchay accepts a specific derivation for Elegy. He had previously discussed six other possible etymologies, all with similar meanings and linked with the theme of lament, including the one accepted by Fraguier. His conclusion on these derivations - 'purement arbitraires'.³

¹ Abbé Souchay, *ibid.*, pp.336-337. See also Mancini-Nivernais, 'Dissertation sur l'Elégie', 1743, in Deuvres de Mancini-Nivernois, 4 vols., Paris, Didot Jeune, 1796, Vol. III, part II, p.260, and J.F. La Harpe, Lycée ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne, Paris, Crapelet, 1816, Vol. I, p.592.

² Abbé Fraguier, *ibid.*, p.277.

³ Abbé Souchay, *ibid.*, p.336.

According to D'Alembert, one of the few writers giving consideration to metre, the elegiac distich with its characteristic monotony was eminently suited to the expression of grief:

Pourquoi les anciens avoient-ils pris d'abord cette forme de vers pour les élégies tristes ? est-ce parce que l'uniformité des distiques, les repos qui se succèdent à intervalles égaux, & l'espece de monotonie qui y regnent, rendoient cette forme propre à exprimer l'abattement & la langueur qu'inspire la tristesse ?¹

The theorists of the eighteenth century were thus in agreement that 'lacrimae rerum' were the origin and essence of Elegy. (It is perhaps not surprising in the case of Jaucourt, the 'sergent-fourrier'² of the Encyclopédie, for his whole article is plagiarized³ from Abbé Souchay). It was not an original interpretation, for, as we shall see, it has its parallels in the ars poetica of the Renaissance, nor was it confined to France. However misconceived the theory may now appear to be, it nevertheless produced the 'plaintive élégie', not only in France, but also in England. We need only think of Thomas Gray's 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard', or 'Lycidas', Milton's elegy on King:

He must not flote upon his watry bear
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of som melodious tear.⁴

¹ Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers. . . 17 vols., Paris, Panckoucke, 1751-1765, Vol. V, 'Elégiaque', by D'Alembert, 1755, p.483.

² P. Castex and P. Surer, Manuel des études littéraires françaises, XVIIII-XIX-XI siècles, Paris, Hachette, 1954, p.542.

³ J. Lough refers to the Chevalier de Jaucourt's task of 'churning out articles for the Encyclopédie'. (The Encyclopédie, London, Longman, 1971). He wrote over 17,000 articles. Evidence of plagiarism occurs in this article 'Elégie', (Encyclopédie, *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp.487-491), and also in the article 'Imitation', (Encyclopédie, *ibid.*, Vol. VIII, pp.567-569). Here the Chevalier de Jaucourt relies upon L. Racine's Réflexions sur la Poésie, 1747.

⁴ J. Milton, 'Lycidas', ll.12-14, in The Poetical Works of John Milton, ed. H. Darbishire, London, Oxford University Press, 1958, p.447.

Still the analysts had to face, and if possible resolve, some of the anomalies that their studies presented. Their difficulty lay in progressing from their first etymological definition to a definition which would complement the second idea presented by Horace and Boileau, that Elegy was not only a song of mourning, but also a song of 'la douce mélancolie' of love. This second idea was the pre-eminent one in the only models the theorists were able to study in detail, the works of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, the poets whose poems sang of love, with its joys and sorrows.

For Abbé Souchay the key rôle in this development was played by Mimnermus. Although, as the theorist shows, chronologically Mimnermus could not have invented the Elegy, as Hermesianax claimed, nevertheless he believes that Mimnermus perfected the genre, by introducing greater harmony and by extending Elegy to the sphere of love. J-B. Michault, echoing Abbé Souchay, envisages the transition as a natural and gradual sequence. The Elegy glides forward into a form for the expression of mood. All sadness is its subject. It gradually encompasses the sorrows of love and thence the joys, the complementary mood in the love-cycle.

Je sçai que l'Elegie a perdu beaucoup de son caractere primitif; en effet après l'avoir fait servir. . . aux inscriptions des tombeaux, on la ramena à d'autres sujets un peu moins lamentables. L'amour, cette source abondante de biens & de maux, lui confia ensuite le récit de ses langueurs. Il est vrai qu'insensiblement on y a peint ses plaisirs, sans doute parce que cette passion est mêlée d'agrémens & de peines.¹

He later suggests two further hypotheses for the sequence, first that the restrictions, tightness, and regularity of the elegiac distich led to literary conceits unsuitable for the disorderly expression of

¹J-B. Michault, Réflexions critiques sur l'Elegie, Dijon, Auge, 1734, p.8.

grief, and, secondly that poetry assumed a new aim, to please:

Les Vers Elegiaques, tels que les Grecs les employoient dans leurs Poëmes douloureux, exigent à chaque Distique du repos, & coupent ainsi le sens. Le Poëte se trouve engagé par là à contraindre & à serrer ses pensées, ce qui y ajoute souvent de la beauté & même de l'esprit. La douleur qui n'aime ni la gêne ni les ornemens, parut bien-tôt aux premiers Poëtes peu propre aux Vers Elegiaques, où il faut presser si fort la matiere. Outre cela l'esprit & les pointes que comporte souvent cette espece de Vers, leur sembla ne pouvoir plus s'acommoder aux plaintes naturelles de la douleur. . . . Ne seroit-ce pas aussi qu'ils se lasserent enfin de se plaindre toujours ? On plait davantage par des idées riantes que par des réflexions chagrines, & le grand art pour réussir en tout, est celui de plaire. . . . Le but changea, on chercha à atendrir & non plus à afliger; insensiblement on passa des charmes languissans de la tendresse aux vifs agrémens de quelques-autres passions enjôüées. Tantôt l'amour se presenta acompagné des ris & des jeux, & l'Elegie en étoit plus gaye & plus vive; tantôt il parut suivi de ses troubles & de ses peines, & l'Elegie revenoit à sa premiere nature, je veux dire sensible & douloureuse. [sic]¹

These two hypotheses are peculiar to Michault, although criticism of the elegiac distich as too monotonous for the expression of grief is reiterated later in Abbé Batteux's writings.² D'Alembert, in his article 'Elégiaque' for the Encyclopédie, reflects the metrical argument, but his conclusion is very different. He sees joy and lightness as inherent in the pentameter line. He also adds a strange moralizing tone not to be perceived in any of the other theorists:

Pourquoi ces mêmes vers ont-ils ensuite été employés à exprimer les sentimens d'une ame contente ? Seroit-ce que cette meme forme, ou du moins le vers pentamètre qui y entre, auroit une sorte de legereté & de facilité

¹ J-B. Michault, *ibid.*, pp.94-96.

² Abbé Batteux, Cours de Belles-Lettres ou Principes de la littérature, nouvelle édition, 4 vols., Paris, Desaint, Saillant & Durand, 1753, Vol. III, p.86.

propres à exprimer la joie ? Seroit-ce qu'à mesure que les hommes se sont corrompus, l'expression des sentimens tendres & vrais est devenue moins commune & moins touchante, & qu'en conséquence la forme des vers consacrés à la tristesse, a été employée par les poètes (bien ou mal-à-propos) à exprimer un sentiment contraire, par une bizarrerie à-peu-près semblable à celle qui a porté nos musiciens modernes à composer des sonates pour la flûte, instrument dont le caractère sembloit être d'exprimer la tendresse & la tristesse ?¹

In this manner the theorists explained the expansion of Elegy to include the joys and sorrows of love. Although some, like Abbé Fraguier, qualify this development as a 'bizarrerie de l'usage',² nevertheless it had to be incorporated into their concept of Elegy, in order to follow the definitions of Horace and Boileau. Moreover, the poets in the field of contemporary Elegy, with most of Greek Elegy lost to them, looked inevitably to the Roman elegists, from whom the Love Elegy of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid (Amores) was selected for imitation. Already the plea for originality, within an inherited tradition, by Mancini-Nivernais rings out in the mid-century:

L'étude des anciens nous fournira des exemples qui, en tout genre, sont la seule bonne source des préceptes. Etudions donc et suivons les anciens: mais, en les imitant, n'oublions pas que nous sommes Français.³

The above discussion would perhaps indicate that the theorists had a clear-cut concept of Graeco-Roman Elegy, one that justified the definition of Horace and Boileau. Nevertheless, beneath the eighteenth

¹ Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire des sciences, des arts et des métiers. . . 17 vols., Paris, Panckoucke, 1751-1765, Vol. V, 'Elégiaque', by D'Alembert, 1755, p.483.

² Abbé Fraguier, 'Mémoire sur l'Elégie Grecque et Latine', 1720, Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 1718-1725, Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1729, Vol. VI, p.277. Repeated verbatim by Jaucourt, Encyclopédie, *ibid.*, 'Elégie', p.487.

³ Mancini-Nivernais, 'Dissertation sur l'Elégie', 1743, in Oeuvres de Mancini-Nivernois, 4 vols., Paris, Didot Jeune, 1796, Vol. III, part II, p.289.

century's relatively simple definition, there lay, in fact, considerable confusion. Most of the theorists were aware that a reduction of Ancient Elegy to funeral laments and to the love cycle, was not quite historically accurate. Abbé Souchay,¹ for example, who catalogues and comments upon all the known Greek writers of the elegiac distich, whether their work is fragmentary or lost, obviously realized that his definition could not be applied to all the poets. He knew that in Greece the elegiac distich was adopted for a wide range of subjects and feelings in addition to the themes of mourning and love; that the elegiac verses of Callinus and Tyrtaeus dealt with war, and were exhortations on themes of courage and loyalty; that the Sages had published their political and moral precepts in elegiacs; that Eratosthenes had discussed the cube in this metre, and that Callimachus had written his mythological narratives in the same form.² Both Abbé Fraguier³ and J-B. Michault,⁴ not forgetting the plagiarizing Jaucourt,⁵ underline this variety:

Peu après, les Poëtes, qui avoient employé cette mesure pour soupirer leurs peines, l'employèrent pour chanter leurs plaisirs. . . De-là par la bizarrerie de l'usage, il est arrivé que toute oeuvre poëtique écrite en vers Pentamètres & Héxamètres, quel qu'en fût le sujet, gay ou triste, s'est nommée Elégie; ce mot ayant changé sa première acception, & ne signifiant plus qu'une pièce écrite en vers Pentamètres & Héxamètres.⁶

¹ Abbé Souchay, 'Premier discours sur les poëtes élégiaques', Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. . . Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1733, Vol. VII, pp.352-384.

² On this question Abbé Souchay does display some confusion. It is not clear whether he saw the development sequence as laments on the dead widening to portray the joys and sorrows of love, and later encompassing a great range of topics, or whether he envisaged a simultaneous development. The difficulty is that his chronology is somewhat distorted. He mentions Callinus as the earliest known elegist, followed by Mimnermus. Modern scholarship, however, groups together Callinus, Tyrtaeus, and Archilochus as the earliest extant elegists.

³ Abbé Fraguier, *ibid.*, p.277.

⁴ J-B. Michault, Réflexions critiques sur l'Elegie, Dijon, Auge, 1734, p.3.

⁵ Encyclopédie, *ibid.*, Vol. V, 'Elégie', by M. le Chevalier de Jaucourt, 1755, p.487.

⁶ Abbé Fraguier, *ibid.*, p.277.

The problem the eighteenth century writers had to solve was to maintain their double-pronged definition of Elegy, and, at the same time, make some allowance for the obvious diversity in Greek Elegy. They found it hard to accept that metre alone could be the all-important criterion. Their solution was ingenious; they made a distinction between true Elegy and elegiac verses. It was not a new distinction because Abbé Souchay,¹ with his usual care, gives its source as P. Tarquin Gallutius in De Elegia.² It is to be encountered with variations in the works of Abbé Fraguier, Le Blanc, Michault, Mancini-Nivernais, and in Jaucourt's article in the Encyclopédie in which he 'quotes' both Souchay and Fraguier. One writer who does not use the distinction is Millevoye; he avoids it by omitting to note the diversity of Greek Elegy.

The specious and arbitrary nature of the distinction becomes clear on investigation. The theorists do not all draw the same dividing line to separate Elegy from elegiac verse and this brings a most important secondary result, that, in some cases, works which their authors classed as elegies are not so regarded by their critics. Souchay is forced by his definition to exclude the Fasti of Ovid, although they are written in the elegiac distich, from his concept of Elegy.³

Tout poëme qui employant le vers élégiaque ne déplore point quelque malheur, ou ne peint ni la tristesse, ni la joye des amants, n'est point une Elégie, mais un poëme historique, ou didactique, ou de quelque autre nature en vers élégiaques. Horace n'ignoroit pas les divers usages ausquels ces vers avoient esté employez; cependant il semble restreindre l'Elégie aux plaintes en général, & aux chants de triomphe des Amants.⁴

¹ Abbé Souchay, *ibid.* , p.384.

² T. Gallutii, Virgilianae Vindicationes, et Commentarii tres de Tragoedia, Comoedia, Elegia, Romae, Alexandri Zannetti, 1621.

³ Abbé Souchay, *ibid.*, p.352.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.384.

The Abbé Fraguier's distinction is slightly different: 'Je m'attacheray seulement à faire quelques réflexions sur la vraie Elégie, sur "la plaintive Elégie en longs habits de deuil"'.¹ This must exclude Ovid's Fasti and, although he embraces the sorrows of love within his 'vraie Elégie', he rejects the Amores, the Ars Amatoria, and the Remedia Amoris of Ovid, as dealing only with the victories of love. So the Abbé Fraguier moves away from Horace and Boileau. Perhaps for this reason he develops the idea of sublimation within the Elegy. This theory suggests that the elegiac poet passes through various degrees; the conquest of his passion leading to escapist dreams of the past and to illusory joys of love. Hence he explains the numerous digressions of Tibullus. In this way a strange hypothesis enables Fraguier to allow a place to joy, but always within the framework of the sorrowful Love Elegy.

Il en est de même dans l'Elégie: la douleur qu'on veut calmer, on la charge d'abord, on s'en occupe, on s'en remplit, on s'y plaist. . . . Car en effet, il n'y a point de disproportion plus grande que celle d'une tristesse profonde à des propos & des pensées pleins de gayeté; & pour sortir de la nuit au grand jour, il faut passer par tous les degrés de l'Aurore. Ces degrés sont des réflexions tristes sur le passé, qui toutes de genre démonstratif, produisent des lieux communs de désirs, où compris dans la thèse générale, nous voyons dans la possibilité du système, un adoucissement à nos peines. Ces idées remplissent un esprit accablé de tristesse, & luy retracent une situation pleine de douceur & d'agrément, laquelle n'a d'existence que dans son imagination: de-là viennent les digressions de Tibulle sur des plans de vie imaginaires, où peut-estre trouveroit-il le bonheur de sa vie, s'il y avoit aucun bonheur dans la duperie des passions.²

To steal Fraguier's term 'bizarrerie',³ there is a somewhat bizarre sequel arising from the different divisions employed by the Abbés, a sequel that underlines the pitfalls of the techniques used by Jaucourt in his

¹ Abbé Fraguier, 'Mémoire sur l'Elégie Grecque et Latine', 1720, Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 1718-1725, Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1729, Vol. VI, p.277.

² Ibid., p.281.

³ See p.183 above.

article for the Encyclopédie. The major part of the article is copied directly from Souchay, with occasional paragraphs taken from Fraguier. His definition of the difference between true Elegy and elegiac lines is particularly interesting: 'Mais tout poème qui. . . n'est point une Elégie'.¹ We recognize, of course, an exact repetition of Souchay. Then Jaucourt suddenly tags on the conclusion: 'Par conséquent les vers élégiaques des fastes d'Ovide et de ses amours ne sont point une élégie'.² He has juxtaposed Souchay and Fraguier. He did not understand clearly Souchay's argument, for this had excluded the Fasti of Ovid but had explicitly included the Amores into 'la vraie Elégie'.³

Mancini-Nivernais goes further in making arbitrary distinctions. He opens his 'Dissertation sur l'Elégie' by firing a shot against the bows of tradition by attacking Boileau's definition. His starting point is the Latin Love Elegy, for here he seeks models for his own poems. Consequently he recognizes the last two lines of Boileau's definition as characteristic of true Elegy, but rejects the first section which makes elegies songs of mourning. His claim is that the first of Boileau's lines is based on a misinterpretation of Horace's meaning in the words, 'versibus impariter iunctis querimonia', stressing that according to Horace the elegiac distich was adopted first for 'querimonia' (laments) but not for 'Elegia' (Elegy). So the funeral lament is reduced to 'vers élégiaques', whereas the Latin Love Elegy is 'la vraie Elégie'.

Il y a dans le vers d'Horace le mot querimonia (plainte, lamentation) et non pas le mot Elegeia (Elégie). Beaucoup de savants l'ont entendu dans ce dernier sens; mais l'étude des Elégiaques latins m'a conduit à une opinion contraire. Je crois bien que le vers appelé élégiaque, c'est-à-dire

¹ See p. 184 above.

² Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers. . . 17 vols., Paris, Panckoucke, 1751-1765, Vol. V, 'Elégie', by M. le Chevalier de Jaucourt, 1755, p.487.

³ Abbé Souchay, *ibid.*, p.352.

l'hexamètre joint au pentamètre, a été employé d'abord pour les poésies funéraires; et l'etymologie probable du mot ἘΛΕΓΟΣ (lamentation) rend cette opinion très-vraisemblable: mais il me paraît constant aussi, que ces poèmes funèbres en vers élégiaques n'étaient point des Elégies, et qu'il faut chercher à ce petit poème une autre origine et une autre destination.¹

Mancini-Nivernais' work is especially valuable in showing the faulty nature of the Abbé Fraguier's exclusion of Ovid. He quotes Ovid Amores, Lib. III, elegy i, to show that Ovid himself believed that he was composing elegies, and that these were elegies where lightness and playful grace were the keynotes.

Venit odoratos Elegeia nexa capillos;
Et puto pes illi longior alter erat.
Forma decens, vestis tenuissima, vultus amantis:
In pedibus vitium causa decoris erat.

Il s'en faut bien que ce tableau soit rembruni; il semble copié d'après celui des Graces. C'est une belle nymphe dont les cheveux tressés repandent les parfums. Elle est galamment couverte d'une gaze légère. Son visage et son air respirent l'amour. Ensuite la Muse prend la parole en souriant, et trace ainsi les traits de son caractère. . .

Sum levis, et levis est mecum mea cura Cupido:
Non sum materia fortior ipsa mea.
Rustica sit sine me lascivi Mater Amoris:
Huic ego proveni lena comesque deae.²

It is noteworthy that the artificial distinctions are found most particularly in the first half of the century, the writers of the second half are more concerned with the assessment of individual Latin elegists.

To consider the eighteenth century views on Elegy as original would be historically naïve. Jonathan Swift's celebrated lines do not only apply to poetry but also to the field of literary criticism.³ The

¹ Mancini-Nivernais, 'Dissertation sur l'Elégie', 1743, in Oeuvres de Mancini Nivernois, 4 vols., Paris, Didot Jeune, 1796, Vol.III, part II, p.260.

² Ibid., p.271-272.

³ And these have smaller Fleas to bite 'em,
And so proceed ad infinitum:

theorists were writing with a tradition of studies of Ancient Elegy behind them. The investigations undertaken during the Renaissance in particular offer many parallels with eighteenth century ideas. Certainly Chénier knew of the previous writers on the subject for he possessed a copy of Sebillet's Art Poétique François, now to be seen in the Bibliothèque Municipale at Carcassonne.¹

He would certainly have known of Clément Marot, the first French poet to compose elegies, who had imprinted a certain kind of Elegy on the minds of Renaissance writers in France. As C.M. Scollen² has shown, Marot's poems were not modelled on the elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, or Ovid's Amores. Their origin lies rather in Ovid's elegiac composition, the Heroides, translated in 1496 by Octavien de Saint Gelais, and in the genre resulting from their imitation, the Epistre Amoureuse. C. Scollen has illustrated the enormous interest in the Heroides, the numerous translations, and the popularity of the love epistle. Marot baptized the poems he wrote in this genre as Elégies to distinguish them from his ordinary Epistres which do not treat love as their theme. Marot's elegies then are love epistles. Their debt to the Heroides meant that their distinctive mood was that of unrequited love, and so sadness is fixed as the characteristic of Elegy:

De sa nature l'Elégie est triste et flebile: et traite
singulièrement les passions amoureuses, lesquelles tu n'as
guères veues ni oyés vuides de pleurs et de tristesse.³

3 [contd.]

Thus ev'ry Poet, in his Kind,
Is bit by him that comes behind.

(J. Swift, 'On Poetry: A Rhapsody', ll.339-342, in The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. H. Williams, 3 vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937, Vol. II, p.651).

¹ See appendix II, p.462 below.

² C.M. Scollen, The Birth of the Elegy in France. 1500-1550, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, XCV, Geneva, Droz, 1967.

³ T. Sebillet, Art Poétique François. Edition critique avec une introduction et des notes publiée par F. Gaiffe, Société des textes français modernes, Lyon, 1910, pp.154-155.

From Marot the Renaissance theorists took sadness as the sine qua non of the origins of Ancient Elegy, from him they inherited the great difficulty of distinguishing between Elegies and Epistles. Given this background it was then easy to adopt the fanciful etymology of the ancient rhetoricians to confirm their theories. This produced a similar problem to that which arose later in the eighteenth century, for the rediscovery of the works of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid's Amores meant that Renaissance writers had to explain the development from the elegiac lament to the joys and sorrows of love which they found in these works.

La première matière de l'Elegie furent choses tristes: comme lamantacions, deploracions sus les mors, doleances des cas piteus: ainsi même que sonne le mot an Grec. E même les Epitaphes des mors, se fesoent an vers Elegiaques. Toutefois on à gagnè depuis, à l'accommoder aus choses joyeuses, c'et assauer aus propos d'Amour . . . A mon avis que l'Elegie à etè transfereé an l'Amour, nō point comme an consideracion de joyeuseté: mes plus tôt de tristecé, dont les pœurs amoureux sont tousjours pleins: ou pour le moins, par ce qu'il i a de tous deus, e du bien e de l'annui.[sic]¹

The close similarity between Renaissance thought and that of the eighteenth century is hardly surprising. They faced the same problems. We may further confirm the closeness of approach by citing Michault, for he uses and quotes the Renaissance writer Peletier:

L'Elegie ne servit donc en premier lieu qu'à des sujets tristes: elle étoit surtout destinée aux Pompes funébres, & même (comme l'observe Pelletier dans son Art poétique) les Epitaphes des morts se faisoient en vers élegiaques.²

Here, at least, the eighteenth century is drawing directly from the sixteenth and it is certain that this was not the only case. It is ironic that some of the insistence on lamentation arose because of Marot's penchant for the Epistre Amoureuse based on the Heroides. The more detailed knowledge that such people as Souchay, Fraguier, and the other writers of the

¹ Jacques Peletier du Mans, L'Art Poétique, 1555, ed. A. Boulanger, Publications de la faculté des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 53, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1930, pp.182-183.

² J.-B. Michault, Réflexions critiques sur l'Elegie, Dijon, Auge, 1734, pp.2-3.

eighteenth century possessed of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid accounts for the widening and deepening of the study, but it does not produce vitally different interpretations.

The speculations of the Renaissance and the eighteenth century then form the background to the Elégies of André Chénier. His work is subject to these analyses, erroneous though modern scholarship may find them. Similarly his poetry derives from the opinions held in his own day about what was proper to Elegy and this provided standards by which the Latin authors were judged.

The function of Elegy as a lament had originally been to touch the sensibility of the hearer, to move him by the pure, artless expression of grief, to provide a genre that did not swell to the heroic heights of Tragedy but rather remained on the more human plane of affliction, to express sentiment mingled with delicacy, tenderness, and pathos. It was these key qualities that Elegy retained so preciously when it also portrayed the joys and suffering of lovers. For the eighteenth century the emotions portrayed were not to be those of intense pain, but rather of tender, melancholy sorrow and gentle pleasure. In expression, a simple ease was to suffuse throughout the poetry, a simplicity, that like the emotions, banished all artifice, all affectation and ostentation, all brilliance and witty conceits.¹ The rôle of art that, of necessity in French Classical doctrine, must act to reinforce the pure expression of sentiment, was to remain hidden and unseen, 'l'art caché'; it must not be the geometrical art of exactitude, but rather the paradoxical art that could by skill create a semblance of the disorder of grief and pleasure, and thus fulfil Boileau's definition: 'un beau desordre est un effet de l'art'.² As Abbé Souchay insists:

¹ See Abbé Souchay, 'Discours sur l'Elégie', Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. . . Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1733, Vol. VII, pp.343-351.

² Boileau, 'L'Art Poétique', chant II, l.72, in Oeuvres complètes de

Ce n'est pas que l'art soit nécessaire à l'Élégie pour arranger ses idées, ni qu'elle demande un discours bien suivi: son caractère n'admet point la méthode géométrique, & la scrupuleuse exactitude représente mal la situation des personnes que la tristesse abat, ou que la joye transporte; car voilà proprement les passions que peint l'Élégie: mais l'art luy devient nécessaire pour mettre dans ses pensées un certain désordre si conforme à la nature, & que les grands maistres seuls ont si bien connu.¹

The sine qua non of Elegy was therefore that the poet should be naturel. Time after time this concept is repeated. It is perhaps again expounded best by Souchay: 'Il semble que si on estoit dans la situation que le poëte représente, on auroit les mêmes pensées que luy'.² To be naturel in the elegiac context is to mirror human nature itself, without adulteration or artefact, to portray the universal, rather than the individual, reactions to the situation in which one is placed. This is, of course, the incarnation of the central tenet of seventeenth and eighteenth century French aesthetics,³ whether prescribed by Boileau or by the Abbé Batteux: the poet must imitate la belle nature, his description must be vrai or, at least, vraisemblable. 'La nature, c'est-à-dire, tout ce qui est, ou que nous concevons aisément comme possible, voilà le prototype ou le modèle des Arts'.⁴

This concept is of extreme importance in the theorists' evaluation of the Roman elegists: it is the yardstick by which each poet is measured, appreciated, or criticized. Abbé Fraguier sums up what he and other eighteenth century writers were searching for, as he writes:

2 [contd.]

Boileau, introduction par A. Adam, textes établis et annotés par E. Escal, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Bruges, Gallimard, 1966, p.164.

¹ Abbé Souchay, *ibid.*, p.344.

² *Ibid.*, p.345.

³ See chapter V, p. 229 below.

⁴ Abbé Batteux, Cours de Belles-Lettres ou Principes de la littérature, nouvelle édition, 4 vols., Paris, Desaint, Saillant et Durand, 1753, Vol. I, p.12.

Il faut d'abord observer, que la grande douleur tragique ne convient pas à cette espèce de Poèmes. . . . La douleur qu'on peint dans l'Elégie, est & plus douce & plus tendre, c'est l'expression d'une mélancolie passionnée, & qui a sa source dans une autre espèce de sensibilité; de-là il est aisé de conclure que les termes en doivent estre simples. C'est presque toujours l'amour qui parle & qui supplie. . . .de même l'Elégie doit user d'une sorte d'expression, qui n'ait rien que de très naturel et de très simple.¹

B. Evaluation of individual Latin elegists

These then were the criteria applied by the eighteenth century in evaluating the Latin elegists, Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid. Despite the confident belief of poets in the immortality of their verses, no poet can be exempt from exaltation or condemnation by the fluctuations in literary tastes and fashions. Tibullus, who has received but scant recognition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,² had praises showered upon him in the eighteenth. Such praises came easily, for Tibullus was the incarnation of the theories of Elegy propagated by the theorists. All the qualities Abbé Fraguier stressed were brought together in the verses of this one man. The Abbé Souchay spoke for the majority in his proclamation: 'De tous les poëtes Latins qui s'appliquèrent à l'Elégie, Tibulle est peut-estre le seul qui en ait conçu le vrai caractère, ou du moins qui l'ait parfaitement exprimé'.³

The key to understanding the century's devotion to Tibullus lies in the epithet most often applied to his work, that is naturel. This is the characteristic applauded by Mancini-Nivernais, 'Cette vérité

¹ Abbé Fraguier, 'Mémoire sur l'Elégie Grecque et Latine', 1720, Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 1718-1725, Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1729, Vol. VI, p.280.

² See the survey of Tibullus' fortunes given by J.P. Elder, 'Tibullus: tersus atque elegans', in Critical Essays on Roman Literature - Elegy and Lyric, ed. J.P. Sullivan, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962, pp.65-105.

³ Abbé Souchay, 'Second discours sur les poëtes élégiaques', Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. . . Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1733, Vol. VII, p.386.

de sentiment répand dans ses ouvrages un naturel qui le rend préférable à ses deux rivaux'.¹ A similar sentiment is published by Jaucourt, again copying Souchay, in the Encyclopédie:

La nature seule de la passion est ce qu'il s'est proposé d'imiter, & qu'il a imité en en peignant les mouvemens & les effets, par les images les plus vives & les plus naturelles. Il désire, il craint; il blâme, il approuve; il loue, il condamne; il déteste, il aime; il s'irrite, il s'appaise; il passe en un moment des prieres aux menaces, des menaces aux supplications. . . . Dans Tibulle tout respire la vérité.²

Le Brun, in his dissertation devoted to Tibullus alone, is even more specific in his description of Tibullus' imitation of human nature. For him, Tibullus' portrayal of human passions goes beyond the vraisemblable; it is drawn from his own experience: 'Son coeur est la source de ses vers. C'est là qu'il puise ces images si naïves,³ qui chatouillent l'âme et demandent des pleurs'.⁴ If, as seems highly probable, André Chénier had read his friend's dissertation, this phrase must surely have impressed him. It was the tender delicacy of Tibullan sentiment that was so appreciated in an eighteenth century imbued with Rousseau's and Prévost's sensibilité: 'Tibulle a moins de feu que Properce; mais il est plus tendre, plus délicat: c'est le poète du sentiment'.⁵

For the critics this was mirrored by a simplicity and purity of expression and diction, a style lacking in excessive adornment and

¹ Mancini-Nivernais, 'Dissertation sur l'Élegie', 1743, in Oeuvres de Mancini-Nivernois, 4 vols., Paris, Didot Jeune, 1796, Vol. III, part II, p.281.

² Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, des métiers... 17 vols., Paris, Panckoucke, 1751-1765, Vol. V, 'Élegie', by M. le Chevalier de Jaucourt, 1755, p.488.

³ For the importance of la naïveté in Chénier's literary doctrine, see chapter V, pp.239-243 below.

⁴ P.D. Le Brun, 'Discours sur Tibulle', 1763, in Oeuvres de Ponce Denis (Ecouchard) Le Brun. . . mises en ordre et publiées par P.L. Ginguéné. . . 4 vols., Paris, Crapelet, 1811, Vol. IV, p.392.

⁵ J.F. La Harpe, Lycée ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne, Paris, Crapelet, 1816, Vol. I, p.610.

affectation, which would destroy all semblance of sincerity and credibility. The eulogies of Tibullus' cultivated, restrained manner of writing reflected the views of the Romans themselves. Ovid had chosen for Tibullus the epithet 'cultus',¹ meaning a refined elegance achieved by labor, and Quintilian, whose literary judgements have influenced those of critics throughout the centuries' commented, 'Elegia quoque Graecos provocamus, cuius mihi tersus atque elegans maxime videtur auctor Tibullus'.² Evidently it was the elegant refinement of Tibullus that the Romans appreciated, the 'deductum. . . carmen',³ which was prescribed by Callimachus and which became the literary credo of the Augustan poets. Transposed and extended into the terms of Le Brun this becomes: 'une simplicité noble, élégante, sublime; un choix, une volupté d'expressions tendres, pures, harmonieuses, un sentiment délicat, un goût exquis'.⁴ For the Abbé Souchay this 'élégance exquise' and 'composition irréprochable',⁵ was the result of supreme, and yet hidden, artistic skill in creating 'le beau désordre' of passions:

Rien de médité, rien de concerté: nul art, nulle
estude en apparence. Mais le désordre qui regne dans
ces mêmes Elégies n'est-il pas un tour secret qui en lie
le dessein, & qui leur donne toute la justesse & toute
la régularité dont elles estoient susceptibles ?⁶

The twentieth century reader of these exuberant eulogies of the

¹ 'Culte Tibulle', Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el. xv, l.28.

² Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, i, 93.

³ Vergil, Eclogues, poem VI, l.5.

⁴ Le Brun, ibid., p.394. See also C.H. Millevoye, 'Sur l'Elégie', in Oeuvres complètes de Millevoye, 2 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1822, Vol. I, p.11.

⁵ J.F. La Harpe, ibid., p.610.

⁶ Abbé Souchay, ibid., p.386.

critics' favourite poet cannot fail to feel the sad irony of the situation, for instance in J-B. Milliet's evaluation of Tibullus. He follows his general analysis of the poet, by giving prose translations of 'les plus beaux morceaux', pouring out excited acclamations after each translation: 'Que de tendresse ! Que de sensibilité ! Que d'amour dans son Elégie à Cérinthe !'.¹ The irony lies in the fact that out of the seven passages he chooses, only one was written by Tibullus. The elegies found in Books III and IV of the eighteenth century editions of Tibullus, were not in fact the work of this poet, and they are now united in one book, Book III, and recognized under the title Corpus Tibullianum.²

It cannot be doubted, however, that Tibullus, whether a composite figure or not, was the most admired member of the elegiac trio. It is strange, therefore, to find H. Potez claiming that the revival of interest in Tibullus came only at the end of the century, and that Mancini-Nivernais' preference for Tibullus ran contrary to contemporary views. Of all the critics studied in this connection, we can only note Le Blanc as the one who does not select Tibullus as the most outstanding elegiac poet, and Le Blanc, as we have shown, had his own specific reason for preferring Ovid. Nevertheless, it is true that there was an intensification of interest in Tibullus in the second half of the century, and this, as we shall see, is proved by the numerous translations of his work that appeared especially in the decade 1770-1780.

When we turn to the critics' assessment of Propertius, we find that this poet never quite achieved the acclaim bestowed on Tibullus. Quintilian had somehow thrown a cloud over any enthusiasm for his work by remarking,

¹ J.B. Milliet, Etrennes du Parnasse. Notice des Poètes Latins, contenant la vie de chaque Poète, les jugements sur ses Ouvrages, avec un choix des plus beaux morceaux, traduits ou imités en vers François, par M. Milliet, 2 vols., Paris, Fetil, 1773, p.167.

² See chapter VIII, p.324 below.

after praising Tibullus, 'Sunt qui Propertium malint'.¹ The slight tone of grudging approval that can be detected, rightly or wrongly, has often led to Propertius running second in the elegiac stakes. Praise with reservation is the pattern for Propertius.

As in the case of Tibullus, the intensification of interest in Propertius in the latter part of the century brought greater depth to the studies, but no change in the evaluation. The critics are all eager to acknowledge in Propertius a fiery, tormented poet, who portrayed the contrasts of love and the ebb and flow of irrational passion. They welcome the agitation, movement, and energy displayed in his verses. As Millevoye explained:

L'amour de Tibulle fut plutôt un sentiment doux qu'une passion violente. Properce était plus fécond; son ame était pourtant plus agitée; il passait continuellement d'un excès à l'autre, tour à tour divinisait et couvrait d'ignominie l'objet de ses feux, tantôt l'accablait de reproches, tantôt menaçait de le punir, et toujours finissait par lui demander pardon. Ces bizarreries, ces inégalités peignent l'amour tel qu'il est, et se prêtent surtout aux mouvements animés de la poésie. C'est l'unique avantage qui balance l'infériorité générale de Properce à l'égard de Tibulle.²

The critics nevertheless agree upon the reservations which temper their enthusiasm. Above all, they disliked Propertius' erudition, and his frequent introduction of mythological exempla.³ They saw these

¹ Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, i, 93.

² C.H. Millevoye, *ibid.*, pp.12-13. See also J-B. Milliet, *ibid.*, p.184. J.F. La Harpe, *ibid.*, p.609.

³ For the modern view of this topic see A.W. Allen. He demonstrates that 'the Classical world was profoundly sceptical of the individual phenomenon: only by reference to its accepted category did the individual thing acquire reliability and truth. Myth served to raise experience from an individual to a universal level'. His demonstration of mythological exempla as an essential, rather than a gratuitous part of Propertian Elegy in Lib. I, el. iii, is particularly interesting. (A.W. Allen, 'Sunt qui Propertium malint', in Critical Essays on Roman Literature - Elegy and Lyric, ed. J.P. Sullivan, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962, pp.107-148, pp.130-134). See also R.O.A.M. Lyne, 'Propertius and Cynthia: Elegy I, 3', Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, 196, 1970, pp.60-78.

comparisons as gratuitous, decorative ornamentation, that necessitated the use of tedious commentaries to aid comprehension. More importantly they believed that such displays of erudition destroyed simplicity, and vraisemblance; Propertian passion suddenly sounded hollow. Le Brun commented:

Il soupire savamment; sa passion est érudite et sa tendresse porte un air de doctrine; enfin il n'invite point aux larmes.¹

Millevoye describes the exempla as a:

Fastidieux étalage d'érudition mythologique. . .
Toujours des comparaisons avec les amours de l'antiquité, comme si des amants pouvaient se comparer à d'autres qu'à eux-mêmes !²

It seems that the beauty and significance of the exempla were lost on the theorists.

Ovid, the final member of our elegiac group, was appreciated less than Tibullus or Propertius. Although the critics recognized the fertile nature of his imagination, his verbal dexterity, his brilliance, the lightness and grace of his lines, still their praise was scant and their criticisms numerous. To the eighteenth century writer Ovid was a poet constantly in pursuit of effect, and for these critics that spelt out incompatibility with la vérité and the true portrayal of human feelings. They believed that in his attempt to shine and be witty, he lacked self-discipline, delighted in artificial conceits, and abounded

¹P.D. Le Brun, 'Discours sur Tibulle', 1763, in Oeuvres de Ponce Denis (Ecouchard) Le Brun. . . mises en ordre et publiées par P.L. Ginguené. . . 4 vols., Paris, Crapelet, 1811, Vol. IV, p.395.

²C.H. Millevoye, *ibid.*, p.13.

in luxuriant rhetorical devices.¹ The various criticisms are expressed by Abbé Souchay:

Ovide veut trop paroistre spirituel; au lieu de suivre la nature, il court après des ornements frivoles; il répand des fleurs au lieu de montrer des sentiments. . . . Il ne sçait point maîtriser son imagination, lorsqu'une fois elle est échauffée, ni modérer la demangeaison qu'il a de faire briller de l'esprit.²

This verbal dexterity is largely responsible for his weakness: the single thought expressed from every possible angle, the antitheses, fostering artificiality and leaving nothing to the reader's imagination. The Abbé concludes that 'Cette abondance excessive est comme le fonds de son caractère; . . . Il aime ce qui est superflu; il s'en tient rarement au nécessaire'.³

There may be some truth in this stylistic analysis, but the critics certainly failed to recognize that, when Ovid was writing some of his poetry, he had his tongue in his cheek. He constantly undercut a given situation, and deliberately leapt from the sublime to the ridiculous. The analysis of Tristia, Lib. I, elegy ii, in the Encyclopédie, is typical of the failure to appreciate the nature of Ovid's humour:

Il s'égayé même lorsqu'il croit ne tracer que la peinture des sujets les plus sérieux. En vain il se représente exposé à périr par la tempête, dans le vaisseau qui le porte au lieu destiné pour son exil; il compte les flots qui se succèdent impétueusement les uns aux autres, & il a le sens froid de nommer le dixième pour le plus grand. . . . je ne partage point ses dangers, parce que j'en apperçois toute la fiction. Quand il tenoit ce discours, il étoit déjà parmi les Sarmates, ou du moins dans le port.⁴

¹ Their interpretation parallels that of Quintilian who characterized Ovid as 'Nimium amator ingenii sui', (Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, i, 88), or Seneca the Elder 'Nam et Ovidius nescit quod bene cessit relinquere', (Controversiae, IX, v, 17).

² Abbé Souchay, 'Second discours sur les poètes élégiaques', Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et de Belles Lettres. . . Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1733, Vol. VII, pp.389-390.

³ Ibid., p.391.

⁴ Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers. . . 17 vols., Paris, Panckoucke, 1751-1765, Vol. V, 'Élégie', by M. le Chevalier de Jaucourt, 1755, p.489.

Thus in the cases of both Propertius and Ovid the critics' devotion to the tenet of vraisemblance distorted evaluation, but what is important is that the Roman authors were being analyzed. The investigations were powerfully reinforced in the later decades of the eighteenth century by a sudden upsurge of translations, imitations, and finally poetry modelled on the Roman elegists.

C. Translators and imitators

The numerous translations in the later half of the century are symptomatic of the depth of interest in the individual Ancient poets. Although in the works of the theorists we have noted a constant study of Elegy throughout the century, nevertheless there had been a definite lack of translations of the poets in the early part of the century. We need only turn to Abbé Goujet's review of translations¹ to recognize the scarcity and poor quality of those dealing with the elegiac trio. In the case of Tibullus, for example, he can only mention the translations of Abbé Marolles (1653), M. de la Chapelle (1712), and Gillet de Moyvre (1743), and he comments: 'nous n'avons d'ailleurs aucune bonne traduction'.² In contrast, when we turn to the later decades of the eighteenth century, we find that in the space of twelve years, 1771-1783, there were no less

¹ Abbé Goujet, Bibliothèque française ou Histoire de la littérature française. Dans laquelle on montre l'utilité que l'on peut retirer des Livres publiés en François depuis l'origine de l'Imprimerie, pour la connoissance des Belles Lettres, de l'Histoire, des Sciences, et des Arts, second edition, 18 vols., Paris, Mariette & Guerin, 1741-1756, Vol. V, pp.446-455, Vol. VI, pp.104-125.

² Ibid., Vol. VI, p.109.

than five published translations of Tibullus, three in prose and two in verse.¹ The other Roman elegists could not quite achieve this success. We note two translations of Propertius,² and three of Ovid's Ars Amatoria,³ but none of the Amores.

We have already associated André Chénier with the works of the critics through his friendship with Le Brun.⁴ A further link was with P.A. Guys, one of the translators of Tibullus. A Hellenist, he was a staunch friend of the Chénier family.⁵ He had known them in Constantinople; his second edition of the Voyage littéraire de la Grèce (1776), contained two letters on Greece by Mme E. Chénier; he was a frequent visitor at her salon during the period he was preparing his translation. Even if André Chénier never read this translation, he must at least have been aware

¹ a) Masson de Pézay, Traduction en prose de Catulle, Tibulle et Gallus par l'Auteur des Soirées Helvétiques, 2 vols., Amsterdam and Paris, Delalain, 1771.

b) P. de Longchamps, Élégies de Tibulle, traduites par M. de Longchamps, Amsterdam and Paris, Morin, 1776. (Reviewed Mercur de France, April 1777, pp.94-103).

c) Tardieu de Saint-Marcel, 'Essai de traduction en vers français, de quelques élégies de Tibulle', in Fables nouvelles dédiées à Monseigneur Comte d'Artois par M. de Saint-Marcel, London and Paris, Monory, 1778.

d) P.A. Guys, Essai sur les élégies de Tibulle auquel on a joint quelques poésies légères par M.G., La Haye et Paris, la Vve Duchesne, 1779. (Reviewed Mercur de France, March 1780, pp.10-21).

e) C.E.J.P. Marquis de Pastoret, Élégies de Tibulle. Traduction nouvelle, Paris, Jombert Jeune, 1783. (Reviewed Journal littéraire de Nancy, 12, 1783, pp.109-119. Mercur de France, Feb. 1784, pp.56-72).

² a) P. de Longchamps, Élégies de Propertius, traduites par M. de Longchamps, Amsterdam and Paris, Le Jay, 1772.

b) Plaisant de la Houssaye. . . Traduction nouvelle des élégies de Sextus-Aurelius Propertius, Chevalier romain, Amsterdam and Paris, Jombert Jeune, 1784.

³ a) J. de Cuers, Chevalier de Cogolin, L'Art d'aimer et le Remède d'Amour, traduction d'Ovide, Amsterdam, 1751.

b) Masson de Saint-Amand, L'Art d'aimer, traduit en français par Masson de Saint-Amand, Paris, Cazin, 1783.

c) M. Granié, L'Art d'aimer d'Ovide, London and Paris, 1785.

⁴ See chapter II, pp. 85-88 above.

⁵ See chapter II, p. 59 above.

of Guys' devotion to Tibullus. In addition, right up to the end of his life, Chénier moved in circles where there was interest in Tibullus, for it was at the house of the Marquis de Pastoret that in 1794 he was arrested by Guénot on behalf of the Comité de Sûreté Générale.

Chénier's association with P.A. Guys must have brought him into contact with the current interpretations of the Roman elegists, for, in his translation of Tibullus, Guys repeated the standard evaluation.¹ Had he read the introduction, Chénier would also have known of the moral judgements of the translators concerning the Latin elegists. Like all the other translators Guys felt justified, on moral grounds, in altering and omitting passages and generally bowdlerizing the text.

Je ne dirai pas aux jeunes gens: ne lisez point Tibulle;
mais lisez-le avec moi, et tel que je dois vous le
présenter. Je n'ai choisi que ce qui peut être offert aux
regards les plus chastes; j'ai supprimé, ou adouci, ce que
je ne pouvois pas me permettre de traduire ou d'imiter.²

He is obviously highly selective, and prefers to omit the Marathus and Cerinthus poems. 'Il a aimé Marathus et Cérinthe de cet amour Grec ou Romain, qui est la tache ineffaçable de l'ancien temps'.³

Whereas the opinions of P.A. Guys form the standard assessment of Tibullus, the ideas of Longchamps, as translator of Tibullus are more unusual. Here is a rare dissonant voice. The tones of dissent had been struck four years previously in his translation of Propertius. Although recognizing that his views run contrary to current opinion, he nevertheless announces his distinct preference for Propertius and heavily criticizes Tibullus with the charge of monotony:

¹ 'Properce est plus savant que tendre; Tibulle n'est que ce qu'il doit être, livré à la douleur, ou au sentiment dont il est pénétré'.
(P.A. Guys, *ibid.*, pp.9-15).

² *Ibid.*, p.7.

³ *Ibid.*, p.8.

Il est cependant vrai que Tibulle, ce Poëte si touchant, si pur, si voluptueux, est souvent foible, minutieux, trop uniforme, que ses tournures sont presque toujours les mêmes, que la tendresse du sentiment qui le caractérise dégénere quelquefois en apathie, que sa langueur ressemble plus à l'assoupissement du sommeil, qu'à l'abattement de la tristesse.¹

There follows a justification of Propertius: that contemporary dislike for his mythological exempla stems from ignorance, and that he possesses in fact that supreme poetic quality of 'le beau simple'.

Longchamps is remarkable, not only for his reversal of current opinions concerning Tibullus and Propertius, but also because he casts doubts on the authenticity of 'Tibullus', Lib. IV. He shows here considerable discernment that marks him off from his contemporaries, as he suggests that Book IV was written by four different authors.² He finds stylistic reasons for his hypothesis and discussing Lib. IV, elegy ii, he comments:

Quoi qu'il en soit, il regne dans ces Elégies, un mélange de la maniere de Tibulle & de celle d'Ovide, qui suppose un Auteur également nourri de ces deux Poëtes, mais très-différent de l'un & de l'autre.³

It seems strange that his contemporaries did not possess this insight. We note, however, that he still gives the authorship of the 'Panegyricus Messallae' to Tibullus, and does not question the authenticity of Book III.

The popularity of the Latin elegists that is manifest in the numerous

¹ P. de Longchamps, Elégies de Propertius . . . Amsterdam and Paris, Le Jay, 1772, pp.viii-ix.

² He suggests Lib. IV, el. i was probably written by Tibullus, but that Lib. IV, el. ii-vii, IV, el. viii-xii, and IV el. xiii come from three anonymous authors. He does, however, reject Broukhusius' suggestion that Lib. IV, el. ii-vii were written by Sulpicia, wife of Calenus, under the reign of Domitian, though his reasons are somewhat dubious: 'Il n'est pas à supposer qu'une Femme même eût mis ce ton de passion & d'enthousiasme dans le tableau de ses propres charmes'. (P. de Longchamps, Elégies de Tibulle . . . Amsterdam and Paris, Morin, 1776, pp.304, 297).

³ Ibid., p.297.

translations is further reflected in imitations. Chénier had only to read the popular literary journals of his own day to see the full extent of this vogue. The Almanach des Muses, for example, in the years 1778-1787, published no less than ten imitations by various dilettante poets.¹

These imitations have little poetic merit; they are merely free translations. In the following example, whose author is not named, the simplicity of the Latin, 'Tibullus', Lib. III, elegy ii, ll.1-8, is lost in tones of bombastic melodrama. The compact nature of the original:

Qui primus caram iuveni carumque puellae
 eripuit iuvenem, ferreus ille fuit.
 durus et ille fuit, qui tantum ferre dolorem,
 vivere et erepta coniuge qui potuit.
 non ego firmus in hoc, non haec patientia nostro
 ingenio: frangit fortia corda dolor.
 nec mihi vera loqui pudor est vitaeque fateri,
 tot mala perpessae, taedia nata meae,

is transformed by unnecessary verbiage to:

Oui, tu fus un barbare, oui, ton coeur fut d'acier;
 toi, qui dans ta fureur, arrachas, le premier,
 la maîtresse à l'amant, l'amant à la maîtresse.
 Mais celui, qui, perdant l'objet de sa tendresse,
 peut se résoudre à vivre, à vivre loin de lui,
 qu'il aime foiblement, il est cruel aussi !
 Moi, nuit & jour, hélas ! j'appellois mon amante;
 dans mes bras abusés, je la pressois absente:
 je la cherchois partout ! la douleur, dans mes yeux,
 par des pleurs supplians, a lassé tous les Dieux;
 & je n'en rougis point; j'en conviens, je confesse
 l'excès de mon amour, l'excès de ma foiblesse.
 Pourquoi donc en rougir ? tous les jours, la douleur
 d'un trait moins irrité, fait saigner un grand coeur.²

Although the poetic value of these imitations is slight, the popularity of such pursuits nevertheless underlines the amount of enthusiasm shown at every level for the Roman elegists.

Finally, there was a large group of poets who were composing elegies

¹ M. Rochon de Chabannes, M. Rigoley de Juvigny, M. de Saint-Auge, M. de Verninac de Saint-Maur.

² Almanach des Muses, 1778, p.61.

in French using the Latin authors as models but whose work was pervaded by eighteenth century sensibility. The nature of their poetic achievement will be discussed with reference to André Chénier in chapters VIII and IX. Suffice it to underline here that the last decades of the century delighted in this genre. With Parny, Bertin, and Le Brun, to name but the most popular poets, the Elegy flourished. These poets consciously worked with reference to the elegiac tradition; Fabre notes the 'feinte modestie' with which Le Brun dubs himself 'Tibullinus'.¹ Their elegies do show a greater awareness than has been noted in the theorists of the variety of themes in Latin Love Elegy. Love is predominant, but motifs of friendship and pastoral scenes find their place. Although his poetic instinct enabled Chénier to surpass his contemporaries, he is still very much a part of this movement. When one considers how far he mirrors his fellow elegists, it is strange to see the contempt in which he held them all except Le Brun.² Perhaps Chénier felt that he alone understood the essence of Roman Elegy, that he alone could successfully transpose it into eighteenth century French poetry, and so fulfil his poetic ambitions.

D. The comments of André Chénier

André Chénier's Elégies are the culmination of all such dedication shown to Ancient Elegy in the eighteenth century. In successfully bringing to life the varied elegiac topoi Chénier demonstrates that he understood and appreciated the essential nature of Latin Elegy more clearly than the critics, translators, imitators, and poets of his own day. Even though, as we shall suggest in chapters VIII and IX, Chénier's creative Elégies represent the true spirit of the Latin poets, nevertheless his value judgements on Ancient Elegy and the elegists themselves reiterate

¹J. Fabre, Chénier, *Connaissance des Lettres*, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.239.

²See p.207 below.

the traditional eighteenth century views and criticism just described.

Chénier's comments on this emerge in scattered sections of his poetry, his prose works, and his notes. His definition of Elegy is obviously dependent upon Boileau's analysis, a song of mourning which had gradually encompassed the joys and sorrows of love:

Mais la tendre Elégie et sa grâce touchante
M'ont séduit: l'Elégie à la voix gémissante,
Au ris mêlé de pleurs, aux longs cheveux épars;
Belle, levant au ciel ses humides regards.¹

This stereotyped approach to the purpose of Elegy, 'Célébrer mon bonheur ou soupirer ma peine',² is presented with more verve in another elegy.

The same conventional elements are there but the elegiac Muses in this case owe much to the Horatian picture of the Muses and Graces³ leading the dances associated with the advent of spring, and reflect the feelings of Botticelli's Primavera:

Le rire sur la bouche et les pleurs dans les yeux,
Partout autour de moi mes jeunes Elégies
Promenaient les éclats de leurs folles orgies;
Et, les cheveux épars, se tenant par la main,
De leur danse élégante égayaient mon chemin.⁴

In contrast to this poetic repetition of the established interpretation, Chénier's notes indicate that he had some interest in the historical

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, ll.15-18, p.128.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, ll.15-18, p.139.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 2, l.26, p.130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 2, l.26, p.136.
(See also Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, l.37, p.128.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, l.37, p.139).

³Horace, Odes, Lib. I, 4; IV, 7.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iv, ll.26-30, pp.34-35.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXI, ll.26-30, p.73.

perspective of Elegy. The loose note in Chénier's text of Propertius¹ is relevant here:

Antimaque avait aimé Lydé; il avait fait pour elle des poésies non Elegiaques à ce que je crois (v. Athénée l.vi)² et il en avait intitulé le recueil Lydé suivant l'usage des poètes anciens.

Chénier is referring to Antimachus of Colophon, a Hellenistic elegist circa 400 B.C. According to Hermesianax and Plutarch, Antimachus composed an opus entitled the Lydé, after his wife, as consolation for her death, and in this he recalled the amorous losses of heroes. Chénier possessed a text including the extant fragments of the heroic laments of the Lydé.³ It is interesting that, although these verses were written in elegiac metre, Chénier labels them 'non Elegiaques'. He is perhaps here reflecting and extending the division established in the eighteenth century between Elegy and vers élégiaques, and judging that narrative, mythological Elegy was not true Elegy. The final comment in the note about ancient practice reveals Chénier's historical insight, for the Archaic Greek elegist Mimnermus⁴ had written an elegiac work named after his mistress Nanno, and the Hellenistic poet Hermesianax, mentioned later by Chénier in the same note, named his collection after his mistress Leontion.

The elegy 'Mânes de Callimaque, ombre de Philétas',⁵ indicates that Chénier, following Propertius,⁶ also recognized the Hellenistic poets

¹ B.M.C. Ms/Ma 24 (previously 8813).

² Athenaei Deipnosophistarum libri XV. See appendix II, p. 452.

³ Antimachi Colophonii Reliquiae. See appendix II, p. 450.

⁴ Mentioned by Chénier in the 'Essai sur les causes', Walter, p. 649.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, pp. 127-130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, pp. 138-140.

⁶ Propertius, Lib. III, el. i.

Callimachus and Philetas, (b. circa 320 B.C.), as patrons of the Love Elegy. In his philological notes, Chénier comments further on Callimachus:

Il avait écrit en vers dans toute sorte de mètres, et en prose sur tous les sujets. Tous les lecteurs qui font cas d'une élocution élégante et pure et de la grâce et du goût dans la composition, doivent regretter la perte de ses Elégies, qui ont principalement servi de modèle à Propertius, poète plus grec que latin. J'ai vu, il y a longtemps, que plusieurs de ses épigrammes sont des fragments de ses Elégies. L'illustre Valckenaer croyait en avoir découvert un grand nombre.¹

The speculation that some of Callimachus' epigrams formed part of his lost subjective love elegies is tantalizing in the light of recent scholarship.² The note also confirms Chénier's awareness of the debt of Latin elegists to Greek predecessors.

Chénier's appreciation of Callimachus' elegant and refined style is carried forward into his critical judgements of the Latin elegists:

Les élégiaques anciens, simples, naturels, passionnés, d'une nudité décente. . . comparés à ces fades et énigmatiques subtilités appelées galanteries qui rendent la plupart de nos écrivains érotiques si fastidieux pour tous les lecteurs qui joignent à un esprit droit et juste une sensibilité vraie et une âme ouverte à tout ce que les passions ont de doux ou d'orageux.³

It is evident that Chénier's views on the character of Elegy do not differ from those of eighteenth century theoreticians. For Chénier too, Elegy had to touch the reader's sensibility by the simple, artless portrayal of love. The key epithet is once again naturel. It is just this delicate, tender expression of universal feelings that Chénier found lacking in his contemporary exponents of Elegy.

¹Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', pp.762-763.

²See F. Cairns, Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp.214-230. See appendix III below.

³Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.661.

For Chénier the true elegiac spirit was to be discovered in the poetry of Tibullus, in Ovid's elegies for Corinna, and in Propertius' poems for Cynthia. In an elegy to Le Brun, Chénier again emphasizes the contrast between their poetic instincts and those of modern elegists, with the exception of Le Brun:

Oh ! je ne quitte plus ces bosquets enchanteurs
 Où rêva mon Tibulle aux soupirs séducteurs;
 Où le feuillage encor dit Corinne charmante;
 Où Cynthia est écrite en l'écorce odorante;
 Où les sentiers français ne me conduisaient pas;
 Où mes pas de Le Brun ont rencontré les pas.¹

Although it is clear that Chénier holds all three elegists in high esteem, nevertheless a hierarchy of preference can be established from his comments. The poet upon whom Chénier confers the greatest praise and affection is Tibullus, whom he refers to as 'mon Tibulle'!² He suggests that there is a special bond of sympathy between this Latin elegist and himself:

. . . ma fière Camille est la soeur de Délie.³

In Tibullus Chénier found the essential qualities of Elegy: tenderness, pathos, and the expression of grief:

Quand à la porte ingrate exhalant ses douleurs
 Tibulle lui prodigue et l'injure et les pleurs,
 La grâce, les talents, ni l'amour le plus tendre,
 D'un douloureux affront ne peuvent le défendre.⁴

The lengthiest eulogy of Tibullus comes in 'La République des lettres'. In this he judges Tibullus above all from a moralist's point of view. Having

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, ll.53-58, p.129.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, ll.53-58, p.140.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, l.4, p.56.
 Omitted by Walter.

³ As note 1 above, l.24, Dimoff, p.128, Walter, p.139.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, vi, 8, ll.1-4, p.120.
 Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', XXV, ll.1-4, p.553.

commented on Vergil and Horace, Chénier continues:

Mais attachés aux grands par un lien crédule,
 Combien tous deux pourtant sont loin de mon Tibulle !
 Il ignore l'encens: l'amour et l'amitié
 De son coeur, de ses vers occupent la moitié.
 Messala, Némésis, et Néère, et Délie
 Sont les rois, sont les Dieux qui gouvernent sa vie.
 Riche, il jouit sans faste et non pour éblouir;
 De la pauvreté même il sait encor jouir.
 Sans regretter cet or, ni ces vastes richesses,
 Ni de ces longs arpents les fécondes largesses,
 Auprès de son foyer la molle oisiveté
 Endort dans les plaisirs sa douce pauvreté.
 Vrai sage, non, jamais tu n'as pu te résoudre
 D'aller au Capitole et d'adorer la foudre.
 Les Césars ni les Dieux n'ont de foudre pour toi.¹

In 'La République des lettres' Chénier proclaims the absolute necessity for poets to have freedom and integrity if literature is to flourish. He attacks the nefarious influence of literary patrons and the sycophantic attitudes of artists towards their protectors. The powerful and didactic tone throughout the poem has influenced Chénier's eulogy of Tibullus. He is selected as the exception to illustrate the value of independence. According to Chénier, Tibullus had the quality of the true philosopher, aequus animus. He lived in relaxed self-sufficiency, free from the usual destructive struggles for power and wealth, and had found the correct balance between action and leisure, devoted to reading, reflection, and friendship. Chénier continues his portrait of Tibullus and his idyllic love:

Sur un lit amoureux, doux témoin de ta foi,
 Tu te ris de l'orage et des vents en furie,
 Et presses sur ton sein le sein de ton amie:
 Seule de ta carrière elle embellit le cours;
 Son souvenir loin d'elle a soutenu tes jours;
 Elle-même fila de sa main fortunée
 Cette trame si belle et si tôt terminée;
 Elle sut, quand la mort te frappait de ses traits,
 Sous d'amoureuses fleurs déguiser tes cyprès;
 Ses baisers suspendaient ton âme chancelante,
 Et tu tenais sa main de ta main défaillante.²

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des lettres', I, 11, 11.65-79, p.229-230.
 Walter, 'La République des lettres', 10, 11.65-79, p.482.

²Ibid., 11.80-90.

Not only does Chénier indicate his approval of Tibullus' modus vivendi, but he also indirectly praises the content of the Latin poet's elegies, for these lines echo some of the motifs of his poetry.

Ovid is also subjected to the same type of moralizing, but in his case Chénier's conclusion is unfavourable. Although Chénier does occasionally praise 'ces vers divins d'Ovide',¹ nevertheless he could not tolerate what he saw as Ovid's suppliant and obsequious attitude to Augustus, after the poet's exile to the Black Sea.

Toi, que le Pinde admire, et que Sulmo vit naître,
Des leçons de Paphos et l'exemple et le maître,
Quand aux glaces du Pont il éteint ton flambeau,
Oses-tu sur l'autel élever ton bourreau ?
Tes Muses à genoux vont t'avouer coupable.
Elles vont, caressant sa main inexorable,
Trahir ton innocence et ta gloire et l'honneur.
Ces Scythes qui t'aimaient, qui plaignaient ton malheur,
A recevoir son joug c'est toi qui les prépares.
Ta lyre apprend les sons de leurs lyres barbares;
Et d'un vers étranger au Parnasse romain,
Consacre ta bassesse aux rives de l'Euxin.²

At other times the attack on Ovid's lack of integrity is mollified by Chénier's sense of pity for an author who has suffered isolation. It is Chénier's own appreciation of the value of friendship that gives rise to the following lines:

Ovide, ah ! qu'à mes yeux ton infortune est grande:
Non pour n'avoir pu faire aux tyrans irrités
Agréer de tes vers les lâches faussetés;
Je plains ton abandon, ta douleur solitaire.
Pas un coeur qui, du tien zélé dépositaire,
Vienne adoucir ta plaie, apaiser ton effroi,
Et consoler tes pleurs et pleurer avec toi!³

Tibullus receives enthusiastic praise for both his poetry and his

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, l.175, p.43.
Walter, 'Notes et variantes', p.872.

²Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des Lettres', I, 11, 11.93-104, p.230.
Walter, 'La République des Lettres', 10, 11.93-104, pp.482-483.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', I, 11.66-72, p.181.
Walter, 'Epîtres', III, 11.66-72, p.142.

life, Ovid's character is criticized, but what of Propertius ? It is most surprising that the third member of the trio is mentioned but twice, and both times in connection with Callimachus. The comment is identical: 'Properce, poète plus grec que latin !'¹

It would seem therefore that Chénier's preference lies with Tibullus, and that in this choice he follows exactly the views of the other eighteenth century theorists. We must wait until the final chapters to judge whether Chénier's theories and comments are put into practice, or whether his Elégies hold any surprises.

¹Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', p.763. 'Essai sur les causes', p.654.

V

LITERARY PRINCIPLES. PART ONE: POETIC IDEALS

André Chénier belongs to that great tradition of French poets, who were at the same time theorists, stretching from Ronsard and Du Bellay to Malherbe, Boileau, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Valéry. Like them he was very much aware of the two elements, theory and practice, involved in poetry. He was as a result not only concerned with the poem itself as a finished article, but was also fascinated by the aesthetic principles and patterns of thought which determined its production and influenced the mechanics of creativity. As E. Guitton has demonstrated,¹ the poets of the eighteenth century were particularly keen to elucidate the origins and nature of their art and to set forth a literary programme. The catalogue of French poetry established by Guitton for the period from 1700 to 1823,² underlines the constant output of Epîtres and Odes on such themes as enthousiasme, imagination, harmonie, and génie. Chénier was by no means exempt from the spirit of didacticism that pervaded his age and he was zealous both to pursue the creation of polished works of art and to clarify and explain them by self-justificatory analysis. This was the view he proclaimed in his triumphant assertion: 'Nul n'est juge des arts que l'artiste lui-même'.³

Such an approach led to the many judgements on Elegy that are to be

¹ E. Guitton, 'Un thème "philosophique": "l'invention" des poètes de Louis Racine à Népomucène Lemercier', Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, ed. T. Besterman, Vol. 88, Banbury, 1972, pp.677-709.

