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TOMPKINS, J.M.S.
1946

The Review of English Studies

VOL. XXII.—No. 85.

JANUARY, 1946

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By J. M. S. TOMPKINS

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O! vales, and wild woods, shall He say,
In yonder grave your Druid lies!

¹ *Poetical works of Mr. William Collins, with a Prefatory Essay by Mrs. Barbauld* (Cadell and Davies, 1797).

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There is nothing of inadvertence in such an arrangement. The repetition confirms Collins's intention and by the link of a possessive pronoun relates the dead poet to the landscape that has been evoked during the ode. The stream, the woods and the meads are a great deal more than a setting; they join with the human figures of the poem—for they *are* human, young people whose 'ease' and 'health' leaves them with the emotional energy for poetical enthusiasm, and not goddesses in a sailing-boat, as Professor Garrod supposes—in lamenting the poet, and they suffer some impoverishment by his death. ('And thou, lorn stream, whose sullen tide No sedge-crowned Sisters now attend.') It is the loss of a poet-priest of nature that we are invited to contemplate, and it is in this sense that those readers, to whom the word 'Druid' has not been a stumbling-block, have taken it. Thus the editor of Thomson in the *Oxford Poets* writes of the poet, before he left Scotland: 'We see him, already a young Druid—the part for which, as Collins happily noted, his genius was cast—in the alleys of Marlefield woods.' Certainly this is the prime meaning of the word in Collins's ode, and it is established by the other designations of Thomson, 'woodland pilgrim', 'sweet bard', 'meek Nature's child'. ('Woodland pilgrim', included in Mrs. Barbauld's censure, transfers us from early Britain to the Middle Ages, in Collins's eclectic way, but it reinforces the association of devotional feeling with nature; the woods are a holy place, as they are in the forest passage in *Summer*, and the poet writes 'woodland pilgrim' as we say 'Canterbury pilgrim'.)¹

Yet, though this is the prime meaning and the only one explicit in the slender elegy, it does not exhaust the content of the word 'Druid' as it was understood in the middle of the eighteenth century in certain poetical and antiquarian circles; for the Druids were believed to have been not only priests of nature but philosophers probing her secrets, metaphysicians, enlightened educators of youth, and ardent patriots, enflaming their people in the struggle for liberty and heartening them with songs to cast back the unconquered Roman over sea. How much of this idealized and impressive figure is implied in Collins's 'Druid' cannot be exactly estimated, but most of it can be shown to be applicable to Thomson, while one important aspect, not explicit in this ode, had been touched previously by Collins in his 'Ode to Liberty'. Since, therefore, his characteristic diction is concentrated and densely associative, it is no very bold assumption that in his ear, at least, all these overtones vibrated together.

The Druid appeared in English literature at the beginning of the seventeenth century. His figure was retrieved by the scholars of the

¹ A remoter but still harmonizing note is struck by the quotation from Virgil's fifth eclogue on the title-page, in which the dead shepherd Daphnis is associated with the seasonal rites of the countryside.

Renaissance from the Greek and Latin historians,¹ and presently introduced on to the stage in Fletcher's *Bonduca* (1608), and into poetry in Drayton's *Polyolbion* (1612), and Milton's 'Lycidas' (1637), and his Latin poem to Manso (1638). As far as literary sources of information go, the antiquarians and poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had access to all that we have now, but their approach to them was different from ours. Much that they read there was an invitation to patriotic idealization and supplied their emulous souls with antiquities which could be elevated into an equivalence with those of Greece and Rome. Something of this process may be seen in the poem to Manso, where Milton adduces the sacred chants of the Druids to convince the Italian that Britain also had long been a land of poetry. But Milton was not really enthusiastic about the Druids, as a reference to his *History of Britain* will show. He demurred at their reputation as philosophers ('Philosophers I cannot call them, reported men factious and ambitious') and refused to say worse of the invading Romans than that they 'beat us into some civility; likely else to have continued longer in a barbarous, savage manner of life'. Much more could be made of those whom Strabo called the most just of men, and whom Caesar described as instructing their disciples in the order of nature and the strength and power of the immortal gods. Much more had already been made of them by Drayton in his brief references in *Polyolbion* and by Selden in his notes to that poem. There² they are 'sacred Bards', who in their invocation of one all-healing Power came near to acknowledging the true God. They are profound philosophers, 'Like whom great Nature's depths no man yet ever knew', and whose learning antedates that of the Romans ('And learning long with us, ere 'twas with them in use'). Caesar, indeed, was envious of the Britons, and his account of them can (where derogatory) be discounted. What could he know of us? The traditions of the Welsh bards go back beyond the writings of the Romans and are a safer guide to druidical manners. Already we find in Selden's notes the suggestion, much elaborated in the following century, that in the last resource Greek philosophy is indebted to the Druids, for he remarks that Lipsius, a Dutch savant of the sixteenth century, doubts whether they received the doctrine of metempsychosis from Pythagoras or he from them. William Stukeley, the eighteenth-century enthusiast, was to call Pythagoras 'the Arch-Druid', thus turning the tables on insolent Greece and haughty Rome.

