

Only by Failure:
The Many Faces
of the Impossible Life
of Terence Gray

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Only *by* Failure

*The Many Faces
of the Impossible
Life of Terence Gray*

PAUL CORNWELL

*Only by 'failure' can I succeed . . .
Thus ends my work? So it does!
Are you perhaps wondering why?
There might be a reason.*

—WEI WU WEI
Posthumous Pieces

*"Failed? Oh, I don't think it failed . . .
these were seven most exciting years."*

—NORMAN MARSHALL
The Quest for Terence Gray, Anglia Television



CAMBRIDGE

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Terence James Stannus Gray 1895–1987

DIRECTOR OF THE FESTIVAL THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE 1926–1933

The post-war world has found an artistic rebirth. It has found a means of self-expression. In architecture, in painting, sculpture, furniture, decoration, all the handicrafts, the theatre, and all other media in which the human mind finds expression in art, new methods, new forms, new inspirations are bursting with life.

—TERENCE GRAY
'The Art Theatre Movement'

The theatre practised as an art-form is a precious thing that must be cultivated wherever civilised man lives . . .

—TERENCE GRAY
'I Look at the Audience' *Theatre Arts Monthly*

In sweeping away the cobwebs of external reality, which were choking the theatre, the theatre as an art-form reappeared and took its rightful place beside the other arts.

—TERENCE GRAY
'This Age in the Theatre', *The Bookman*

One is writing of something that potentially has been established for at least a decade . . . in Prague and in Paris, in Berlin and in Moscow, in Vienna and in Cambridge . . . modern stagecraft has been struggling to birth . . .

—TERENCE GRAY
'Theory and Practice of Stagecraft'

Two days later, the old man caught up with our hero, and presented him with a sack full of butterflies . . . Petron received them graciously, but when the old man had gone, 'What on earth,' he said, 'am I to do with all this beauty?' and he pitched the whole sackful down the cliff.

—HUGH SYKES DAVIES
Petron

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List of Works Published by Terence Gray

Books and Articles

- 1920 *The Life of Queen Hatshepsut* (Heffer, Cambridge) 'Egyptian Dancing' (*The Dancing Times*, October)
- 1922 'Let Egypt Dance Again' (*The Dancing Times*, July) 'Dance Drama' (*The Dancing Times*, September)
- 1923 *And in the Tomb were Found . . .* (Heffer, Cambridge, and Appleton, New York)
- 1924 *Kings and Queens of Ancient Egypt* illustrations by W.M. Brunton, with introduction and chapter on Khafra by Gray (Hodder and Stoughton)
- 1925 *Cuchulainn, an Epic Drama of the Gael* (Heffer, Cambridge) *Stage lighting for 'Little' Theatres* by C. Harold Ridge, foreword by Basil Dean and introduction by Gray (Heffer, Cambridge) 'The Tremendous Lover' (*Poetry and the Play*, June)
- 1926 *Dance Drama, Experiments in the Art of the Theatre* (Heffer, Cambridge) *Festival Review*, from 1926 to 1933: numerous editorial articles as Terence Gray and under various pseudonyms (including 'The Theatre in Paris' and 'Can the theatre be practised as an art-form?')

- 1927 *Red Nights at the Tcheka* by de Lorde and Henri Bauche, translated by Gray, unpublished
- 1928 *Stage Lighting* by C. Harold Ridge, with preface by Norman Marshall and added text by Gray (Heffer), 'Suggestions for the new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre' (*The Bookman's Journal*, XVI-6) 'The Art Theatre Movement' (an address to N.U.T. Conference in Cambridge)
- 1931 'I Look at the Audience' (*Theatre Arts Monthly*, October)
- 1932 'This Age in the Theatre' (*The Bookman*, October) 'The Theatre Shall Be Theatrical' (*Varsity*, October)
- 1934 'Theory and Practice of Stagecraft' (*Theatre and Stage*, Pitman monthly)
- 1941 'Sara Payne's Ballets' (*The Bell*, Dublin, July)
- 1955 *La Doctrine Supreme* by Benoit translated by Gray with foreword by Aldous Huxley (Routledge, London and Pantheon, New York)
- 1958 *Fingers Pointing Towards the Moon* by Wei Wu Wei (Gray) (Routledge and Kegan Paul)
- 1960 *Why Lazarus Laughed, The Essential Doctrine* by Wei Wu Wei (Routledge)
- 1963 *Ask the Awakened, The Negative Way* by Wei Wu Wei (Routledge)
- 1964 *All Else is Bondage* by Wei Wu Wei (Hong Kong University Press)
- 1965 *Open Secret* by Wei Wu Wei (Hong Kong)
- 1966 *The Tenth Man* by Wei Wu Wei (Hong Kong)
- 1968 *Posthumous Pieces* by Wei Wu Wei with copyright Terence Gray (Hong Kong/Oxford University)

- 1973 *Ask the Awakened* published in America (Little, Brown & Co of Boston)
- 1974 *Unworldly Wise* by O.O.O. (Wei Wu Wei/ Gray) (Hong Kong)
- 1977 *La Voie Negative* (Edition de la Difference, Paris), French translation of *Ask the Awakened*
- 1982 *All Else is Bondage* (new edition by Hong Kong U.P.)
- 1999 *All Else is Bondage* (new edition by Sunstar, USA)
- 2002/3 *Fingers Pointing Towards the Moon, Why Lazarus Laughed, Ask the Awakened, The Tenth Man* (new editions by Sentient Publications, Boulder, USA)
- 2003 *And in the Tomb were Found . . .* (new edition by Kessinger, U.S.A.)
- 2004 *Open Secret and Posthumous Pieces* (new editions by Sentient) Forthcoming: *All Else is Bondage* and *Unworldly Wise*

Terence Gray's Plays and Dance-dramas

1. *The Life of Queen Hatshepsut* (Heffer, 1920)
 2. *The Building of the Pyramid*
 3. *The Nameless*
 4. *A Royal Audience*
 5. *And in a Tomb were Found . . .*
 6. *Love Songs and Dirges of Old Egypt (a narration)*
- 2-6 above were contained in *And in a Tomb were Found . . .* (Heffer, 1923).

The Building of the Pyramid was first performed in June, 1930, at the London Hippodrome at a special matinee performance to honour the

Egyptologist Flinders Petrie of the British School of Archaeology.

A Royal Audience was first performed in February, 1927, in Paris, in a translation by Henri Bauche; then in English at the Festival Theatre in May, 1928.

And in a Tomb were Found ... was first performed at the Festival Theatre in May, 1927.

7. *Cuchulainn, an epic drama, a cycle of four plays* (Heffer, 1925): *The Young Cuchulainn* (part one)

8. *The Tragedy of Deirdre* (part two)

9. *Maeve of Connaught* (part three)

10. *The Only Son of Aoife* (part four)

11. *The Eternal Rhythm*

12. *The Poisoned Kiss*

13. *The Renaissance*

14. *The Scorpions of Ysit*

The Scorpions of Ysit was first performed as a ballet with choreography by Ninette de Valois in November, 1928, at the Royal Court Theatre, and revised in November, 1932, at Sadler's Wells.

15. *The Cardinal's Bracelet*

16. *The Tremendous Lover*

11–16 were contained in *Dance Drama* (Heffer, 1926). *The Tremendous Lover* first appeared in *Poetry and the Play* in the first edition under a new title in June, 1925 (previously the journal was called *Poetry*).

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As Terence Gray did at the beginning of his book *Dance Drama* in 1926, I dedicate my book to the young dancers and actors who are now entering the profession.

Preface

1. A personal visit to the Cambridge Festival Theatre

I hear the two worn and broken doors being unbolted and I enter through a narrow slit between them, leaving behind the sunshine of a fine sunny day in May. I walk across the empty foyer, my footsteps echoing on the bare concrete floor where once the walls and floor had been covered with carpet, and then through two doors into the semi-dark auditorium of the disused Regency theatre, the bustling Theatre Royal as it once was before being renamed the Festival Theatre in the nineteen-twenties and now standing silent and forgotten on the edge of a noisy Newmarket Road in Cambridge.

In one glance, I take in my view of the empty sunken pit edged in red brick, below the level where I stand, and look across to the worn frontages of the two circles and then, above, up to the vast space of the gods, stretching up high into the darkness towards the ceiling, now full of holes from the theatre's many neglected years. As my guide and I walk on, round the back of the musty theatre, along the narrow corridors past series of doors which had once been the entrances to the boxes and I imagine the noise and the excitement of the evenings of the performances at the theatre, with the applause and the laughter. After a steep climb, we reach the highest level and stand on the dusty floor-boards of the large open space which we call the gods, where today there is ample room for at least a hundred or more others, and we look back, down

towards the stage. I see the Greek trapezium above what was once a proscenium opening and, at the rear of the widened stage, the vast curving cyclorama, one of the first in England. Atmosphere seems to simply drip from the walls and the ghosts of actors past are almost to be heard, the voices of a century or more ago and others of more recent times; even the chanting of the congregations during the days when the theatre was used as a mission hall seems to be there in my mind's ears.