² Ibid., pp.701-709.

³ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des lettres', I, 3, 1.63, p.211. Walter, 'La République des lettres', 3, 1.62, p.472.

found scattered throughout his writings. As we have just seen, it is in these that Chénier revealed how deeply he shared the contemporary scholarly interest in the history of this poetic genre, and in the form and substance of the poems of the individual Latin elegists. His own considerable knowledge of Ancient Elegy and the Latin exponents was, nevertheless, subjected to a more demanding and pervasive literary influence, springing from principles and prejudices which were artistically satisfying, and above all artistically stimulating, to his own generation, and even more to his own particular poetic needs.¹ This was the cultural ideal, the very essence of Neo-classicism, which caused Chénier to view Antiquity from a well-defined angle of vision and explains his attitudes to the Latin elegists. Here he found the principles which guaranteed that his interpretation of the elegists, when linked to his own personal experience, would unleash a dynamic, generative force for his own specific genre of Elegy. Here was the mould into which he poured knowledge and experience and transformed them into a new creation: 'Jetez dans son moule les richesses étrangères que vous lui offrez, pour qu'elle leur donne sa forme et qu'elle leur imprime son cachet'.² This vital interpretative process forms a link between Chénier's concept of Latin Elegy and his own elegiac output. A clear literary credo emerges from his writings so that a discussion of his views can call not only upon evidence from his own Elégies, but can also be focussed upon the programmatic details that can be derived from his theoretical works, 'La République des lettres', the 'Epître sur ses

¹ 'Une véritable Poétique, où viennent aboutir tous les courants de l'esthétique littéraire du siècle'. (M. Jouglard, 'L'"Imitation Inventrice" ou les contradictions d'André Chénier', R.L.C., VIII, 1928, pp.640-653, p.642).

² Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.688. This imagery was applied by Chénier to stress the importance of language.

ouvrages', and especially the 'Essai sur les causes' and the celebrated poem 'L'Invention'. All these embody the ideals of Neo-classicism, which Chénier applied to maintain and support the current thoughts on Latin Elegy. Yet, once again, there is a paradox. Ironically Chénier's involvement in his own age produced his dissociation from it. His individualism fostered a more accurate analysis of his source material and provided, as it were, a spring-board for the writing of original elegies much closer to the spirit of Antiquity than those composed by any of his contemporaries. The familiar pattern of dependence and independence is reaffirmed.

It would be simple to gloss over the teasing problems of this subject and to foster the impression that Chénier set out, in his theoretical works, fully developed, precise statements of his literary aims. In order to achieve a just appraisal of his work, an analysis of his poetic beliefs must be accompanied by certain cautions and must stress the complexities of the investigation. It would be foolhardy to expect straightforward solutions from a poet whose life was so brief; his appreciation of his own poetic activity was inevitably progressing; his works were not polished for publication, and as a result are open to the charge of omissions and inconsistencies. We are restricted to what would be termed in the case of other poets 'an apprenticeship'. Nor are the problems made easier, in fact they are exacerbated, by the dispersal and loss of vital manuscripts so that Chénier's theoretical works cannot be successfully dated, and attempts to show a chronological evolution of ideas cannot be sufficiently documented.

Perhaps the greatest speculation surrounds the important poem 'L'Invention', a theoretical work that reveals part of Chénier's literary doctrine, and, at times, soars to the heights of lyricism as

the poet manages to 'write real poetry about poetry',¹ so that it can be said 'thought becomes a pretext for pure poetry'.² The problems to be faced in attempting to extricate the poet's ideas, to date them, and set them in context are exemplified by this poem, which may be taken as a model. The most difficult problem arises from the fragmentary state of the manuscripts, for only 159 lines³ are extant in manuscript form, whereas the version published by the first editor, Latouche, contains 392 lines.⁴ The loss of such precious documentation has provoked speculation and controversy that have little hope of settlement. Although it is beyond doubt that 'L'Invention' was left unfinished,⁵ serious doubts have been raised that question the activity of Latouche. Becq de Fouquières, who was so often embroiled with Gabriel de Chénier concerning the loss of the manuscripts, had already recognized Latouche's tamperings, showing him:

Voilant aux yeux de ses contemporains les fautes ou les défauts du poëte, parfois devinant jusqu'à ses plus secrètes intentions, et souvent le corrigeant avec un bonheur inespéré qu'eût admiré André lui-même.⁶

¹ F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1965 p.98.

² Ibid., p.99.

³ Bibliothèque Nationale. Nouvelles acquisitions françaises.

1) 6849 fo.5 verso. 2) 6849 fo.3 verso. 3) 6849 fo.3 recto.
4) 6849 fo.4 recto. 5) 6849 fo.5 recto. 6) 6849 fo.5 verso.

⁴ H. de Latouche, ed., Oeuvres complètes d'André Chénier, Paris, Baudouin, 1819, pp.1-14.

⁵ See C. Cherpak, 'The structure of Chénier's "L'Invention"', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, LXXII, 1957, pp.74-83, for a discussion of the stylistic reasons.

⁶ L. Becq de Fouquières, Documents nouveaux sur André Chénier et examen critique de la nouvelle édition de ses oeuvres, Paris, Charpentier, 1875, p.152.

Later generations of Chénier scholars have been less convinced about the 'bonheur inespéré' of Latouche's intervention. Dimoff has underlined that the poem seems to have been 'artificiellement composé, par Latouche, de fragments qui se rejoignaient à peu près'.¹ This view was enlarged upon by Fabre:

Comment ne pas remarquer, en tout état de cause, le contraste entre l'admirable spontanéité des fragments et le caractère factice de l'ensemble, l'artifice scolaire des transitions ?²

So far, because the recovery of the manuscripts defied the persistent efforts of Becq de Fouquières, it has been impossible to confirm or deny such views. It now seems unlikely that a definitive solution of the effect of Latouche's editing will be found.

Similarly, the impossibility of fixing a definite date for the composition of 'L'Invention' has encouraged divers opinions concerning the poem's position in the development of Chénier's literary principles. Dimoff, and later Fabre,³ date the beginning of 'L'Invention', and 'La République des lettres', to the year 1787,⁴ when the poet returned from Italy. He believes that the important work, the 'Essai sur les causes':

¹ P. Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.407. See also P. Dimoff, ed., André Chénier: 'L'Invention', Poème avec introduction et notes par P. Dimoff, Paris, Nizet, 1966, p.21.

² J. Fabre, Critical review of Dimoff's edition L'Invention (see note 1 above), R.H.L.F., 68, 1968, p.675.

³ 'En l'absence du manuscrit complet dont disposait le premier éditeur, divers brouillons montrent que ce "poème", comme la plupart des poèmes de Chénier, assemble assez artificiellement des morceaux composés à des dates et dans des circonstances différentes: le noyau en 1787, d'autres développements, ceux de la fin surtout, beaucoup plus tard'. (J. Fabre, Chénier, Connaissance des Lettres, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.149).

⁴ Dimoff has ingeniously dated the mss. B.N. nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 6849 fo. 3 & 4 to before December 1787 by reference to the water-marks. In contrast 6849 fo. 5 dates from London after December, 1787. See P. Dimoff, ed., André Chénier: 'L'Invention', ibid., pp.14-15.

paraît avoir été conçu au cours de cette période de la vie d'André Chénier qui s'étend de son retour de Suisse à son départ pour l'Italie, c'est-à-dire entre Novembre 1784 et Septembre 1786.¹

He goes on to suggest that 'L'Invention' represents verse drafts of some of the major ideas already contained in the 'Essai':

En attendant le moment plus ou moins lointain, où il serait en mesure de faire connaître par cet Essai sa doctrine tout entière, il n'entendait point s'interdire, s'il y trouvait avantage, de traiter, par avance et séparément, dans des ouvrages en vers plus succincts, certains des articles dont il avait marqué la place dans son traité en prose.²

Scarfe, on the other hand, varies the time scale established by Dimoff, and decides that parts of 'L'Invention' reflect 'the correlation amour-poésie which was the basis of the elegies from 1781 onwards'.³

He then argues that other passages 'are. . . an obvious attempt to justify the modernism of "Hermès" and "L'Amérique" and could be dated from 1783',⁴ and that other passages were produced later than that.

Scarfe's final conclusion is that the bulk of 'L'Invention' was written between 1783 and 1787. Again in contrast to Dimoff, Scarfe dates the 'Essai sur les causes' much later, to the years 1786 to 1793,⁵ a period following Chénier's meetings with the Italian poet, Alfieri.⁶

¹ P. Dimoff, ed., André Chénier: 'L'Invention', *ibid.*, p.5.

² *Ibid.*, p.8, and also P. Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, pp.407-408. Dimoff based his assumption on part of the 'Essai sur les causes': 'Tout cela peut être traité soit en prose, soit en vers, dans cette espèce de roman sur la perfection des arts'. (Walter, p.692).

³ F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.93.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.94.

⁶ Various dates have also been suggested for the 'Epître sur ses ouvrages', Dimoff fixing the time as 1787, and Gabriel de Chénier as 1791.

Inevitably the lack of a definite time scale for 'L'Invention' has given varying interpretations of the rôle of the poem in relation to the elaboration of Chénier's ideas. The basic premise that the poet's literary ideas must have progressed still seems valid. How radical was this progression, were his ideas slightly modified and extended, were they completely transformed, remain questions of great significance in a discussion applying Chénier's principles to his Elégies. The absence of dates makes it difficult to decide whether the information gleaned from 'L'Invention' can be applied to the early elegies or whether it should only be applied to his epics. The traditional solution to this problem, that of Becq de Fouquières, sees 'L'Invention' as a preface and apology to the poems 'Hermès' and 'L'Amérique'. This genesis found favour with C. Kramer¹ and with Dimoff, who states confidently:

Il convenait de ne présenter ces poèmes qu'à un public préalablement averti, éclairé, déjà prêt à les recevoir et désireux même, s'il était possible, de les voir paraître. C'est à créer cette atmosphère favorable que devait servir 'L'Invention', et telles furent vraisemblablement les réflexions qui poussèrent André Chénier à l'entreprendre et à y développer des idées en partie destinées d'abord à 'L'Essai'.²

This seems, to some extent, justifiable since the references to the progress of science can easily be related to 'Hermès' and 'L'Amérique', and Chénier seems to have been composing these epics intermittently between 1782 and 1792.³ Nevertheless, 'L'Invention' incorporates too many other extraneous themes to be restricted in this way as merely an introduction for the two epics.

¹ C. Kramer, 'L'Esthétique d'André Chénier d'après un ouvrage posthume', Neophilologus, 2, 1917, pp.8-20, claims that 'L'Invention' 'est en quelque sorte la préface de ses épopées', (p.9).

² P. Dimoff, ed., André Chénier: 'L'Invention', Poème avec introduction et notes par P. Dimoff, Paris, Nizet, 1966, p.13.

³ Walter, 'Notes et variantes', p.916.

E. Faguet had, prior to Dimoff's assessment, elaborated the idea of development in Chénier's thought, and had divided the poet's output into 'trois manières'. The first phase was between 1783-1785 when Chénier, writing the Bucoliques, was aiming to be a 'poète grec en terre de France'.¹ The second phase, 1785-1788, marks the elegiac period, when 'il cessait d'être antique, et, sans doute, pour devenir personnel',² and the third, 1788-1794, when Chénier turned against imitating the Ancients, and wrote 'L'Invention' and the epics whilst cherishing the idea of being a philosopher-poet:

Il y a bien au moins trois Chéniers, l'un antique dans sa pensée et dans sa forme; l'autre contemporain de ses contemporains par sa manière de penser et de sentir, et celui-là d'une forme un peu incertaine et flottante, quoique encore soutenu souvent par l'imitation de l'antique; le troisième enfin, qui voulait naître, et dont nous ne connaissons que les promesses, et qui, sauf la forme, . . . prétendait bien dépasser le premier et oublier complètement le second.³

This idea of radical progression has also been commented upon by P. Morillot.⁴

Does 'L'Invention' therefore present a different philosophy leading to a new modernist approach, a philosophy heralding a break with the Classical Tradition as portrayed in his bucolic and elegiac verse? If

¹ E. Faguet, André Chénier, Les grands écrivains français, Paris, Hachette, 1902, p.74.

² Ibid., p.91.

³ E. Faguet, Dix-huitième siècle. Etudes littéraires, Nouvelle bibliothèque littéraire, Paris, Boivin, 1890, p.539.

⁴ 'Il y a eu comme deux moments principaux dans la doctrine de Chénier: le premier qui correspond aux Bucoliques, et le second aux Poèmes (Hermès, L'Amérique, etc.): entre les deux mettons, si nous voulons, une phase intermédiaire, celle des Elégies'. (P. Morillot, 'La Poétique d'André Chénier: imitation et invention', Revue des cours et conférences, I, (série 2), 1893, pp.348-352, 380-384, p.348).

Faguet's conjectures were valid it would be wrong to apply the themes of 'L'Invention' to Chénier's elegiac output. Fortunately the errors of Faguet's argument are evident. The hypothesis shows a total disregard for Chénier's methods of working. The few poems that can be dated accurately indicate that the poet carried out his poetic explorations simultaneously. He advanced on a broad front following the whims of inspiration, so that in the 'Epître au Chevalier de Pange', dated 1791, he could claim: 'Tu sais combien mes Muses sont vagabondes. . . . Elles ne peuvent achever promptement un seul projet; elles en font marcher cent à la fois'.¹ Moreover, and more important for our study, Faguet's separatist conjecture overrides the real unity that is the hallmark of André Chénier's poetry and his poetic thought. This is summed up in Chénier's own words, 'imitation inventrice', the constant interplay of tradition and originality, of dependence upon and independence from the Classical Tradition. The stress may have shifted slightly as Chénier matured, but there certainly was no negation of this ideal.² Thus, since the various parts of the poetic edifice defy chronological order, but still indicate the permanent sources of inspiration and thought, it is possible to take evidence from Chénier's poetic theories en bloc and to apply them to his approach to Latin Elegy.

The difficulties caused by the incomplete manuscript evidence are further compounded by Chénier's critical methods. The way in which he deliberately analyzes poetry would indicate that his poems are a

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VI, ll.7-9, p.200.
Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', IV, ll.6-8, p.563.

² 'Rien dans les projets d'André Chénier ne trahit les démarches contradictoires d'une pensée, qui aurait été amenée par la réflexion à se démentir elle-même sur ce point essentiel; tous convergent vers un même but, procèdent d'un même idéal: mais cet idéal, simplement entrevu d'abord, est allé en s'éclairant, en se précisant, en se fixant de plus en plus, et, . . . les conceptions successives du poète, à mesure qu'il avançait en âge, marquent les étapes de ce progrès'. (P. Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. I, p.373).

concentration of his poetic ideals. Such a self-justifying mode opens a trap for the poet, for it produces a dichotomy that is difficult for any writer. It has long been a common criticism in Chénier studies to underline the discrepancy between the poet's theory and his practice. Indeed this criticism has frequently been levelled at eighteenth century poets and their poetry is seen as the failure of an ideal: 'un temps qui se faisait de la poésie une idée trop sublime pour ne pas être cruellement déçu par la médiocrité de ses poètes'.¹ Perhaps such criticism, that Chénier's individual poems did not always reflect his Neo-classical doctrine, encouraged Scarfe to question the amount of attention paid to theory.

It is a common error in criticism to imagine that what a poet writes about his art is of prime importance, and that his theoretical statements about the nature and craft of poetry are to be taken as doctrine. They are always interesting, but they are not indispensable. Every poem embodies and illustrates a theory of poetry and tells us what must have been the poet's idea of poetry at the time when he wrote it. In this respect Chénier's explicit theory of poetry is less impressive than his actual practice.²

Here Scarfe fails to take into account the fact that Chénier was writing his poems and his theoretical works simultaneously. Thus his poems gave insight to his poetics, and his poetics gave insight to his poetry; the interaction was continuous, the two interdependent.

A. Sacerdos Musarum

In reviewing the nature of his own poetic activity Chénier was expressing the immense respect he felt for his art. His aesthetic

¹ J. Fabre, 'La Poésie et le Poète selon André Chénier', L'Information Littéraire, 18, 1966, pp.99-105, p.100.

² F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.92.

was demanding. For him poetry was no trivial pastime to be dabbled in by dilettantes, but rather an art requiring total selfless dedication, total commitment, total absorption. The nobility, dignity, and sanctity of poetry were uppermost in Chénier's mind. As a result he accepted the view that art is immortal. This was by no means new to eighteenth century France. In the ancient world the notion of the divine origin of poetic inspiration was a commonplace, and poets would frequently invoke one, or all, of the Muses, as in the Vergilian invocation: 'tu vatem, tu, diva, mone'.¹ In this way using mythology, the poets were insisting that poetic composition was more than a rational enterprise but was a force emanating from outside the poet. The Augustan poets reinstated an archaic word for a poet that would stress not only the divine nature of poetry but also the dignity of the poet. Their use of vates is of great significance for it shows the poet as a man apart, a priest of the divine Muses, and a prophet within society. These ideas are resumed by Horace:

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo;
favete linguis: carmina non prius
audita Musarum sacerdos
virginibus puerisque canto.²

The corollary of these sentiments in the ancient world was the awareness of the immortality of the poet through his poems. Ovid was not being mock-modest when he proclaimed:

Ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis,
vivam, parsque mei multa superstes erit.³

¹ Vergil, Aeneid, Lib. VII, l.41.

² Horace, Odes, Lib. III, 1, ll.1-4.

³ Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el.xv, ll.41-42.

The majesty of poetry, with the repeated usage of epithets, auguste and sainte, is a constant theme in Chénier's writings. Poetry is idealized, personified, and deified, breathing inspiration into the poet:

Tantôt, m'éblouissant d'une clarté soudaine,
La sainte poésie et m'échauffe et m'entraîne.¹

Chénier's 'Muse' takes her place among the Gods. She is ever youthful, infused with radiant purity, beauty, and truth, bathed in an aura of sanctity and solemnity, dignity, and golden harmony:

Vierge au visage blanc, la jeune Poésie,
En silence attendue au banquet d'ambrosie,
Vint sur un siège d'or s'asseoir avec les Dieux,
Des fureurs des Titans enfin victorieux.
La bandelette auguste, au front de cette reine,
Pressait les flots errants de ses cheveux d'ébène;
La ceinture de pourpre ornait son jeune sein.
L'amiante et la soie, en un tissu divin,
Répandaient autour d'elle une robe flottante,
Pure comme l'albâtre et d'or étincelante.
Creux en profonde coupe, un vaste diamant
Lui porta du nectar le breuvage écumant.
Ses belles mains volaient sur la lyre d'ivoire.
Elle leva ses yeux où les transports, la gloire,
Et l'âme et l'harmonie éclataient à la fois.²

Chénier's conception of the poet embodies the ancient notion of the vates. For him the poet was a figure in isolation, a man with a mission

¹Dimoff, Vol.III, 'Elégies', III, i, 6, ll.9-10, p.16.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', II, ll.8-9, p.536.

²Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', IX, ll.1-15, p.29.
Walter, 'Bucoliques', I, ll.1-15, p.3.

See also the Ode, 'Le jeu de Paume':

Reprends ta robe d'or, ceins ton riche bandeau,
Jeune et divine Poésie: . . .
La liberté du génie et de l'art
T'ouvre tous les trésors. Ta grâce auguste et fière
De nature et d'éternité
Fleurit. Tes pas sont grands. Ton front ceint de lumière
Touche les cieus. Ta flamme agite, éclaire,
Dompte les cœurs. . .

(Dimoff, Vol.III, 'Odes', III, 2, ll.8-9, 33-38, pp.230-231.

Walter, 'Odes', I, ll.1-2, 26-31, pp.167-168).

For discussion of this subject see J. Fabre, 'La Poésie et le Poète selon André Chénier', L'Information Littéraire, 18, 1966, pp.99-105.

to reveal truth through poetry. Poetry represented the absolute, a search for perfection. Consequently all Chénier's writings, whether they be Elégies, Epîtres, Odes, Hymnes, Iambes, or prose works, are imbued with this aspiration, and in them aspiration becomes inspiration as they provide patterns of excellence whether in thought, form, or style. In some works, in his 'Odes', 'L'Invention', 'Hermès', for example, this didacticism is pre-eminent as Chénier leads his fellows to self-fulfilment and happiness. It would be implausible, however, to suggest that the Elégies always have the same didactic intensity in their themes, and yet, even in those elegies that seem to offer little beyond pleasure, the same goals are present. The search for perfection in their case is concentrated into form and style.

B. Le beau idéal

It was natural that a man with so powerful a notion of poetry and the poet should establish a set of idealized literary precepts in which inherent beauty and universal truth hold sway, and from which the ugliness of stark realism is banished. This makes the Neo-classical exhortation to imitate nature of cardinal importance in Chénier's literary philosophy:

Que la nature seule, en ses vastes miracles,
Soit leur fable et leurs Dieux, et ses lois leurs oracles.¹

The Aristotelian doctrine of mimesis and the belief that art is representational has been a constantly accepted idea throughout the European Tradition. Ronsard's claim that 'nulle Poésie se doit louer

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.291-292, p.21.
Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.291-292, p.130.

pour accomplie, si elle ne ressemble la nature',¹ La Fontaine's
'prêchant l'art de la simple nature',² and Pope's,

Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang'd and Universal Light,
Life, Force, and Beauty, must all impart,
At once the Source, and End, and Test of Art.³

are all examples of the same artistic propensity. Yet each age has its especial interpretation of Boileau's dictum: 'Jamais de la Nature il ne faut s'écarter'.⁴ From the most enthusiastic parts of his writings it would seem that Chénier felt that nature should be imitated in toto. In 'L'Invention' he claims that 'd'une oeuvre immortelle / La nature est en nous la source et le modèle',⁵ defining this as 'L'immense vérité, la nature elle-même'.⁶ Similarly in the 'Essai', Chénier envisages poetry as drawing inspiration from nature in its entirety:

Tout dans la nature l'inspire et lui donne à rêver:
toute la nature lui appartient. . . . Il voit tout, il sent tout, il peint tout. . . depuis le cèdre jusqu'à l'hysope. Il n'est aucun objet si méconnu, si abandonné, qui ne lui fournisse quelque image nouvelle, quelque expression vivante, quelque allusion délicate, quelque emblème ingénieux.⁷

¹ P. de Ronsard, 'Odes' (1550), 'Au Lecteur', in Oeuvres complètes de P. de Ronsard, édition critique avec introduction et commentaire par P. Laumonier, Société des textes français modernes, Paris, Hachette, 1914, Vol. I, p.47.

² La Fontaine, 'Épître à Monseigneur L'Evêque de Soissons', l.58, in Oeuvres de J. de La Fontaine, Nouvelle édition. . . par H. Regnier, 11 vols., Paris, Hachette, 1892, Vol. IX, p.203.

³ A. Pope, 'An Essay on Criticism', ll.70-73, in The Poems of Alexander Pope, The Twickenham Edition, Vol. I, Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Criticism, ed. E. Audra and A. Williams, London, Methuen, 1961, pp.246-247.

⁴ Boileau, 'L'Art Poétique', chant III, l.414, in Oeuvres complètes de Boileau, introduction par A. Adam, textes établis et annotés par F. Escal, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Bruges, Gallimard, 1966, p.179.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.195-196, p.18.

Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.195-196, p.127.

⁶ Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.199.

Walter, *ibid.*, l.199.

⁷ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.684-685.

Such statements cannot and should not be taken at face value and interpreted in the light of our own modern outlook. For an eighteenth century poet imitation of nature could never be all-embracing, for it could never include the mundane or sordid realities of existence. Chénier's philosophy should be regarded, therefore, as selective, with beauty and universal truth the criteria.

Exclusive as this philosophy is, Chénier's definition of nature does expand and extend the ideas of Horace or Boileau, who thought only in terms of the portrayal of human nature rather than the environment. 'Hermès' and 'L'Amérique' show that Chénier's perception exceeded theirs and encompassed the discoveries of his own century. Moreover, certain passages written after the poet's return from Switzerland and influenced also by Jean-Jacques Rousseau show him to be inspired by the more primitive and wilder aspects of nature:

Moi je me plus toujours, client de la nature,
 A voir son opulence et bienfaisante et pure,
 Cherchant loin de nos murs les temples, les palais
 Où la divinité me révèle ses traits,
 Ces monts, vainqueurs sacrés des fureurs du tonnerre,
 Ces chênes, ces sapins, premiers nés de la terre:
 Les pleurs des malheureux n'ont point teint ces lambris.
 D'un feu religieux le saint poète épris
 Cherche leur pur éther et plane sur leur cime.¹

Such Romantic sentiments are unusual, for Chénier was very much a poet of the eighteenth century and the prevailing attitude that man was the centre of the universe, so that man, his character, feelings, and behaviour, are basically the real subject of his poetry. When in the 'Essai' Chénier describes the qualities of a true poet, he immediately reduces the poet's vista and refers to the subject that attracted him above all. For him the poet is:

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', II, ll.11-19, p.28.
 Walter, 'Hermès', ll.12-20, p.391.

Quiconque enfin, dans la moindre chose qu'il dit, montre une vaste connaissance, une infaillible érudition de la nature, une profonde et naïve expérience du coeur humain.¹

Similarly, after stating that 'tout dans la nature l'inspire',²

Chénier immediately returns to the dominant theme of human nature:

Il veut connaître la nature humaine. . . il se tâte, il s'étudie dans tous les sens. . . il veut que chaque homme, à tout âge, dans tous les temps, dans tous les pays, dans toutes les circonstances possibles, puisse en le lisant se retrouver dans quelque endroit de ses ouvrages, s'en appliquer quelque morceau, se dire à lui-même: 'Je ne suis pas seul au monde et cet auteur a pensé à moi'.³

This understanding of the human heart, which is central to his poetry, comes only after years of psychological analysis. A true poet must:

. . . s'observer, dès l'enfance, assez pour se souvenir de lui tout entier, pour n'avoir rien fait qui ne fût une expérience, pour se rappeler sur quoi ses premières idées étaient fondées, d'où naquirent ses premiers jugements, ses premières opinions, comment et pourquoi il en a changé, de quelles manières les nouvelles opinions qu'il a adoptées se sont développées dans son cerveau, quelle et combien forte a été la première impression des objets sur lui.⁴

The need to understand nature, and particularly human nature, fully derives from Chénier's conviction that absolute truth resides there. Nature and truth are inextricably linked for 'la nature et la vérité sont seules éternelles'.⁵ Just as in L'Esprit des Lois Montesquieu had recognized the existence of absolute and natural laws alongside relative

¹Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.683.

²Ibid., p.684.

³Ibid., p.685.

⁴Ibid., p.685.

⁵Ibid., p.681.

and changeable laws peculiar to each nation, and Diderot had distinguished 'un beau réel' from 'un beau aperçu',¹ so Chénier felt the presence of the ephemeral and the eternal in nature. Following the precepts that can be traced back to Plato and to Aristotle, he knew that his mission as a poet was to express and make clear the fundamental laws and transcendental truths of nature, to seek and expound the essence hidden behind the veil of the temporal. This did not mean that the particular had to be rejected, but rather that it should be presented in such a way that its inherent, universal significance could be clearly seen. In lines that bring to mind the strength of a Michelangelo 'Slave', Chénier used the Platonic idea of sculpture liberating forms locked in marble in order to underline the real truths latent in nature, awaiting the sensitive touch of a poet who is himself: 'vrai, sûr, infaillible comme la nature'.² The imagery is finely adapted to the idea in the lines:

Aux antres de Paros le bloc étincelant
 N'est aux vulgaires yeux qu'une pierre insensible.
 Mais le docte ciseau, dans son sein invisible,
 Voit, suit, trouve la vie, et l'âme, et tous ses traits.
 Tout l'Olympe respire en ses détours secrets.
 Là vivent de Vénus les beautés souveraines;
 Là des muscles nerveux, là de sanglantes veines
 Serpennent; là des flancs invaincus aux travaux,
 Pour soulager Atlas des célestes fardeaux.³

Chénier's acceptance of the unchanging laws of nature postulates that human nature does not change and that human psychology is, and remains, fundamentally the same for all times and for all places. This means that, in spite of individual variations, man has a universal response

¹D. Diderot, 'Recherches philosophiques sur l'origine et la nature du beau', 1751, in Oeuvres complètes de Diderot revues sur les éditions originales. . . par J. Assézat, 20 vols., Paris, Garnier, 1939, Vol. X, p.27.

²Walter, *ibid.*, p.684.

³Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.266-274, pp.20-21.
 Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.266-274, p.129.

to his common destiny. In 'Hermès', using words that recall those of Abbé Dubos,¹ Chénier puts forward his theory of universality: 'Tous les hommes ont le même fonds de goûts, de passions, de sentiments, qui se façonnent différemment dans chacun'.² This recognizes what Quintilian had pointed out long before: 'id facillime accipiunt animi quod agnoscunt',³ that the reader appreciates what he knows to be true, the common experience, which 'oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Express'.⁴ Chénier, less briefly, makes the point in the following way:

Quel lecteur peut quitter un livre où il se retrouve partout, un livre qu'il lui semble avoir fait lui-même, où il dit à chaque page: 'J'ai éprouvé cela . . . J'avais pensé cela mille fois' . . . ou bien: 'Oh ! que cela est vrai ! J'aurais dû le trouver!' Il y a des sentiments si purs, si simples, des pensées si éternelles, si humaines, si nôtres, si profondément innées dans l'âme, que les âmes de tous les lecteurs les reconnaissent à l'instant; elles se réunissent à celle de l'auteur, elles semblent se reconnaître toutes et se souvenir qu'elles ont une origine commune.⁵

This touching of a common chord in the reader seemed to Chénier particularly appropriate in his Elégies:

Qu'un jeune homme, agité d'une flamme inconnue,
S'écrie aux doux tableaux de ma Muse ingénue:
'Ce poète amoureux, qui me connaît si bien,
Quand il a peint son coeur, avait lu dans le mien'.⁶

¹ 'Les hommes de tous les tems & de tous les pays sont semblables par le coeur'. (Abbé Dubos, Réflexions critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture, 3 vols., Paris, Pissot, 1770, Vol. II, p.516).

² Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', IV, ii, 6, ll.1-3, p.41.

Walter, 'Fragments et notes se rattachant à "Hermès"', ch. II, p.410.

³ Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. VIII, iii, 71.

⁴ A. Pope, 'An Essay on Criticism', l.298, in The Poems of Alexander Pope, The Twickenham Edition, Vol. I, Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Criticism, ed. E. Audra and A. Williams, London, Methuen, 1961, p.273.

⁵ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.683-684.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, ll.75-78, pp.129-130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, ll.75-78, p.140.

In sharp contrast Chénier attacked those poets who rejected universal thoughts and feelings in their misguided and frenzied search for 'originality', which in their writings signified the distortion of reality. Yet Chénier's poems have in turn been attacked because of their insistence on the unchangeable forms of human nature. J. Haraszti, for example, insists that Chénier 'se dépouille volontiers de toute individualité, et s'essaye à une impersonnalité objective, quoique la première condition pour un poète lyrique soit d'être subjectif'.¹ Such nineteenth century criticism fails to take into account Chénier's aim to be original within a traditional framework, to give unusual twists to universal thoughts and feelings. It is worth remembering en passant that this literary aim has by no means lost its significance in the present day. T.S. Eliot emphasizes the constant interplay between the particular and the universal, and the distortions caused by a rejection of the latter.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life. One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones.²

The avoidance of the extraordinary and the perverse is in the main line of French literary tradition which brought with it a further limitation to Chénier's credo of 'imiter la nature'. In literary thought the balance had always swung in favour of le vraisemblable rather than

¹J. Haraszti, La Poésie d'André Chénier, Paris, Hachette, 1892, p.228.

²T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Selected Prose, ed. J. Hayward, London, Penguin, 1955, p.29.

le vrai. Le vraisemblable, that which is psychologically credible and acceptable, whether fact or fiction, was preferred to le vrai which could occasionally shock moral scruples and the sense of psychological probability. In his day Boileau urged seventeenth century dramatists:

Jamais au Spectateur n'offrez rien d'incroyable.
Le Vrai peut quelquefois n'estre pas vraisemblable.¹

The example of Medea would illustrate the point. Indeed Corneille stood alone in repudiating the convention of vraisemblance. In the Renaissance, it had also been felt that it was the task of the historian alone to present absolute reality. Ronsard's comment was, 'C'est le faict d'un Historiographe d'esplucher toutes ces considerations, & non aux Poëtes, qui ne cherchent que le possible'.² The traditional view of the eighteenth century was summed up by Dubos: 'La premiere regle que les Peintres & les Poëtes soient tenus d'observer en traitant le sujet qu'ils ont choisi, c'est de n'y rien mettre qui soit contre la vraisemblance',³ and Marmontel was equally dogmatic in his 'Dans les arts d'imitation la vérité n'est rien, la vraisemblance est tout'.⁴

¹ Boileau, 'L'Art Poétique', ch. III, ll.47-48, in Oeuvres complètes de Boileau, introduction par A. Adam, textes établis et annotés par F. Escal, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Bruges, Gallimard, 1966, p.170.

² P. de Ronsard, 'Préface sur la Franciade', in Oeuvres complètes de P. de Ronsard, édition critique avec introduction et commentaire par P. Laumonier, Société des textes français modernes, Paris, Didier, 1950, Vol. XVI, p.340.

³ Abbé Dubos, Réflexions critiques sur la Poesie et sur la Peinture, 3 vols., Paris, Pissot, 1770, Vol. I, pp.247-248.

⁴ J.F. Marmontel, 'Illusion', 'Eléments de Littérature', in Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition. . . 18 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XIV, p.89. See also, 'La matiere des beaux arts n'est point le vrai, mais seulement le vraisemblable'. (Abbé Batteux, Cours de Belles-Lettres ou Pricipes de la littérature, nouvelle édition, 4 vols., Paris, Desaint, Saillant et Durand, 1753, Vol. I, p.13).

Chénier, influenced by these ideas, determined to portray thoughts and feelings that were universally credible, defining the importance of vraisemblance in his poems. He argued that nature seen in toto occasionally offends sensibilities, and therefore it is the poet who 'montre et fait adopter à la nature mère / Ce qu'elle n'a point fait, mais ce qu'elle a pu faire'.¹ Chénier was thus opening the way to exploring the manifold possibilities offered by nature, and accepting the doctrine of le beau idéal which found a special identification in the second half of the eighteenth century in the development of the meaning of vraisemblance.

The doctrine of le beau idéal, so prominent in the Neo-classical aesthetic, and hence in Chénier's writings, implied that, in order to penetrate to the universal truths latent in nature, all its external imperfections and deformities had to be stripped away so that reality could be enhanced. The task of the arts was not just simply to imitate nature, but to improve on it, to imitate la belle nature.²

L'art ne consiste pas à contrarier la nature, mais à l'améliorer, à l'embellir en l'imitant, à faire mieux qu'elle, en faisant comme elle, en suivant ses inclinations, ses directions, ses mouvements, en observant ses révolutions et ses diverses métamorphoses, surtout, en choisissant en elle les traits, les formes, les aspects, les accidents où la vérité donne le plus de charme à l'imitation.³

This idealization of nature and the cult of pure beauty is attained by processes of selection and combination, processes necessitating elimination and purification. The most perfect elements are harmonized

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.51-52, p.14.
Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.51-52, p.124.

²'On établit le principe fondamental des beaux arts, qu'on réduit tous. . . à l'imitation de la belle nature'. (Abbé Batteux, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p.x).

³J.F. Marmontel, 'Essai sur le goût', *ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp.30-31.

into a whole that has universal validity. The amalgamation of disparate elements to achieve a whole that embellishes reality had already been noted by Cicero with reference to the celebrated Athenian painter Zeuxis who, for his painting of Helen of Troy, selected the exquisite features from the most beautiful women of Athens:

Neque enim putavit omnia, quae quaereret ad venustatem uno se corpore reperire posse ideo, quod nihil simplici in genere omnibus ex partibus perfectum natura excolivit.¹

The example was often remembered by Neo-classical theoreticians:

Rappelons-nous l'exemple de Zeuxis. La nature a dans ses trésors tous les traits dont les plus belles imitations peuvent être composées: ce sont comme des études dans les tablettes d'un peintre. L'artiste, qui est essentiellement observateur, les reconnoît, les tire de la foule, les assemble. Il en compose dans son esprit un tout, dont il conçoit une idée vive qui le remplit.[sic]₂

It was no doubt the example to which Chénier himself referred in his definition of le beau idéal:

C'est le fécond pinceau qui, sûr dans ses regards,
Retrouve un seul visage en vingt belles épars,
Les fait renaître ensemble, et, par un art suprême,
Des traits de vingt beautés forme la beauté même.³

'La beauté même', Chénier's ideal beauty, valid for all time, was so to be achieved. Winckelmann's assessment was reinforced:

De cet extrait des plus belles formes amalgamées ensemble, naissoit, comme par une nouvelle génération,

¹ Cicero, De Inventione, II, 1-2.

² Abbé Batteux, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p.27.

³ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.53-56, p.14.

Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.53-56, p.124.

In the 'Essai', Chénier gives a more recondite example: 'Parrhasius d'Ephèse ayant peint un Hercule à Lindos disait l'avoir peint comme il l'avait vu souvent en songe. . . soit qu'il le crût. . . soit que. . .

C'est l'emblème du beau idéal. Plinie, 1.35. Athénée, 1.12'.

(Walter, p.652).

une substance plus noble dont l'idée suprême, fruit de la considération du beau, offroit une jeunesse permanente.¹

Chénier's struggle to achieve the idealization of nature could never be for him a simplistic, mechanical process of selection and automatic combination, for, in his case, the principle of le beau idéal was uniquely bound to his concept of originality and invention. He insisted that it was within the power of a creative artist to produce unusual and unexpected combinations of what already existed in nature. The stress is laid on revealing hidden analogies and surprising associations of ideas, thoughts that recall Horace's phrase 'callida . . . iunctura'.² In this way an original twist is given to thoughts and feelings that, nevertheless, remain universally recognizable:

Ainsi donc, dans les arts l'inventeur est celui
Qui peint ce que chacun put sentir comme lui;
Qui, fouillant des objets les plus sombres retraites,
Etale et fait briller leurs richesses secrètes;
Qui, par des noeuds certains, imprévus et nouveaux,
Unissant des objets qui paraissaient rivaux,
Montre et fait adopter à la nature mère
Ce qu'elle n'a point fait, mais ce qu'elle a pu faire.³

L'Abbé Batteux had previously used similar terminology in his definition of le génie as 'un instrument éclairé qui fouille, qui creuse, qui perce sourdement'.⁴ Thus the enlightened, sensitive poet will be able to

¹J.J. Winckelmann, Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité par M. Winkelmann, traduite de l'allemand par M. Huber, 3 vols., Leipzig, Breitkopf, 1781, Vol. II, p.49.

²Horace, Ars Poetica, ll.47-48. See also 'S'il décrit les objets sensibles, il y fait remarquer des traits frappants qui jusqu'à lui nous avaient échappé, des accidents et des rapports sur lesquels nos regards ont glissé mille fois'. (J.F. Marmontel, 'Génie', 'Eléments de Littérature', in Œuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition, 18 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XIII, p.500).

³Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.45-52, pp.13-14.
Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.45-52, p.124.

⁴Abbé Batteux, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p.11.

uncover harmonious links between seemingly discordant elements, with the proviso, of course, that the links were not reckless and imaginary, but rather vraisemblables, 'des noeuds certains':

. . . l'esprit de lumière
Fait naître en ce chaos la concorde et le jour:
D'éléments divisés il reconnaît l'amour,
Les rappelle; et partout, en d'heureux intervalles,
Sépare et met en paix les semences rivales.¹

In addition, Chénier was convinced of the possibilities for original ideas within this framework. For him nature's boundless store was certainly not exhausted:

L'auguste poésie, éclatante interprète, . . .
. . . rit quand, dans son vide, un auteur oppressé
Se plaint qu'on a tout dit et que tout est pensé.²

He felt that certain themes had not been dealt with, but beyond that, he believed that the new combinations of theme, and of style, were infinite. For confirmation we move from 'L'Invention' to the 'Essai', a prose statement of Chénier's conception of the possibilities still open:

Puisqu'il est certain que beaucoup d'objets de la nature physique et même morale n'ont pas été traités par nos grands poètes, et que, d'ailleurs, tous les hommes de génie ne saisissent pas toutes choses de la même manière et ne les envisagent pas sous les mêmes rapports, il est certain aussi qu'il y a encore à trouver une infinité d'images nouvelles et de nouvelles combinaisons de mots.³

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.40-44, p.13.
Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.40-44, p.124.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.207, 217-218, pp.18-19.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.207, 217-218, p.128.

³Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.686. See also, 'La nature est infiniment riche en objets, & chacun de ces objets peut être considéré d'un nombre infini de manières. . . la nature a une infinité de desseins que nous connoissons; mais elle en a aussi une infinité que nous ne connoissons pas. Nous ne risquons rien de lui attribuer tout ce que nous concevons comme possible selon les loix ordinaires'. (Abbé Batteux, Cours de Belles-Lettres ou Principes de la littérature, 4 vols., Paris, Desaint, Saillant and Durand, 1753, Vol. I, pp.81-82).

With such an approach how could Chénier do other than attempt to fulfil his restless search for perfection ?

Implicit in such words is the insistence that it is the poet of genius who can, from the most hackneyed subjects, reveal hidden analogies. It is the poet of genius who can provide original treatment.¹ It is the poet of genius who can discover new aspects in subjects which appear so trite that they are drained of inspiration. From this conceit, advanced in the 'Essai', Chénier, in the lyrical tones of 'L'Invention', explores more deeply the world of analogies, where not even the seemingly sterile can escape, and where poetry can revive the most barren of ideas:

Seule, et la lyre en main, et de fleurs couronnée, . . .
 Aux lieux les plus déserts, ses pas, ses jeunes pas,
 Trouvent mille trésors qu'on ne soupçonnait pas.
 Sur l'aride buisson que son regard se pose,
 Le buisson à ses yeux rit et jette une rose.
 Elle sait ne point voir, dans son juste dédain,
 Les fleurs qui trop souvent, courant de main en main,
 Ont perdu tout l'éclat de leurs fraîcheurs vermeilles;
 Elle sait même encore, ô charmantes merveilles !
 Sous ses doigts délicats réparer et cueillir
 Celles qu'une autre main n'avait su que flétrir.²

The last couplet reveals Chénier's thesis that the essential truths of le beau idéal, laid open by skilful analysis, are only accessible to the true poet. Inevitably we think of T.S. Eliot who, in our own time, made a similar statement:

¹ Chénier surely echoed Dubos in his belief that even the most hackneyed subjects can be transformed: 'Non-seulement un Poëte né avec du génie, ne dira jamais qu'il ne sçauroit trouver de nouveaux sujets, mais j'ose même avancer qu'il ne trouvera jamais aucun sujet épuisé. La pénétration, compagne inséparable du génie, lui fait découvrir des faces nouvelles dans les sujets qu'on croit vulgairement les plus usés'. (Abbé Dubos, Réflexions critiques sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture, 3 vols., Paris, Pissot, 1770, Vol. I, p.237). See also Marmontel: 'S'il se saisit d'un sujet connu, il le pénètre si profondément, que ce champ, que l'on croyait usé, devient une terre féconde'. (J.F. Marmontel, 'Génie', *ibid.*, Vol. XIII, p.500).

² Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.219, 221-230, p.19.
 Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.219, 221-230, p.128.

The mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of 'personality', not being necessarily more interesting, or having 'more to say', but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.¹

There is no wonder that Chénier criticized 'immature poets' of the kind surveyed by T.S. Eliot, and indeed criticized them strongly as:

Les gens du bel air. . . incapables. . . de saisir ces nombreux rapports des choses entre elles qui frappent une imagination sensible et lui inspirent ce langage ardent et métaphorique qui donne la vie à tout.²

The most virulent attacks were directed to those authors whom he believed had betrayed le beau idéal. The key principles of imitation of la belle nature and of vraisemblance encouraged the development of poetry where beauty, truth, reason, harmony, simplicity, and good sense were the order of the day. His criticism parallels those of Boileau, who was still a dominant influence in the eighteenth century:

Aimez donc la Raison. Que toujours vos écrits
Empruntent d'elle seule et leur lustre et leur prix.
La plupart, emportez d'une fougue insensée
Toujours loin du droit sens vont chercher leur pensée.
Ils croiroient s'abaisser, dans leurs vers monstrueux,
S'ils pensoient ce qu'un autre a pû penser comme eux.
Evitons ces excez. . .³

The excess that Chénier particularly singled out for chastisement was the abuse of invention, an abuse which he regarded as a struggle for originality at the expense of reason, vraisemblance, and good taste,

¹ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Selected Prose, ed. J. Hayward, London, Penguin, 1955, p.26.

² Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.676.

³ Boileau, 'L'Art Poétique', ch. I, ll.37-43, in Œuvres complètes de Boileau, introduction par A. Adam, textes établis et annotés par F. Escal, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Bruges, Gallimard, 1966, p.158.

that could only lead to a total lack of restraint, to a wild imagination, and the distortion of reality. Echoing words from Horace's Ars Poetica,¹ Chénier showed how much he despised what he saw as autistic anarchy:

Mais inventer n'est pas, en un brusque abandon,
 Blessé la vérité, le bon sens, la raison;
 Ce n'est pas entasser, sans dessein et sans forme,
 Des membres ennemis en un colosse énorme;
 Ce n'est pas, élevant des poissons dans les airs,
 A l'aile des vautours ouvrir le sein des mers;
 Ce n'est pas sur le front d'une Nymphe brillante
 Hérisser d'un lion la crinière sanglante:
 Délires insensés ! fantômes monstrueux !
 Et d'un cerveau malsain rêves tumultueux !
 Ces transports déréglés, vagabonde manie,
 Sont l'accès de la fièvre et non pas du génie.²

In this context it is not difficult to find an explanation of Chénier's antagonism to English authors:

. . . ces convulsions barbares de Shakespeare, . . .
 ces expressions monstrueuses et tirées on ne sait
 d'où, . . . ces idées énormes et gigantesques qui,
 dans les poètes du Nord, fatiguent et rembrunissent
 l'âme sans la toucher, sans l'intéresser le moins du
 monde. . . La plupart de ces poètes du Nord, surtout
 Anglais, se tourmentent toujours et en toute occasion;
 leur douleur est un désespoir frénétique; leurs plaintes,
 des hurlements; leurs images n'ont point de modèle
 dans la nature; leur expression est démesurée.³

¹ Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
 iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
 undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
 desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
 spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici ?
 credite, Pisones, isti tabulae fore librum
 persimilem cuius, velut aegri somnia, vanae
 fingentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni
 reddatur formae. . . (Horace, Ars Poetica, 11.1-9).

² Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.25-36, p.13.
 Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.25-36, pp.123-124.

³ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.646-647.

These ideas, the common ones of his day,¹ spill over into verse:

Les poètes anglais, trop fiers pour être esclaves,
 Ont même du bon sens rejeté les entraves.
 Dans leur ton uniforme, en leur vaine splendeur,
 Haletant pour atteindre une fausse grandeur,
 Tristes comme leur ciel toujours ceint de nuages;
 Enflés comme la mer qui blanchit leurs rivages
 Et sombres et pesants comme l'air nébuleux
 Que leur île farouche épaissit autour d'eux.²

C. La naïveté

So far, in this discussion of literary principles, Chénier has emerged as a poet expressing ideas closely linked to those of other writers and theorists of his time. At every stage thoughts parallel to those he was formulating occur in such writers as Dubos, L'Abbé Batteux, Louis Racine, Marmontel, Winckelmann, or even Condillac. All the ideas coming from Chénier's vision of nature are eventually encompassed and summarized in one distinctive theory, which reaches beyond those of his contemporaries to a new, individual level: the theory of la naïveté. This striking advance is the poet's personal contribution to the eighteenth century debate on nature. It provides the keystone to his precepts and, if we are to believe Scarfe, 'we are here in the presence of new and stirring thoughts which might have changed

¹ See Marmontel's criticism of Shakespeare: 'Mais que dans ses ouvrages on trouve à chaque instant les plus absurdes invraisemblances, les plus dégoûtantes horreurs; que les moeurs en soient un mélange de bassesse et d'atrocité; que l'action la plus noble y soit interrompue par de froides bouffonneries; que les héros et la canaille s'y confondent, et qu'à côté d'un mot simple et sublime, se présente l'expression la plus outrée, la plus grossière, la plus rampante'. (J.F. Marmontel, 'Essai sur le goût', 'Eléments de Littérature', in Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition. . . 18 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XII, p.23).

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Poésies diverses', II, 1, ll.17-24, p.295.
 Walter, 'Ebauches et fragments de poèmes', I, ll.17-24, p.498.

the whole course of French poetry'.¹ What is more certain is that Chénier himself recognized the importance of his belief: 'la naïveté est le point de perfection de tous les arts'.² He was to amplify the theory in the 'Essai', but again we are cheated of the completed exposition. All that remains are short notes: 'Développer tout cela. . . suite du même principe',³ and 'ensuite la naïveté dans les détails du style. . .'.⁴

The difficulty in analyzing the principle arises not only from the incomplete demonstration, but also from Chénier's choice of the terms, naïf and naïveté. The poet himself recognized this problem of semantics and, as a result, stressed the sense in which the terms were not to be interpreted: 'les personnes qui y ont moins réfléchi semblent n'entendre par naïveté qu'une franchise innocente et presque enfantine à dire de petites choses'.⁵ Être naïf does not mean being amusingly simple. For a correct understanding of the concept, the etymological sense of the word has to be sought: naïf derives from the Latin nativus which could mean 'inborn', 'innate', 'unaffected', 'produced by nature'. Seen in these terms the theory of naïveté brings us back to the doctrine of universal thoughts and feelings, and indeed Chénier begins his section of the 'Essai' in which he discusses la naïveté with part of the famous quotation from Terence: 'Homo sum;⁶ voilà le principe, le but, l'objet de tous les arts'.⁷ La naïveté is thus the ability to touch the truths, the

¹F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.117.

²Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.681.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p.683.

⁵Ibid., p.681.

⁶Terence, Heauton Timorumenos, Act I, 1.25, 'Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto'.

⁷Walter, *ibid.*, p.680.

qualities, and sentiments that are innate in man. It presupposes a deep knowledge of human emotions, 'des sentiments si purs, si simples, des pensées si éternelles, si humaines, si nôtres, si profondément innées dans l'âme',¹ and these are then expressed in a simple, natural, yet forceful way. The definition of naïf is to the point: 'Il faut être vrai avec force et précision, c'est-à-dire être naïf'.² So naïveté of feeling and of expression, the touching of common chords will alone move the reader. Without it poems are empty:

Vous pouvez avoir un beau choix de mots, de phrases bien arrondies, des périodes sonores et harmonieuses; si vous n'êtes point naïf, vous ne toucherez point. L'oreille retiendra vos sons, l'âme ne retiendra point vos pensées; elles n'iront pas jusqu'à l'âme, elles se perdront dans l'oreille. Vous serez comme le poète Rousseau, toujours pompeux et jamais sublime. . . Un sentiment noble n'est sublime que par naïveté; un sentiment tendre, c'est par la naïveté qu'il vous remplit les yeux de larmes; la naïveté d'une plainte la rend déchirante et nous fait souffrir à l'entendre, et souffrir avec délices lorsque nous pouvons l'apaiser. C'est donc la naïveté seule qui produit en nous des émotions vives, profondes et rapides.³

This is the quality that marks out an author or painter making his work inimitable:

Un peintre, un auteur seulement pompeux et noble sera copié par tout le monde: celui qui est naïf est à jamais inimitable; sa naïveté est le sceau qu'il imprime à toutes ses pensées, à toutes ses expressions, qui fait que son ouvrage est le sien et ne saurait être celui d'un autre. Vingt autres peuvent être aussi naïfs, aussi excellents que lui: ils ne le seront pas comme lui; ce seront de nouveaux originaux.⁴

¹Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.684.

²Ibid., p.681.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

One way of understanding la naïveté is to follow Chénier in some of the examples he gives in the 'Essai' to illustrate what he means by naïveté of feeling and expression. His examples are taken from Homer, Sophocles, Theocritus, Terence, Vergil, Tacitus, Dante, Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine, Montaigne, J.J. Rousseau, and Montesquieu.¹ From all the examples given it is plain that Chénier was looking for the moment of simplicity, purity, and truth. If we may give a parallel example it is the moment when, after his denial of Christ, all Peter's thoughts and emotions were distilled into those few simple words of poignant beauty, 'and he went out and wept bitterly'.²

As one of his examples Chénier chose lines from the Aeneid, Lib. IV, as the deserted Dido cries out 'saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset / ante fugam suboles',³ which brings forth the comment: 'malheur au coeur de pierre qui ne préfère point cela à vingt volumes de belles phrases'.⁴ In the example from Corneille, Chénier does not find la naïveté in swollen, empty rhetoric:

Est-ce la scène de Ptolémée et de ses confidents, ou les vers enflés qui ouvrent le chef-d'oeuvre de Cinna, qui ont fait de Corneille le grand Corneille ? Non: ce sont les cris et les sublimes naïvetés de tout genre dont le Cid est rempli, dont Héraclius et Rodogune fourmillent; c'est Polyeucte disant: 'Je suis chrétien'; c'est: 'Qu'il mourût'; c'est: 'Rome eût été du moins un peu plus tard sujette'; c'est: 'Mais quoi ! toujours du sang et toujours des supplices !', et mille autres passages d'une grandeur à laquelle nul poète moderne n'atteignit jamais.⁵

These two examples form models which are repeated in many other instances. They enable Scarfe to evaluate Chénier's theory and allow us to accept

¹Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.681-683.

²St Matthew 26, 75.

³Vergil, Aeneid, Lib. IV, ll.327-328.

⁴Walter, *ibid.*, p.682.

⁵Walter, *ibid.*

his judgement as a fitting estimate of 'sublime naïveté':

In considering the best of Corneille and Racine, Chénier found this 'sublime naïveté'. . . in those moments to which great art inevitably leads, when human passions and dilemmas are suddenly reduced to their simplest terms, when speech comes nearest to a kind of silence which penetrates the soul of the reader or spectator.¹

¹F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Works, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.117.

VI

LITERARY PRINCIPLES. PART TWO: IMITATION INVENTRICEA. Imitation

Linked to Chénier's aesthetic, with its unique doctrine of la naïveté, is his fervent insistence, which he held in common with his contemporaries, that one of the essential ways to imitate nature, truth, and beauty was through the Ancients. He regarded the Graeco-Roman civilization as outstanding in that its authors had scaled the heights of achievement. To imitate these authors was therefore a major artistic impulse, and, as such, was not a mere intellectual exercise, but a constant source of inspiration, regeneration, and enthusiasm. Chénier's emotions were fully engaged. He was not only willing to acknowledge his immense debt to Antiquity but to boast of his sense of inherited culture and his part in the Classical, Humanist Tradition:

Souvent des vieux auteurs j'envahis les richesses.
 Plus souvent leurs écrits, aiguillons généreux,
 M'embrasent de leur flamme et je crée avec eux.
 Un juge sourcilleux, épiant mes ouvrages,
 Tout à coup à grands cris dénonce vingt passages
 Traduits de tel auteur qu'il nomme; et les trouvant,
 Il s'admire et se plaît de se voir si savant.
 Que ne vient-il vers moi ? je lui ferai connaître
 Mille de mes larcins qu'il ignore peut-être.
 Mon doigt sur mon manteau lui dévoile à l'instant
 La couture invisible et qui va serpentant,
 Pour joindre à mon étoffe une pourpre étrangère.¹

In his predilection for Graeco-Roman authors, Chénier restates the sociological arguments that were prevalent at, and occasionally before,

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, 11.94-105, p.205.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, 11.94-105, p.159.

his time. Indeed, in the 'Essai', where these points are expounded, Chénier confesses his debt to Montaigne, Montesquieu, J.J. Rousseau,¹ and his close friend, Alfieri.² Winckelmann³ and Young are not mentioned, although their influence is strongly in evidence. It was the former who summarized these divers sociological influences on the development of Greek Art:

Le principe de la supériorité des Grecs dans l'Art doit être attribué au concours de différentes causes: à l'influence du climat, à la constitution politique & à leur façon de penser, ainsi qu'à la considération dont jouissoient les Artistes & à l'emploi qu'ils faisoient des Arts.⁴

The first of these arguments, Montesquieu's theory of the influence of climate, received lengthy exposition by Winckelmann, who claimed that

¹ See also: 'Je ne prétends pas dans ce que j'ai discuté et discuterai encore sur ces matières dire seulement des choses neuves et révéler des vérités inconnues. Je sais que chez plusieurs anciens et, après eux, chez Montaigne, Montesquieu, l'auteur du Contrat Social, j'en ai lu une partie doctement et sagement développée, suivant l'usage de ces écrivains; mais, outre que je les ai étayées, en y ajoutant ce que m'indiquait aussi, à moi, mon génie particulier et le besoin de les exposer sous le point de vue qui convenait précisément à mon sujet, comme la suite et le tissu de cet ouvrage exigeaient qu'elles fussent lues aussi chez moi, je n'ai pas dû les omettre pour affecter de ne rien dire que de neuf, ou pour me soustraire par orgueil à une comparaison avec des hommes que l'on ne peut surpasser dans l'art d'écrire'. (Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.626-627).

² 'Je veux de plus que l'on sache qu'avant que cet ouvrage entièrement fait fût entièrement écrit, Vittorio Alfieri d'Asti. . . me lut ses trois livres du Prince et des Lettres qui n'étaient pas encore imprimés. Comme l'unanimité de sentiments et d'opinions avait été la première cause qui nous lia d'amitié, je ne fus pas si étonné que flatté de voir souvent une honorable ressemblance entre ce qu'il avait écrit et ce que j'écrivais. Je l'interrompis quelquefois pour en faire la remarque, mais comme je n'ai terminé cet écrit que depuis cette excellente lecture, il est possible qu'elle eût laissé dans mon esprit des traces assez profondes pour que, sans le vouloir et sans le savoir, je tienne de lui plus d'un passage éclatant. Je déclare donc avec joie que l'on pourra retrouver ici plusieurs choses déjà lues chez lui, soit que notre conformité de principes me les eût dictées sans lui, soit qu'une utile réminiscence les ait fait couler de ma plume'. (Walter, *ibid.*, p.691).

³ See P. Dimoff, 'Winckelmann et André Chénier', R.L.C., 21, 1947, pp.321-333.

⁴ J.J. Winckelmann, Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité par M. Winkelmann, traduite de l'allemand par M. Huber, 3 vols., Leipzig, Breitkopf, 1781, Vol. II, p.2.

climate has an effect on the physiognomy of peoples, on their physical characteristics, and the musicality of their language, and hence on their thought processes, institutions, and art:

Il faut que l'influence du climat ranime la semence qui doit faire germer l'Art, & la Grece étoit le sol le plus favorable pour cet objet. . . .La nature, après avoir passé par les degrés du froid & du chaud, s'est fixée dans la Grece, comme dans son centre où règne une température mixte entre l'hiver et l'été. . . .Entourée sans cesse d'un air pur et serein tel qu'Euripide décrit le climat d'Athènes, elle n'est point gênée dans son activité par les brouillards & les vapeurs, & elle porte plutôt le corps à sa maturité.¹

Chénier uses this theme in his eulogy of the Greeks in the opening lines of 'L'Invention':

Et vous, à qui jadis, pour créer l'harmonie,
L'Attique, et l'onde Egée, et la belle Ionie,
Donnèrent un ciel pur, les plaisirs, la beauté,
Des moeurs simples, des lois, la paix, la liberté,
Un langage sonore, aux douceurs souveraines,
Le plus beau qui soit né sur des lèvres humaines.²

'L'Invention' then at its very beginning recalls Winckelmann's second point that there is a close correlation between the institutions and mores of a given society and its arts. Winckelmann had argued that the arts can only thrive in a free society:

La liberté forme une des principales causes de la prééminence des Grecs dans l'Art. Aussi la liberté sembloit-elle avoir établi son siege dans la Grece.³

To a poet of Chénier's background, living when ideas of liberty were fermenting, the appeal of such ideas could not be avoided. They became a constant theme in the 'Essai' and 'La République des lettres'. 'L'Invention'

¹ J.J. Winckelmann, *ibid.*, pp.2-3.

² Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.3-8, p.12.
Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.3-8, p.123.

³ J.J. Winckelmann, *ibid.*, p.8.

looked back with longing to an idealized, yet static Graeco-Roman world, where society was just and men were free:

Voyageons dans leur âge, où, libre, sans détour,
Chaque homme ose être un homme et penser au grand jour.
Au tribunal de Mars, sur la pourpre romaine,
Là du grand Cicéron la vertueuse haine
Ecrase Céthégus, Catilina, Verrès;
Là tonne Démosthène; ici, de Périclès
La voix, l'ardente voix, de tous les cœurs maîtresse,
Frappe, foudroie, agite, épouvante la Grèce.¹

A few lines before he had compared Antiquity with present circumstances, commenting, 'leurs mœurs et leurs lois, et mille autres hasards,/ Rendaient leur siècle heureux plus propice aux beaux-arts'.² The arts could not, according to Chénier, flourish in a decadent society where tyranny, greed, and privilege ruled:

A mesure que le temps et l'argent et l'activité
affermissent les tyrannies, les écrivains, effrayés par
le danger ou attirés par les récompenses, vendirent
leur esprit et leur plume aux puissances injustes, les
aidèrent à tromper et à nuire, enseignèrent aux hommes
à oublier leurs droits; et, se disputant à qui donnerait
les plus illustres exemples de servitude, l'art d'écrire
ne fut désormais que l'art de remplir de fastidieuses pages
d'adulations ingénieuses, et par là plus ignominieuses;
et, par cette bassesse mercantile, les saintes lettres
furent avilies et le genre humain fut trahi.³

Time after time Chénier denounced such prostitution of the arts. He had quickly grasped that in a society dominated by tyranny and wealth, of which he himself was on the fringe, the poet, whose mission should be to proclaim truth and virtue, was often reduced to sycophantic adulations:

Pour moi, ouvrant les yeux autour de moi au sortir de
l'enfance, je vis que l'argent et l'intrigue étaient
presque la seule voie pour aller à tout; je résolus
donc, dès lors, sans examiner si les circonstances me

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.161-168, p.17.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.161-168, p.127.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.157-158, p.17.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.157-158, p.126.

³ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.624.

le permettraient, de vivre toujours loin de toutes affaires, avec mes amis, dans la retraite et dans la plus entière liberté . . . Sûr de n'avoir jamais ni la richesse au prix de la liberté, ni l'amitié ou la familiarité des princes et des grands, ni les éloges privés, ni l'association à aucun musée ou académie, ou autre confrérie savante, ni enfin aucune espèce de récompense royale ou littéraire; déterminé à ne point vivre partout où la pensée ne sera point libre; à ne connaître de guide que la raison, de maître que la justice, et de protecteur que les lois, je puis, autant que ma nature m'aidera, chercher la vérité sans déguisement, la trouver sans que des préjugés me l'obscurcissent, et la dire sans que ni désir, ni espérance, ni crainte, viennent altérer ma franchise ou la rendre muette.¹

Chénier's ideal poet was therefore a modern epicurean, with the philosophy of nil admirari, seeing, without awe or envy, ambition, wealth, and privilege, and spurning greed, amor habendi.² The model is Horace, for Chénier looked not only to Antiquity in general to offer guide lines for the present, but also to its individuals to provide moral exempla. 'Oh ! suivons donc aussi l'exemple de leur vie',³ he exclaims. Like Horace, he valued independence; he aspired to a cultured life where he could know his inner self, a life balanced between city and country, a life free from lust for possession, a life in retirement devoted to leisure and good friends, but dominated by poetry:

Soyons heureux comme eux au sein de l'amitié.
Horace, loin des flots qui tourmentent Cythère,
Y retrouvait d'un port l'asile salutaire.⁴

Poetry demanded an exemplary life, where the absence of crime allowed the holy gifts of Ronsard's phrase to flourish:

¹Walter, *ibid.*, pp.624, 625-626.

