

A POETRY OF INVOCATION:  
A STUDY OF THE POEMS OF WILLIAM COLLINS AND THEIR TRADITION

By  
PHILIP D. MARION

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1976

FOR MY MOTHER AND FATHER

who taught me to love books and beauty

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To all the friends and mentors who gave generously of their time, patience, learning and encouragement to assist me in the completion of this study, I extend my heartfelt thanks. They never doubted (as I often did) that the end would come.

In particular I am grateful to Professor Ben Pickard, who suffered my anguish gracefully during weekly tennis matches; to Professors Douglas Bonneville and Richard Brantley, who read the dissertation on rather short notice and who gave me the benefit of their kind yet unsparing suggestions in the final oral; and especially to Professor Ira Clark, who taught me to read Milton, who painstakingly read the manuscript chapter by chapter, and whose detailed, perceptive comments helped shape the final version of each.

I am especially indebted as well to Professor Aubrey Williams, who first taught me the pleasures and rewards of the historical method, whose kindness to me has been unflinching, and whose straightforward counsel has always been gladly given and gratefully received. His suggestions for the improvement of my master's thesis contributed significantly to the strength of the final argument of the dissertation. I thank him too for reading and commenting on the dissertation, and for participating in the final defense.

To my wife, Joanne, I owe thanks which a lifetime cannot repay; she has supported and encouraged me without complaint during each of the seven years which culminate in this study, while watching me

chase a star that always seemed to be fading in the west.

Finally, my deepest debt is to Professor Melvyn New, the director of this dissertation from its earliest stages as a master's thesis. He found my writing chaos, and left it with whatever grace it now possesses. Since my first quarter in graduate school his energy and discipline as both scholar and teacher have served as my guide, his courage and wit as my example. He has shown me the path in ways too numerous to count.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. . . . .	iii
ABSTRACT . . . . .	vi
I. INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
NOTES. . . . .	14
II. THE INVOCATIVE TRADITION: SPENSER AND MILTON . . . . .	20
NOTES. . . . .	54
III. COLLINS: THE EARLY POEMS . . . . .	61
NOTES. . . . .	105
IV. THE DILEMMA: <u>ODES ON SEVERAL DESCRIPTIVE AND ALLEGORIC</u> <u>SUBJECTS</u> (1746) . . . . .	113
NOTES. . . . .	161
V. <u>ODES</u> (CONTINUED) AND FINAL ATTEMPTS . . . . .	166
NOTES. . . . .	220
VI. COLLINS AND KEATS: THE MUTUAL DILEMMA. . . . .	227
NOTES. . . . .	263
APPENDIX: TWO POEMS OF DOUBTFUL ATTRIBUTION . . . . .	267
NOTES. . . . .	273
LIST OF WORKS CITED. . . . .	274
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH. . . . .	285

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Council  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

A POETRY OF INVOCATION: A STUDY OF THE POEMS OF WILLIAM COLLINS  
AND THEIR TRADITION

By

Philip D. Marion

December, 1976

Chairman: Melvyn New  
Major Department: English

Despite the disrepute into which the label "pre-romantic" has gradually fallen in recent years, and despite consequent attempts to provide more precise readings of English poets of the mid eighteenth century in their own terms, the distortion and neglect fostered by the "pre-romantic" approach continue to dominate critical treatment of their work. And, as I demonstrate in chapter I, the work of no important poet of the period has been more consistently misread than that of William Collins. With too few (and usually only partial) exceptions, Collins' poetic theory and practice have been analyzed piecemeal or judged arbitrarily according to narrow "pre-romantic" standards. Moreover, attempts to correct this view invariably conclude just as arbitrarily that Collins should be seen either as a last gasp of Augustan theory and practice, or in formalist isolation from all poetic traditions.

All such notions have in common a steadfast refusal to heed the clear signposts to an understanding of his work which Collins himself provides in his poems. If we are to apprehend his work more accurately,

then, we must begin not with romantic or Augustan criteria, but with the standards Collins consistently imposes upon himself--standards which are the abiding concerns of his poetry. My aim in this study, therefore, is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Collins canon in which I avoid the arbitrary impositions of the past by following his own signposts faithfully. Only after having done so can one begin to reassess his relationship to the Romantics.

To follow Collins' lead is to become aware of several closely interrelated elements in his work which form the basis of his theory of poetry and which, in turn, rigidly control the structure of nearly all his poems: his choice of Spenser and Milton as his chief poetic idols; a crippling self-doubt caused by the dilemma in which that choice traps him; and most important, the invocative stance by which he attempts to surmount his doubt. Collins' determination to emulate Spenser and Milton causes him to believe, I argue, that he must first attain the same divine inspiration they claimed as central to their poetic vision and achievement. At the same time, Collins finds himself unable to believe that such inspiration remains available in his increasingly secular era. This inspiratory dilemma is the key to the structure of Collins' work: with very few exceptions his poems are frustrated invocations to which the Muse gives no answer. For Collins the invocation becomes, in effect, the poem, rather than a necessary prelude to it as it was for Spenser and Milton. The invocative stance is therefore, I maintain, central not only to our understanding of Collins' own work, but to our perception of his relationship to his predecessors, contemporaries and successors as well.

Accordingly in chapter II, after a brief survey of the invocative

tradition they inherited, I examine the invocative stances of Spenser and Milton--stances I show to be virtually identical. In chapters III through V I offer a close reading of the full Collins canon. And finally in chapter VI, with the invocative tradition and Collins' place in it in view, I inaugurate a reassessment of his relationship to the Romantics by focusing on the invocative dilemma in Keats--who, I conclude, both shares the Collins anguish and, significantly, is able to transcend it by transforming his stance fitfully in his later work. Because Collins' work occupies such a critical place in the decline of the traditional invocative stance and the visionary poetry it makes possible, it continues to warrant our careful attention.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

When Wordsworth wrote a brief commemorative poem for William Collins in 1789 entitled "Remembrance of Collins Composed upon the Thames Near Richmond," in which he treated his predecessor reverently as a kindred spirit, he unknowingly presaged what was to become the prevailing critical approach to the poetry of Collins and most of his contemporaries in the first half of the twentieth century: the "pre-romantic."<sup>1</sup> That approach, obviously, grew out of the attempt to trace the origins of romantic poetry to the middle and later years of the eighteenth century, as well as out of the larger, concomitant desire to understand the transition in the premises of taste which was then taking place.<sup>2</sup> As Walter Jackson Bate has persuasively argued, perhaps no similar change in aesthetic theory "has been more fundamental and pervasive."<sup>3</sup> And in our own century few literary matters have received more critical attention than the various aspects of this change, usually considered under what Bate has accurately called the "arbitrary headings of 'classicism' and 'romanticism'."<sup>4</sup>

Such labels and their attendant assumptions are admittedly always difficult to overturn or replace, if only because they become so convenient. This is particularly true when the period in question is indeed one of sweeping and complex changes, not only in aesthetics but in every realm, from religion and philosophy to economics and politics.

Some oversimplification is bound to occur in order to make the discussion of these changes manageable, and it is therefore not surprising that the terms "classic," "Augustan" and "romantic" are still regularly employed today in spite of widespread complaints about their accuracy.