Enid Collett, one-time secretary to Terence Gray and who died at the age of over ninety a year ago, told me that when she was taken back to the theatre, shortly before my own first visit, she had been reduced to tears when she saw the deterioration. She had known the building when it was furnished with plush chairs and the paint was new and bright and colourful and there was always the smell in the air of fine wine and the best gourmet food.

The building, which had once been the Festival Theatre and before that the Theatre Royal, was recently purchased by the Windhorse Trust on behalf of the Buddhists of the Cambridge Buddhist Centre, the previous owners being the Cambridge Arts Theatre who bought the theatre from Gray's father. The Trustees of the Arts Theatre had used the building for over fifty years as a space for storage and scene-construction, lacking the resources and the will to promote a revival of the theatre, which would have made a second professional theatre in the city and Cambridge knows too well the implications of that kind of competition. The New Theatre in Cambridge, once a rival to the Festival Theatre, had been forced through falling audiences to become a cinema and, when demolished, an office block.

Since my first visit, the Cambridge Buddhists have renovated the building, being able to inherit a new roof raised by courtesy of the National Lottery, and they now show their total commitment to the preservation of the theatre and the adjoining house. Their first "open day", when they displayed their new carpets and their bright new paint, was also the beginning of the new millennium, and the preservers of the ancient theatre even managed to recreate the exact entrance doors as they were when the Festival Theatre opened in 1926. They now use the theatre for meditation and for the presentation of their Buddhist festivals. On my second visit, I was able to see a large golden Buddha floodlit in the centre of the stage, looking so theatrical, and I realised that they had given the old theatre, in their own particular and special way, a new lease of life. The Cambridge Buddhists had welcomed me, a total stranger on the day that I first knocked on their door, and given me

every possible help and had showed immense patience as I wandered from room to room and wondered at the old stage-turntable under the floor of the stage and at the dressing rooms where the back-stage Gray would have once roamed. My new friends at the Buddhist Centre were genuinely excited when I returned for a third time, to tell them of my latest discovery, that Terence Gray, in the last part of his long life, had published a series of eight books which, although passionately private to the man, had leanings and sympathies towards the world of Zen Buddhism.

One of Gray's "experiments in the Art of the Theatre", which he conjured up in his imagination over thirty years before his first book of mysticism and had published earlier the same year as the Festival Theatre opened, is called *The Eternal Rhythm*, and in the play he had already displayed his interest, if not his participation, in Buddhism:

I will suggest that in this world sometimes a soul which has achieved self-consciousness meets another soul, one which is unconscious, one whose personality still sleeps, and loves it. Gradually the self-conscious soul awakens the other and develops it until it reaches its own high level of development. But the newly-awakened soul does not stop here, and finally the once unconscious soul becomes greater than the one which has developed it, and surpasses it. There is, perhaps, a strange sort of universal spiritual law about this, a sad, beautiful, tragic inevitability. It seems to be somehow connected with the design of things, it might even be traced to the complicated and intricate workings of the Eternal Rhythm itself. The soul which is now the greater eventually attains a higher sphere of consciousness. What shall we call it? The Buddhists call it Nirvana . . .

(Terence Gray, *Dance Drama*, Heffer, 1926, p 59)

Somehow, oddly perhaps but also true and pleasing, the building which was the Festival Theatre, now in its present guise as a centre for Buddhists, has turned full circle.

2. Who was this man called Terence Gray?

My visits to the Festival Theatre were the way I began my investigation. As a Cambridge theatre-goer since 1943, I knew that a man called Terence Gray had achieved a reputation which extended far beyond the

city. I knew from childhood memories that the Festival Theatre had been still alive, if not exactly flourishing, during my early school-days in Cambridge and I vaguely remember being taken to a pantomime there, possibly a year or two before the theatre died in 1940. Otherwise, apart from the odd reference I had seen in my reading about the theatre in general, I only knew that Terence Gray had once lived in the house, now demolished, at Wandlebury, which is an extensive country estate just outside of the city boundaries now owned by the Cambridge Preservation Society and used by local people for recreation.

So it was with the performances at the Festival Theatre that I began my research, in order to find out why the theatre was well-known and why it is still remembered with warm enthusiasm by theatregoers today. There are several complete collections of the programmes of the Festival Theatre during Gray's time, from 1926 to 1933, held at the Cambridge Arts Theatre, the Cambridgeshire Collection, and in the University Library. The Cambridgeshire Collection in the City Library has newspaper cuttings and sets of local newspapers and journals of the period, and books of memoirs by others who worked there (actors such as Flora Robson, Robert Donat and Robert Morley, and producers such as Norman Marshall and Tyrone Guthrie). The three main references for the Festival Theatre during Gray's time are *The Other Theatre* by Norman Marshall, published in 1947, which has a long chapter on the Festival Theatre as Marshall remembered it fourteen years later, Richard Cave's booklet with a comprehensive set of photographs called *Terence Gray and the Cambridge Festival Theatre* (1980), and Kathrine Sorley Walker's excellent biography of Ninette de Valois (1987) which has much carefully-researched detail of her years at the Festival Theatre with her cousin, Terence Gray.

I soon realised that it was indeed Gray who had provided the creative spark that set the old Theatre Royal, long semi-derelict, on its new path to become the Festival Theatre. He was the co-director, the owner and manager, and later the main producer; in short, he could be described as the theatre supremo. His co-founder was Harold Ridge, an expert on the new European lighting, who had made a huge contribution in the first year but soon dropped by the wayside. The initial mystery, which had attracted me and still does, was how it was that Gray, a man with a limited public education (two years at school at Eton College and one year at Magdalene College in Cambridge) and with serious emotional problems as a child (he was an acute stutterer) and a career post-war in another occupation, could possibly have known exactly what he wanted

to do in the Festival Theatre. His aims and intentions were very clear, however, as can be seen in his writing in numerous articles, despite the fact that he was totally inexperienced in practical theatre. But he had obviously read widely and, as I was soon to discover, he had been enthused by certain theatrical productions and people in the Cambridge University theatre circle immediately after the Great War.

Apart from what is recalled in the personal memoirs written by actors and producers who worked at the Festival Theatre, there seemed to be, as I widened my research, very little to be found about Gray's personal life, although certain features of his behaviour soon became obvious in reading his own writing, particularly in the theatre programme called the *Festival Review* in which the writing was of a more intimate, chatty nature. I personally found that local people who remember him from his brief return visits to the home of his parents at Wandlebury in the post-war years, from 1945 to the sale of the estate in 1955, were very reluctant to talk about him. One such told me, in all seriousness, that he was "not a very nice person at all." Others I contacted, such as Enid Collett (Gray's secretary), were really too old to recall what are now distant years, beyond the kind of factual information that can also be traced in books and articles. It is indeed a long time ago, seventy years since Gray left the theatre. But for me, attempting as I was to read anything and everything in print about Terence Gray and to look for possible links in the lives of other people who were in Cambridge at that time (1926–1933) and somehow had a connection with the theatre, I soon began to get the feeling that Gray was a very unusual personality: a showman and yet a shy man who liked to hide, although undoubtedly also a creative "doer", a real worker, as a theatre impresario and a promoter of plays as well as a manager, a producer and a creative artist very much involved with scenic design. Altogether Gray was a man who lived life to the full.

The complete story of the life of Terence Gray would make an epic widescreen drama, taking the viewers (readers) from the troubles of Ireland to the peace of a rural estate in Cambridgeshire, to Eton College and Magdalene College, to the work of the Red Cross ambulance brigades within gunfire in France and Italy during the Great War, across the deserts of Egypt in search of treasure, to the theatres of Paris and Dublin during the twenties and in 1926 to the old Regency theatre in Cambridge, to Mexico and the legend of Quetzalcoatl, to the sun-blessed vineyards of the Rhone Valley, to the racecourses of Ireland and England, and finally across the countries of the Far East as a new-found

mystic, as Gray was to become in his later life, when he grew a long white beard and went in search of enlightenment. Throw into this mixture the story of his heritage as the son of a rich Irish aristocrat and his two marriages and an affair, the first marriage to the daughter of a lady with the family name of Rimsky-Korsakov and the second to an exiled princess from Russian Georgia, and the end result is a colourful and unique story, and an impossible life for one man.

The descriptions of Gray by writers in local newspapers long after the closure of the theatre suggest something of the turmoil of the seven years of the Festival Theatre. In 1964, but over thirty years after Gray left Cambridge, H.H.H. (*Cambridge Evening News* 10 August 1964) dismissed Gray superficially as the “angry young man of the twenties.” Twelve years later, George Marks, who was a critic during the last years of the theatre, described Gray as a “cult figure and mystery man.” (*Cambridge Evening News* 29 November 1976.) There are many similar remarks in the books of memoirs written by actors and producers of the time, but perhaps the most extreme was that provided by the actor Robert Morley, himself a very flamboyant figure, who in 1966 described Gray as “the only genius I have ever met in the theatre, besides Bernard Shaw” (page 65). Perhaps together the three random comments provide a starting-point, although inevitably just a hazy sketch of the public Terence Gray seen in reflection, but they fail to reveal any secrets about the private man who throughout most of his life wished (and managed) to remain anonymous, hidden by masks and pseudonyms.