²'Que j'aime le sage qui se plaît dans sa médiocrité, qui goûte trop son bonheur pour y songer, qui n'aime point les grands et qui en parle fort peu, qui sait vivre avec eux sans les rechercher, se passer d'eux sans les fuir'. (*Ibid.*, pp.638-9).

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', I, l.54, p.181.
Walter, 'Epîtres', III, l.54, p.142.

⁴*Ibid.*, ll.56-58, p.181.
Ibid., ll.56-58, p.142.

Jamais les Dieux saints et bons
 Ne repandent leurs saints dons
 Dans une ame vicieuse.¹

As the lives of the Ancients furnished models of behaviour,² so their writings embodied the aesthetic ideals sought by late eighteenth century writers. The Ancients were regarded as close to nature, and to imitate them was almost to imitate nature; succinctly put by Pope: 'Nature and Homer were, he found, the same'.³ Chénier clarified this proposition for he felt that the Greeks and Romans could study unspoilt human nature directly, and, as a result, could more easily envisage the inner truths in man, whereas, in contrast, modern man had become bound by arbitrary rules and conventions that only served to take him further away from the paths of nature and its truths. Unfortunately, the point cannot be pressed home by detailed quotation of Chénier's 'Essai', for his demonstration of the theme remains unfinished:

Chez les anciens, l'homme n'étant pas habitué, façonné à une multitude d'institutions arbitraires et absolument éloignées de la nature, était plus. . . lui-même. . . plus nu. (A l'endroit des ouvrages des anciens.) (Morceau long et détaillé. Les anciens étaient nus. . . leur âme était nue. . . Pour nous, c'est tout le contraire. . . Dès l'enfance, nous emmaillottons notre esprit; nous retenons notre imagination par des lisières; des manchettes et des jarretières gênent les articulations et les mouvements de nos idées et notre âme est emprisonnée dans des culottes).⁴

¹ P. de Ronsard, 'Ode à Michel de l'Hospital', ll.440-442, in Œuvres complètes, édition critique, avec introduction et commentaire par P. Laumonier, Paris, Hachette, 1921, Vol. III, p.143.

² See also Chénier's eulogy of Cicero: 'Toujours dans une activité laborieuse et bienfaisante, au sénat, au camp, chez lui, protégeant les bons, poursuivant les méchants, repoussant les Parthes, développant à ses lecteurs l'art de bien parler qu'il pouvait regarder comme sien, ou embellissant les préceptes de la sagesse de cette éloquence divine qui était sa langue naturelle, il ne cessa pas un seul instant de rendre service à la patrie, à la vertu, au genre humain, et de bien mériter des lettres qui avaient si bien mérité de lui'. (Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.658).

³ A. Pope, 'An Essay on Criticism', l.135, in The Poems of Alexander Pope, The Twickenham Edition, Vol. 1, Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Criticism, ed. E. Audra and A. Williams, London, Methuen, 1961, p.255. See also: 'C'est la nature qu'Homère a consultée dans cette révélation naïve des faiblesses du coeur humain'. (J.F. Marmontel, 'Essai sur le goût', 'Eléments de Littérature' in Œuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition, 18 vols., Paris, Firmin

What Chénier appreciated in the Ancients' imitation of nature was their creation of le beau idéal, which was, as we have already noted, an essential ingredient of his own aesthetic:

En suivant la route de la nature même, ils arrivaient, ils s'élançaient jusqu'à la beauté parfaite que la nature indique mais n'exécute que rarement. Au travers de nos corps dégradés, fatigués souvent par les travaux, par l'âge, par les infirmités, par l'empreinte des vices, des chagrins, ils savaient retrouver et rendre cette forme céleste et primitive; ils faisaient l'homme à l'image de Dieu.¹

Chénier judged that the Ancients had clothed the universal truths involved in this doctrine in the most natural, unaffected, simple, and yet reasonable form: the 'délicieuse simplicité de la Grèce encore naissante'.² The works of the Ancients were thus infused with that all-important naïveté of feeling and expression that touches human sensibility: 'Leurs expressions sont vraies, humaines, nées dans l'homme et doivent toucher tous les hommes'.³ In this they had been guided by good taste and had avoided the disorders and excesses of later authors:

Eux seuls, dans les égarements de l'enthousiasme, suivaient toujours la nature et la vérité . . . eux seuls ont bien su connaître les limites souvent imperceptibles qui séparent tous les genres, et n'ont jamais donné dans ces disparates bizarres, dans ces incohérences sauvages qui ne brillent aux yeux qu'en les aveuglant.⁴

³ [contd.]

Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XII, p.13).

⁴Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.645-646.

¹Walter, *ibid.*, p.650.

²*Ibid.*, p.653.

³*Ibid.*, p.646.

⁴*Ibid.*

It was the successful combination of Chénier's beliefs in the need for le beau idéal and his criterion of la naïveté that elicited his eulogy of their work:

Mais qui jamais a su, dans des vers séduisants,
 Sous des dehors plus vrais peindre l'esprit aux sens ?
 Mais quelle voix jamais d'une plus pure flamme
 Et chatouilla l'oreille et pénétra dans l'âme ?¹

Such voices, penetrating the soul, had to be imitated.

Yet, there is one aspect in the imitation of nature by the Ancients that might not seem at first to have quite the same relevance for both the eighteenth century and for Antiquity. This was the introduction of mythology. Many of the mysteries of natural forces had been explained by primitive societies in terms of anthropomorphic deities. This is amply illustrated in the Iliad and the Odyssey, but from the fourth century B.C. the critical spirit of philosophy, in Greece especially, was producing abstract thought, and there was a certain weakening in the complete acceptance of the Olympian Pantheon.² Even so myth still remained a major element of poetry - even in the verses of the epicurean Lucretius. It was part of an inherent culture, often used to explore questions of human existence through symbolism and allegory, and often employed for stylistic reasons or for pleasure and entertainment.

Scientific advances in knowledge had shattered the veracity of myths and Chénier acknowledged this. Indeed in 'L'Invention' he seems to suggest that certain fables should not be included if they were contradictory to modern scientific discoveries:

¹ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.153-156, p.17.
 Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.153-156, p.126.

² See C. Segal, 'Ovid's "Metamorphoses": Greek Myth in Augustan Rome', Studies in Philology, LXVIII, Oct. 1971, pp.371-394.

Que leurs [des esprits inventeurs] vers, de Thétis respectant
le sommeil,
N'aillent plus dans ses flots rallumer le sommeil;
De la cour d'Apollon que l'erreur soit bannie,
Et qu'enfin Calliope, élève d'Uranie,
Montant sa lyre d'or sur un plus noble ton,
En langage des Dieux fasse parler Newton !¹

In practice Chénier's application of mythology differs little from its treatment by Latin poets like Propertius. Chénier saw in mythology not an exhausted, bankrupt tradition, but a brilliant poetic system, a permanent source of inspiration.² He invested it, as did the Ancients, with an allegorical value, able to propound abstract truths in lucid, living, concrete images:

On veut proscrire aussi les allégories antiques. . . .
L'allégorie est la langue de l'esprit. . . . Il faut encore
en inventer de nouvelles. . . . La poésie donne un corps, un
visage à tous les vices, à toutes les vertus, aux passions. . .³

He understood mythology as an outstanding way to exteriorize individual thoughts and feelings, linking them with the collective experience and sanctioning them by tradition.

Chénier was moreover impelled to imitate the Ancients since their standards, both in form and content, were for him, and for his contemporaries, absolute values whose validity was guaranteed by the test of time:

Nul âge ne verra pâlir vos saints lauriers,
Car vos pas inventeurs ouvrirent les sentiers;
Et du temple des arts que la gloire environne
Vos mains ont élevé la première colonne.⁴

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.293-298, p.21.
Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.293-298, p.130.

²For Chénier's use of mythology in his Elégies see chapter VIII, pp.336-338 below.

³Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.692.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.9-12, p.12.
Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.9-12, p.123.

Thus, just as Horace recommended the constant reading of Greek authors: 'vos exemplaria Graeca / nocturna versate manu, versate diurna',¹ and was echoed by Du Bellay 'Ly donques et rely premierement (ô Poëte futur) feuilletete de main nocturne et journalle les exemplaires grecz et latins',² so Chénier looked upon the Ancients as worthy models. In an elegy, written to the Marquis de Brazais, he sets them next to nature as the only true guides for any poet:

Les poètes vantés,
 Sans cesse avec transport lus, relus, médités;
 Les Dieux, l'homme, le ciel, la nature sacrée
 Sans cesse étudiée, admirée, adorée,
 Voilà nos maîtres saints, nos guides éclatants.³

Even for a poem in a modern setting Chénier believed that the poet should still turn to the Ancients and learn from them:

Même quand nous traçons des tableaux et des caractères
 modernes, c'est d'Homère, de Virgile, de Plutarque, de
 Tacite, de Sophocle, de Salluste, d'Eschyle qu'il nous
 faut apprendre à les peindre.⁴

B. Invention

For Chénier, 'dévot adorateur de ces maîtres antiques',⁵ imitation of their work was an essential part of literary creation. The principle that guided the way in which he imitated ancient authors, is of cardinal importance for this thesis. He characterized it as 'imitation inventrice'.⁶

¹ Horace, Ars Poetica, ll.268-269.

² J. Du Bellay, La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse. Edition critique par H. Chamard, Paris, Fontemoing, 1904, p.201.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, 1, ll.5-9, p.125.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', I, 1, ll.5-9, p.133.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Amérique', VI, 1, p.127.
 Walter, 'Fragments, notes et vers destinés à "L'Amérique"', 1, p.440.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, l.133, p.206.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, l.133, p.160.

⁶ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.690.

Although this was far from being a revolutionary theory,¹ nevertheless it occupied a central position in his aesthetic throughout his career,² and, along with the principle of la naïveté, is the doctrine that raised his poetry to an outstanding peak of achievement. In it imitation and originality are inextricably united, and Chénier aimed to be a poet of marked individuality and, at the same time, an artist writing within his literary inheritance. It was not, as L. Bertrand claimed, an irreconcilable principle in which the two elements clashed and were doomed to sterility,³ but rather a source of enrichment: 'Et toujours cette sorte d'imitation inventrice dont j'ai parlé enrichit les auteurs les plus justement renommés pour leur originalité'.⁴

In his search for imitation inventrice Chénier was continuing the guiding principles of the Latin poets. The imitations of Greek poetry by Roman authors are everywhere acknowledged; Dubos⁵ selected the Aeneid as

¹ 'La bonne imitation est une continuelle invention; il faut se transformer en son modèle, embellir ses pensées, & par le tour qu'on leur donne, se les approprier; enrichir ce qu'on lui prend, & lui laisser ce qu'on ne peut enrichir'. (L. Racine, 'Reflexions sur la poésie', in Oeuvres de Louis Racine, Paris, Desaint et Saillant, 1747, Vol. IV, p.105).

² Morillot put a contrary view, that 'imitation' and 'invention' represent two separate phases in Chénier's poetics. 'Sans doute ces deux systèmes . . . ne sont pas foncièrement contradictoires dans la pensée intime de Chénier: ils sont loin cependant d'être identiques; ils représentent deux états différents de l'esprit du poète, et même, jusqu'à un certain point, deux phases distinctes dans le développement de son génie. Imiter les idylles de Théocrite ou les élégies de Tibulle, c'est très bien; il y eut pourtant des moments où André se dit en lui-même que ce n'était pas tout et qu'il y avait une autre manière d'être poète'. (P. Morillot, 'La Poétique d'André Chénier: imitation et invention', Revue des cours et conférences, I, Série 2, 1893, p.351). This is invalidated by the numerous notes for 'L'Amérique' and 'Hermès' in which Chénier reminds himself to imitate passages from Antiquity; for example, inter alia, 'Le serpent (v. Virgile) aux rayons du soleil'. (Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Amérique', VIII, 3, p.137. Walter, 'Fragments, notes et vers divers destinés à "L'Amérique"', 29, p.445).

³ L. Bertrand suggested that imitation inventrice was a bold theory but that 'elle a pour contre-partie une théorie de l'imitation qui en a stérilisé à peu près tous les germes'. (L. Bertrand, La Fin du Classicisme et le retour à l'Antique dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, Paris, Hachette, 1897, p.237).

⁴ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.690.

⁵ 'Virgile s'est, pour ainsi dire, acquis à bon titre la propriété de toutes les idées qu'il a prises dans Homère. Elles lui appartiennent en Latin,

his example of the way in which the finest qualities of the poem arise from the interplay of theme and expression with the epics of Homer.

G. Williams has discussed the issue in his book Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry, and his exhaustive study has indicated how Roman literature prospered from this special interaction with Greek authors.¹ Roman authors recognized, as Chénier did, that imitation alone could not suffice to produce work of any moment: 'Ante omnia igitur imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit, vel quia pigri est ingenii contentum esse iis quae sint ab aliis inventa'.² Imitation had to be linked with originality and only through these two concomitant forces could a poet reach his full potential. The claim to originality in each case was not based on rejecting what has been said before but in a fresh assessment leading to the creation of something new within the tradition. Chénier was convinced of the possibility of being independent from and at the same time dependent upon Graeco-Roman models:

Un poète qui vient après, qui les connaît tous et sait les sentir tous, peut. . . se composer une manière d'après toutes celles-là, une manière à lui. . . . Ils l'ont aidé à se faire sa manière qui n'est celle d'aucun d'eux, qui est aussi, tout comme la leur, celle de la nature, originale comme la leur, puisqu'elle est vraie, pittoresque, facile, imprévue, et difficile à imiter.³

Chénier accomplished his exhortation, 'Changeons en notre miel leurs

5 [contd.]

à cause du tour élégant & de la précision avec laquelle il les a rendues en sa langue, & à cause de l'art avec lequel il enchasse ces différens morceaux dans le bâtiment régulier dont il est l'Architecte'. (Abbé Dubos, Réflexions critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture, 3 vols., Paris, Pissot, 1770, Vol. II, p.83).

¹G. Williams, Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968.

²Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, ii, 4.

³Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.691.

plus antiques fleurs',¹ in various ways, for there are many different levels in the relationship a poet may establish with his sources. A poem may, for example, be inspired by an individual, personal experience that is then modified as the poem is composed and the literary motifs flood in to crystallize the experience and to set it against the all-important background. At another time the poet's reading may stimulate his creative talent and summon up analogies drawn from personal experience. At times, as Marmontel suggests, the source of the inspiration is evoked in the poet's subconscious:

Souvent l'auteur ne sait lui-même où il a vu ce qu'il imite:
l'esprit ne vit que de souvenirs, et rien de plus naturel
que de prendre de bonne foi sa mémoire pour son imagination;
rien de plus difficile que de bien démêler ce qu'on a tiré
des livres ou des hommes, de la nature ou de soi-même.²

Within a single poem the nature of Chénier's treatment of his ancient models also varied, as the balance between imitation and invention altered. The simplest relationship that the poet can establish with his literary source is one of translation, though this term can cover varying degrees of adaptation, and often a knowledge of the original is essential to the understanding. Although we can cite 'Medée',³ one of the Bucoliques, as a free translation of part of Vergil's Eclogues, poem VIII; this type of imitation was not frequently indulged in by Chénier. He preferred a balance in which invention was given more weight.

In the 'Epître sur ses ouvrages' Chénier describes two other methods he employed more frequently to incorporate classical sources. The first type of imitation inventrice that he illustrates, involves transposing

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, l.181, p.18.
Walter, 'L'Invention', l.181, p.127.

²J.F. Marmontel, 'Plagiat', 'Eléments de Littérature', in Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition, 18 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XIV, p.563.

³Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', VI, pp.52-54.
Walter, 'Bucoliques', VII, pp.9-10.

borrowed, yet congenial,¹ themes and ideas into a new context:

Tantôt chez un auteur j'adopte une pensée,
Mais qui revêt, chez moi souvent entrelacée,
Mes images, mes tours, jeune et frais ornement.²

This could not be a mechanical reproduction for, by their adaptation to a different setting, the ideas gained a new life.

The second method follows Quintilian's advice:

Ex his ceterisque lectione dignis auctoribus et verborum
sumenda copia est et varietas figurarum et componendi
ratio, tum ad exemplum virtutum omnium mens dirigenda.³

It involved transferring recollected words, phrases, and images into a new context:

Tantôt je ne retiens que les mots seulement;
J'en détourne le sens, et l'art sait les contraindre
Vers des objets nouveaux qu'ils s'étonnent de peindre.⁴

¹ Du Bellay insists that a poet must create 'à l'imitation de celui dont il se sentira approcher de plus pres. Autrement son imitation ressembleroit celle du singe'. (J. du Bellay, La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse. Edition critique par H. Chamard, Paris, Fontemoing, 1904, p.200).

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.117-119, pp.205-206.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.117-119, p.159.

³ Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, ii, I.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.120-122.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.120-122. The two passages may recall La Fontaine's 'Epître à Monseigneur l'Evêque de Soissons', ll.26-32.

Mon imitation n'est point un esclavage:
Je ne prends que l'idée, et les tours, et les lois,
Que nos maîtres suivoient eux-mêmes autrefois.
Si d'ailleurs quelque endroit plein chez eux d'excellence
Peut entrer dans mes vers sans nulle violence,
Je l'y transporte, et veux qu'il n'ait rien d'affecté,
Tâchant de rendre mien cet air d'antiquité.

(Œuvres de J. de La Fontaine, Nouvelle édition. . . par H. Regnier, 11 vols., Paris, Hachette, 1892, Vol. IX, p.202).

In such a way are ancient formulae transformed by the idiosyncratic use of them made by the poet. The final chapters of this thesis will furnish detailed examples elucidating these techniques as we compare Chénier's Elégies with the models provided by Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid.

Whichever method was adopted at a given time by Chénier, total assimilation of the borrowed material was required: the poet had to make it his own. To express this aim Chénier took the image of a gardener delicately grafting new branches on to trees, branches which were to become integral parts of the tree and produce fruit:

Des antiques vergers ces rameaux empruntés
Croissent sur mon terrain mollement transplantés.
Aux troncs de mon verger ma main avec adresse
Les attache; et bientôt même écorce les presse.
De ce mélange heureux l'insensible douceur
Donne à mes fruits nouveaux une antique saveur.¹

In this assimilation of content and form Chénier did not confine himself to adapting one ancient author to one poem. Indeed here again, he was following the principle constantly employed by the Romans, that of contaminatio:

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.127-132.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.127-132. M. Jouglard in 'L'"Imitation Inventrice" ou les contradictions d'André Chénier', R.L.C., VIII, 1928, p.642 has suggested that this imagery was borrowed from Vida, translated into French in 1771 by L'Abbé Batteux: 'Il en est qui prennent ouvertement et avec intrépidité, qui même s'en font une gloire, parce que sous les paroles qu'ils ont empruntées ils ont eu l'art merveilleux d'enfermer un autre sens. . . C'est ainsi que les plantes transplantées dans un sol nouveau et les arbres entés sur une tige étrangère produisent de plus belles fleurs ou de plus beaux fruits'. The translation by L'Abbé Batteux is in Les Quatre Poétiques d'Aristote, d'Horace, de Vida, de Despréaux avec les traductions et des remarques de M. L'Abbé Batteux, 2 vols., Paris, Saillant et Nyon, 1771, Vol. II, p.161.

The imagery used is also reminiscent of Du Bellay's comments on the Romans' adoption of Greek: 'Que si les anciens Romains eussent été aussi negligens à la culture de leur langue, quand premièrement elle commença à pululer, pour certain en si peu de tens elle ne feust devenue si grande. Mais eux, en guise de bons agriculteurs, l'ont premièrement transmuée d'un lieu sauvage en un domestique: puis affin que plus tost et mieux elle peust fructifier, coupant à l'entour les inutiles rameaux, l'ont pour échange d'iceux restaurée'. (J. Du Bellay, *ibid.*, pp.70-71).

Tout ce que des Anglais la muse inculte et brave,
 Tout ce que des Toscans la voix fière et suave,
 Tout ce que les Romains, ces rois de l'univers,
 M'offraient d'or et de soie, est passé dans mes vers.
 Je m'abreuve surtout des flots que le Permesse
 Plus féconds et plus purs fit couler dans la Grèce;
 Là, Prométhée ardent, je dérobe les feux
 Dont j'anime l'argile et dont je fais des Dieux.¹

The process of contamination shows Chénier's eclectic spirit. It is a complicated amalgam of ideas and forms, taken not from one, but from several sources, and then welded into a cohesive whole. In a note destined to be developed for 'L'Amérique' Chénier summarizes the process:

Je veux dans un même morceau confondre et imiter cet
 endroit d'Homère où Priam demande à Hélène le nom des
 héros de l'armée, et la divine scène d'Eschyle dans les
 Sept chefs où un messager apprend à Etéocle le nom des
 chefs et les devises de leur bouclier qu'Etéocle rétorque
 toujours contre eux. Cette scène est au-dessus de
 l'éloge.²

Such distillation of the excellent qualities of several authors provides the means whereby Chénier converted their riches into his own:

Ainsi, bruyante abeille, au retour du matin
 Je vais changer en miel les délices du thym.³

The technique of contaminatio does lay itself open to criticism, for on the surface it appears to be a mere collection of phrases from other poets. This is evident from the criticism of P. Morillot who judged it as 'la théorie. . . qui réduit la poésie à n'être plus qu'une série de morceaux admirablement joints'.⁴ Contaminatio is not in its true sense

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.109-116, p.205.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.109-116, p.159.

² Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Amérique', VI, 4, p.128.
 Walter, 'Fragments, notes et vers destinés à "L'Amérique"', 4, p.440.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 4, ll.35-36, p.49.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 3, ll.35-36, p.92.

⁴ P. Morillot, 'La Poétique d'André Chénier: imitation et invention',
Revue des cours et conférences, I, Série 2, 1893, p.350.

synonymous with pastiche. The different elements are collected and then transformed into a completely new, imaginative unity. It offers great thematic complexity and interest as the reader searches for and grasps the varied connotations and comparisons with the literary models. It becomes, especially in the hands of Chénier, the poetry of literary allusion. It is disappointing to see that some modern critics refuse the effort required by the reader:

Chénier's work has many failings which hinder the full recognition of his genial powers. One of these disadvantages is the demand it makes on the reader in the way of scholarship. This can only be overcome by reducing or even refusing that demand, even at the risk of sometimes remaining at the surface.¹

This may, with the decline of classical scholarship, be an explanation for Chénier's decline in popularity, but to overlook his literary allusions, and the unique product which comes from them, is surely to miss the whole point of his poetry.

The final level of a poet's relationship with his literary models is when imitation inventrice may be said to be in the form of subconscious reminiscences. In his preface to his second edition of L'Olive, Du Bellay comments on this process:

Si, par la lecture des bons livres, je me suis imprimé quelques traictz en la fantaisie, qui après, venant à exposer mes petites conceptions selon les occasions qui m'en sont données, me coulent beaucoup plus facilement en la plume qu'ilz ne me reviennent en la memoire, doit-on pour ceste raison les appeller pieces rapportées ?²

This stage of imitation inventrice requires total absorption of the literary sources. The writer has to be so steeped in Classical

¹ F. Scarfe, ed., André Chénier. Poems selected and edited by F. Scarfe, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1961, p.xxi.

² J. Du Bellay, L'Olive, 'Au Lecteur', second edition, 1550, in L'Olive. Texte établi avec notes et introduction par E. Caldarini, Textes littéraires français, Genève, Droz, 1974, pp.49-50.

Antiquity that his thoughts, feelings, and expressions, fuse naturally with this background, and with his imagination. E. Faguet applied this with insight to Chénier:

Chénier réalise le rêve de tous les poètes humanistes français depuis Ronsard, rêve qu'aucun d'eux n'a réalisé en effet pleinement. Se faire une âme antique, penser, sentir, être ému et voir même comme un ancien.¹

For André Chénier, then, literary larceny was not reprehensible, but rather a necessary part of original creation. He believed it to be perverse to avoid imitatio in a wild attempt to be extraordinary when common-place ideas fitted logically into the context, and he said so, at some length, in the 'Essai'. The argument and the language merit quotation:

Mais ici je ne veux point passer outre sans mentionner et montrer combien est vaine et insensée l'idée de plusieurs qui, dès qu'ils rencontrent dans un livre des pensées ou des expressions semblables à d'autres qu'ils ont déjà rencontrées dans d'autres livres, crient aussitôt au pillage et au plagiat. Et d'abord je demanderai s'il n'y a pas un grand nombre de pensées fécondes et universelles qui, étant liées par leurs rapports à une multitude de choses, étant la suite, l'origine ou le noeud d'une multitude de notions, doivent entrer nécessairement dans beaucoup de matières diverses, et par conséquent se trouver sur le droit chemin de tous les divers auteurs qui les traitent, si ces auteurs ont un esprit exact et un discernement juste. Or, je dis que s'éloigner de ces pensées lorsqu'on y est précipité par la pente de son sujet, sur cette seule raison qu'un autre auteur, en écrivant d'autre chose, aurait dû les avoir aussi et les aurait employées, serait puéril et contre le bon sens: car elles sont nécessaires au fil du discours et la conséquence de ce qui a été dit, et le passage a des conséquences ultérieures; et il est clair que leur absence laisserait dans l'enchaînement des idées une interruption impossible à bien remplir.²

¹E. Faguet, André Chénier, Paris, Hachette, 1902, p.61. See also 'Tout rempli de ses lectures antiques, tout imprégné de l'esprit et des souvenirs de Rome et de la Grèce, il en reproduit les traits, les tours, les images, naturellement, sans recherche et sans effort'. (L. Petit de Julleville, Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900, Vol. VI, Paris, A. Colin, 1898, p.658).

²Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.688-689.

The last lines of the quotation imply the complete necessity of this kind of borrowing. T.S. Eliot, who seems so often to resemble Chénier in thought, underlines the point:

Bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it is torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion.¹

For Chénier too the plagiarist plundered because of lack of talent; the treasures he stole he tarnished; the borrowed material was never fully incorporated, and anomalous and incongruous themes produced empty phrases:

Celui qui n'ayant point de but, de plan, de séries d'idées qui le conduise, d'impulsion secrète qui le domine, n'écrit que pour tenir une plume, et va cherchant de côté et d'autre quelques perles incohérentes et parasites, quelques riches lambeaux, pour les coudre à sa robe qui les ternit et n'en paraît que plus pauvre,² celui-là est un plagiaire ou au plus un compilateur. Mais celui qui embrasse un projet étendu, le poursuit, avance dans son vaste plan, ne perd de vue aucune partie et, recueillant dans ses souvenirs et dans ses lectures quelques beautés qui se trouvent devant lui, grossit son fleuve déjà grand, et mêle de l'or avec de l'or, celui-là ne mérite pas les mêmes noms. Car l'un ne fait que transposer des mots d'un papier sur un autre; il emprunte sans devenir riche; et les bonnes choses qu'il rencontre ne font que passer sur ses lèvres et le laissent maigre et décharné,³ tandis que l'autre les goûte, les savoure, les digère et leur suc devient sa propre substance.⁴

This elegant prose becomes elegant verse as Chénier repeats in 'L'Invention'

¹ T.S. Eliot, 'Philip Massinger', Selected Essays, second edition, London, Faber, 1934, p.206.

² 'Le vrai plagiat. . . va comme un filou voler un écrivain célèbre, et déchirer une riche étoffe pour la coudre avec ses haillons'. (J.F. Marmontel, 'Plagiat', 'Eléments de Littérature', in Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition, 18 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XIV, p.564).

³ 'Les écrivains indiscrets de nostre siècle, qui, parmy leurs ouvrages de neant, vont semant des lieux entiers des anciens auteurs pour se faire honneur, font le contraire. Car cett' infinie dissemblance de lustres rend un visage si pasle, si terni et si laid à ce qui est leur, qu'ils y perdent beaucoup plus qu'ils n'y gagnent'. (Montaigne, 'De l'institution des Enfants', Selected Essays, ed. A. Tilley and A. Boase, fifth edition, Manchester University Press, 1967, p.283).

⁴ Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.689.

his vigorous condemnation of excessive subservience, and relates how the authors of Antiquity had pointed the way to immortality:

A nous tous aujourd'hui, vos faibles nourrissons,
 Votre exemple a dicté d'importantes leçons.
 Il nous dit que nos mains, pour vous être fidèles,
 Y doivent élever des colonnes nouvelles.
 L'esclave imitateur naît et s'évanouit;
 La nuit vient, le corps reste, et son ombre s'enfuit.¹

Actually these attacks made by Chénier against the 'servum pecus'² are formulated in terms that recall the ideas of Edward Young. Young's denunciation of plagiarists had been equally scathing:

Les imitateurs ne font que nous donner des copies de ce que nous avons déjà, qui, quelquefois gâtent le modèle et ne servent qu'à multiplier inutilement les volumes sans rien ajouter à la dose de science et de génie qui en fixe la valeur réelle.³

P. Dimoff has uncovered the pervasive influence on Chénier's 'L'Invention'⁴ of Young's 'Conjectures sur la composition originale'. The French translation by Le Tourneur of this essay had appeared in 1770. Dimoff specifies the links, and notes, not without irony, that:

Il n'est presque pas un article du programme littéraire, exposé dans 'L'Invention' dont on n'y puisse retrouver la source. André Chénier, bien entendu, la plupart du temps, a modifié les termes et changé les images; il a tantôt longuement appuyé sur ce qu'Young ne faisait que noter en passant; tantôt, au contraire, ramassé en quelques vers le contenu de plusieurs pages des Conjectures. Mais, ainsi déguisée, résumée ou développée, l'idée reste au fond identique.⁵

¹ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.13-18, pp.12-13.
 Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.13-18, p.123.
 See also Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', pp.650-651.

² Horace, Epistles, Lib. 1, XIX, 19.

³ E. Young, 'Conjectures sur la composition originale', Oeuvres diverses du Docteur Young, traduites de l'anglais par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, Le Jay, 1770, 2 vols., part III, p.240.

⁴ P. Dimoff, 'Une Source anglaise de "L'Invention" d'André Chénier', R.L.C., I, 1921, pp.504-526.

⁵ Ibid., p.506.

The sub-title of 'L'Invention', 'audendum est', contains an essential truth in the nature of imitation inventrice. This Dantonesque exhortation, in its French rendering, 'osons', forms the leitmotif of the poem, and again demonstrates the importance of Young's theories.¹ This was the basis of the challenge, issued to contemporary writers by Young, to rival and to surpass the Ancients:

Osons, enflammés par l'émulation, mettre leurs lauriers
au hasard et leur faire craindre la perte de ces postes
élevés qu'ils occupent depuis si longtemps dans le champ
de la gloire.²

For such a reason Chénier, in 'L'Invention', portrays himself as 'Prométhée ardent',³ and proclaims that 'Ce n'est qu'aux inventeurs que la vie est promise'.⁴ Although these statements are carefully defined and limited, the pleas for emulation and audacity ring out. They are developed, of course, in terms that give a new setting to ancient topoi:

Mais, qu'auprès de leurs chars, dans un char enlevée,
Sur leurs sentiers marqués de vestiges si beaux,
Sa roue ose imprimer des vestiges nouveaux !
Quoi ! faut-il, ne s'armant que de timides voiles,
N'avoir que ces grands noms pour nord et pour étoiles,
Les côtoyer sans cesse, et n'oser un instant,
Seul et loin de tout bord, intrépide et flottant,
Aller sonder les flancs du plus lointain Nérée,
Et du premier sillon fendre une onde ignorée ?⁵

¹ For examples of Chénier's use of 'osons' see,
'Mieux qu'eux, par votre exemple, à vous vaincre excités, / Osons'.
Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.22-23, p.13.
Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.22-23, p.123,
and, 'Travaille; ose achever cette illustre conquête'.
Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.252, p.20.
Walter, *ibid.*, l.252, p.129.

² E. Young, *ibid.*, p.308.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, l.115, p.205.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, l.115, p.159.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, l.19, p.13.
Walter, 'L'Invention', l.19, p.123.

⁵ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.88-96, p.15.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.88-96, p.125.

Again Chénier and his contemporaries¹ were only adopting a principle dear to the Romans themselves, that of aemulatio. It was essential not only to equal but to surpass the excellence of the model, for, as Quintilian said: 'Nam qui hoc agit, ut prior sit, forsitan, etiam si non transierit, aequabit. Eum vero nemo potest aequare cuius vestigiis sibi utique insistendum putat'.² It was pointed out by Marmontel that the Romans, possessed of a heightened sense of emulation, did indeed occasionally surpass the Greeks:

Après avoir été les disciples des Grecs, ils en devinrent les rivaux; et en s'efforçant de les atteindre, ils eurent quelquefois la gloire de les surpasser.³

Chénier advocated a similar dynamic and independent relationship with the Classics. In prose that recalls the writing of Le Brun,⁴ he describes the qualities of a poet and emphasizes the spurs of creative inspiration and of constant search for perfection as the essence of emulation, which, with work, produces masterpieces:

¹The exhortation 'audendum est' was a common literary precept of the time: 'Ce qui fait des imitateurs un troupeau d'esclaves, servum pecus, c'est l'inertie de leur esprit, et cette basse timidité qui ne sait qu'obéir et suivre. De tous les caractères, le plus essentiel à celui qui prend pour modèle un homme de génie, c'est la hardiesse du génie: et comment ressembler à celui qui ose, si on n'ose pas comme lui?' (J.F. Marmontel, 'Imitation', 'Eléments de littérature', in Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel, nouvelle édition, 18 vols., Paris, Firmin Didot, 1818-1819, Vol. XV, p.133).

²Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, ii, 10.

³Marmontel, 'Essai sur le goût', *ibid.*, Vol. XII, p.34.

⁴P. Dimoff cites Le Brun's 'Réflexions sur le génie de l'ode', as the source of this passage: 'Je dirais donc au jeune homme qui me consulterait: si vous ne sentez pas ce feu, cette heureuse chaleur, cette impulsion divine, ces secousses de l'âme qui passent rapidement dans celles des autres, si vous osez me dire: Est deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo: si vous lisez sans frémissement d'admiration le Qualem ministrum, ou l'ode sur le duc de Bretagne, ne faites point d'odes'. (P. Dimoff, ed., André Chénier: 'L'Invention', Poème avec introduction et notes par P. Dimoff, Paris, Nizet, 1966, p.165).

Mais toi, jeune élève, si les chefs-d'oeuvres antiques,
chaque jour contemplés, baignent ton front de sueur,
enflamment ton courage et laissent dans ton cœur un
long aiguillon d'émulation et de gloire; si l'idée ou
la vue de la beauté allume tes sens et te mets hors de
toi; si tu aimes à t'enfoncer dans les bois, seul, errant
comme un insensé, et ruminant dans ton cerveau les
brûlants tableaux des poètes et répétant les vers où
respirent, où se meuvent les héros, les géants, les
dieux; si tu frappes du pied, de dépit, en trouvant
toujours ton exécution au-dessous de ta pensée; si,
toujours mécontent de ce que tu viens de faire, une
ardente inquiétude te fait toujours chercher quelque
chose au delà, viens, viens, travaille; c'est toi qui
feras des chefs-d'oeuvres; c'est toi qui ressusciteras
ce bel art, cet art divin, si mal connu parmi nous.¹

The argument that, far from having a stultifying effect on a young poet the Classics should act as a powerful stimulus, is voiced in more imaginative terms as Chénier likens the aspiring poet to the young eagle, not to be intimidated, lest he should for ever remain in obscurity.

Doit-il donc, à l'aspect de l'aigle ambitieux
Qui pénètre la nue et la voûte des cieux,
L'aiglon intimidé, dans un nid, sans courage,
Doit-il ensevelir et sa force et son âge,
Et n'oser, immobile en un obscur sommeil,
S'aller perdre jamais dans les feux du soleil?²

Chénier felt that the sense of rivalry with the Ancients, or with contemporaries, would inflame a poet's imagination until 'porté sur son imagination aux ailes de feu, il s'élançe, il pénètre jusqu'aux plus secrets appas'.³ In this there is almost a mystical belief in the

¹Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.651.

See also: Le poète enivré de ses jeunes fureurs, . . .
. . . promenant ses pas sous le bois égarés,
Des poètes divins relit les vers sacrés.
Leurs triomphes n'ont point abattu son courage.
Il mesure leur vol qui plane d'âge en âge.
L'ardeur de suivre aussi cet illustre chemin
Soulève ses cheveux, aiguillonne sa main.

Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', III, ll.45, 48-53, p.190.

Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', I, ll.66, 69-74, pp.558-559.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.39-44.

Walter, *ibid.*, ll.60-65.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 2, ll.18-19, p.19.

Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', IV, ll.17-18, p.537.

artist's imagination becoming so heightened that he feels possessed by a God within, and creation, in this sense, is an act of deliverance. In lines that imitate Vergil's description of the inspired Sibyl,¹ Chénier shows the passionate enthusiasm and exaltation brought about by divine furor:

Tel le bouillant poète, en ses transports brûlants,
Le front échevelé, les yeux étincelants,
S'agite, se débat, cherche en d'épais bocages
S'il pourra de sa tête apaiser les orages,
Et secouer le Dieu qui fatigue son sein.
De sa bouche à grands flots ce Dieu dont il est plein
Bientôt en vers nombreux s'exhale et se déchaîne:
Leur sublime torrent roule, saisit, entraîne
Les tours impétueux, inattendus, nouveaux,
L'expression de flamme aux magiques tableaux
Qu'a trempés la nature en ses couleurs fertiles,
Les nombres tour à tour turbulents ou faciles.²

The extraordinary sensitivity granted in these moments of divine inspiration produces poetic insight, of the kind Chénier knew. In such a moment: 'L'art ne fait que des vers, le coeur seul est poète'.³

The sense of mysticism is increased as Chénier, following Young's demand, 'Voyageons dans les siècles passés et visitons les riches magasins de l'antiquité',⁴ urges a poet to become a Greek or a Roman, and think and react as they did, and then return and contemplate the modern world through

¹ A manuscript (B.N. nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 6849 fo.5), for 'L'Invention' has this note: 'Il ne faut pas oublier quelque part de placer cette comparaison. Tel que le taon envoyé par Junon va tourmenter Io. . . descript. . . ainsi le poète, tourmenté par son génie, tourne. . . descript. . . magnum si pectore possit. . . Et secouer le Dieu qui tourmente son sein (A. VI 77-80)'. (Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', I, 4, ll.1-5, pp.7-8).

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, II, ll.345-356, p.23.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.345-356, p.131.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', X, l.2, p.175.
Walter, 'Varia', 'Epilogue', l.2, p.614.

⁴ E. Young, 'Conjectures sur la composition originale', Oeuvres diverses du Docteur Young, traduites de l'anglais par M. Le Tourneur, Paris, Le Jay, 1770, 2 vols., part III, p.281.

their eyes. He would then be able to express the thoughts of his own day, and convey the feelings of his own time, with the simplicity and naïveté of the ancient artist.

Puis, ivres des transports qui nous viennent surprendre,
Parmi nous, dans nos vers, revenons les répandre;
Changeons en notre miel leurs plus antiques fleurs;
Pour peindre notre idée, empruntons leurs couleurs;
Allumons nos flambeaux à leurs feux poétiques;
Sur des pensers nouveaux, faisons des vers antiques.¹

From la naïveté, from imitation inventrice, and from the almost mystical conclusion of his ideas, Chénier produced a poetic foundation for poems which achieve the highest expression of French poetry in the eighteenth century. There was neither iconoclasm nor idolatry in his formulation of the belief that the poet must dare to erect a new column in the temple of the arts, whose architecture must remain the same:

O qu'ainsi parmi nous des esprits inventeurs
De Virgile et d'Homère atteignent les hauteurs,
Sachent dans la mémoire avoir comme eux un temple,
Et sans suivre leurs pas imiter leur exemple;
Faire, en s'éloignant d'eux, avec un soin jaloux,
Ce qu'eux-même ils feraient s'ils vivaient parmi nous!²

Chénier's theories do not, as Scarfe suggests, mean a 'breaking away from the Neo-classical theory of tradition'.³ Instead it is evident that that theory was being exploited to the full. Inevitably Neo-classicism is to be judged by the poetry it produced. In appreciating Chénier's poetry we shall see, in the words of T.S. Eliot, that 'not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously'.⁴

¹Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, ll.179-184, p.18.
Walter, 'L'Invention', ll.179-184, p.127.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.285-290, p.21.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.285-290, p.130.

³F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.118.

⁴T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Selected Prose, ed. J. Hayward, London, Penguin, 1955, p.22.

VII

CREATIVITY: THE TECHNIQUE OF COMPOSITION

L'art ne fait que des vers; le coeur seul est poète. . . .
 Son coeur dicte; il écrit. A ce maître divin
 Il ne fait qu'obéir et que prêter sa main.¹

Chénier's claim, if isolated from his other theoretical statements, lends persuasive arguments to an interpretation of the author as a 'Romantic' poet driven to write verse by spontaneous and individual emotions. Indeed there appears a striking resemblance between Chénier's sentiments and those of Musset in his poem, 'Namouna':

Sachez-le, - c'est le coeur qui parle et qui soupire
 Lorsque la main écrit, - c'est le coeur qui se fond.²

Yet the parallel lasts only as long as Chénier's lines are abstracted from their context. Of particular relevance to us here is the fact that Chénier did not decry the importance of ars in poetry, in spite of the suggestion in the opening quotation. He would have been well acquainted with the ancient debate as to the relative merits of ars and ingenium as summarized by Horace in the Ars Poetica:

natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte
 quaesitum est: ego nec studium sine divite vena
 nec rude quid prosit video ingenium; alterius sic
 altera poscit opem res et coniurat amice.³

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', X, ll.2, 7-8, p.175.
 Walter, 'Varia', 'Epilogue', ll.2, 7-8, p.614.

² A. de Musset, 'Namouna', ch.II, iv, ll.19-20, in Poésies complètes d'Alfred de Musset, texte établi et annoté par M. Allem, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1933, p.264.

³ Horace, Ars Poetica, ll.408-411.

In this argument Chénier upheld Horace's verdict because of his belief that inspiration alone was insufficient. Even though he proclaimed 'le coeur seul est poète', he knew that, in order to produce a poem of true artistic worth, poetic inspiration had to be paired with the sheer hard work of creativity. Just as Ronsard counselled a poet to be 'laborieux à corriger & limer tes vers',¹ so Chénier, in didactic vein, instructed the young artist to correct, revise, and polish his verses, and to construct them with the meticulous care of an architect:

Si pour toi la retraite est un bonheur suprême,
Si chaque jour les vers de ces maîtres fameux
Font bouillonner ton sang et dressent tes cheveux;
Si tu sens chaque jour, animé de leur âme,
Ce besoin de créer, ces transports, cette flamme,
Travaille. . . .²

Work there had to be, but clearly not tedious drudgery, rather a process animated by boundless enthusiasm.

The fruits of such labour had to be l'art caché, bringing forth poems of apparent simplicity and spontaneity belying hours of toil. But Fate intervened and prevented such a consummation, although bringing mixed blessings. The premature death of André Chénier has at least afforded later generations the rare opportunity of being able to delve into a poet's workshop. The unfinished manuscripts allow the reader to speculate about the genesis and evolution of the poems. The numerous brouillons of the elegies, drafts that might well have been discarded by the poet on subsequent revision and on publication, give an insight into

¹ P. de Ronsard, 'Abregé de l'Art poétique françois', in Oeuvres complètes de P. de Ronsard, édition critique avec introduction et commentaire par P. Laumonier, Société des textes français modernes, Paris, Hachette, 1949, Vol. XIV, p.6.

² Dimoff, Vol. II, 'L'Invention', II, 11.256-261, p.20.
Walter, 'L'Invention', 11.256-261, p.129.

Chénier's techniques of composition, and, above all, indicate the way in which the Latin elegiac models discussed in chapter III were assimilated into the structure of his own Elégies. Thus, ironically, 'la retraite'¹ - the study where Chénier knew 'un bonheur suprême'² - that most private of places where the poet worked 'dans un calme pur',³ is flung open to the public gaze.

A. The manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale

Investigations into Chénier's techniques of composition for the Elégies take us to the Bibliothèque Nationale which holds almost all of the surviving manuscripts. Here, in the Catalogue général des manuscrits français (1900), they are listed in the nouvelles acquisitions françaises in four packets or liasses:⁴ 6848-6850, 'Oeuvres poétiques d'André Chénier, 218, 224, et 190 feuillets'; 6851, 'Notes et fragments divers d'André Chénier, 379 feuillets'. The classification and order of the manuscripts were established by Gabriel de Chénier for his edition of 1874.⁵ The ninety-eight extant elegies, which include fragments and fourteen single lines, are to be found, with a few exceptions, in liasse 6850. They are accompanied

¹ See note 2, p.270 above.

² Ibid.

³ Dimoff, Vol. II, 'La République des lettres', I, 1, 1.21, p.208. Walter, 'La République des lettres', 1, 1.10, p.470.

⁴ Other mss. relating to André Chénier are to be found as follows: Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 23863 - Actes notariés et documents relatifs aux familles Amproux de Lorme, de Bignicourt, Cesson, de Chénier. . .
23687 - Correspondance et papiers divers des familles de Chénier, La Tour de Saint-Igest, et Bonnet de Malherbe. . .
12694 - Considérations sur la mort. Note autographe d'André Chénier, avec lettres d' Aimée de Coigny à Garat et d'Henri de Latouche au Marquis de Chateaugiron.

⁵ 6848: 'Bucoliques'. 6849: 'L'Invention', 'Hermès', 'Suzanne', 'L'Amérique', 'L'Art d'aimer', 'Poème sur la superstition', 'Bataille d'Arminius', 'La France libre', 'La République des lettres', 'Théâtre'. 6850: 'Elégies', 'Epîtres', 'Hymnes', 'Odes', 'Iambes'. 6851: 'Apologie', 'Histoire du Christianisme', 'Réflexions sur l'esprit de parti', 'Essai sur les causes et les effets de la perfection et de la décadence des lettres et des arts', 'De la cause des désordres qui troublent la France', 'Fragments satiriques', 'Notes sur les Chinois'.

by annotations in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier and of his wife Elisa, indicating the position of each elegy in Latouche's edition and in Gabriel de Chénier's edition.¹ Not included in liasse 6850 are fourteen elegies, placed by Gabriel de Chénier in liasse 6848, 6849, or 6851, that have been labelled as elegies by P. Dimoff, either because they were designated in this way by the poet, or, in most cases, for stylistic and thematic reasons.² For the sake of lucidity and easy reference only Dimoff's edition of the poems will be cited when manuscript references are given. Dimoff alone has accurately transcribed all the elegiac material, (although, as we have seen, his arrangement of the poems is now open to doubt).³ Walter, in this case, proves to be an insufficient guide to the manuscripts. He omits from his 'popular edition' the majority of the single line fragments and many notes,⁴ and, above all, fails to include the important signs Chénier used

¹ 6850 fo. 1 recto, in the hand of Elisa de Chénier: 'Dossier où sont les manuscrits d'André de Chénier, t.3. *Elégies, Epîtres, Hymnes, Odes, Iambes.* Pour remettre à la Bibliothèque nationale sans rien déranger de l'ordre établi'. If André Chénier had given a specific order to his Elégies, this is irretrievably lost.

² (1) 'Quand à peine Clothon', 6851 fo. 16 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', I, pp.3-4).
 (2) 'Ah ! quand presque en naissant', 6851 fo. 22 recto. (Ibid., II, 1, pp. 5-6).
 (3) 'O grottes du mont Hara', 6849 fo. 132 recto. (Ibid., III, iii, 3, pp. 29-30).
 (4) 'Je parcours ces déserts', 6848 fo.205 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 8, p.98).
 (5) 'Et dormant ou veillant', 6851 fo. 341 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 12, pp.99-100).
 (6) 'Seul dans la forêt', 6849 fo. 213 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 27, pp.114-115).
 (7) 'L'oeil des témoins', 6849 fo. 121 verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 2, p.116).
 (8) 'Tantôt s'écoule et fuit', 6848 fo. 205 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 6, p.119).
 (9) 'Ainsi, lorsque souvent le gouvernail agile', 6849 fo. 203 recto. (Ibid., VII, 1, pp.157-158).
 (10) 'Sans parents, sans amis', 6849 fo. 204 recto. (Ibid., VII, 4, p.159).
 (11) 'Mer, qui pour séparer les amis', 6849 fo. 220 recto. (Ibid., VII, 5, p.160).
 (12) 'Le myrte armé d'un fer', 6848 fo. 205 verso. (Ibid., IX, 10, p.172).
 (13) 'Le loriot joyeux, et l'aigre sauterelle', 6848 fo. 205 recto. (Ibid., IX, 15, p.173).
 (14) 'Doux souris, doux regards', 6849 fo. 218 recto. (Ibid., IX, 19, p.174).

³ See above chapter II, pp. 97-99.

⁴ Examples of omissions:

(1) 'Peindre Nice. . . cette ville où les étrangers', designated by Chénier as ΕΛ, 6850 fo. 116 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 4, p.15).
 (2) 'On pourrait imiter l'élégie de Properce', designated 'Ελεγ. ιταλ.', 6850 fo. 141 recto. (Ibid., III, ii, 4, p.22).
 (3) None of the single lines and notes included by Dimoff, *ibid.*, pp.170-174 are to be found in Walter's edition.

to label his poems. In failing to take these into consideration Walter commits serious errors, for he places amongst his 'Epîtres', and 'Vers épars' poems that the author himself indicates as elegies.¹

More serious problems arise from the fact that the manuscripts of the Elégies are incomplete. Our gaze into the poet's workshop has only a restricted view. The reasons explaining the loss of so much of the manuscript evidence for Chénier's poetry take us back to the preparations for the first edition of the poet's work, published in 1819. After the death of Marie-Joseph Chénier in 1811, the manuscripts, which had previously been in his care, passed to his executor Daunou, and an edition of selected poems was planned with H. de Latouche chosen as the first editor. Details of the subsequent history of the manuscripts are unclear,² but, somehow, in 1819, Latouche obtained the manuscripts of the poems he selected for his edition, and retained many of them. This was despite the protests of the Chénier family, who were left, in the main, with unfinished poems and notes. When Latouche died the manuscripts which he had kept were inherited by Pauline de Flaugergues and were then destroyed, in 1871, during the Franco-Prussian war. Only those manuscripts that Latouche had donated to his friends escaped this fate and survive in private collections. If we now turn to the Elégies and elegiac fragments published by P. Dimoff, we can see that the manuscripts of thirty-nine elegies have been either lost or, in seven cases of the thirty-nine, have remained in private hands.³ Apart

¹ Examples of errors:

(1) Walter places amongst his 'Vers épars' (p.594) the fragment, 'Des monts du Beaujolais' with its heading Ελεγ., 6850 fo. 116 verso. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 2, p.13).

(2) He places amongst his 'Varia', (p.606) 'Il faut employer cette fable orientale du rossignol' designated Ελ.κω, 6850 fo. 157 recto. (Ibid., III, iii, 5, p.31).

² There are two different versions of the story, one by Latouche, (H. de Latouche, La Vallée aux Loups, second edition, Paris, Levavasseur, 1833, pp.218-221), the other by G. de Chénier, (L'Ordre et la liberté, 29, 31 March, 5, 9 April, 1864). H. de Latouche claimed that the manuscripts were given to him by the Chénier family and were therefore his rightful possession, whereas G. de Chénier claimed that they were borrowed under false pretences and fraudulently retained.

³ These are listed in note form on the following page.

3 [contd.]

List of elegies whose manuscripts are either lost or in private collections. Dimoff was able to trace and consult all but four of those in private hands.

- (1) 'Aujourd'hui qu'au tombeau'. Lost. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 2, pp.6-8).
- (2) 'Souffre un moment encor'. Lost. (Ibid., II, 3, pp.8-9).
- (3) 'Vous restez, mes amis'. Lost. (Ibid., III, i, 1, pp.10-12).
- (4) 'Ainsi, vainqueur de Troie'. Lost. (Ibid., III, iv, pp.34-35).
- (5) 'Fumant dans le cristal', ll.1-34, private collection; ll.35 to end, lost. (Ibid., IV, i, 1, pp.45-46).
- (6) 'Ah ! je les reconnais'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, i, 4, pp.48-50).
- (7) 'Souvent le malheureux'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, i, 6, pp.57-59).
- (8) 'Mais ne m'a-t-elle pas juré'. Dimoff was unable to identify the owner of this manuscript. (Ibid., IV, i, 7, pp.59-61).
- (9) 'Ah ! portons dans les bois'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, ii, 1, pp.61-62).
- (10) 'O lignes que sa main'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, ii, 3, pp.63-65).
- (11) 'Eh bien ! je le voulais'. Private collection. (Ibid., IV, ii, 4, p.66).
- (12) 'Et c'est Glycère, amis', ll.1-44, private collection, ll.45 to end, Dimoff was unable to identify the owner of this manuscript. (Ibid., IV, ii, 5, pp.67-69).
- (13) 'Ah ! des pleurs ! des regrets !'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, ii, 6, pp.69-70).
- (14) 'Allons, l'heure est venue'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, ii, 7, pp.70-73).
- (15) 'Non, je ne l'aime plus'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, ii, 8, pp.73-75).
- (16) 'Reste, reste avec nous'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, ii, 9, pp.75-78).
- (17) 'Hier, en te quittant'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, iii, 3, pp.81-83).
- (18) 'De l'art de Pyrgotèle'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, iv, 1, pp.87-89).
- (19) 'Loin des bords trop fleuris'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, v, 1, pp.90-91).
- (20) 'Jeune fille, ton coeur avec nous veut se taire'. Dimoff was unable to identify the owner of this manuscript. (Ibid., IV, v, 2, pp.92-93).
- (21) 'Bel astre de Vénus'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, v, 11, p.99).
- (22) 'Je suis né pour l'amour'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, v, 22, pp.106-110).
- (23) 'J'ai suivi les conseils'. Lost. (Ibid., IV, v, 24, pp.110-112).
- (24) 'Qui ? moi ? moi de Phébus'. Lost. (Ibid., V, 1, pp.125-127).
- (25) 'Mânes de Callimaque'. Lost. (Ibid., V, ii, 1, pp.127-130).
- (26) 'Qu'un autre soit jaloux'. Lost. (Ibid., V, ii, 2, pp.130-133).
- (27) 'De Pange, le mortel dont l'âme'. Lost. (Ibid., V, iii, 1, pp.133-135).
- (28) 'Ami, de mes ardeurs'. Private collection. (Ibid., V, iii, 2, pp.135-136).
- (29) 'De Pange, ami chéri'. Lost. (Ibid., V, iii, 3, pp.136-137).
- (30) 'Quand la feuille en festons'. Lost. (Ibid., V, iii, 4, pp.138-141).
- (31) 'Abel, doux confident de mes jeunes mystères'. Dimoff was unable to identify the owner of this manuscript. (Ibid., V, iv, 1, pp.141-142).
- (32) 'Pourquoi de mes loisirs accuser la langueur?'. Lost. (Ibid., V, iv, 2, pp.142-145).
- (33) 'Amis, couple chéri'. Lost. (Ibid., V, v, pp.145-148).
- (34) 'O Muses, accourez'. Lost. (Ibid., VI, 1, pp.149-152).
- (35) 'O jours de mon printemps'. Lost. (Ibid., VI, 2, pp.152-155).
- (36) 'O nécessité dure !'. Lost. (Ibid., VII, 9, pp.162-163).
- (37) 'Ah ! ne le croyez pas'. Lost. (Ibid., VIII, 1, pp.164-165).
- (38) 'L'innocente victime, au terrestre séjour'. Lost. (Ibid., VIII, 2, p.167).
- (39) 'L'art des transports de l'âme'. Lost. (Ibid., X, pp.175-176).

from a few cases Dimoff has reproduced the texts of these poems as published by Latouche, or consulted the manuscripts in private collections. The editorial implications of this tragic loss will be discussed later in this chapter.¹ Let it suffice here to say that the loss is particularly regrettable since Latouche must have selected for publication the most nearly completed elegies, those which, from a comparison with the printed poems, would have made the most invaluable contribution to an assessment of Chénier's techniques of composition.

The Bibliothèque Nationale has therefore been left a surprisingly disparate group of unfinished manuscripts for the Elégies. Nevertheless, the actual physical appearance of the documents provides tangible evidence of the way in which Chénier went about his task, and enables us to make conjectures about his methods of producing a poem. It consequently merits description. The Elégies and elegiac fragments are scattered over loose pieces of paper of differing quality and size. Although the variation is considerable, the average size of the paper used is 10 cm wide by 18 cm long, the smallest being 10 cm by 6 cm. Sometimes a larger sheet of paper has been folded down the middle to give four sides.² The ink is generally mid- or dark brown in colour, but occasionally light brown or black ink is preferred, sometimes affording useful proof of later corrections and revisions.³ Particularly noteworthy are the varied states of neatness and punctuation, furnishing clues as to how far the poem has progressed. One small group of poems has been transcribed with great care in small, fine, very neat handwriting, with thorough punctuation, suggesting final copies of the elegies,⁴ whereas other fragments show by their slanting hand and sparse

¹ See pp.316-318 below.

² See 6850 fo. 119-120 and fo. 146-147.

³ See 'O nuit, nuit douloureuse !', 6850 fo. 9 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 4, pp.83-86).

⁴ See 'Ah ! qu'ils portent ailleurs ces reproches austères', 6850 fo. 128 recto. (Ibid., IV, i, 2, pp.46-47).

punctuation that they have been written rapidly and will require revision.¹ Occasionally the draft is written in a heavy hand, at times illegible, with sections crossed out,² or the whole poem may be crossed out by diagonal lines, possibly when a second version was made.³ Sometimes one elegy occupies a whole side of paper,⁴ at other times an elegy may be cramped and fitted into the upper half of the paper.⁵ Sometimes memoranda and single line fragments cover a side,⁶ at other times there may be only a single line.⁷ If the paper has been folded in half, giving two columns, one side may be left blank for corrections,⁸ or both columns may be used for the main body of verse.⁹ Sections of a poem may be inverted,¹⁰ whilst others are suddenly written vertically.¹¹ In one case, unique among the Elégies, an eighteen line poem is signed by André Chénier;¹² two rare manuscripts are dated.¹³ An impression of creative confusion is easily engendered from such a varied collection of manuscript evidence.

Nevertheless, on closer inspection of the manuscripts, we have concluded that the Elégies and elegiac fragments fall into certain, well-

¹ See 'Trop longtemps le plaisir', 6850 fo. 152 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 8, p.32).

² See 'Et toi, lampe nocturne', 6850 fo. 23 recto & verso, fo. 24 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, i, 5, pp.50-56).

³ See 'S'ils n'ont point le bonheur', 6850 fo. 17 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 4, pp.93-94).

⁴ See 'Tel j'étais autrefois', 6850 fo. 137 recto. (Ibid., III, ii, 9, pp.25-26)

⁵ See 'Ah ! le pourrai-je au moins ?' 6850 fo. 43 recto. (ibid., IV, v, 25, p.112).

⁶ See 6850 fo. 89 recto, fo. 156 recto.

⁷ See 'Je sens là, dans ce coeur', 6850 fo. 76 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 18, p.104)

⁸ See 'Quel mortel inhabile à la félicité', 6850 fo. 16 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 4, pp.95-96).

⁹ See 'O nuit, nuit douloureuse !', 6850 fo. 9 recto. (Ibid., IV, iii, 4, pp.83-86).

¹⁰ See 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce', 11.44-47 are inverted, 6850 fo. 47 recto & verso. (Ibid., III, i, 6, pp.15-17).

¹¹ See 'O délices d'amour', 11.54-61 are written vertically in the left hand corner of the mss., 6850 fo.131 recto & verso. (Ibid., III, ii, 10, pp.26-28).

¹² See 'Ainsi le jeune amant', 6850 fo. 91 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 3, pp.117-118).

¹³ See 'Ainsi, lorsque souvent le gouvernail', 6849 fo. 203 recto, (Ibid., VII, 1, pp.157-158), dated 'le 10 décembre, 1787'. 'L'idée de ce long fragment',

defined groups. These, classified as follows, form a basis for speculation concerning the poet's techniques:

Group A.¹ Neat copies, i.e. elegies that appear to be finished, since they are carefully written, bear no corrections, and have full punctuation.

Group B.² Lines of verse only, which have not reached the final stage of a neat copy. This is shown by the writing, the occasional corrections, and sparse punctuation.


Group C.³ Lines of verse, sometimes with a brief addendum in prose, with numerous corrections, occasionally incomplete lines, crossings-out, and scanty punctuation. Often the paper is folded down the middle, with the right-hand side for corrections.

Group D.⁴ Shorter fragments of verse, often with brief prose annotations, and incomplete lines. This is a large group.

13 [contd.]

(the commentary for 'Animé par l'Amour'), 6850 fo. 13 recto & verso, fo. 14 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, i, 1, pp.40-44), which is dated 'le 23 avril 1782'.

¹ See (1) 'Quand à peine Clothon', 6851 fo. 16 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', I, pp.3-4).

(2) 'Ah ! qu'ils portent ailleurs ces reproches austères', 6850 fo. 128 recto. (Ibid., IV, i, 2, pp.46-47). This poem even has its lines numbered, and the closing sign  is placed at the end.

(3) 'Va, sonore habitant de la sombre vallée', 6850 fo. 38 recto. (Ibid., IV, ii, 2, pp.62-63), with closing sign at the end.

(4) 'Et moi, quand la chaleur', 6850 fo. 95 recto. (Ibid., VII, 8, p.161).

(5) 'Je vis. Je souffre encor', 6850 fo. 20 recto. (Ibid., VII, 10, p.163).

² See (1) 'Tel j'étais autrefois', 6850 fo. 137 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 9, pp.25-26).

(2) 'Salut, Dieux de l'Euxin', 6850 fo. 150 recto. (Ibid., III, iii, 2, p.29).

(3) 'Sous le roc sombre et frais', 6850 fo. 86 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 3, p.93).

(4) 'Ainsi le jeune amant, seul', 6850 fo. 91 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 3, pp.117-118).

(5) 'Le courroux d'un amant', 6850 fo. 35 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 9, p.121).

(6) 'Heureux qui, se livrant aux sages disciplines', 6850 fo. 161 recto & verso. (Ibid., VII, 2, pp.158-159).

³ See (1) 'Ah ! quand presque en naissant', 6851 fo. 22 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 1, pp.5-6).

(2) 'Oh ! c'est toi ! Je t'attends', 6850 fo. 133 recto & verso. (Ibid., III, ii, 3, pp.21-22).

(3) 'O nuit, nuit douloureuse !', 6850 fo. 9 recto. (Ibid., IV, iii, 4, pp.83-86).

(4) 'Je t'indique le fruit', 6850 fo. 107 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 17, pp.103-104).

(5) 'Quand à la porte ingrate', 6850 fo. 31 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 8, p.120).

⁴ See (1) 'Des monts du Beaujolais, aspect délicieux', 6850 fo. 116 verso. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 2, p.13).

(2) 'Au sommet de la mont', 6850 fo. 143 recto. (Ibid., III, ii, 1, p.18).

(3) 'Allez, mes vers, allez', 6850 fo. 135 recto. (Ibid., III, ii, 5, pp.22-23).

(4) ' . . . Penché sur toi', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 13, p.101).

(5) 'Non, je n'ai plus d'empire où commandent ses pleurs', 6850 fo. 124 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 15, p.102).

(6) 'Non, ces doctes beautés', 6850 fo. 78 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 23, p.110).

(7) 'A l'heure où quelque amant inquiet', 6850 fo. 99 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 5, pp.118-119).

Eleg XLVI. p. III. 112.

Élégie

imprimé. fragments 38
D'Eligien X. édition
Charpentier, 1841, page 154.

Va, sonore habitant de la sombre vallée,
sole, invisible Écho, vois douce, pure, ailée,
qui, tant que de Paris ni'éloignent les beaux jours,
aines à répéter mes vers et mes amours:

les cieux sont enflammés. sole, dis à Camille
que je l'attens qu'ici, moi, dans ce bel asile,
je l'attens, qu'un berceau de platanes épais
la mène en cette grotte, ou, l'autre jour, au frais,
pouvons, s'il lui souvient, l'heure ne fut point
lente.

va. sous la grotte; ici, parmi l'herbe. Douante
d'où l'œil même du jour ne saurait approcher,
et qu'égayer en courant l'eau filte du rocher.