What is difficult to understand is why the fallacies and distortions inherent in the most pernicious (and least useful) of these labels, "pre-romantic," persisted unquestioned for as long as they did. For under its aegis nearly the whole body of English poetry written in the middle years of the eighteenth century was relegated a priori to the status, in effect, of nonentity. As Northrop Frye has said, the term "has the peculiar demerit of committing us to anachronism before we start, and imposing a false teleology on everything we study."<sup>5</sup> When the poems of the period were read at all, they were forced to support whatever preconceived thesis a critic wished to defend. The poets were thus seen almost exclusively as either poor imitators of the now generally rehabilitated Augustans, or, most often, as writers who haltingly prepared the way for the coming of the Great Romantics. Their works have either evidenced "romantic" qualities to the critic seeking to show the rise of the romantic imagination, or they have provided examples of the last gasps of Augustan poetics to the critic seeking to propound the values of the Augustan imagination.<sup>6</sup> The result has been that few of these poets have been respected or studied as significant in their own right. Moreover, inevitably in such criticism important, even central aspects of the individual poet's work are either slighted or ignored while others are often amplified beyond recognition.

If these flaws were not apparent all along, they should be so by now. Yet despite the gradual reappraisal in the past twenty-five years

of many of the traditional assumptions about the poetic theories and practices which figure in the transition from "classic" to "romantic," and despite the disrepute into which the label "pre-romantic" has generally fallen, much remains to be done if we are to complete the rescue of individual poets from the distortions and misreadings imposed upon them for so long.<sup>7</sup> And the work of no important poet in this period has been more, or longer, distorted and neglected as a result of this approach than has that of Collins--nor is any canon more in need of further rehabilitation if we are to begin to understand his poetry in its own terms.<sup>8</sup>

Just how sustained the distortion of Collins' work has been is perhaps most apparent in the fact that even at the height of his fame during the nineteenth century, well before the "pre-romantic" label had come into fashion, he was most often praised in terms with implicitly romantic overtones: for the brilliance of his native genius or the sublimity of his aspirations or the revolutionary freedom of his imagination.<sup>9</sup> Hazlitt, for example, typically singles out the "sterling ore of genius" in Collins, along with his "fervour of imagination."<sup>10</sup> A similar note was struck by Sir Egerton Brydges when he wrote of the "Ode on the Poetical Character" that "its general conception is magnificent, and beaming that spirit of inventive enthusiasm, which alone can cherish the poet's powers, and bring forth the due fruits. Collins never touched the lyre but he was borne away by the inspiration under which he laboured."<sup>11</sup> Even more revealing is the pronouncement with which Brydges opens his essay: "Collins is the founder of a new school of poetry..."<sup>12</sup> Later in the century Swinburne, with characteristic enthusiasm, echoed Collins' earlier critics (Brydges' "new school" notion

in particular) when he wrote that "Here, in the twilight which followed on the splendid sunset of Pope, was at last a poet who was content to sing out what he had in him--to sing and not to say, without a glimpse of wit or a flash of eloquence."<sup>13</sup>

This pattern is not substantially altered when, near the turn of the century, Walter C. Bronson suggests, in the introduction to his influential edition of the poems, that while Collins "was a romanticist by nature...elements of a true Classicism were deep within him."<sup>14</sup> Of course, the explicitly "pre-romantic" argument essayed by Phelps was coming to the fore during this period, and Bronson's comment seems designed in part as a response to it. But instead of providing a more balanced view, his statement merely introduces yet another distortion fostered by the "pre-romantic" approach by arbitrarily and vaguely compartmentalizing Collins' work. First of all, Bronson is never clear as to the proportions of these modes within individual poems. And in any case, his ultimate bias is best revealed by his insistence on a developing romantic emphasis in Collins' odes--an argument difficult to prove due to the uncertainty of their order of composition.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, although he quite correctly points out that Collins "reveals his poetical creed by his literary allusions," and that Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton and Orway are Collins' "gods" in English poetry,<sup>16</sup> he fails to apply this insight to the poems and still insists that what he sees as the absence of didacticism and intellectual subjects in them proves his point: that the romantic aesthetic is dominant.

By the time George Saintsbury commented on Collins' poetry early in this century, the "pre-romantic" penchant for rigid dichotomizing was firmly established. Saintsbury, though he avoids the usual

terminology, is nevertheless clearly influenced by "pre-romantic" prejudices, and imposes perhaps the most radical and unsound division on Collins' work. He condemns the poet for all those aspects of his work which seem to him to be indigenous to the period in which Collins wrote, especially singling out what he terms his "ludicrous" and "otiose" diction.<sup>17</sup> At the same time Saintsbury lauds those aspects of the poems which he feels are traceable to Collins' native genius alone. In other words, he concludes, there are manifest in his work "two writers--the Collins of eternity [the romantic Collins?] and the Collins of his day," and the best way to read Collins is to ignore the latter entirely.<sup>18</sup>

What these critics have in common is a tendency to attribute to Collins and his work a number of vague, preconceived qualities which one seldom if ever encounters in the poems themselves. Their conclusions, moreover, are only possible because they neglect the single most important aspect of Collins' poetry--namely, that his intentions as a poet and his notion of his ability to fulfill them are the central, abiding concerns of his work. Once we recognize this fact the misreadings passed on by a critic like Brydges should become obvious. For example, Collins' poems are actually the record of his frustrated, career-long quest for the very inspiration Brydges credited him with possessing fully from the start. Furthermore, far from seeing himself as "the founder of a new school of poetry," Collins in fact longed throughout his career to reestablish an old one via poems the form and content of which pervasively reflect that longing. Finally, to the general failure of these critics to perceive the real subject of Collins' verse, and therefore to read him more accurately, must be

added their overall failure to support their sweeping conclusions with careful readings of the poems; instead they have chosen isolated lines or stanzas when they have quoted him at all, disregarding thereby the full context of his work.

With the growing interest of the twentieth century in more detailed examination of the works themselves came the first attempts to re-evaluate prior estimates of Collins' poetic theory and achievement. But if we turn to these attempts expecting significant advances over previous views, we are bound to be somewhat disappointed. For unfortunately, with the "pre-romantic" approach in full cry in the anthologies, a number of these efforts only compounded earlier errors. H.W. Garrod, although he succeeds, in reaction to Swinburne's extravagant praise, in demonstrating certain undeniable obscurities in Collins' poems, also regards him merely as a precursor of the romantic period. He argues, for example, that Collins "conceived poetry to have suffered too long from a plethora of moral reflection. He wished to bring back description."<sup>19</sup> Garrod's notion of Collins' intent not only causes him to neglect important aspects of the poet's works, but in addition to find fault (as usual) with the poems because they fail to conform to a standard to which Collins, in all likelihood, did not wish to conform. To say that Collins believed poetry to have need of more description and less moral reflection is both to leave what is meant by "description" vague, and to ignore--just as Bronson had--the presence of a continuing moral concern in almost all of his work.<sup>20</sup>

A prime example of Garrod's persistent condemnation of Collins' poetry because it fails to measure up to the romantic theory of poetry by which he arbitrarily judges it is the following remark about the

"Ode Occasion'd by the Death of Mr. Thomson":

Just as we might think that Collins was going to say something from the heart, say something of himself and Thomson, he drifts into...frigidity... Not Collins' tears, not a man's tears, nor a poet's. But the tears of two goddesses, who have been placed for the occasion in a real sailing-boat, on a real 'excursion to Richmond by water'.<sup>21</sup>

Garrod here is unaware of, or is simply ignoring, the importance which the eighteenth century attached to the portrayal of general nature and the universal in art, as a means of personal statement.<sup>22</sup>