At the Festival Theatre, Gray had indicated that he was essentially serious and well-intentioned and a highly creative man of the theatre. Before Cambridge, his personal life had been emotionally rich if not entirely academic, with an unsettled childhood, uprooting from Ireland to Cambridgeshire and with a father who was an active man-of-the-world who travelled widely and was totally preoccupied with his estates and his racehorses. As a boy, the young Terence would often remain at home, lonely and with only the company of his nanny and his private tutor. His two years at Eton College had been a trial for him, suffering as he did from an acute stammer and lacking the social experience that other more robust boys possessed. His year at college in Cambridge during the build-up to the Great War, when his own college was losing students for war service each day and the town was full of battledress and the sound of marching, was far from a happy experience. Post-war, his life remained unsettled, although he managed to gain a certain reputation as an Egyptologist and as a writer during the years when he

was spending time away from his first wife, wandering round the deserts of Egypt. Then from 1926, he started to earn (unfairly) his reputation as a defiant and angry director, for newspaper editors considered then as now that such head-lines were more newsworthy than what was actually being achieved in such a volatile profession. As an impresario, Gray was forced to fight his own private war with the Lord Chamberlain over the censoring of plays which he had wanted to stage. He had also to fight long and hard against the over-opinionated young student critics of the University, young men who became increasingly at odds with Gray's modernist theatre style and who made wild comments about his behaviour, in a way that Gray condemned as naive, uninformed and insensitive. Gray, to his credit, really wanted nothing to distract him from his total concentration on the main thrust of his endeavours, which was to promote the new art of the theatre as seen by (in particular) Edward Gordon Craig, and to replace the outdated realistic presentations of the theatre with something more artistic and vibrant and fitting with the modern world being developed throughout Europe and in America in the years between the wars.

It is Gray's public face which is easier to assess. He can be visualised from the few photographs available, with his black hair and pharaoh beard, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a black cloak, and often to be seen driving round the town in his old German car. Julian Trevelyan, the artist and son of the poet R.C. Trevelyan (who translated the first play to be seen in the Festival Theatre), was at Cambridge University in the late twenties and wrote that Gray was "an almost mythical figure, shy to the point of embarrassing everyone around him, who could occasionally be seen moving through the foyers, a tall, handsome man with a black beard." (1957, page 19)

Creatively, Gray was streets ahead of most, if not all, of the theatre-people working in England at the time. He had his purpose, he worked at it, and he wished that others would respect the sincerity of his efforts. This confidence, even if seen to be sometimes verging on conceit, may have put the backs up of other lesser mortals, such as the cloistered University critics who were not directly involved in the emotions and the toil and sweat of the actual day-to-day running of the repertory theatre, working all hours of the day and night. Gray's colleagues often found him difficult, that is undoubtedly true. Harold Ridge, his partner, and Harold Prentice, the first producer at the Festival Theatre, were unable to remain very long with Gray, for unknown but many suspected reasons. When in his last season Gray wanted to bring back some of the

now-famous names who had become established in their careers in his theatre, hardly anyone of note was able or wanted to do so, although there could well have been commercial reasons for this. But, disregarding for the moment any debate about the success or failure of the Festival Theatre in terms of its impact on world theatre, it cannot be denied that Terence Gray, almost single-handedly, established his theatre, virtually from nothing with a new unknown company of actors, to become the prime experimental theatre in England in the early thirties. Many who knew the Festival Theatre well and enjoyed the performances described it as an “unique” place. Many student writers were enthusiasts and praised him and did much to spread the news of his achievement. Alistair Cooke, writing for an American journal, and the young student-poet Kathleen Raine, who described in some detail the enrichment which the theatre had offered in her early student days in Cambridge, are just two examples. It has been said that the reputation of the Festival Theatre at the time was such that people came from all over Europe to see certain productions.

The story of Terence Gray is not, of course, just an account of the seven years of the Festival Theatre and he certainly did not disappear at the end of the theatre years into the sunset, settling in peace under the vines in Southern France, as many local writers (and writers of theatrical reference books) seemed to think; for Gray developed an important second life, a life that many would claim to be his main vocation, as a writer of mystical books on the outer fringes of Zen Buddhism. But as in his work in the theatre, Gray still needed to be different, and his attitude in his eight books was unorthodox to an extreme, although like much of his writing about the theatre the eight books brought out the full extent of his humour as well as his deep curiosity about the world in his search for enlightenment. Writing under the pseudonym of Wei Wu Wei for all except his last book, he undoubtedly created his own following, especially at first in India but more recently world-wide. In later life he had a circle of friends, many of them influential Buddhist writers. Today his books, most of which have been long out of print, are searched for on the Internet and have all been recently reprinted.

So here, as storytellers say, begins the story of the Anglo-Irish Terence Gray: Irish Aristocrat born in Suffolk in England, scholar and writer, Egyptologist, historian, playwright, essayist, director, producer, theatrical supremo, wine grower, racehorse owner, wanderer and traveller, and Buddhist/Taoist philosopher. The full story has never been told before, and this attempt to write a biography will probably be considered by

many to be but a first attempt at tracing the details of his long, adventurous life. To sum up, there are still several mysteries about Terence Gray that disturb: for example, what was the truth about his birth, his family upbringing and his unsuccessful schooling, how was it that he could begin to immerse himself in Egyptian archaeology without any training or known academic study, how did he plan his theatre in such detail almost as a military operation, despite being totally inexperienced other than as a hopeful but mostly-unperformed playwright, what really happened to him in the breakdown of the delicate relationship with the student critics and why was it that some Cambridge students promoted a kind of “revenge” in the form of sketches in a public revue in which Gray’s alleged extra-marital affair was aired and attacked? Why was it, indeed, that Gray gave up his theatre after just seven years, offering only the bland statement that he had done all that he wished to do, when there was obviously still so much unfinished?

Many will find within these pages an amazing story and an enigma, an account of a highly influential and yet today largely unknown man, a person who was always wanting to live his life out of the spotlight and yet was always at the same time promoting his own reputation, and a man who died in a country far from that of his origin without anybody apart from his family and his close friends knowing. Whether or not he finally considered his own life a success or a failure is really not important, although he offered one tantalizing clue in the last words of his penultimate book. He wrote in 1968 at the age of seventy-three in *Posthumous Pieces*, “Only by ‘failure’ can I succeed . . . Are you perhaps wondering why? There might be a reason.” What that reason was must and should remain Terence Gray’s secret, as indeed he would have wished.

Chronology

- 1867 Harold Gray born at Graymount, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, son of Major George Gray and Elizabeth Stannus.
- 1894 Harold Gray married Rowena Stannus, daughter of Thomas and Margaret Stannus, of Maghraleave House, Lisburn near Belfast.
- 1895 Terence James Stannus Gray born 14th September and birth registered at Felixstowe, Suffolk, England.
- 1895 Harold Gray appointed High Sheriff, Antrim.
- 1904 Harold and Rowena Gray purchased Magog House, Wandlebury, Stapleford, near Cambridge.
- 1909 Terence Gray entered Eton College (like his father) but stayed for just two years.
- 1914 He entered Magdalene College, Cambridge (like his father). Education was interrupted by war, after just one year, and he did not return.
- 1915 He began service in Red Cross, serving as an ambulance driver in France and Italy. Mother was in charge of French Red Cross hospitals at Compiegne and Troyes.
- 1917 Gray was conscripted into the Royal Flying Corps.

- 1917 Gray married Vera Lowe, daughter of Harvey Lowe and Raissa Rimsky-Korsakov.
- 1920 Published book and article on Egypt.
- 1921 Daughter, Sonia Raissa, born to Terence and Vera Gray.
- 1922 Father elected as M.P. for Cambridgeshire but did not seek re-election in 1923.
- 1922/3 Published articles on Egyptian Dance and *Dance Drama*.
- 1923/4 Visited two sites in Egypt excavated by Guy Brunton, the husband of W.M. Brunton who illustrated three of Gray's books.
- 1925 Published book on Irish hero, Cuchulainn.
- 1925 Stage designs were awarded Gold Medal diploma at Paris International Exhibition of Decorative Arts.
- 1926 Published book on *Dance Drama*.
- 1926 Gray and Ridge opened the Festival Theatre in Cambridge and Gray began his seven years as Artistic Director with three performances in the ADC Theatre, Cambridge.
- 1928 Gray's *The Scorpions of Ysyt* performed at Royal Court with choreography by his cousin, Edris Stannus (Ninette de Valois).
- 1931 Gray took on the pseudonym of Quetzalcoatl.
- 1932 *The Scorpions of Ysyt* revised at Sadler's Wells, with new music by Gavin Gordon and designs by Fedorovitch.
- 1933 Gray retired from Theatre and settled in the South of France at Tain l'Hermitage, where his family had a vineyard.
- 1938 Father received a knighthood for public service.