The prime motive, then, in the idealizing of the Druids was patriotic; they saved us from considering ourselves, as Milton had done, the bar-

¹ I am indebted for all the classical references in what follows, and for many references to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquarians to T. D. Kendrick, *The Druids. A Study in Celtic Prehistory* (1927).

² *Polyolbion*. Songs I, VI, IX, X, and notes.

barous recipients of a foreign culture and substituted the more pleasing conception of early Britain as a centre of intellectual light. This motive was strengthened in the eighteenth century by the cult of liberty, of which the Druids were supposed to be early adherents. Nothing stirred the pride of the eighteenth-century Briton more strongly than the reflection that he was free, while every other European, except the Swiss, was the slave of some form of autocratic government; and he had the rare satisfaction of hearing his estimate of his superior condition confirmed by voices from abroad. Moreover, history instructed him that his country always had been free, barring such unfortunate episodes as the Roman and Norman conquests. This is the burden of Thomson's 'Rule Britannia'. It is also the theme of his long poem *Liberty* (1735) and of Collins's 'Ode to Liberty', in both of which Druids appear. They hold this position because, by instilling their faith in the immortality of the soul into the warriors of their race, they taught them to despise death in battle, and may thus be considered the fountain-head of that valour which beat back Caesar from the coast of Kent, confronted Paulinus in Mona and supported the revolt of Boadicea. Tacitus¹ had placed in the mouth of the Caledonian chieftain, Galgacus, a speech in which the liberty of the Britons is emphasized. To Thomson they are 'erect from Nature's hand'; they know no master 'save creating Heaven Or such as choice and common good ordains', and this freedom is integrally connected with the natural setting of their lives, the forests which were

at once
 Their verdant city, high-embowering fane,
 And the gay circle of their woodland wars;
 For by the Druid taught, that death but shifts
 The vital scene, they that prime fear despised;
 And, prone to rush on steel, disdain'd to spare
 An ill-saved life, that must again return.²

In Collins's ode the Druids are found singing before the British chiefs in the celestial temple of Liberty. I do not know where Collins got the notion of this temple, which stood, he says, 'an hoary Pile' in some forgotten 'religious Wood . . . midst the green Navel of the Isle'. Its overthrow, whether at the hands of Roman or Dane, is unrecorded, but its 'beauteous Model,' its Platonic idea, still lies beyond the 'braided Clouds . . . amidst the bright pavilion'd Plains' of Heaven. The whole notion may be an unsupported sally of his imagination,³ stimulated, perhaps, by a

¹ *Agricola*, xxx.

² *Liberty*, Book IV, ll. 627-33.

³ Mrs. Barbauld, *op. cit.*, says that Collins has taken advantage of a tradition 'less known' (*sc.* than the former connection of Britain with the Continent) that in the time of the Druids there existed in Britain a temple sacred to Liberty, but she gives no

hint in Thomson's poem; at all events it proves that Collins thought the Druids suitable inhabitants of such a temple.¹

Political liberty, however, is the fruit of virtue. Thomson's fifth book is full of the need for integrity, public spirit, and 'an active flood of universal love', as preservatives of freedom. We expect to find, then, that the moral character of the Druids stood high, and this is indeed the case. In the pages of the eighteenth-century archaeologists and historians, of Toland, Stukeley, and Carte,² the Druids appear as the apostles of that interdependent triplicity of ideals—freedom, virtue, and culture—that Collins had expressed in his 'Ode to Simplicity', and Thomson throughout *Liberty*. Of the authors just mentioned, Carte is chiefly important as summing up the view of the Druids held by a laborious and responsible historian at the end of the first half of the eighteenth century, two years before Collins published his ode on Thomson's death. Both the others are eccentrics, with an individual angle on their subject. Toland was a Deist, who regarded the Druids as the arch-examples of the arch-evil, priestcraft, and he cannot touch on their rites or mysteries without a contemptuous Deistic snort. But he was also an Irish-speaking Celt from Inishowen, deeply concerned to plead for the study of Celtic antiquities, in whose eyes the order of Druids in Gaul and Britain was a great achievement of the Celtic genius;