A.S.P. Woodhouse provides the earliest attempt at a comprehensive survey of Collins' idea of the creative imagination. But he concludes that Collins' theory and practice are essentially the same as those of Joseph Warton, and that each poet represents a clear step in the direction of romanticism.<sup>23</sup> Woodhouse, through a highly selective procedure, compiles evidence for his belief that Collins' emphasis on the powers of 'fancy' is the result of his admiration for that faculty of the mind for its own sake. His position is perhaps most radically different from the one I shall maintain in this study when, near the end of his essay, he suggests: "The role of his 'persons' is imaginative and pictorial, not ethical, and on no subject, save his art, is he willing to advance a definite proposition in his poetry."<sup>24</sup> Woodhouse contends, then, that although Collins does make clear pronouncements about his art within his poems, he has little or nothing to say about the abstractions which are the subjects of that art. My own argument is, in part, that Collins not only propounds his own theory of poetry in his poems, but that one of his central concerns is his ability to use his poetry to make those abstractions concretely visible and thereby affecting to the society of which he is a member. For him the creative imagination

is a means to that end, as well as what Woodhouse calls "a power which can transcend the limits of the actual and the immediate, and can create its own romantic world of freer and intenser experience,"<sup>25</sup> although Woodhouse's statement is undercut by his typically vague use of the term "romantic" in its final clause.

More recent criticism of Collins has not greatly altered the dominant romantic bias, despite the growing number of close readings of at least some of the poems.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately many of the readings provided in full-length studies of Collins are overshadowed either by arguments concerning the details of his life, or by attempts to "place him" in his age.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the few poems which have received detailed analyses are consistently the same. The "Ode to Evening" has received by far the most intense scrutiny, while the "Ode on the Poetical Character" and the "Ode Occasion'd by the Death of Thomson" have each received at least more attention than the remaining poems.<sup>28</sup> (All three are of course basic to arguments for Collins' "pre-romantic" status.) But although these poems are without question important, concentration on them alone has contributed by omission to the prevalent failure to understand the range of Collins' meaning and achievement.

The first critic to do more than simply mention the crucial fact that the subject of Collins' poems is nearly always his art itself was Alan D. McKillop in his essay, "The Romanticism of William Collins."<sup>29</sup> Its title suggests its weakness; nevertheless, McKillop's basic approach to the problem of Collins' theory and practice is, I believe, the most valid thus far--and one which deserves to be pursued. The essence of this approach is the recognition, in McKillop's words, that the writing of the kind of poetry Collins sought to create "was an enterprise which

was doomed to failure, and indeed no one could be more deeply conscious of his failure than he was himself--no one felt more keenly the impotence of British poetry in the middle of the eighteenth century."<sup>30</sup> One need not agree with McKillop's insistence on what can only be called a romantic aesthetic standard to grasp the value of his locating the tension between intention and fulfillment in Collins' work within the poems. The question is not what Collins wanted to do and did do according to a critic's arbitrarily imposed view, but what Collins himself wants his poetry to do and what he knows it does.

Of equal importance is McKillop's collateral recognition of how many of Collins' poems "show more or less clearly that his mind reverted inevitably to the idea that true poetry was remote from things present and modern."<sup>31</sup> However, this realization leads McKillop to a conclusion which is not entirely legitimate: "The real subject of Collins' odes, then, is the concept of poetry; Simplicity, Fear, Pity, and the rest are only ancillary to an idea of inspiration which is conceived and intensely desired, but never fully realized."<sup>32</sup> That Collins often despairs of his calling and the inspiration it requires is so; indeed, the causes and results of that despair constitute the central theme of the present study. But it is also true that the abstractions to which he writes are the essence of that calling. It is because he believes he can only make them palpable to his readers (his chief goal) by first achieving this inspiration that he desires it at all.<sup>33</sup>

My aim in this study is therefore to furnish a close, comprehensive analysis of Collins' poetic theory and practice, while assiduously avoiding the distortions so habitually and arbitrarily visited upon his work in the past. I eschew not only the dominant "pre-romantic"

reading, but also attempts to balance it which place the poet either in a narrowly defined "post-Augustan" milieu or in formalist isolation from all poetic traditions. All three approaches have fostered serious misreading or neglect of what actually goes on in Collins' poems. Yet understanding precisely what happens in them is especially crucial because, as McKillop has suggested, it is there and there alone that Collins' struggle for the fulfillment of his aspirations is both articulated and enacted. Also, the limitations of the Collins biography and the scarcity of available letters only serve to augment the importance of the poems as the primary source for any study of the poet.<sup>34</sup> In other words, if we are ever to understand Collins' poetry, his place in his own time, and, ultimately, the exact nature of his relationship to the Romantics, we must begin by heeding much more carefully the distinct signposts the poet himself provides abundantly throughout his work.

To do so is to become aware of several closely interrelated elements of Collins' work which are the basis of his theory of poetry and which, in turn, rigidly control the structure of most of his poems. These components have not previously been examined in light of their full causal relationships, nor has their pivotal correlation been applied, as it needs to be, to a reading of the total Collins canon. The key elements are: his choice of poetic idols; a crippling self-doubt born of the dilemma in which that choice traps him; and the poetic stance by which he attempts to surmount his doubt, but that becomes itself a part of the trap. Together they constitute the principal focus of my analysis.

First, when Collins thought about writing poetry, he nearly always

thought not of the future but of the past; when he thought about past poets whose idea of the poet's function and the nature of poetry he most wished to emulate, he nearly always thought of Spenser and Milton.<sup>35</sup> This is what one must conclude, at any rate, from the overwhelming evidence of the poems. Of course, idolizing Milton, and to some degree Spenser as well, was not at all uncommon in the mid eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup> But there is an intensity and anguish in Collins' desire to follow in the wake of his predecessors which calls special attention to his attitude toward them, and, I believe, makes it imperative that we understand as precisely as possible what it is that Collins seeks in his forebears.

Linked inextricably in Collins' verse to his desire to follow his great predecessors is his recurring certainty that he is unable to do so. This certainty is accompanied by a pervasive self-consciousness that seems to be in part caused by and in part a contributor to Collins' self-doubt. In fact, it is difficult to determine which of these elements in the poet's work prompted the other, so closely interwoven are they through the canon. What is clear is the overriding dilemma at the heart of these recurrent doubts and of his entire poetic output. In its simplest terms, that dilemma is the result of Collins' notion that the achievements of Spenser and Milton were possible only because they had prayed for and received a divine inspiration. Therefore it follows that he must also receive it if he is to write the kind of poetry they wrote. But the years between 1667 and 1740 had, as Collins' predicament amply demonstrates, wrought extensive changes, and the inspiration possessed by his idols seems hopelessly out of reach to him despite his determined efforts.