- 1939 Father appointed High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Hunts. Gray returned to Ireland and stayed through the war years.
- 1941 Reviewed a ballet performance in Dublin.
- 1945 Vera Gray died and Gray returned to France.
- 1951 Father died and buried at Hyeres near Toulon, Provence. Property and wealth left in trust for his son.
- 1953 Mother died and buried at Stapleford Church near their home at Wandlebury. The properties in England, Ireland and France passed to Terence Gray.
- 1955 *La Doctrine Supreme* by Hubert Benoit with a foreword by Aldous Huxley and the translation by Gray.
- 1956 Gray's (inherited) horse Zarathrustra, trained by Captain Boyd-Rochfort, won Ascot Stakes.
- 1957 Zarathrustra won Ascot Gold Cup.
- 1957 Gray married a second time, to H.S.H. Natalie Imeritinsky, the second daughter of Squadron Leader H.S.H. Prince Michael Imeritinsky, R.A.F., of Georgia.
- 1958 First of Gray's eight books on Mysticism and Zen Buddhism published in London under the pseudonym of Wei Wu Wei.
- 1968 Death of Wei Wu Wei announced in Gray's penultimate book, *Posthumous Pieces*.
- 1987 Gray died aged 92 in Monte Carlo, leaving a surviving wife, Princess Natasha Mrs Gray, and daughter, Sonia Gray.

Beginning a New Life in England

1. A Suffolk Boy

The birth of Terence James Stannus Gray was registered on the 11th October, 1895, in Felixstowe, Suffolk, by Mrs Rowena Elizabeth Dorothea Gray formerly Stannus. Her husband's occupation was described simply as "landowner." She gave her (their) address, to the Registrar of the district of Woodbridge, as Maghraleave, Lisburn, Ireland, which was her own parents' home, despite the fact that she and Harold had been married for a year and had settled in Graymount, the home and estate which had been inherited by Harold following the death of his father. The birth had been on the 14th September, four weeks before the registration. Thus it was (it seems) a strange beginning for Terence, for there is a mystery about the circumstances and all sorts of answers. There are three questions? Why did the mother take the trouble to bring the baby to England for registration, or was Terence indeed born in Suffolk? Why, in either possibility, was there an interval of one month between the birth and the registration? Also, why offer your address as the home of your parents when the mother was (presumably) living in her husband's house at Graymount? The ledger entry for Terence when he entered Magdalene College, Cambridge, gave his birth-place as Felixstowe and not Ireland. Why, then, was there not a local Suffolk address? The fact remained that Rowena had married a man of a long line of Irish descent, a man who was surely very proud to have an Irish son and heir.

Harold Gray was born in 1867, the son of Major George Gray and Elizabeth Stannus. Elizabeth was the daughter of the Rev. James

Stannus, the Dean of Ross, and Elizabeth Burrowes, who in turn was the daughter of Sir Erasmus Burrowes, Bart. Rowena Stannus, Harold Gray's bride, was the daughter of Thomas and Margaret Stannus. The family name Stannus makes the lineage confusing, because the reality was that Harold and Rowena were cousins. The Gray family can be traced back to Sir Gilbert Gray of Perth, c. 1551, and the Stannus family back to William Stanehouse (Stannus) in the early seventeenth century.

Harold and Rowena were thus very well connected, being members of the Irish upper class in each family and both appearing with extensive entries in Burke's *Landed Gentry of Ireland*. Any irregularity in the story of the birth would have been an acute embarrassment to such people. The Gray and the Stannus families were also devoted Ulster people; later settled in England, Harold and Rowena became active members of the Conservative and Unionist Party, making their own allegiances abundantly clear. Harold had strong Anglo-Irish connections before the marriage: he had been educated in England at Eton College and then at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he matriculated but did not take a degree and played polo for the University of Cambridge and rowed for his college. In 1895, the year that young Terence was born, Harold was appointed as the High Sheriff of Antrim, an important and highly respected position in Irish society. He was described later as winning the respect of all classes of the community with his dignified manner and kindly courtesy (see Gaskell). He was also a Justice of the Peace for Antrim at Lisburn, the home of his bride.

Later, when Harold became the prospective Member of Parliament for Cambridgeshire in 1922, his supporters in the local Conservative and Unionist Party promoted in the local newspapers some unknown aspects of the character and appeal of their candidate. One, the *Cambridge Chronicle*, had a huge headline on the front page in thick black capital letters of VOTE GRAY, under which they described him, in their attempt to show him as the complete all-rounder, as an extensive landowner in Antrim and with some 1400 acres in Cambridgeshire. The farm vote was vital for Harold Gray if he was to have any chance, as a virtually unknown candidate, to unseat the sitting Liberal member. The description of their candidate continued: he had sailed a yacht round the north of Ireland, he had won several swimming championships, and he had since been twice round the world, visiting India and the United States, and he had been big game hunting in East Africa. Also, if that needed to be topped, he and his wife had been on a treasure hunt on the Cocos Islands in the East Indian Ocean (territory of Australia), one of

many expeditions to the islands between the wars when hopefuls were looking for pirate treasure. The Grays had used a map given to them when they were in Peru, but like all the others before them and since, they found nothing. This may well provide one very small clue, however, to the question of why it was that Terence Gray chose in his early twenties to enter the world of archaeology and set off on his own explorations, without any particular qualifications, in the deserts of Egypt.

Thomas Stannus, the father of Rowena, was also a Justice of the Peace in Lisburn, and it is likely that her husband-to-be and her father shared this common attention to public service; it may have been this which finally brought the two cousins closer together. The town of Lisburn on the outskirts of Belfast was an attractive and busy country town, just eight miles from the city. It was, at the beginning of the twentieth century, an extremely prosperous part of Antrim, with flax spinning and linen manufacture as the main occupations of the 15,000 population, and betting on horse-racing one of the main leisure pursuits. Rowena's parents lived in a large country house with extensive gardens, away from the town to the north.

Very little is known about the education of Rowena. There is no information that she went away for study or training. Twenty years after the marriage, during the First World War, she elected to go to France to help run a large French Red Cross hospital. This suggested some previous experience of nursing in her younger days; a career in medicine would have been difficult to seek, for a woman, at that time. Her qualifications for being accepted to help to run a war hospital may well have been her desire to seek public service, as she later showed herself eager to do on many occasions, and also her valuable experience, probably since her teens, in assisting in the running of three large country estates, with their extended family of servants and the inevitable day-to-day stresses of watching and controlling the finances.

So it was that Harold and Rowena Gray abandoned for the moment the inherited home of Graymount in Ireland and set off for England to search for a similar property where Harold could continue his farming and his training of racehorses. Harold Gray was now thirty-seven. The type of home that he and his new wife required was also one which would fit their status, for Harold was well-established in Ireland, with his estates and his horses, and his yacht and his clubs. The clubs included the Carlton in London and the Irish Turf and Conservative clubs in Dublin. Prospects ahead, he must have felt at that the time, would be favourable, so that he would be able to offer his own son the

same opportunities as his father had given him. There was no reason, of course, why Terence could not have travelled alone from Ireland to attend school and university in England, taking his own trunk with him as his father had probably done. But for the moment, the young Terence, not having reached his ninth birthday, was probably blissfully unaware that ahead of him there were two of the biggest disturbances possible for a life made for thinking and meditation: two of the most prestigious centres of learning in England awaited him, namely Eton College and Magdalene College, Cambridge. It had been the route into the establishment taken so confidently by Harold Gray, and what had worked for him would surely be suitable for young Terence. So the new home near Cambridge was to be a stepping-stone, ideal for Terence and more than ideal for his two supportive and ambitious parents.

2. The Home of Godolphin

Since the birth of young Terence, life for the Grays had been unsettled, to say the least. Harold, despite his considerable wealth, his privileged education and the confident face he offered to the world, had been forced, after hours of emotional debate within the family, into the unforeseen. Each member of the family would need to show their willingness to uproot from their life in Ireland and abandon everything in order to drop smoothly into their new life in England in a small isolated property outside of Cambridge. It would be a new world in rural Cambridgeshire about which even Harold would have discovered little during his time at Magdalene College; for Rowena it would have been like uprooting her life to a foreign country but where at least they shared a common language. Nobody in the wider family of their relations or among their friends could have predicted that these proud members of the Gray/Stannus lineage would have talked themselves into this departure from their Irish home in order to walk off into the largely unknown. "Why did they need to move?" strangers would have asked in the pubs and along the streets of Lisburn. But, given that the necessity was there, where else would such a family go, a family with their horses and their estates and their love of country life? Where could they seek continued happiness but somewhere equidistant (nearly) from Cambridge, Harold's student home, and Newmarket, the home of English horseracing. In the early nineteenth hundreds, as today, Newmarket was the mecca for horse-breeders and trainers from all

corners of the British Isles, if not the whole world, although the prestige and reputation, it must be admitted, was equally high, if not higher, in Ireland. Was it simply this, then, that encouraged Harold to uproot and transfer his home and his possessions, and his family, to Cambridgeshire?