1782

20 ans

ah! quand pres qu'en naissant hier presque un an
 de l'avenir dit au lieu d'un avenir flateur
 quand le char me qui suit de premières années
 ne m'offrirait des amours que belles destinées
 assurés de mes Dieux quand mes jeunes projets
 me promettaient un nom de plaisirs de succès

au sein de mes amis une si belle heureuse:
 ah je ne pensais pas faible et naissant flateur
 de si-tor mille d'être en un obscur tombeau
 sans apprendre en qu'on se passe à l'envie,
 sans avoir illustre ma part à l'ignominie

|| c'est ce de suite

De maux précieuses la foule qui m'inspire
 m'écomait de mes ans le faible privilège
 et je risais aux pleurs de leur main cordonné
 de l'aveugle à la vie en hémi
 pour me dire mon sort mes douleurs ma faulte
 pour être de vingt ans une infirmité celle
 dans mes reins agités quand des sables brûlants
 s'ouvrent un dur passage et de l'ire en mes flans.

il vint m'inspire que d'être visible
 fin par plusieurs peines milans les ans
 un son ombre et un fin pour ce
 un an que les premiers l'ambance
 est - ne par un fin de l'ambance

'Ah ! quand presqu'en naissant', 6851 fo.22 recto.
 Plate to illustrate the mss. in group C (p. 277 above).
 Actual size.

Group E.¹ Drafts of poems developed in a mixture of prose and verse.

Group F.² Lengthy prose drafts.

Group G.³ Short prose notes; ideas for poems to be developed.

Group H.⁴ Notes inspired directly from the poet's reading. These take the form of memoranda, citing a reference to, or quoting lines from, a classical source to be imitated at a later date. Chénier may comment in a short note in prose, or imitate the source directly in verse. This is a large group.

¹ See (1) 'O beautés de Marseille', 6850 fo. 111 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 3, pp.13-14).

(2) 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce', 6850 fo. 47 recto & verso, fo. 48 recto. (Ibid., III, i, 6, pp.15-18).

(3) 'O belle (son nom; pas le véritable ?)', 6850 fo. 139 recto & verso. (Ibid., III, ii, 2, pp.19-20).

(4) 'Trop longtemps le plaisir', 6850 fo. 152 recto. (Ibid., III, iii, 8, p.32).

(5) 'L'Elégie est venue me trouver', 6850 fo. 129 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, ii, 10, pp.78-80).

(6) 'Triste chose que l'amour !', 6850 fo. 97 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 27, pp.113-114).

² See (1) 'Viens me trouver. Je languis, je sèche', 6850 fo. 146 recto & verso. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 6, pp.23-24).

(2) 'O ma jeune souveraine', 6850 fo. 147 recto. (Ibid., III, ii, 7, p.24).

³ See 'Marseille. . . Raconter l'histoire de la fille gauloise', 6850 fo. 116 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 3, p.13).

(2) 'O mes amis, dans tous les plaisirs de mon voyage', 6850 fo. 137 verso. (Ibid., III, i, 5, p.15).

(3) 'J'ai été à ce bal', 6850 fo. 112 recto. (Ibid., VII, 3, p.159).

⁴ See (1) 'On pourrait imiter l'élégie de Properce', 6850 fo. 141 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 4, p.22).

(2) 'Il faut traduire ou imiter ces beaux vers de mon Tibulle', 6850 fo. 120 verso. (Ibid., IV, i, 6, p.56).

(3) 'Je revois tous ses traits', 6850 fo. 74 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 7, pp. 97-98).

(4) 'Quand d'un souffle jaloux', 6850 fo. 120 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 14, pp.101-102).

(5) 'Il faut traduire ces vers charmants', 6850 fo. 120 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 11, p.122).

(6) 'La pâle violette, emblème de l'amour', 6850 fo. 119 verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 19, p.124).

(7) 'Il faut placer quelque part', 6850 fo. 119 verso. (Ibid., IX, 7, p.171).

(8) 'Si du ris sur ta bouche il découvre les traces', 6850 fo. 119 verso. (Ibid., IX, 8, p.171).

(9) 'Cruelles destinées !' 6850 fo. 120 recto. (Ibid., IX, 12, p. 172).

Elog. LXXIX. p. 145 146
Marseille.

111

o beautés de Marseille... vous avez une loümeur vive et
 utraicente... vos chers... vos yeux noirs et... sur de regards
 bien doux et qui peut vivre près de vous... Marseille est
 une ville... Dans son port tout herissé d'une frue de mats
 on trouve le musulman l'indien de... marseille est toute
 l'univers... elle a toujours été fleurissante... unissant le
 commerce aux sciences et à la guerre... Pytheas...
 depuis l'iberie jusqu'à la ligurie plusieurs opulentes
 côtes l'ont reconnues pour unire... fille des phocéens
 roies de Rome rivale de Parthage elle a été
 l'Athene grecque... le destin que lui promet
 le ciel... les phocéens avoient de
 leur pays... ^{le vaisseau} protégés d'ici sur la
 mer et leur gré... ^{le} c'est ici qu'il faut mettre la
 que de nous) ils arrivent pendant que le ciel de cette
 votre préparait le destin impétueux, peruse fille...
 cette belle les avait vu arriver? elle avait dit à
 ses nourrices o que les étranges est beaux... ils
 n'ont point l'air sauvage de nos grecs... la douleur
 et la fièvre sont sur son visage... le héros grec
 est involontairement... elle entre ^{la belle barbare} qui s'en va
 on debi donne la coupe... celui a qui elle la présentera
 sera un espong... elle se courbe... et rougissant
 et baisant les iens elle présente la chere grec la
 coupe impetiale... ^{et indique la coupe de la herodote}
 Salut o ville grecque, honneur d'unum français
 toi par qui dans l'horreur de nos vieilles furets
 du cruel Teuates le pretre sanguinaire
 Cyprien! entendit les dons sons de la langue d'homere
 qui disciple a la fois de Minerve et de Mars
 fit couler sur nos bords l'opulence et les arts
 et de nos durs yeux polissant la rudesse
 sur de nos hers grecs sur truns, plantés la grace.

'O beautés de Marseille', 6850 fo. 111 recto.
 Plate to illustrate the mss. in group E (p.280 above).
 Actual size: 11 cm wide x 19 cm long.

Eleg. LXXXIII, p. 148.

116

Ed. Peindre Nice... cette ville où les étrangers... les oranges...
 -- Sc. -- finir en imitant légèrement le verset de
 Pétrarque sur les viliches: -- ce dire ~~de~~ ~~de~~ ~~de~~
 avec sans tous les visages pour savoir si trouverai sur
 quelqu'un d'eux quelqueun de nos traits

Eleg. LXXIX, p. 146.

Ed. Marseille... raconter l'histoire de la fille gauloise
 d'un roi des gaulois... laquelle dans la banque présente
 la coupe (l'écrit ainsi qu'on choisissait un mari.) Au chef
 de la colonie phocéenne... je voudrais qu'elle ait le
 visage de la Diane d'Éphèse... raconter tout cela dans le goût de
 4 livres de ~~grègues~~...

'Peindre Nice' and 'Marseille. . . Raconter l'histoire',
 6850 fo. 116 recto.

Plate to illustrate the mss. in group G (p.280 above).
 Actual size: 12.8 cm wide x 10 cm long.

Eleg. LXXXIII. p. 157

120

l'ingratitude de mes maux n'a point eu de suites...
je t'en dois bien ma rage et mon inimitié.
Sont jaloux pour jouer ma crédule espérance
avec sa perfidie et son intelligence ?

Eleg. LXXXIII p. 152, 153.

ipse interque greges, interque armenta Cupido
natus, et undomitas dicitur inter equos.
illuc indocto primum se exercuit arcu.

he! mihi, quam doctas nunc habet ille manus!
nec perudes velut ante petis: fixisse fuellas
gestis, et audaces perdomuisse viros.

Eleg. LXXXIII p. 153

Tibull. l. 2 et. 1. v. 67.

il faut traduire ces vers charmants; et imiter la concision
élégique qui est un de plus beaux poèmes de l'antiquité. Il
est plein d'âme, d'esprit, d'érudition, et de philosophie.
Car les érotiques anciens ne sont pas des Dorat. j'en dis
autant de la huitième élégie du livre premier?

Eleg. LXXXIII p. 153

Soudes Divi! serpent notus exuit annos.

Tibull. l. 1. et. 4

cruelles Destinees!

le serpent rajanni dépourvu des années.

Eleg. LXXXIII p. 156.

Il n'y a parlé des ventails de plumes de paon.
Il faut parler de nos ventails Chinois.

Group I.¹ One or two Alexandrines, often grouped together on one page.

Group J.² Short passages in prose or verse, on related themes, grouped together on the same paper.

Group K.³ One or more attempts at the same elegy.

B. The composition of specific elegies

These manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale thus offer so varied a collection that attempts to pinpoint exactly the way in which Chénier composed his Elégies must involve an element of conjecture. By far the greatest number of surviving documents is formed by the groups containing elegiac fragments and brief prose notes. These are the simplest bases of Chénier's poetic composition. Single lines of verse

¹ See (1) 'Et ton coeur m'aimera, si ton coeur peut aimer', 6850 fo. 89 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 9, p.98).
'Tu verras ses rigueurs', 6850 fo. 89 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 16, p.123).
'Perfide, mais pourtant chère, quoique perfide', 6850 fo. 89 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 18, p.124).

(2) 'Tous ceux qu'un même Dieu frappe des mêmes traits', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 12, p.122).
'Non, tu ne connais point cette ardeur incertaine', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 14, p.123).
'L'âstre qui fait aimer', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., V, iii, 4, p.138).
'Achille au bord de la mer', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IX, 4, p.170).

² See (1) 'Il faut employer cette fable orientale', 6850 fo. 157 recto. (Dimoff Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 5, p.31).
'As-tu vu cette belle. . .', 6850 fo. 157 recto. (Ibid.).
'Mégoun et Lelleh. . .', 6850 fo. 157 recto. (Ibid., III, iii, 6, p.31).
'Peindre une belle Orientale', 6850 fo. 157 recto. (Ibid., III, iii, 7, p.32)
(2) '. . . O peuple des oiseaux', 6850 fo. 93 recto. (Ibid., IV, iii, 2, p.81)
'O joli serin qui es l'ami de ma belle', (Ibid.).
'Un perroquet', (Ibid.).
(3) 'Lorsqu'un amant, qui pleure en vain', 6850 fo. 67 recto. (Ibid., IV, iii, 5, pp.86-87).
'Seul, rêvant et passant le temps', (Ibid.).
'O Espérance, tu es la première des Déesses', (Ibid.).

³ See (1) 'Animé par l'Amour', 6850 fo. 119 recto, fo. 12 recto & verso, fo.13 recto & verso, fo. 14 recto & verso. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, pp.36-44).
(2) 'Et toi, lampe nocturne, astre cher à l'amour', 6850 fo. 23 recto & verso, fo. 24 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, i, 5, pp.50-56).
(3) 'S'ils n'ont point le bonheur, en est-il sur la terre?', 6850 fo. 16 recto & verso, fo. 17 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 4, pp.93-96).
(4) 'Oh ! puisse le ciseau qui doit trancher mes jours', 6850 fo. 121 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 5, pp.96-97).

abound. Let us take for example, 'Perfide, mais pourtant chère, quoique perfide'.¹ Did this line contain a vague idea for a future elegy, or, as seems more likely, could it have arisen from the poet's reading and a desire to imitate the bracketing structure that was so popular in Augustan Elegy? In another fragment Chénier is seen experimenting with a line that neatly defines the essence of Love Elegy:

Lui soupirer un vers plein d'amour et de larmes.

Un vers brûlant d'amour et de larmes trempé.²

Such fragments clearly show the poet exploring the different structures and word orders possible within the framework of the French Alexandrine. Elsewhere, on a page where single lines are common, suddenly and spontaneously there is a fragment of four lines:

. . . Penché sur toi j'attendrai ton réveil
 Sans troubler les douceurs de ton chaste sommeil.
 Je baiserais les fleurs qui forment ta couronne,
 Et le lin qui te couvre, et l'air qui t'entourne.³

Are these lines an evocation of an actual event, or, as may be suggested by the rest of the manuscript with its references to ancient sources, do they stem from Chénier's reading of Propertius or Ovid? Perhaps they represent a conflation of the two, a literary reminiscence stirring the memory of one real occasion? Whatever their origin, these four Alexandrines waited in vain for the time of their assimilation into the structure of an elegy.

In the same way, the numerous concise prose notes awaited development. One of them seems to recall a particular incident during the poet's sojourn

¹ 6850 fo. 89 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 18, p.124).

² 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 15, p.123). Curiously the second line is repeated on the recto.

³ 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 13, p.101).

in England and constitutes the briefest outline of a poem:

J'ai été à ce bal où toutes ces belles Anglaises. . . .
Je les regardais sans rien dire. . . . Je portais envie
à ceux à qui elles parlaient et de la main de qui elles
acceptaient des oranges, des glaces. . . .¹

Usually, however, the prose notes are the vital memoranda, discussed in chapter III, the aide-mémoire, taken during the poet's reading, where quotations from ancient sources may be commented upon, or transcribed, together with an instruction that, one day, they must be imitated and sewn into an elegy. Here the Lucretian paradox of the sea's treacherous smile has caught Chénier's imagination:

Nec poterat quemquam placidi pellacia ponti
Subdola pellicere in fraudem ridentibus undis.

Lucret., V, 1002.

Infidi maris insidias, viresque, dolumque
Ut vitare velint, neve ullo tempore credant
Subdola cum ridet placidi pellacia ponti.

Id., II, 557.

Il faut placer quelque part une traduction ou une
imitation de ces vers divins de Lucrèce. . . . De Thétis
le sourire perfide, ou telle autre expression.²

The impression given by this abundance of raw material is that Chénier was constantly searching for ideas and phrases to incorporate into his Elégies. Whenever he came across a suitable idea, whatever its origin, he would note it down, gathering together the varied, basic elements of composition, compiling, as it were, an index to which he could refer at a later date, when a new idea might summon up one that had already been filed away. Thus the 'semina rerum'³ were in time elaborated in various ways into new patterns of thought and style, and by means of

¹ 6850 fo. 112 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 3, p.159).

² 6850 fo. 119 verso. (Ibid., IX, 7, p.171).

³ Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, Lib. I, 1.59.

imperceptible links and grafts, a total elegy born.

The arrangement of the basic material was not as haphazard as it might at first seem. The manuscripts reveal that Chénier would often group together on one piece of paper elegiac fragments and notes on related themes. Short notes for elegies referring to his journey through France to Italy are united in the following example:

Ελεγ.

Villefranche. . . Anse, etc. . .
Des monts du Beaujolais aspect délicieux,
Quand L'Azergue limpide, enfant de ces beaux lieux,
Descendant sur les prés et la côte vineuse,
Vient grossir de ses eaux la Saône limoneuse.

Ελ.

Marseille. . . Raconter l'histoire de la fille gauloise
d'un roi des Gaules. . . laquelle, dans le banquet, présente
la coupe (c'était ainsi qu'on choisissait un mari) au
chef de la colonie phocéenne. . . Je feindrai qu'elle a été
le voir descendre. Elle était au haut d'une tour avec sa
nourrice. . . Raconter tout cela dans le goût du IV^e livre
de Properce. . .

Ελ.

Peindre Nice. . . cette ville où les étrangers. . . les
oranges. . . etc. . . Finir en imitant légèrement le
sonnet de Pétrarque: muovesi il vecchiarel. . . et dire:
J'examine avec soin tous les visages, pour voir si [je]
trouverai sur quelqu'un d'eux quelqu'un de vos traits.¹

Again on one paper are the ideas for contrasting elegies; one to hail Italy, the other to bid it farewell:

Ελεγ. ιταλ.

Au sommet de la mont. je découvre à mes pieds la belle Italie.
Salut, terre où Saturne a trouvé le repos,
Mère de l'abondance et mère des héros.

¹ 6850 fo. 116 recto & verso. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 2, p.13, III, i, 3, p.13, and III, i, 4, p.15).
See also 6850 fo. 157 recto, (ibid., III, iii, 5, p.31, III, iii, 6, p.31, and III, iii, 7, p.32), which were to provide themes for the Oriental elegies.

Salut, Dieux paternels d'une terre sacrée,
 O Romulus, et toi, Vesta, reine adorée,
 Toi qui tiens sous ta garde, en tes asiles saints,
 Et le Tibre toscan et les palais romains.

Et dans une autre, en quittant l'Italie:

Adieu. . .
 Et toi, mère Vesta, qui règnes sur le Tibre.¹

If, amidst the manuscripts, a wealth of examples could be found to show these crude notes and fragments of poetry being fashioned and enlarged by one particular method into a more polished form, then analysis of Chénier's techniques of composition would be straightforward. It would be easy to assume from certain evidence that Chénier worked in a steady, linear progression from the simple jottings, through drafts of mixed prose and verse, then through corrections of verse drafts alone, to the finished elegy. However, there are, as far as can be ascertained, only eight examples that give an indication of this method of composition.

There exist, for these eight elegies, manuscripts of the early stages, but only in two cases do they seem to have reached the final draft.²

This is suggested by the fact that they were published by Latouche

¹ 6850 fo. 143 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 1, p.18).
 See also 6850 fo. 67 recto. (Ibid., IV, iii, 5, pp.86-87).

² The eight examples are:

(1) 'Marseille . . . Raconter l'histoire', 6850 fo. 116 recto, fo. 111 recto. (Ibid., III, i, 3, pp.13-14).

(2) 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce', 6850 fo. 47 recto & verso, fo. 48 recto. (Ibid., III, i, 6, pp.15-18).

(3) 'O grottes du mont Hara', 6849 fo. 132 recto. (Ibid., III, iii, 3, pp.29-30).

(4) 'Animé par l'Amour', 6850 fo. 119 recto, fo. 12 recto & verso, fo. 13 recto & verso, fo. 14 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, i, 1, pp.36-46).

(5) 'Et toi, lampe nocturne', 6850 fo. 23 recto & verso, fo. 24 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, i, 5, pp.50-56).

(6) 'Il faut traduire ou imiter', 6850 fo. 120 verso, fo. 17 verso. (Ibid., IV, i, 6, pp.56-59).

(7) 'S'ils n'ont point le bonheur', 6850 fo. 17 recto & verso, fo. 16 recto & verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 4, pp.93-96).

(8) 'Et dormant ou veillant', 6851 fo. 341 recto, 6850 fo. 88 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 12, pp.99-101).

The two examples of elegies reaching the final stage are (4) and (6) above.

who, as we have seen, only selected completed poems for his edition. Since the manuscripts of the last phase of the two elegies in question were subsequently lost, there is now no means of verifying Latouche's transcription of the final stage, and we are robbed of complete manuscript evidence for a linear technique of composition.

As so often, Chénier's poetry evades simple and neat solutions. Most of the manuscripts available for study in fact present a much more arbitrary picture of unplanned, undeveloped, and unsystematic work. Inevitably problems arise.

The first of the difficulties is posed by the poems published by Latouche. Not only have the manuscripts of these polished elegies disappeared, but, with the exception of the two examples mentioned above, there are for them none of the brief notes or elegiac fragments, nor any prose drafts. Can it therefore be assumed that such simpler jottings did once exist and that these were destroyed when the elegies were finished? And, if so, destroyed by whom, André Chénier or Latouche?

A second perplexing problem emerges from the fact that side by side the manuscripts that contain the scraps of verse and short prose notes are manuscripts containing other elegies at different stages in their evolution. Some of them, comprising some thirty or so lines of verse, are clearly undergoing intensive revision and correction, (group C), others display a mixture of prose and verse sections, (group E), whilst a few are entirely in prose, (group F). Strangely, except for the eight elegies already noted, it is impossible to trace any elegy from one of these patterns to another. None of the elegies existing in the more advanced form can be found in the undeveloped stages. There are no links between the groups. It may be that Chénier destroyed earlier drafts or notes as the subsequent, individual elegy progressed. Dimoff has, however,

rejected this view:

Dira-t-on qu'André Chénier, dès qu'il avait rédigé un canevas nouveau, détruisait aussitôt le précédent devenu inutile ? Ce soin minutieux se concilierait mal avec sa négligence habituelle dans des cas analogues.¹

He suggests that Chénier did not follow one pattern of work in creating his poems. He maintains that the poet's techniques were more arbitrary and that he was swayed by his needs and whims at any given moment. Thus, quite spontaneously, according to the demands of mood and inspiration, Chénier might compose a lengthy passage in verse, or might write in prose and verse, or might even be content with the briefest note of reference.² 'Simples notes ou vers isolés, morceaux en vers ou en prose plus ou moins complètement rédigés, tout cela se juxtapose pêle-mêle'.³ To suggest that the poet composed according to mood and did not evolve his elegies in systematic fashion, and did not destroy his previous notes, is a valid assumption for the way in which Chénier worked when he began an elegy. It still does not explain why, with the two exceptions, there is no early manuscript material for the finished elegies, whether these be the neat copies in manuscript form, (group A), or the elegies published by Latouche. Nor is Dimoff's logic impeccable, for if Chénier did work unsystematically then he could easily have destroyed some of the early manuscripts as the mood took him.

¹Dimoff, *La Vie et l'Œuvre*, Vol. II, p.7.

²'Il n'a pas traité à la lente élaboration par André Chénier, pour chacun de ses ouvrages, d'un plan où il aurait d'avance tout prévu et réglé, si bien qu'il pourrait, à la fin, se mettre à écrire, sans plus avoir à s'inquiéter d'autre chose que de l'expression et du style. Ses notes et ses canevas sont en réalité de modestes aide-mémoire, plus ou moins longs ou courts, explicites ou sommaires, selon son humeur lorsqu'il les rédige, et aussi selon la nature de l'œuvre envisagée'. (Ibid., p.8).

³Ibid., p.11.

It seems likely, therefore, that Chénier began his elegies in a variety of forms and that, at some stage, the poet destroyed the early manuscripts of his completed elegies. As a result our main evidence for the methods by which the individual poems were constructed comes from the eight elegies that do bear witness to expansion. By examining these we can gain some insight into the means by which the preparatory material was woven into the tapestry of a finished elegy.

The exact method of extension again seems to vary according to the demands of mood, time, and inspiration. The manuscript, 6849 fo. 132 recto, 'O grottes du mont Hara',¹ shows a development in three parts, all short and in prose. The first part comprises the apostrophe: 'O grottes du mont Hara, vous vîtes l'enfant d'Ismaël méditer longtemps', and a reference to Savary's Vie de Mahomet, with the instruction that this should be put into a poem on solitude, or into another poem with an oriental setting and a section on solitude. The next section, still in prose, develops the opening of a poem invoking solitude. The third and briefest section gives an alternative beginning, with the qualification that this should, in preference, be the start of an 'ode étrangère'; at that stage the fragment is left.

In contrast, the manuscripts, 6850 fo. 47 recto and verso and fo. 48 recto, 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce',² present first a lengthy draft, mainly in prose but incorporating a section of nine lines in verse, as if when Chénier was drawing up the overall scheme, suddenly Alexandrines flowed spontaneously from his pen. The second part is much shorter, a brief note in prose and two Alexandrines, that may be seen as the development of the beginning of the first draft. The third section consists of twenty lines of poetry, written in a neat hand, with no

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 3, pp.29-30.

²Ibid., III, i, 6, pp.15-18.

corrections. This seems to be the verse extension of the final section of the first draft. This particular elegy, as far as we know, was never completed.

The manuscripts, 6851 fo. 341 recto and 6850 fo. 88 recto, show that a plan for an elegy may shift direction.¹ The first element was one line of verse, a literary conceit: 'Et dormant ou veillant, moi je rêve toujours'. This then became the prose draft of an elegy which would portray the poet dreaming of an adventure in which he would be cast into a raging torrent. The elegy was to imitate the English poet, Edward Young. The third development of the initial Alexandrine shows a sudden change in thought: 'Je dors; mais mon coeur veille, il est toujours à toi'. There follows a short draft of an erotic nature. This third section was crossed out, and the comment 'c'est fait' written below. It seems likely that this was inscribed when ten lines of verse were written, which transformed the third section into poetry.

In contrast to this mixture of prose and verse the manuscripts 6850 fo. 16 recto and verso, and fo. 17 recto and verso, 'S'ils n'ont point le bonheur, en est-il sur la terre?',² show a three stage development, all in verse. The first attempt of seventeen lines is unfinished and one line is missing and another incomplete; the whole passage was obviously deemed unsatisfactory and it has been crossed out by diagonal lines. The second version is of twenty-four lines, but with four of these missing, and incorporates the Alexandrines of the first version. The third version was originally of twenty-nine lines, six of these were then crossed out, and a note added, '6 v. à transporter dans mon élégie champêtre', and three lines written to replace them. This third attempt retains only four lines from the preceding version.

Of the eight elegies the most interesting example of the

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 12, pp.99-101.

²Ibid., IV, v, 4, pp.93-96.

creation of a poem as revealed by the manuscripts is 'Animé par l'Amour, le vrai Dieu des poètes',¹ 6850 fo. 119 recto, fo. 12 recto and verso, fo. 13 recto and verso, and fo. 14 recto and verso. Here the extension of the first elements of the composition is particularly relevant since it illustrates the process of contaminatio, the way in which various Latin sources were assimilated into the poem as the work progressed. These documents are amongst the most precious in the collection of Elégies, because of the commentary, written by the poet himself, on the second phase of the poem.

The elegy advances from an original theme in three stages. The initial idea, (6850 fo. 119 recto), can be said to have sprung from Chénier's reading of Propertius. Two poems by the Latin elegist form the basis of sixteen lines of verse, in which there is a two-line lacuna. Chénier, as we shall see, acknowledges in his commentary the debt to Propertius and mentions as the primary source of inspiration, Propertius, Lib. III, elegy iii, (in modern editions Lib. III, elegy v),² and later refers to the second Propertian elegy imitated in this fragment, Lib. I, elegy iii.³ The fourteen lines, the starting point of the new elegy, were not all to survive intact to the final version. At some later stage lines 1 to 8 were crossed out by a diagonal line, leaving six lines which, with slight variations, formed the beginning of the final version. Again, at a later date, these were also crossed out, this time by two diagonal lines, doubtlessly indicating that they had found their place in a new setting.

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, pp. 36-46.

²The reader following Chénier's references to Propertius, as transcribed by Dimoff, must remember that the division of Propertius' elegies is different in modern editions from that of the Broukhusius edition, (see p.139 above), used by Chénier.

³Not Propertius, Lib. I, elegy i, as stated in Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.20.

The second phase in the progress of the elegy permits a fascinating insight into the way Chénier worked. Taking up the elegy again he extended the core of the fourteen lines to ninety lines, and to these he attached a highly enlightening commentary, in which he noted his sources and commented freely on the text. The manuscript group, 6850 fo. 12 recto and verso, fo. 13 recto and verso, fo. 14 recto and verso, closes with a statement that reveals not only the date of composition but also an aspect of Chénier's social life. The poet was certainly no scholarly hermit at this stage ! 'J'ai écrit ces 90 vers et ces notes le 23 avril 1782, avant l'Opéra où je vais à l'instant même'.¹ Unfortunately even this text is not free from problems. We know that Chénier composed ninety lines, and refers to them in the commentary, but only thirty-eight of them have been conserved in the manuscripts, the other fifty-two have been lost. P. Dimoff has, to some extent, remedied this by making an ingenious and convincing reconstruction² of most of the missing section by relying on information obtained from the first and third phases of the elegy, and especially on the commentary.

In the third version, the elegy was reduced to fifty lines. Although Dimoff saw the manuscript of the first thirty-four lines, then in the hands of the Brölemann family,³ the manuscript of the final lines, published in Latouche's edition, is now lost. This last fifty-line poem repeats previous lines, but omits a great number and adds eight new lines as a conclusion.

The real interest of this elegy, however, resides in the commentary that accompanies the second stage. This merits detailed study if only because it is such an unusual document. It is particularly important

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, ll.223-224, p.44.

² Ibid., ll.17-106, pp.37-40.

³ Ibid., p.36.

for our study, because Chénier notes the sources of the elegy and gives reasons why certain Latin texts appeal to him. From this commentary we see that, although the Latin elegists are naturally the major source of inspiration, nevertheless Chénier gleans also from other Roman poets, from Vergil and from Horace. In the very first lines of his commentary he makes a clear statement of the process of contaminatio by which the elegy advanced from its fourteen-line beginnings:

L'idée de ce long fragment m'a été fournie par un beau morceau de Properce, l.III, él. 3.¹ Mais je ne me suis point asservi à le copier. Je l'ai étendu; je l'ai souvent abandonné pour y mêler, selon ma coutume, des morceaux de Virgile et d'Hor. et d'Ovide et tout ce qui me tombait sous la main, et souvent aussi pour ne suivre que moi.²

It can be assumed that Chénier is here describing the techniques by which he accommodated to the final poem the scattered notes and aide-mémoire, jotted down as he was reading, and how these earliest promptings were extended and enlarged by new literary and personal reminiscences conjured up as the poem progressed. This was no artificial and mechanical process, no forced union of disparate themes and styles. The various strands, whatever their origin, are woven together into a seamless whole. The dominant force in the making of the poem is Chénier's own creative mind and imagination. Filtering through these, transformed by them, the notes, the literary and personal reminiscences, take on a new, independent poetic existence.

To follow and to examine Chénier's own remarks and assessment of the elegiac fragment he composed is to see in more detail the workings of this intricate technique of contaminatio. From the main inspiration

¹ See note 2, p.293 above.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.107-112, pp.40-41.

of this elegy, Propertius, Lib. III, elegy iii in the Broukhusius, III, v in modern editions, Chénier takes a theme which links the commonplace literary topos of carpe diem to an apology for writing Elegy. He dedicates his youthful years to the hedonist pursuit of love and to the light, literary genre of Elegy, with the forecast that he will later turn to more serious studies and a more elevated literary form, for, as he claims in the final version of the elegy, 'Le moment d'être sage est voisin du tombeau'.¹ Propertius had composed a similar apology, affirming his present devotion to Elegy, gaiety, and love, and looking forward to spending his later years in the study of natural philosophy.

It comes as no surprise that the opening four lines are a direct imitation of this same Propertian elegy:

Animé par l'Amour, le vrai Dieu des poètes,
Du Pinde en mon printemps j'ai connu les retraites,
Aux danses des neuf soeurs entremêlé mes pas,
Et de leurs jeux charmants su goûter les appas.²

In his commentary Chénier quotes lines 19-20 as the direct source:

Me juvat in prima coluisse Helicon juvena,
Musarumque choris implicuisse manus.³

indicating that he found line 20 'charmant'. He is obviously quite satisfied with his rendering of it: 'Il me semble qu'il n'est guère possible de traduire autrement ni mieux que je n'ai fait ce second vers',⁴ the word 'translation' being used in the sense of adaptation. The theme that Elegy is the special domain of a youthful lover is the same in both authors, yet differences are apparent. Line 1, a clear

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.269, p.46.

²*Ibid.*, ll.17-20, p.37.

³*Ibid.*, ll.114-115, p.41.

⁴*Ibid.*, ll.116-117.

statement of the theme, and line 4 are additions to the Latin couplet. Chénier introduces a geographical variation as he transfers the Muses from Helicon, a mountain dedicated to them in Boetia, to Pindus, the mountain range north-east of Delphi in which was Mount Parnassus, sacred to Apollo and the Muses. It is revealing that this variation still remains within the bounds of classical scholarship. A following comment serves to emphasize further the poet's literary and historical sense for it demonstrates the variety of connotation aroused by just two lines of a Latin elegy. Chénier can, with justice, be described as a doctus poeta as he notes:

Les anciens regardaient la danse non seulement comme l'art de faire des pas gracieux, mais encore de toutes les attitudes du corps et surtout des bras. Si mollia brachia, salta. - Ovid.¹

The quotation from Ovid, for which Chénier does not give a reference, is from the Ars Amatoria, Lib. I, l. 595.

Chénier continues the commentary by returning to the Propertian elegy and quoting the following two lines, 21 and 22:

Me juvat et multo mentem vincere Lyaeo,
Et caput in verna semper habere rosa.²

Again he expresses pleasure in the phrase that has particularly struck him: 'Ce distique-là est bien beau; mentem vincere Lyaeo !',³ and underlines the fact that his technique has been to expand the ancient source to introduce elements that are original in French poetry: 'J'ai étendu ce texte pour y faire entrer plusieurs détails qui m'ont paru neufs dans notre poésie'.⁴ Indeed the expansion transforms the original single elegiac couplet into ten Alexandrines, which develop

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.118-121.

²*Ibid.*, ll.122-123.

³*Ibid.*, ll.125-126.

⁴*Ibid.*, ll.124-125.

the idea of the joys of youth by introducing a graphic account of a banquet, at which wine flows freely and verses are spun, as the poet is surrounded by friends and mistress. His senses are kindled by wine and by his beloved's eyes:

Je veux, tant que mon sang bouillonne dans mes veines,
 Ne chanter que l'amour, ses douceurs et ses peines,
 De convives chéris toujours environné,
 A la joie avec eux sans cesse abandonné. . .
 Fumant dans le cristal, que Bacchus à longs flots
 Partout aille à la ronde éveiller les bons mots.
 Reine de mes banquets, que ma déesse y vienne.
 Que des fleurs de sa tête elle pare la mienne.
 Pour enivrer mes sens, que le feu de ses yeux
 S'unisse à la vapeur des vins délicieux.¹

Chénier's eclectic technique is underlined by these lines for the picture of such symposia may be found in Horace and in Latin Love Elegy.² It is further pointed by Chénier's specific note that line 30 imitates a different Propertian elegy, I, iii, from which he quotes lines 21 and 22:

Et modo solvebam nostra de fronte corollas,
 Ponebamque tuis, Cinthia, temporibus.³

It is difficult to distinguish from Chénier's ten lines just what he felt to be the new details which he claimed to be introducing into French poetry. The themes he uses were not a new departure in French, as is seen by the very close resemblance between his elegy and a poem by Malherbe. Even the verbal echoes are striking:

Quand le sang bouillant en mes veines
 Me donnoit de jeunes desirs,
 Tantôt vous soupiriez mes peines,
 Tantôt vous chantiez mes plaisirs.⁴

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.21-32, pp.37-38.

² See R. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book I. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, p. xv.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.134-135, p.41.

⁴ F. Malherbe, 'A la Reine Marie de Médicis pendant sa régence, Ode', LXVIII, ll.21-24, in Poésies de F. Malherbe accompagnées du commentaire d'André Chénier, Nouvelle édition. . . par L. Becq de Fouquieres, Paris, Charpentier, 1874, p.215.

From the commentary it would seem that Chénier was referring rather to what he regarded as a greater freedom in style and language, and particularly in word order:

Reine de mes banquets, que ma déesse y vienne.

Je ne sais si l'arrangement de ce vers serait approuvé.
Il me paraît précis, naturel, et plein de liberté.¹

Chénier's comments on the next section are rather more vague, and from them it has only been possible to reconstruct two of the eight lines² to which he refers:

Amis, que ce bonheur soit notre unique étude.
Nous en perdrons si tôt la charmante habitude !

The poet merely stresses that the ideas in this section originate in the numerous examples of the carpe diem theme in Ovid and Horace. He does not give any specific references, but he is clearly reaffirming his technique of contaminatio.

After drawing upon these two authors, the one working in the elegiac genre, the other in Odes, Chénier returns his poem to his initial inspiration, Propertius, Lib. III, elegy v.

Un jour, telle est des Dieux. . . inexorable,
Vénus, qui. . . fit le bonheur durable,
A nos cheveux blanchis refusera des fleurs,
Et le printemps pour nous n'aura plus de couleurs.³

These are slight modifications of lines 23 and 24 which Chénier quotes from the Propertian elegy:

Atque ubi jam venerem gravis interceperit aetas,
Sparsert et nigras alba senecta comas.⁴

In the French rendering Venus has become the subject, and 'fleurs'

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, IV, i, 1, ll.127-129, p.41.

² Ibid., ll.33-40, p.38.

³ Ibid., ll.41-44.

⁴ Ibid., ll.142-143, p. 42.

are introduced to form a link with the preceding section, but Chénier sensed that his version was inferior. He recognized the mastery of Propertius, and, by underlining the special phrases, acknowledged the Roman poet's superiority:

Ce vers et ceux qui suivent ne valent peut-être pas
tous ensemble les deux vers de Propertius.¹

Such underlining shows the details that Chénier particularly appreciated; but the precise imagery of 'alba senecta', and the bracketing structure of 'nigras. . . comas', giving the important juxtaposition of 'nigras' and 'alba', could not be successfully translated into French, essentially because of the clarity of meaning offered by the condensation possible from the Latin case system.

The following lines bring the sudden inclusion of a more personal note, and lead to remarks of a rather different kind in the commentary:

Qu'un sein voluptueux, des lèvres demi-closes
Respirent près de nous leur haleine de roses.
Que Lais, sans réserve, abandonne à nos yeux
De ses charmes secrets les contours gracieux.²

These sensual lines have no parallel in the Propertian text, nor does Chénier seem to have been happy with his choice of two of his epithets, although they are both in the final version of the elegy:

Voluptueux n'est pas bon. Il fallait une épithète qui
peignît cette palpitation si belle qui soulève de jeunes
tétons. Des lèvres demi-closes ne vaut guère mieux:
malheureusement c'est presque la seule rime.³

His remarks on the use of a classical pseudonym to hide the name of his mistress are also somewhat surprising. They reveal a different Chénier,

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, IV, i, 1, ll.140-141, p.42.

² Ibid., ll.45-48, p.38.

³ Ibid., ll.146-149, p.42.

one with a crude sense of humour that seems far removed from the writer of such dignified verse:

Toi que je ne nomme point, tu verras bien, si jamais tu me lis, que ce sont tes belles fesses qui m'ont fait faire ces jolis vers. Que n'ai-je osé écrire ton nom au lieu de celui de Laïs ! Je n'aurais pas été obligé de changer le vers. Malheureusement pour moi, trop de personnes auraient reconnu que j'ai dit vrai, et que tu as le plus beau cul du monde.¹

After this brief personal interlude the commentary returns to more serious questions of literary and textual criticism. The elegy leaves the hedonist pursuits of youth and pictures an old age devoted to the study of natural phenomena and natural philosophy, thereby showing, in the traditional manner of the ancient *recusatio*, that the poet is quite capable of composing on such themes should he so desire. Again the initial impulse for this change comes from the Propertian elegy, lines 25 and 26, which Chénier quotes with satisfaction:

De tout cet univers interrogeant la voix,
J'irai de la nature étudier les lois.

vaut bien à mon avis le dist. de Propertius:

Tum mihi naturae libeat perdiscere mores;
Quis deus hanc mundi temperet arte domum.²

In this case Chénier does not restrict himself to comments of a purely literary nature but indulges in textual criticism of the lines of Propertius preferring 'qua Deus',³ although this variant represents little advantage, and it is not in the Latin manuscripts.

For the rest of the elegiac fragment and the commentary the poet ceases to imitate Propertius and turns to Vergil and Ovid. It comes as little surprise that the major inspiration for the final section

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.155-160, p.42.

² *Ibid.*, 11.167-171, pp.42-43.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.172, p.43.

should be Vergilian, and that the opus drawn on should be the Georgics, for here we have, in the guise of a manual for farmers, a poetic account of natural phenomena.

The poet once again comments with appreciation on his sources, recognizing the limitations of his own version, for instance in the lines coming from Ovid:

Par quelle main sur soi la terre suspendue
Voit mugir autour d'elle Amphitrite étendue.

J'ai imité, autant que j'ai pu, ces vers divins d'Ovide;

. . . nec brachia longo
Margine terrarum porrexerat Amphitrite
Métam., lib. I.¹

Chénier has absorbed the Ovidian source, retaining the more recondite, mythological personification of Amphitrite for the sea. This enables him not only to keep the accompanying image, 'main'/'brachia', but lends exotic musicality to the line, and marks Chénier, once again, as a doctus poeta.

Unfortunately the next Latin source contributed to a four-line section of the elegy that cannot be reconstructed from any clues either in the commentary or the first and third versions of the elegy. Chénier quotes 'ce bel endroit des Géorgiques, liv. I':

Unde tremor terris; qua vi maria alta tumescant;
Objicibus ruptis, rursusque in se ipsa residant.²

and comments on the impossibility of imitating the hexameter couplet:

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll. 173-178. (The lines quoted are from Ovid, Metamorphoses, Lib. I, ll.13-14).

²*Ibid.*, ll. 179-182, p. 43.

Je n'ose pas écrire mes vers après ceux-là. Le premier des miens est mal fait. Qua vi maria alta tumescant est désespérant.¹

The full connotations and sound value of 'tumescant' cannot easily be transferred from one language to another. Chénier's dissatisfaction with his own efforts may indeed explain why these four lines are omitted from the final version of the elegy. Curiously this is a case where Chénier did not take his usual care in noting his references. The lines he quotes are from the Georgics, but from Lib. II, ll.479-480 in both the modern texts and those used by Chénier.

For the line, 'Si d'un axe brûlant le soleil nous éclaire',² the poet justifies his use of bold metonymy, 'axe' rather than 'char', by citing the authority first of Vergil, Georgics, Lib. III, l.107, and then of Propertius, Lib. III, elegy iv, l. 13. Esoteric usage is preferred: 'J'aime mieux axe que char. Cela est moins trivial. Les Latins le disent partout. Volat vi fervidus axis. Virg. Spoliis onerato Caesaris axe. Propert.'³ Unusually he expresses pleasure in his own choice, the epithet, 'brûlant', which 'paraît heureuse en ce qu'elle représente l'effet que doit produire la présence du Dieu du feu, et en même temps la précipitation de son vol'.⁴ Perhaps the inspiration for this came from his reading of Servius' comments on Vergil, Georgics, Lib. III, l. 107, to be found in the Emmenes edition: 'Fervidus axis. Alibi, Frenaque ferventisque rotas. Nam tam rotae, quam axis cursu calescunt'.⁵

The next reference in Chénier's commentary is very similar to the

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.183-185, p.43.

² *Ibid.*, l.69, p.39.

³ *Ibid.*, ll.187-189, p.43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ll.189-192.

⁵ P. Virgili Maronis opera, in tres tomos divisa. . . Lugd. Batavorum, apud Jacobum Hackium, anno 1680, Vol. I, p. 475. (See chapter III, p.142 above).

previous one, although it once more demonstrates his dissatisfaction with his version of Vergil's lines:

Si l'Ourse au sein des flots craint d'aller se plonger.

Vers mal fait, d'après celui-ci de Virgile:

Arctos, Oceani metuentes aequore tingi.¹

This time, although Chénier does not give its source, the line is from the Georgics, Lib. I, l. 246. Chénier has retained the learned imagery of the Great and Little Bears, which do not set in the northern hemisphere, but has turned the phrase from the passive to the active voice. Lines of this kind are reminiscent of the numerous one or two line fragments which, as we have seen, are scattered throughout the manuscripts, most probably inspired by Latin authors.² It illustrates how easily and imperceptibly such basic notes could be inserted into the body of a poem.

The Georgics also furnished the inspiration for the next five lines of Chénier's elegy:

Quel signe sur la mer conduit le passager,
Quand sa patrie absente et longtemps appelée
Lui fait tenter l'Europe et les flots de Malée;
Et quel, de l'abondance heureux avant-coureur,
Arme d'un aiguillon la main du laboureur.³

These lines, that counsel the use of natural phenomena to forecast weather, are taken from the Georgics, Lib. I, ll. 204-207, where certain constellations are mentioned as signs of stormy weather. Chénier, in his commentary, is content to quote the Vergilian hexameters without giving any line reference:

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.193-195, p.43.

²See 'L'onde changée en pleurs roule des flots amers', 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IX, 17, p.173), and 'Quo teneam vultus imitantem Protea nodo ?/Par quels noeuds retenir ce mobile Protée ?', 6850 fo. 119 recto. (*Ibid.*, IX, 11, p.172).

³*Ibid.*, IV, i, 1, ll.76-80, p.39.

Praeterea tam sunt Arcturi sidera nobis
 Haedorumque dies servandi et lucidus Anguis,
 Quam quibus in patriam ventosa per aequora vectis
 Pontus et ostriferi fauces tentantur Abydi.¹

He refers the reader to another Vergilian line: 'Voyez aussi Géorg., I, v. 252',² in which Vergil summarizes his theme, 'hinc tempestates dubio praediscere caelo'. Before the quotation of the four lines from the Georgics, Chénier expressed a proper appreciation of his own interpretation: 'Les cinq vers suivants me semblent bons, surtout les deux derniers dont je m'applaudis'.³ The slight sense of smugness disappears as he admits the supremacy of an eternal master: 'Quels vers ! et comment ose-t-on en faire après ceux-là !'.⁴ Yet despite the sincere humility, pride in his own doctrina still breaks through: 'Les miens, si petits et si inférieurs, ont cependant peut-être l'avantage de citer l'Europe et Malée, lieux célèbres par des naufrages'.⁵ Chénier has omitted the reference in the Georgics to the Black Sea, Pontus, and the straits of the oyster-bearing Abydos, both noted for storms and shipwrecks in Antiquity, but has replaced these locations by the equally recondite 'l'Europe et Malée', renowned for the same reasons. The reference also shows other techniques adopted by Chénier in transposing the Latin text. He omits completely, for example, the specific naming of the constellations, the Arcturus, Haedi, and Anguis, and the unusual compound adjective 'ostriferi', which could not have been superimposed on the French language, and prefers a rendering more vague than the strange and exotic diction of the original. He adds two final lines, and the passive voice of the verbs, 'servandi sunt', 'vectis', and 'tentantur' have been turned into the active form, so shifting the emphasis,

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.198-201, p.44.

² *Ibid.*, l.202.

³ *Ibid.*, ll.196-197.

⁴ *Ibid.*, l.203.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ll.204-206.

and giving the text an overall feeling of French rather than of Latin tonality.

The commentary then proceeds to the discussion of questions of style and syntax. In the Alexandrine 'Lier à ses ormeaux la vigne paresseuse',¹ Chénier was attempting to introduce into French the flavour of the Latin possessive adjective 'suis', 'qui fait un effet si élégant dans leurs poésies'.² Then, in the following line, 'Voir à quelles moissons quelle terre est heureuse',³ he was seeking to echo the Roman author's treatment of rhythmic anaphora. The application of this rhetorical device may well have been suggested to him by a line from the opening of the Georgics: 'et quid quaeque ferat regio et quid quaeque recuset'.⁴ Anaphora afforded especial pleasure to Chénier because of its lucidity, and his efforts to adapt it for French poetry serve to stress his originality:

Tournure latine claire et précise: je ne crois pas qu'on
l'eût encore transportée en français. C'est de tout ce
morceau le vers que j'aime le mieux.⁵

Two further lines were inspired by Vergil:

Où des feux du midi le platane vainqueur
Entretient sous son ombre une épaisse fraîcheur.⁶

This time Chénier's knowledge of Latin authors takes him away from the Georgics to the 'frigus opacum' of the Eclogues, poem I, l. 52, from which he extends the original text by specifically naming the tree: 'Il y a peu d'arbres dont la feuille soit aussi large que du platane et du figuier'.⁷

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, 1.85, p.40.

²*Ibid.*, 11.208-209, p.44.

⁴Vergil, Georgics, Lib. I, l. 53.

⁶*Ibid.*, 11.95-96, p.40.

³*Ibid.*, 1.86, p.40.

⁵Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.211-213, p.44.

⁷*Ibid.*, 11.216-217, p.44.

The elegiac fragment analyzed in such detail by Chénier in his commentary proves to be circular in structure terminating, as it had begun, with the picture of a banquet. At the beginning it was a scene of youth, its wine and poetry, love and sorrow, mistress and friends. At the banquet, as his life closes, pleasure still rules, but the pleasure is less intense. The poem ends on a note of sweet calm and tranquil resignation; the colours are muted and autumnal:

J'aurai quelques amis, soutiens de ma vieillesse.
 Le plaisir, qui n'est plus celui de ma jeunesse,
 Est encor cependant le Dieu de mes banquets.
 L'oeillet, la tubéreuse y brillent en bouquets.
 L'Automne sur ses pas y conduit l'abondance,
 Et la douce gâité, mère de l'indulgence;
 Et, tel que dans l'Olympe, à la table des Dieux,
 De pampres et de fruits et de fleurs radieux,
 Donne à tous les objets offerts à son passage
 Ce ris pur et serein qui luit sur son visage. . .¹

Chénier's comments on these final lines illustrate clearly that often the literary reminiscence is deeply embedded in the poet's subconscious. After such a precise and detailed commentary on the rest of the elegy, the last of his comments are vague and imprecise: 'Je crois que les derniers vers ressemblent à quelque chose qui est dans Tibulle. Mais je ne me souviens pas à quel endroit'.² Perhaps he had no time to tax his memory further or to check the source for, as we know, he was in a hurry to go to the Opera!³

When Chénier came back to this elegy and produced the third version, the ninety-five lines he had so meticulously discussed were cut to fifty. He has particularly reduced the list of natural phenomena to be studied in old age, so that fifty-four lines have been condensed

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.97-106, p.40.

² *Ibid.*, 11.220-222, p.44.

³ *Ibid.*, 11.223-224.

to twenty. In contrast, he has added five lines that reinforce the carpe diem theme, and which are possibly reminiscent of Propertius:

dum nos fata sinunt, oculos satiemus amore:
nox tibi longa venit, nec reditura dies.¹

The first variation of this is inserted near the beginning of the final version of the elegy:

Hâtons-nous. L'heure fuit. Hâtons-nous de saisir
L'instant, le seul instant donné pour le plaisir.²

The other three of the added five lines come near the end, and bear a sinister warning:

Cependant jouissons; l'âge nous y convie.
Avant de la quitter, il faut user la vie:
Le moment d'être sage est voisin du tombeau.³

The final lines of this last version are also new, as the poem ends with a sudden exhortation to a servant to lead his master to his beloved:

Allons, jeune homme, allons, marche; prends ce flambeau;
Marche, allons. Mène-moi chez ma belle maîtresse.
J'ai pour elle aujourd'hui mille fois plus d'ivresse.
Je veux que des baisers plus doux, plus dévorants,
N'aient jamais vers le ciel tourné ses yeux mourants.⁴

Thus the general setting of the elegy has changed. The above lines are to be interpreted as meditations on the fleeting nature of pleasure, encouraging the poet to hurry to his mistress. Chénier has moved the emphasis away from his apology for writing elegies, and the circular structure of the second version has disappeared, with a consequent loss, perhaps, in the architectural design of the poem.

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xv, 11.23-24.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.233-234, p.45.

³ *Ibid.*, 11.267-269, p.46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.270-274.

However, the poet's dependence on ancient sources has not altered, the intricate patterns of contaminatio are still very much in evidence, and the clear traces of the poem's literary ancestry enhance the rich complexity as the reader recalls its inheritance.

The manuscripts of the elegy 'Animé par l'Amour', and its commentary, are therefore of cardinal importance to an understanding of contaminatio. This technique of composition is not, of course, exclusive to the Elégies.¹ It was used by Chénier in all his poetry, but this commentary is the only example we have which shows the poet actually setting down on paper an extensive analysis of his own text and its literary antecedents, and he does this for an elegy. Nor does the significance of the commentary end with the discussion of contaminatio, for it throws light on the unfinished state of the Elégies as a whole, and on Chénier's personality and general methods of work.

C. General methods of work: diversity of approach

The very fact that Chénier indulged in such exacting self-criticism makes it plain that he was a perfectionist who fastidiously corrected and analyzed his own poetry. Lines of verse that seem to have flowed easily were later subjected to, or awaited, careful revision. Ideas had to be pruned or expanded, cacophonous groups of words had to be harmonized, and rhymes improved. There could be no complacency with this kind of approach, nor any satisfaction with initial efforts. In the 'Epître à Bailly', Chénier paints a picture of a poet's dissatisfaction and self-analysis:

¹ See 'Souvent le malheureux songe à quitter la vie', (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, pp.57-59), where echoes of Tibullus, Ovid (Ex Ponto), Vergil (Aeneid), Horace (Odes) and Theocritus may be heard; and 'Hier, en te quittant', (ibid., IV, iii, 3, pp.81-83), inspired by an elegy of Propertius, but interspersed with echoes from Tibullus and Vergil (Aeneid).

. . . Seul avec lui, superbe et satisfait,
 Il s'écoute chanter, se récite, se plaît.
 Et puis quand de la nuit les heures pacifiques
 Ont calmé de ses sens ces vagues poétiques,
 Il reprend son travail. Consterné, furieux,
 Il n'y voit que défauts qui lui choquent les yeux.
 Il jure d'oublier sa fatale manie,
 Ses Muses, ses projets. . . .¹

Moments of exhilaration are described as being followed by moments of depression: 'quand le moment de l'enthousiasme est passé, quand on relit de sang-froid. . . quel dégoût !'.² Such intense feelings surely are the mark of a man searching for perfection. If these sentiments are autobiographical, and they appear to be, then this temperament, with its innate pessimism, could have had a stultifying and deleterious effect. It may well explain why so many of the Elégies are left unfinished. Chénier's self-criticism was perhaps too exacting, impeding the more rapid completion of his poems that would have been necessary to cheat fate. That he intended one day to develop and finish the various drafts is indicated in the 'Epître à Bailly', as he continues with a note of confidence and hope:

. . . Mais bientôt son génie,
 Prompt à se rallumer, en de nouveaux transports
 S'élançait, et se roidit à de nouveaux efforts.³

Chénier's critical mind that fostered the slow advancement of his work can be attributed to his restless, vacillating temperament. He was certainly not single-minded in the way he tackled each individual poem. It looks as though he had an inherent inability to concentrate on and complete one elegy at a time. Instead he was always ready to

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', III, ll.56-63, p.190.
 Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées' I, ll.77-84, p.559.
 (At this stage it is convenient to refer once again to both Dimoff and Walter).

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VI, ll.36-39, p.201.
 Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', IV, ll.32-34, p.564.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', III, ll.63-65, p.190.
 Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', IV, ll.84-86, p.559.

change course, to leave a poem for a while as a new theme attracted him, returning at whim to the previous poem. As a result Chénier became involved with numerous works at one and the same time, so that few were finished. Evidence of this comes not only from the manuscripts themselves but from the poet's own admissions. He stresses the multiplicity of his approach in the 'Epître sur ses ouvrages':

Ainsi donc, sans coûter de larmes à personne,
 A mes goûts innocents, ami, je m'abandonne.
 Mes regards vont errant sur mille et mille objets.
 Sans renoncer aux vieux, plein de nouveaux projets,
 Je les tiens; dans mon camp partout je les rassemble,
 Les enrôle, les suis, les pousse tous ensemble.¹

In the unfinished 'Epître au Chevalier de Pange' the capricious and errant nature of his Muse is reiterated, together with the clear statement that, not only were there poems of the same genre on the stocks at the same time, but various of his larger projects proceeded apace. Thus the poet might leave an elegy and turn to a pastoral poem or to renewed work on his epics, 'L'Amérique' or 'Hermès'. The unfinished state of the total opus stems directly from this pattern of work:

Tu sais combien mes Muses sont vagabondes. . . . Elles ne peuvent achever promptement un seul projet; elles en font marcher cent à la fois. Elles font un pied à ce poème-ci, une épaule à celui-là. . . . Souvent tu me crois occupé à faire des découvertes en Amérique, et tu me vois arriver une flûte pastorale sur les lèvres; tu attends un morceau d'Hermès, et c'est quelque folle Elégie.²

This moving backwards and forwards in his poetic composition arose from Chénier's fertile intellect and teeming imagination. In

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.45-50, p.203.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.45-50, pp.157-158.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VI, ll.7-10, 12-15, p.200.
 Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', IV, ll.6-9, 11-14, p.563.

the same épître the poet admits the impossibility of controlling his poetic imagination, which can be stimulated in any direction, as one idea summons up a host of others:

C'est ainsi que je suis maîtrisé par mon imagination.
Elle est capricieuse et je cède à ses caprices. Je vais
me promener dans le dessein de m'occuper d'un objet.
A peine ai-je fait dix pas, mon esprit est frappé d'un
objet nouveau. Soudain il s'élançe, il monte à cheval sur
ce bâton et il va, il va. . . et là souvent il en
rencontre un autre. Il remonte encore sur ce nouveau
bâton et il court à droite, à gauche. . . et l'argile
que j'avais amollie et humectée pour en faire un pot à
l'eau, sous mon doigt capricieux devient une tasse ou
une théière.¹

Yet this restless temperament, swayed by capricious whims, can have been deliberately encouraged, for, in the 'Epître sur ses ouvrages', Chénier muses on the possibility of a more rational pattern of writing his poetry:

Peut-être il vaudrait mieux, plus constant et plus sage,
Commencer, travailler, finir un seul ouvrage.²

The defiant answer is immediate; he will not shackle the vagaries of his creativity: 'Mais quoi ! cette constance est un pénible ennui'.³ Again to the Chevalier de Pange, he expresses the same determination not to spoil the pleasure of writing poetry, nor to limit the freedom of his imagination to roam at will:

Irai-je me contraindre et d'un plaisir me faire un
travail pénible ? Non. D'autant que mon esprit
n'abandonne jamais ses premiers projets et que par

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.15-25, pp.200-201.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.14-22, pp.563-564.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.61-62, p.204.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.61-62, p.158.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.63.
Walter, *ibid.*, l.63.

un plus grand circuit il y revient toujours:
 comme un cheval, que l'on fait passer dans l'eau,
 en arrivant au bord, recule, se cabre, se lève,
 caracole, s'enfuit; le maître lui laisse faire ses
 grands détours, puis le ramène pas à pas et il passe.¹

By returning to the imagery of the horse, that at first refuses at an obstacle but then is gradually brought back after several detours and eventually overcomes the hurdle, Chénier is putting forward his confident belief that one day he will extend, revise, and polish the numerous poems left at different stages of their construction. The 'Epître au Chevalier de Pange', that reveals so much about the methods and pattern of his writing, continues to emphasize that the poet was intent on finishing the poems and determined to offer them to the public view. Chénier established this aim by means of an unusual image, that of slowly incubating eggs suddenly hatching together:

Ils boitent tous et ils seront sur pied tous ensemble.
 Elles [ses Muses] les couvent tous à la fois: ils sortiront
 de la coque à la fois, ils s'envoleront à la fois.²

The final process of publication was to succeed a lengthy process of slow germination, followed by sudden fruition. It is almost as if Chénier had taken to heart Horace's warning: '. . . delere licébit / quod non edideris; nescit vox missa reverti'.³ There was to be nothing slipshod, nothing demeaning to the dignity of poetry in the works he finally intended to publish. How sad that the task was never completed! Only two of Chénier's poems were published during his lifetime, 'Le Jeu de Paume'⁴ and the 'Hymne aux Suisses de Châteauneuf'.⁵

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VI, ll.25-31, p.201.

Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', IV, ll.22-28, p.564.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.10-12, p.200.

Walter, *ibid.*, ll.9-11, p.563.

³ Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll.389-390.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Odes', III, 2, pp.230-244.

Walter, 'Odes', I, pp.167-178.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Iambes', I, 1, pp.259-262.

Walter, 'Hymnes', II, pp.164-166.

The confessions made by Chénier in the prose draft of the unfinished 'Epître au Chevalier de Pange' are repeated in the 'Epître sur ses ouvrages', a much more polished work as is shown by the fact that it was published by Latouche. In this second épître three images illustrate Chénier's techniques of composition. In the first image, and in phraseology and diction recalling the unfinished épître,¹ the poet is compared to a sculptor chipping away not at one piece of stone, but at a whole gallery of statues:

S'égayant à son gré, mon ciseau vagabond
 Achève à ce poème ou les pieds ou le front;
 Creuse à l'autre les flancs; puis l'abandonne et vole
 Travailler à cet autre ou la jambe ou l'épaule.
 Tous, boiteux, suspendus, traînent: mais je les vois
 Tous bientôt sur leurs pieds se tenir à la fois.²

This idea is immediately elaborated by a second image, once again echoing the unfinished épître,³ that of incubating eggs. The repetition of 'ensemble' in each of the lines emphasizes the completeness of final publication:

Ensemble lentement tous couvés sous mes ailes,
 Tous ensemble quittant leurs coques maternelles,
 Sauront d'un beau plumage ensemble se couvrir,
 Ensemble sous le bois voltiger et courir.⁴

The third image, concluding the stylistic device of theme and variation so often used by Chénier, was not employed by him in the 'Epître au Chevalier de Pange'. The scene shifts to a foundry and the poet vividly describes the art of the bell-founder. The mould is carefully prepared and lies hidden until the day molten bronze is poured in and bells of

¹ See Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VI, ll.7-11, p.200.
 Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', IV, ll.6-10, p.563.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.51-56, pp.203-204.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.51-56, p.158.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VI, ll.11-12, p.200.
 Walter, 'Epîtres inachevées', IV, ll.10-11, p.563.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.57-60, p.204.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VII, ll.57-60, p.158.

different shapes and sizes are cast simultaneously:

. . . Vous avez vu sous la main d'un fondeur
Ensemble se former, diverses en grandeur,
Trente cloches d'airain, rivales du tonnerre ?
Il achève leur moule enseveli sous terre;
Puis, par un long canal en rameaux divisé,
Y fait couler les flots de l'airain embrasé;
Si bien qu'au même instant, cloches, petite et grande,
Sont prêtes, et chacune attend et ne demande
Qu'à sonner quelque mort, et du haut d'une tour
Réveiller la paroisse à la pointe du jour.¹

So unusual is this metaphor, and so graphic in its detail, that F. Scarfe has linked it to an actual event.² In the Church of Saint-Vincent in Carcassonne, one of the bells was inscribed: 'Dédiée à M. André Béraud et à dame Marie Chénier, sous l'invocation de Saint-André'. The name of the Saint and the date of the dedication, November 1773, make it likely that the young André Chénier, at that time in the care of his uncle and aunt Béraud at Carcassonne, would have been present at the ceremony. Moreover, the metaphor may reflect the family tradition, for Chénier's grandfather, Guillaume, took over a foundry at Montfort, near Limoux, not far from Carcassonne.

Whether Chénier is in this case drawing upon an actual event that he witnessed remains an open question, but he certainly did not want the purpose of the metaphor to remain in any doubt, as he specifically applied the image of the bell-founder to himself:

Moi, je suis ce fondeur: de mes écrits en foule
Je prépare longtemps et la forme et le moule,
Puis sur tous à la fois je fais couler l'airain:
Rien n'est fait aujourd'hui, tout sera fait demain.³

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.79-88, pp.204-205.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.79-88, p.158.

² 'Such a description could hardly be written by a person who had not been impressed by seeing that complex operation'. (F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965 p.7).

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.89-92, p.205.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.89-92, p.159.

D. Chénier's failure to publish: consequent editorial problems

'Tout sera fait demain'. It is impossible to say how far distant was the final goal. Evidence that he was seriously contemplating publication of some of his work, as a trial sample, is seen in the existence of a preface for a proposed collection of poems. It is marked by a characteristic hesitation, and even a lack of confidence:

L'auteur de ces poésies les a extraites d'un grand nombre qu'il a composées et travaillées avec soin depuis dix ans. Le désir de quelque succès dans ce genre, et les encouragements de ses amis l'ont enfin déterminé à se présenter au lecteur. Mais comme il est possible que des amis l'aient jugé avec plus de faveur que d'équité, et aussi que les idées du public ne se rencontrent pas avec les siennes et les leurs, il a cru meilleur d'en faire l'essai en ne mettant au jour qu'une petite partie de ses ouvrages. Car, si le peu qu'il publie est goûté, il en aura plus de plaisir et de courage à montrer ce qui lui reste; sinon il vaudra mieux pour les lecteurs d'être fatigués moins longtemps, et, pour lui, de se rendre ridicule et ennuyeux en moins de pages.¹

The dating of this proposal is difficult. G. Walter and J. Fabre suggest that the poet was beginning to think about an edition of his poems in 1790.² The traditional interpretation, first proposed by H. de Latouche³ and later accepted by Becq de Fouquières,⁴ and more recently restated by P. Dimoff⁵ and J. Fabre,⁶ sets Chénier's plans for publication three years later in 1793. It is argued that whilst Chénier was in Versailles, in hiding and in danger of being denounced as an enemy of the Revolution, he began to classify his manuscripts preparing to publish them. This tradition

¹Walter, 'Fragments littéraires', VI, p.751.