But by far the most significant and instructive element in Collins' poetry--and the most pervasive in its effects--is the mode to which his inspiratory dilemma reduces him in the majority of his works: what I shall term the invocative stance. For in his customary posture Collins invokes the aid of a goddess who personifies an abstract quality or idea, and prays vehemently for the ability (an ability he believes Spenser and Milton to have been especially possessed of) to embody that quality or idea poetically.<sup>37</sup> Besides being indicative of the extent of Collins' inhibiting self-consciousness, the stance is the key to the structure of all but a very few of his works and, I shall argue, to his relationship both to his predecessors, and to his successors in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>38</sup>

We cannot begin to comprehend the latter accurately, however, until the former has been thoroughly established. Therefore in chapter II I suggest a more detailed answer to the question of what exactly Collins seeks in his forebears through a survey of the invocative tradition as a whole, then an analysis in particular of the attitudes of Spenser and Milton toward the Muse, invocation and inspiration, for it is through these attitudes that their notions of the poet and his function are revealed, especially as they relate to Collins' ubiquitous invocative stance. It is, I shall try to show, the tension between what Spenser and Milton think the poet should do and what they actually do in their poems on the one hand, and what Collins, seeking to follow them, wants to do but believes he cannot--and therefore does not--do on the other, upon which we must focus in deciding their full meaning to him.

In chapters III through V I offer a close reading of the Collins

canon, concentrating primarily on his dilemma and invocative stance. Then finally in chapter VI, with the invocative tradition and Collins' place in it in mind, I attempt to initiate a reassessment of his relationship to the Romantics, based not on the vague old preconceptions, but rather on the more precise recognition of Keats's profound sharing of his predecessor's dilemma, and especially his stance. Nor is my choice of Keats an arbitrary one. He is clearly representative of his time in his concern with the problem of establishing a claim to inspired vision (Blake and Wordsworth come immediately to mind); but even more important is the particularly striking proximity of his struggle to Collins', a proximity which makes Keats's work the most instructive starting point for a reassessment, as we shall see.

Collins' dilemma and his response to it can tell us much about critical changes in the invocative tradition--changes with far-reaching consequences not only for his poetry, but for poets down even to our own day. The gulf between Milton's devout "Hail holy Light" and Byron's scoffing "Hail, Muse! et cetera," is much wider than mere chronology suggests.<sup>39</sup> And as Collins knew only too well, the loss for poetry would be both great and irreparable.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For Wordsworth's poem, see The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940-49), I, 41. As its title suggests, the poem deliberately echoes Collins' own elegy for his friend and fellow poet, James Thomson.

<sup>2</sup>The "pre-romantic" approach per se actually begins with William Lyon Phelps's The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement: A Study in Eighteenth Century Literature (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1893). Believing himself to be the first to undertake such a study, Phelps sums up what became the standard argument thus: "...that between the years 1725 and 1765 the Romantic movement was a real, if quiet force, and that in these forty years may be found the seeds which sprang to full maturity in Scott and Byron, and in all the subsequent Romantic literature of the nineteenth century" (p. vii). Also see Henry A. Beers, A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Holt, 1910). The major teaching anthologies produced during the next two decades (many of them still in widespread use) perpetuated the approach, and, as Morse Peckham, "A Survey of Romantic Period Textbooks," CE, 20 (1958), 49-53, demonstrates, few had altered it even in much later revisions. In his "Preface" to the third edition of his Anthology of Romanticism (New York: Ronald Press, 1948; orig. pub. 1929), one of the most influential texts, Ernest Bernbaum recommended a reading of his selections from the "Pre-Romantic Movement" after those from the romantic period, "because the pre-romantic ones will be of greater interest and significance to those readers who are familiar with the characteristics of the main movement itself" (p. iv). Nothing could be more certain to preserve the traditional prejudice. Equally guilty (and equally influential) is Bernbaum's Guide through the Romantic Movement, 2nd ed. (New York: Ronald, 1949), pp. 6-41. Only very recently has this trend begun to reverse itself in the anthologies, as David Perkins' English Romantic Writers (New York: Harcourt, 1967) shows; he omits the "pre-romantic" category altogether.

<sup>3</sup>From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England (1946; rpt. New York: Harper, 1961), p. vii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>"Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," ELH, 23 (1956), p. 144.

<sup>6</sup>For an example of the former, see especially J.W. Mackail, "Collins and the English Lyric in the Eighteenth Century," in Studies of English Poets (London: Longmans, 1926), pp. 137-58, originally a

lecture given in 1920. For the idea that these poets weakly preserve Augustan diction see Thomas Quayle, Poetic Diction: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Verse (London: Methuen, 1924). And even Oliver Sigworth, in the most recent full-length study of Collins' work, William Collins (New York: Twayne, 1965), tends to overemphasize the poet's Augustan heritage, distorting the poems in the process.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to Bate, still of central importance on the transition as a whole is M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (1953; rpt. New York: Norton, 1958). Key arguments for reevaluating the standard labels are: R.D. Havens, "Discontinuity in Literary Development: The Case of English Romanticism," SP, 47 (1950), 102-11; Bertrand Bronson, "The Pre-Romantic or Post-Augustan Mode," ELH, 20 (1953), rpt. in Facets of the Enlightenment (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), pp. 159-72; and Frye, "Defining an Age of Sensibility." Havens and Frye argue forcefully for a reading of mid eighteenth-century poets in terms of their own era and preoccupations. Neither, unfortunately, provides very precise suggestions on how to proceed. With too few exceptions, the general guidelines for a reappraisal which these critics laid down in the 1950's have simply not been pursued in detail for specific poets. The following attempts deserve mention: on Smart, Sophia B. Blaydes, Christopher Smart as a Poet of His Time (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), and Moira Dearnley, The Poetry of Christopher Smart (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969); on Goldsmith, Ricardo Quintana, Oliver Goldsmith: A Georgian Study (New York: Macmillan, 1967), and Robert Hopkins, The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1969)--neither one of whom concentrates on the poetry; on Thomson, Ralph Cohen, The Unfolding of the Seasons (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970); and on the Wartons, Joan Pittock, The Ascendency of Taste: The Achievement of Joseph and Thomas Warton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

<sup>8</sup> Only Patricia Meyer Spacks, in what is probably the single most valuable exception to the general neglect noted above, The Poetry of Vision (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), has dealt with Collins closely. Often perceptive, her discussion is not, however, comprehensive--she deals with four other mid-century poets as well--and it suffers at times from the excesses of her formalist approach.

<sup>9</sup> On the great respect accorded Collins' work during the later years of his own century and throughout the nineteenth, see Edward Gay Ainsworth's unusually balanced Poor Collins: His Life, His Art, and His Influence (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1937), pp. 256-87.

<sup>10</sup> William Hazlitt, "On Gay, Swift, Young, Collins, & c.," in Lectures on the English Poets, ed. William Carew Hazlitt (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), p. 154.

<sup>11</sup> "An Essay on the Genius and Poems of Collins," in The Poetical Works of William Collins, The Aldine Edition of the British Poets (London: William Pickering, 1853), p. xlvi. Brydges' essay was originally published in the Aldine Edition of 1830.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. xliif.

<sup>13</sup>Algernon Charles Swinburne, "William Collins," in The English Poets, ed. T.H. Ward (New York: Macmillan, 1880), III, 279. Swinburne's tone is perhaps best indicated when he bases his highest praise on his unaccountable belief that Collins was the first English poet after Milton "to reannounce with the passion of a lyric and heroic rapture the divine right and the godlike duty of tyrannicide" (p. 281).

<sup>14</sup>The Poems of William Collins, The Athenaeum Press Series (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1898), p. xxxix.

<sup>15</sup>See P.L. Carver, The Life of a Poet: A Biography of William Collins (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), pp. 110 ff.

<sup>16</sup>Bronson, p. xliv. For an example of how his bias prevents him from seeing the full significance of this particular point, see his discussion of the "Oriental Eclogues," p. lviii.