A suitable property was found about five miles south of Cambridge, in the parish of Stapleford although some distance from the village, in what is still today after the expansion of the city, a prime country spot on the top of the Gogmagog Hills, one of the few rises on the flat face of Cambridgeshire. Today the area is known as Wandlebury and it is owned by the Cambridge Preservation Society, who have provided a well-maintained country area for walking and general recreation. In 1904, when the Grays bought the estate, there was a house with stables and gardens and extensive farmland, although certainly the entire property was in drastic need of immediate attention. The house, dating back several centuries and overflowing with personal history, is sadly no longer there. It was demolished brick by brick by the Cambridge Preservation Society, the present owners, much to the intense anger of Terence Gray, who in the 1950s generously gave the house and gardens (all that was inside the pre-Roman ring) to be a permanent memorial to his father and mother.

The site of the house and stables and the walled gardens is circular in shape, being the centre of a defensive ring structure dating back to the Iron Age. In the middle of the ring there was, at the time of the purchase, extensive stables which had already had a history: there are accounts of some of the “running horses” of King William, Queen Anne and Georges I and II being kept there. In the first part of the eighteenth century, an earlier house had been extended by Lord Francis, the second Earl of Godolphin, when he needed a “hunting-box” (a small country lodge and stables) for his pleasure. He had married Henrietta Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough’s eldest daughter, who (it has been said) had an extramarital affair with William Congreve, the Irish poet and playwright, who left all his estate to her when he died. Through several generations of Godolphins, the family had inherited various titles, notably that of the Duke of Leeds. It was a later Francis Godolphin, the fifth Duke of Leeds, who owned a stallion called, appropriately, Godolphin, a rare brown-bay Arabian which is remembered today as one of the handful of racehorses which fathered British horse racing. Godolphin died in 1753 at the age of twenty-nine. The simple marked burial place, under the shaded archway of the surviving old stable-

block, can be visited today. (It must have been the source of constant wonderment to the nine-year-old Terence Gray when he was brought to live on the Magog estate.) Later, another family name was added, that of the Osborne family, and the final member of the Godolphin lineage at Magog House had the rather grand title of George Godolphin Osborne, Duke of Leeds. The eighth and ninth dukes, who both lived in the house, shared the same name. The eighth duke, who was M.P. for Cambridge 1810–1831, is still remembered in St. Andrew's Church in Stapleford village, where a memorial was erected in 1872 "raised in remembrance of many years dear companionship by his most loving daughters," his wife Harriet, Baroness Godolphin, having died twenty years before her husband. The ninth duke died in 1895, the year that Terence Gray was born, and his wife, Fanny Georgina, one year later. The house and estate were then sold by the Godolphin-Osbornes to the Earl of Buchan, who owned the property but did not occupy it.

One more owner followed and then the day came when Harold Gray's final offer to purchase the estate was accepted and the Gray family, as the new owners, began the long exhausting task of transferring some of their valued Irish furniture and all their personal things from Graymount and from Rowena's family home in Antrim to adorn the many rooms of their new house on the hills overlooking Cambridge. Harold and Rowena and young Terence had inherited over-night, it seems, a very special historic house on an ancient site, alive with memories and occupied (who knows?) by ghosts of people from long ago back to before the Romans arrived. What the Gray family had inherited, in short, was their own piece of English landed gentry, which could now inter-mingle with their own heritage of Irish landed gentry, and public service would continue in the parish of Stapleford almost without interruption. One could say that the new family fitted into their new home like a hand in the right-size glove.

The house, stables and estate were purchased for £18,000, which was a goodly sum in 1904 and probably a bargain price for what the Grays got in consideration of the family wealth, especially on Harold's side. As soon as they were settled and the painters had been through the entire house, Terence was introduced to his own special orange, mustard and navy blue bedroom and placed into the full-time loving care of Jane Ann Beggs, who had come to Magog House from Ireland with the family and who later, with Terence's ultimate departure and escape from the apron strings, became the devoted house-keeper and personal friend of (by then) Lady Rowena.

Magog House was spacious, a large and rambling building which immediately gave young Terence ample opportunity to explore with its many rooms and dark corridors, before each night he settled down under the sheets in his multi-coloured bedroom. The entrance hall into the house was twenty-five feet square with a gallery above and two marble columns like the entrance to a museum, which (in a way) the house was with its heavy Irish furniture and curtains. Beyond the hall there was a drawing-room, a dining-room, a garden room, a billiards room with a smoking room for the men guests, a library, filled with many large heavy and dusty tomes of ancient Irish history which were, presumably, taken down and explored by young Terence, and nine bedrooms with their own dressing-rooms and bathrooms. For the use of a handful of servants, there was a laundry with a wash-house, a butler's pantry, a strong room and, highly necessary in the times of dirt-tracks and unmade roads, a boot room. A fine mansion, it looks very grand in photographs of the time when the Grays lived there; it was certainly prestigious enough to be the home of a future Conservative Member of Parliament for Cambridgeshire and with grounds extensive enough for huge political parties. The member and his wife would one day play host and hostess to hundreds of loyal party workers who filled the gardens at fund-raising fetes. For the moment, however, their young son would have enjoyed the quieter times, such as the sound of the gentle clip-clop on the cobbles of the stable-yard, as the tired racehorses slowly made their way back to the stables after their exercise, passing in front of Terence's window.

Harold Gray was soon established as the local squire, in spirit, if not in actuality; and he proceeded with the daily routine of caring for his precious horses and the running of his estate, soon purchasing further small farms in the vicinity (such as Gunners Hall Farm and Worsted Lodge Farm to the east) to extend the acreage of his estate and to take him inch by inch nearer towards the racecourses at Newmarket. Rowena, forever the devoted and dutiful wife, also gradually began to learn the social skills that went with her public duties in the village and further afield within the county. She became interested in the church and the school in Stapleford, although she was thankful at times that the village was some distance from their isolated estate up on the hills. Later (in 1925) she paid for the organ to be moved into the so-called Leeds Chapel of the church (named after the memorial to George Godolphin Osborne, the eighth Duke of Leeds and one-time owner of Magog House). Next to the organ there is a dedication to Rowena's

parents, Thomas and Margaret Stannus, saying that they were “frequent worshippers” in the church. Both inside the parish of Stapleford and beyond, Rowena began to develop her other interests as a staunch Conservative, always ready to give every assistance to her husband as (eventually) the prospective member; also she dropped easily into many of the very English country pursuits such as the Women’s Institute and the British Red Cross Society, both of which highly valued her service.

Back in Ireland, doubtless the couple were missed. Harold had been appointed as a High Sheriff, and he and Rowena had been in residence at large country houses and active in their local society. The truth is, after all is said and done, that Irish people had often chosen to uproot themselves in order to seek their personal golden path on the mainland or further afield. Harold had already lived for much of his life in England and he was certainly not the only one. It is estimated that well over half the native population of Ireland at that time was known to be living abroad, most of them permanently: about half in the United States and a quarter in England. Conditions and prospects in Ireland were undoubtedly poor and had been through many generations. There was still considerable poverty, especially in the big cities of Belfast and Dublin, and continuous political unrest was everywhere and threatening to erupt at any moment. The future had probably looked bleak to Harold and Rowena Gray and it was bleak, although the real crunch did not come, with the separation of Ulster, until long after the Grays had left for Cambridge. It was unlikely that this was really the main reason for their sudden departure from Ireland, for it was much later after the violence which had occurred at the time of the Great War, that the twenty-six counties eventually became an autonomous state, leaving the six counties of Ulster to remain within the United Kingdom. The new constitution which created the state of Eire did not happen until 1937, by which time the young Terence Gray had grown up, seen some of the world, passed through his seven years in the theatre and retired to the family vineyard in the South of France.

3. Young Terence, the growing boy

Terence must have enjoyed a lot of his time at Magog House in these early years, from his arrival at the age of nine. There was the opportunity to climb the large beech trees, to watch the horses and the estate staff going about their daily business, and to run round the ditches of

the Iron Age ring (like children of his age still do today) and then wander out, beyond, into the rolling chalk hills. At least that is what you would expect in an ideal setting for a young lad in the calm of the English countryside in 1904: but it was the calm before the storm, you could add. For the Grays, after leaving Ireland as a melting pot with much political unrest brewing, were soon to enter the fire, or more accurately the firing-line, when they made their heroic decision to uproot once again in order to do service with the Red Cross in France. But, for the moment, the Irish problems were behind them and the horrors of the war had yet to come, and outside the sky was still blue, the flowers were growing in the meadows, the sheep were grazing peacefully on the surrounding chalk hills, and young Terence had discovered the ideal environment in which to explore, think and dream.