²Walter, 'Notes et variantes', VI, p.962.

J. Fabre, Chénier, Connaissance des Lettres, 42, Paris, Hatier, 1965, p.130.

³H. de Latouche, La Vallée aux Loups, Paris, Levavasseur, 1833, pp.216-217.

⁴L. Becq de Fouquières, Lettres critiques sur la vie, les oeuvres, les manuscrits d'André Chénier, Paris, Charavay, 1881, p.99.

⁵Dimoff, Vol. I, Préface, p.xvii.

⁶J. Fabre, *ibid.*, p.130, who links the two interpretations.

states that the poems, together with the poetic fragments and prose notes, were arranged into three portfolios according to their stage of development. One file contained the finished poems, a second those drafts that were well advanced, and a third file collected together the fragments and notes for future reference. Perhaps the threat of imminent arrest and enforced retreat encouraged this organization of his work. It is for this reason that the link between Chénier's technique of composition and the failure to publish his works is so close and has to be specifically noted, for it is probably the basic explanation of the condition of the manuscripts at present in the Bibliothèque Nationale. A brief prose note, though undated, may well reflect the poet's feelings at this time:

Il arrange ses projets, il les dispose. . . dans tant d'années tout cela sera fait. . . alors dans son lit, se retournant, ne pouvant dormir. . . il sue, il s'élance dans l'avenir. . . il voudrait que ces années fussent déjà écoulées où il jouira. . . .¹

Becq de Fouquières looked to manuscript evidence, and particularly the ink used by Chénier at that time, to suggest that the poet copied out certain finished poems and numbered them for publication. He had seen the manuscripts numbered 2, 3, 5, 19, 25, and 29. Since only the manuscripts of finished poems were numbered in this way, and these later passed into the hands of Latouche, the classification cannot be confirmed by any of the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Dimoff was, however, able to verify the existence of numbers for two elegies, the 20th,² and the 29th.³ These manuscripts had not been lost. They were the ones which, as we have seen, were given away by Latouche to friends. The figures obviously make it clear that at least twenty-nine elegies were numbered. Unfortunately, as far as

¹Walter, 'Esquisses et notes', p.754.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 5, pp.67-69.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 5, pp.100-101.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 2, pp.135-136.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 2, pp.152-153.

can be checked from Becq du Fouquières' comments, Latouche neglected this order in the first edition of the poems. The subsequent loss of nearly all the papers given to Latouche means that there can be no hope of organizing the Elégies as the poet himself proposed. As for the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, that possibly formed the contents of the second and third files, no trace of the original order remains. As these passed through the hands of the Chénier family from the poet's father to his brothers Constantin, Marie-Joseph, and Louis Chénier, and finally to Gabriel, the classification was irretrievably lost.

The numbering makes it appear probable that Chénier had a definite scheme in mind for his Elégies and possibly for all his poems. Studies have indicated that Latin poets often tried to give an overall architectural design to their opus. The Aeneid, for example, neatly falls into two sets of six books, with parallelism, correspondences, and contrasts linking the books of the two groups.¹ The confusion regarding the manuscripts means that a modern editor of Chénier's poems cannot hope to reproduce the structural design the poet might have required. However that editor need not be lost, for, to avoid disorder amongst his poems and notes, Chénier had often labelled, in French or Greek, his work according to the genre. The Elégies are variously described as Elégie, El., Ελ., or Ελεγ. (See table below). Other labels remind the poet that the lines of poetry are only a fragment of an elegy, or the beginning, or an end: frag. Eleg., Elég. frag., El. fin., El. comm., El. commenc. Although these are precious indications for an editor they still do not provide any clues to the overall arrangement of the Elégies. Yet certain of the Elégies are designated in such a way that there appears to be an intention by Chénier to put them into groups. Eight elegies have the label 'Italian', (ελεγ. ιταλ., Elégie ιταλ., Eleg.ιταλ., Ελ.ιταλ.), four others are

¹ See Brooks Otis, Virgil. A Study in Civilised Poetry, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964.

Table to show the designations used by Chénier for his Elégies

Unless stated otherwise these manuscripts are from liasse 6850.

El.	Elégie	Ελ.	Ελεγ.	Ελεγ. ιταλ.	Ελεγ. Ηω	Ελεγ. β	frag. Elég.	El. commenc.
fo.16 r ^o	fo.38 r ^o	fo.35 r ^o	fo.67 r ^o	fo.131 r ^o	fo.152 r ^o	fo.147 r ^o	fo.78 r ^o	fo.80 r ^o
fo.31 r ^o	fo.41 r ^o	fo.58 r ^o	fo.84 r ^o	fo.137 r ^o	fo.154 r ^o	Ελεγ. in προθυριασμ.	Elég. frag.	El. comm.
fo.43 r ^o		fo.72 r ^o	fo.86 r ^o	fo.141 r ^o	Ελ. Ηω			
fo.65 r ^o		fo.88 r ^o	fo.116 v ^o	fo.143 r ^o	fo.150 r ^o fo.157 r ^o	fo.23 v ^o	fo.123 r ^o	fo.129 r ^o
fo.99 r ^o		fo.89 r ^o	fo.125 r ^o	Ελ. ιταλ.				
fo.107 r ^o		fo.93 r ^o		fo.139 r ^o			El. fin.	
fo.118 r ^o		fo.111 r ^o		Elégie ιταλ.				
fo.148 r ^o		fo.112 r ^o		fo.133 r ^o				
		fo.116 r ^o		Ελέγ. ιταλ.				
		fo.124 r ^o		fo.135 r ^o				
		fo.126 r ^o		Ελεγ. ιταλ. τριβ σαφικ				
		6849 fo.213 v ^o		fo.146 r ^o				

designated 'Oriental', (ελεγ. ηω, ελ. ηω). One elegy proclaims its affinity to an ancient literary genre, ελεγ. in προθυριασμ., and a final elegy is curiously referred to as ελεγ. β. P. Dimoff is the only editor who has reproduced these signs correctly, although doing so is only a partial solution to the problem. A host of notes and poetic fragments have no label, and these have been placed within the elegiac genre by Dimoff for various reasons. Some are the first notes and drafts of a definite elegy and are easily identified. Others contain a single line later used in an elegy, or the name of one of Chénier's mistresses, whilst others are classified by the elegiac nature of their theme and subject matter. To give some order to all these elegies Dimoff has used Chénier's own designation as a basis for further groupings. The subdivisions ιταλ. and ηω suggested to him that Chénier may have organized his Elégies around events in his life: poems arising from his journey to Italy and plans for a journey to Greece. Inevitably the other elegies fall easily into groups that focus upon Chénier's mistresses: the Lycoris cycle, the Camille cycle, the D'.z.n group, and general love poems, and into a group of elegies dealing with his illness, his friendships, his stay in England. Chénier's final organization would probably have been different, and Dimoff admits that his is a 'classification artificielle'.¹

Certainly, as we have seen in chapter II,² following G. Buisson's historical methods, there is now conclusive evidence that a re-classification of the D'.z.n - Camille cycle is necessary. Moreover research for this thesis has demonstrated that the manuscript evidence and Chénier's techniques of composition make a further re-assessment essential. Our inspection of the surviving manuscripts has revealed the possibility of extending the accepted Lycoris cycle. Certain elegies and elegiac fragments and notes that Dimoff has placed under the more general headings of 'Amours diverses', 'Fragments et vers se rapportant à l'amour',

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, Introduction, p.ix.

² See pp. 97-110 above.

and 'Fragments, notes et vers épars' can now be dated approximately to 1782 and so to the period when 'Lycoris' was occupying the poet's attention. The evidence is based on the manuscript material whose general format was outlined earlier. Within this general format there is a specific series of elegies and notes which have been written on manuscripts of the palest blue paper, each with the same distinctive watermark, suggesting that they were being produced at about the same time. In some cases the sheet of paper has been folded to give four sides measuring approximately 11 cm wide x 17 cm long, in other cases the paper has been torn in half to give two sides with similar measurements. The manuscripts 6850 fo. 12, 13, and 14, all have this particular format and are the second draft of the elegy 'Animé par l'Amour'.¹ Fortunately these have been dated to 1782 by the author himself and the third phase, though now lost in manuscript form, contains the name Lycoris. The preliminary draft² of this elegy is the first poem of the manuscript group 6850 fo. 119-120, which again has the same distinctive format. Moreover, the last note of this group, 'Nunc et amara dies',³ is an early idea for the elegy 'Souvent le malheureux songe à quitter la vie',⁴ and, although this manuscript is lost, the published elegy uses the name of Lycoris. Dimoff placed all these elegiac fragments within his Lycoris cycle but overlooked the aide-mémoire,⁵ with references particularly to Tibullus, that come between the first version of 'Animé par l'Amour' and 'Nunc et amara dies' in fo. 119-120. By their very nature these important aide-mémoire must have been written at the same time as the other material on fo. 119-120, and fo. 12, 13, and 14. They should therefore be linked more closely with the Lycoris cycle. Manuscript

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, pp.37-44.

² Ibid., pp.36-37.

³ Ibid., IV, i, 6, p.56.

⁴ Ibid., pp.57-59.

⁵ 'Ministre des naufrages', 6850 fo. 119 recto. (Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IX, 5, p.170).

'Par quels noeuds', 6850 fo. 119 recto. (Ibid., IX, 11, p.172).
The image of Proteus also appears in the recognized Lycoris group:

6850 fo. 17 has also the same format, and again contains a note¹ that was later assimilated into the Lycoris elegy 'Souvent le malheureux'. Although Dimoff has placed this note with the Lycoris cycle, he does not include 'S'ils n'ont point le bonheur, en est-il sur la terre'² in this group, although this elegy is also on fo. 17. There is the same format for the manuscript 6850 fo. 23-24 which has drafts for the elegy 'La Lampe'.³ Dimoff placed this within the Lycoris group for, although her name is not mentioned, Chénier calls himself Gallus, the literary pseudonym he took as the counter-part to Lycoris.⁴ Similarly 6850 fo. 82, which is used for the elegy 'Vois ta brillante image',⁵ is included in the cycle because the name of Lycoris is there, and once again we note that the format of the manuscript is the same. From all this evidence it seems likely that all the elegies written on this paper date from the same period. The other elegies and notes on this particular kind of paper, and not included by Dimoff in his Lycoris group, because her name is not used, are:

1) 6850 fo. 80, 'Les premiers vers sont d'une jolie chanson de Shakespeare',⁶

5 [contd.]

'Mais surtout, Lycoris, Protée insidieux / Partout autour de toi je veille, j'ai des yeux'. (Ibid., IV, i, 4, ll.51-52, p.49).

'Il faut placer quelque part', 6850 fo. 119 verso. (Ibid., IX, 7, p.171).

'La pâle violette', 6850 fo. 119 verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 19, p.124).

'Si du ris sur ta bouche', 6850 fo. 119 verso. (Ibid., IX, 8, p.171).

'Il faut traduire', 6850 fo. 120 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 11, p.122).

'Properce a parlé', 6850 fo. 120 recto. (Ibid., IX, 13, p.172).

'Cruelles destinées !', 6850 fo. 120 recto. (Ibid., IX, 12, p.172).

'L'ingrate de mes maux', 6850 fo. 120 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 20, ll.27-30, p.106).

'Quand d'un souffle jaloux', 6850 fo. 120 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 14, pp.101-102).

'Un coeur toujours', 6850 fo. 120 verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 13, p.123).

'Au sommet d'Hélicon', 6850 fo. 120 verso. (Ibid., IX, 6, p.170).

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, pp.56-57.

² Ibid., IV, v, 4, pp.93-94.

³ Ibid., IV, i, 5, pp.50-56.

⁴ Ibid., IV, i, 3, l.6, p.47.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Dimoff, *ibid.*, IV, v, 16, pp.102-103.

2) 6850 fo. 121-122, which has numerous aide-mémoire and the longer elegies, 'Oh ! puisse le ciseau qui doit trancher mes jours', and 'Il n'est donc plus d'espoir'.¹ The argument for placing these within the Lycoris cycle is strengthened by the fact that the last four lines of 'Il n'est donc plus d'espoir' are on fo. 120 which can definitely be linked to this period of Chénier's career. In addition there is 3) 6850 fo. 124, 'Non, je n'ai plus d'empire',² and finally there is 4) 6850 fo. 156, a series of aide-mémoire and the elegy 'Où sont ces grands tombeaux'.³

The significance of this new dating of the manuscripts is considerable. It enlarges the Lycoris group and thereby gives it greater importance. It proves that in 1782 Chénier was, through his own techniques of composition, building up a poetic store. It shows that at this date he was including in his manuscripts a large number of aide-mémoire from his reading of ancient authors, Tibullus in particular. It confirms that right from the beginning of his career, after he had left the Collège de Navarre, Chénier was already plundering the treasure house of Antiquity.

¹ 'Oh ! puisse le ciseau', 6850 fo. 121 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 5, p.96).
 'Il n'est donc plus d'espoir', 6850 fo. 121 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 20, pp.105-106).
 'Ah ! les serments jurés', 6850 fo. 122 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 17, p.124).
 'Un vers brûlant d'amour', 6850 fo. 122 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 15, p.123).
 'Sans pitié l'immoler', 6850 fo. 122 recto. (Ibid., VI, 4, p.156).
 'On peut appeler les eaux', 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Ibid., IX, 14, p.173).
 'Vos jours brillants', 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Ibid., IX, 18, p.174).
 'L'onde changée en pleurs', 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Ibid., IX, 17, p.173).
 'Lui soupirer un vers', 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 15, p.123).
 'Que leurs vaisseaux errants', 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Ibid., VI, 3, p.155).
 'Et la rose pâlit', 6850 fo. 122 verso. (Ibid., IV, v, 2, p.92).

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, IV, v, 15, p.102.

³ 'Penché sur toi', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IV, v, 13, p.101).
 'Non, tu ne connais point', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 14, p.123).
 'Achille, au bord de la mer', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IX, 4, p.170).
 'L'astre qui fait aimer', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., V, iii, 4, p.138).
 'Tous ceux qu'un même Dieu', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IV, vi, 12, p.122).
 'Le boeuf, accablé de vieillesse', 6850 fo. 156 recto. (Ibid., IX, 9, p.171).
 'Où sont ces grands tombeaux', 6850 fo. 156 verso. (Ibid., IV, vi, 10, p.121)

VIII

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER AND THE LATIN LOVE ELEGY: THOUGHT AND STYLE.PART ONE: THE ELEGIAC ILLUSION

The final assessment of André Chénier's Elégies resides in his ability to renew the Latin Love Elegy and to produce elegies of an equivalent standing in the French language. It is the aim of chapters VIII and IX to illustrate Chénier's achievement by detailed stylistic and thematic comparisons between his Elégies and the poems that were his Latin models. In order to appreciate these comparisons fully it is important to have an understanding of the Latin Love Elegy, of its origins and development, its milieu, its themes, and the differences between the individual elegists. The subject is vast and we cannot become involved in all the problems that beset present-day interpreters of the genre, for many of these problems were not apparent to eighteenth century readers. In consequence only an outline which serves as a general historical and literary guide to the following research can be given at this point.

The Latin Love Elegy has had an extraordinary influence for a genre which flourished for an unusually brief moment in Rome's lengthy literary history, and which can boast of only three major writers whose works still survive. The elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid, and their precursor Gallus, who form the elegiac canon listed by Quintilian,¹ were composed within about forty years at the end of the first century B.C. (circa 40-2 B.C.). The genre is therefore closely linked to a specific period, that is to the years that marked the final collapse of the Roman Republic, and the establishment of the Augustan Principate. The minor elegists, such as Lygdamus and Sulpicia, whose poems form the third book of the Corpus

¹ Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, i, 93.

Tibullianum, were also writing during this time. That the Latin Love Elegy has been classified as a genre implies that it was subject to certain conventions in form and content accepted by the writers. The elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid share common themes and stylistic features. Moreover, the first work of the elegiac trio, the Propertian Monobiblos, indicates that the conventions were already defined by about 30 B.C. A historical development must therefore be posited for the Latin Love Elegy.¹

The work of the Latin elegists is seen as a natural consequence of Greek Elegy, through Alexandria to Rome. The major impetus to growth in Rome was provided by Catullus (circa 84-54 B.C.) and the Neoterics, who were inspired by the principles of the Alexandrian poets. Catullus' poems LXV to CXVI are all composed in the elegiac metre but are, in the main, epigrams. Only two poems (LXVIII and LXXVI) are prototypes of an extended love elegy. The most important and original contribution made by Catullus was to focus upon a single relationship and to explore in depth the range of emotions experienced. It was he who transferred the vocabulary of marriage and social commitment (fides, pietas, amicitia, etc.), to his adulterous affair with Lesbia. In this way he was able to analyze the tensions of a relationship which he saw as solemn and binding and which was destroyed by the infidelities of Lesbia. The influence of Catullus upon the Latin elegists was crucial. From him they took and extended the vocabulary of love and they enlarged his notion of the conflict between dream and reality into the concept of servitium amoris, the very essence of abasement and suffering in the elegiac world.

It is generally assumed that Cornelius Gallus (circa 76-26 B.C.) recognized the possibility of combining from the various sources those

¹ See appendix III, below.

themes, characters, and situations that are conventional in the Latin Love Elegy. We know that Gallus wrote four books of elegies dedicated to Lycoris, but, since only ten lines of his verse are extant, the character of his poetry remains uncertain. Indications from Vergil's tenth Eclogue suggest that his themes included the desire to retreat to the country with his beloved, her absence abroad, and the clash between love and war, all of which are repeated in the poems of the later elegists. It is believed that the mythological element in Gallus' work was more prominent than in those of his successors.

The conventions of the Latin Love Elegy were soon well established. The outstanding feature of the genre is, in fact, its use of literary topoi. In their portrayal of the human heart and its gamut of emotions the elegists cast themselves into a definite rôle. They assumed the conventional persona of the elegiac lover and treated this within a series of stock situations. Central to the genre is the affair of the lover and his mistress. The dominant theme of love is expressed in recurrent motifs: the paraklausithyron, carpe diem, servitium amoris, inter alia, and features traditional characters such as the exclusus amator, the lena, and the dives amator. However the Latin Love Elegy cannot be confined to themes of love alone. The investigation of human emotions also involves themes of friendship and death, man's relationship with nature, his appreciation of art and literary principles. These motifs all have long and complex literary histories, and in some cases may even be traced back to Homeric prototypes.¹ Exploitation of the literature of the past in new poetry of the highest standards of excellence was a keynote of Alexandrian work with its cult of σοφία (doctrina) and τέχνη (ars).

¹ F. Cairns, Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry, Edinburgh University Press, 1972, pp.34-36.

It was the literary aims, attitudes, and practices of the Hellenistic poets that pervaded Roman poets in the first century B.C. Their ideal also was to be a doctus poeta. In fulfilling this rôle and introducing stereotyped motifs into their elegies, the Augustan poets realized the need for original treatment. Every theme, for example, the renuntiatio amoris, had its own traditional set of elements to distinguish it from another motif. Within this framework there were smaller divisions, secondary elements that could be associated with other themes. It was by new combinations, arrangements, and selection of the secondary elements, by modifications and innovations in thought and style, that an individual elegist could achieve originality.¹ The elegist would expect his educated audience to understand the allusions and to detect the creative twists in the handling of conventional topoi.

One of the ways in which the Latin elegists transcended the conventional motifs was by adapting them to reflect the radically changing society and morality of their day. When Propertius and Tibullus were composing their first books of elegies, the strife of civil war had ended at Actium and the foundations of efficient imperial government were being laid. Octavian-Augustus aimed to restore Rome to its past greatness by a vigorous programme of reform and regeneration. The mos maiorum was to be revived, traditional public values, morality and civicism, institutions and religious practices were to be restored. On the other hand, the crisis of the collapse of the Republic, and the ever-increasing Greek influence, had encouraged the growth of greater individualism, and the demand for otium. J-P. Boucher in his analysis of the period indicates the problems:

¹F. Cairns, *ibid.*, pp.5-7, 99, et alibi.

Le Romain n'est plus le citoyen aux vertus légendaires, et la discipline ancienne a cédé devant un individualisme croissant. La défiance des citoyens à l'égard de la respublica rejoint la connaissance de la culture, des distractions et de la vie grecques pour les inciter à jouir d'un otium qui eût scandalisé les vieux Romains.¹

Otium had been, and was still, regarded as the just reward for labor, industria, and virtus. In Cicero's terms this was otium cum dignitate, earned at the end of the cursus honorum.² Others at the time found the two concepts irreconcilable; traditional virtus, political duties, and public morality were set by them against a demand for otium signifying the rights of the individual to a private existence. The tensions within the state, labelled by Boucher as 'la crise de la conscience romaine',³ are mirrored in the work of the elegists. Otium, paupertas, inertia have been turned into a complete modus vivendi and a political creed. This elegiac ideal involves the rejection of the traditional occupations of an upper-class Roman, the rejection of the law-courts and military service, and the refusal of wealth and honours. Instead, the elegiac poet devotes his life to love and art. The labor and pietas due to the state have been transferred to love and literature. Much of the interest in the Latin Love Elegy comes from the clash between the two worlds. The elegists frequently defend and then extol a negative, private ethic against the overwhelming pressures of the state and public morality. The Latin Love Elegy is thus much more than a youthful expression of love, it deliberately adopts a strong anti-conformist stance, negating and revising the values that were being vigorously encouraged by Augustan propaganda. Ironically,

¹J-P. Boucher, Etudes sur Propertius. Problèmes d'inspiration et d'art, Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 240, Paris, E. de Boccard, 1965, p.14.

²Cicero, De Oratore, Lib. I, i, quoted by Boucher, *ibid.*, p. 16.

³*Ibid.*, p.18.

otium and a life of art and love had only been made possible for the elegists by Rome's political and economic successes and by the internal peace provided by Augustus.

In developing their life of love the elegists were thus offering an alternative morality to that advocated by Augustus. Militia amoris was the most serious occupation of the elegiac life, and the commitment to the mistress was to be for eternity. The elegists intensified Catullan attitudes of devotion and declared the servitium amoris to be the key concept of their morality. The normal male domination of Roman society was overturned. The poet was humiliated and debased and became a professed slave of his mistress. Such concepts, deriving from a long literary tradition, were fostered by the social context of the time and by the increasing part played by ladies in Roman society.¹ The elegiac mistresses appear to portray the well-educated and elegant women of the first century B.C., who were becoming influential in politics and who were indulging in adultery. Sallust's portrait of Sempronia, (the wife of D. Junius Brutus, consul 77 B.C.), is often adduced as an example of a woman who resembles the elegiac mistress:

. . . litteris Graecis et Latinis docta, psallere saltare elegantius, quam necesse est probae, multa alia, quae instrumenta luxuriae sunt. . . .verum ingenium eius haud absurdum: posse versus facere, iocum movere, sermone uti vel modesto vel molli vel procaci; prorsus multae facetiae multisque lepos inerat.²

The old divisions between the sophisticated courtesan, the meretrix, and the matrona were not always as clear as they once were. Clodia, the infamous wife of Q. Metellus Celer, and sister of P. Clodius, the woman

¹ For a discussion of this topic see R.O.A.M. Lyne, The Latin Love Poets from Catullus to Horace, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980, pp.1-18.

² Sallust, Bellum Catilinae, 25.

celebrated by Catullus as Lesbia, had already demonstrated the growing sexual licence amongst the upper classes in Rome.

These brief glimpses into the social context of Latin Elegy present striking comparisons with the attitudes and milieu of André Chénier. Just as Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid eschewed the cursus honorum, with its military service and magistracies, to become poets, so André Chénier found he had no liking for a career in the army, the usual means of advancement for a young, aspiring nobleman. The Latin elegists were all equites and therefore had sufficient inherited wealth to enable them to devote themselves to literature. The elegiac cult of paupertas did not necessitate the rejection of ancestral wealth, merely the rejection of its accretion by a life of negotium. Similarly, as a grand bourgeois, André Chénier had sufficient funds to postpone the necessity of working for a living. When forced eventually to enter the diplomatic service in England to help weakened family finances, he was soon bemoaning his loss of independence and showing his distaste for the menial jobs he carried out. Boucher's description of the milieu of the Latin elegists could easily be applied to the wealthy, aristocratic circles frequented by André Chénier:

On a affaire. . . à une vie de gens de lettres et de gens du monde dans des cercles riches et peu nombreux où les femmes jouent leur rôle de public qui donne la royauté, d'animatrices soucieuses d'être illustrées par un amant célèbre.¹

Such sociological arguments cannot be extended too far. Eighteenth century French society certainly was not a replica of society in Rome at the beginning of the Principate. The only sure comparisons between André Chénier and the Latin elegists arise from stylistic and thematic studies of their poetry. We have already noticed that in his reworking of the genre Chénier had an abundance of themes from which to make his selection.

¹J-P. Boucher, *ibid.*, p.29.

Moreover it should be emphasized in concluding our introduction to the Latin Love Elegy that Chénier was able to choose his themes and style from three poets who approached their poetry in three highly individual ways.

To find the description of an affair whose passionate intensity led to torments, bitterness and jealousy, self-pity and a preoccupation with death, Chénier could turn to the elegies of Propertius, (circa 57-16 B.C.). Here too he saw the skilful exploitation of mythological exempla and an ability to introduce irony and self-mockery when it was required to lessen the tension. Propertius, like all the elegists, was a supreme craftsman who knew how to render incidents in a dramatic way. His idiosyncratic style created a sense of immediacy by abrupt transitions between blocks of thought, and by the manipulation of word-order, extending words beyond their normal meaning. In Tibullus (circa 48-19 B.C.) Chénier found the calmer, less dramatic expression of elegiac themes. Within each Tibullan poem there are numerous motifs, all carefully interwoven, but a recurrent idea is the desire to escape to the countryside with his mistress, there to enjoy rural simplicity. Tibullus is the only elegist of the trio to write for more than one mistress, Delia and Nemesis, and to compose homosexual elegies. Tibullus' style is 'tersus' and 'elegans',¹ with its deceptively simple, smooth, and melodic diction, its sublime exploitation of etymology, its avoidance of excessive imagery and mythology. Finally, for a reductio ad absurdum, Chénier could turn to Ovid (43 B.C.-17 A.D.). The last of the elegists treated the genre in a different way, for it was his nature to parody the stock characters and situations, to take a witty, superior, detached view of the game of love, to highlight its incongruities and follies, and to undercut every situation by bathos and irony. In Ovid was real verbal and metrical dexterity, a facility for

¹ Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Lib. X, i, 93.

language and word games, and a love of rhetorical devices.

This outline of the Latin Love Elegy enables us to appreciate André Chénier's adaptation of the genre in style and thought. As he studied the works of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid, certain stylistic values were firmly fixed into his poetic techniques. The various structural forms that Chénier employed in his Elégies, his use of mythology and rhetorical devices, and his appreciation of poetic diction can all be traced back to his knowledge of the three elegists. In fact, Chénier's style is based beyond this upon general Latin poetic practice, which he absorbed through his reading of the elegists and of the major Latin poets, Catullus, Vergil, and Horace. Indeed these stylistic features, and rhetoric in particular, had been the mainspring of French literature from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century.

The structural patterns of the individual Latin elegies show interesting variation. Numerous elegies, as befit their 'biographical' framework, take the form of interior meditations or personal monologues. In them the elegist comments upon his own feelings, the poem lacks narrative and its relationship to a specific, temporal situation is reduced. The first and nineteenth elegies of the Propertian Monobiblos can be cited for study of this technique. An apposite illustration comes in the following lines from Tibullus, Lib. I, elegy i, in which the poet aspires to live in rural simplicity:

non ego divitias patrum fructusque requiro,
 quos tulit antiquo condita messis avo:
 parva seges satis est; satis est, requiescere lecto
 si licet et solito membra levare toro.
 quam iuvat immites ventos audire cubantem
 et dominam tenero continuisse sinu
 aut, gelidas hibernus aquas cum fuderit Auster,
 securum somnos imbre iuvante sequi !¹

¹ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. i, ll.41-48.

Such elegies are the vehicle for Chénier's melancholic musings on life in general and love in particular:

Souvent, las d'être esclave et de boire la lie
De ce calice amer que l'on nomme la vie,
Las du mépris des sots qui suit la pauvreté,
Je regarde la tombe, asile souhaité;
Je souris à la mort volontaire et prochaine;
Je me prie, en pleurant, d'oser rompre ma chaîne.¹

These elegies frequently include sententiae, which echo the moralizing aphorisms found in Propertius:

is poterit felix una remanere puella,
qui numquam vacuo pectore liber erit.²

Chénier's elegy quoted above continues its threnodic motif and develops a paradox in general, sententious terms:

L'homme sait se cacher d'un voile spécieux.
A quelque noir destin qu'elle soit asservie,
D'une étreinte invincible il embrasse la vie;
Et va chercher bien loin, plutôt que de mourir,
Quelque prétexte ami de vivre et de souffrir.³

In contrast, the majority of Chénier's love elegies adopt a more lively method in the form of a dramatic monologue. This may be linked to narrative, as in 'Allons, l'heure est venue',⁴ in which Chénier recounts a dream about Camille, describes his expectations, and then recounts his subsequent visit to his beloved only to find her with a rival. The way in which the details of the deception are held back, the poet's gradual realization of betrayal, turn narrative into dramatic monologue. Frequently, as in elegies of the type, 'Non, je ne l'aime plus',⁵ the narrative element

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 9, 11.5-10, p.162.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXIV, 11.5-10, p.75.

²Propertius, Lib. I, el. x, 11.29-30.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.16-20, p.162.
Walter, *ibid.*, 11.16-20, p.75.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 7, pp.70-73.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 7, pp.103-105.

⁵Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 8, pp.73-75.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 8, pp.105-106.

is restricted, but the framework of dramatic monologue is retained, as the poet vividly juxtaposes his past hopes with his present rejection, and intersperses the monologue with his previous comments to Camille. This kind of dramatic monologue appealed strongly to Chénier for it enabled him to communicate tortured emotions directly to the reader. In one rather unusual case, 'La Lampe',¹ this is done by means of a dramatic tragi-comedy, including dialogue, as the lamp, which had witnessed its mistress' infidelity, until she blew it out, replies to the poet's charge of treachery. It is questionable whether Chénier, in this use of dramatic monologue, ever reached the standard of the Propertian elegy, Lib. I, elegy iii. Propertius returns home late after a party. In his drunken state he sees Cynthia asleep and idealizes her beauty in a series of comparisons with mythological heroines. This romanticized vision of Cynthia is then abruptly dispelled as the domina awakes and rejects the poet with vindictive accusations. This drama is a striking blend of humour and wit, of pathos and irony, and of tenderness and sarcasm; it would be difficult to surpass it in excellence.

Within these major structural forms, Chénier introduces other techniques favoured by Roman poets. Of these we may cite the use of the poetic catalogue, that is illustrated from Tibullus' account of the civilizing rôle of the ruris dei:

rura cano rurisque deos. his vita magistris
 desuevit querna pellere glande famem:
 illi compositis primum docuere tigillis
 exiguum viridi fronde operire domum:
 illi etiam tauros primi docuisse feruntur
 servitium et plaustro supposuisse rotam.
 tum victus abiere feri, tum consita pomus,
 tum bibit inriguas fertilis hortus aquas,
 aurea tum pressos pedibus dedit uva liquores
 mixtaque securo est sobria lympha mero.²

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 5, pp.50-56.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'La Lampe', pp.120-122.

² Tibullus, Lib. II, el. i, ll.37-46.

The technique of a poetic catalogue in Chénier's Elégies has already been mentioned with reference to 'Animé par l'Amour',¹ and will be seen again in Chénier's catalogue of Camille's beauty in the elegy 'Pourquoi de mes loisirs accuser la langueur ?'.² Also appreciated by the Latin poets was the ring structure. In Tibullus, Lib. II, elegy ii, for example, the poem begins and ends with an invocation of Natalis. Chénier's imitations of this ring structure are found in 'Et c'est Glycère',³ and in 'O nuit, nuit douloureuse !',⁴ which both achieve a circular pattern. In an elegy to Marie Cosway,⁵ Chénier developed the ring structure by incorporating within it the further technique of ekphrasis, the description of a work of art. Ekphrasis is rarely found in Latin Elegy,⁶ and it is rather to Epic, and particularly to the descriptions in Vergil's Aeneid, that we should turn to analyze this device. In Chénier's elegy the beginning and the end are in the form of an address to an artist who is to engrave the beautiful features of Marie Cosway onto a precious gem. In the lengthy central section of the poem, the poet details the various qualities of the subject which the artist should capture. Furthermore, Chénier adopted the dedicatory framework of the hymn, which is so often found in Horace's Odes, but which also occurs in Tibullus, as the opening lines of Lib. II, elegy v indicate:

¹ See chapter VII p.307.

² See p.359 below.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 5, pp.67-69.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 5, pp.100-101.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 4, pp.83-86.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 2, pp.110-111.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iv, 1, pp.87-89.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Marie Cosway', 1, pp.112-113.

⁶ F. Cairns suggests that the final couplets of Tibullus, Lib. II, el. i, are an ekphrasis of a famous sculpture or painting. (F. Cairns, Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.134).

⁷ For example Vergil, Aeneid, Lib. VIII, ll.608-731.

Phoebe, fave: novus ingreditur tua templa sacerdos:
huc age cum cithara carminibusque veni.

Following the traditional form of the hymn, Chénier was able to compose an elegy 'O Muses, accourez', which combines narrative, lyric, and didactic intent. Its opening is a fine example, for it includes the apostrophe and the imperative, mentions the 'cult-sites' of the deity, and lists alternatives ('soit que. . . soit que'/'sive. . . sive'), all forms which closely resemble the conventional patterns of a hymn:

O Muses, accourez; solitaires divines,
Amantes des ruisseaux, des grottes, des collines !
Soit qu'en ses beaux vallons Nîme égare vos pas,
Soit que de doux pensers, en de riants climats,
Vous retiennent aux bords de Loire ou de Garonne.¹

In imitating the stylistic features of the Latin poets Chénier also accepts the rôle of mythology, although, inevitably, in the Elégies the introduction of mythological material is more restricted than in the Bucoliques. At the simplest level, Chénier, as did the Latin poets, recognized the value of mythological personification in his poetry:

La poésie donne un corps, un visage à tous les vices, à toutes les vertus, aux passions. . . elle transporte sur le visage même qu'elle leur donne les traits, les marques, les signes par où elles se manifestent sur les visages des hommes. . . par exemple, Cybèle n'est que la Terre, Cérès est le nom du blé; Mars, Bellone, Erinnys ne sont que des noms de la guerre; Neptune, Amphitrite sont des synonymes de la mer; Vénus est le besoin de jouir; Apollon, les Muses désignent le penchant et le goût de la poésie.²

Examples of this basic use of mythology abound in the Elégies, adding an evocative richness of sound:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 1, ll.1-5, p.149.
Walter, 'Elégies', II, ll.1-5, p.56.

²Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.692.

De la blonde Palès l'aspect délicieux,
 Et l'azur d'Amphitrite, et la voûte des cieux,
 Portent jusqu'à leur âme et délicate et tendre
 Une voix, des accents qu'eux seuls savent entendre.¹

Chénier was also conscious of the deeper significance of mythology for poetry: 'Sachez découvrir les vérités que les antiques sages ont couvert [sic] de l'enveloppe des fables'.² For ancient poets, and for Chénier, mythology was not merely gratuitous ornamentation and embellishment. It was regarded as symbolically true and had a function to express universal truths. Through comparison with myth the individual experience was given meaning and validity. Thus in the elegy 'Mânes de Callimaque', in order to illustrate the magical power of poetry, Chénier introduces mythological exempla: Orpheus, who could enchant even rock renowned for shipwrecks, Amphion, who made rocks move to form the walls of Thebes, and Arion, saved from drowning by dolphins who had been charmed by his lyre:

Par la lyre attendris, les rochers du Riphée
 Se pressaient, nous dit-on, sur les traces d'Orphée.
 Des murs fils de la lyre ont gardé les Thébains,
 Arion à la lyre a dû de longs destins:
 Je lui dois des plaisirs. . . .³

The second elliptical reference highlights that Chénier demands knowledge from his readers. The examples are based on lines from two Propertian poems: firstly, from Lib. III, elegy ii:

Orphea detinuisse feras et concita dicunt
 flumina Threicia sustinuisse lyra;
 saxa Cithaeronis Thebas agitata per artem
 sponte sua in muri membra coisse ferunt;⁴

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 4, ll.2-5, p.93.
 Omitted in Walter.

²Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', ch. III, V, i, 20, ll.1-3, pp.70-71.
 Omitted in Walter.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, ll.39-43, p.128.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, ll.39-43, p.139.

⁴Propertius, Lib. III, el. ii, ll.3-6.

and secondly, from Lib. II, elegy xxvi:

sed tibi subsidio delphinum currere vidi,
qui, puto, Arioniam vexerat ante lyram.¹

It is no wonder that Chénier turned to Propertius in this matter for the influence of mythology on Propertius is all-pervasive.² In his use of such exempla Chénier establishes himself as the ancient ideal of the doctus poeta. This is exemplified in a reference in the elegy, 'De Pange, ami chéri':

Je rêve assis au bord de cette onde sonore,
Qu'au penchant d'Hélicon, pour arroser ses bois,
Le quadrupède ailé fit jaillir autrefois.³

The learned allusion is to the spring of the Muses, Hippocrene, which is said to have welled forth when Pegasus' hoof struck a rock on Mount Helicon.

Latin poetry is above all characterized by its excellent development and skilful usage of rhetorical devices to reinforce the sense of a given poem. As will be stressed in the following thematic survey of the Elégies, Chénier closely imitates the use by the Roman elegists of metaphor to enliven the theme of love as a disease. Personification was also part of the traditional imagery of Latin authors. Just as Ovid could declare: 'caecaque me praedam fecerat ira suam',⁴ so Chénier could personify fear, 'Et la crainte inquiète est fille de l'amour',⁵ and his own lyre, 'Ma

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xxvi, ll.17-18.

² For the most recent discussion of Propertian mythology see R.O.A.M. Lyne, The Latin Love Poets from Catullus to Horace, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980, pp.82-102.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 3, ll.14-16, p.137.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 3, ll.14-16, p.153.

⁴ Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el. vii, l.44.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 5, l.36, p.68.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 5, l.36, p.101.

jeune lyre osait balbutier des vers'.¹ On the other hand, there is only one example of an extended simile in the Elégies. Here again Chénier seems to be following Latin elegiac practice for similes are also infrequent in Propertius' work. Chénier's simile, 'Ainsi, vainqueur de Troie. . .',² is derived from the Odyssey,³ and likens Chénier's enthusiastic return to France to the return of Odysseus to Ithaca.

The Latin poets, in their use of rhetorical devices, continually sought to achieve symmetry and balance. For this reason they appreciated anaphora, the balanced repetition that underlines the sense of lines by emphasis, or creates pathos, as appropriate. The clarity and poignancy of this Propertian couplet is created by anaphora:

tu mihi sola domus, tu, Cynthia, sola parentes,
omnia tu nostrae tempora laetitiae.⁴

In Chénier's elegy 'La Lampe', anaphora is linked to rhetorical exclamations to express the poet's angry criticism of the lamp. The hyperbole of the lines is evident:

C'est moi, près de son lit, qui fis veiller tes feux
Pour garder mes amours, pour éclairer nos jeux;
Et tu ne t'éteins pas à l'aspect de son crime !
Et tu sers aux plaisirs d'un rival qui m'opprime !⁵

In the elegy 'Ah ! je les reconnais !', 'par vous' is repeated five times

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, 1, l.14, p.125.
Walter, 'Epîtres', I, 1, l.14, p.133.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iv, ll.1-14, p.34.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXI, ll.1-14, pp.72-73.

³ Homer, Odyssey, book 13, ll.100-108 and ll.352-358.

⁴ Propertius, Lib. I, el. xi, ll.23-24.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 5, ll.75-78, p.53.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'La Lampe', ll.15-18, p.120.

in the same position in each of fourteen lines to emphasize the poet's love of the Muses.¹ Poetic symmetry was likewise attained by means of antithesis. Propertius combined antithesis and anaphora in a cry of despair:

mi neque amare aliam neque ab hac desistere fas est:
Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit.²

Chénier, too, used antithesis to produce pathos. In the following lines antithesis is coupled with apostrophe, a further rhetorical device often found in the Elégies:

O sort ! je dois donc voir, et dans mon plus bel âge,
Flotter mes jours, tissus de désirs et de pleurs,
Dans ce flux et reflux d'espoir et de douleurs !³

In another line it forms a succinct and bitter admonishment: 'Lâche ! aime donc la vie, ou n'attends pas la mort'.⁴ When the poet begs Camille to remain faithful abroad, 'Présente aux milieu d'eux, sois seule, sois absente',⁵ the antithesis is reinforced by the bracketing structure of the line. This was a favourite Latin stylistic pattern, and can be seen in the Propertian line, 'quantus in exiguo tempore fugit amor !'.⁶ However, such

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 4, ll.21-34, pp.48-49.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 3, ll.21-34, p.92.

² Propertius, Lib. I, el. xii, ll.19-20.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 9, ll.2-4, p.162.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXIV, ll.2-4, p.75.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 10, l.4, p.163.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', XXX, l.4, p.555.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 3, l.78, p.65.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 3, l.78, p.100.

⁶ Propertius, Lib. I, el. xii, l.12.

patterns cannot be imitated easily in the more rigid word order of the French language. The flexibility of Latin made chiasmus a common feature providing symmetry within the line. The chiastic form abba is clearly in evidence in Propertius', 'nos uxor numquam, numquam seducet amica'.¹ The following lines show Chénier imitating the technique to produce a sense of mounting excitement and expectation:

Tout embrasait mon sang: tout mon sang est amour.
Non, plus de feux jamais, non, jamais plus d'ivresses
N'ont chatouillé ce coeur affamé de caresses.²

It is noticeable that Chénier has the same love of emphasis as the Latin authors. Epithets come in pairs and congeries, the accumulation of verbs or substantives, which are often synonymous, is a constantly recurring aspect of Chénier's style:

Allez fléchir son coeur, désarmer son courroux;
Suppliez, gémissiez, implorez sa clémence.³

In a Propertian couplet congeries combines with rising tricolon:

O me felicem ! o nox mihi candida ! et o tu
lectule deliciis facte beate meis !⁴

Using the same methods Chénier is able to reproduce similar effects in the following examples: 'Ma vie, et ma dépouille, et tout mon souvenir',⁵

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. vi, l.41.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 3, ll.12-14, p.21.
Walter, 'Elégies', IX, ll.12-14, p.62.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 5, ll.2-3, p.22.
Walter, 'Elégies', XIII, ll.2-3, p.66.

⁴ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xv, ll.1-2.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 2, l.8, p.6.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXV, l.8, p.76.

and 'La prier, la maudire, invoquer le cercueil'.¹ Such accumulation, underlined by rhetorical questions and alliteration, produces a tense and powerful opening to an elegy on betrayal:

Mais ne m'a-t-elle pas juré d'être infidèle ?
 Mais n'est-ce donc pas moi qu'elle a banni loin d'elle ?
 Mais sa voix intrépide, et ses yeux et son front
 Ne se vantaient-ils pas de m'avoir fait affront ?²

No less bitter is the Propertian rebuke of Cynthia:

Hoc verum est, tota te ferri, Cynthia, Roma,
 et non ignota vivere nequitia ?
 haec merui sperare ? dabis mihi, perfida, poenas.³

In diction too Chénier continued the Classical Tradition and strove to lend a certain remoteness and dignity to his poetry that would distinguish it from every-day speech. Examples abound of words of poetical usage, whose Latin roots are often clear:

- (1) A mes trois lustres pleins ajoute quatre années,⁴
- (2) L'axe tourne, mon coeur; souffre encore un moment,⁵
- (3) De Charybde à Scylla toujours vague et flottant.⁶

In contrast to these innumerable links between Chénier's style and that of the Latin authors, the connection between the Classical French Alexandrine

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 7, l.7, p.59.

Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 5, l.7, p.95.

² Ibid., ll.1-4.

³ Propertius, Lib. II, el. v, ll.1-3.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', I, l.2, p.3.

Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', I, l.2, p.544.

⁵ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 3, l.2, p.8.

Walter, 'Elégies', XVI, l.2, p.68.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, v, l.26, p.146.

Walter, 'Epîtres', V, l.26, p.149.

and the various Latin metres is tenuous, for the systems of versification are based on different principles. Nevertheless, the flexibility with which Chénier uses this metre owes much to his appreciation of Latin metrical forms. Chénier's Alexandrines have a distinctive musicality which stems from his avoidance of monotonous repetition within the metrical line. Lines may flow forward mellifluously with little break and with internal rhymes:

Vous-mêmes choisirez à mes jeunes reliques
 Quelque bord fréquenté des pénates rustiques,
 Des regards d'un beau ciel doucement animé,
 Des fleurs et de l'ombrage, et tout ce que j'aimai.¹

At other times the line is fractured in staccato rhythms to show anger:

Perfide ! Mais non, non, il faut n'y plus songer.
 Quoi ! toujours un soupir vers elle me ramène !
 Allons. Haïssons-la, puisqu'elle veut ma haine.
 Oui, je la hais. Je jure. . . . Eh ! serments superflus !
 N'ai-je pas dit assez que je ne l'aimais plus ?²

Particularly reminiscent of Latin metre is the use of enjambment followed by a strong pause to echo sense:

A peine tu sortais, que cette porte amie
 S'ouvre; un front jeune et blond se présente, et je vois
 Un amant aperçu pour la première fois.³

The master of this technique in Rome was not an elegist, but Vergil. Thus, in concluding our analysis of Chénier's style, we reaffirm his debt not only to Love Elegy but to general Latin poetic practice.

Direct thematic comparison with the Latin elegists further highlights Chénier's poetic talent. André Chénier knew the recurrent themes of the

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 2, ll.13-16, pp.6-7.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XXV, ll.13-16, p.76.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 8, ll.60-64, p.75.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 8, ll.60-64, p.106.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 5, ll.94-96, p.54.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'La Lampe', ll.34-36, p.121.

Love Elegy in depth, and, by reworking the motifs for his own needs, he was consciously perpetuating the system the elegists themselves had followed, and placing his own verses in the Graeco-Latin Tradition.

Amongst the major themes developed by the Latin elegists was one which had little to do with love but much to do with the nature of their poetry. This was the recusatio or polite refusal. It takes as its premise that the poet intended to write an epic poem, and then, although this was regarded as the noblest poetic achievement, politely declines so to do. The poem thus becomes an apology or a justification for composing an elegy and enables the poet, should he so choose, to define Elegy and to set out his literary programme in the way that Ovid does so amusingly in the opening elegy of the first book of the Amores. Recusatio is found throughout Augustan literature, in Vergil's Eclogues,¹ in Horace's Odes,² and in the elegists. The paradigm for the various treatments is to be found in the exordium of the major work of Callimachus, the Aitia. Although Chénier wrote about the Alexandrian poet and speculated about the nature of the Aitia,³ he could not have known the text in question, which was only discovered in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it merits a brief analysis at this point, not only for an understanding of the Latin elegists' use of the theme, but also for their literary principles, both of which are reflected in Chénier's Elégies. In the preface to the Aitia, Callimachus sets out his famous literary credo, which is, in essence, a reaction against the overwhelming domination of pseudo-Homeric epic poetry which, he felt, had become out-dated and obsolete, hackneyed and bombastic. In contrast Callimachus demanded perfection of form on a small scale with

¹ Vergil, Eclogues, poem VI.

² Horace, Odes, Lib. IV, 15.

³ Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', pp.762-765.

greater originality of thought, and a style that was 'slender', elegant, and delicate, λεπτός. The principles are expressed in a series of images in which Apollo instructs the poet to keep his Muse thin, not to drive his chariot on wide, worn roads, but on narrow tracks, and to sing for those who love the shrill voice of the cicada and not the braying of asses. The Augustan poets were forced to give a very different interpretation to the Callimachean recusatio. They politely decline to write an epic, either because they have been dissuaded by a God, Muse, or mistress,¹ or because they allege their talents cannot rise to the noble subjects of Epic, which, in many cases, have become the story of Roman history and an account of the great deeds of Augustus himself.² In the meantime, they briefly enumerate and praise the very epic subjects they are rejecting. It is Propertius, above all, who makes use of the recusatio in a most subtle way in several of his elegies.³ Political pressures were strong from Augustus and Maecenas to encourage the poets to celebrate the new regime and its ethos in epic poetry. By using the recusatio form Propertius managed to define his Callimachean literary aims and, at the same time, to reject political pressures whilst offering indirect flattery to Augustus.

Chénier was, of course, in a very different environment. He was fiercely independent and shunned all patronage, which he attacked vehemently in the 'Essai sur les causes', and in the 'République des lettres'. There was no political pressure on him to compose epic verses, and yet he repeatedly employed the recusatio motif, adopting Propertius as his especial model. In four elegies⁴ he amplifies the theme as the basic framework of

¹ See Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el. i.

² See Propertius, Lib. II, el. x.

³ See Propertius, Lib. I, el. vii, Lib. II, el. i, x, Lib. III, el. i-iii, v, ix, xvii.

⁴ (1) 'Fumant dans le cristal'. Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, pp.45-46.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 1, pp.90-91.
(2) 'Qu'un autre soit jaloux'. Dimoff, *ibid.*, V, ii, 2, pp.130-133.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 2, pp.136-138.
(3) 'Quand la feuille en festons'. Dimoff, *ibid.*, V, iii, 4, pp.138-141.
Walter, *ibid.*, VI, 4, pp.154-156.
(4) 'Pourquoi de mes loisirs'. Dimoff, *ibid.*, V, iv, 2, pp.142-145.
Walter, *ibid.*, IV, 2, pp.146-148.

his poem, whilst in two others¹ the motif plays a substantial part of the whole. Here is evidence that he too felt compelled to justify his writing of elegies, for the hierarchy of literary genres established by the Ancients still persisted in regarding the Epic as the pinnacle of poetic achievement.

An early essay in the free adaptation of a Propertian recusatio is the elegy 'Fumant dans le cristal', whose three stage development and commentary have been analyzed in our discussion of Chénier's methods of working.² The final draft of this elegy demonstrates clearly how the poet employed the techniques of contaminatio in both thought and style. It illustrates his recourse to different models, to various topoi, to macrologia, magnifying the original subject by more lengthy innovations, and to brachylogia, minimizing and omitting elements from the models. Chénier's first innovation is to place the Propertian recusatio, (Lib. III, elegy v), within the dramatic setting of a symposium so that he can address his drinking companions. However, even this idea seems to have been prompted by the Latin text in which the poet pledges himself to hedonistic pursuits:

me iuvat et multo mentem vincere Lyaeo,
et caput in verna semper habere rosa.³

Chénier has freely translated 'multo. . . Lyaeo' by 'Bacchus à longs flots', so maintaining the traditional personification of the deity for the object associated with him, but replacing the more esoteric title Λυαίος /Lyaeus, the relaxer.⁴ The second line of the couplet brings in the flowers that are a traditional part of sympotic poetry.⁵ Closer inspection

¹(1) 'Mânes de Callimaque'. Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, pp.127-130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, pp.138-140.
(2) 'L'Elégie est venue'. Dimoff, *ibid.*, IV, ii, 10, pp.78-80.
Walter, 'Varia', pp.601-602.

²See chapter VII, pp. 292-309.

³Propertius, Lib. III, el. v, ll.21-22.

⁴'Curam. . . dulci Lyaeo solvere'. (Horace, Epodes, IX, ll.37-38).

⁵Horace, Odes, Lib. I, 36.

of Chénier's elegy reveals that he has greatly extended the couplet and created a picture that is heavy with perfume and sensuality:

Fumant dans le cristal, que Bacchus à longs flots
Partout aille à la ronde éveiller les bons mots.
Reine de nos banquets, que Lycoris y vienne;
Que des fleurs de sa tête elle pare la mienne.
Pour enivrer mes sens, que le feu de ses yeux
S'unisse à la vapeur des vins délicieux.¹

In the midst of pleasure the poet's thoughts turn naturally to the transience of life and to an exhortation to enjoy youth, for youth alone is suited to love, and by implication, love elegies are the songs of youth, a belief so often expressed by Chénier's Latin mentors.² The poet relegates the study of philosophy to old age. In effect, and this is the second innovation, Chénier has linked together the motifs of carpe diem and recusatio. Again it is the Propertian elegy that has provided the spur for this combination:

atque ubi iam Venerem gravis interceperit aetas,
sparserit et nigras alba senecta comas,
tum mihi naturae libeat perdiscere mores.³

In the Camille cycle Chénier was to reaffirm his belief that elegies are the poems of youth. In the unfinished 'L'Elégie est venue me trouver',⁴ the modified recusatio form was intended as an introduction to a portrait of Camille's infidelities with an elderly dives amator, another elegiac motif. Elegy is personified and comes to chide the poet for abandoning her verses. Unfortunately there remains only a prose draft, though we may suspect that

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 1, ll.225-230, p.45.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 1, ll.1-6, p.90.

²'aetas prima canat Veneres, extrema tumultus'. (Propertius, Lib. II, el. x, l.7).

³Propertius, Lib. III, el. v, ll.23-25.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 10, pp.78-80.
Walter, 'Varia', pp.601-602.

Chénier had Ovid's Amores in mind for developing the personification of Elegy:¹

L'Elégie est venue me trouver (la peindre. . .). Eh bien !
m'a-t-elle dit, m'as-tu abandonnée ? attends-tu que tu sois
vieux pour faire ελεγους ? Je n'aime point ceux qui me
courtisent trop vieux. . . Il faut être jeune.²

Elegy herself then reinforces the necessity for youth to compose elegies by satirizing the elderly lover.

Chénier seems to have been particularly impressed by Ovid's personification of Elegy at the time he was writing the Camille poems. In the lengthy and complex 'Mânes de Callimaque',³ he develops this description of Elegy and ranges over several elegiac themes, the sacer vates, the triumph theme, and erotodidaxis, including, very briefly, the recusatio motif. Propertius, in the elegy which provided the starting point for Chénier's poem, rejects epic poetry in a single line: 'a valeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis!',⁴ and dwells rather on the Callimachean ideal of composing fine, polished verses. Then at the end of the poem he comments on the increased fame of a poet after death, and typically catalogues a list of the epic subjects which he has rejected, so returning to the format of a recusatio. The impulse for Chénier's elegy may have come from Propertius, the development of the recusatio springs from Ovid's Amores,⁵ in which Ovid handles the form in an ingenious way, depicting a debate between the Muses of Tragedy and Elegy. Ovid is swayed by Elegy's arguments but swears to return later to Tragedy:

¹ Ovid, Amores, Lib. III, el. i.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.1-4.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.1-4.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, pp.127-130.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, pp.138-140.

⁴ Propertius, Lib. III, el. i, l.7.

⁵ Ovid, Amores, Lib. III, el. i.

hic ego dum spatior tectus nemoralibus umbris,
 quod mea, quaerebam, Musa moveret, opus;
 venit odoratos Elegia nexa capillos,
 et, puto, pes illi longior alter erat.
 forma decens, vestis tenuissima, vultus amantis,
 et pedibus vitium causa decoris erat.¹

When Chénier describes Elegy he combines the sensuality of Ovid's version with the description by Boileau: 'La plaintive Elegie en longs habits de deuil,/Sçait les cheveux épars gemir sur un cercueil'.² It is obvious that Chénier omits Ovid's humour. Ovid could not resist undercutting and deflating his description by pointing to Elegy's limp, a neat reference to the shortened pentameter line of an elegiac couplet. Ovidian bathos did not seem appropriate to Chénier's seduction:

Mais la tendre Elégie et sa grâce touchante
 M'ont séduit: l'Elégie à la voix gémissante,
 Au ris mêlé de pleurs, aux longs cheveux épars;
 Belle, levant au ciel ses humides regards.³

A more specific approach to the recusatio motif occurs in the elegy 'Pourquoi de mes loisirs accuser la langueur?',⁴ for Chénier, abandoning the classical fiction, actually applies the renunciation of epic poetry to his own projects, 'Hermès' and 'L'Amérique'. The fiction returns as he manipulates the time scale of his writing, for, as we have seen earlier, his habit was to advance all his poems together. He certainly did not start on the epics and then abandon them for elegies. To make his point he suggests that Abel de Fondat, the addressee, was urging him to give up Camille and the Elegy and to strive for greater glory through the composition of epic poetry, and he establishes this situation by a series of rhetorical

¹ Ovid, *ibid.*, 11.5-10.

² Boileau, 'L'Art Poétique', chant II, 11.39-42, in Œuvres complètes de Boileau, introduction par A. Adam, textes établis et annotés par F. Escal, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Bruges, Gallimard, 1966, p.164.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.15-18, p.128.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.15-18, p.139.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iv, 2, pp.142-145.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', IV, 2, pp.146-148.

questions:

Pourquoi de mes loisirs accuser la langueur ?
 Pourquoi vers des lauriers aiguillonner mon coeur ?
 Abel, que me veux-tu ? Je suis heureux, tranquille.¹

It is impossible to say whether this reflects an actual incident, but it is evident that the introductory line is a close translation of Propertius: 'Quid mihi desidia non cessas fingere crimen ?'.² After that Chénier leaves the Latin poet and produces a striking section, claiming for the first time that he lacked the talent and inspiration necessary for epic poetry, a commonplace of recusatio that he did not often use. With a metaphor that recalls Icarus and introduces notions of hubris and nemesis he gives a skilful twist to the basic form of the recusatio:

Pourquoi me rappeler, dans tes cris assidus,
 Je ne sais quels projets que je ne connais plus ?
 Que d'Achille outragé l'inexorable absence
 Livre à des feux troyens les vaisseaux sans défense;
 Qu'à Colomb pour le nord révélant son amour,
 L'aimant nous ait conduits où va finir le jour;
 Jadis, il m'en souvient, quand les bois du Permesse
 Recevaient ma première et bouillante jeunesse,
 Plein de ces grands objets, ivre de chants guerriers,
 Respirant la mêlée et les cruels lauriers,
 Je me couvrais de fer, et d'une main sanglante
 J'animais aux combats ma lyre turbulente;
 Des arrêts du destin prophète audacieux,
 J'abandonnais la terre et volais chez les Dieux.
 Au flambeau de l'Amour j'ai vu fondre mes ailes.³

Chénier returns to Propertius for the second half of his poem. The detailed plea in Propertius that each man should keep to his own talents, is freely adapted by Chénier:

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.1-3.

Walter, *ibid.*, ll.1-3.

²Propertius, Lib. I, el. xii, l.1.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.9-23, p.143.

Walter, *ibid.*, ll.9-23, p.147.

sed neque Phlegraeos Iovis Enceladique tumultus
 intonet angusto pectore Callimachus,
 nec mea conveniunt duro praecordia versu
 Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen avos.
 navita de ventis, de tauris narrat arator,
 enumerat miles vulnera, pastor ovis;
 nos contra angusto versantes proelia lecto:
 qua pote quisque, in ea conterat arte diem.¹

The Propertian inspiration almost disappears as Chénier points to his restless poetic temperament and feigns inability to finish his epics since now his inspiration springs only from Camille:

Si quelquefois encore, à tes conseils docile,
 Du jouet d'un esprit vagabond et mobile,
 Je veux, de nos héros admirant les exploits,
 A des sons généreux solliciter ma voix;
 Aux sons voluptueux ma voix accoutumée
 Fuit, se refuse et lutte, incertaine, alarmée;
 Et ma main, dans mes vers de travail tourmentés,
 Poursuit avec effort de pénibles beautés;
 Mais si, bientôt lassé de ces poursuites folles,
 Je retourne à mes riens que tu nommes frivoles,
 Si je chante Camille, alors écoute, voi:
 Les vers pour la chanter naissent autour de moi.²

This may be freely adapted but Latin elegiac thought and diction are not forgotten as Chénier's 'mes riens' and 'frivoles', reflect the Latin poets' description of Elegy as lusus and levis.

There is a new twist in this elegy, and one which seems to have no precedent in the Roman writers, for Chénier suggests that in his poems for Camille he is not completely rejecting Homer, but merely stripping his epic of heroic deeds and clinging only to its amorous aspects - an innovation indeed, but one that does tax the reader's credulity:

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. i, ll.39-46.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.27-38, pp.143-144.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.27-38, p.147.

Et si de mes projets le vol s'est abaissé,
 A la lyre d'Homère ils n'ont point renoncé.
 Mais, en la dépouillant de ses cordes guerrières,
 Ma main n'a su garder que les cordes moins fières
 Qui chantèrent Hélène et les joyeux larcins,
 Et l'heureuse Corcyre, amante des festins.¹

The Latin elegists' discussion of their art went beyond the recurrent motif of recusatio. They also expressed their confident beliefs about the rôle of the poet and the nature of poetic inspiration. For the elegists, as indeed for the other Augustan poets like Vergil and Horace, there was an important new conception of the poet in society. This development was reflected in the term used: vates, the bard, an archaic word that the Augustans infused with fresh vigour. The concept of the sacer vates reveals the dignity of the inspired poet-prophet, the priest of Apollo and the Muses, who is to reveal and interpret the nature of truth. Although the idea of the sacer vates can be traced back to Pindar, the model frequently imitated by the poets in expressing dedication to their art was again Callimachus, and the celebrated prologue to the Aitia. Following the lines previously quoted, the text becomes fragmentary. It seems that Callimachus speaks of a dream in which he was on Mount Helicon, sacred to Apollo and the Muses, and mentions the river Permessus and the spring Aganippe at the foot of Helicon, and that from this dream he drew the subjects for his Aitia. From Ennius onwards Roman poets had been inspired by this exordium to show a poet bringing down a garland from Helicon, entering the sacred grove, treading narrow paths, and drinking from pure springs. They also developed the contrast between the spring of Hippocrene on Helicon, gushing and powerful, the source of epic poetry, and Aganippe, or Permessus, at the foot of Helicon, the spring of humbler poetic genres. The imagery became

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.65-70, pp.144-145.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.65-70, p.148.

the source for describing the poet's pseudo-religious vocation.

Such themes, the sacer vates and poetic consecration, form the ideas of Propertius, Lib. III, elegy i. It opens with an invocation of the shades and rites of Callimachus and Philitas of Cos, third century B.C. Hellenistic poets who wrote inter alia elegiac narrative poems and epigrams. Propertius begs access to their grove, and claims to be the first to come from the pure spring as a priest of poetry to carry Italian mystic emblems into the Greek dances. For him the initiated poet is the priest who will reveal the truth:

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,
in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.
primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos
Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros.
dicite, quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro ?
quove pede ingressi ? quamve bibistis aquam ?¹

Chénier takes up this theme and transposes this opening into French by a free translation, which is clearly reminiscent of the Latin text, as the underlined parallels emphasize:

Mânes de Callimaque, ombre de Philéas,
Dans vos saintes forêts daignez guider mes pas.
J'ose, nouveau pontife aux antres du Permesse,
Mêler des chants français dans les chœurs de la Grèce.
Dites en quel vallon vos écrits médités
Soumirent à vos vœux les plus rares beautés.
Qu'aisément à ce prix un jeune coeur s'embrase !²

A few minor adjustments are made. Propertius, for example, uses the word 'orgia', meaning the mystic emblems of the ecstatic religious cults to be revealed to the initiated. The term, with all its connotations, could not easily be translated into French. In another case Chénier expands the Latin text. The pure spring becomes 'aux antres de Permesse', the correct

¹ Propertius, Lib. III, el. i, ll.1-6.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, ll.1-7, p.127.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, ll.1-7, pp.138-139.

and learned explanation that one would expect from Chénier's scholarship.

This free translation enabled Chénier to make important statements about his art. He fixes himself firmly within the Classical Tradition, paying homage not only to the Greeks but to Propertius himself. He asserts his belief in the serious nature of his poetic vocation, and proudly underlines his originality in having written French poetry based on a classical author. Chénier's skill is plain to see when a comparison is made with the prose translation by P. de Longchamps which seems stilted and heavy:

C'est vous que j'invoque, Manes de Callimaque, Ombre sacrée de Philéas. Laissez-moi pénétrer dans les retraites ombragées où vous futes inspirés. Aucun autre, avant moi, n'entreprit d'initier les Muses Latines dans les mystères de votre art. Apprenez-moi dans quel antre vous sçutes monter votre Lyre au ton de l'Élégie, sous quels auspices vous y futes introduits, à quelles fontaines vous vous êtes abreuvés ?¹

Likewise, the extent of Chénier's skill in loose translation is seen when he transfers the image of the poet, as a priest of the Muses, riding in triumph with his Muse and surrounded by Cupids:

. . . et a me
nata coronatis Musa triumphat equis,
et mecum in curru parvi vectantur Amores,
scriptorumque meas turba secuta rotas.²

In Chénier's rendering he drives Elegy herself through Paris, accompanied by Cupids. His additional description of them points to his strong awareness of the dependency of the Latin poets on the Greeks:

¹ P. de Longchamps, Elégies de Propertius, traduites par M. de Longchamps, Amsterdam and Paris, Le Jay, 1772, p.339.