<sup>17</sup>"Young, Collins and Lesser Poets of the Age of Johnson," in The Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1913), X, 143. Saintsbury's strictures cannot help but recall Wordsworth's objections to Gray's diction in the "Preface" to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Collins (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1928), p. 105. This is the first full-length study of Collins' poetry, and despite the author's protestations to the contrary, it is essentially a fault-finding analysis. The passage cited is a paraphrase of Joseph Warton's preface to his own volume of odes, published by Dodsley in 1746. He and Collins apparently planned to publish their poems together, but the scheme fell through. See Carver, pp. 72-73, 131-35.

<sup>20</sup>For a pertinent discussion of the relationship between moral statement and "description" in Augustan verse, see Ralph Cohen, "The Augustan Mode in English Poetry," ECS, 1 (1967), especially pp. 9-22. Cohen's entire analysis is most important.

<sup>21</sup>Garrod, pp. 109-10.

<sup>22</sup>See Bate's discussion of the premise of general nature, From Classic to Romantic, p. 59-92.

<sup>23</sup>"Collins and the Creative Imagination: A Study in the Critical Background of His Odes," in Studies in English by Members of University College, Toronto, ed. Malcolm W. Wallace (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1931), pp. 59-130. Critics have commonly begun with this assumption that Collins and Warton must have shared a similar theory of poetry because of the projected joint publication of their odes in 1746 (see n. 19 above). It is also typically assumed that Warton's sentiments in his preface are those of Collins. The assumption is, I believe, erroneous. The most complete, if also wrongheaded, treatment of the link is that of Leo Thurman Dacus, "William Collins' Poetry: Theory and Practice Compared with Joseph Warton's," Diss. East Texas State 1970. Dacus' approach is thoroughly "pre-romantic."

<sup>24</sup>Woodhouse, p. 126.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 128-29. See Woodhouse's later qualification of several of his conclusions in this first essay, "The Poetry of Collins Reconsidered," in From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle, ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 93-137. Despite some modification of the Warton-Collins link, Woodhouse's insistence on regarding Collins only as a poet caught in transition between Pope and Wordsworth distorts the picture. In both essays, Woodhouse repeats the error committed by so many of Collins' critics in the nineteenth century--namely, he finds poems like the "Ode to Liberty" wanting because they fail to meet the preconceived standards he imposes on Collins. See, for example, pp. 118 ff. of the latter essay. Cf. Ainsworth, pp. 85-106 and passim. Of the moral stance in Collins, Ainsworth comments at one point: "Collins's greatest powers lie in fanciful and imaginative themes, and after the 'Persian Eclogues' there is little moralizing in his poetry" (p. 86). This view is typical, and incorrect.

<sup>26</sup>See the particularly important contribution made by Spacks, The Poetry of Vision.

<sup>27</sup>For an example of both tendencies see Sigworth, Collins. The biographical instinct would be somewhat forgivable were it not for the nearly impossible task which Collins' life presents the scholar. The records are unsatisfactory to say the least.

<sup>28</sup>The following have appeared on the "Ode to Evening" alone in recent years: Alan D. McKillop, "Collins's 'Ode to Evening'--Background and Structure," Tennessee Studies in Literature, 5 (1960), 73-83; Merle E. Brown, "On William Collins' 'Ode to Evening,'" EIC, 11 (1961), 136-53; Henry Pettit, "Collins's 'Ode to Evening' and the Critics," SEL, 4 (1964), 361-69; and Martin Kallich, "'Plain in Thy Neatness': Horace's Pyrrha and Collins' Evening," ELN, 3 (1966), 265-71. The "Ode on the Poetical Character" is used all too often as the sole basis for interpretations of Collins' poetics, even by critics who should know better. See especially Harold Bloom's otherwise very perceptive discussion in The Visionary Company, rev. and enl. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 7-15.

<sup>29</sup>SP, 20 (1923), 1-16. John Middleton Murry, "The Poetry of William Collins," in Countries of the Mind (New York: Dutton, 1922), recognizes that Collins is preoccupied with his art in his poems, but the realization leads him to generalize about the man rather than to analyze particular poems. See pp. 82-86.

<sup>30</sup>McKillop, pp. 6-7.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 14. Cf. Earl R. Wasserman, "Collins' 'Ode on the Poetical Character,'" ELH, 34 (1967), 92-115. Wasserman links this remoteness to the remoteness of man from God in a fallen world, a view which deserves more attention than it has thus far received. For their extremely valuable contributions to the general subject of poets' growing lack of confidence, beginning in the late seventeenth century,

in their ability to match the achievements of the past, I am indebted throughout this study to W.J. Bate's The Burden of the Past and the English Poet (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), and Harold Bloom's The Anxiety of Influence (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973). Neither Bate nor Bloom, however, makes more than passing reference to specific poets.

<sup>32</sup>McKillop, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup>McKillop also concludes that it "is by denying the presence of poetry, by despairing of his calling, that Collins often becomes a romantic poet" (p. 16). This, it seems to me, is a non sequitur, particularly when it is stated in this manner.

<sup>34</sup>See Carver's biography.

<sup>35</sup>Collins' desire to emulate Milton and Spenser has often been noted. The most comprehensive and helpful treatment of the relationship to date is Ainsworth's in Poor Collins. See especially his chapter, "Ars Poetica." Ainsworth's remains the best full-length study of the poet, though it suffers lack of precision and detailed focus. He vaguely locates Collins' problem in his having set his ideal too high, whereas I will argue that his ideal is not only too high, it is a nearly impossible one for a poet of his time. In addition to Ainsworth, I am indebted to the provocative introductions and notes of two recent editions of Collins' works which point to his extensive allusion to and echoing of Spenser and Milton: Selected Poems of Thomas Gray and William Collins, ed. Arthur Johnston (1967; rpt. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1970); and The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Roger Lonsdale (1969; rpt. New York: Norton, 1972). The pervasiveness of these echoes is a significant clue to the special importance of these two poets among Collins' other idols.

<sup>36</sup>See R.D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1922), and Jewel Wurtsbaugh, Two Centuries of Spenserian Scholarship (1609-1805) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1936).

<sup>37</sup>I am especially indebted to Johnston, Selected Poems, for his suggestive discussion of what he calls the "forms" of prayer and invocation in Collins. See his "Introduction," pp. 124-26, as well as the discussion of Collins' abstractions and personifications, pp. 126-27. Cf. Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 268-69. In addition to a helpful, if brief, discussion of the basic structure of Collins' odes, Hagstrum accurately emphasizes that "the mood created is that of religious devotion. The entire ode is usually presented as a prayer, which becomes the unifying metaphor of the poem" (p. 269).

<sup>38</sup>In the most recent treatment of Collins' long recognized self-consciousness, Martha Collins, "The Self-Conscious Poet: The Case of William Collins," ELH, 42 (1975), 362-77, provides a perceptive

synthesis of critical commonplaces about the poet's focus on himself and poetry as his primary subjects. In discussing Collins' obsessions and their effects in his work, however, she mentions invocation as only one facet of his poetic stance, whereas I argue that it governs his entire oeuvre.