¹ Thomson (*Liberty*, III, 539–70) makes Liberty retire during the Dark Ages to 'the celestial regions', where 'Far other scenes and palaces arise, Adorned profuse with other arts divine'; cf. the gems and mural sculptures in Collins's temple ('Ode to Liberty', ll. 89–128). The question of Collins's indebtedness to Thomson is difficult. There are many resemblances. *A propos* of one, the appearance of Sparta and Athens as the temporary homes of Liberty in both poems, Professor Garrod remarks: 'If [*Liberty*] were not so dull a poem, and Collins had not been so lazy a man, I might think he had read it.' There is every appearance that he had done so. Not only is the progress of Liberty from Greece to Rome and then to Florence, Pisa, Venice, Genoa, Switzerland and Britain practically the same in both poems, but Britain is presented in both as the ancient home of Liberty, and allusion is made in both to the prehistoric continuity of Britain and Gaul and their separation by an inbreak of the sea. Collins, however, does not mention Thomson in his notes, but ascribes the legend to 'several of our old historians', and adds: 'I don't remember that any Poetical Use has been hitherto made of it.' (It occurs, however, in *Polyolbion*, Song XVIII.) A. S. P. Woodhouse, (*Collins and the Creative Imagination*, 1931) commenting only on the last point, suggests that Collins had been directed by his antiquarian friends to the old historians, especially Camden's *Britannia*, and had overlooked Thomson's handling of the passage. But this does not account for such a sequence of similarities. Edward Gay Ainsworth (*Poor Collins*, 1937), who has traced them all, feels justified in calling Collins's 'Ode to Liberty' a 'concentrated and somewhat confused version' of Thomson's poem. I do not think that the obviousness of the historical material and the fondness of the eighteenth century for 'progresses' quite cover the case. It is perhaps best to assume a rapid reading of *Liberty* some years before the 'Ode to Liberty' was written, so that the argument of the poem was retained and the detail forgotten, and then a rediscovery of the story of the continuity and separation of England and France in Camden.

² Toland's *Critical History of the Celtic Religion and Learning: containing an Account of the Druids* appeared posthumously in *A Collection of Several Pieces by Mr. John Toland*, 1726. William Stukeley, *Stonehenge, a Temple Restor'd to the British Druids* (1740); *Abury, a Temple of the British Druids* (1743). I also use phrases from *The Brill, Caesar's Camp at Pancras* and *The Weddings*; both tracts were reprinted in the second edition of Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1776) and seem to date originally from 1758 and 1723 respectively. *A General History of England. By Thomas Carte, an Englishman*, 1747.

and, first and last, his racial enthusiasm overpowers his Deistic spleen. It is to be observed that this racial consciousness is special to Toland, and is otherwise very rare among eighteenth-century enthusiasts, to whom Celt and Saxon were alike 'Britons' and had an equal claim to their filial respect. The eighteenth-century patriot did not call himself an Anglo-Saxon but a Briton. 'Britons never shall be slaves', wrote Thomson. The Druids were Britons, and the pensive mourner by Thomson's grave is a Briton, and both inhabit Britain, the land of oak-trees and liberty, and that is good enough. It was the soil, not the blood, that was the basic consideration: the men were bred by the land: the continuity was territorial, and the Druid was adopted by the eighteenth century as easily as King Arthur by the Middle Ages. Both were 'ours'.¹ The Welsh, whose bardic tradition was held to descend uninterrupted from the British bards, might be allowed to have a special interest in their ancestors, but not so as to exclude the rest of Britain from its birthright.

William Stukely was a more single-minded enthusiast than Toland. His mission was to establish the druidical origin of the megalithic monuments of Great Britain, and his two copiously illustrated folios on Stonehenge and Avebury are still warm with an excitement which perceives in the admired structures the architecture 'of pure reason and good sense', and fills them in imagination with 'a solemn sacrifice of magnanimous Britons'. Toland, too, had believed that the stone circles were British temples, but he and Stukeley disagreed *toto coelo* as to the nature and value of the rites performed in them. Stukeley was a believing Christian and a clergyman, and to get full imaginative satisfaction out of his stone circles he had to conceive the Arch-Druid in his own image. It was less surprising to his generation than it is to us to read his assertion that the Druids were 'of Abraham's religion entirely'. To Stukeley, as to Camden and Selden, Europe had been peopled by the descendants of Japhet, from whom Gaul, Briton, Greek, and Roman were alike derived. All ultimate origins were Biblical, as all languages led back to Hebrew. If we find in the Old Testament that the patriarchs planted groves and raised altars and pillars of stone, what more probable than that the Druids, who did the same things, were of the same family and occupied in patriarchal worship? Some adventurous philology is added to the rationalized mythology of the Renaissance scholars to elucidate these remote occurrences, and Stukeley concludes that the Druids were a Phoenician colony, brought to Britain by the Tyrian Hercules, who was the son-in-law of

¹ Camden, working out the likeness and hence the relationship between Gauls and Britons, by means of a comparison of customs and characteristics, matches the traits of the ancient Gauls, as reported by classical historians, indifferently with those the same historians' report of the Britons and with what is generally known in his day of 'our Britons', i.e. Elizabethan Englishmen.