² Propertius, *ibid.*, ll.9-12.

Sur un axe brillant c'est moi qui la promène
 Parmi tous ces palais dont s'enrichit la Seine;
 Le peuple des Amours y marche auprès de nous;
 La lyre est dans leurs mains: cortège aimable et doux,
 Qu'aux fêtes de la Grèce enleva l'Italie !¹

As he moves away from the Latin text, in which Propertius had developed the idea of originality by the Callimachean reference to a chariot racing over narrow paths, Chénier insists to Le Brun that they, independently, had recreated Elegy.

'Quand à peine Clothon, mère des destinées' provides an example of the treatment by Chénier of an elegiac motif without having any specific Latin text in mind. He uses the topos of sacer vates and dedicates himself to love and poetry, as personified in the figures of Venus, Apollo, and Orpheus. By introducing references to Pindus, Gnidus, and Paphos he stresses that he is not part of the common herd but a divinely inspired priest:

Né citoyen du Pinde, et citoyen de Gnide,
 Avide de plaisirs, et de louange avide,
 Aux autres d'Apollon pontife initié,
 Aux banquets de Vénus convive associé,
 Au temple de Paphos, sur la lyre d'Orphée,
 Mes chants vont à Vénus consacrer un trophée.²

The seriousness with which the poet viewed his mission as sacer vates is echoed in the elevated diction, balance, and anaphora. As at a religious ceremony silence is required when the priest intones:

Connaissez son génie aux feux qu'elle m'inspire:
 Tant que la lyre d'or va chanter sous mes doigts,
 D'un silence sacré favorisez ma voix.³

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.19-23, p.128.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.19-23, p.139.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', I, ll.5-10, p.3.
 Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', I, ll.5-10, p.544.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.14-16, p.4.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.14-16.

Although the Latin elegists dedicated themselves to poetry as the priests of Apollo and the Muses, and Propertius attributes his love poetry to Apollo, 'tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo',¹ nevertheless all three are insistent that their true inspiration is derived from their mistress, the domina of Latin Elegy. The idea recurs, whether in Tibullus praising Nemesis:

usque cano Nemesim, sine qua versus mihi nullus
verba potest iustos aut reperire pedes,²

or in Ovid's praise of Corinna:

ingenium movit sola Corinna meum,³

or in Propertius, in praise of Cynthia:

nam sine te nostrum non valet ingenium.⁴

They proclaim that their poetry in return confers immortality and fame upon the beloved:

fortunata, meo si qua es celebrata libello !
carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae.⁵

These two themes are easily assimilated into Chénier's poetry. At the beginning of his elegiac writing, in an elegy to Le Brun in 1782, during the Lycoris cycle, he rejects fame and glory in favour of love poetry.⁶

¹ Propertius, Lib. IV, el. i, l.133.

² Tibullus, Lib. II, el. v, ll.111-112.

³ Ovid, Amores, Lib. III, el. xii, l.16.

⁴ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xxx, l.40.

⁵ Propertius, Lib. III, el. ii, ll.17-18.

⁶ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 2, pp.130-133.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 2, pp.136-138.

By a clever inversion of the Callimachean dream-motif (but which contradicts statements in other elegies), he denies divine inspiration granted on Mount Helicon, and claims that love alone is the source of his verses. The statement is general; no mistress is named:

Aux sommets où Phoebus a choisi sa retraite,
 Enfant, je n'allai point me réveiller poète:
 Mon coeur, loin du Permesse, a connu dans un jour
 Les feux de Calliope et les feux de l'amour.
 L'amour seul dans mon âme a créé le génie;
 L'amour est seul arbitre et seul Dieu de ma vie.¹

The allusion to Calliope and the thought involved suggest that Chénier had in mind a couplet of Propertius:

non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo.
 ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.²

Later, in the Camille cycle, the idea is intensified. The setting for the elegy 'O lignes que sa main, que son coeur a tracées !',³ is Camille's absence on a journey, and Chénier emphasizes that his poetic inspiration demands her physical presence. The poet makes a simple, clear confession, whose impact is reinforced by the bracketing structure of the line, (Camille. . . Muse). The statement is then expanded by the familiar imagery of Helicon and the choirs of Apollo:

Camille, où tu n'es point, moi je n'ai pas de Muse.
 Sans toi, dans ses bosquets Hélicon me refuse;
 Les cordes de la lyre ont oublié mes doigts,
 Et les choeurs d'Apollon méconnaissent ma voix.⁴

The succeeding lines contradict the poet's fears that his Muse is deserting

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.9-14, p.130.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.9-14, p.136.

² Propertius, *Lib. II*, el. i, 11.3-4.

³ Dimoff, *Vol. III*, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 3, pp.63-65.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 3, pp.98-100.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.17-20, p.63.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.17-20, p.98.

him. He is able to attain high levels of eighteenth century sensibility as he allows the melancholy he feels to merge with the emptiness of his natural surroundings. In fact, these sentiments also recall feelings in Vergil's Eclogues:

Ces regards purs et doux, que sur ce coin du monde
Verse d'un ciel ami l'indulgence féconde,
N'éveillent plus mes sens ni mon âme. Ces bords
Ont beau de leur Cybèle étaler les trésors;
Ces ombrages n'ont plus d'aimables rêveries,
Et l'ennui taciturne habite ces prairies.¹

The second half of the recusatio elegy, 'Pourquoi de mes loisirs accuser la langueur?', previously discussed,² uses the device of the catalogue to list the attributes of Camille that fire Chénier's poetic imagination. The lines are closely modelled on the opening poem of Propertius' second book, in which he enumerates Cynthia's attractions - her fine, translucent dress, her loose-flowing hair, her musical talents, her beauty in sleep, and her beauty when naked in amorous struggles. The final couplet neatly rounds off the list and wittily cuts short further enquiries:

sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere cogis,
hac totum e Coa veste volumen erit;
seu vidi ad frontem sparsos errare capillos,
gaudet laudatis ire superba comis;
sive lyrae carmen digitis percussit eburnis,
miramur, facilis ut premat arte manus;
seu cum poscentis somnum declinat ocellos,
invenio causas mille poeta novas;
seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu,
tum vero longas condimus Iliadas;
seu quidquid fecit sive est quodcumque locuta,
maxima de nihilo nascitur historia.³

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.21-26, pp.63-64.

Walter, *ibid.*, ll.21-26, p.98.

²See pp.349-352 above.

³Propertius, *Lib. II, el. i, ll.5-16.*

Chénier's catalogue is even more detailed and comprises two sections, the first of which owes little to his precursor, and much to the eighteenth century's awakening feelings about nature, whilst the second is Propertian to a degree. He begins with a description of nature transformed by the power of his love for Camille into a fertile and sensual source of poetry:

Tout pour elle a des vers ! Ils renaissent en foule;
 Ils brillent dans les flots du ruisseau qui s'écoule;
 Ils prennent des oiseaux la voix et les couleurs;
 Je les trouve cachés dans les replis des fleurs.
 Son sein a le duvet de ce fruit que je touche;
 Cette rose au matin sourit comme sa bouche;
 Le miel qu'ici l'abeille eut soin de déposer
 Ne vaut pas à mon coeur le miel de son baiser.
 Tout pour elle a des vers ! Ils me viennent sans peine
 Doux comme son parler, doux comme son haleine.¹

It is at this point that the poet returns to the Propertian catalogue, but with a strange inversion of the order which destroys the grace of the Latin poet's tactful humour:

Quoi qu'elle fasse ou dise, un mot, un geste heureux
 Demande un gros volume à mes vers amoureux.
 D'un souris caressant si son regard m'attire,
 Mon vers plus caressant va bientôt lui sourire.
 Si la gaze la couvre, et le lin pur et fin
 Mollement, sans apprêt; et la gaze et le lin
 D'une molle chanson attend une couronne.
 D'un luxe étudié si l'éclat l'environne,
 Dans mes vers éclatants sa superbe beauté
 Vient ravir à Junon toute sa majesté.
 Tantôt, c'est sa blancheur, sa chevelure noire;
 De ses bras, de ses mains le transparent ivoire.
 Mais si jamais sans voile, et les cheveux épars,
 Elle a rassasié ma flamme et mes regards,
 Elle me fait chanter, amoureuse Ménade,
 Des combats de Paphos une longue Iliade.²

Much of the diction and phraseology in the latter part of the elegy is

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iv, 2, ll.39-48, p.144.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', IV, 2, ll.39-48, p.147.

²Ibid., ll.49-64.

directly translated from Propertius:

'un gros volume'/'volumen',
 'le lin pur et fin'/'Cœa veste',
 'les cheveux épars'/'sparsos capillos',
 'une longue Iliade'/'longas Iliadas'.

Some attributes are omitted - Cynthia's musical talents disappear, as does the line describing Cynthia asleep. On the other hand, new elements are introduced - Camille's smile, the contrast between her black hair and ivory skin, and the comparison between Camille and a Maenad. Too often, perhaps, this amplification smacks of artificial literary conceits that weaken the French adaptation, as, for instance, in the lines: 'D'un souris caressant si son regard m'attire,/Mon vers plus caressant va bientôt lui sourire'.

Such celebration of beauty was common to all the Latin poets, and to Chénier. It is noticeable that in Chénier's case most of his eulogies of beauty are concentrated in the D'.z.n group. They are infused with an eighteenth century sensuality of the kind found in the languid image of the sleeping D'.z.n:

Tu dors, belle D'.z.n, tes beaux yeux sont fermés.
 Ton haleine de rose aux soupirs embaumés
 Entr'ouvre mollement tes deux lèvres vermeilles.¹

Ironically, although Chénier shows greater enthusiasm in his accounts of the beauty and the inspiration he receives from D'.z.n-Camille, it is only for Lycoris that he puts forward the idea that his work will render her immortal. Perhaps this came from a period when he was more intent on his powers of adapting the works of the Latin authors, and more interested in his own background, than in producing a portrait of Lycoris:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 4, ll.19-21, p.84.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 2, ll. 19-21, p.110.

Vois ta brillante image à vivre destinée,
 D'une immortelle fleur dans mes vers couronnée.
 L'étranger, dans mes vers contemplant tes attraits,
 S'informerá de toi, de ton nom, de tes traits;
 Et quelle fut enfin celle qui, dans la France,
 Était la Lycoris du Gallus de Byzance.
 De la reine d'amour les jeunes favoris
 Demanderont aux Dieux une autre Lycoris.
 L'amante inquiétée ou la fidèle épouse
 Te verra dans mes vers et deviendra jalouse.
 Un enfant d'Apollon, par l'amour excité,
 Fait aux rides du temps survivre la beauté.¹

The poem, though incomplete, seems detached and distant from the mistress who is to be immortalized. Its starting point is the theme found in the last lines of Propertius, Lib. III, elegy ii:

fortunata, meo si qua es celebrata libello !
 carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae.
 nam neque Pyramidum sumptus ad sidera ducti,
 nec Iovis Elei caelum imitata domus,
 nec Mausolei dives fortuna sepulchri
 mortis ab extrema condicione vacant.
 aut illis flamma aut imber subducet honores,
 annorum aut ictu, pondere victa, ruent.
 at non ingenio quaesitum nomen ab aevo
 excidet: ingenio stat sine morte decus.²

Comparison with Bertin's elegy, Les Amours, Liv. III, elegy i, illustrates Chénier's superior talent as a poet. Bertin also imitated the Propertian lines, in a version that is closer to the original, but which is a ponderous translation and which shows no deep understanding of the callida iunctura of words that creates musicality:

Heureux cent fois, heureux l'objet aimable
 Dont le doux nom couronnera mes vers !
 Mes vers seront un monument durable
 De sa beauté qu'encensa l'univers.

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 3, p.47.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 6, pp.96-97.

²Propertius, Lib. III, el. ii, ll.17-26.

Thèbes n'est plus: tout ce vaste rivage
 N'est qu'un amas de tombeaux éclatans.
 Sparte, Ilion, Babylone et Carthage
 Ont disparu sous les efforts du temps.
 Le temps, un jour, détruira nos murailles,
 Et ces jardins par la Seine embellis:
 Le temps, un jour, aux plaines de Versailles,
 Sous la charrue écrasera les lis.
 Ne craignez rien de sa rigueur extrême,
 O charme heureux de mes derniers beaux jours !
 Regardez-vous, et songez qui vous aime;
 Du ciel le temps a chassé les dieux même:
 Ils sont tombés; mais vous vivrez toujours.¹

In exploring the spectrum of feelings involved in the relationship with the beloved, the Latin authors range from moments of joy, triumph, and idealization - the elegiac illusion - to moments of grief and despair as the illusion is shattered. In Latin poetry Chénier could find the material for the sensitive examination of the human heart, and so remain faithful to his principle of naïveté in literature. The dominae of Latin Elegy do have individual traits: Cynthia is characterized as having an imperious nature, as jealous and capable of angry outbursts; Nemesis is more mercenary and cruel than Delia; Corinna is artful, vain, and fickle. Yet, in spite of these broad outlines, their characters are not fully delineated. The dominae remain somewhat shadowy figures and it is the poet's own psychology and reactions - or rather his persona's psychology - that are so richly analyzed. In fact, so meagre are the details about the dominae that scholars can still argue whether the pseudonyms indicate real or fictitious characters,² and whether their social status was that of a high-class meretrix, a courtesan, or a married woman.³ Indeed the elegists themselves

¹ A. de Bertin, 'Les Amours', Liv. III, el. i, ll.32-48, in Oeuvres complètes de Bertin, Paris, Ménéard et Desenne, 1821, pp.61-62.

² It is generally accepted from both ancient and modern evidence that Propertius' Cynthia and Tibullus' Delia have some historical reality, that Tibullus' Nemesis probably did not exist, and that Ovid's Corinna is purely fictitious.

³ For a discussion see G. Williams, Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, pp.525-542.

profit from this wilful ambiguity. Chénier's elegies receive the same emphasis. Although Lycoris is portrayed as pleasure-seeking, frivolous, and fickle, and the beautiful D'.z.n-Camille, the French Cynthia, is shown as having a domineering character with a lashing tongue, their characters are only revealed in outline. It is the poet's feelings and reactions that are elucidated.

The Latin elegists, particularly Propertius and Tibullus, adopt a persona that is so obsessed by love that it has a detrimental effect on personality. They so blind themselves to reality that they are willing to live in an idealized world of dreams, and to create the elegiac illusion, which can be a source of delicate humour and gentle self-mockery, but, above all, a source of pathos. It is the confrontation between the elegiac illusion and reality which is one of the outstanding features of Latin Elegy, and Chénier was well aware of the poetic opportunities offered by a revival of the illusion.

Essential to the process of idealization was the transfer of the traditional values of marriage and friendship to the union of poet and mistress. As we have seen Catullus introduced this startling idea into his relationship with Lesbia, and used it with poignant effect in a series of poems in the elegiac metre.¹ Marriage and friendship in the Roman world involved both moral and legal obligations which were mutually accepted. These involved friendship and goodwill (benevolentia), loyalty, duty, and trust (fides and pietas), and, in the context of marriage, a binding oath and fidelity (foedus and castitas). The elegists embellished these concepts, and through them indicated the importance they attached to the relationship with the mistress, so that the relationship was transformed, idealized, and invested with high moral expectations on the part of the poet. Propertius particularly uses such terminology and, unlike Tibullus and Ovid, intensifies

¹Catullus, poems LXXII, LXXVI, LXXXVII.

it by the idea of fidelity to one mistress alone, as he follows the Catullan example:

semper amica mihi, semper et uxor eris.¹

The transfer of legal terminology from traditional institutions to the poet's relationship is clarified:

foedera sunt ponenda prius signandaque iura
et scribenda mihi lex in amore novo.²

In this way a strong sense of lasting commitment is infused into an otherwise free relationship built only on sexual attraction.

Although the elegiac illusion is a facet of Chénier's Elégies, he finds himself unable to absorb exactly his predecessors' terminology, and the transfer of legal vocabulary from marriage to a free relationship can be achieved only with difficulty. Nevertheless, Chénier does cherish the ideal, and seeks a relationship based on mutual trust and obligations. In an elegy derived from 'Tibullus', Lib. III, elegy xi, he prays that mutual bonds may be created, using the words 'noeuds mutuels' to express the Latin foedus:

Oh ! de noeuds mutuels, Dieux, formez nos liens !
Ou donnez-lui des fers, ou dégagez les miens.
Mais laissez-moi les miens et qu'elle les partage;
Et qu'ensuite le temps jamais ne nous dégage.³

The couplets allude to the prayer of 'Tibullus':

nec tu sis iniusta, Venus: vel seruiat aequè
vinctus uterque tibi vel mea vincla leva.⁴

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. vi, l.42.

² Ibid., Lib. III, el. xx, ll.15-16.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 10, ll.1-4, p.98.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', XVII, ll.1-4, pp.550-551.

⁴ Corpus Tibullianum, Lib. III, el. xi, ll.13-14.

Ironically, although Chénier believed Tibullus was his model, the poem he imitates was written by Sulpicia for her beloved Cerinthus.

Unfortunately there is no means of telling to whom Chénier's poem was dedicated. The other elegies that deal with this motif come from the Camille cycle, as one might expect, for this was the relationship on which Chénier set the highest store. There is an interesting extension of this theme as the illusion of the Latin poets is linked to eighteenth century rêverie. In solitude Chénier muses and idealizes Camille, not as a mistress and friend of equal standing, as is implied by the Latin term amica, but as a faithful, compliant mistress:

. . . L'espoir, la rêverie,
La belle illusion la rendent à mes feux;
Mais sensible, mais tendre, et comme je la veux:
De ses refus d'apprêt oubliant l'artifice,
Indulgente à l'amour, sans fierté, sans caprice,
De son sexe cruel n'ayant que les appas.
Je la feins quelquefois attachée à mes pas;
Je l'égaré et l'entraîne en des routes secrètes.¹

In 'Allons, l'heure est venue, allons trouver Camille',² Chénier indulges in the same rêverie. He decides to visit his mistress after a dream in which he imagines that Camille, 'allait me cherchant sur sa couche fidèle, / Et me tendait les bras et m'appelait près d'elle'.³ The theme of illusion is linked to that of the dream, as the poet imagines awakening the sleeping Camille:

Quel charme de trouver la beauté paresseuse;
De venir visiter sa couche matineuse,
De venir la surprendre, au moment que ses yeux
S'efforcent de s'ouvrir à la clarté des cieux;
Douce dans son éclat, et fraîche, et reposée,
Semblable aux autres fleurs, filles de la rosée !⁴

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 1, ll.6-13, pp.61-62.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 1, ll.6-13, p.97.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 7, pp.70-73.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 7, pp.103-105.

³ Ibid., ll.5-6.

⁴ Ibid., ll.13-18.

The pleasing musicality created by the internal rhymes echoes the idealized beauty. The languid tranquillity and delicate, hazy colours that pervade these lines are achieved by the long vowel sounds and whispering sibilants. Propertius had similarly been entranced by the sight of the sleeping Cynthia, whom he compares with the mythological beauties of old:

Qualis Thesea iacuit cedente carina
 languida desertis Cnosia litoribus;
 qualis et accubuit primo Cepheia somno
 libera iam duris cotibus Andromede;
 nec minus assiduis Edonis fessa choreis
 qualis in herboso concidit Apidano:
 talis visa mihi mollem spirare quietem
 Cynthia non certis nixa caput manibus...¹

The fides of Propertius and Tibullus was to be steadfast to death and beyond. The link between love and death was established by Propertius in the often quoted phrase, 'laus in amore mori'.² The elegist does not fear death itself, but the thought that he might lack Cynthia's love at the hour of death:

Non ego nunc tristis vereor, mea Cynthia, Manis,
 nec moror extremo debita fata rogo;
 sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore,
 hic timor est ipsis durior exsequiis.³

For his elaboration of this theme Chénier did not turn to Propertius but to Tibullus. A couplet from the first poem of Tibullus' first book seems to have impressed him by its harmony with eighteenth century sensibility:

te spectem, suprema mihi cum venerit hora,
 et teneam moriens deficiente manu.⁴

¹ Propertius, Lib. I, el. iii, ll.1-8.

² Propertius, Lib. II, el. i, l.47. For a discussion of this subject see R.J. Baker, "'Laus in amore mori": Love and Death in Propertius', Latomus, 27, 1970, pp.670-698.

³ Propertius, Lib. I, el. xix, ll.1-4.

⁴ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. i, ll.59-60.

Chénier imitates this couplet on two occasions, employing different techniques of literary allusion. In an early poem arising from the reality of his physical suffering, 'Aujourd'hui qu'au tombeau je suis prêt à descendre', the poet wishes a better fate for his friends. The idealized vision of death in the presence of a beloved is derived from Tibullus:

Et quand la mort viendra, qu'une amante fidèle,
Près de vous désolée, en accusant les Dieux
Pleure, et veuille vous suivre, et vous ferme les yeux.¹

During the Lycoris period Chénier again toyed with the theme, though the addressee is unnamed. This time the poet has developed the Tibullan couplet into ten lines on the theme of consolation at death. The last line is an exact translation of the Latin source:

Quand d'un souffle jaloux la Parque meurtrière
Viendra de mon flambeau dissiper la lumière,
Si tu viens près de moi, sur mon lit de douleurs
Ta présence pourra répandre des douceurs.
Pour apaiser l'effroi que cet instant réveille,
Que le son de ta voix flatte encor mon oreille;
Qu'autour de toi mes bras soient encore attachés;
Que tes yeux sur les miens soient encore penchés;
Que ta bouche se joigne à ma bouche expirante;
Que je tienne ta main dans ma main défaillante !²

At the same time Chénier tackled the motif with reference to Ovid. As expected at this early stage of his career, he keeps close to the Latin author, but is already selective in the details he transfers. In his elegy Ovid characteristically takes the motif a stage further than Tibullus, exploiting it for humour. Ovid's persona is lascivus, he is the irresistible Don Juan, shocking and impudent. He depicts himself being in love with two girls and boasts of his ability to make love to them both.

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 2, ll.62-64, p.8.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXV, ll.62-64, p.77.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 14, ll.1-10, pp.101-102.
Walter, 'Elégies', VIII, ll.1-10, p.61.

Such claims of virility lead amusingly to the thought of dying in the embrace of Venus:

felix, quem Veneris certamina multa perdunt;
 di faciunt, leti causa sit ista mei !
 induat adversis contraria pectora telis
 miles et aeternum sanguine nomen emat;
 quaerat avarus opes et, quae lassarit arando,
 aequora periuro naufragus ore bibat;
 at mihi contingat Veneris languescere motu,
 cum moriar, medium solvar et inter opus;
 atque aliquis nostro lacrimans in funere dicat;
 'conveniens vitae mors fuit ista tuae'.¹

Chénier imitates these lines, and the verbal similarities are obvious:

'au milieu de langueurs'/'veneris languescere motu',
 'se dégage'/'solvar',
 'l'oeil humide de pleurs'/'lacrimans'.

However, by abandoning the setting of Ovid's elegy, Chénier loses its bawdy ribaldry:

Oh ! puisse le ciseau qui doit trancher mes jours
 Sur le sein d'une belle en arrêter le cours !
 Qu'au milieu des langueurs, au milieu des délices,
 Commençant de Vénus à goûter les prémices,
 Mon âme, sans effort, sans douleurs, sans combats,
 Se dégage et s'envole, et ne le sente pas !
 Que chacun sur ma tombe, où la pierre luisante
 Offrira de ma fin l'image séduisante,
 L'oeil humide de pleurs, dise avec un soupir:
 'Ainsi puissé-je vivre, et puissé-je mourir !'²

The theme, taken seriously, appealed to eighteenth century taste.

It appears in Parny's elegy 'Ma Mort'.

. . . Un jour l'arrêt du Sort
 Viendra fermer ma paupière affaiblie.
 Lorsque tes bras, entourant ton ami,
 Soulageront sa tête languissante,

¹ Ovid, *Amores*, Lib. II, el. x, ll.29-38.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 5, ll.1-10, p.96.

Walter does not transcribe this early draft of 'Oh ! puisse le ciseau' ('Elégies', VII, p.61).

Et que ses yeux soulevés à demi
 Seront remplis d'une flamme mourante;
 Lorsque mes doigts tâcheront d'essuyer
 Tes yeux fixés sur ma paisible couche,
 Et que mon coeur, s'échappant sur ma bouche,
 De tes baisers recevra le dernier.¹

Chénier's early application of the motif does not seem to differ from such sentiments.

Tibullus, and occasionally Propertius,² set their fantasies in an idealized, idyllic, rustic landscape. To the Augustan poets the small farmer represented nostalgic Republican ideals of simplicity, piety, hard work, harmony with nature, and contentment, as glorified in Vergil's Georgics. The bucolic elegies, as exemplified in the poems of Tibullus, involve therefore the concepts of iucunda paupertas, (rejection of wealth and acceptance of simple sufficiency in the countryside), of pietas, (putting oneself in the correct relationship with the Gods by keeping the religious festivals, prayer, and sacrifice), and of living innocently with the beloved in a Utopian world. This is described in delicate, muted tones that give sections of Tibullus' poetry a characteristic dream-like quality.

This longing for an idyllic world is found in an elegy in which Chénier recalls the dreams he had cherished for life with Camille. His inspiration was the Tibullan elegy, Lib. I, elegy v, in which the poet imagines that if Delia recovers from her illness, she will go with him into the countryside where they will live blissfully. In his fantasy Tibullus presents Delia as a respectable Roman materfamilias. The vignette is one of a wife taking pleasure in sweet rustic duties:

¹ E.D. de F. de Parny, 'Elégies', Liv. III, 'Ma Mort', ll.28-37, in Oeuvres de Parny. Elégies et poésies diverses. Nouvelle édition revue et annotée par A-J. Pons avec une préface de M. Sainte-Beuve, Paris, Garnier, 1873, p.83.

² See Propertius, Lib. II, el. xix.

at mihi felicem vitam, si salva fuisses,
 fingebam demens, et renuente deo.
 rura colam, frugumque aderit mea Delia custos,
 area dum messes sole calente teret,
 aut mihi servabit plenis in lintribus uvas
 pressaque veloci candida musta pede.
 consuescet numerare pecus; consuescet amantis
 garrulus in dominae ludere verna sinu.
 illa deo sciet agricolae pro vitibus uvam,
 pro segete spicas, pro grege ferre dapem.
 illa regat cunctos, illi sint omnia curae:
 at iuuet in tota me nihil esse domo.¹

Such a theme would obviously appeal to the age in which Marie-Antoinette retreated to le Hameau at Versailles. R. Mauzi has made a detailed examination of the theme of retreat, and has underlined its importance throughout the eighteenth century:

Le rêve du repos se cristallise autour d'une image qui, de Prévost à Chénier, conserve, tout au long du siècle, une remarquable fixité. C'est l'image d'une retraite campagnarde, avec une petite maison, un jardin, une société choisie.²

Chénier's adaptation of the Tibullan passage stresses the tranquillity and simplicity of such an existence, but introduces the notion of personal freedom away from carping criticism. In effect, he transforms his model by inverting the rôles: in his vision it is the poet who will see to his mistress' every need, who will set himself to the household chores. For him the change is important for it enables him still to depict Camille as aloof. The elegiac idyll has not fantasized her into a devoted wife:

'Nous irons au hameau. Loin, bien loin de la ville,
 Ignorés et contents, un silence tranquille
 Ne montrera qu'au ciel notre asile écarté.
 Là, son âme viendra m'aimer en liberté.
 Fuyant d'un luxe vain l'entrave impérieuse,
 Sans suite, sans témoins, seule et mystérieuse,
 Jamais d'un oeil mortel un regard indiscret

¹ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. v, ll.19-30.

² R. Mauzi, L'Idée du bonheur dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIII^e siècle, Paris, A. Colin, 1960, p.334.

N'osera la connaître et savoir son secret.
 Seul je vivrai pour elle, et mon âme empressée
 Epiera ses désirs, ses besoins, sa pensée.
 C'est moi qui ferai tout; moi, qui de ses cheveux
 Sur sa tête le soir assemblerai les noeuds.
 Par moi, de ses atours à loisir dépouillée,
 Chaque jour par mes mains la plume amoncelée
 La recevra charmante; et mon heureux amour
 Détruira chaque nuit cet ouvrage du jour.
 Sa table par mes mains sera prête et choisie;
 L'eau pure, de ma main, lui sera l'ambrosie'.¹

In Bertin's version of the rustic retreat, Chénier's important self-abasement is lost, and an equal partnership between the poet and his mistress is established:

Mais disciple, avec toi, de la blonde Cérès,
 Je ne rougirais pas de dételer moi-même
 Des boeufs fumans sous l'aiguillon,
 De reprendre, le soir, un pénible sillon,
 Et de suivre, à pas lents, le soc de Triptolême.
 Je ne rougirais pas, sous mes doigts écumans,
 De presser avec toi le nectar des abeilles,
 D'écarter les voleurs et les oiseaux gourmands,
 Ou de compter les fruits qui rompent tes corbeilles.²

The desire to escape into the countryside runs throughout Chénier's pastoral elegy, 'O Muses, accourez; solitaires divines'.³ It is different in that it does not concentrate on life in the countryside with a beloved, but glorifies the rustic landscape as being the true home of elegiac poetry: it is only in this setting that a poet is seized by 'douce mélancolie',⁴ and can indulge in the 'belles rêveries'⁵ that create poetry. Vital then to

¹Dimoff, Vol. III 'Elégies', IV, ii, 8, ll.13-30, pp.73-74.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 8, ll.13-30, p.105.

²A. de Bertin, 'Les Amours', Liv. I, el. xii, ll.32-40, in Oeuvres complètes de Bertin, Paris, Ménard et Desenne, 1821, p.25.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 1, pp.149-152.
 Walter, 'Elégies', II, pp.56-58.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.49, p.150.
 Walter, *ibid.*, l.49, p.57.

⁵Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.74, p.151.
 Walter, *ibid.*, l.74, p.58.

this pastoral inspiration is the element of iucunda paupertas, that involves withdrawal from society. The idea has greater poignancy if we accept Gabriel de Chénier's view that 'cette élogie fut composée après le retour de Londres dans les premiers mois de l'été de 1791':¹

Oh ! oui; je veux un jour, en des bords retirés,
 Sur un riche coteau ceint de bois et de prés,
 Avoir un humble toit, une source d'eau vive
 Qui parle, et, dans sa fuite et féconde et plaintive,
 Nourrisse mon verger, abreuve mes troupeaux.
 Là je veux, ignorant le monde et ses travaux,
 Loin du superbe ennui que l'éclat environne,
 Vivre comme jadis, aux champs de Babylone,
 Ont vécu, nous dit-on, ces pères des humains
 Dont le nom aux autels remplit nos fastes saints;
 Avoir amis, enfants, épouse belle et sage;
 Errer, un livre en main, de bocage en bocage;
 Savourer sans remords, sans crainte, sans désirs,
 Une paix dont nul bien n'égale les plaisirs.²

In describing this simple sufficiency the Ancients naturally thought of the Golden Age. Chénier infuses his elegy with comparable nostalgia. Interestingly, he deals with the Golden Age in one line, and dwells on exempla from the Old Testament: the Garden of Eden, Ruth, Joseph, and Rachel, and plays on the exotic musicality of biblical names, a rare source of inspiration in the pagan elegies:

Vous savez si toujours, dès mes plus jeunes ans,
 Mes rustiques souhaits m'ont porté vers les champs;
 Si mon coeur dévorait vos champêtres histoires:
 Cet âge d'or si cher à vos doctes mémoires;
 Ces fleuves, ces vergers, Eden aimé des cieux,
 Et du premier humain berceau délicieux;
 L'épouse de Booz, chaste et belle indigente,
 Qui suit d'un pas tremblant la moisson opulente;
 Joseph, qui dans Sichem cherche et retrouve, hélas !
 Ses dix frères pasteurs qui ne l'attendaient pas;
 Rachel, objet sans prix qu'un amoureux courage
 N'a pas trop acheté de quinze ans d'esclavage.³

¹ G. de Chénier, ed., Œuvres poétiques d'André de Chénier avec une notice et des notes par M. Gabriel de Chénier, 3 vols., Paris, Lemerre, 1874, Vol. III, p.302.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.35-48, p.150.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.35-48, p.57.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.23-34.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.23-34, pp.56-57.

But, as we shall see in the next chapter, the dream of innocence is fragile and is soon lost. Feelings of melancholy conjure the vision of the heroines Julie and Clarisse. As Mauzi comments:

C'est alors un étrange emportement, qui le fait s'enfuir, éperdu, à la recherche d'un semblable visage, dont tout son être éprouve le torturant besoin. Le repos n'était qu'une halte provisoire avant la quête passionnée, un repliement sur soi précédant la ferveur consumante, ou seulement un fragile mirage, aussitôt brouillé par l'irruption de plus profonds désirs.¹

Nature is again the setting for Chénier's Muse in a much earlier elegy that dates from the Lycoris cycle. This poem clearly acknowledges Tibullus as the model for such pastoral poems as Chénier encourages François de Pange to adopt the genre:

Amoureux, avec l'âme et la voix de Tibulle,
Fuirais-tu les hameaux, ce séjour enchanté
Qui rend plus séduisant l'éclat de la beauté ?²

In the next lines he develops a couplet from Tibullus, which he had previously characterized as 'vers charmants'. The lines are taken from the pastoral elegy, Lib. II, elegy i, which, in Chénier's opinion, was 'un des plus beaux poèmes de l'antiquité'.³

Ipsae interque greges, interque armenta Cupido
Natus, et indomitas dicitur inter equas.⁴

The motif found favour at the end of the eighteenth century, and Chénier's version combines eighteenth century refined eroticism with the playful winged putti of Hellenistic poetry:

¹ R. Mauzi, *ibid.*, p.335.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 4, ll.25-27, p.139.
Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 4, ll.25-27, p.154.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, vi, 11, l.2, p.122.
Walter omits this note.

⁴ Tibullus, Lib. II, el. i, ll.67-68. Chénier's transcription of the couplet has been given here, not that of the Oxford Classical Text.

L'amour aime les champs, et les champs l'ont vu naître.
 La fille d'un pasteur, une vierge champêtre,
 Dans le fond d'une rose, un matin du printemps,
 Le trouva nouveau-né.
 Le sommeil entr'ouvrait ses lèvres colorées.
 Elle saisit le bout de ses ailes dorées,
 L'ôta de son berceau d'une timide main,
 Tout trempé de rosée, et le mit dans son sein.¹

In comparison Le Brun's account of this motif replaces the light eroticism by a somewhat bombastic tone:

Le tendre Amour dut naître au sein d'une prairie:
 Là, du nectar des fleurs son Enfance nourrie,
 Goûta les jeux naïfs des rustiques Hameaux;
 Et sa bouche divine enfla les chalumeaux.
 Souvent il se mêlait aux danses des Bergères,
 Ou tressait en osier des corbeilles légères.
 Quelquefois de ses mains un guéret sillonné,
 Sourit de voir un soc de myrte couronné.²

The description of nature that follows the lines imitated from Tibullus is characteristic of Chénier's pastoral landscape. Except in reminiscences of Switzerland, he does not seem to have been moved by the bleak northern scenes of mountain and torrent. His idyll sings more gently, in Hellenistic and Tibullan vein, of streams, woods, shade, zephyrs, flowers, birds, and grottos, a harmonious, smiling vision suffused with movement and light:

Là de plus beaux soleils dorent l'azur des cieux;
 Là les prés, les gazons, les bois harmonieux,
 De mobiles ruisseaux la colline animée,
 L'âme de mille fleurs dans les zéphyrsemée;
 Là parmi les oiseaux l'amour vient se poser;
 Là sous les antres frais habite le baiser.³

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 4, 11.28-35, p.139.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 4, 11.28-35, pp.154-155.

² P.D. Le Brun, 'Elégies', Liv. I, el. i, in Oeuvres de Ponce Denis (Ecouhard) Le Brun. . . mises en ordre et publiées par P.L. Giquené. . .
 4 vols., Paris, Crapelet, 1811, Vol. II, p.5.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.38-43, p.139.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.38-43, p.155.

Similarly in Propertius, Lib. III, elegy iii, when Apollo bestowed on the poet his elegiac vocation, he showed him in a pastoral setting: a path leading over mossy ground, a grotto with a mosaic of pebbles, Bacchus' tympana hanging from the hollowed stones, Pan pipes, a spring into which Venus' doves dipped their beaks:

dixerat, et plectro sedem mihi monstrat eburno,
 quo nova muscoso semita facta solo est.
 hic erat affixis viridis spelunca lapillis,
 pendebantque cavis tympana pumicibus,
 orgia Musarum et Sileni patris imago
 fictilis et calami, Pan Tegeaeae, tui;
 et Veneris dominae volucres, mea turba, columbae
 tingunt Gorgoneo punica rostra lacu.¹

Tibullus' vision of an idyllic rural existence was in harmony with the elegists' ethical code. But, as we have seen, it was at odds with the ideals of society. The elegiac persona consciously flouts standards of public morality and extols nequitia, a vita iners, and otium, an individual and indolent life in the service of love, (paradoxically, in his love-life the elegiac persona exhibits the qualities of commitment, hard work, and fidelity !). The elegists repeatedly show indifference to politics and reject war and military renown, as in Propertius, Lib. III, elegy v. On the other hand, military terms provided them with vocabulary, (arma, militia, castra, etc.), and with imagery. The lover was engaged only in a campaign to win his beloved's favour, and love-making was described in military terms, as in Ovid's Amores, Lib. I, elegy ix, where the whole of the elegy is devoted to this conceit. The opening lines exemplify the comparison:

¹ Propertius, Lib. III, el. iii, ll.25-32.

Militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido;
 Attice, crede mihi, militat omnis amans.
 quae bello est habilis, Veneri quoque convenit aetas:
 turpe senex miles, turpe senilis amor.
 quos petiere duces annos in milite forti,
 hos petit in socio bella puella viro:
 pervigilant ambo, terra requiescit uterque;
 ille fores dominae servat, at ille ducis.¹

Chénier occasionally adopts this illusion of the poets' vita iners:

Quand pourrai-je habiter un champ qui soit à moi ?
 Et, villageois tranquille, ayant pour tout emploi
 Dormir et ne rien faire, inutile poète,
 Goûter le doux oubli d'une vie inquiète ?²

Verbal echoes of the motif are often found as in the couplet:

O délices d'amour, et toi, molle paresse,
 Vous aurez donc usé mon oisive jeunesse !³

where the adjective 'molle' translates the Latin mollis, one of the key words in Latin Elegy, and 'oisive' derives from otium. However, the tension that exists in the work of the Roman authors between the demands of society and the demands of the individual is not felt in Chénier's work. Indeed, in one draft for an elegy, he is far from extolling the virtues of the elegiac vita iners, and looks back to Antiquity to find true examples of civic involvement:

Si j'avais vécu dans ces temps, je n'aurais point fait des
 Arts d'aimer, des poésies molles, amoureuses. Ma Muse
 courtisane n'aurait point. . . J'aurais mené la vie d'un
 jeune Romain. Au barreau, dans le Sénat, j'aurais défendu
 la liberté, ou je serais mort à Utique d'un coup de poignard.⁴

¹ Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el. ix, ll.1-8.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 1, ll.19-22, p.150.
 Walter, 'Elégies', II, ll.19-22, p.56.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 10, ll.1-2, p.26.
 Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', VIII, ll.1-2, p.540.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 6, ll.31-36, p.17.
 Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', II, ll.30-34, p.536.

The only anti-establishment stance in Chénier's Elégies is seen in his refusal to court patronage, to curry favour with the rich, and so prostitute his poetry for immediate glory.¹

Nor does Chénier exploit the important comparison of love and war, and the military vocabulary constantly applied to it in Latin. The following lines from one of the Italian poems are a rare example of his use of military terminology:

Viens encore opposer à mes brûlants transports
De tes bras envieux la lutte et les efforts,
Ou ton ordre. . . ou ta douce prière,
Ou du lin ennemi la jalouse barrière.
Mes bras, plus que les tiens agiles et pressants,
Forceront le rempart de tes bras impuissants.²

As the extract shows, he does imitate the theme of joyous sensuality and happiness when he has won his beloved's favours. He waits, in this poem, for his 'belle Romaine' in her room, surrounded by the various objects which remind him of her and increase his erotic expectations:

Ces glaces, tant de fois belles de ta présence,
Ces coussins odorants, d'aromates remplis,
Sous tes membres divins tant de fois amollis,
Ces franges en festons, que tes mains ont touchées,
Ces fleurs dans ces cristaux par toi-même attachées,
L'air du soir si suave à la fin d'un beau jour,
Tout embrasait mon sang: tout mon sang est amour.³

There is in Chénier a sensuality which rivals that of his predecessors and which he develops without any reference to them. He can in his sensual imagination conjure up the exotic image of a langorous Oriental beauty:

¹ See Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VI, 2, pp.152-155.
Walter, 'Elégies', I, pp.54-56.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 3, ll.19-24, pp.21-22.
Walter, 'Elégies', IX, ll.19-24, p.62.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.6-12, p.21.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.6-12, p.62.

Son beau sein, éclatant de jeunesse et d'amour,
 Et s'élève et repousse un précieux contour
 De perles dont Ceylan voit son onde si vaine.
 Et de perles encor serpente une autre chaîne
 Sur ses bras nus, divins, dont les yeux sont charmés,
 Qu'avec un soin d'amour la nature a formés.
 Assise auprès de lui, ses yeux, pleins de son âme,
 Nagent dans les langueurs d'une amoureuse flamme,
 Et sa voix sur un luth, voluptueux accents,
 Lui soupire en chanson la langue des Persans.¹

The Lycoris cycle offers an example of the pursuit of enjoyment being linked to comments on the frailty of life. The carpe diem motif, with its simple philosophy, is as old as literature itself. It offered to Chénier a further opportunity to imitate Catullus and to turn that imitation into invention. The original poem is transformed, couched in a different idiom and in the context of another time. Chénier imitates one of the most famous of Catullan poems, 'Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus', and begins with a free translation of the second and third lines which in the Latin poem read:

rumoresque senum severiorum
 omnes unius aestimemus assis.²

He then proceeds to expand Catullus' colourful rejection of the criticisms of crabby old men with a more detailed description:

Ah ! qu'ils portent ailleurs ces reproches austères,
 D'une triste raison ces farouches conseils,
 Et ces sourcils hideux, et ces plaintes amères,
 De leur âge chagrin lugubres appareils.³

Extremely difficult to imitate is the contrast made by Catullus between the regenerative power of nature and the transience of human life and the everlasting nature of death. Catullus expresses the theme in particularly

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 2, ll.35-44, p.20.
 Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', IV, ll.34-43, p.538.

² Catullus, poem V, ll.2-3.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 2, ll.1-4, p.46.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 2, ll.1-4, p.91.

beautiful lines, whose assonance and skilful juxtaposition of words renders them especially memorable:

soles occidere et redire possunt:
nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda.¹

On this occasion Chénier's efforts do not appear to match the perfection achieved by the Latin poet. The Roman miniature becomes larger, more clumsy, and somewhat heavy as the thoughts of death lead to exhortations of present enjoyment:

Vois les soleils mourir au vaste sein des eaux;
Thétis donne la vie à des soleils nouveaux,
Qui mourront dans son sein, et renaîtront encore;
Pour nous, un autre sort est écrit chez les Dieux;
Nous n'avons qu'un seul jour; et ce jour précieux
S'éteint dans une nuit qui n'aura point d'aurore.²

But in dealing with the illusion of elegiac dreams Chénier is able, as he does on one of the rare occasions in the Camille group, to exude happiness and joyous expectation and express them in a mood of delicate confidence:

Les cieux sont enflammés; vole, dis à Camille
Que je l'attends; qu'ici, moi, dans ce bel asile,
Je l'attends; qu'un berceau de platanes épais
La mène en cette grotte, où, l'autre jour, au frais,
Pour nous, s'il lui souvient, l'heure ne fut point lente.³

Such a mood was indeed rare for the elegiac illusion among the Ancients, and in their imitator, Chénier, was often replaced by the very opposite, that is to say by elegies of disillusion.

¹ Catullus, *ibid.*, ll.4-6.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.7-12, p.47.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.7-12, p.91.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 2, ll.5-9, pp.62-63.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 2, ll.5-9, p.98.

IX

ANDRE CHENIER AND THE LATIN LOVE ELEGY: THOUGHT AND STYLE.PART TWO: DISILLUSION

In the elegies of Propertius and Tibullus, the idealized elegiac dream of happiness and fidelity, often placed in a tranquil, pastoral setting, can be a source of great pathos, for moments of contentment are few. The illusion is constantly shattered by the brutal realities of a relationship in which obsession leads to moral degradation, and in which jealousy and suspicion, anger and betrayal are paramount. These two worlds meet with greatest impact in the elegies of Propertius, which owe so much to Catullus. The failure of the ideal was supremely stated in the love-hatred paradox of the latter's succinct epigram:

Odi et amo: quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.¹

Nowhere has the dilemma of tortured emotions been expressed with greater simplicity or beauty. This mental and emotional conflict, explored by Propertius and Tibullus with dramatic effect, was reproduced by Chénier above all in his turbulent cycle of poems for D'.z.n-Camille.

The ability to experience both love and hatred simultaneously is the corollary of the Ancients' concept of love as a disease and a destructive obsession. The notion is not exclusive to writers of Elegy, for it can be traced back to early Greek Lyric and Tragedy, to Hellenistic poetry, and to Roman poetry and drama particularly, but again it was rendered most effectively by Catullus in his desperate prayer:

¹Catullus, poem LXXXV.

o di, si vestrum est misereri, aut si quibus umquam
 extremam iam ipsa in morte tulistis opem,
 me miserum aspicate et, si vitam puriter egi,
 eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi,
 sei mihi surrepens imos ut torpor in artus
 expulit ex omni pectore laetities.
 non iam illud quaero, contra ut me diligat illa,
 aut, quod non potis est, esse pudica velit:
 ipse valere opto et taetrum hunc deponere morbum.¹

Catullus sees himself in the grip of a terrible, degrading disease beyond any cure. This is a predominant concept in Roman Elegy. The persona of the poet is a victim, saucius, suffering from an obsessive, irrational passion, furor, a destructive madness which overpowers all normal thoughts and emotions and is impervious to advice. The opening lines of Propertius' Monobiblos mark him as wretched, 'miserum', contaminated by love's disease, 'contactum', and living 'nullo consilio'. The tyranny of love gives rise to mental and emotional aberrations, which, according to Tibullus, not even the God of healing can cure:

quidquid erat medicae vicerat artis amor.²

Paradoxically, but in keeping with human nature, the obsession is also alluded to as a dulce malum:

. . . faveo morbo cum iuvat ipse dolor.³

In describing the symptoms of love Chénier cannot escape from the feelings so often expressed by the Roman writers. In a poem addressed to D'.z.n, the poet confesses his unrequited love using Latin elegiac diction, mythology, and metaphors:

¹ Catullus, poem LXXVI, ll.17-25.

² Tibullus, Lib. II, el. iii, l.14.

³ Tibullus, Lib. II, el. v, l.110.

Oui, je brûle; ô D'.z.. ! laisse-moi du repos.
 Je brûle; oh ! de mon coeur éloigne ces flambeaux:
 Ah ! plutôt que souffrir ces douleurs insensées,
 Combien j'aimerais mieux sur des Alpes glacées
 Etre une pierre aride, ou dans le sein des mers
 Un roc battu des vents, battu des flots amers !
 O terre ! ô mer ! je brûle. Un poison moins rapide
 Sut venger le Centaure et consumer Alcide.¹

The lines are closely drawn from a passage from Tibullus:

uror, io, remove, saeva puella, faces.
 o ego ne possim tales sentire dolores,
 quam mallet in gelidis montibus esse lapis,
 stare vel insanis cautes obnoxia ventis,
 naufraga quam vasti tunderet unda maris !²

Chénier's rendering of the traditional imagery of burning, of flames and torches, of cliffs and rocks exposed to the wind and the waves, seems to be little more than a versification of the prose translation by Longchamps:

Oui, je brûle; fille barbare écarte ces flammes. Ah ! pour ne les plus ressentir ces cruelles angoisses, que ne suis-je le glaçon pétrifié sur la montagne; ou ce rocher, qui, battu par la tempête, est l'écueil immobile où vient se briser la fureur d'un vaste Océan.³

All that Chénier adds is a learned mythological allusion to the poison that killed Herakles: Nessus, a centaur, raped Deianira, and was killed by Herakles, but before he died gave her some blood assuring her that it was a love charm, and this Deianira later smeared onto a garment, which she sent to Herakles. At this stage in his relationship with D'.z.n-Camille the poet is still enjoying the obsession, and is gently poking fun at himself. The dramatic setting of these lines - the poet has just been surrounded and interrogated by a bevy of impudent Cupids - makes the self-mockery very evident. The following lines bring a quick return from this amusing hyperbole to the more serious note of suffering as, in quieter and

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 3, ll.15-22, p.82.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.',1, ll.15-22, p.109.

²Tibullus, Lib. II, el. iv, ll.6-10.

³P. de Longchamps, Elégies de Tibulle, traduites par M. de Longchamps, Amsterdam and Paris, Morin, 1776, pp.129 & 131.

more reminiscent mood, Chénier reverts to a famous Vergilian simile and compares himself to a wounded deer:

Tel que le faon blessé fuit, court, mais dans son flanc
Traîne le plomb mortel qui fait couler son sang;
Ainsi là, dans mon coeur, errant à l'aventure,
Je porte cette belle, auteur de ma blessure.¹

The simile is a condensed reworking of the one in the Aeneid, Lib. IV, in which the passionate Dido is compared to a wounded deer that rushes wildly about but cannot dislodge the fatal arrow:

uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur
urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,
quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit
pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum
nescius: illa fuga silvas saltusque peragrat
Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo.²

It is interesting that Chénier omits the idea of the hunting shepherd, Aeneas, who is unaware that he has shot the deer; D'.z.n was, no doubt, very conscious of her seductive charms. Naturally Chénier turned to Vergil for the concept of love as an irrational passion, for the fourth book of the Aeneid is the most striking and poignant account of this furor.

Insomnia is a commonplace symptom of love, especially the obsessive love described by elegists. Bertin's treatment of the subject is marred by an insipid style, ending in sentimentality:

Depuis ce temps je brûle: aucun pavot n'apaise
Les douleurs d'un poison lent à me dévorer.
La nuit, sur le duvet, je me sens déchirer;
Le plus léger tapis m'importune et me pèse,
Et mes yeux sont, hélas ! toujours prêts à pleurer.³

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.23-26.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.23-26.

²Vergil, Aeneid, Lib. IV, ll.68-73.

³A. de Bertin, 'Les Amours', Liv. I, el. ii, ll.46-50, in Oeuvres complètes de Bertin, Paris, Ménard et Desenne, 1821, p.4.

A better description, in contrast, of the tossing and turning of sleepless nights caused by Chénier's infatuation would be hard to find:

O nuit, nuit douloureuse ! ô toi, tardive aurore,
Viens-tu ? vas-tu venir ? es-tu bien loin encore ?
Ah ! tantôt sur un flanc, puis sur l'autre, au hasard
Je me tourne et m'agite, et ne peux nulle part
Trouver que l'insomnie amère, impatiente,
Qu'un malaise inquiet et qu'une fièvre ardente.¹

Ovid's approach, upon which the passages are based, has an entirely different mood. With characteristic bathos he asks naively whether love might be the reason for his sleeplessness and dispassionately discusses whether he should struggle against it or yield to its demands. Chénier cannot treat insomnia in this burlesque fashion, for it is the background to a billet doux in which he confesses his love for D'.z.n. The lines he imitates seriously are those of Ovid's feigned insomnia:

Esse quid hoc dicam, quod tam mihi dura videntur
strata, neque in lecto pallia nostra sedent,
et vacuus somno noctem, quam longa, peregi,
lassaque versati corporis ossa dolent ?²

Once Chénier had realized his dream of happiness and joy in the conquest of D'.z.n, she became more clearly the destroyer of that illusion in the form of Camille. It is she who is treacherous, whose temperament is cruel, and, as a result, the poems take on a greater intensity. In one of these elegies in the Camille cycle the poet's fantasy is poignantly juxtaposed with the reality of betrayal and deceit. The illusion of happiness is broken, but the recognition of that fact, as in the paradox of Catullus, brings no cure:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 4, ll.1-6, p.83.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 2, ll.1-6, p.110.

²Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el. ii, ll.1-4.

Absente, je la tiens en des grottes muettes. . .
 Mais présente, à ses pieds m'attendent les rigueurs,
 Et, pour des songes vains, de réelles douleurs.
 Camille est un besoin dont rien ne me soulage.¹

Even the presence of the beloved feeds the disease of love. The escape in the case of Propertius was to plan a visit to Athens in an attempt to gain freedom:

Magnum iter ad doctas proficisci cogor Athenas,
 ut me longa gravi solvat amore via.
 crescit enim assidue spectando cura puellae:
 ipse alimenta sibi maxima praebet amor.²

Chénier follows this theme very closely in his description of his attempt to free himself from Camille by a journey to Italy and Greece:

Ses traits que malgré moi je vais toujours chercher,
 Son image partout à mes yeux répandue,
 Et les lieux qu'elle habite, et ceux où je l'ai vue,
 Son nom qui me poursuit, tout offre à tout moment
 Au feu qui me consume un funeste aliment.³

The extent of the degradation and abasement brought about by the disease of love became a key motif in the Latin Love Elegy with the emphasis placed on the idea of servitium amoris.⁴ In their elaborations of this theme the elegists showed their greatest originality. The lover was presented as a slave, and, to imagine the emotive impact of this notion, one has only to remember the base status of the slave in Roman society. The elegists fully utilized this concept to evoke a world of suffering and humiliation. Claimed and dominated by the power of love, the lover is

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 1, ll.14-17, p.62.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 1, ll.14-17, p.97.

²Propertius, Lib. III, el. xxi, ll.1-4.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 1, ll.4-8, pp.28-29.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XVIII, ll.4-8, p.71.

⁴For a discussion of this theme see F.O. Copley, 'Servitium amoris in the Roman Elegists', Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 78, 1947, pp.285-300.

stripped of his freedom and freewill and must endure any hardship. He is the victim, coming under the savage tyranny, iura, iuqum, of the domina superba, a term which has strong connotations in this context, and must suffer her punishments. The yoke is not easy:

Hic mihi servitium video dominamque paratam:
iam mihi, libertas illa paterna, vale.
servitium sed triste datur, teneorque catenis,
et numquam misero vincla remittit Amor,
et seu quid merui seu nil peccavimus, urit.¹

In these couplets Tibullus illustrates the imagery associated with the servitium amoris: the lover's chains, vincla, catenis, the punishment of fire, steel, and, lastly, the wounds. Such constant images vividly convey a relationship of total dependence from which there is no escape and in which there is no real happiness.

Although Chénier does not follow his Latin predecessors in making the humiliating servitium amoris the dominant motif of his Elégies, nevertheless he does adopt this concept and the associated imagery, as is seen by the following prose draft:

Ah ! malheureux ! j'ai beau fuir l'amour comme un
esclave fugitif, ou comme un taureau qui a secoué le
joug, ou comme un cheval qui s'est enfui de l'étable
. . . . Mais il sait me retrouver, et levant sur moi une
branche de myrte dont il me menace en criant, il me donne
de nouveaux fers, il soumet ma tête à un nouveau joug, il
monte sur moi et me gouverne avec un nouveau frein qu'il
rit de me voir mordre. . . .²

The new yoke, the new chains, and the new reins imposed by love are most noticeably stressed in the Camille cycle, where Chénier imagines the lover as a slave to a domineering, ruthless mistress. He repeatedly pictures himself as the victim of her arrogant whims. One such elegy owes its

¹Tibullus, Lib. II, el. iv, ll.1-5.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 27, ll.5-11, p.113.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', XI, ll.4-10, pp.542-543.

outline to Propertius, Lib. III, elegy xvi, in which the Latin poet recalls how at midnight a letter comes from Cynthia summoning him to Tibur and how he contemplates perils of refusal. The same tinge of gentle self-mockery colours Chénier's adaptation:

Ah ! des pleurs ! des regrets ! lisez, amis. C'est elle.
 On m'outrage, on me chasse, et puis on me rappelle.
 Non: il fallait d'abord m'accueillir sans détours.
 Non, non: je n'irai point. La nuit tombe; j'accours.
 On s'excuse, on gémit; enfin on me renvoie,
 Je sors. Chez mes amis je viens trouver la joie:
 Et parmi nos festins un billet repentant
 Bientôt me suit et vient me dire qu'on m'attend.¹

A similar situation arises in the elegy 'Eh bien ! je le voulais'.² The lover's alter ego judges that Camille is in the wrong, and that for once he should wait for her to bring her apologies. Instead he goes to forgive her, but the tables are turned and it is the lover who is the submissive slave, 'Confus et repentant, je demande pardon'.³ More seriously, in the same cycle of poems, Chénier compares the figurative slave of love and a real servant. During Camille's journey to Switzerland, suspicion of infidelity encourages the poet to wish that he had followed her disguised as her servant:

Invisible, inconnu, Dieux ! pourquoi n'ai-je pas
 Sous un voile étranger accompagné tes pas ?
 J'ai pu de ton esclave, ardent, épris de zèle,
 Porter, comme le coeur, le vêtement fidèle.⁴

The servitium amoris is not always treated so seriously. Propertius pokes fun at himself and his absurd situation by recounting a drunken incident. He imagines that, drunk, and straying round the town, he has

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 6, 11.1-8, p.69.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 6, 11.1-8, p.102.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 4, p.66.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 4, p.100.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 1.16.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 1.16.

⁴ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 3, 11.59-62, p.65.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 3, 11.59-62, p.99.

been arrested by a band of scolding Cupids and brought back by them to his beloved. This is his amusingly weak excuse for an ill-timed arrival in an inebriate state. Not surprisingly Cynthia gives him a hostile reception. The opening lines of the elegy are full of the vocabulary of servitium amoris and it is worth quoting at length not only for the verbal reminiscences found in Chénier's transcription, but also for its own humour:

Hesterna, mea lux, cum potus nocte vagarer,
 nec me servorum duceret ulla manus,
 obvia nescio quot pueri mihi turba minuta
 venerat (hos vetuit me numerare timor);
 quorum alii faculas, alii retinere sagittas,
 pars etiam visa est vincla parare mihi.
 sed nudi fuerant. quorum lascivior unus,
 'Arripite hunc', inquit, 'iam bene nostis eum.
 hic erat, hunc mulier nobis irata locavit'.
 dixit, et in collo iam mihi nodus erat.
 hic alter iubet in medium propellere, at alter,
 'Intereat, qui nos non putat esse deos !
 haec te non meritum totas expectat in horas: . . .
 parcite iam, fratres, iam certos spondet amores;
 et iam ad mandatam venimus ecce domum'.
 atque ita mi iniecto dixerunt rursus amictu:
 'I nunc et noctes disce manere domi'.¹

Chénier's version illustrates the literary allusion from the outset:

Hier, en te quittant, enivré de tes charmes,
 Belle D'.z..., vers moi, tenant en main des armes,
 Une troupe d'enfants courut de toutes parts.
 Ils portaient des flambeaux, des chaînes, et des dards.
 Leurs dards m'ont pénétré jusques au fond de l'âme;
 Leurs flambeaux sur mon sein ont secoué la flamme,
 Leurs chaînes m'ont saisi. D'une cruelle voix:
 'Aimeras-tu D'.z.. ?' criaient-ils à la fois,
 'L'aimeras-tu toujours ?' Troupe auguste et suprême,
 Ah ! vous le savez trop, Dieux enfants, si je l'aime.
 Mais qu'avez-vous besoin de chaînes et de traits ?
 Je n'ai point voulu fuir. Pourquoi tous ces apprêts ?
 Sa beauté pouvait tout; mon âme sans défense
 N'a point contre ses yeux cherché de résistance.²

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xxix, ll.1-13, 19-22.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 3, ll.1-14, pp.81-82.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 1, ll.1-14, pp.108-109.
 Lines 15-20 are based on Tibullus, Lib. II, el. iv, ll. 5-10.

The humorous setting for the servitium amoris is retained. It is noticeable that the light-hearted parody belongs to the D'.z.n poems, before the poet wears the true iugum amoris. Verbal reminiscences abound, but Chénier has given a new twist to the original situation. Instead of wandering in a drunken state after a party, the French poet is leaving his beloved, inebriated by her charms. Unfortunately, the change means that the line, 'hos vetuit me numerare timor', in which Propertius plays on the lover's drunken vision has to be omitted. As they lead the poet to the house of his beloved, three Latin Cupids complain in turn that Cynthia has been waiting for hours, and hint at the love-making that is in store, whereas, Chénier's French Cupids speak with one voice and merely extract a confession of love. This confession is given a neat, flattering change of emphasis as the lover claims that there is no need for chains, D'.z.n's beauty has already ensnared him. Amidst all the humour this eulogy of her beauty is the real point of the episode.

Of the three Latin elegists it was Ovid who constantly parodied the elegiac topoi and created wit and humour by bathos and a burlesque treatment. In the Amores, Lib. I, el. ii, as we have seen, after spending a sleepless night, he asks the disingenuous question: could love be the cause? For his part, he decides not to struggle against love, as the lover in the Propertian elegy did, but rather to give in and so make the burden lighter. This kind of amusing inversion of servitium amoris is to be found in an unfinished Italian elegy by Chénier:

Je t'appartiens, Amour, Amour inexorable;
Et tu ne permets pas à ton esclave amant
De pouvoir loin de toi se distraire un moment.
Eh bien ! allons, conduis-moi aux pieds de . . . Je ne refuse
aucun esclavage. . . . Conduis-moi vers elle, puisque c'est
elle que tu me rappelles toujours.¹

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, ii, 10, ll.26-31, p.27.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', VIII, ll.26-31, p.540.

Whereas Ovid continues in witty style and enjoys playing the game of love, Chénier immediately recaptures a serious note, and, in rather an insensitive and distasteful description, calls upon old age to free him from love's fury. In Ovid the wit and humour are constant, in Chénier, self-mockery and gentle teasing are welcome, but never dominant, strains.

The hardships and humiliation endured as part of the servitium amoris are further enlarged by the use of one of the important stock rôles, that of the exclusus amator. The lover stays outside his mistress' door, which is shut against him so that he has to plead for access in the traditional locked-door serenade, the paraklausithyron. The form is not exclusive to Latin Elegy. F.O. Copley in his extensive survey suggested its origin lies in the κωμος, the boisterous street ballads, songs of revelry following a symposium.¹ It can certainly be traced back to Greek and Roman Comedy and the rowdy procession through the streets ending with a lover's song at his mistress' door and usually his admission. In non-dramatic Greek versions, interest shifts to the komast's song in front of a door that remains closed, thus symbolizing the sorrows of love. The Roman elegists examined the possibilities of the exclusus amator and set him in their world of degradation. The motif contains numerous stereotyped elements which could be omitted, rapidly glossed over, or selected and given prominence. The lover has usually been at a drinking party, and, in an inebriate state and still wearing the sympotic garlands, he makes his way, either alone or with friends, to his beloved's house. He is locked out, and cajoles and pleads for entry, lamenting his suffering. When the door remains closed the lover may use threats of violence against it, or prophesy that soon his mistress' beauty will fade and she will be abandoned. Finally, the lover hangs his garlands on the door and faithfully

¹F.O. Copley, 'Servitium amoris in the Roman Elegists', Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 78, 1947, pp.285-300.

spends the night on the threshold, vigilatio ad clausas fores, exposed to lashing wind and rain. The elegists ring numerous changes: laments may be addressed to the mistress or to the door itself, or even to the stubborn janitor (Ovid Amores, Lib. I, el. vi), and in the Propertian version (Lib. I, el. xvi), the door itself complains of its shame. The paraklausithyron may also be linked to other elegiac motifs, for example, the theme of clandestine love, furtivus amor, and of the custos or lena who guards the mistress too well (Tibullus, Lib. I, el. ii), or to the theme of being supplanted by a dives amator (Tibullus, Lib. I, el. v) who has seduced the loved one away by his gifts.