<sup>39</sup>In Paradise Lost, III, 1; and Don Juan, III, 1 respectively.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INVOCATIVE TRADITION: SPENSER AND MILTON

In his wide-ranging study of poetic inspiration, The White Goddess, Robert Graves has gone so far as to assert that "The function of poetry is religious invocation of the Muse; its use is the experience of mixed exaltation and horror that her presence excites."<sup>1</sup> However thoroughly one can agree with such a sweeping declaration, it is certain that from Homer to at least the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and further, I believe, to poets like Blake and Keats), poets have often placed strong emphasis on their need for or relationship to the Muse. She has been variously the subject of religious devotion and fervent prayer (Pindar, Dante), the cause for extended debate (Classical versus Christian), and occasionally the object of ridicule and harsh attack (Hobbes).<sup>2</sup> But whatever her treatment, for poets she has more frequently than not been at the center of a stance, both serious and difficult, whereby they have sought to speak as seers and prophets, moral legislators and consciences, and to embody in their poetry realms of value and feeling beyond the sight of ordinary men so that those men, too, might see.

#### I

The poet's invocation of a Muse is by its very nature a self-conscious gesture. As such it reveals more than has been widely recognized about the poem in which it appears, as well as about the

poet who writes it.<sup>3</sup> Aware of his limitations in undertaking the role of poet, he seeks aid from a power or powers outside himself. Speaking of the poet's reaction to the answered invocation and revealing how such invocation significantly affects a poet's overall tone, C.M. Bowra argues, "While such a fit is on him, the poet has a sense of inexhaustible abundance and does not question that the visitation will give him all, and more than all, that he needs for his task."<sup>4</sup> Thus the poet's belief in a successful invocation of a Muse can give him the confidence and authority to undertake and complete his poem, no matter how long or difficult the project might be. This, in addition to Graves' idea, suggests how seriously a poet may take his invocative stance.

Even at its simplest and apparently most conventional the invocation focuses attention on the poet, the task he sets for himself in a given poem, his notion of the abilities he will need to perform that task, and his idea of the sources of these abilities. Thus even the briefest of invocations rewards the reader's careful attention. When Homer, for example, invokes the Muse at the start of the Iliad the reader learns immediately that the poet requires the special assistance of an authority outside himself if he is to act as mediator between his mortal audience and the immortal powers the Muse represents, as well as between past and present: "Achilles' Wrath, to Greece the direful Spring / Of Woes unnumber'd, heav'nly Goddess, sing!"<sup>5</sup> The poem to follow, then, is a joint venture between poet and goddess, and its completion by the poet depends upon the existence and favor of the world beyond men the Muse inhabits.

This duality also sets up the interaction between men and gods that determines the action of the poem itself--the fate of Achilles, or

the war. The poet does not make his poem, nor does any character in that poem exist, as an isolated individual. Each takes his identity from being a part of a cosmic order. The poet, especially, if his invocation is answered, can go on with the poem secure in the Muse's help, and thus confident in his purpose and his abilities. Thus the epic is possible for Homer: "Declare, O Muse! in what ill-fated Hour / Sprung the fierce Strife..." (I, 9-10). The poet is only the Muse's instrument: she will speak through him.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Homer's stance seems to obviate the sense of struggle that becomes more and more evident in the Renaissance. He seems in other words, sure of himself and his Muse.

In contrast to Homer's invocative stance is Pindar's attitude toward the Muse, an attitude that is especially significant because of the emphasis Collins himself places on it. In the midst of his ninth Olympian Ode Pindar halts to seek the Muses' aid: "Would I could find me words as I move onward as a bearer of good gifts in the Muses' car; would I might be attended by Daring and by all-embracing Power!"<sup>7</sup> The intensity revealed here in Pindar's repetition of the phrase "Would I," as well as the exclamatory tone, coupled with the conditional mode of "I could" and "I might," lend this invocation, as well as the poem in which it appears, an atmosphere of intense, emotional seeking and an undercurrent of uncertainty about whether he can do in the poem what he wishes so much to do. Pindar seems to exemplify Graves's "mixed exaltation and horror," especially the fear of inadequacy. There is a religious fervor that not only grows out of Pindar's notion of the poet as a prophet-seer, but that also seems to be a part of his strong sense of the personal burden this calling places upon the poet.

Bowra, in his full-length study of Pindar, argues that in holding

this notion of the poet's role and relationship to the Muses (really one and the same), Pindar needs to be distinguished from other Greek poets who invoke a Muse: "Hesiod [and Homer] presumably believed that his main task was to pass on the actual words which the Muses gave him, but Pindar knows that his task is more difficult and that he stands in the same relation to the Muses as that in which a prophet stands to an oracular god. He must receive their messages and then make them understood by putting them into proper shape."<sup>8</sup> Bowra then goes on to state (again very significantly for an understanding of Collins) that the key difference between Pindar's idea of the Muse and the poet's calling and those of his contemporaries is that "Pindar makes it the centre of his whole outlook on poetry."<sup>9</sup>

Another important facet of the invocative stance is its service as a preface to a particularly difficult section of a poem. It is well illustrated by Virgil, obviously a central model for later poets.<sup>10</sup> In the sixth book of the Aeneid the poet seeks the aid of the gods of the underworld before he attempts to render visible sights not customarily revealed to living human eyes:

Ye Realms, yet unreveal'd to Human sight,  
Ye Gods, who rule the Regions of the Night,  
Ye gliding Ghosts, permit me to relate  
The mystic Wonders of your silent State.<sup>11</sup>

Virgil's consciousness that in order to render an invisible, spiritual domain to mortal sight he must rely on assistance from a source outside his own talents as a poet, is a crucial tenet of the invocations of later poets. This function clearly goes beyond Homer's hope, for example, to be the medium through which the Muse herself retells the story of Achilles.

Dante, who appropriates Virgil for his guide through the underworld,

blends pagan and Christian notions of invocation and inspiration; he thereby takes a crucial step closer to Spenser and Milton, and, finally, to Collins and the mid eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> In this blending, the stance of Virgil as a poet desiring to portray an invisible world becomes a part of the increasing burden the Christian poet takes upon himself as a prophet granted special vision, special powers in order to embody poetically what he sees.<sup>13</sup> For Dante, in the Divine Comedy, all depends upon his being granted both a special power to see what mortal man sees on earth only in prophetic visions, and the ability to recall and write of it in his poem. When the Christian poet seeks to write about an incorruptible spiritual universe for a fallen, mortal audience, his invocations and the imperative inspiration from his Muse become more central, more important than ever to his stance as poet.

The repeated invocations through Dante's poem, as well as his strong sense of his unworthiness to be granted such special vision, testify both to his recognition of the difficulty of his task and to his need for almost constant aid, be it from the Muse, Virgil or, ultimately, Beatrice herself. About to begin the descent to Hell, Dante invokes the Muses and confesses his lack of confidence to his guide, Virgil:

O Muses! O High Genius! Be my aid!  
O Memory, recorder of the vision,  
here shall your true nobility be displayed!

Thus I began: "Poet, you who must guide me,  
before you trust me to that arduous passage,  
look to me and look through me--can I be worthy?"<sup>14</sup>

In his first invocation in the Paradiso Dante spends twenty-four lines in a prayer for aid that he addresses to Apollo as the father of the Muses.<sup>15</sup> Its length alone suggests its importance to the poet, and the

dual elements of hope of succour and fear of inadequacy pervade it as they do Dante's other invocations. Here, of course, the special needs of the poet about to try to describe the farthest reaches of Heaven, are clear.