Abraham. There was nothing unusual about this mode of research. The vast synthesizing learning of the Renaissance, now so completely antiquated, was still alive in his day.¹ Where he shows his idiosyncrasy is in his insistence that the Druids kept this patriarchal religion unblemished, and, moreover, that they may fairly be called Christian. To this undogmatic Churchman of the Enlightenment the essence of Christianity is 'a knowledge of the plurality of persons in the Deity', and that, he thinks, they might have attained by the 'strength of reason'. Indeed, he undertakes to suggest the line their reasoning could have taken. We hear nothing of the 'juggling arts and tricks' by which, according to Carte and Toland, 'they dexterously led the people blindfold'. On the contrary, Stukeley will put his Druids as nearly as possible on a level with the patriarchs. 'We cannot say that Jehovah appeared personally to them', he writes carefully, 'yet we may well think they were sometimes vouchsafed the spirit of prophecy, and particularly in regard to Messiah, who they knew was to be born of a virgin, and likewise was to be born at the winter solstice, whence their famous mistleto solemnity'. While the rest of the world lapsed into idolatry, their temples remained the only monuments of the unpolluted patriarchal religion. 'Left in the extremest west to the improvement of their thoughts, [they] yet advanc'd their enquiries, under all disadvantages, to such heights, as should make our moderns asham'd to wink in the sunshine of learning and religion.' In short, as we survey the plates of Stonehenge, with Stukeley busy at his easel in the middle-distance and a travelling-chariot drawn up on the drover's road in the foreground, we may make the gratifying reflection 'that the true religion has chiefly, since the repeopling of mankind after the flood, subsisted in our island; and here we made the best reformation from the universal pollution of Christianity, popery'. Patriotism can go no further.

At this point we may well ask: What has become of Andate, Goddess of Victory, and the other gods of the Celts? Stukeley's answer would be that this worship was imported by idolatrous colonies from the Continent, and this would be the line taken by anyone tender of the reputation of the Druids. Caesar had said that the Druids believed that their discipline came to them from Britain, and that those who wished to study it in its purity travelled thither. This statement makes possible the process by which all that is attractive in the accounts of the Gaulish Druids can be referred to Britain as its source, and all that is unattractive can be regarded as a Gaulish perversion of the true discipline. In particular, human sacrifice is very much played down, not only by the poets, who generally omit any reference to it, but by the antiquarians. We do not hear at all of the

¹ It acquired fresh vitality in the late eighteenth century from a school of mythologists, whose speculations, and their probable effect on the Romantic poets, are traced by Edward G. Hungerford in *Shores of Darkness* (1941). There is much about Druids here.

slaughterous basketry that has passed from Caesar into the lower school history books. Human sacrifice, we are reminded, was practised at times by the Romans themselves and by all nations of the ancient world. Everybody did it, in fact. Even so, Stukeley prefers to think that the Druids' participation in such an 'extravagant act of superstition deriv'd from some extraordinary notices they had of mankind's redemption: or perhaps from *Abraham's* example misunderstood'. Carte suggests that their originally bloodless rites were corrupted through the influence of Phoenician traders who 'being themselves furiously prepossessed in favour of human sacrifices, seem to have recommended them to a people extremely devoted to religion, and disposed to receive any rites that might express a higher veneration of their deities'—a sufficiently handsome apology. In Mason's verse play *Caractacus*, published ten years after Collins's ode, when the hard-pressed hero suggests to the Druid on Mona that the time has come to approach the gods with a human victim, he is sternly told that that sort of thing may happen across the Channel, but not in Britain, except where Britons have been 'mistaught by Gaul', and never on Mona. These anxious and ingenious explanations suggest strongly that barbarism was no part of the Druids' charm; it is against the imputation of barbarism that they are to be defended. Even Toland's juggling priests have nothing of the witch-doctor about them; they are nearer to the cynically enlightened prelates of the eighteenth century whom Protestant England conceived as presiding over the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood. Romance had not yet turned wistfully towards the barbaric, as it did towards the end of the eighteenth century.¹ The blood on the Druids' hands is not relished; it is an embarrassment. There is no dallying with fear. The sort of thrill that Lucan found in the dreadful druidical forest near Massilia may be faintly transmitted in Selden's allusion to 'such gloomy shadows, as they most usually for contemplation retired their ascending thoughts into'—though even here the thoughts 'ascend'—but it is not to be detected in Stukeley's 'verdant cathedrals', where the worship is fundamentally related to that in Stukeley's parish church. We do not therefore find that the virtues of the Druids are those of the noble savage; they are highly civilized and a little donnish. 'The collegiate life which the *Druids* led,' writes Carte, 'far from rendering them morose and awkward, served only to improve their

¹ The human sacrifice is then emphasized often to the exclusion of all other druidical customs; e.g. T. Warton's 'Sonnet written at Stonehenge' (publ. 1777) refers to 'druid priests, sprinkled with human gore'. This is Mrs. Barbauld's difficulty; she associates the Druid only with bloody rites: 'To the sanguinary and superstitious Druid, whose rites were wrapped up in mystery, it was peculiarly improper to compare a poet whose religion was simple as truth, sublime as nature, and liberal as the spirit of philosophy' (*op. cit.*). Wordsworth, also, includes the 'giant wicker' and the 'baleful rite' in his vision of the Druids (*Prelude*, XIII, 21–49, and *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, II and III), but to him they are also astronomers and musicians and, I think, monotheists. Shelley briefly denies the Druid a place in his progress of Liberty ('Ode to Liberty', Stanza VIII).

politeness, by daily conversations with persons of the same rank with themselves, whose minds, by their studies and reasonings on subjects of morality, were filled with noble sentiments; and who had added to their other accomplishments, a knowledge of all useful parts of learning.' They 'made Ethics a principal part of their study' and were wise lawgivers. 'Wherever they were not themselves a party,' writes Toland, with his usual comic wobble, 'neither the Egyptians, nor Persians nor Greeks, nor Romans, did surpass the wisdom, equity and strictness of the Druids in the sanction or execution of the laws.' Moreover they were men of peace, exempt from military service themselves and revered as mediators even by hostile troops on the battlefield, and this appealed strongly to the eighteenth-century intellectuals, to whom war was an irrational survival of barbarism.^{1 2}