Terence was not really the rough-and-ready exploring type of child; he was not the all-weather energetic, sporty child that his father had been during his youth in Ireland. As a mature man, Harold Gray listed, in addition to his clubs and his yachts, as his physical recreations: shooting, racing and polo. Now, slowly nearing fifty, Harold may have secretly wished that the war had come earlier, when he was a younger man, so that he could have volunteered himself, with all he had to offer, as a candidate for officer-training. It is strange, really, how such energetic, physical men, full of outward energy and confidence, sometimes seem to have children who are so different. Terence had never shown any indication of sporting interest; on the academic side, too, he failed to respond to the challenges of both Eton and Magdalene, where his father had succeeded (especially on the sporting side). Later, it is clear that Terence proved himself to be a very deep and creative thinker, which was one thing that his father had not shown. But now, in 1904, uprooted and still a young lad, Terence was forced by circumstance to live a solitary life. An only child, he was shy and withdrawn, he had a stutter, he was emotionally overwhelmed by all that he saw which represented the outgoing life of his father and the social whirl of a landowning country aristocrat and prosperous farmer, and the father with political ambitions who was seldom at home. Terence had to exist in a house where his parents, usually separately, were off here, there and everywhere throughout the year, leaving him to be looked after and comforted in his loneliness by others.

In a sentence, Terence was not like his father. He did not seek company, for a start, and usually preferred to be alone, to find the hidden places around the house and estate where he could dream and

imagine. His health was never good and he was not physically strong, despite all the fresh air and the country life. His problems, such as they were, were not really physical at all; they were more psychological. For young Terence it soon began to show itself in the form of his acute stutter, which later became a considerable burden to him, especially in his years at the Festival Theatre. It was a personal problem which, like all sufferers, he had to come to terms with; it remained with him to varying degrees throughout his adult life, right up to the last years of his life, when he once again could enjoy a life of seclusion, with his second wife in the South of France.

There were five long years between his arrival in the strange surroundings of the isolated Magog House and his eventual departure for Eton College in 1909, when he was fourteen. At some stage he was transported to a small preparatory school called St. Vincents in Eastbourne, Sussex, where he began his preparations for his admission to Eton College and where, too, he could have some bracing sea air to compensate for the breathless air of flat Cambridgeshire. He also had, when he was back at home, a series of private tutors who tried hard to install some academic discipline into him, the young lad who would, in truth, rather read or contemplate other things and who would use every excuse possible, including feeling unwell, to fight against the academic pressure. But there was, in any case, always his Nanny to offer her warm shoulder to cry on when comfort was needed and to replace the lack of friends of his own age. The village of Stapleford was a good two miles from Magog House and there were no brothers or sisters, and no known relatives this side of the Irish Sea, although there was his cousin Edris Stannus (later to be called Ninette de Valois), who was three years his junior and lived in Kent (from the age of seven).

Terence must have spent many hours alone in his multi-coloured bedroom, surrounded by his toys and his books, including the large volumes he borrowed from his father's library. He was able to let his imagination run wild, imagining the different parts of the world which later he would be able to see for himself, such as the hot deserts of Egypt where the pharaohs of long ago watched over those pyramids and temples which he saw in the black-and-white photographs in the books. It could be that he had been given a toy theatre. These had been very popular during the nineteenth century and around 1900 there was a revival of interest. Penny-plain (penny for a plain one), tuppence coloured, the sheets of scenes and characters from stories had to be cut out and pasted on cardboard. The Grays would surely have wanted

young Terence to have the “latest thing”. What indeed could have been more exciting and stimulating to the solitary boy than his own toy theatre? He could act out his own versions of the Irish legends, a world from which he had been cut off, and even create his own stories from the history which now surrounded him on the Gogmagog Hills. Terence Gray’s own published stories and plays, which were published between 1923 and 1926, began life (as he recalled himself) way back in the “long ago”. It could be indeed that he played with his ideas about the Iron Age and about Roman history at a very early age, for Magog House was inside the Iron Age “ring” and just a short stroll from the point where two important Roman roads intersect, at Worsted Lodge Farm. It is possible that Terence saw in his imagination and in his dreams these various characters from history at play in the gardens outside his bedroom window, acting out their own dance dramas.

The gardens of Magog House, which had become neglected during recent years, were given special treatment by both Harold and Rowena Gray, who were keen to renew the gardens which the Godolphins had created across many generations. It was not long after the Grays had settled in that the gardens had indeed sufficiently recovered for W.H. Carr to write about them across two large pages in *Garden Life* (24 February 1912). The writer began by saying that the estate had “the most historic gardens in the county” and that they covered some six acres with many rose beds and herbaceous borders, over two dozen Rhododendrons in tubs, a tennis court and a lawn for croquet, a rockery, an ornamental lake built inside the “famous cock-pit” with wild ducks, and many unusual shrubs and trees, including a Tree of Heaven and a giant mulberry tree. The Tree of Heaven or ailanthus, with its clusters of small greenish flowers, was native to China. There was also a kitchen garden, partly walled, with many glass houses containing exotic plants ranging from bananas to orchids. In 1912 there had been a hundred and fifty fruits on the banana trees. To top that, the gardens had produced over one and a half thousand heads of celery. Thus, with the vineyard in France, the Grays were more than self-sufficient, and it is no surprise that later when Terence opened the Festival Theatre on Newmarket Road, Cambridge, he had some of the supplies for what he later claimed to be the best restaurant in the town.

Back in 1909, the day came for Terence’s journey from Cambridge to Windsor. The four years since his arrival at Magog House had passed and he was now fourteen. The big family occasion of his expected appearance at Eton College had arrived. It was thus a grown-up handshake for

his tutor and a tight hug and a sad farewell for his dear nanny, and there he was standing on the doorstep of the great hall, dressed in his Eton gear, his trunk packed by his nanny and then loaded into the boot of the family car by the chauffeur. Terence stood balanced awkwardly on one foot, trying hard to look casual as he silently contemplated the moment when he would be required to stride manfully on to the centre-stage of the historic school at which his father had achieved so much. The car and the chauffeur were both prepared for the great day, washed and brushed and shining in the early morning sun. Harold soon appeared, not very long after his son, wearing his best grey suit and sporting a new colourful bow-tie. Carefully taking out his gold pocket-watch, he looked first at the car and the chauffeur and then at his son and the nanny and the tutor, and lastly at his watch. He then turned towards the front door, which immediately opened to reveal his wife who had arrived as punctual as ever in her best silks and furs.

The journey at least enabled Terence to reflect, as he curled up in the corner of the leather rear-seat alongside his mother. Predictably, life would be difficult at the school; it was, after all, his first school since his time at the preparatory school on the south coast. Dressed up he may have been but in his heart he was anxious and fearful of what was ahead of him. Would the teachers take to this shy, introverted boy with his love of quiet solitary activities, especially his books and his toy theatres? Would he be able to stand up to the rough and tumble of the teenage life generally, with the others who were much more used to boyish physical play? At the age of fourteen he was leaving his home without his parents (even though they, especially his father, had been away from him so many, many times). It was a sad departure from his nanny and from the daily comforting routine of the home and the country life around Magog House in general, which he had enjoyed in his own sensitive and solitary way since he was nine and, before that, from an early age in similar surroundings at Graymount in Country Antrim. Would he be able to meet just one friend, he must have wondered, somebody who would share his own particular interests? At the back of his mind, as he watched the English countryside drift by, he had the feeling, deep down, that he had already shown himself, in so many ways large and small, to have been rather a failure, particularly in the eyes of his over-active father. He now had so much to live up to, so much to achieve, and he was probably terrified of the prospect.

But Terence was able, despite all these fears, to withstand the pressures through the next two long years which followed that particular

day, although it was no real surprise when Rowena Gray finally found it necessary to pick up her gold-plated pen in the quiet of the library to write a long letter to the college, to explain the reasons why her Terence would not be returning for his third year.

It was then back to what went before: back to the nanny, the tutor, the solitary life in the multi-coloured bedroom, and also back to his own personal time which he could find, somehow, for his books and his toy theatres and for his dreams of the ancient past. Now there would be four long years of peace and opportunity for the imagination ahead of him, uninterrupted by the big distraction which was Eton College, before the nightmare of his next hurdle, which would soon be standing there as tall as Jack's beanstalk: the gates of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Like Eton, it had been his father's college and the gates were a symbol of the great task in front of him, one day. But for the moment, before that dreaded day came, there would be also four years of endeavour, of serious application, for both young Terence and for his tutor(s). The ex-Eton student was already far behind his age in his academic achievement and nowhere near the level required to undertake a Cambridge degree. It is not hard to imagine the wagging fingers and the threatening faces being pulled by the worried and over-anxious parents. "You've got to get on with it, my boy."