Even within such a brief survey of the invocative stance it is readily apparent that inherent in the act of invocation, the appeal to a source of power and inspiration outside the poet, is the poet's fear that he is inadequate to the task. When, moreover, a poet undertakes to describe an invisible spiritual world, as Dante does, his sense of inadequacy is heightened, for the measure of performance is not sight but vision. Finally, when the poet is a Christian as well, he is further weighted down by the innate inadequacy of man, the fall from grace which renders not only his poetry inadequate, but perhaps his virtue.

Nonetheless, in Homer, Virgil and Dante--but notably not in Pindar--there is a strong sense, given the scope of their achievement, that their invocations were sufficiently answered. Indeed, we seldom hear them regret the quality of their achieved vision. Their invocations are, in short, prayers that are answered, and the invocative stance is revealed as an inherently religious one, which casts an aura of spirituality or otherworldliness on both the function of the poet and the source of his poetry. For these poets invocation provides both a means of establishing the exalted, difficult role they seek to fulfill, and a ritualized stance from which to write with a measure of confidence and authority as favorites of the Muse.

A brief look at Chaucer reveals one further mode of the poet's invocation of his Muse. With his typical irony, Chaucer often uses the

invocation to create a self-deprecating persona who is merely telling a story, and who is not to be held responsible for parts of the tale which may displease the reader. He may pose as a man with little experience who does not really comprehend what is going on in his poem, or as a man so saddened by the tale that he needs help to go on with it. On other occasions, however, he would seem to use the invocation as a means of adopting the same stance we have been tracing. It has been fairly convincingly argued that Chaucer's lines are seldom completely free from irony, whether in style or point of view about the human condition or narrative tone of voice.<sup>16</sup> Chaucer's invocations, and the ironies which are attached to them offer another illustration of how the poet's notion of his role, his ability to adopt it, and his source of inspiration are legitimately discovered within his invocative stance.

Troilus and Criseyde offers perhaps the best evidence of Chaucer's ironic attitude when he invokes a Muse. He begins Book I with the conventional statement of his subject, "The double sorwe of Troilus,"<sup>17</sup> and proceeds to invoke Thesiphone to "help me for t'endite / Thise woful vers, that wepen as I write" (ll. 6-7). Thus the poet makes clear his sympathy for Troilus. He goes on then with his invocation, and further emphasizes his sorrow while he also asserts his humble stance as poet:

To the clepe I, thow goddesse of torment,  
Thow cruwel Furie, sorwyng evere yn peyne,  
Help me, that am the sorwful instrument,  
That helpeth loveres, as I kan, to pleyne.  
(ll. 8-11)

Having said this, the poet explains that he is attempting only to serve the servants of the god of love, for he himself has not been successful

in love and thus knows little about it. The irony, of course, is evident in the telling of the story itself, where the poet captures every nuance of the love relationship and proves to be wiser about love than this humble stance suggests. The pose enables the poet both to be sympathetic to Troilus' double sorrow, and to remain distant enough from his story to allow a certain balance of sympathies for and criticism of the characters.

Chaucer maintains this distance from his poem in still another way that he also sets up primarily via his invocative stance. His invocation to the second book begins thus:

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,  
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,  
To ryme wel this book til I have do;  
Me nedeth here noon other art to use.  
Forwhi to every lovere I me excuse,  
That of no sentement I this endite,  
But out of Latyn in my tonge it write.  
(ll. 8-14)

Here he excuses himself and emphasizes that his story is based on an authority beyond the individual poet in the same breath. One is reminded perhaps of Homer's invocative stance as a poet who asks merely to be allowed to retell a story given to him by his Muse: both poets use their invocations to place themselves in a tradition, and to remove themselves from immediate involvement in the action. Chaucer continues throughout much of the poem to use his invocations thus: they serve as keys to his notion of his role, to his attitude toward his capacity for that role, to his response to his subject and characters, and for shifts in overall tone such as that opening the fourth book to the sorrow of Troilus' loss of Criseyde.

Finally, to close his poem Chaucer assumes once more the invocative stance, and this time it parallels Troilus' final vantage point as he

rises toward heaven. The poet prays now not to the classical Muses,  
but to Christ,

Us from visible and invisible foon  
Defende, and to thy mercy, everichon,  
So make us, Jesus, for thi mercy digne,  
For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne.  
(V, ll. 1866-69)

Not only is his stance here appropriately parallel to Troilus' final rejection of earthly love, but it also resolves the poet's previously ironic tone as one not experienced in love by its focus on a love that is not subject to the accidents, confusions and tragic finalities of that earthbound love the poet speaks of in his earlier invocations.<sup>18</sup> Such a resolution seems ultimately to be the poet's goal. Again, as in Dante<sup>19</sup> and, as I shall try to show, in Spenser and Milton, the poet stands as a mediator between two systems of value and two worlds--the spiritual and the material, the ideal and the real. He stands, too, secure in his belief in the source and authority of his inspiration in a tradition and a power that transcends individual poets and, indeed, the material universe itself. That such mediation is the role these poets set for themselves in their various ways is made clear in their invocative stances, which illuminate as well their notions of their ability to achieve that role, and of the inspiration they must be granted before success is possible. Let us turn now to the invocative tradition in the sixteenth century, particularly in Spenser.

## II

Between Chaucer and Spenser the idea of a Christian Muse continued to present itself to poets seeking to write poems on Christian themes.<sup>20</sup> The Renaissance blending of pagan and Christian materials encouraged

the writers of epics to infuse the invocative stances of Homer and Virgil with their own sense of prayer to the spirit of God. Tasso, in the opening lines of Jerusalem Delivered, seeks to place his poem in the tradition of the Classical epics, yet also to distinguish it from them. He states his theme in the Classical manner, but then carefully characterizes his Muse as a Christian, not a pagan one:

O heavenly muse, that not with fading bays  
Deckest thy brow by th' Heliconian spring,  
But sittest, crown'd with stars' immortal rays,  
In heaven, where legions of bright angels sing,  
Inspire life in my wit, my thoughts upraise....<sup>21</sup>

Such a distinction, is, of course, central to the overall conflict at the heart of his poem between virtuous Christian warriors and evil pagan ones, but it also exemplifies the defensive, apologetic situation in which the poet in this tradition increasingly finds himself. He seems to wish to build on the Classical foundation, yet to surpass it as well; he must defend the use of the pagan frame in a poem for his Christian audience about the higher truth of a Christian crusade.<sup>22</sup>

Just how apologetic and defensive Tasso feels becomes clear when he continues his invocation: "My verse ennoble, and forgive the thing, / If fictions light I mix with truth divine..." (ll. 14-15). He follows this with two further stanzas of explanation of his use of such fictions, and uses the commonplace argument that fallen men need such to move their dull minds and feelings toward virtue. The dilemma that Tasso's apology for employing poetic fictions so clearly demonstrates has had a profound effect on poetry since his time. How can the poet embody divine or moral truth in his verse when what he writes is by its very nature a "fiction"? And, if what he writes is without truth, what is the purpose of poetry at all? Tasso's defensive answer shows that he

was troubled believing what earlier poets had confidently done, in the efficacy of divine inspiration.