It remains to consider what Carte meant by ascribing to the Druids 'a knowledge of all useful parts of learning'. There is a Baconian flavour about the phrase, and it is observable that in the eighteenth century, though the function of the Druids as poets and historians is not forgotten, the accent falls heavily on their skill as natural philosophers. The importance of this for Collins's use of the name is obvious. There is ample basis for this conception in the classical writers. Caesar tells us that the Druids discussed the stars, their movements, the size of the universe and the earth, and the order of nature. Cicero records that Divitiacus the Aeduan claimed to have the knowledge of nature that the Greeks called 'physiologia'. Ammianus Marcellinus says that the Euhages, the seers, the second of the three orders of the learned, explained the high mysteries of

¹ Much of this glowing account of the virtues and graces of the Druids is traceable to the identification of Abaris the Hyperborean as a Hebridean Druid, argued by Toland, with great ingenuity and pertinacity, and accepted by Stukeley and Carte. Abaris, according to a legend recorded by numerous writers from Diodorus Siculus to Suidas, visited Greece and Sicily in the time of Pythagoras, was received by him as an equal, and won golden opinions everywhere. He is commonly considered a Scythian, but Toland maintains that the Hyperborean island (Diodorus Siculus, II, 47), which he distinguishes from the Hyperborean continent, was the Hebridean group. (The Loeb editors think it may have been the British Isles.) If Abaris was a Hebridean Celt, it might be assumed that he was a Druid. We hear that he spoke Greek perfectly, was eloquent, candid, moderate and sagacious, 'a searcher after wisdom, desirous of friendship', and favoured by Pythagoras beyond his other disciples. 'Can courts form a finer gentleman?' asks Carte. 'Can Greece or Rome boast of producing a man more extraordinary?' Toland, who leaves no stone unturned, translates *χλαμύδι σφιγγόμενος* 'wrapt in a plad (*sic*) . . . the native garb of an aboriginal Scot'. The next step was to presume that this paragon was the master, not the disciple, of Pythagoras. It also followed that, if the Hyperborean island was the Hebrides, then the Hyperborean embassies to Delos might have consisted of British Druids, who brought to Greece the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of a future state of rewards and punishments. Carte, following Stukeley, pushes this assumption to its limits and asserts that it was from the Druids that the 'learned Greeks borrowed the best of their religious doctrines, and the first knowledge of those sciences, in which they became afterwards so eminent'. The equation of Virgil's golden bough with the druidical mistletoe establishes them in an equally important position in regard to Roman origins.

² The cause of national liberty alone hallowed it. To Thomson (*Summer*, II. 534-5) the patriot is: 'Backward to mingle in detested war, But foremost when engaged'.

nature. The very proficiency of the Druids in magic, which elicited reluctant blame from their admirers, was ascribed to their advanced knowledge of natural science, and Carte points out that their power to provide apparent miracles presumes a regular course of enquiry by judicious persons, extended over ages. Much was made of the connection with Pythagoras. Like him they taught the transmigration of souls, whether they derived the doctrine from the Greek sage or transmitted it to him. Stukeley ascribes to them 'a good notion of music', since 'Pythagoras completed this art'. They were mathematicians and astronomers, as the careful orientation of their stone circles seemed to prove. Stukeley, who spent much time analysing the symmetry of these monuments, assures us that they 'well understood the geometry of the circle', and that their structures were in exact relation to the quarters of Heaven. He can account for this precision only by assuming that they knew the use of the magnetical compass, and he speculates whether the sacred golden arrow, which Abaris presented to Pythagoras in return for his instruction, might not be the magnetic needle. Carte, finding in Diodorus Siculus's account of the Hyperborean island that there the moon could be seen at a small distance from the earth, with mountainous eminences on her face, jumps to the conclusion that they had telescopes. They were, indeed, completely equipped, adepts in physics, astronomy, mathematics, physiology and geography, equals or perhaps masters of the Greeks in philosophy, specially devoted to ethics, and 'really unblameable in all respects, except in what related to their sacrifices, divinations and superstitions'.¹

Such were the conceptions of the Druids that were rife when Collins wrote his ode, and the presumption that he was affected by them does not depend upon establishing his acquaintance with the pages of Toland, Stukeley and Carte. He is likely enough to have looked at the last two. Stukeley and his enthusiasms were well known in the literary world of his time, and Carte's first volume was an impressive book and something of a landmark in the writing of history, from its full use of documents. There is, however, no evidence of Collins's direct indebtedness to these particular books, and no need of it. He had no archaeological axe to grind; his imagination, always captivated by the grand and remote, seized on the idealized figure of the Druid, as it hovered in the eighteenth century fancy, and explored its rich and complex applicability as a type of the dead poet. The figure, moreover, must have haunted his mind for years. It is true that the word 'Druid' occurs only twice in his poetry, in the ode in question and in the passage already quoted from the 'Ode to Liberty'. It does, however, occur in the poetry of his closest friend, Joseph Warton, and in that of the younger brother, Thomas Warton. At the end of Thomas

¹ See Carte.