And so the years passed slowly by, from 1911 to 1914, with restricted time for study because of the enforced periods of rest which were needed after the emotional upsets brought on during his time away from home. It was not an ideal prelude for a student in his formative years on the road to manhood and awaiting entry to his university.

In his book *Dance Drama* of 1926, Terence Gray reflected back to around the year 1911, if one takes his own reference (page 28) of "a decade and a half ago Max Reinhardt produced *Sumurun* in London" to mean that he was present at one of the performances. He continued, "This beautiful and moving drama was immediately appreciated . . ." *Sumurun* was Reinhardt's own mime-play and it was a full version of what he had presented in a shorter version earlier in the year. The revised performance was presented at the Savoy Theatre during October and November, 1911. It would mean, if the above interpretation of Gray's reference is correct, that he was going to plays at this time after his return from Eton, at the age of about sixteen. *Sumurun*, the wordless-play mentioned earlier, might well have been the actual spark that set off Gray's own desire to write his own dance-dramas. It could be that his parents took him to see plays when he was younger, both locally in

Cambridge, where traditional plays were performed by touring companies at the New Theatre or in London and perhaps on family visits to Dublin and Antrim.

The current theatrical sensation in London was undoubtedly the Diaghilev Russian Ballet, which was known to have had some influence on Gray's future in the theatre. His choice of plays at the Festival Theatre were to include a lot of large-scale pieces of epic theatre, particularly the Greek plays, in which dance and movement played an important part. As a writer he later dedicated himself to dance and to dance-drama, both very much a response (sometimes a reaction) to the excesses of Russian dance theatre. His two marriages, the first to the daughter of a Russian mother and the second to a Russian princess from Georgia, may have had connections with Russian dance (this will be discussed later). Gray may have attended performances in London or even in Paris of, for example, Nijinsky in *L'Après-Midi d'un Faun* or *Petrushka*, or the "choreographic dramas" of *Scheherezade* and *Cleopatre*, or to one of the first performances of the sensational *Le Sacre du Printemps* with the music of Stravinsky. He possibly saw some of the early performances by his cousin Edris Stannus (now dancing as Ninette de Valois), who was still five years or more away from her own involvement with the Russian ballet. The name of de Valois was chosen by her mother, according to Sorley Walker, because of a "historic family link with the French royal house." (1987, page 5)

As far as plays were concerned, the talking-point in London was the performance of plays at the Royal Court (up to 1907 and then at the Savoy in 1912) produced by Harley Granville-Barker, the respected actor-playwright-manager who almost single-handedly had started to revitalize the English theatre, a task and a challenge which Gray was later to take up himself. Granville-Barker and Gray were shortly to cross paths in France. The fact that Gray was soon to become deep in the world of the theatre himself and that his other interest was Egyptology could mean that the seeds of his ideas were sown during these four formative years before his single year at Magdalene College and the unexpected and dramatic upheaval of the Great War which followed.

Probably largely unknown to him, moves were taking place, during the Autumn of 1913 and the early part of 1914, to establish a place for him at his father's old college in Cambridge, just a few miles away from Magog House. Letters were sent back and forth from Harold to his old pals at Magdalene College: to "My dear Ramsey" (A.S. Ramsey), a fellow student in the 1880's and in 1925 destined to be the new Master of

Magdalene College), and to S.A. Donaldson, the present Master. One (undated) letter from Donaldson urged that “as an old Magdalene man (i.e. Harold), I (Donaldson) feel we must do what we can for him (Terence).” Also, a (undated) testimonial was received from a certain Dr. J.C. Waithman, who gave his address as 58, New Cavendish Street, London W1, who had also been a co-student of Harold’s. Waithman wrote to confirm that he had known both Harold and Terence Gray “for many years.”

Harold Gray admitted that his son was not up to the academic standard necessary for a degree student, and there was some discussion as to whether Terence should aim at the degree course or be willing to accept the offer of a “diploma course” which the college seemed to prefer. In the end it was agreed by Harold Gray that Terence should attend the college before his entry in October in order to take a short college examination. This proved to be (just) acceptable, although the result was conditional that, should the Gray family agree, a suitable tutor known to the college, a certain “Mr Hillyer”, would give Terence some extra catching-up tuition. This was to include a few weeks away in Aberdovey in the Snowdonian region of Central Wales, in order to provide good air, exercise, quiet, and (not least) a chance to take Terence away from the pressures of life at home. The real benefits and outcome of this expedition are not known, but C.E. Hillyer the tutor, concluded in an undated letter to the college that his young charge was “fairly intelligent, but as he knows very little and may not work more than three hours a day I don’t feel that he will pass.”

So Terence remained under extreme pressure from all sides: from his father, from the college, from his tutors (at home and then at college), and probably also from his medical advisers. His head, already brimming over with his growing interests in history and (indirectly) the theatre, had to continually fight against these intrusions on his own fantasy life. He had always been a loner and a dreamer, and it could well be that, in the comfort of his own room, he may have looked up at his toy theatre sitting unused in the shadows on the highest shelf, and started to have dreams of owning a real live theatre of his own. The quiet pulsating music inside his head would have increased to a crescendo as the room darkened and his eyes gradually closed . . . and, dream-like, the curtains of his theatre slowly opened.

*Like Father, Like Son,
at Magdalene College, Cambridge*

1. A Short Drive from the Hills to the Cam

The end of summer and the arrival of the autumn in 1914 indicated that the time had come, for the moment at least, for Terence to put away his childish dreams, although his entry into college life was not exactly the introduction into academic life which his parents had hoped for. The Master of Magdalene College was already well aware that the Terence Gray on his list of possible new entrants had not been fully prepared academically. The young teenager had left Eton College prematurely, after just two years, and (despite the efforts of his tutor) he obviously still did not have the qualifications or the ability perhaps, to begin a full degree course. However, the college authorities were willing to give him a “go”. In fact, what was on offer was the opportunity to study for the University’s Previous Examination or “Little Go”, which he would have to take in his second year before he continued on to the B.A. degree (the “Great Go”). The young Terence had thus been given a chance to shine like his father, for the honour of the family was at stake and the proud parents could undoubtedly afford the fees. Terence hesitated on the threshold for a second or two, took a long deep breath before he walked slowly forward through the gates of his second ancient foundation.

On the twelfth of October in the year of 1914, the entry clerk at Magdalene College dipped his pen in the ink and carefully wrote:

Terence James Stannus Gray born 14 September 1895 at Felixstowe, son of

Harold William Stannus Gray and Rowena Stannus of Gogmagog Hills, Cambridgeshire, educated privately, is admitted pensioner. Tutor: A.S. Ramsey.

The previous three entrants on the page were from Tonbridge School, Eton College and the City of Norwich School, and the one that followed Terence's entry was from Harrow School. As his father doubtless had said, probably more than once, "You're in good company, my boy."

Now that his son had been admitted to college, indeed now that he was physically actually there, Harold Gray began to enlarge on his previous correspondence to Magdalene College. In a letter written a fortnight after Terence moved into his college accommodation, Harold wrote on the 27th October that there was, as perhaps the college had suspected, a medical history which had delayed his son's development. It was possible (he did not say) that it had been the one of the reasons for Terence's rejection from Eton College. In short, Terence was "not very well," although Harold dismissed it with the explanation that his son had simply "out grown his strength." The possibility that there could have been psychological reasons was not raised (and that is not in fact known). But Harold admitted, nevertheless, that his son had been at home for some time, i.e. he had not able to be at school, and also that, presumably for medical reasons, "only a limited amount of work had been allowed to him." That is where, for the moment, the matter rested.

Terence was one of twenty-two new students who took up residence in a college hostel situated across the river just three minutes from those towering main gates, the exaggerated size of which young Terence had seen so many times in his worst nightmares. His own room was in number 30, Thompson's Lane: it had (and still has) an attractive but simple frontage, but it was too close for comfort to the Cambridge Electric Works, with all the noise and smoke and traffic passing his window each day. A coal-fired power station, it had been opened just twenty years previously. But what must be must be, and Terence picked up his books and his paper and pens and settled down to his Little Go. The examination consisted of Elementary Logic, French (two papers, with a translation and a set book), Greek (a Greek gospel or a Greek classic), and also papers in Latin and mathematics. Most students would have taken it in their stride, but for Terence Gray, lacking the discipline of academic study, it may have offered quite a challenge. Much later, after World War II, the examination was replaced by a more rigorous entrance examination.

Terence had a good basic knowledge of spoken French and that would not have been a problem. The family had a house in the South of France, and Terence must have made frequent trips there with his mother and father. The value of these holidays in France must have been significant. Later, as his theatre interests grew, he made frequent trips to the Parisian theatre and his knowledge of French was to allow him the chance to work on a translation of an important book, an opportunity which undoubtedly opened up the final part of his long life. In addition to his French studies as an adolescent, he would have done some Greek with his tutor at Magog House, and this would have had some interest for him with his growing passion for ancient history. Logic may have been new to him as an academic study, although it is possible to see its value to him later in life, as a descriptive writer, a creative playwright and, particularly, as a mystical thinker.