Chénier frequently adopts the pose of the exclusus amator, and adapts the form of the paraklausithyron. In remodelling this idea, he elaborates especially the themes of suspicion, jealousy, and betrayal so that they play a major rôle in the Lycoris and, more particularly, in the Camille elegies.

An early poem of the Lycoris cycle is entirely devoted to the paraklausithyron, and follows in close detail the traditional setting of the vigilatio ad fores. In the third and fourth lines of 'Il n'est donc plus d'espoir'¹ the whole theme is succinctly expressed:

Couchons-nous sur sa porte. Ici, jusques au jour,
Elle entendra les pleurs d'un malheureux amour.

There is, later, a brief moment of revolt when the exclusus amator contemplates finding consolation in someone else's arms, or even rejecting the whole of womankind, so that he can rejoice and celebrate his freedom from the tyranny of unhappy love:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 20, pp.105-106.
Walter, 'Elégies', XIV, pp.66-67.

Oui; j'y suis résolu; je n'aimerai jamais;
 J'en jure. . . Ma perfide avec tous ses attraits
 Ferait pour m'apaiser un effort inutile. . .
 J'admire seulement qu'à ce sexe imbécile
 Nous daignons sur nos vœux laisser aucun pouvoir;
 Pour repousser ses traits, on n'a qu'à le vouloir.
 Ingrate que j'aimais, je te hais, je t'abhorre. . .¹

An ironic smile lurks behind the excessive protestations of the poet as he remains 'sur ce seuil inflexible',² and there is a witty reductio ad absurdum when the lover hears the door move, and, in a sudden volte face, immediately declares undying love, only to find that it was the door creaking in the wind:

Mais quel bruit à sa porte. . . Ah ! je dois-je attendre encore ? . .
 J'entends crier les gonds. . . On ouvre. . . C'est pour moi. . .
 Oh ! ma . . . m'aime et me garde sa foi. . .
 Je l'adore toujours. . . Ah ! Dieux ! ce n'est pas elle,
 Le vent seul a poussé cette porte cruelle.³

This is very near in spirit and intent to Ovid's tongue in cheek paraklausithyron:

fallimur, an verso sonuerunt cardine postes
 raucaque concussae signa dedere fores ?
 fallimur: impulsa est animosa ianua vento.
 ei mihi, quam longe spem tulit aura meam !⁴

Ovid is merely playing a game, whereas Chénier's lover, despite the mockery, portrays the reality of a stormy relationship, for he is scathing in a later picture of Lycoris in which he comments on her deceptive, wheedling charms and her skill in infidelity.

Camille in her turn was guilty of infidelities so the theme of the

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.15-21, pp.105-106.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.15-21, p.67.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, 1.9, p.105.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 1.9, p.66.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.22-26, p.106.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.22-26, p.67.

⁴ Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el. vi, 11.49-52.

exclusus amator and the paraklausithyron occur several times in the elegies addressed to her. The motif does not always provide the whole subject of the elegy. In 'Reste, reste avec nous, ô père des bons vins !'¹ the paraklausithyron is skilfully linked to a sympotic elegy in a way which proves once again Chénier's ability to poke fun at his own expense. The poem's opening is inspired by 'Tibullus', Lib. III, elegy vi:

Candide Liber ades: sic sit tibi mystica vitis
semper, sic hедера tempora vincta feras:
aufer et ipse meum patera medicante dolorem:
saepe tuo cecidit munere victus Amor.
care puer, madeant generoso pocula baccho.²

Reste, reste avec nous, ô père des bons vins !
Dieu propice, ô Bacchus ! toi, dont les flots divins
Versent le doux oubli de ces maux qu'on adore.³

The poet tries to forget the infidelities by taking the advice of friends and joining them in their festivities. He categorically declares: 'Camille dans mon coeur ne trouve plus des armes'.⁴ Yet as he drowns his sorrows in wine, he is still haunted by her image until he is forced to admit, in lines that pick up the 'Tibullan' text:

Ah ! qu'un front et qu'une âme, à la tristesse en proie,
Feignent malaisément et le rire et la joie !⁵

ei mihi, difficile est imitari gaudia falsa,
difficile est tristi fingere mente iocum,
nec bene mendaci risus componitur ore,
nec bene sollicitis ebria verba sonant.⁶

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 9, pp.75-78.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 9, pp.106-108.

²Corpus Tibullianum, Lib. III, el. vi, ll.1-5.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.1-3, p.75.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.1-3, p.106.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.15, p.76.
Walter, *ibid.*, l.15, p.107.

⁵Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.35-36.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.35-36.

⁶Corpus Tibullianum, *ibid.*, ll.33-36.

Wine, as is its wont, far from curing the poet, has made him long for Camille, and the poem ends with the paraklausithyron as the sign of his ever-present obsession:

Riez, amis; nommez ma fureur insensée.
 Vous n'aimez pas, et j'aime; et je brûle, et je pars
 Me coucher sur sa porte, implorer ses regards;
 Elle entendra mes pleurs, elle verra mes larmes;
 Et dans ses yeux divins, pleins de grâces, de charmes,
 Le sourire ou la haine, arbitres de mon sort,
 Vont ou me pardonner ou prononcer ma mort.¹

Parny's elegy 'La Rechute' is similarly based on 'Tibullus' III, vi. He too shows the lover turning to 'Le dieu joufflu de la vendange':²

C'en est fait, j'ai brisé mes chaînes !
 Amis, je reviens dans vos bras.
 Les belles ne vous valent pas;
 Leurs faveurs coûtent trop de peines.
 Jouet de leur volage humeur,
 J'ai rougi de ma dépendance:
 Je reprends mon indifférence,
 Et je retrouve le bonheur.³

In lines that are close to Chénier's, he too admits the impossibility of consolation:

Que dis-je, malheureux ? ah ! qu'il est difficile
 De feindre la gaieté dans le sein des douleurs ! . . .
 Et toi, tendre Amitié, plaisir pur et divin,
 Non, tu ne suffis plus à mon âme égarée.⁴

However, it is noteworthy that whereas Chénier concludes with the theme of paraklausithyron, the remaining lines of Parny's elegy revert to carpe diem.

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.76-82, pp.77-78.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.76-82, p.108.

²E.D. de F. de Parny, 'Elégies', Liv. II, 'La Rechute', l.9, in Œuvres de Parny. Elégies et poésies diverses. Nouvelle édition revue et annotée par A-J. Pons avec une préface de M. Sainte-Beuve, Paris, Garnier, 1873, p.43.

³*Ibid.*, ll.1-8, p.43.

⁴*Ibid.*, ll.15-16, 19-20, p.44.

It is an angry lover who, in the elegy 'Allons, l'heure est venue, allons trouver Camille',¹ uses the theme of the exclusus amator and the paraklausithyron to create a dramatic monologue in which hopeful dreams and illusions are destroyed by the reality of betrayal. Awakening from a dream the poet imagines visiting his mistress to surprise her as she awakes. He builds up an idyllic scene of innocent beauty and fidelity, and then depicts his arrival at the house and his reactions in a most graphic way. Staccato sentences, gathering speed, indicate that he gradually becomes aware that he is being deceived. At first it is the wry smile of the janitor, a familiar figure of Latin Elegy, to which he pays little heed. The door is locked. He hears muffled voices, but his mounting suspicions are allayed as he realizes that Camille is talking to her maid, the ancilla of the Roman poets. When the door is eventually opened the treachery is apparent; neither the maid's excuses, nor Camille's appearance can hide the infidelity:

Dieux ! comme elle approchait (sexe ingrat, faux, perfide !)
 S'essayant, effrontée à la fois et timide,
 Voulant hâter l'effort de ses pas languissants,
 Voulant m'ouvrir des bras fatigués, impuissants;
 Abattue, et sa voix altérée, incertaine,
 Ses yeux anéantis ne s'ouvrant plus qu'à peine,
 Ses cheveux en désordre et rajustés en vain,
 Et son haleine encore agitée, et son sein. . .
 Des caresses de feu sur son sein imprimées,
 Et de baisers récents ses lèvres enflammées:
 J'ai tout vu. Tout m'a dit une coupable nuit.²

Following the patterns established by the Latin elegists, Chénier's lover never seems free from feelings of jealousy and suspicion. These feelings are not confined to the framework of paraklausithyron, as in

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 7, pp.70-73.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 7, pp.103-105.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.61-71, pp.72-73.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.61-71, p.104.

the above examples, but surface, however briefly, in the majority of elegies whether the suspicions are imaginary or real. Indeed, to a certain extent, the lover thrives on them as necessary components of love. Chénier's portrayal of jealousy has an intensity that is absent in Bertin's unimaginative and pedestrian treatment of the theme:

Je suis jaloux de l'ouvrier habile,
 Qui de ton corps mesure les contours;
 Je suis jaloux de ce marbre immobile,
 Qui tous les soirs te voit changer d'atours;
 Je suis jaloux de toute la nature
 Et malheureux, jour et nuit tourmenté,
 Je crois voir un rival caché dans ta ceinture,
 Et sous le tissu qui voile ta beauté.¹

Unfortunately there is no Ovidian wit in this reductio ad absurdum.

Jealousy and wit appear in four out of the seven major elegies addressed to Lycoris. Sometimes the suspicions are purely imaginative:

J'étais seul, je mourais. Seul, Lycoris absente
 De soupçons inquiets m'agite et me tourmente.
 Je vois tous ses appas et je vois mes dangers;
 Ah ! je la vois livrée à des bras étrangers.²

Sometimes the betrayal is clear:

. . . je trouve partout mon âme et mes douleurs,
 Le nom de Lycoris et la honte et les pleurs.
 Ingrate Lycoris, à feindre accoutumée,
 Avez-vous pu trahir qui vous a tant aimée ?
 Avez-vous pu trouver un passe-temps si doux
 A déchirer un coeur qui n'adorait que vous ?³

¹ A. de Bertin, 'Les Amours', Liv. I, el. xv, ll.27-34, in Oeuvres complètes de Bertin, Paris, Ménéard et Desenne, 1821, p.30.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 4, ll.13-16, p.48.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 3, ll.13-16, p.92.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, ll.27-32, p.57.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 4, ll.11-16, pp.93-94.

Sometimes the whole poem may be concentrated on the infidelities of Chénier's mistress. This is so in the case of 'La Lampe',¹ derived, on this occasion, not from the Roman elegists but from Greek epigrammatic verse.

These sentiments occur even in an elegy for D'.z.n before she has surrendered and conquest been achieved. Whilst the lover suffers from insomnia, kept awake by his love, he imagines D'.z.n in the arms of a rival:

Dieu d'oubli, viens fermer mes yeux. O Dieu de paix,
Sommeil, viens, fallût-il les fermer pour jamais.
Un autre dans ses bras ! ô douloureux outrage !
Un autre ! ô honte ! ô mort ! ô désespoir ! ô rage !₂

In the Camille cycle, Camille's journey abroad, mentioned previously, gives rise to suspicions that she may be being seduced by attractive rivals. In Propertius, Lib. I, elegy xi, Cynthia has left for the fashionable resort of Baiae, and the poet begs her to return, for he is full of anxiety about the dangers of unknown rivals in that scandalous place:

an te nescio quis simulatis ignibus hostis
sustulit e nostris, Cynthia, carminibus ?
atque utinam mage te remis confisa minutis
parvula Lucrina cumba moretur aqua, . . .
quam vacet alterius blandos audire susurros
molliter in tacito litore compositam !₃

Chénier modified this setting by recounting that he had received a letter from Camille which at first quelled his fears, but soon the worries returned. The extract shows the resemblance to the Propertian text:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 5, pp.50-56.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'La Lampe', pp.120-122.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, iii, 4, ll.27-30, p.84.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'D'.Z.N.', 2, ll.27-30, p.110.

³Propertius, Lib. I, el. xi, ll.7-10, 13-14.

Eh bien ! sont-ils bien tous empressés à te voir ?
 As-tu sur bien des coeurs promené ton pouvoir ? . . .
 Mais, Dieux ! puisses-tu voir, sous un ennui rongeur,
 De ta chère beauté flétrir toute la fleur,
 Plutôt que d'être heureuse à grossir tes conquêtes;
 D'aller chercher toi-même et désirer des fêtes,
 Ou sourire le soir, assise au coin d'un bois,
 Aux éloges rusés d'une flatteuse voix,
 Comme font trop souvent de jeunes infidèles.¹

The theme of Camille's infidelity recurs in this group of poems² but in one humorous elegy the rôles are reversed, and the poet himself is shown as the fickle philanderer. Despite their repeated assertions of fidelity, the Roman elegists also occasionally contradict themselves and find excuses for their behaviour in the irresistible impulses of love. Ovid's persona could not have resisted any girl. Chénier uses the reversal of rôles to introduce another elegiac motif, the violent temper of his mistress. The poem opens with eager enquiries about the sensual beauties who are to be at a party:

Et c'est Glycère, amis, chez qui la table est prête ?
 Et la belle Saxonne est aussi de la fête ?
 Et Rose, qui jamais ne lasse les désirs,
 Et dont la danse molle aiguillonne aux plaisirs ?
 Et sa soeur aux accents de sa voix la plus rare
 Mêlera, dites-vous, les sons de la guitare ?
 Et nous aurons Julie, au rire étincelant,
 Au sein plus que l'albâtre et solide et brillant ?³

Having agreed to join the party, the lover pauses and thinks of Camille's violent reactions should she find out. The poet paints a picture of a jealous, violent mistress who not only has a lashing tongue but also resorts to physical violence:

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 3, ll.43-44, 51-57, pp.64-65.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 3, ll.43-44, 51-57, p.99.

² See Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 8, pp.73-75.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 8, pp.105-106.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 5, ll.1-8, p.67.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 5, ll.1-8, p.100.

Si j'ai loué des yeux, une bouche, un sourire; . . .
 Elle a tout vu. Bientôt cris, reproches, injure.
 Un mot, un geste, un rien, tout était un parjure.
 'Chacun pour cette belle avait vu mes égards.
 Je lui parlais des yeux; je cherchais ses regards'.
 Et puis des pleurs ! des pleurs ! que Memnon sur sa cendre
 A sa mère immortelle en a moins fait répandre.
 Que dis-je ? sa vengeance ose en venir aux coups.¹

Propertius proclaimed Cynthia's violence to be even more frenzied, for this domina knocks over tables, hurls wine goblets, and physically assaults the poet.² Both men interpret this as a sign of love, and conclude that love can be strengthened by exciting jealousy:

nam sine amore gravi femina nulla dolet.
 quae mulier rabida iactat convicia lingua,
 haec Veneris magnae volvitur ante pedes; . . .
 non est certa fides, quam non in iurgia veritas:
 hostibus eveniat lenta puella meis.³

Ah ! je l'aime bien mieux injuste qu'indolente.
 Sa colère me plaît et décèle une amante.
 Si j'ai peur de la perdre, elle tremble à son tour;
 Et la crainte inquiète est fille de l'amour.
 L'assurance tranquille est d'un coeur insensible.
 Loin, à mes ennemis une amante paisible.⁴

Suddenly the voice of Julie is heard and the lover succumbs to easy pleasures.

The complete disintegration of a relationship is marked by the renuntiatio amoris, the formal rejection of the beloved. F. Cairns⁵ has enumerated its various possible elements as follows: the lover's previous sentiments for the beloved, the lover's formal renunciation of the beloved, the lover's reasons for rejecting the beloved, the lover's successors

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.18, 21-27, p.68.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.18, 21-27, p.101.

²Propertius, Lib. III, el. viii, ll.1-8.

³*Ibid.*, ll.10-12, 19-20.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.33-38.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.33-38.

⁵F. Cairns, Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry, Edinburgh University Press, 1972, pp.80-81.

treated with hostility, the future miseries of his successors, the future misery of the beloved, the lover's present state of mind, the beloved's attempts to win back her lover, and the lover's resolve to find a better beloved. Chénier only left one full-scale renuntiatio amoris,¹ and, although the beloved is unnamed, the intensity of the feeling and the reference to a dream which may recall 'Allons, l'heure est venue',² suggest that this is the final rejection of Camille. The elegy is remarkable for its vituperative force, and for the fact that it contains several of the elements of classical renuntiatio amoris. The lover formally renounces his beloved, in response to her rejection of him:

Je vous perds ! Quoi, par vous nos liens sont rompus !
Vous le voulez; adieu, vous ne me verrez plus.³

He recalls his previous feelings, feelings of total dependence and everlasting fidelity:

. . . vous fûtes toujours l'arbitre de mon sort.
. . . je vous jurai d'éternelles tendresses !⁴

He refers to the callous nature of his beloved and the miseries to be faced by his successors:

Adieu, suivez le cours de vos nobles travaux.
Cherchez, aimez, trompez mille imprudents rivaux;
Je ne leur dirai point que vous êtes perfide,
Que le plaisir de nuire est le seul qui vous guide,
Que vous êtes plus tendre, alors qu'un noir dessein,
Pour troubler leur repos, veille dans votre sein.⁵

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 22, pp.106-110.
Walter, 'Elégies', X, pp.62-65.

² Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 7, pp.70-73.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 7, pp.103-105.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 22, ll.5-6, p.107.
Walter, 'Elégies', X, ll.5-6, p.63.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.9 and 23.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.9 and 23.

⁵ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.93-98, p.109.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.93-98, p.65.

Finally there is a prophecy that his successors will abandon her and that he will be insensitive to her misery:

Mais ils sauront bientôt, honteux de leur faiblesse,
Quitter avec opprobre une indigne maîtresse;
Vous pleurerez, et moi, j'apprendrai vos douleurs
Sans même les entendre, ou rire de vos pleurs.¹

The attack on the mistress is particularly bitter, for the lover indulges in gloating revenge. The rôles are inverted, the beloved has become the magistra amoris and has taught the lover how to be unfaithful. Nevertheless the poet still feels the need to justify himself by a sententia and mythological exemplum:

Et quand vous m'avez fait, vous, les mêmes promesses,
Était-ce rien qu'un piège ? Il n'a point réussi.
J'ai fait comme vous-même; ah ! l'on vous trompe aussi,
Vous, dans l'art de tromper maîtresse sans émule.
Vous avez donc pensé, perfide trop crédule,
Qu'un amant, par vous-même instruit au changement,
N'oserait, comme vous, abuser d'un serment ?
En moi c'était vengeance; à vous ce fut un crime
Trahir qui nous trahit est juste autant qu'utile,
Et l'inventeur cruel du taureau de Sicile,
Lui-même à l'essayer justement condamné,
A fait mugir l'airain qu'il avait façonné.²

The text is based on Ovid, not on the Ovid of the Amores, but on the Ovid of the didactic parody, the Ars Amatoria:

fallite fallentes; ex magna parte profanum
sunt genus: in laqueos, quos posuere, cadant. . . .
et Phalaris tauro violenti membra Perilli
torruit; infelix inbuit auctor opus.
iustus uterque fuit, neque enim lex aequior ulla est
quam necis artifices arte perire sua.
ergo, ut periuras merito periuria fallant,
exemplo doleat femina laesa suo.³

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.99-102, pp.109-110.
Walter, *ibid.*, 11.99-102.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.24-31, 35-38, pp.107-108.
Walter, *ibid.*, 11.24-31, 35-38, p.63.

³Ovid, Ars Amatoria, Lib. I, 11.645-6, 653-8.

Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum, for whom Perillus made a bronze bull, condemned him to be the first to suffer in it by being roasted alive.

This mythological exemplum is translated by Chénier, doctus poeta.

The venomous attack is continued by a motif found in Propertius, that the mistress owes her beauty to poetry alone:

Falsa est ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae,
olim oculis nimium facta superba meis.
noster amor talis tribuit tibi, Cynthia, laudes:
versibus insignem te pudet esse meis.
mixtam te varia laudavi saepe figura,
ut, quod non esses, esse putaret amor.¹

Chénier's adaptation of these lines is even more reproachful and bitter, for it picks up the Propertian 'quod non esses' and describes the frail body that only comes to life through his poetry:

Vos attraits sont à moi: c'est moi qui vous fis belle. . . .
Je vins à vos genoux, en soupirs caressants,
D'un vers adulateur vous prodiguer l'encens;
De vos regards éteints la tristesse chagrine
Fut bientôt dans mes vers une langueur divine.
Ce corps fluet, débile, et presque inanimé,
En un corps tout nouveau dans mes vers transformé,
S'élançait léger, souple; . . .²

Chénier pursues this by introducing friends who give a further unflattering portrayal:

'Quoi ! c'est là cet objet d'un si pompeux hommage !
Dieux ! quels flots de vapeurs inondent son visage !
Ses yeux si doux sont morts; elle croit qu'elle vit;
Esculape doit seul approcher de son lit'.³

If the poem is addressed to Camille the criticism is particularly vicious in the light of the D'.z.n poems celebrating her beauty.

¹Propertius, Lib. III, el. xxiv, ll.1-6.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.44, 49-55, p.108.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.44, 49-55, pp.63-64.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.71-74, p.109.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.71-74, p.64.

Tibullus and particularly Propertius show a morbid concentration on death in their elegies. In several cases the threnodic motif is a corollary of betrayal in love, as in Propertius, Lib. II, elegy viii, in which the poet contemplates murdering the perfidious domina before committing suicide. The idea of a death-wish created by a mistress' infidelity is taken up by Chénier in an elegy addressed to the treacherous Lycoris. The poem is built up from three passages from Tibullus, and opens with a sententia on hope amidst misery:

Souvent le malheureux songe à quitter la vie,
L'espérance crédule à vivre le convie.¹

The maxim is clearly a very close translation of the ironic couplet which Chénier had read in Tibullus, Lib. II, elegy vi, (numbered in his edition II, vii):

iam mala finissem leto, sed credula vitam
spes fovet et fore cras semper ait melius,²

which is then amplified, by the use of a series of parallels to show that hope prevents his suicide:

spes alit agricolas, spes sulcis credit aratis
semina quae magno faenore reddat ager:
haec laqueo volucres, haec captat harundine pisces,
cum tenues hamos abdidit ante cibus:
spes etiam valida solatur compede vinctum.³

Chénier only retains the comparison with the farmer, and adds his own parallel with the soldier:

Le soldat sous la tente espère, avec la paix,
Le repos, les chansons, les danses, les banquets.
Gémissant sur le soc, le laboureur d'avance
Voit ses guérets chargés d'une heureuse abondance.⁴

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, ll.17-18, p.57.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 4, ll.1-2, p.93.

²Tibullus, Lib. II, el. vi, ll.19-20. ³Ibid., ll.21-25.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.19-22, p.57.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.3-6, p.93.

Then suddenly he inverts his Tibullan model, which had applied the idea of hope to love; Chénier's declaration reverses his own opening sententia as he states his utter despair:

Moi, l'espérance amie est bien loin de mon coeur.
 Tout se couvre à mes yeux d'un voile de langueur;
 Des jours amers, des nuits plus amères encore.
 Chaque instant est trempé du fiel qui me dévore.¹

The cry of anguish is itself a poignantly beautiful, and skilful, adaptation of a couplet from another Tibullan elegy:

nunc et amara dies et noctis amarior umbra est:
 omnia nam tristi tempora felle madent.²

F. Cairns has drawn attention to Tibullus' effective use of seemingly simple adjectives, 'adjectives of general significance in a context which imposes on them a more limited and specific import. Juxtapositions of synonyms or antonyms sometimes help to draw the reader's attention to such limited use of adjectives'.³ As an example he quotes the use of the general adjective tristis which takes on a special meaning in the couplet just quoted. 'The conjunction of amara, amarior and tristi indicates that triste fel is the "bitter bile" of ancient medicine'.⁴ It is noticeable that Chénier sensed the extended meaning of 'tristi felle' and duly translated it as 'le fiel qui me dévore'.

Chénier continues to pursue the theme of premature death as the only alternative to love. His idyllic vision of the Elysian fields, where the elegiac illusion of fidelity is possible, is also taken from Tibullus. The Tibullan elegy, I, iii, describes the poet's illness, and imagines Venus guiding the lover's shade to Elysium where the Golden Age and love still exist:

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.23-26, p.57.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.7-10, p.93.

² Tibullus, Lib. II, el. iv, ll.11-12.

³ F. Cairns, Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.103.

hic choreae cantusque vigent, passimque vagantes
 dulce sonant tenui gutture carmen aves;
 fert casiam non culta seges, totosque per agros
 floret odoratis terra benigna rosis;
 ac iuvenum series teneris immixta puellis
 ludit, et adsidue proelia miscet amor.¹

Chénier retains 'choreae' and 'cantus', but omits the conventional reference to the earth bringing forth fruits from an untilled soil as in the Golden Age. He introduces a Nymph, so that he can comment on the fidelity of the beauties in Elysium:

Du Léthé bienfaisant la rive fortunée
 Me prépare un asile et des ombrages verts:
 Là, les danses, les jeux, les suaves concerts,
 Et la fraîche Nafade, en ses grottes de mousse,
 S'écoulant sur des fleurs, mélancolique et douce.
 Là, jamais la beauté ne pleure ses attraits:
 Elle aime, elle est constante, elle ne ment jamais;
 Là tout choix est heureux, toute ardeur mutuelle,
 Et tout plaisir durable et tout serment fidèle.²

Bertin's imitation of this same passage is in similar terms but with less invention and with less musicality:

Là, sous des berceaux toujours verts,
 Au murmure de cent fontaines,
 On voit les ombres incertaines
 Danser, former des pas divers;
 Et l'écho des roches lointaines
 Redit les plus aimables vers.
 C'est-là que vont régner les belles
 Qui n'ont point trahi leurs sermens;
 C'est-là qu'on place à côté d'elles
 Le nombre élu des vrais amans.³

The frequent allusions to death by Propertius and Tibullus are not all associated with love. Propertius composes the dying words of Gallus to a passing soldier (Lib. I, elegy xxi), a lament for the death of Marcellus,

¹ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. iii, ll.59-64.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.58-66, p.58.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.42-50, p.94.

³ A. de Bertin, 'Les Amours', Liv. I, el. xiii, ll.32-41, in Oeuvres complètes de Bertin, Paris, Ménard et Desenne, 1821, p.27.

son of Octavia (Lib. III, elegy xviii), and an epicedium for Paetus, a young man lost at sea (Lib. III, elegy vii). Chénier too makes important use of threnodic motifs in non-erotic contexts. He was preoccupied by the idea of his own premature death. This melancholic temperament may be accounted for by his severe attacks of nephritis, but the idea was a favourite of eighteenth century poets, especially after the deaths of Gilbert, Malfilâtre, and Chatterton. In an elegy¹ written at the age of twenty, Chénier refers to his dreams of success that have been dashed by illness. The threnodic motif is skilfully expressed in the imagery of light:

Ah ! je ne pensais pas, faible et naissant flambeau,
Si tôt m'aller éteindre en un obscur tombeau.²

The major poem devoted to these melancholy reflections, 'Aujourd'hui qu'au tombeau je suis prêt à descendre',³ is a fine elegy inspired by texts from Propertius and Tibullus. The poet calmly considers his belief that he will meet with an early death and links this belief with the theme of friendship. An analysis of this poem indicates that the opening is modelled on a passage from Propertius, Lib. II, elegy xiii, (Broukhusius edition II, x). Here the Latin poet, stressing the importance of his love and poetry, gives Cynthia instructions for his funeral and rejects all grandiose ceremony. Only his books of poetry and the beloved Cynthia must be present:

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 1, pp.5-6.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', II, pp.544-545.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.9-10, p.5.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.9-10, p.544.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 2, pp.6-8.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXV, pp.76-77.

Quandocumque igitur nostros mors claudet ocellos,
 accipe quae serves funeris acta mei.
 nec mea tunc longa spatietur imagine pompa,
 nec tuba sit fati vana querela mei;
 nec mihi tunc fulcro sternatur lectus eburno,
 nec sit in Attalico mors mea nixa toro.
 desit odoriferis ordo mihi lancibus, adsint
 plebei parvae funeris exsequiae.
 sat mea sat magna est, si tres sint pompa libelli,
 quos ego Persephonae maxima dona feram.
 tu vero nudum pectus lacerata sequeris, . . .¹

When Chénier contemplates his death the lines become slow, stately, and funereal, with long vowel sounds and liquid consonants, and internal rhymes evoking grandiose, solemn ritual:

Aujourd'hui qu'au tombeau je suis prêt à descendre,
 Mes amis, dans vos mains je dépose ma cendre.
 Je ne veux point, couvert d'un funèbre linceul,
 Que les pontifes saints autour de mon cercueil,
 Appelés aux accents de l'airain lent et sombre,
 De leur chant lamentable accompagnent mon ombre,
 Et sous des murs sacrés aillent ensevelir
 Ma vie, et ma dépouille, et tout mon souvenir.²

Both the Latin and the French poets abjure a ceremonious funeral cortège, which they feel to be an empty sham. In Propertius this reflects Callimachean ideals of poetry as a cult of smallness and the anti-epic. Chénier confines himself to the creation of the stately procession, the lugubrious call of the trumpet ('tuba'/'airain'), but the ivory bier and its gold cloth ('Attalico toro') have been toned down to a 'funèbre linceul', so that the stress is not on the rich pomp of a Roman burial but on impersonal and gloomy Christian rites. Also omitted as too foreign is the allusion to Roman ancestral busts carried at a funeral. The really important change made by Chénier lies in the addressee. This is no longer a love poem. It is addressed to the poet's friends. They are to be responsible for the

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xiii, ll.17-27.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.1-8, p.6.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.1-8, p.76.

funeral. This mixture of the threnodic motif with the theme of friendship gives the poem its originality. It is in touches of this kind that invention appears, and it is in this way that Chénier is distinguished from such writers as Parny, whose elegy 'Ma Mort' comes from the Propertian poem:

Je ne veux point qu'une pompe indiscrete
 Vienne trahir ma douce obscurité,
 Ni qu'un airain à grand bruit agité
 Annonce à tous le convoi qui s'apprête.
 Dans mon asile, heureux et méconnu,
 Indifférent au reste de la terre,
 De mes plaisirs je lui fais un mystère:
 Je veux mourir comme j'aurai vécu.¹

Consolatio for Propertius was in the presence of the beloved and his books of poetry; for Chénier it was in the thought that he would live on in the memory of his friends:

L'espoir que des amis pleureront notre sort
 Charme l'instant suprême et console la mort. . . .
 Oui, je vais vivre encore au sein de mes amis.²

Chénier entrusts his friends with his burial; they are not to choose 'des murs sacrés', but an idyllic rustic setting as befits his pagan elegiac verse:

Vous-mêmes choisirez à mes jeunes reliques
 Quelque bord fréquenté des pénates rustiques,
 Des regards d'un beau ciel doucement animé,
 Des fleurs et de l'ombrage, et tout ce que j'aimai.
 C'est là, près d'une eau pure, au coin d'un bois tranquille,
 Qu'à mes mânes éteints je demande un asile.³

¹ E.D. de F. de Parny, 'Elégies', Liv. III, 'Ma Mort', ll.38-45 in Oeuvres de Parny. Elégies et poésies diverses. . . . Paris, Garnier, 1873, pp.83-84.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.11-12, 36, pp.6-7.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.11-12, 36, p.76.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.13-18.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.13-18.

In the Propertian elegy the work of finding a grave was left to Cynthia, who was to select a tiny, humble plot overshadowed by a laurel:

et sit in exiguo laurus super addita busto,
quae tegat exstincti funeris umbra locum.¹

Chénier's sepulchral epitaph is also based on the Propertian text:

et duo sint versus: qui nunc iacet horrida pulvis,
unius hic quondam servus amoris erat.²

But, whereas Propertius proclaims only his devotion to Cynthia, Chénier stresses his moral rectitude, his love, and his premature death:

Qu'il fut bon, qu'il aima, qu'il dut vivre longtemps.³

To increase the feeling of pathos arising from his imagined premature death Chénier turned to a passage of 'Tibullus', in which the poet Lygdamus begs Persephone to spare him, pleading his youth and moral integrity:

immerito iuveni parce nocere, dea.
non ego temptavi nulli temeranda virorum
audax laudandae sacra docere deae,
nec mea mortiferis infecit pocula sucis
dextera nec cuiquam trita venena dedit,
nec nos sacrilegos templis admovimus ignes,
nec cor sollicitant facta nefanda meum,
nec nos insanae meditantur iurgia mentis
impia in adversos solvimus ora deos.⁴

Chénier imitates, but shortens, this series of negatives. He omits the reference to the Roman mystery cult that is foreign to an eighteenth century French audience:

¹ Propertius, *ibid.*, ll.33-34.

² *Ibid.*, ll.35-36.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.24, p.7.
Walter, *ibid.*, l.24, p.76.

⁴ Corpus Tibullianum, Lib. III, el. v, ll.6-14.

Ah ! le meurtre jamais n'a souillé mon courage.
 Ma bouche du mensonge ignora le langage,
 Et jamais, prodiguant un serment faux et vain,
 Ne trahit le secret recélé dans mon sein.
 Nul forfait odieux, nul remords implacable
 Ne déchire mon âme inquiète et coupable.¹

In the following section of the poem Chénier produces sad but apposite images of untimely death, as he transfers the Tibullan text into a French milieu:

quid fraudare iuvat vitem crescentibus iuvis
 et modo nata mala vellere poma manu ?²

becomes

Oui, vous plaindrez sans doute en mes longues douleurs
 Et ce brillant midi qu'annonçait mon aurore,
 Et ces fruits dans leur germe éteints avant d'éclorre,
 Que mes naissantes fleurs auront en vain promis.³

A version of the Latin couplet by M. de Saint-Auge offers a very curious, if clumsy, parallel with Chénier's rhyme:

Ma vie à peine a passé son aurore.
 Pourquoi d'une main sans pitié
 Dépouiller le rameau de son fruit jeune encore ?
 Ou pourquoi foule sous son pié
 La grappe en fleur qui vient d'éclorre ?⁴

The epilogue, the last twenty-four lines of the elegy, assembles the previous ideas in quiet, wistful, melancholic tones. Its opening lines on early death, which repeat the imagery of time and nature, are particularly

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.25-30.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.25-30.

²Corpus Tibullianum, *ibid.*, 11.19-20.

³Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.32-35.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.32-35.

⁴'Elégie cinquième du troisième livre de Tibulle, imitation abrégée de M. de Saint-Auge', Almanach des Muses, 1784, p.67.

full of pathos. With the variation in metrical pauses, the created balance and antithesis, the assonance, they rise to the level of great poetry in thought and style, as they touch on the lacrimae rerum:

Je meurs. Avant le soir j'ai fini ma journée.
A peine ouverte au jour, ma rose s'est fanée.
La vie eut bien pour moi de volages douceurs;
Je les goûtais à peine, et voilà que je meurs.¹

The notion of the need for friendship, as seen in the elegy just quoted, receives greater emphasis in Chénier's work than in the works of his Latin counterparts. The absence of friends was intensely felt and this is most evident in the series of elegies written in London, where the lack of friendship became almost stifling. These poems owe more to the poet's situation at the time than to literary models. In the following elegy, the treatment of the themes of friendship and the threnodic motif, derived from loneliness and isolation, is one of self-pity leading to the desire for death:

Sans parents, sans amis, et sans concitoyens,
Oublié sur la terre, et loin de tous les miens,
Par les vagues jeté sur cette île farouche,
Le doux nom de la France est souvent sur ma bouche.
Auprès d'un noir foyer, seul, je me plains du sort,
Je compte les moments, je souhaite la mort.
Et pas un seul ami dont la voix m'encourage;
Qui près de moi s'asseye, et, voyant mon visage
Se baigner de mes pleurs et tomber sur mon sein,
Me dise: 'Qu'as-tu donc ?' et me presse la main.²

Nor did isolation always lead to such self-indulgent pity. Elsewhere the tone is of cynical lassitude, in which the human condition itself is regarded with a jaundiced eye:

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.41-44.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.41-44, p.77.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 4, p.159.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', XXXI, p. 555.

Et chacun, l'oeil en pleurs, en son coeur douloureux
 Se dit: 'Excepté moi, tout le monde est heureux':
 Ils sont tous malheureux. Leur prière importune
 Crie et demande au ciel de changer leur fortune.
 Ils changent; et bientôt, versant de nouveaux pleurs,
 Ils trouvent qu'ils n'ont fait que changer de malheurs.¹

The important theme of friendship in Chénier's Elégies is not always combined however with such pessimism. Numerous poems addressed to friends range over many of the themes mentioned so far, but one introduces yet another traditional elegiac form, that of the syntaktikon,² or farewell of a departing traveller, as exemplified by Tibullus, Lib. I, elegy x. In Antiquity there were three basic variants of the syntaktikon: the traveller leaving another city for home; the traveller leaving home for another city; the traveller leaving one foreign city for another. The various topoi include the regrets of the speaker at his departure, a eulogy of the city and people he leaves, the reasons for his going, praise for the cities he will visit, a promise to return, and prayers for a safe journey and the people left behind. Chénier's elegy 'Vous restez, mes amis, dans ces murs'³ reproduces the second type of syntaktikon and features all the topoi enumerated above. The originality of this poem stems from the specific setting and motives for leaving, and from the deliberate eulogy of friendship. Propertius, in the poem that Chénier adapts, is planning a trip to Athens so that he can forget Cynthia.⁴ He describes his plan and explains that he can no longer endure Cynthia's abuse. In anticipation of the voyage he addresses the ship's crew and makes his farewell to Rome and to his friends, before giving a detailed account of the itinerary and a catalogue of the pleasures that he looks forward to in Athens. There he will visit Plato's Academia

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', VII, 6, 11.7-12, p.160.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XXIII, 11.7-12, p.75.

² F. Cairns, Generic composition in Greek and Roman Poetry, Edinburgh University Press, 1972, pp.38-50.

³ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III,i,1, pp.10-12.
 Walter, 'Elégies', XVII, pp.69-71.

⁴ Propertius, Lib. III, el. xxi.

and the gardens of Epicurus, and he will study rhetoric, poetry, and art. He insists that the journey will cure him or, if not, he will find death abroad. Chénier too is saying farewell before he starts on a two year Grand Tour of Italy and Greece. He addresses both the friends he is to leave behind and the companions of his journey, the Trudaines. Whereas the Propertian syntaktikon is seen as a renuntiatio amoris, the escape from the despotism of love accounts for only one of the reasons for Chénier's departure, the others being the need for rest, better health, and the desire to see places, as well as the hope of study.¹ The Latin text is followed as Chénier details the route with a sense of excitement and expectation, as he calls forth the sonorous exotic names so rich in connotations for him: Marseille, Venice, Rome, Athens, Byzantium, and Smyrna.² The emphasis is, however, more on friendship than anything else, and in Propertius this receives only a passing phrase. There is an encomium not only for the Trudaines,³ but also for the friends who are to be left behind:

Croyez, car en tous lieux mon coeur m'aura suivi,
Que partout où je suis vous avez un ami.⁴

For the same theme he also uses a very close translation of 'Tibullus':

vivite felices, memores et vivite nostri,
sive erimus seu nos fata fuisse velint,⁵

as he exhorts his friends to live happily and remember him:

Vivez heureux ! gardez ma mémoire aussi chère,
Soit que je vive encor, soit qu'en vain je l'espère.⁶

¹ See chapter II, p. 79.

² Ibid., p. 80.

³ Ibid., pp.73-74.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.35-36, p.11.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.35-36, p.70.

⁵ Corpus Tibullianum, Lib. III, el. v, ll.31-32.

⁶ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.49-50, p.12.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.49-50, p.70.

Travel poems were an integral part of Latin Elegy. They appear in another form, that of the epibaterion, or the speech the traveller makes when he reaches home or arrives at some other destination. The epibaterion is normally favourable to the location, but this attitude is sometimes inverted. Propertius composes an example (Lib. I, elegy xvii) in which he points to the hostility and the isolation of a place which is not his home, recalling that Cynthia had pleaded that he should not go away. There is no inversion in Chénier's recreations of the epibaterion for they all express joy. In 'Je suis en Italie, en Grèce',¹ he salutes these lands and the poetic inspiration to be gained there. Another attempt at this form shows Chénier's love of Greek and oriental names:

Salut, Dieux de l'Euxin, Hellé, Sestos, Abyde,
Et Nymphes du Bosphore, et Nymphes Propontide.²

The epibaterion that marks Chénier's return home allows him to comment on the nature of his 'Muse naïve',³ and to voice fears about literary critics:

Mais que les premiers pas ont d'alarmes craintives !
Nymphes de Seine, on dit que Paris sur tes rives
Fait asseoir vingt conseils de critiques nombreux,
Du Pinde partagé despotes soupçonneux:
Affaiblis de leurs yeux la vigilance amère;
Dis-leur que, sans s'armer d'un front dur et sévère,
Ils peuvent négliger les pas et les douceurs
D'une Muse timide, et qui, parmi ses soeurs,
Rivale de personne et sans demander grâce,
Vient, le regard baissé, solliciter sa place.⁴

These lines seem to be hinting that Chénier was thinking of the time when

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 6, pp.15-18.
Walter, 'Ebauches d'Elégies', I, p.535.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iii, 2, ll.1-2, p.29.
Walter, 'Elégies', XIX, ll.1-2, p.72.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, iv, l.32, p.35.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXI, l.32, p.73.

⁴Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.43-52, p.35.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.43-52, pp.73-74.

his poems would be published.

The theme of friendship is also intertwined with the notion of erotodidaxis, in which the poet acts as the praeceptor amoris. This erotic teaching appears in several guises in the Latin elegists, sometimes serious, sometimes mock-didactic. The instruction may be given to the mistress herself, as when Tibullus (Lib. I, elegy ii) teaches Delia how to deceive her guard, or in Ovid (Amores, Lib. I, elegy iv) when the girl is taught how to communicate with the poet even in the presence of her vir. Advice may be given to friends as in Propertius, Lib. I, elegy v, where the poet warns his friend Gallus about the sufferings of love. Finally, the poet may take on the rôle of the universal teacher, a man of experience, writing to sustain his fellow-sufferers, as in Propertius, Lib. I, elegy vii.

In one short elegy Chénier takes on the rôle of praeceptor amoris and advises his friend François de Pange to enjoy himself and not to devote all his time to study. This elegy may be dated from the period of the Lycoris cycle since, as Dimoff records,¹ the manuscript's verso is used for the elegy 'Fumant dans le cristal'. Chénier's advice is modelled on the final lines of Tibullus, Lib. I, elegy ii, (Broukhusius edition, I, v), in which general guidance is offered to a young man never to tease a lover, for fear that Venus will take her revenge, and he, in turn, will become an ageing lover of whom everyone will make fun:

at tu, qui laetus rides mala nostra, caveto
 mox tibi: non uni saeviet usque deus.
 vidi ego qui iuvenum miseros lusisset amores
 post Veneris vinclis subdere colla senem
 et sibi blanditias tremula componere voce
 et manibus canas fingere velle comas:
 stare nec ante fores puduit caraeve puellae
 ancillam medio detinuisse foro.
 hunc puer, hunc iuvenis turba circumterit arta,
 despuit in molles et sibi quisque sinus.²

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 2, note, p.135.

²Tibullus, Lib. I, el. ii, ll.87-96.

The first couplet in the Tibullan verse is extended by Chénier into four lines; no new ideas are added, the point is merely emphasized by repetition:

Ami, de mes ardeurs, quoi, ta plume ose rire !
 Quoi, tu ris de l'Amour, tu ris de son empire !
 Imprudent, c'est l'Amour que tu viens outrager !
 Ah ! tremble, malheureux; il aime à se venger.¹

Succeeding lines follow the next three Tibullan couplets quite closely in their description of the aged lover, but omit the allusion to the exclusus amator and to the ancilla, and add the vignette of the aged lover, dives amator, showering gifts on his beloved:

C'est toi-même aiguïser le trait qu'il te destine.
 Toi-même sous ses pieds c'est creuser ta ruine.
 J'ai vu de ces rieurs qui, fiers, dans leurs beaux jours
 Insultaient à nos fers, à nos pleurs, aux amours,
 Vieux, gémir sous le joug d'une jeune inhumaine;
 Fatigant leurs habits d'une richesse vaine,
 Cachant leurs cheveux blancs, se traîner à ses pieds;
 L'accabler de leurs dons, mille fois renvoyés;
 Et d'une faible voix, leurs lèvres palpitantes
 Bégayer en pleurant des caresses tremblantes.²

The final couplet in Tibullus' lines, the apotropaic picture of the young man spitting to ward off the curse that the aged lover might bring, could not be transported into French. Chénier's version is indeed prosaic and colourless by comparison:

Alors en les voyant, le jeune homme, à son tour,
 Rit des justes revers de leur antique amour.³

Tibullus and Chénier are particularly linked by their rôle of praeceptor amoris; they are qualified to teach by experience; they know what it is to be in love, they can recognize the signs of love. Tibullus announces:

¹ Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, iii, 2, ll.1-4, p.135.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', VI, 2, ll.1-4, p.152.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.5-14, pp.135-136.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.5-14, pp.152-153.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.15-16, p.136.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.15-16, p.153.

Non ego celari possum, quid nutus amantis
quidve ferant miti lenia verba sono.¹

Chénier teases a distracted girl:

Ah ! mon oeil est savant et depuis plus d'un jour,
Et ce n'est pas à moi qu'on peut cacher l'amour.²

Like the Latin elegists Chénier moved to a more important concept of the motif when he saw himself as the universal teacher, whose poetry set forth a code d'amour for the instruction of young lovers. He develops the exhortation of Propertius, 'haec urant pueros, haec urant scripta puellas',³ at some length:

Qu'une jeune beauté, sur la plume et la soie,
Attendant le mortel qui fait toute sa joie,
S'amuse à mes chansons, y médite à loisir
Les baisers dont bientôt elle veut l'accueillir.
Qu'à bien aimer tous deux mes chansons les excitent;
Qu'ils s'adressent mes vers, qu'ensemble ils les récitent:
Lassés de leurs plaisirs, qu'aux feux de mes pinceaux
Ils s'animent encore à des plaisirs nouveaux;
Qu'au matin sur sa couche, à me lire empressée,
Lise du cloître austère éloigne sa pensée;
Chaque bruit qu'elle entend, que sa tremblante main
Me glisse dans ses draps et tout près de son sein.⁴

As so often, contaminatio begins to operate and for the last four lines of his poem Chénier turns from expanding Propertian lines to translating Ovid's first poem in the second book of the Amores:

atque aliquis iuvenum, quo nunc ego, saucius arcu
agnoscat flammae conscia signa suae
miratusque diu 'quo' dicat 'ab indice doctus
conposuit casus iste poeta meos ?'⁵

¹Tibullus, Lib. I, el. viii, ll.1-2.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, v, 2, ll.8-9, p.92.
Walter, 'Fragments d'Elégies', XXIII, ll.7-8, p.553.

³Propertius, Lib. III, el. ix, l.45.

⁴Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, ii, 1, ll.63-74, p.129.
Walter, 'Epîtres', II, 3, ll.63-74, p.140.

⁵Ovid, Amores, Lib. II, el. i, ll.7-10.

Qu'un jeune homme, agité d'une flamme inconnue,
 S'écrit aux doux tableaux de ma Muse ingénue:
 'Ce poète amoureux, qui me connaît si bien,
 Quand il a peint son coeur, avait lu dans le mien'.¹

Happy the teacher who can see the ambivalence of his position ! Chénier does not fail to recognize the irony of the rôle of praeceptor amoris - the teacher, always ready to instruct others, but never ready to learn from his own lessons:

Dupe de mes regards, à mes désirs crédule, . . .
 Toujours trahi, toujours je me laisse trahir. . . .
 Relevé d'une chute, une chute m'attend.²

Didacticism of another type is likewise hinted at in a project for an aetiological poem. Aetiology, the explanation of causes, was especially favoured by the Hellenistic poets with their antiquarian and etymological interests; one famous example is the explanation by Callimachus of the features of the cult of Diana Nemorensis in the Aitia. Four poems in Propertius' fourth book are aetiological; there is an explanation of the God Vertumnus in IV, ii, of the Tarpeian rock in IV, iv, of the reasons for the exclusion of women from the worship of Hercules at the Ara Maxima in IV, ix, and of the temple of Juppiter Feretrius in IV, x. No completed elegy by Chénier shows the influence of aetiology, but in a brief note there is the indication that he was acquainted with this fourth book of Propertius, so different from the other three, and that he intended to compose an aetiological poem on the foundation of the city of Marseille:

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.75-78, pp.129-130.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.75-78, p.140.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', V, v, ll.20, 22, 25, p.146.
 Walter, 'Epîtres', V, ll.20, 22, 25, p.149.

Marseille. . . . Raconter l'histoire de la fille gauloise d'un roi des Gaules. . . . laquelle, dans le banquet, présente la coupe. . . . au chef de la colonie phocéenne. . . . Raconter tout cela dans le goût du IV^e livre de Propertius.¹

It is apparent from the last two chapters that Chénier realized his aim to renew the Latin Love Elegy by adopting its style and amplifying its major themes and conventional poses. We must conclude that Chénier's reworking of the genre is impressive, not only in the quality of the work he produced, but also in its quantity. Our survey has brought an appreciation of the vast number of the themes derived from the elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid, which Chénier adapted to French poetry. His Elégies are, in consequence, extraordinarily rich and varied compositions that testify to the immense scope and flexibility of the genre and the Classical Tradition.

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', III, i, 3, ll.1-6, p.13.
Walter, 'Notes et variantes', I, p.930.

X

A CONFLUENCE OF THEMES

The aim of this thesis has been to relate André Chénier to the Latin Literary Tradition through a detailed study of his Elégies. As the research has progressed, the analysis of the poems has enriched our concept of Neo-classicism, and has helped to redefine it in terms of the accomplishments of an outstanding French poet at the end of the eighteenth century. The redefinition comes from appreciating that the accepted view of André Chénier as a noteworthy figure in French literary history, because of his devotion to Ancient Greece, needs to be enlarged. We now understand that a major part of his Neo-classicism derived from Latin authors. Born in Constantinople he considered himself to be 'le français byzantin' [sic],¹ and his knowledge of Greek language and literature was so impressive that, not unnaturally, critics have underscored his affiliation to Ancient Greece and its importance in his poetry. However, in examining Chénier's Elégies, we must conclude that the poet was influenced more by Latin than Greek writers, and that in this he was not greatly deviating from French literary practice. In affirming this we have not sought to minimize the importance of Ancient Greece, for the study has stressed that Chénier interpreted Latin literature as a reflection of Greece through Rome, and that he valued intensely the whole Classical Tradition.

What has become increasingly evident from the research is that Chénier, as a poet, was exceedingly fortunate. The cultural aspects of Neo-classicism, with their bases in the rediscovery of Antiquity, offered the perfect environment for the development of his poetic tastes and abilities.

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Vers en langues diverses', VI, 3, p.320.
Walter, 'Vers en langues étrangères', III, p.617.

Chénier drew from this second Renaissance knowledge and inspiration which he transferred into the artistic creations which made him the poetic representative of the era. He united in his Elégies the various facets of Neo-classicism: the return to the inherent truths of nature, the cultivation of le beau idéal, the taking of the Ancients as worthy models where he could find the beauty, simplicity, purity, and harmony he sought. No reassessment of Chénier's importance is necessary to adopt this opinion: the detailed study of the Elégies confirms it beyond doubt.

The technique of analysis presented in chapters VIII and IX of this thesis has been to examine a variety of motifs and stylistic devices and to illustrate them by means of examples drawn from the Elégies. Only in one case has it been possible to discuss a single elegy in its entirety, and that to serve the specific purpose of looking at Chénier's technique of composition from the manuscript evidence. It would be impossible in summing up to take a single elegy and to find in it a synthesis of all the features discussed throughout this study. Yet it is worthwhile to select part of an elegy in order to highlight Chénier's literary principles, his transformation of classical themes, and his use of imagery, rhetoric, and metre. Although the extract chosen must perforce be brief, the lines enable us to bring together some of the major factors which contributed to Chénier's poetic achievement and to the creation of lyrical and original poetry in the French language. Let us therefore turn to the following lines from the elegy, 'O lignes que sa main, que son coeur a tracées !':

Ta lettre se promet qu'en ces nobles rivages	
Où Sénart épaissit ses immenses feuillages,	10
Des vers pleins de ton nom attendent ton retour,	
Tout trempés de douceurs, de caresses, d'amour.	
Heureux qui, tourmenté de flammes inquiètes,	
Peut du Permesse encor visiter les retraites;	
Et loin de son amante, égayant sa langueur,	15
Calmer par des chansons les troubles de son coeur !	
Camille, où tu n'es point, moi je n'ai pas de Muse.	
Sans toi, dans ses bosquets Hélicon me refuse;	
Les cordes de la lyre ont oublié mes doigts,	
Et les chœurs d'Apollon méconnaissent ma voix.	20

Ces regards purs et doux, que sur ce coin du monde
 Verse d'un ciel ami l'indulgence féconde,
 N'éveillent plus mes sens ni mon âme. Ces bords
 Ont beau de leur Cybèle étaler les trésors;
 Ces ombrages n'ont plus d'aimables rêveries, 25
 Et l'ennui taciturne habite ces prairies.
 Tu fis tous leurs attraits: ils fuyaient avec toi
 Sur le rapide char qui t'éloignait de moi.
 Errant et fugitif je demande Camille
 A ces antres, souvent notre commun asile; 30
 Du je vais te cherchant dans ces murs attristés,
 Sous tes lambris, jamais par moi seul habités,
 Où ta harpe se tait, où la voûte sonore
 Fut pleine de ta voix et la répète encore;
 Où tous ces souvenirs cruels et précieux 35
 D'un humide nuage obscurcissent mes yeux.
 Mais pleurer est amer pour une belle absente;
 Il n'est doux de pleurer qu'aux pieds de son amante,
 Pour la voir s'attendrir, caresser vos douleurs
 Et de sa belle main vous essuyer vos pleurs; 40
 Vous baiser, vous gronder, jurer qu'elle vous aime,
 Vous défendre une larme et pleurer elle-même.¹

The opening lines of the whole elegy set the scene. Camille is abroad in Switzerland and the poet, left behind, is full of fears and jealousy. As we have previously noted,² the framework of the elegy is classical. It is partly based on Propertius, Lib. I, elegy xi, in which Cynthia has gone to the notorious resort of Baiae, and the abandoned poet, anxious and jealous, urges her to return:

Ecquid te mediis cessantem, Cynthia, Bais,
 qua iacet Herculeis semita litoribus,
 et modo Thresproti mirantem subdita regno
 proxima Misenis aequora nobilibus,
 nostri cura subit memores a ! ducere noctes ?
 ecquis in extremo restat amore locus ?³

From the beginning of Chénier's elegy, imitation is amplified by invention as the French poet applies the classical theme to his own personal situation. Propertius merely voices fears of infidelity; Chénier's fears have been allayed for a while by a reassuring letter from Camille:

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, ii, 3, ll.9-42, pp.63-64.
 Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Camille', 3, ll.9-42, pp.98-99.

²See chapter IX, p.397 below.

³Propertius, Lib. I, el. xi, ll.1-6.

O lignes que sa main, que son coeur a tracées !
 O nom baisé cent fois ! craintes bientôt chassées !
 Oui: cette longue route, et ces nouveaux séjours,
 Je craignais. . . . Mais enfin mes lettres, nos amours,
 Ma mémoire, partout sont tes chères compagnes.¹

This letter prompts Chénier's musings about the dependence of his poetry on Camille and memories of past happiness. As the elegy progresses, it returns, beyond our extract, to the Propertian theme of jealousy and fear of rivals, until, in conclusion, Camille, like Cynthia, is begged to hasten her return and to remain faithful:.

. . . Je veux que ton retour
 Te paraisse bien lent; je veux que nuit et jour
 Tu m'aimes. (Nuit et jour, hélas ! je me tourmente).
 Présente au milieu d'eux, sois seule, sois absente.²

The initial lines of the extract in question develop the idea of the letter and indicate that Camille expects that the poet will have written love poetry in her honour during her absence:

Ta lettre se promet qu'en ces nobles rivages
 Où Sénart épaissit ses immenses feuillages,
 Des vers pleins de ton nom attendent ton retour,
 Tout trempés de douceurs, de caresses, d'amour.³

As soon as the idea is enunciated, it is rendered personal and linked to a specific situation by its reference to the forests of Sénart and thereby to the magnificent estate of the Bonneuil family at Bonneuil-sur-Marne, where the poet awaits the return of his beloved. Camille's demands give rise to the theme of the passage as the poet contemplates his lack of poetic inspiration even amidst the beauties of nature if his beloved is absent. The extract therefore has an underlying mood of sorrow and melancholy that contrasts with memories of happiness, 'ces souvenirs cruels

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, 11.1-5.
 Walter, *ibid.*, 11.1-5.

²*Ibid.*, 11.75-78.

³*Ibid.*, 11.9-12.

et précieux',¹ and with descriptions of nature in a smiling mood, 'ces regards purs et doux'.² In this way the passage conjures up both the joys and sorrows of love, the very essence of both the Latin and the French Love Elegy.

The extract has its own structure forming a distinct entity within the poem as a whole, for there is a deliberate break at its beginning and at its end to emphasize the change of thought which it contains. Within this section there is an inner structure. The first twelve lines are grouped into three blocks of thought and are almost stanza-like in construction, with one line, line 17, outstanding as a single sentence of finely-balanced language. There follow two further blocks of thought extending to eight lines each, with a final 'stanza' of six lines, which acts as an epilogue to the passage.

In the first group of four lines, just quoted, Camille demands that love poetry should be written during her absence. The next 'stanza' states the calming powers of poetry and its ability to bring consolation to poets who are tormented in love:

Heureux qui, tourmenté de flammes inquiètes,
Peut du Permesse encor visiter les retraites;
Et loin de son amante, égayant sa langueur,
Calmer par des chansons les troubles de son coeur !³

Chénier has moved from personal experience to generalization and expresses his opinion in sententious form. The elliptical construction is clearly imitated from the Latin usage of 'felix qui . . .', as exemplified in the Tibullan antithesis:

a miseri, quos hic graviter deus urget ! at ille
felix, cui placidus leniter adflat Amor.⁴

¹ Ibid., l.35.

² Ibid., l.21.

³ Ibid., ll.13-16.

⁴ Tibullus, Lib. II, el. i, ll.79-80.

Chénier's Latin construction, 'heureux qui. . .', introduces further classical references which illustrate the elegiac motif of sacer vates, entering the sacred groves of Mount Helicon with its stream Permessus, the very symbol of elegiac inspiration: 'Permessi flumine lavit Amor'.¹ According to G. Walter, the image of Permessus 'était devenu pour André Chénier une véritable obsession'.² He claims that it was the classical reference most frequently alluded to by the poet. Moreover, by introducing such sententiae Chénier fulfils his avowed intention to be a sacerdos Musarum, revealing truth to mankind through poetry, which was, as we have seen, one of his basic literary principles.

The sententia completed, Chénier immediately reverts to his personal situation and denies that he can attain the happiness he envisages for others. The denial begins asyndetically with an abrupt transition to the emphatic statement:

Camille, où tu n'es point, moi je n'ai pas de Muse.³

The striking nature of this line comes from the bracketing structure of 'Camille. . . Muse', enclosing the balancing 'tu. . . moi'. The line is imitated from Propertius: 'nam sine te nostrum non valet ingenium'.⁴ Even when Chénier seems to be voicing the most subjective emotions, the classical inspiration remains. On this occasion, Chénier outstrips his Latin master. He produces a superb example of that naïveté which, as we have noted, so dominated his literary aesthetic.

After this 'personal' statement, Chénier finds his way back to the groves of Helicon and to the choirs of Apollo. Although he echoes Propertian language ('Heliconis in umbra'),⁵ as a doctus poeta Chénier is

¹ Propertius, Lib. II, el. x, l.26.

² Walter, 'Répertoire des notes cités', p.1028.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, l.17.
Walter, *ibid.*, l.17.

⁴ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xxx, l.40.

⁵ Propertius, Lib. III, el. iii, l.1.

able to transform his classical references in an original way. The traditional theme is inverted, the sacred groves are closed to him unless his beloved is present:

Sans toi, dans ses bosquets Hélicon me refuse;
Les cordes de la lyre ont publié mes doigts,
Et les chœurs d'Apollon méconnaissent ma voix.¹

The next section is pervaded by a mixture of sweetness and sorrow, as Chénier describes the beauties of nature made empty by the absence of Camille. These lines illustrate the technique of contaminatio and show the inspiration that is occasionally drawn from other Latin poets for Chénier's Elégies. There is a truly Vergilian ring to these inner lines with their references to the sky, flowers, shadows, and silent meadows. Indeed the lines: 'Ces regards purs et doux, que sur ce coin du monde / Verse d'un ciel ami l'indulgence féconde',² are redolent of the Eclogues, poem vii, where nature rejoices at the return of Phyllis:

Phyllidis adventu nostrae nemus omne virebit,
Iuppiter et laeto descendet plurimus imbri.³

For Chénier the natural surroundings retain their beauty, but cannot arouse his poetic sensitivity. Without Camille all is vain:

. . . Ces bords
Ont beau de leur Cybèle étaler les trésors;
Ces ombrages n'ont plus d'aimables rêveries,
Et l'ennui taciturne habite ces prairies.
Tu fis tous leurs attraits: . . .⁴

It is sad that Chénier's poetic instincts seem to fail him in the unmelodious conclusion to this section:

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.18-20.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.18-20.

² *Ibid.*, ll.21-22.

³ Vergil, Eclogues, poem vii, ll.59-60.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.23-27.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.23-27.

. . . ils fuyaient avec toi
 Sur le rapide char qui t'éloignait de moi.¹

Fortunately the musicality is restored in the next group of lines when the poet recalls the places where once he and Camille found happiness. A melancholic rêverie imbues the lines as the places awaken memories, but also reinforce the sense of solitude and isolation:

Errant et fugitif je demande Camille
 A ces antres, souvent notre commun asile;
 Ou je vais te cherchant dans ces murs attristés,
 Sous tes lambris, jamais par moi seul habités,
 Où ta harpe se tait, où la voûte sonore
 Fut pleine de ta voix et la répète encore.²

Despite the feelings of desolation apparent in these lines, Chénier nevertheless has succeeded by skilful and delicate word-pictures in painting the landscape at Sénart and the Château where Camille lived.

The 'epilogue' picks up the idea of weeping caused by cruel yet precious memories, but the perspective shifts again as sententia takes its place. As praeceptor amoris Chénier switches from personal sentiments to address lovers in general, commenting that tears should only be shed in the presence of the beloved. It is fitting that the last lines are a direct imitation of the Propertian distich:

felix, qui potuit praesenti flere puellae;
 non nihil aspersis gaudet Amor lacrimis.³

Whereas the Latin sententia is succinct, Chénier develops the idea of love delighting in tears, as the mistress consoles a lover's sorrow. Chénier's audience would not have been offended by the weeping and the tears. Although

¹Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.27-28.
 Walter, *ibid.*, ll.27-28.

²*Ibid.*, ll.29-34.

³Propertius, *Lib. I*, el. xii, ll.15-16.

the theme is classical it is also typical of eighteenth century sensibility. As F. Scarfe comments:

The eighteenth-century idea of sensibility did not exclude tears, and those critics who tend to regard Chénier as an effeminate poet lose sight of the fact that the open expression of the passions and emotions was less frowned upon then than it is now.¹

These final lines exhibit word-play of the highest order, and close with a literary conceit; the tears of the lover become the tears of the beloved:

Il n'est doux de pleurer qu'aux piéds de son amante,
Pour la voir s'attendrir, caresser vos douleurs
Et de sa belle main vous essuyer vos pleurs;
Vous baiser, vous gronder, jurer qu'elle vous aime,
Vous défendre une larme et pleurer elle-même.²

Chénier's poetic achievement does not only stem from the background of his literary aesthetic and his subtle reworking of classical themes. The passage under review also illustrates the way in which meaning can be enhanced by the introduction of imagery and rhetoric. Chénier is, in these lines, following the stylistic devices, described and illustrated in chapter VIII,³ which were developed by the Ancients, and used by all French Classical poets. Yet the techniques never obtrude and the lines remain characteristic of Chénier, reflecting the lyricism and musicality which are the most remarkable aspects of his style.