Warton's *Pleasures of Melancholy*, written in 1745, the babe Contemplation is found by a Druid on his evening walk, 'far in a hollow glade of Mona's wood', and taken home 'to the close shelter of his oaken bower', where she lies 'listening to the rapid roar Of wood-hung Menai, stream of Druids old'. It is a fairly safe assumption that the Druid entered the imaginative world of the young Wartons from 'Lycidas' (ll. 50–5). It is this passage that Joseph Warton quotes later in his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (vol. 1, section i, 1756) when he wants to point out the inferiority of Pope to Milton as an imitator of Theocritus. 'The mention of places, remarkably romantic, the supposed habitation of Druids, bards, and wizards', he writes, picking up each of the operative words in turn, 'is far more pleasing to the imagination, than the obvious introduction of Cam and Isis, as seats of the Muses.' Moreover, the Wartons were specially devoted to the minor poems of Milton, regarding them, as Professor Garrod says, as something of a family discovery. Joseph Warton has only one Druid in his *Odes on Various Subjects* (1746), the companion book to Collins's *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects* (1746) and he appears in a playful 'Ode to a Lady who Hates the Country'. In the earlier *Enthusiast*, substantially written in 1740, we hear of bards of old, who sought brown forests and pathless wilds to meet the Muse and learn 'the moral strains she taught to mend mankind', but though this is plainly in the druidical line, the word 'bard' must be examined. Druidical amateurs knew perfectly well that the order of Druids was three-fold, and consisted of Druids proper, who were priests and lawgivers, seers (Vates, Voids, Euhages) and bards who sang hymns to an instrument like the lyre; but they did not attempt, in poetry at any rate, to keep the distinction between the first and last classes. To Milton bards and Druids are synonymous ('where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie'), and in the eighteenth century every Druid can be referred to, if the verse requires it, as a bard. The synonymy, however, does not hold in inverse; 'bard' was already a word of wider connotation; a bard might be Chaucer or Numa Pompilius or a modern English rhymester.¹ We must not therefore lean too heavily on the word 'bard' in *The Enthusiast*, but content ourselves with noting, here and in the 'Ode to Fancy', that linking of the notions of poetry, nature and liberty, which Collins insists on and which he also found in Thomson. The same ideas persist in Thomas Warton's later odes; there are Druids, breathing their solemn songs in oaken bowers, in his 'Ode on the Marriage of the King' (1761) and a Druid harp, sounding to battle from the pro-

¹ Collins has 'old Runic bards', in his 'Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland'. These may be scalds, but are more likely, in view of their 'uncouth lyres . . . many-coloured vest' and 'matted hair with boughs fantastic crown'd' to be Celtic, i.e. Druids, in which case 'Runic' joins the vague romantic vocabulary, and means no more than mysterious, sacred and antique.

found gloom of hoary forests, with baffled Caesar fleeing to gain an easier triumph at Pharsalia, in his 'Ode on his Majesty's Birthday, June 4th, 1788'. These passages are too late for our immediate purpose, but they confirm the likelihood that the Druid was an important figure in the imaginations of the Wartons and their friends.

The special feature of the Wartons' dealings with Druids (and this is important in connection with Collins's application of the word to Thomson) is their strong romantic emphasis on the wild natural setting in which the Druid functions. The fact was not new. It had been known that the Druids worshipped in groves, where they cut the sacred mistletoe. The very name Druid was held to derive from $\delta\rho\upsilon\varsigma$, an oak, and Stukeley turns away from his stone circles long enough to remind us that 'their verdant cathedrals, as we may call them, are celebrated by all old writers'. But this had hitherto been a matter of secondary importance, less interesting than their patriotism, their theology or their mathematics. To the Wartons it was primary. It was from the woods that the Druids received their inspiration. It is in the woods that Contemplation is nourished. From nature or from some embodiment of nature, nymph or genius, come ecstasy, moral enlightenment, love of man and the wisdom of a governor.¹ Poets of all periods have received this inspiration, and the Druids first among them. The Druid as a scientist and mathematician does not appear to have interested the Wartons.

From the enthusiasms of the friends of Collins's formative years it is proper to turn to the friend of his manhood, and ask what Thomson himself makes of the word 'Druid'. Affection pays tribute most gladly in words that have a special significance for the hearer, and, if the ear of the friend is closed, the use of this language has a poignant satisfaction for the survivor. Thomson uses the word Druid twice. The passage from *Liberty* has been cited. The word appears in *The Castle of Indolence* in an interesting context. The Knight of Arts and Industry, who destroys the castle and releases the captives, is accompanied by a 'bard' who is described as 'a little Druid wight Of withered aspect'. The word is vague; but from what follows, it must connote mystery and exalted authority, inhabiting here an unlikely physical form. The deepest moral and religious counsels are in his mouth. It is he who wakes the indolent, and sings to his 'British harp' of God immanent in nature and of the chain of being, leading up through nature to nature's God.² He is a sacred poet and utters something

¹ *The Enthusiast* and *The Pleasures of Melancholy* are here attuned to—and may well have taken their note from—Thomson, *Summer* (ll. 516–63).