Long before the summer of 1914, at the time when Terence had been at home and fearing his entry one day into his father's college, there had been indications of unrest in Europe. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Hapsburg monarchy and to the absolute control of Central Europe, had married the Countess Sophie Chotek. In June, 1914, when Terence was beginning to select the personal contents of his trunk to take to Thompson's Lane, the Archduke and the Countess made a visit to Sarajevo. Driving by mistake into a wrong turning, their driver attempted to reverse the car, when suddenly a student jumped on the running-board and, within seconds, he had fired two shots and they were both dead. The news of the assassination rang through Europe. It was seen immediately as a challenge to the Austro-Hungarian alliance and, in desperation, their politicians turned towards Germany. But complications were added to complications and diplomacy failed time and time again. Within months, Germany began an offensive on two fronts: against the might of Russia on one side, and against France on the other. France was heavily fortified along its frontier, and the Germans saw that their only possibility was to drive an attack through Belgium. Already the British had started preparations for war and it was no surprise to most people when on the tenth of August, 1914, just one month before the Gray family's car journey from the Gogs to the Cam, the British politicians declared, jointly with France, war against Austria and Hungary.

It was, as everywhere in Europe, a flash-point in the town of Cambridge. Individual futures suddenly collapsed and many, many more would in the weeks to come. Terence must have soon seen

refugees from Belgium arriving in the town, including the first train-load of 125 wounded Belgian soldiers. The newspapers told how the Germans had made a quick advance across Belgium and were now moving from Ghent towards Ostend, which was considered to be the real prize. Dramatic news came of the fall of Antwerp, although much of the news from Belgium was highly censored. There was very little news of the advances on the other front against Russia.

In Cambridge, as in all the villages, towns and cities throughout the length and breadth of England, there was soon a call for mobilisation in a big way. The tension in the political climate became more acute as the days of August passed slowly by. By September, it became more and more frightening for everybody, no less for Terence as he crouched in his room in the student hostel unpacking his trunk, alone with his thoughts. He hardly dared to contemplate what he wanted to do in the coming years, when the war was over, or even his immediate future, the present year at college with all his worries about settling down to the study of Logic, French and Greek. The cries for mobilisation seemed remote from his own present preoccupation with unpacking and finding places for his belongings and, generally, trying to exist as a grown-up student away from the attentive care of his family.

2. The First Year of the War in Cambridge

The real impact of the war on the life of Magdalene College can be seen in the diminishing number of students during Terence's first year. Of the 110 students expected in October, 1914, when the entry clerk had entered the name of Terence Gray in the college register, only fifty-seven were still resident by the end of the year.

The annual meeting of the Cambridge branch of the Red Cross was held in the Guildhall at the end of October. There had been a dramatic call on their services, as had been expected, and the need for money, in particular, was urgent and desperate. Rowena Gray, who was to give a lifetime's service to the Red Cross, may well have been present. Unknown to Terence, and probably unknown to both parents at this particular time, within the year all three of the Gray family were to be on French soil in the service of the Red Cross. At the meeting in the Cambridge Guildhall, the Belgium army was praised for their "spirited and brave defence," although the members expressed their concern about the present stalemate at the front in Belgium. One bit of news

which was loudly cheered was the capture of 70,000 Germans near Amsterdam.

The people of Cambridge tried hard to express their support, practically in the care of hundreds of refugees but also, almost spiritually, in the many ways in which deep feelings were expressed. Encouraged by public support, young men came forward daily to volunteer to make what would be their ultimate sacrifice. Billed as patriotic concerts, performances were mounted throughout the town specifically for fund-raising. One concert at the New Theatre had one hundred and fifty wounded Belgian soldiers in the audience. Another, at the Playhouse in Mill Road, was a variety programme which included the star billing of Monsieur Billon, a Belgian violinist. Many artistes appeared without fees, such as a baritone from the Italian Grand Opera in London called Giovanni Colombo who came to Cambridge to sing at another fund-raising concert at the Playhouse.

Meanwhile, Terence was trying hard to place the frightening upsets of these early times towards the back of his mind, as each day he opened his books and tried hard to concentrate on his study. He could not fail to notice the gradual emptying of his college as many of his more confident fellow students had elected to volunteer for war service. The Master of Magdalene, who was a man of the church, made his own contribution to the war effort when he decided to resign from his honorary post as patron of the Cambridge Town Football Club because he had seen among the small crowds at local matches many "able-bodied" young men. He expressed great regret in a carefully-worded letter to the club, for even the Master of Magdalene had to be prepared to make a sacrifice. He wrote:

We have need of every man we can raise and train to take their place in the fighting line . . . It is not a time for watching football. (*Cambridge Independent Press*, 6 November 1914)

The *Cambridge Review*, a University journal, described the whole situation as a "gloomy picture." The Review had started a Roll of Honour for the war dead from the University, the men of Cambridge who had given their lives for the noble cause. They also published special articles, such as Letters from the Front (one was by a Lieutenant in the R.A.M.C.), Medical Students and the War, and War Literature.

Within months of the outbreak of the war, many of the Cambridge colleges, if not all of them, had been transformed. Overnight, it seemed,

the sleepy University market-town was changed into an army garrison, with civilian clothes losing to the brown battle-dress worn by the visiting military and the students in officer training. A group from the Gunners, for example, was in Magdalene College, using the rooms deserted by the students. A temporary hospital (which was still there two years after the end of the war) was set up in Neville's Court in Trinity College, which also gave rooms to men from the Cavalry. Corpus Christi College became the headquarters of the Officers' Training Corps; Pembroke College was full of uniformed students and Gonville and Caius had a section of the Rifle Brigade for special training; and Jesus College had men from the Durhams in residence. The famous Cambridge "Backs" (a grassed avenue behind the main colleges) had several temporary huts between the crocuses and the daffodils, and on Parker's Piece, well-known for the cricketing exploits of the young Jack Hobbs, there was now the noise of military drilling instead of the peaceful sound of bat and ball.

Terence's year at university must be considered, also, as the opportunity that he may have had for extra-curricular activities, especially of Cambridge as a breeding-ground for an interest in the theatre. Today, in more settled times, students of his disposition would be participating in college theatre or in the productions of the A.D.C. Theatre (the Amateur Dramatic Club). But there is no evidence of Terence's involvement in any clubs or societies in Cambridge, not that it would actually have been possible during these restrictive times. He may have continued his visits to the theatre, possibly in London, although much of the more serious theatre (classical and experimental) had ceased or been transformed into lighter fare. A well-known theatre critic of the time, J.C. Trewin, wrote in reflection:

Then the first German war began, and soon the stage was awash with spy plays, melodramas, musical comedy, and skimble-skamble revues. The serious drama, baling out desperately, managed to keep afloat, but little could be done until the war ended. (1948, page 88)

In Cambridge, the professional theatre at the New Theatre continued for a while, with its policy of having visiting companies. These included the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and several musical comedies; even Shaw and Wilde (later very much idols for the young Terence Gray) had a look-in with performances of *Pygmalion* and *An Ideal Husband*. These would have certainly appealed to all three members of the Gray family

in normal circumstances.

Many of the university student clubs and activities collapsed for lack of support. The Amateur Dramatic Club, for example, had to close. Most college clubs were forced to abandon their activities because of reduced numbers and other student preoccupations. The Union (debating) Society was one university club which had tried very hard to continue, despite sparse attendances. In May, 1915, near the end of Terence's time at Magdalene College, the Union held a debate that "this House would welcome a State Subsidized Theatre," a motion which would certainly have attracted him. One speaker, quoted by the *Cambridge Review* (May, 1915), "appealed for a theatre free from the necessity of making profits." This was something that Gray would have supported. This motion was finally carried by 8 votes to 5 and the small group of thirteen members were listed, but the name of Terence Gray was not among them.

Terence had received a mixed education before Cambridge and just how hard he managed to study during this year at Magdalene College is difficult to imagine. One sentence which he wrote later hardly confirms his diligence:

When I went to Cambridge I let the family down because I went to a lecture.

This may have reflected more on the father with his known sporting interests, although it can also be taken as an early example of the young son's humour.

University sport was another extra-curricular activity which surprisingly was non-existent during the first year of the war, although presumably at a college-level sport for fitness was being encouraged, not that Terence would have been interested. Unlike his father, he had no inclination to dip his oar in the River Cam or to hit a small wooden ball with his swinging mallet in the sport of polo.

In January, 1915, the Master of Magdalene was again in the news. Now no longer a patron of the town Football Club, he turned his attention (as men of influence should) to the matter of temperance. In a packed Cambridge Guildhall, the Master took the chair at a United Temperance meeting at which he announced his full support for Lord Kitchener's appeal for a "sober army." The meeting was enthusiastic although, as the *Cambridge Review* reported, there were "few, if any, undergraduates present." At the end of the meeting, thirty-six young men were persuaded to come forward, prepared to adopt a pledge that they would