Personification recurs throughout the passage and is the most salient feature of its imagery. In line 31, 'Ou je vais te cherchant dans ces murs attristés', the personification serves as a transferred epithet as the poet endows an inanimate object with his own emotions. In another example mythological personification ennobles Chénier's style and provides an evocative richness of sound and allusion: '. . . Ces bords / Ont beau de

¹ F. Scarfe, André Chénier, his Life and Work, 1762-1794, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.51.

² Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.38-42.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.38-42.

³ For examples of Latin imagery and rhetorical devices, see chapter VIII, pp. 338-342.

leur Cybèle étaler les trésors'.¹ In line 19, 'Les cordes de la lyre ont oublié mes doigts', the personification of the strings of the lyre forms a bold and startling inversion of the normal thought pattern. This is 'ce langage ardent et métaphorique qui donne la vie à tout',² which Chénier demanded of poets. In lines 33-36:

Où ta harpe se tait, où la voûte sonore
Fut pleine de ta voix et la répète encore;
Où tous ces souvenirs cruels et précieux
D'un humide nuage obscurcissent mes yeux,

personification is combined with rhetorical devices. The motif of the emptiness of the Château is emphasized by anaphora and antithesis, and is reinforced by the structure of ascending tricolon. The symmetry and balance produced by these devices is often linked to internal rhymes and assonance: 'Des vers pleins de ton nom attendent ton retour, / Tout trempés de douceurs, de caresses, d'amour'.³ Here we find something of the inner poetic sensitivity that produces the music of Chénier's poetry. It is again evident in lines 25 and 26: 'Ces ombrages n'ont plus d'aimables rêveries, / Et l'ennui taciturne habite ces prairies', where personification, internal rhymes, and assonance give rise to a lilting, melancholic melody. The latter line is also noteworthy for the choice of an epithet of Latin derivation: 'taciturne'.

Finally, the musicality of Chénier's lines comes from versification. The poet has avoided the monotony so frequently associated with the Alexandrine by careful use of enjambment:

Ces regards purs et doux, que sur ce coin du monde
Verse d'un ciel ami l'indulgence féconde,
N'éveillent plus mes sens ni mon âme. Ces bords
Ont beau de leur Cybèle étaler les trésors.⁴

¹ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.23-24.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.23-24.

² Walter, 'Essai sur les causes', p.676.

³ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.11-12.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.11-12.

⁴ Dimoff, *ibid.*, ll.21-24.
Walter, *ibid.*, ll.21-24.

Similarly monotony is avoided by a harmonious variation in the position of the caesurae, as exemplified in lines 17-19:

Camille, où tu n'es point, moi je n'ai pas de Muse.
 Sans toi, dans ses bosquets Hélicon me refuse;
 Les cordes de la lyre ont oublié mes doigts.

It is not surprising that the musicality of Chénier's style and versification appealed to so many later poets. It is not for nothing that Musset was to declare: 'Un vers d'André Chénier chanta dans ma mémoire'.¹

The extract we have analyzed has demonstrated the success of Chénier's principle of imitation inventrice. Its motifs and style are dependent upon the Classical Tradition; it springs from the poems of the Latin love elegists, especially Propertius; it incorporates the literary principles that Chénier had deduced from his intense knowledge of classical texts, especially in this case Latin poems; indeed it sums up the classical apport of the elegy, and for this very reason, it lays stress on the originality of Chénier's approach. He has applied his own poetic sensitivity to all the facets of his classical background, so that the poem transcends its models by its lyricism and musicality, and thereby forms a unique and original love elegy.

The Latin Love Elegy was the perfect vehicle for André Chénier. Above all it presented him with a considerable number of themes, and variations within them by the individual elegists. Most of these elegiac motifs were, and are, of universal relevance and interest, dealing with love in its various guises from joy to bitterness and despair, with friendships, with man's response to nature, with death, and even with literary principles. The nature of the themes explains the constant

¹ A. de Musset, 'Une soirée perdue', l.28, in Poésies complètes d'Alfred de Musset, texte établi et annoté par M. Allem, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris, Gallimard, 1933, p.395.

popularity of the Latin elegists, even today. An eighteenth century poet found no difficulty in finding topoi with which he could sympathize and which he could develop in his own way. Chénier realized that Elegy was not exhausted, but that he could recreate its themes in French poetry. We have seen that he adopted all the major elegiac topoi, transposing them into his own poetic world. Chénier expected his readers to recognize the literary allusions in an elegy and to seize upon the differences and the connotations, so adding a further dimension to the poem. If the challenge is met the Elégies afford both aesthetic and intellectual pleasure.

Our survey of the motifs culled from Roman writers has demonstrated the fulness of Chénier's recreation of the Latin Love Elegy. Yet it would be mistaken to suppose that every theme in Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid could appeal to an eighteenth century reader. Chénier was selective in his choice and there are several elegiac themes that he does not touch upon. He does not, for example, follow the Latin elegists in all their variations of the travel poems and does not deal with the traditional forms of the propemptikon, in which the speaker says farewell to a departing traveller,¹ the schetliastic propemptikon, in which the speaker attempts to stay the departing traveller,² or the prosphonetikon, a welcome for a traveller who is returning.³ Nor does he imitate the conventional forms of the celebratory genethliakon, the birthday poem,⁴ or the soteria, the thanksgiving for the safety of someone who has been ill.⁵ Omitted too are the elegies that have a general rhetorical purpose, for example, on venality.⁶

¹ Propertius, Lib. I, el. vi.

² Propertius, Lib. I, el. viii.

³ Ovid, Amores, Lib. II, el. xi, ll.37-56.

⁴ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. vii, Lib. II, el. ii.

⁵ Propertius, Lib. II, el. xxviii; Corpus Tibullianum, Lib. III, el. x.

⁶ Tibullus, Lib. II, el. iii; Ovid, Amores, Lib. III, el. viii.

It is impossible to make definitive statements as to why Chénier did not select these topics; perhaps he felt these themes were not suitable to his talents, or failed to find the necessary inspiration from the poems dealing with them; perhaps they were merely overlooked and forgotten.

In some specific cases a reason for omission may be suggested. The non-erotic motif of the description of Roman festivals, such as the Ambarvalia¹ or the Parilia,² is too specialized or too foreign for imitation in French. Nor does the world of state and politics intervene in the French elegies. Tibullus' encomiastic praise of his literary patron, Messalla,³ finds no parallel in a French poet whose boast was to be independent, nor does Propertius' protest against Augustan legislation,⁴ or his comments on the miseries of the siege of Perusia.⁵ Chénier was, at the time of the composition of the Elégies, free from political constraints.

Other themes may have been disregarded on the grounds of bad taste. All the elegists, for example, introduce the rôle of the lena. The prototype for this figure can be traced back to Greek Mime and New Comedy, and to Roman Comedy. Her rôle varies covering a range of activities by which the lena introduced girls and men for her own monetary gain, either as a brothel-keeper or a maid or nurse acting as a go-between. The Roman elegists feature the latter⁶ and treat the lena with traditional scorn, accusing her of corruption, witchcraft, and intoxication, for it is the lena who seduces the beloved away from the poet-lover to the dives amator:

¹ Tibullus, Lib. II, el. i.

² Tibullus, Lib. II, el. v.

³ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. vii, Lib. II, el. v, (in praise of Messalinus).

⁴ Propertius, Lib. II, el. vii.

⁵ Propertius, Lib. I, el. xxi, and el. xxii.

⁶ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. ii and el. v; Propertius, Lib. IV, el. v, Ovid, Amores, Lib. I, el. viii.

. . . quod adest huic dives amator,
 venit in exitium callida lena meum.
 sanguineas edat illa dapes atque ore cruento
 tristia cum multo pocula felle bibat:
 hanc volitent animae circum sua fata querentes
 semper, et e tectis strix violento canat:
 ipsa fame stimulante furens herbasque sepulcris
 quaerat et a saevis ossa relictis lupis;
 currat et inguinibus nudis ululetque per urbes,
 post agat e triviis aspera turba canum.¹

The sinister figure of the lena allows for strong, abusive verse, which gives emotional release, but which did not appeal to eighteenth century French taste.

It was also inevitable that the homosexual elegies of Tibullus² were not revived by Chénier. The series of love poems written to Marathus have their origin in early Greek lyric and elegiac poetry, and in Hellenistic verse. Despite what G. Williams has called 'a lack of connection with reality and a very complex relationship with Hellenistic poetry'³ in Latin homosexual elegies, the views of the French public on this matter can easily be gleaned from the comments of the translators of Tibullus. The Marquis de Pastoret's condemnation of Tibullus, Lib. I, elegy iv is categorical:

Cette Elégie peut être regardée comme un petit Poème sur l'Art d'aimer. Il est malheureux qu'elle soit fondée sur un goût aussi dépravé que criminel. Les exemples trop fréquens qu'on en trouve chez les anciens font gémir sur cet abus du plaisir et de la nature. Je n'ai pas cru devoir imiter M. de Pesay et M. de Longchamps qui l'ont adressée à une femme. Ce changement seroit utile si Tibulle devoit être placé dans les mains des enfans; et dans ce cas même, je crois qu'il vaudroit mieux en faire une édition où cette Elégie et quelques-autres fussent supprimées, que de chercher à transformer des sentimens qui ne sont jamais bien couverts par cette bizarre métamorphose. [sic]⁴

¹ Tibullus, Lib. I, el. v, ll.47-56.

² Tibullus, Lib. I, el. iv, viii, and ix.

³ G. Williams, Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, p.556.

⁴ C.E.J.P. Marquis de Pastoret, Elégies de Tibulle. Traduction nouvelle, Paris, Jombert Jeune, 1783, p.78.

Despite these misgivings he does translate the elegy. In contrast, Masson de Pézay¹ and P. de Longchamps² bowdlerized the text, and P.A. Guys omitted the elegy from his translation and spoke of 'cet amour Grec ou Romain, qui est la tache ineffacable de l'ancien temps'.³ In selecting his themes Chénier obviously bowed to public taste and opinion.

Yet, in another important respect, Chénier did not conform to public taste. As we have seen, eighteenth century theorists, and Chénier himself in his comments, gave great praise to Tibullus. The survey we have undertaken into the poet's imitation of his Latin sources has produced some surprising results leading to important conclusions about Chénier's actual order of precedence for the elegiac trio. It is apparent that there is some discrepancy between Chénier's remarks and his imitative practice.

In practice Ovid is the poet whom Chénier imitates the least in his Elégies. Although there are occasional adaptations of passages from the Amores, on the whole Ovid's treatment of love is too witty and too cynical for the French poet's purpose. Ovid cast himself in the rôle of the conventional lover, but then exploited this for humour and wit by irony and parody. He debunks the genre, and refuses to take any theme seriously. Although Chénier indulges in self-mockery, and there is more humour in his Elégies than critics have conceded, nevertheless Ovid's constantly burlesque attitude did not suit Chénier's temperament, nor his overall view of the Love Elegy.

¹ Masson de Pézay, Traduction en prose de Catulle, Tibulle et Gallus par l'Auteur des Soirées Helvétiques, 2 vols., Amsterdam and Paris, Delalain, 1771, p.33.

² P. de Longchamps, Elégies de Tibulle, traduites par M. de Longchamps, Amsterdam and Paris, Morin, 1776, pp. 27-33.

³ P.A. Guys, Essai sur les élégies de Tibulle auquel on a joint quelques poésies légères par M.G., La Haye et Paris, la Vve Duchesne, 1779, p.8.

Chénier seems to have been far more attracted to Tibullus. Ironically his imitations depend as much upon the Corpus Tibullianum as on Tibullus himself, and it may be considered somewhat strange that Chénier did not detect the inferior style of the elegies written by Lygdamus and Sulpicia. He drew upon Tibullus particularly for his descriptions of the elegiac rustic idyll and the threnodic motif. Our thematic investigation has also shown that Chénier imitated Tibullus particularly in the early Lycoris period.

Critics have always accepted Chénier's eulogies of Tibullus and assumed that the poet's greatest debt was to this elegist. Our research now obviates this view. Victor Hugo holds the key to our interpretation in his poem 'Paupertas':

Femmes, ni Chénier ni Properce
N'ajoutent la condition
D'une alcôve tendue en perse
A vos yeux, d'où sort le rayon.¹

The elegiac author who dominates Chénier's recreation of Latin Love Elegy is Propertius. We have discovered that imitations of this poet far outnumber the others. The intensity of the emotion portrayed by Propertius allured Chénier. He sensed an affinity of thought and feeling in Propertius' anguished analysis of suffering, jealousy, and betrayal, as the illusion of happiness and fidelity disintegrated. Propertius also taught Chénier how to employ irony and self-mockery to undercut, on occasion, the intensity of passion. Here then is Chénier's real guide to Elegy. Chénier wrote only one comment about Propertius, a comment made twice: 'poète plus grec que latin'.² This phrase is most significant. It succinctly reveals the source of Chénier's attraction to Propertius, who was without doubt the major influence on his Elégies and the stimulus to his creative talent.

¹ V. Hugo, 'Paupertas', ll.41-44, in Les Chansons des rues et des bois, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1966, p.79.

² Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', p.763; 'Essai sur les causes', p.654.

XI

CONCLUSION

André Chénier transformed the Neo-classical spirit of the age by the intensity of his personal identification with Antiquity. His assimilation of the classical past, his methods of gathering material and incorporating it into his poems, have become familiar in the course of this study. He cultivated a truly remarkable knowledge of the Ancients and from them selected the themes and modes of the Latin Love Elegy in which he saw concentrated the whole classical elegiac background. He thus accorded the dominant place in his own elegies not to Greek literature but to the poetry of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid. In the table, Appendix I, we have indicated for each of the Elégies their Latin sources and the traditional themes of the Latin Love Elegy which reappear in Chénier; we likewise show the link with the major cycles of the Elégies (Lycoris, Camille etc.). The arguments sustained in chapters VIII, IX, and X are based on the evidence provided by this chart. It is clear that Chénier adopted all the main themes of Latin Elegy and that he enlivened his poetry by contaminatio.

Interestingly, the most important discovery emerging from the table is that Chénier imitated Propertius more than Tibullus and Tibullus more than Ovid. In addition, Propertius is shown to be the predominant inspiration in the poetry of passionate emotion composed for Mme de Bonneuil. The rôle of Propertius, previously underestimated, receives its appropriate emphasis when the literary implications of G. Buisson's identification of D'.z.n and Camille as Mme de Bonneuil have been accepted. Thus, the poems written for her appear to us today to form the essential part of Chénier's elegiac output. It was natural that he should turn to Propertius for the expression of the intense feelings of joy and sorrow that characterize the affair. As the importance of these elegies is established, so the influence of Propertius is magnified, and the individuality and modernity of Chénier's approach highlighted. However, the achievement of the Elégies resides not only in

imitation of classical poetry. Their originality stems from the way that Chénier transformed the themes and images of his models into French poetry of the highest order.

Nor can the influence of Latin Elegy be confined to the Elégies alone. The authentic voice of Elegy is to be heard again at the end of Chénier's life. In prison, the poet was able to draw upon his previous poetic development to produce poetry superb in its representation of universal thought and emotion. 'La Jeune captive'¹ has always been acclaimed as one of Chénier's finest poems. It is outstanding for its lyricism, its naïveté and poignancy, and its musicality. Yet it is also remarkable in that it continues an elegiac theme within the form of the Ode, for in this poem Chénier returns to the threnodic motifs recurrent in his Elégies. Indeed, in its thought and imagery 'La Jeune captive' offers a striking and close parallel with the elegies 'Aujourd'hui qu'au tombeau'² and 'Souvent le malheureux'.³ Appendix I demonstrates that when Chénier is dealing with threnodic motifs his inspiration is largely Tibullan. In fact, 'La Jeune captive' uses the same Latin sources as the two earlier elegies (ll.1-3/Tibullus, III, v, 19-20; l.10/Tib., II, iv, 11-12; ll.13-15/Tib., II, vi, 19-26; ll.19-21/Tib., III, v, 6; l.37/Tib., I, iii, 4-5). The links are evident, but there are noteworthy changes. Clearly the metrical form of the Ode offers greater flexibility. There has also been a shift of emphasis: in the personal Elégies Chénier was obsessed with his own suffering; in the impersonal Odes the poet has chosen 'La Jeune captive' as the symbol of all who face premature death. Without his elegiac background Chénier could not have created such a poem.

There is therefore every reason to take a much closer look at the Odes and Iambes to discover whether the sources used by Chénier in his Elégies have continued to serve him in these later poems.

¹Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Odes', I, ii, pp.222-224.
Walter, 'Odes', VII, pp.185-186.

²Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', II, 2, pp.6-8.
Walter, 'Elégies', XXV, pp.76-77.

³Dimoff, Vol. III, 'Elégies', IV, i, 6, pp.57-59.
Walter, 'Les Amours', 'Lycoris', 4, pp.93-95.

Appendix I

Table of the Latin sources of the elegiac themes in Chénier's Elégies.

1. The page references for the Elégies are to the Dimoff edition.
2. The table follows the order of the love elegies suggested by G. Buisson's identification of D'.z.n and Camille as Mme de Bonneuil.
3. To indicate the relative importance of the various themes within a given elegy, the major theme has been asterisked.

CHÉNIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS <u>CORP. TIB.</u>	DIVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'Quand à peine Clothon...' (pp. 3-4) 1.13					Sacer vates* Servitium amoris	
'Ah! quand presque en naissant...' (pp. 5-6)					Threnodic motifs*	
'Aujourd'hui qu'au tombeau...' (pp. 6-8) 11.1-24 11.25-40 11.45-49 11.62-64	II, xiii, 17-36	III, v, 6-20, 31 I, i, 59-60		Verg., <u>Eclogues</u> , X, 33-34	Threnodic motifs* " " " Laus in amore mori	
'Vous restez, mes amis...' (pp. 10-12) 11.37-38 11.49-50	III, xxi	III, iv, 45-46 III, v, 31-32			Syntaktikon* Threnodic motifs "	Italy/Greece
'Marseille... Raconter l'histoire...' (pp. 13-14)	Draft to be based on IV				Aetiology*	Italy/Greece
'Je suis en Italie...' (pp. 15-18) 1.31				Quotes Horace, <u>Satires</u> , II, ii, 92-93	Epibaterion* "	Italy/Greece

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS CORP. TIB.	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'Au sommet de la mont....' (p.18) 11.3-4				Verg., <u>Georgics</u> , II, 173-174	Epibaterion* "	Italy/Greece
'O belle (son nom;)....' (pp.19-20) 11.13-44 11.51-52					Sensuality Servitium amoris	Italy/Greece
'Oh ! c'est toi!....' (pp.21-22) 11.19-24					Sensuality* Military vocabulary	Italy/Greece
'On pourrait imiter....' (p.22)	Draft based on II, xxxi				Beauty of mistress*	Italy/Greece
'Allez, mes vers....' (pp.22-23)					Servitium amoris*	Italy/Greece
'Après celle du souper....' (p.25) 11.5-6		Draft based on I, iii, 83-86		Quotes Horace, <u>Odes</u> , III, vii, 19-20, 30	Custos/Ancilla "	Italy/Greece
'Tel j'étais autrefois....' (pp.25-26) 11.3-5					Paraklausithyron	Italy/Greece
'O délices d'amour....' (pp.26-28) 11.1-2 11.20-32			I, ii		Vita iners Servitium amoris	Italy/Greece
'Partons, la voile est prête....' (pp.28-29)	III, xxi, 1-10				Servitium amoris/ Syntaktikon*	Italy/Greece

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS CORP. TIB.	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'Salut, Dieux de l'Euxin...' (p.29)					Epibaterion*	Italy/Greece
'Ainsi, vainqueur...' (pp.34-35) 11.23-30					Epibaterion*	Italy/Greece
'Anime par l'Amour...' (pp.37-45) 11.17-32	(III, v, 19-22 (I, iii, 21-22 III, v, 23-24 III, v, 25-26			Ovid, <u>Met.</u> , I, 13-14 Verg., <u>Georgics</u> , II, 479-480 Verg., <u>Georgics</u> , I, 246 Verg., <u>Georgics</u> , I, 204-207 Verg., <u>Georgics</u> , I, 53 Verg., <u>Eclogues</u> , I, 52	Recusatio/Carpe diem*	Lycoris
1.75					"	"
11.75-80					"	"
1.86					"	"
11.95-96					"	"
11.233-234	II, xv, 23-24				"	"
'Ah! qu'ils portent ailleurs...' (pp.46-47) 11.1-12 11.15-19	II, xv, 23-24, 49-54			Catullus, V	Carpe diem*	Lycoris
'Vois ta brillante image...' (p.47) 11.1-2 11.11-12	III, ii, 17-18 III, ii, 25-26				Mistress immortalized by Poetry*	Lycoris
'Ah! je les reconnais...' (pp.48-50) 11.1-8 11.13-18				Horace, <u>Odes</u> , III, iv, 5-20	Sacer vates Infidelity of mistress	Lycoris

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS <u>CORP. TIB.</u>	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'Ah! je les reconnais...' (cont.) 11.21-28 11.51-64				Horace, <u>Odes</u> , III, iv, 21-36, II, xix, 1-4	Sacer vates Infidelity of mistress	Lycoris
'Et toi, lampe nocturne...' (pp.50-56)					Infidelity of mistress*	Lycoris
'Souvent le malheureux...' (pp.57-59) 11.17-22 11.24-26 11.27-28 1.49 11.29-56 11.57-68 11.82-84	I, i, 33-34	II, vi, 19-28 II, iv, 11-12 I, iii, 57-64		Verg., <u>Aeneid</u> , IV, 653	Threnodic motifs* " " Obsession of love Threnodic motifs Infidelity of mistress Threnodic motifs Laus in amore mori	Lycoris
'Mais ne m'a-t-elle pas juré?...' 11.14-30 11.37-40	II, xxv, 19-20	III, vi, 43-49			Paraklausithyron* " "	Lycoris
'Oh! puisse le ciseau...' (pp.96-97)			II, x, 29-38		Laus in amore mori*	Lycoris
'Quand d'un souffle jaloux...' (pp.101-102)		I, i, 59-60			Laus in amore mori*	Lycoris
'Il n'est donc plus d' espoir...' (pp.105-106) 11.22-26			I, vi, 49-52		Paraklausithyron* "	Lycoris
'....., île charmante...' (p.80)					Beauty of mistress*	D'.z.n
'.....0 peuple...' (p.81)					Beauty of mistress*	D'.z.n

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS <u>CORP. IIB.</u>	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'Hier, en te quittant...' (pp.81-83) 11.1-14 11.15-20 11.21-22 11.23-26	II, xxix, 1-22	II, iv, 6-10		Horace, <u>Epodes</u> , XVII, 30-33 Verg., <u>Aeneid</u> , IV, 68-73	Servitium amoris Obsession of love " "	D'.z.n
'O nuit, nuit douloureuse!...' (pp.83-86) 11.1-8 11.22-30 11.35-46			I, ii, 1-8 II, xvii, 7-10		Obsession of love Infidelity of mistress Beauty of mistress	D'.z.n
'Ah! portons dans les bois...' (pp.61-62) 11.5-14 11.3, 15-24					Elegiac illusion Obsession of love	Camille
'O lignes que sa main...' (pp. 63-65) 11.1-8 11.13-28 11.23-27 11.33-34 11.37-42 11.51-60	I, xi, 1-8 II, xxx, 40 I, xii, 15-16 I, xi, 7-16			Verg., <u>Eclogues</u> , VII, 57-60	Infidelity of mistress Mistress inspiration for Poetry " Docta puella Erotodidaxis Infidelity of mistress Servitium amoris*	Camille
'Eh bien! je le voulais...' (p.66) 11.10-17	II, xxv, 19-20				"	Camille
'Et c'est Glycère...' (pp.67-69) 11.25-26 11.27-44	II, xviii, 16 III, viii, 1-24				Infidelity of poet* " "	Camille

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS <u>CORP. IIB.</u>	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'Ah! des pleurs!...' (pp.69-70) 11.14-18	III, xvi II, xiv, 19-20				Servitium amoris* "	Camille
'Allons, l'heure est venue...' 11.13-28 11.29-76 11.37-40, 45-60	I, iii, 1-26				Beauty of mistress Infidelity of mistress Custos/Ancilla	Camille
'Non, je ne l'aime plus...' (pp.73-75) 11.1-8 11.9-10 11.11-34 11.35-54	I, xv, 42	II, iv, 13-20 (I, v, 19-36 (II, iii, 5-10 I, ix, 17-38			Renuntiatio amoris Infidelity of mistress Iucunda paupertas Infidelity of mistress	Camille
'Reste, reste avec nous...' (pp.75-78) 11.1-6 11.23-26 11.35-36 11.69-71 11.75-82	II, ix, 21-22 (II, viii, 1-5 (II, xxv, 17-20	III, vi, 1-6 III, vi, 57-62 III, vi, 33-37			Obsession of love " " Infidelity of mistress Paraklausithyron	Camille
'L'Elegie est venue...' (pp.78-80) 11.1-33 11.38-41 11.45-46	Quotes II, xvi, 27-43 II, v, 5-6		III, i		Recusatio Venal mistress "	Camille

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	<u>TIBULLUS</u> <u>CORP. TIB.</u>	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'Je suis né pour l'amour...' (pp.106-110) 1.9 11.15-18 1.23 11.26-38 11.35-38 11.51-62	II, xxiv, 41-42 III, xxiv, 1-8			Ovid, <u>Ars Amatoria</u> , I, 645-646, 653-658	Renuntiatio amoris* Obsession of love Renuntiatio amoris Elegiac illusion Infidelity of poet Infidelity of poet Renuntiatio amoris	Camille
'Mânes de Callimaque...' (pp.127-130) 11.1-7 11.8-10 11.11-18 11.19-23 11.39-48 11.59-66 11.67-70 11.75-78	III, i, 1-6 III, i, 7 III, i, 9-12 (III, ii, 1-10 (II, xxvi, 17-18 III, iii, 18-20 III, ix, 45-46		III, i, 7-10 II, i, 7-10		Sacer vates Vita iners Recusatio " Sacer vates Erotodidaxis " "	Camille
'pourquoi de mes loisirs...' (pp.142-145) 11.1-2 11.4-6 11.27-36 11.37-64 11.75-78	I, xii, 1-2 II, i, 39-46 II, i, 1-16				Recusatio* " Vita iners Recusatio Mistress inspiration for Poetry Docta puella	Camille
'Amis, couple chéri...' (pp.145-148) 11.1-3 11.5-8 11.9-12 11.29-98 11.62-72			II, iv, 7-10 II, iv, 11-43	Horace, <u>Epodes</u> , II, 39-48	Renuntiatio amoris Servitium amoris " Iucunda paupertas "	Camille

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS <u>CORP. TIB.</u>	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'De l'art de Pyrgotèle... (pp.87-89) 11.31-33				Horace, <u>Odes</u> , I, iv, 5-7	Docta puella* "	Marie Cosway
'Jeune fille, ton coeur...' (pp.92-93)		I, viii, 1-2			Erotodidaxis*	
'Je revois tous ses traits...' (pp.97-98)				Ovid, <u>Fasti</u> , II, 770- 774	Beauty of mistress*	
'Oh! de noeuds mutuels...' (pp.98-99)		(III, xi, 13-16 (II, ii, 17-22			Elegiac illusion*	
'Je t'indique le fruit...' (pp.103-104) 11.5-7					Laus in amore mori	
'Triste chose que l'amour!...' (pp.113-114) 11.5-11 1.12				Quotes Verg., <u>Aeneid</u> , VII, 279	Servitium amoris "	
'Tantôt s'écoule...' (p.119) 11.4-8		I, i, 45-46			Iucunda paupertas	
'Qui? moi?...' (pp.125-127) 11.33-34					Mistress inspiration for Poetry	
'Qu'un autre soit jaloux...' (pp.130-133) 11.1-32 11.11-14	II, i, 3-4				Recusatio Mistress inspiration for Poetry	

CHENIER, <u>ELEGIES</u>	PROPERTIUS	TIBULLUS <u>CORP. TIB.</u>	OVID, <u>AMORES</u>	OTHER LATIN WORKS	THEME	CYCLE
'De Pange, le mortel...' (pp.133-135) ll.1-8 ll.16-18				Horace, <u>Odes</u> , I, xxii	Vita iners "	
'Ami, de mes ardeurs...' (pp.135-136)		I, ii, 87-96			Erotodidaxis*	
'De Pange, ami chéri...' (pp.135-137) ll.14-16	III, iii, 1-2				Sacer vates	
'Quand la feuille...' (pp.138-141) ll.16-24 ll.28-36 ll.78-83		II, i, 67-69	III, i, 7-14	Verg., <u>Georgics</u> , II, 5-8	Iucunda paupertas* Recusatio Iucunda paupertas	
'O Muses, accourez...' (pp.149-152) ll.19-22 ll.35-39				Horace, <u>Satires</u> , II, vi, 59-62 Horace, <u>Satires</u> , II, vi, 1-4	Iucunda paupertas* " "	
'O jours de mon printemps...' (pp.152-155) ll.9-20					Iucunda paupertas Threnodic motifs*	
'Sans parents, sans amis...' (p.159)					Iucunda paupertas Threnodic motifs*	
'O nécessité dure!...' (pp.162-163) 1.6				Catullus, XXVII, 2	Threnodic motifs* "	
'L'innocente victime...' (p.167)					Threnodic motifs*	

Appendix II

The revised catalogue (continued)

A. Latin prose authors

1. Cato, Varro, Columella, Palladius.

Scriptores Rei Rusticae Veteres Latini, Cato, Varro, Columella, Palladius,

quibus nunc accedit Vegetius de Mulo-Medicina et Gargilii Martialis fragmentum, cum additionibus prope omnibus ex mss. pluribus collatis.

Adjectae notae virorum clariss. integrae, tum editae, tum ineditae, et lexicon rei rusticae, curante IO. Matthia Gesnero, Eloq. et Poes.

P.P. Goetting. Lipsiae, sumptibus Caspari Fritsch, 1735, 2 vols. 4^o.

This edition, B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 9 a-b), (previously 8946 Ch.2/12), forms part of the extra series of books ascribed by Dimoff to André Chénier in his posthumous article.¹ Dimoff conjectures that the following loose notes in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier are copies of originals by the poet.

i. Varron, lib. I, Cap. I, p.135.

Auteurs grecs qui ont écrit sur l'agriculture.

(A loose note affixed at vol. I, page 135).

ii. Varron, Lib. I, Cap. XIII

Sepes.

Cap. XIV, p.169.

(A loose note affixed at vol. I, page 169).

iii. Columelle, Lib. XI Cap. 3, 3, p.763.

(A loose note affixed at vol. I, page 763).

iv. Palladius, Lib. I, tit. 34.

Sepes.

pp. 883-885.

(A loose note affixed at vol. II, page 883).

¹ P. Dimoff, 'Notes inédites d'André Chénier', R.H.L.F., 69, 1969, p.953.

v. Palladius, februarus.

XXIV, p.919.

Sepes.

(A loose note affixed at vol. II, page 919).

vi. Index

(A loose note affixed at vol. II, page 1317).

2. Cicero

M. Tulli Ciceronis de natura deorum libri tres, cum notis integris Paulli Manutii, Petri Victorii, Joachimi Camerarii, Dionysi Lambini, et Fulvii Ursini. Recensuit suisque animadversionibus illustravit ac emaculavit Joannes DAVISIUS, L.L.D., Coll. Regin. Cantab. magister et Canonicus Eliensis. Accedunt emendationes Cl. Joannis VALCKERI. Cantabrigiae, typis academicis, impensis C. Crownfield, 1718, 1 vol. 8^o.

Dimoff has shown that Chénier refers to a note of Davies on Cicero's De Natura Deorum, and that the page reference corresponds to this edition.¹

'Davies qui a cité ces vers dans ses notes sur Cicéron, De la nature des Dieux, L.I p.63. . .'.²

3. Pomponius Mela

Isaaci Vossii observationes ad Pomponium Melam. De situ orbis ipse Mela, longe quam antehac emendatior, praemittitur. Hagae Comitum, apud Adrianum Vlacq, 1658, 1 vol. 4^o.

As Dimoff notes,³ Chénier refers to Vossius' notes on Pomponius Mela.

¹Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.242.

²Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', VIII, p.762.

³Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.244.

Although there is no evidence to prove that this edition belonged to the poet, since it forms part of the Donation Chénier there is a likelihood that this was the case. (Ref: B.M.C. 9250 Ch. 2, 10).

4. Cornelius Nepos

De vita excellentium imperatorum, ex recognitione Steph. And. Philippe. Lutetiae Parisiorum, sumptibus M.S. David, 1745, 1 vol. 12^o.

This edition, at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 78) (previously 9025), contains a note in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier: 'Vient de mon oncle Constantin qui l'avait de la succession d'André'.

5. Velleius Paterculus

M. Velleii Paterculi historiae romanae quae supersunt. Londini, ex officina Jacobi Tonson et Johannis Watts, 1725, 1 vol. 32^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 83) (previously 8766). The fiche d'entrée claims the volume belonged to André Chénier.

6. Tacitus

a. C. Cornelius Tacitus ex J. Lipsii editione cum notis et emendationibus H. Grotii. Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Elzeviriana, 1640, 2 vols. 12^o.

This edition, B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 92 a-b) (previously 9062 a-b), contains a note in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier: 'Vient de mon oncle Constantin qui l'avait recueilli dans la succession d'André'.

b. Dimoff in his first catalogue cites the edition of Tacitus belonging to Chénier as: C. Cornelius Tacitus ex J. Lipsii accuratissima editione. Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Elzeviriana, 1634 & 1640, 2 vols. 32^o. (Ref: 9062 Ch. 2 bis-6).¹ He seems to have telescoped the above correct edition with another volume of the Donation Chénier:

¹Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.245.

c. Cornelius Tacitus ex J. Lipsii accuratissima editione. Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Elzeviriana, 1634, 1 vol. 32^o. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 101) (previously 8740). There is no evidence to suggest that this book belonged to André Chénier, and the fiche d'entrée assigns it to Marie-Joseph.

B. Greek writers

1. Analecta

Analecta veterum poetarum graecorum, editore Rich. Fr. Phil. Brunck. Argentorati, apud Jo. Gothofr. Bauer et socium, bibliopolas, n.d., 3 vols. 8^o.

Volume 1....1 August 1772

Volume 2....21 December 1773

Volume 3....30 November 1776

Preface (Vol. 1, pp.i-xxxiv) dated Strasbourg, 18 December 1776. The B.M.C. possesses a copy of the above Analecta, edited by Brunck, as part of the Donation Chénier, Ref: B.M.C. 099.5 (Ch. 18 bis)(previously 8943). There is no evidence to confirm that this actual copy belonged to the poet rather than to any other member of the family. However Dimoff has shown from the numerous references scattered throughout the manuscripts of André Chénier that he did possess a copy of the Analecta edited by his family friend Richard Brunck.¹

2. Antimachus

Antimachi Colophonii reliquiae, Nunc primum conquirere et explicare instituit Car. Adol. Gottl. Schellenberg. Accessit epistola Frid. Aug.

¹For example Chénier's mention of an epigram 'de Léonidas de Tarente sur la Vénus d'Apelle . . . l'épigr. entière est une des plus jolies de ce poète élégant et ingénieux. Anal. t.I, p.231'. (Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', II, p.758).

Wolfii. Halae Saxonum, sumptibus Hemmerdeanis, 1786, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition, B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 24), (previously 9180), is confirmed by the fiche d'entrée as having belonged to André Chénier.

3. Aratus

Ἄρατου Σολεως φαινομενα και διοσημεια. Θεωνος σχολια.

Ἐρατοσθενους καταστερισμοι, μετρον της γης περιφερειας, του κυβου διπ-
λασιασμος, κοσκινον, του Νειλου πηγαι, του κανονος τομη Διονυσιου ὕμνοι.

Accesserunt annotationes in Eratosthenem et Hymnos Dionysii (curante Jo. Felle). Oxonii, e theatro Sheldoniano, 1672, 1 vol. 8^o.

Dimoff¹ notes that Chardon de la Rochette, who acquired this edition belonging to André Chénier, published in the Magasin Encyclopédique (cinquième année, t.1. p.388) a lengthy² note in Latin written by André Chénier on the verso of the title page of part two of this volume. The note is concluded by the poignant sentence: 'Scribebam Versaliae, animo

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.235.

² The Latin note refers to Valckenaer's Fragmenta elegiarum Callimachi. When Valckenaer died before the printing of this book was completed, his son stopped publication but, as a friend of Chénier, loaned to him the 128 pages already printed. 'Il mourut avant que l'impression fût achevée. Son fils l'arrêta, reprit chez l'imprimeur tout ce qu'il y avait de fait et n'en garda qu'un exemplaire qu'il m'a prêté'. (Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XI, p.763). 'Cujusnam viri cura prodiisset hic liber quem ego apud londinensem bibliopolam inveni; dum ante hos tres aut quatuor annos in Britannia degerem, nuper sum edoctus; idque ut alia innumera, debeo batavo homini cujus operum assidua lectio mihi quotidie novos Graecarum musarum ac venerum recessus aperit. Is est magnus Valckenarius, qui supremis suis temporibus gravi morbo vix elapsus, Callimachi elegiarum fragmenta illustranda suscepit; nam ille Ernesti industriam in hac parte haud multi faciebat. Igitur cum jam dimidia pars voluminis, quasi ex tempore effusi, typis excusa foret, fato occubuit vir egregius. Tum ab ejus unico filio, Jano Valckenario jurisconsulto, quasi paternae memoriae consulente, nam et ipse multarum litterarum homo est, typhotetarum operae intermissae sunt, autoris apographum domi reportatum, quodque jam excusum fuerat pecunia redemptum cujus UNICUM EXEMPLAR a se asservatum mihi legendum permisit vir humanissimus. Enimvero libellus iste non eadem lima, elaboratus atque perpolitus videtur qua tot acuti ingenii, et inexhaustae doctrinae monumenta, quibus Valckenarii nomen innotuit. Nam neque clara satis aut nitida oratione conscriptus est, et incondita eruditionis copia laborat, et in immensa digressionum spatia hinc inde effluit. Est autem non raro ubi, licet senem, Valckenarium agnoscas tamen. Atque ibi dum veterum

et corpore aeger, moerens, dolens, die novembris undecima 1793,
Andreas C. Byzantinus'.¹

4. Aristotle

'Αριστοτελους περι κοσμου, προς 'Αλεξανδρον , Aristotelis de mundo liber, ad Alexandrum, cum versione latina Gulielmi Budaei. Glasgae, in aedibus academicis excudebat R. Foulis, 1745, 1 vol. 32^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 75), (previously 8760 Ch. 2-6). A loose note in the book asserts 'Vient d'André'.

5. Athenaeus

'Αθηναίου Δειπνοσοφιστων βιβλια πεντεκαιδεκα , Athenaei Deipnosophistarum libri XV. Isaacus Casaubonus recensuit et ex antiquis membranis supplevit auxitque. Adjecti sunt ejusdem Casauboni in eundem scriptorem animadversionum libri XV. Addita est Jacobi Dalechampii Cadomensis latina interpretatio cum notis marginalibus. Cum necessariis indicibus. N.pl. [Heidelbergae], apud Hieronymum Commelinum, 1598, 1 vol. fo.

Dimoff² notes that Chénier refers to this edition of Athenaeus in notes for the 'Bucoliques'. 'La flûte, invention phrygienne, fut attribuée à Minerve, Hyagnis, Marsyas, Olympe etc. . . V. Spanheim, sur

2 [contd.]

de Coma Berenices testimonia meminit, prolatis etiam Eratosthenis verbis, quae Leonis extrema sunt, et hic leguntur p.5, haec addit quae exscribere visum est'. (Walter, 'Fragments littéraires', VII, pp.751-752).

¹Walter, 'Notes et Variantes', VII, note 2, p.962.

²Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.235.

Callim., et Casaub. sur Athénée, l. XIV c.2.¹

6. Callimachus

a. Callimachi hymni, epigrammata et fragmenta, ex recensione Theodori J.G.F. Graevii, cum ejusdem animadversionibus. Accedunt N. Frischlini, H. Stephani, B. Vulcanii, P. Voetii, A.T.F. Daceriae, R. Bentleyi commentarius et annotationes viri illustrissimi Ezechielis Spanhemii. Nec non praeter fragmenta, quae ante Vulcanius et Daceria publicarant, nova, quae Spanhemius et Bentleyus collegerunt et digesserunt. Hujus cura et studio quaedam quoque inedita epigrammata Callimachi nunc primum in lucem prodeunt. Ultrajecti, apud Franciscum Halmam, Guilielmum Van de Water, bibliopolas, 1697, 2 vols. 8^o.

Chénier refers on numerous occasions to Spanheim's commentary,² and Dimoff³ has shown that the references correspond to the pagination of the 1697 edition.

b. Callimachi hymni, epigrammata et fragmenta, cum notis integris H. Stephani, B. Vulcanii, Annae Fabri, Th. Graevii, Rich. Bentleyi; quibus accedunt Ez. Spanhemii commentarius et notae nunc primum editae Tiberii Hemsterhusii et Davidis Ruhnkenii. Textum ad mss. fidem recensuit, latine vertit, atque notas suas adjecit Jo. Aug. Ernesti. Lugduni Batavorum, apud S. et J. Luchtmans, 1761, 2 vols. 8^o.

Although Chénier refers to T.H.'s⁴ opinion and quotes this edition, it seems, as Dimoff suggests, it was 'moins couramment consultée par lui que celle de Graevius'.⁵

¹Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', IV, 2, ll.13-15, p.85.

²For example in a list of 'Emblèmes antiques' that could be used in the epic poem 'Hermès', Chénier notes 'Apollon bâtisseur de villes. Spanheim, in Callim., p.80'.

Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', IV, iv, 3, l.7, p.53.

Walter, 'Fragments et notes se rattachant à Hermès', p.414.

³Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.236.

⁴Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XI, p.764.

⁵Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.236.

c. Callimachi elegiarum fragmenta (sub hoc nomine nunc primum edita), paulo copiosius quam oportuerat illustrata a Ludov. Casp. Valckenaer.

On the death of Valckenaer the printing of this edition was stopped by his son who nevertheless showed the 128 pages already in print to André Chénier.¹

7. Euripides

a. Euripidis tragoediae quatuor, Hecuba, Phoenissae, Hippolytus et Bacchae, ex optimis exemplaribus emendatae [a Rich. Franc. Phil. Brunck]. Argentorati, ex officina J.H. Heitz, 1780, 1 vol. 4^o.

Dimoff² has shown that in his notes for the 'Bucoliques', Chénier refers to this edition.³

b. Εὐριπίδου Ἰκετιδῆς, Euripidis drama Supplices mulieres, ad codd. mss. recensitum et, versione correctâ, notis uberioribus illustratum. Accedit de Graecorum quinta declinatione imparisyllabica et indeformata Latinorum tertia quaestio grammatica. Editio altera. Londoni excudebant G. Bowyer et J. Nichols, 1775, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 18) (previously 9302). A loose note in the book claims 'Vient d'André Ch.', and this is confirmed by the fiche d'entrée.

c. Exercitationum in Euripidem libri duo, auctore S. Musgrave, A.M., medicinae studioso, societatis regiae londinensis socio. Lugduni Batavorum, ex typographeo Dammeano, 1762, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 23) (previously 9004). A loose note in the hand of Gabriel de Chénier confirms 'Ce livre a appartenu à André'.

¹Walter, *ibid.*, p.763.

²Dimoff, *ibid.*, p.237.

³... imiter d'une manière bien antique tout ce qu'il y a de beau dans le Penthée d'Euripide: v.13 λιπῶν δε λυδῶν etc; ce qu'il chante au chœur de femmes, au thiasus pour l'exciter, v.55; tout le chœur; toute la scène du bouvier, v. 659. V. la traduct. des vers 693 et suiv. mêlés avec les vers 142 et suiv. (édit. de Brunck)'. (Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', III, ll.1-7, p.257).

8. Hesiod

'Ησιοδου 'Ασκραίου τα εύρισκομενα, Hesiodi Ascraei quae exstant, ex recensione Johannis Georgii Graevii, cum ejusdem animadversionibus et notis. Accedunt notae ineditae Jos. Scaligeri et Fr. Gujeti. Apud D. Elzevirum, 1667, 1 vol. 8^o.

Dimoff¹ has shown that André Chénier refers to Graevius' notes on Hesiod. 'Les premiers hommes sacrifiaient de l'herbe. V. Graevius sur Hesiode, p.40'.²

9. Homer

a. Homeri hymnus in Cererem, nunc primum editus a Davide Ruhnkenio. Accedunt duae epistolae criticae, ex editione altera, multis partibus locupletiores. Lugduni Batavorum, apud S. et J. Luchtmans, 1782.

André Chénier claims to have read the 'belles épîtres critiques de David Runkenius',³ and Dimoff⁴ suggests this was the most complete and practical edition.

b. 'Η του 'Ομηρου 'Ιλιας, Homeri Ilias, Interpretatio Latina adjecta est, ex editione S. Clarke. Glasgae, in aedibus academicis, excudebant Robertus et Andreas Foulis, 1747, 2 vols.

This edition is to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 68 a-b) (previously 9334 a-b). The volume contains the loose note 'Vient d'André', but is not mentioned by Dimoff.

10. Longus

Λογγου ποιμενικων των κατα Δαφνιν και Χλοην βιβλοι τετταρες.
Longi pastoralium de Daphnide et Chloe libri quatuor, ex recensione et cum

¹Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.238.

²Dimoff, Vol. II, 'Hermès', IV, iii, 7, p.47.

Walter, 'Fragments et notes se rattachant à Hermès', p.412.

³Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XXV, p.772.

⁴Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.238.

animadversionibus Johan. Baptistae Casparis d'Ansse de Villoison, Regiae inscriptionum Academiae Paris., Regiae Lond. necnon et Antiquariae, Regiae Berolinensis, Gotting., Manhem., Upsal., Matrit., Massil., Corton., Romae, etc. Societatum socii. Excudebat Franc. Ambros. Didot, Parisiis, sumptibus Guill. de Bure natu majoris, Bibliopolae, 1778, 1 vol. 4^o.

Dimoff¹ has shown that Chénier's references from Longus for his 'Bucoliques' correspond to this edition.²

11. Menander

Emendationes in Menandri et Philemonis reliquias, ex nupera editione Joannis Clerici, ubi multa Grotii et aliorum, plurima vero Clerici errata castigantur, auctore Phileleuthero Lipsiensi [Rich. Bentleio], scriptae anno MDCCX. Accedit epistola critica Richardi Bentleii de Johanne Malela Antiocheno, scripta anno MDCXCI. Editio altera emendatior. Cantabrigiae, typis Academicis, impensis Cornelii Crownfield, 1713, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 40) (previously 9297). The fiche d'entrée asserts that this volume belonged to André Chénier. Against lines 116-117, chapter CXCII 'reliquiae ex incertis comoediis', the following marginal note in the hand of André Chénier has been discovered, 'Vid. Brunck in aristoph. acharn. v. 49'.

12. Pindar

a. Πινδαρου περιοδος, Pindari Olympia, Pythia, Nemea, Isthmia. Johannes Benedictus, Medicinae doctor, et in Salmuriensi Academia Regia linguae graecae Professor, ad metri rationem, variorum exemplarium fidem, scholiastae ad verisimiles conjecturas directionem, totum authorem innumeris mendis repurgavit; metaphrasi recognita, latina paraphrasi addita,

¹Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.239.

²Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', II, 5, pp.219-221.

poeticis et obscuris phrasibus Graeca prosa declaratis; denique adjectis rerum et verborum brevibus et sufficientibus commentariis, arduum ejusdem sensum explanavit. Editio proxima, cum indice locupletissimo. Salmurii, ex typis Petri Piededii, 1620, 1 vol. 4^o.

Dimoff¹ has shown that Chénier refers to this edition in his notes for the 'Bucoliques'. 'Dans les jeux funèb. pour Hercule et Iolas la couronne était de myrte. V. Pind. Isthm. 4, v. 17, et la note de Benoît'.²
 b. Carminum Pindaricorum fragmenta curavit J. Gottlob. Schneider. Argentorati, apud Joh. Frid. Stein, 1776, 1 vol. 4^o.

This edition is to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 13) (previously 9184). The fiche d'entrée assigns this book to André Chénier.

13. Plato

Platonis dialogi quatuor, Meno, Alcibiades primus, Phaedo, Phaedrus, graece ad editionem Henrici Stephani expressi. Viennae, typis Joan. Thom. Nobilis de Trattnern, 1784, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 20) (previously 8916). A loose note in Gabriel de Chénier's hand confirms 'Vient d'André'.

14. Sophocles

Sophoclis quae exstant omnia, cum veterum grammaticorum scholiis. Superstites tragoedias ad optimorum exemplarium fidem recensuit, versione et notis illustravit, deperditarum fragmenta collegit Rich. Franc. Phil. Brunck. Strasbourg, Treuttel et Wurtz, 1786, 2 vols. 4^o.

André Chénier refers to 'l'Oedipe-Roi, v. 684, édit de Brunck'.³

¹Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.239.

²Dimoff, Vol. 1, 'Bucoliques', IV, 6, ll.10-12, p.260.

³Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XX, p.770.

15. Stobaeus

Dicta poetarum, quae apud Stobaeum exstant, emendata et latino carmine reddita ab Hugone Grotio. Accesserunt Plutarchi et Basilii magni de usu Graecorum poetarum libelli. Parisiis, apud Nicolaum Buon, in via Jacobaea, 1623, 1 vol. 4^o.

Dimoff¹ notes that Chénier alludes to the Grotius translation of Saint Basil's 'De legendis gentilium libris'. The page references correspond to the above edition.

16. Theocritus

a. Theocriti decem idyllia, latinis pleraque numeris a C.A. Wetstenio reddita, in usum auditorum cum notis edidit ejusdemque Adoniazousas uberibus adnotationibus instruxit L.C. Valckenaer. Lugduni Batavorum, apud Joann. le Mair, 1773, 1 vol. 8^o.

Dimoff² notes that Chénier refers to a note by Valckenaer on the Adoniazousai of Theocritus. The page reference corresponds to this edition: 'Les troupes de jeunes gens, en Crète, s'appelaient ἀγελη, et le chef ἀγελατης. Comme à Lacéd. βουσαι et le chef βουαγορ. V. Meurs., ibid., liv. III, ch. II, et Miscell. Lacon., l.II, ch. 3, et Valken., In Adon., p.274',³

b. Theocritus, Moschos, Bion, Simmias

Θεοκριτου, Μοσχου, Βιωνος, Σιμμίου, τα εύρισκομενα : Theocriti, Moschi, Bionis, Simmii quae exstant cum Graecis in Theocritum scholiis et indice copioso, omnia studio et opera Danielis Heinsii. Accedunt Jos. Scaligeri, Is. Casauboni, et ejusdem Danielis Heinsii notae et lectiones. N.pl. [Heidelbergae], ex bibliopolio Commeliniano, 1604, 1 vol. 4^o.

¹Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.240.

²Ibid., p.241.

³Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', I, ll.101-104, p.255.

Dimoff¹ notes that Chénier refers to the Latin translation of Theocritus made by Heinsius and to be found in this edition.²

17. Theophrastus

Joannis Meursii Theophrastus, sive de illius libris qui injuria temporis interciderunt liber singularis. Accedit Theophrastearum lectionum libellus. Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Elzeviriana, 1640, 1 vol. 32^o.

This edition is to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 97) (previously 9043). The fiche d'entrée assigns the book to André Chénier.

18. Tyrtaeus

Tyrtaei quae restant omnia collegit, commentariis illustravit, edidit Christ. Adolph. Klotzius. Breae, impensis Ludovici Foersteri, 1764, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 52) (previously 9212). The fiche d'entrée assigns this book to André Chénier.

C. Works of scholarship

1. Casaubon

Isaaci Casauboni de satyrica graecorum poesi et romanorum satira libri duo, in quibus etiam poetae recensentur qui in utraque floruerunt. Parisiis, apud Ambrosium et Hieronymum Drouart, 1615, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition, B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 54) (previously 9315), is assigned by the fiche d'entrée to André Chénier.

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.236.

² Walter, 'Notes philologiques et littéraires', XXVII, p.772.

2. Corsini

Eduardi Corsini, Cl. Reg. scholarum piarum in Academia Pisana philosophiae professoris dissertationes quatuor agonisticae, quibus Olympiorum, Pythiorum, Nemeorum atque Isthmiorum tempus inquiritur ac demonstratur. Accedit Hieronicarum catalogus, editio longe uberior et accuratior. Lipsiae, sumtu Joh. Frid. Iahni, librarii, 1752, 1 vol. 8^o.

Dimoff¹ has shown that Chénier's references to Corsini's dissertations correspond to this edition: 'Avant et après Pindare la couronne fut de pin. V. Corsini dissert. 4, p.III'.²

3. Maittaire

Graecae linguae dialecti, in scholae regiae Westmonasteriensis usum, recognitae opera Mich. Maittaire. Praefationem et appendicem ex Apollonii Dyscolii fragmento inedito addidit J.F. Reitzius. Hagae Comitum, apud Joannem Neaulme, bibliopolam, 1738, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 21) (previously 8911) and is assigned to André Chénier by the fiche d'entrée.

4. Meursius

a. Joann. Meursi Graecia ludibunda, sive de ludis Graecorum liber singularis. Accessit Danielis Souteri Palamedes, sive de tabula lusoria, alea et variis ludis libri tres. Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Elzeviriana, 1595, 1 vol. 12^o.

This edition is to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 69) (previously 8768). It exhibits marginalia in Chénier's own hand.

¹Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.246.

²Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', IV, 6, ll.9-10, p.260.

- i. p.15 'in Alcurano Salomoni tribuitur. vid. Schickard. Jarich p.66'.
- ii. p.28 'ōiō vid. Schickard in Jarich proem'.
- iii. p.28 '* vid. Schickard'.
- iv. p.29 'vid. ōiō Schickard. Jarich pag. 146'.

b. Johannis Meursi Graecia feriata, sive de festis Graecorum libri sex.
Lugduni Batavorum, ex officina Elzeviriana, 1619, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 48)
(previously 9298), and is assigned to Chénier by the fiche d'entrée.

c. V.Cl. Johannis Meursi Miscellanea Laconica, sive variarum antiquitatum
laconicarum libri IV, nunc primum editi cura Samuelis Pufendorfii.
Amstelodami, apud Jodocum Pluymer, 1661, 1 vol. 4^o.

Dimoff¹ notes that Chénier refers to this edition in a note for his
'Bucoliques'.

d. Joannis Meursi Creta, Cyprus, Rhodus, sive de nobilissimarum harum
insularum rebus et antiquitatibus commentarii postumi, nunc primum editi.
Amstelodami, apud Abrahamum Wolfgangum, 1675, 1 vol. 4^o.

Dimoff² has shown that Chénier alludes to this edition: 'Crit. l.I,
c.6'.³

5. Muncker, Thomas⁴

Mythographi Latini. C. Jul. Hyginus. Fab. Planciades Fulgentius. Lactantius
Placidus. Albricus Philosophus. Thomas Munckerus omnes ex libris Mss.
partim, partim conjecturis verisimilibus emendavit, et commentariis
perpetuis, qui instar bibliothecae historiae fabularis esse possint,
instruxit. Amsterodami, ex officina viduae Joannis A. Someren, 1 vol. 8^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 37)
(previously 8970). Although it is not mentioned by Dimoff, the book exhibits

¹ Dimoff, La Vie et l'Oeuvre, Vol. II, p.247. See p.458 above.

² Dimoff, ibid., p.247.

³ Dimoff, Vol. I, 'Bucoliques', I, l.100, p.255.

⁴ This entry should be transferred to p.449 above.

a marginal note that seems clearly to be in the hand of the poet. Commenting Hyginus Fabula CCLXXVII 'Rerum inventores primi...Palamades autem Nauplii filius invenit aequae literas : undecim', Chénier notes 'undecim. Hoc forte dubium ait Servius. Sed certum tamen θ, ϕ, χ , ab eo inventas cum adspiratione. Vid: eum ad Virg: II Aen. v. VII'.

6. Muret

M. Antonii Mureti variarum lectionum libri octo, ad Hippolytum Estensem, Cardinalem ac Principem illustrissimum, in quibus Graecorum testimonia in sermonem latinum pridem conversa per Nicolaum Nathanaelum Cretensem nunc multo quam ante emendatiora in lucem prodeunt cum gemino indice locorum, qui his in libris explicantur et rerum memorabilium, per Joannem Nicodorum Sammaxentinum. Parisiis, apud Marcum Locqueneulx, 1578, 1 vol. 32^o.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 104) (previously 8994 Ch 2-9). It is assigned to Chénier by the note 'Vient d'André'.

7. Musgrave

Exercitationum in Euripidem libri duo. Auctore S. Musgrave A.M. Medicinae studioso, societatis regiae Londiniensis socio. Lugduni Batavorum, ex typographeo Dammeano, 1762.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 23) (previously 9004). Although Dimoff does not mention this book a loose note by Gabriel de Chénier claims 'Ce livre a appartenu à André'.

D. French Authors

1. La Fontaine

Fables de La Fontaine, tome second, Paris, Didot Aîné, 1782.

This edition is to be found at the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 95) (previously 9068), and although it is not mentioned by Dimoff in his catalogue, it contains a note by Gabriel de Chénier, 'Vient de mon oncle

Constantin qui l'avait eu de la succession d'André. Le 1er tome manque'.

2. Sebillet, Thomas

Art Poétique François, pour l'instruction des jeunes studieux, et encor' peu avancés en la Poésie Française [par T. Sebillet]. Avec le Quintil Horatian, sur la defense et illustration de la langue Française [de J. du Bellay par Ch. Fontaine]. Lyon, Jean Temporel, 1556, 1 vol.

This edition is to be found in the B.M.C. Ref: 099.5 (Ch. 96) (previously 9366). Although Dimoff has not included this book in his catalogue, the title page clearly indicates 'notes d'André Chénier', and the catalogue adds 'Copies par G. de Chénier de notes manuscrites d'André Chénier'.

i. Fixed opposite page 155, the loose note in Gabriel de Chénier's hand: 'Page 155. Thomas Sibilet feint ici de ne pas savoir que la deffense & illustration de la langue française, publiée sous les initiales, J.D.B.A. est de Joachim du Bellay, & il critique ce livre, qui était le manifeste de l'école de Ronsard. (André Chénier)'.

ii. Fixed opposite page 203: 'Page 203. critique de Ronsard (A. Chénier)'.

iii. pp.262-3:

(1) Recto 'Le Caron dont parle ici Thomas Sibilet est sans doute Loys de Caron, dit Charoudar, avocat, auteur du grand coutumier de France. Il a fait des poésies mais il était né en 1536 et il n'aurait eu que 20 ans en 1556'.

(2) Verso 'Page 263 Le Conte d'Alsinois les six vers ou hexastiques'.

iv. p.265:

'Page 265. Thomas Sibilet critique Ronsard p.203 & ici il l'appèle divin dans son Sonnet (A. Chénier)'.

Appendix III

The Elegiac Tradition: Greek Elegy

The origins of the Latin Love Elegy have preoccupied scholars for centuries, and the speculation continues today. Elegy, defined in its original sense of poetry composed in the elegiac distich, dates back at least as far as the Greek elegists of the seventh century B.C. There is now general agreement as to the nature of Archaic Greek Elegy. Those fragments that survive are almost all subjective and indicate the genre's hortatory, sententious, and gnomic character, encompassing a wide range of themes, military, political, social, and moral. The elegies of Callinus, Tyrtaeus, and Archilochus, for example, deal with military topics, whereas Solon used the elegiac metre for his political and moral diatribes. Fragments of amatory Elegy form part of the Theognidean corpus. Of special interest for students of the Latin Love Elegy is Mimnermus who was considered by the Alexandrians and Propertius¹ as the founder of amatory Elegy. Although little can be deduced from the fragments of Mimnermus' work which remain, it is probable that he wrote elegiac poetry about his love for his mistress Nanno.²

When we turn to the development of Elegy during the Hellenistic period, we find that traditional interpretations have recently been re-assessed. The problem lies in the fact that, although the Augustan elegists acknowledge the influence of Hellenistic Elegy, no fragment of a 'subjective' love elegy comparable with the work of the Latin poets has been discovered. The conjecture has been generally accepted³ that the

¹ Propertius, Lib. I, el. ix, l.11.

² See F. Cairns, Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp.217-219, and G. Luck, The Latin Love Elegy, second edition, London, Methuen, 1969, pp.31-32.

³ G. Luck, *ibid.*, pp.33-42.

elegists of this period did not produce 'subjective' love elegies, but that they wrote 'objective' narrative elegies in the third person about the loves of mythological and historical characters. These lengthy narrative elegies are then distinguished from the brief amatory epigrams in the elegiac metre in which the Hellenistic poets wrote about their 'own' feelings and experiences. In this argument the Latin Love Elegy is seen as an original contribution, which combined Hellenistic Elegy and Epigram and also drew from other literary sources including New Comedy and Mime.¹ F. Cairns, while accepting that these elements are vital components of the Latin Love Elegy, has now modified the general theories by conjecturing the existence of subjective 'frames' in Hellenistic Elegy.² He cites the example of Antimachus (circa 400 B.C.) who is known to have written an elegiac work to console himself for the death of his wife. In this work, named the Lyde after his wife, he told of the sorrows of heroes at the loss of their beloved. In the traditional view Antimachus was hailed as the inventor of Hellenistic narrative Elegy. F. Cairns proposes that in the prologue or in the epilogue Antimachus might have dealt with his own loss and so speculates that 'there was at least a subjective frame to the Lyde'.³ He similarly suggests that the narrative material in Philetas' work, dedicated to his mistress Bittis, and in Hermesianax' Leontion, might have been preceded, linked, or followed by subjective amatory passages.⁴ F. Cairns states clearly the implications of his interpretation:

The importance of the subjective erotic frames of Hellenistic narrative elegies lies in their relationship with the narrative content. It is clear that the Greek elegists

¹ J. Barsby, Ovid's Amores Book One, edited with translation and running commentary by John A. Barsby, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973, pp.10-12.

² F. Cairns, *ibid.*, pp.219-224.

³ *Ibid.*, p.220.

⁴ F. Cairns draws a parallel with Callimachus' Aitia, an elegiac narrative work linked by subjective passages, *ibid.*, pp.221-223.

were emphasising analogies between themselves and their heroes and in doing so they created or implied poetic personae for themselves. It was this which encouraged the Roman elegists to go one stage further, to identify rather than analogise and to expand the process of subjectivisation by adding to their own erotic personae all the emotions and experiences of the love-sick heroes of Greek narrative erotic elegy.¹

¹F. Cairns, *ibid.*, p.224.

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A. ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

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Bibliothèque Nationale (B.N.), Paris, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 6848-6850, 'Oeuvres poétiques d'André Chénier, 218, 224, et 190 feuillets', 6851, 'Notes et fragments divers d'André Chénier, 379 feuillets'

6848, 'Bucoliques'

6849, 'L'Invention', 'Hermès', 'Suzanne', 'L'Amérique', 'L'Art d'aimer', 'Poème sur la superstition', 'Bataille d'Arminius', 'La France libre', 'La République des lettres', 'Théâtre'

6850, 'Elégies', 'Epîtres', 'Hymnes', 'Odes', 'Iambes'

6851, 'Apologie', 'Histoire du Christianisme', 'Réflexions sur l'esprit de Parti', 'Essai sur les causes et les effets de la perfection et de la décadence des lettres et des arts', 'De la cause des désordres qui troublent la France', 'Fragments satiriques', 'Notes sur les Chinois'

Other minor manuscripts referring to André Chénier are to be found as follows: nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 23863, 23687, 12694.

Bibliothèque Municipale de Carcassonne (B.M.C.), Donation Chénier, R.3. 11768-11905

The manuscripts deal with the whole family, and therefore some do not have a great relevance to the present study, for example:

R.3. 11770, 11784-11791, refer to Gabriel de Chénier,
11798, Constantin-Xavier de Chénier,
11803-11809, Louis-Sauveur de Chénier

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- 11812, André Chénier - M. Louis de Chénier, Mme Elisabeth de Chénier, Constantin-Xavier de Chénier, correspondance,
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