² *Castle of Indolence*, xxxiii, xxxvi, xlvi–lxiii. In this respect the 'Druid wight' differs from the Druid proper and the 'Arch-Druid' Pythagoras. It is interesting that in his passage on Pythagoras (*Liberty* III, ll. 31–70) Thomson regrets that the sage stopped short at metempsychosis:—

of Thomson's essential creed. He might be called a natural priest, but that Thomson, who in the fourth book of *Liberty* fulminates much against Superstition and the temporal power of the Church, would not use so compromising a word. If, as seems likely, the little wight of withered aspect, ennobled by this sacred power, is Thomson's friend, Pope, we have the interesting suggestion that a playful compliment, paid by one poet to another, is remembered by a third when the first is dead, and paid back with mournful deliberation. Or Collins, whose memory seems to have been bad, may not have remembered, and yet the seed may have germinated.

There are no Druids in the *Seasons*, but it is there that Thomson is most 'druidical'. To take the most obvious aspect first, the aspect to which the friend of the Wartons would be most sensitive, Thomson appears here as specially the poet of the groves. His poetry is full of woodland scenery from the 'sunny glades' and 'solemn oaks' of *Spring* to the 'mid-wood shade', 'the awful listening gloom' of the 'woodland quire' in *Summer* and the 'mournful grove and vast embowering shades' of *Autumn*; ¹ and three times ² he traces how, in such a setting, the love of nature glows into ecstasy, and revelation and inspiration descend upon the poet. To describe this state he calls on his strongest terms—rapture, divine astonishment—and his boldest conceptions. The wanderers in the woodland 'feel the present Deity, and taste the joy of God'. In these 'haunts of meditation', where the 'ancient bards the inspiring breath Ecstatic felt', and conversed with 'angels and immortal forms' who prompted the poet's muse to 'better themes', the modern bard has the same experience.

Shook sudden from the bosom of the sky,
A thousand shapes or glide athwart the dusk
Or stalk majestic on. Deep-roused, I feel
A sacred terror, a severe delight
Creep through my mortal frame.

Or the visitation may come in the shape of 'Philosophic Melancholy', piercing the heart with virtuous pangs and inflaming the imagination, so

He taught that life's indissoluble flame,
From brute to man, and man to brute again,
For ever shifting runs the eternal round
. Delightful truth!
Had he beheld the living chain ascend,
And not a circling form, but rising whole.

Most eighteenth-century writers on Druids (e.g. Stukeley) make no distinction between the Pythagorean metempsychosis and the druidical belief in the return of the soul to another human frame. Thomson may have done so, but his language (cf. *Liberty*, iv, ll. 627–33) is vague. Pope deals with the chain of being in the *Essay on Man*, Epistle I, but does not link to it the ascent of the individual soul, as Thomson seems to do in *Liberty* and *Winter* ll. 603–8, though not in the *Castle of Indolence*. There seems to be in Thomson's mind a loose association of the notions Druids—Pythagoras—metempsychosis—chain of being—Pope, which holds together, but will not stand pressure.

¹ *Spring*, ll. 893, 915; *Summer*, ll. 9, 518, 521; *Autumn*, ll. 990, 1030.

² *Spring*, ll. 893–903; *Summer*, ll. 516–63; *Autumn*, ll. 988–1036.

that, while 'ten thousand thousand fleet ideas . . . crowd fast into the mind's creative eye', the emotional nature, similarly quickened, streams forth in love and benevolence to the human race. Nor are the woods congenial only to the solitary ecstatic. To their 'verdant portico, . . . nature's vast Lyceum', the poet walks in the evening with philosophic friends, 'improving and improved'. Like that of the Druids, his philosophic interest is strongly directed to the workings of the physical world. His special care for insect-life is modern, but the magnificent address to the sun¹ as the 'great delegated source of life and light' occupies what was believed to be druidical ground, and so do the passages on stars and comets.² His philosophic range is summed up in the appeal to all-sufficient Nature in the last lines of *Autumn*, where he prays to be instructed in the 'rolling wonders' of Heaven, 'their motions, periods, and their laws', in the mineral strata of the deep, the vegetable world, the more complex system of animals, and finally the workings of the mind of man, while such passages as those on the source of water and the nature of frost,³ together with fervent addresses to 'awful Newton' and Bacon, 'the great deliverer',⁴ prove how important a part of Thomson's love of nature was the intellectual satisfaction of knowing how it worked, rising to ecstatic wonder at the Great Designer. In all these passages, moreover, he is aware of himself as one of a little advance-guard of enlightenment. While the 'fond sequacious herd' tremble at the portent of the comet, 'the enlightened few whose God-like minds philosophy exalts' triumph in their power to forecast its path.⁵ The Druids also were an enlightened few, a select body of sages, equipped with learning far above the reach of the common man, though ultimately beneficial to him, and it is in this way that Thomson thinks of the philosophers of his age and of the poets who are tutored by philosophy. The friends who walk in the woods of a summer's evening and those 'of pliant soul, Or blithe or solemn, as the theme inspired', who pass the winter-glooms in converse in some deep retirement, are—and are well aware they are—superior minds, 'to those exulting eye a fairer world, Of which the vulgar never had a glimpse, Displays its charms'.⁶ Like Caesar's Druids, they hold discussions touching the order of nature and the immortality of the soul, and if the words 'and the strength and power of the immortal gods' require some adaptation to fit this philosophical circle, it is not much. Thomson was on the whole rather less Christian than Stukeley believed the Druids to have been. In all his rapturous worship of the great Creative Spirit of the Universe, the 'Source of Being, Universal

¹ *Summer*, ll. 90–174.

² *Summer*, ll. 1693–1729; *Autumn*, ll. 1088–137.

³ *Autumn*, ll. 736–835; *Winter*, ll. 714–31.

⁴ *Spring*, l. 208; *Summer*, ll. 1535–50.

⁵ *Summer*, ll. 1710–29; and cf. *Spring*, ll. 208–17; and *Autumn*, ll. 1115–37.

⁶ *Summer*, ll. 1386–8; *Winter*, ll. 572–608.

Soul Of heaven and earth, Essential Presence',¹ there is no specifically Christian expression though the Christian ideal of love is everywhere present. To complete the 'druidical' qualities of the *Seasons* we have only to recall Thomson's glowing enthusiasm for liberty—'all-protecting freedom which alone Sustains the name and dignity of man'—and his grave moral counsel; his muses are 'humanizing' and teach

The godlike wisdom of the tempered breast,
Progressive truth, the patient force of thought,
Investigation calm whose silent powers
Command the world, the light that leads to Heaven,
Kind equal rule, the government of laws—²

and the whole train of social and moral virtues. Liberty, truth, and love of human kind are the stars by which he steers, and his whole poem is bathed in their light.

It was not unnatural, then, or even far-fetched, for Collins to see in Thomson the modern Druid. The poet-priest of nature, the patriot glorifying liberty, the devout enthusiast of a benevolent Creative Spirit, whom he would not attempt to define dogmatically, the hymn-maker, (there are many in the *Seasons*), the believer in the immortality of the soul, the student and teacher of natural philosophy, the moral sage—he embodied in a modern form almost all the characteristics of the idealized Druids of contemporary conceptions. He had, moreover, a fervent enthusiasm, a quality of genuine awe and wonder which, civilized and enlightened as it was, might seem to relate him to ancient bards and seers. The gloom of his woods is neither Gothic nor elegiac; it is something deeper and older. Of all the druidical characteristics that are patient of modern dress (for we may discount stone circles and human sacrifice) only one salient trait is missing from his work; he makes no use of anything resembling the symbolic and enigmatical language in which the Druids couched their teaching, and which they were held to derive from Pythagoras. The literary fashions of the time were dead against obscurity, and the enlightened few were anxious to impart, in the clearest way, any instruction to which the sequacious herd would open its ears.

There remains a small textual point which gains new significance when connected with eighteenth-century druidical lore. In Fawkes's *Poetical Calendar* and Pearch's *Collection* the first line of the *Ode occasion'd by the Death of Mr. Thomson* runs 'In yonder grove a Druid lies'. Most editors reproduce the original version, as printed by Manby and Cox, but R. A. Willmott in *Poems of Gray, Parnell, Collins and T. Warton* (1854) makes a plea for the revision on the grounds that it is more accordant with the notion of a Druid, and that the speaker, being in a boat, does not see the

¹ *Spring*, ll. 556–7.

² *Summer*, ll. 875–83.

grave itself but the elms and chestnuts on the river bank. Neither reason is conclusive. Collins was not much concerned with topographical accuracy, as the 'whitening spire' of Richmond Church¹ proves. As for the burial of Druids in their sacred groves, I have not found this anywhere mooted, though it is a likely enough flight of fancy. However, the emendation is not to be dismissed lightly. It does deepen the druidical colouring, and obviates the unpleasing repetition of the vowel sound and the word itself in the rhymes of the second and fourth lines of the first stanza. On the other hand, it weakens the poetical shock of the first line and confuses the position of the musing Briton in the last; if he is standing near enough to the grave to see the stone and mound, he could hardly refer to 'yonder grove', though he might to 'yonder grave'. The poem is beautiful but not flawless, and the reader must decide which flaw he can best put up with. Probably Collins himself, that anxious reviser, remained undecided.

¹ Cf. Mrs. Barbauld, *op. cit.* 'The church of Richmond is not white nor a spire, nor can it be seen from the river; and as to the monument erected in the last verse to this great Poet, it must be looked upon in the light of a prophecy which is not yet fulfilled.' Sir Harris Nicolas in his *Memoir of Thomson* (Aldine edition, 1847) says: 'He was buried in Richmond Church under a plain stone without any inscription.'