The problem of defending poetry and poets engulfed England as well. As Russell Fraser has recently shown,<sup>23</sup> using Sidney as a central example of the dilemma, the defense of poetry against narrow rationalist or Puritan attacks places more and more weight on the poet's role: he is a prophet, his truth transcends both philosophy and history, and so on. Sidney also emphasizes the divine association traditionally applied to the poet, and cites even Plato who, in Ion, "giveth high and rightly divine commendation to poetry."<sup>24</sup> Tracing the attack on poetry not only to standard utilitarian (and Protestant) arguments but also to the rise of empiricism and rationalism and to their emphasis on the powers of the unaided individual mind, and seeing the defense increasing the individual poet's responsibility, Fraser concludes that the "reliance on the inner light, typified in Descarte's rejection of all outer authority, begets a contempt for history and a belief in the capacity of the individual man to stand as an individual."<sup>25</sup> Thus, at the very time when the possibility of divine inspiration (and divinity itself) came under heavier attack from empirical and rationalistic sources, the poet felt more driven to seek some "higher truth" to justify himself and his poetry. As human self-sufficiency emerged as a viable philosophical alternative to human dependence upon a higher order, poetry paradoxically found it increasingly impossible to explain itself on its own terms; poetry now more than before had to seek its justification from the threatened supernatural. Though the seeds of this paradox are clearly present in Spenser's time (and even before), Spenser and Milton both manage to express and carry out--though not

without some struggle--the poet's transcendent role as a divinely inspired mediator between the spiritual and the material, the ideal and the imperfect. The dilemma, I would suggest, does not become a crippling or obsessive one until the mid eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

Spenser himself is fully aware of the problem of assuming this poetic role in his time. One need only glance through "The Teares of the Muses" to see his concern and even anger about attacks on and general neglect of poets. There, too, he makes his notion of the sources of inspiration above and beyond man, and of the sacred calling of the poet who depends on them, integral parts of the complaint.<sup>27</sup> The device of asking the Muses to speak, "Reharse to me, ye sacred Sisters nine,"<sup>28</sup> and then of withdrawing while they do so in their own voices emphasizes the gap between the immortal ideal of the goddesses and their neglect by mortals. Clio begins the lament with just this assertion; she asks Jove, the "Father of the Gods" (l. 55), to "Behold the fowle reproach and open shame, / The which is day by day unto us wrought" (ll. 61-62). And Urania, speaking of the human condition and the present low state of poetry in Christian terms--of "fleshes frailtie and deceit of sin" (l. 492)--asks, "What difference twixt man and beast is left, / When th' heavenlie light of knowledge is put out, / And th' ornaments of wisdome are bereft?" (ll. 487-89). The poem then ends in pessimism; the Muses, having completed their lamentation, "all their learned instruments did breake" (l. 599).<sup>29</sup>

Yet Spenser, as we shall see, aspired throughout his career to become one of those few who, in Polyhymnia's words, "this sacred skill esteme" (l. 583) to be "lifted up above the worldes gaze" (l. 587). His pervading poetic stance, in both his invocations and the resulting

poems, places him between the transcendent ideal and earthbound mortal, between an invisible spiritual world and the one men daily inhabit. The poet's role is close to that of the prophet; it is to make the invisible visible, and by doing so to draw his audience emotionally and intellectually from the lower to the higher plane. Since the poet is mortal, he requires aid from above: this, with Spenser's awareness of the attacks being made on poets generally, creates the tension between humility and confidence that lies at the heart of his invocative stance, as well as at the center of the poems themselves.<sup>30</sup> The role Spenser seeks to adopt is perhaps best summarized by Michael Murrin when, discussing the allegorical tradition of the poet as priest, prophet and mediator inherited by the Renaissance from both the Classical and biblical past, he says the poet's "allegorical myths were necessary to the very life of society, mirroring it in a magical fashion which at the same time revealed value--the invisible standards by which man lives in the visible cosmos," once he realizes his own nature."<sup>31</sup>

Spenser's ideal for the poet, his portrayal of the poet's attempt to reach this ideal, and the recurring despair of success, appears as early as The Shepheardes Calender. In the "Argument" to the "October Aeglogue" we are told,

In Cuddie is set out the perfecte paterne  
of a Poete, whiche, finding no maintenaunce  
of his state and studies, complayneth of the  
contempte of Poetrie, and the causes thereof:  
Specially having bene in all ages, and even  
amongst the most barbarous alwayes of singular  
account and honor, and being indede so worthy  
and commendable an arte: or rather no arte,  
but a divine gift and heavenly instinct, not  
to bee gotten by laboure and learning, but  
adorned with both: and poured into the witte  
by...celestiall inspiration.... (VII, 95)

The poem portrays the central Spenserian conflict between the ideal of the divinely inspired poet, and the anger and despair of both Piers and Cuddie because poets are not honored. The conflict is finally resolved in the Epilogue of the calendar, however, and the poem ends on a hopeful note; despite neglect Spenser assumes his role with confidence and determination:

Loe I have made a Calender for every yeare,  
That steele in strength, and time in durance, shall outweare:  
And if I marked well the starres revolution,  
It shall continewe till the worlds dissolution,  
To teach the ruder shepheard how to feede his sheepe,  
And from the falsers fraud his folded flocke to keepe.  
(ll. 1-6)

His aspiration to adopt successfully the role of the poet as inspired teacher appears again in the letter to Raleigh in which Spenser explains his purpose in The Faerie Queene: "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline..." (I, 167). He goes on in the letter to place his poem in the tradition of the epic from Homer through Virgil, then on to the romantic epics of Ariosto and Tasso, and accentuates his admiration of them as poets: "By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private mo:all vertues...." Already Spenser sets forth his concept of his role as one who portrays a concrete embodiment for his audience of abstract (and thus, in their pure form, invisible) virtues.

That this role as he conceives it necessitates successful mediation between the invisible and the visible via the aid of a Muse is immediately apparent as he begins Book I. Here again he cites the example of Virgil, this time focusing on his invocative example:<sup>32</sup>

Lo! I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,  
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds,  
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,  
For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,  
And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;  
Whose prayes having slept in silence long,  
Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds  
To blazon broad emongst her learned throng....

(Proem, ll. 1-8)

The humble stance that this high task enforces--a humility inherent in the act of invocation itself and in the role of the poet who assumes such a stance--receives continued emphasis as the poet begins his invocation proper:

Helpe then, O holy Virgin, chiefe of nyne,  
Thy weaker Novice to performe thy will,  
Lay forth out of thine everlasting scryne  
The antique rolles, which there lye hidden still,  
Of Faerie knights, and fayrest Tanaquill,  
Whom that most noble Briton Prince so long  
Sought through the world, and suffered so much ill,  
That I must rue his undeserved wrong:  
O helpe thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong.

(Proem, ll. 10-18)<sup>33</sup>

The poet stands, then, a "weake" mortal before the "everlasting," and because this is Spenser's concept of the poet's stance, aid from a transcendent power is for him imperative.

In this the poet's status parallels the condition of man himself as Spenser portrays it consistently through the poem. Arthure's entrance at crucial moments to save faltering heroes like Redcrosse and Guyon suggests man's need for external aid, as do intrusive remarks by the poet about the general human condition like that with which he credits God's grace through Arthure's saving of Redcrosse:

Ne let the man ascribe it to his skill,  
That thorough grace hath gained victory.  
If any strength we have, it is to ill,  
But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will.

(I. x. 1)

Thus the poem's invocations embody Spenser's view of man and poet, illuminating the position of both in relation to God. Spenser, in The Faerie Queene as a whole, conflates the general human condition, the status of the hero and the stance of the poet: all strive for an ideal which their mortal natures prevent them from attaining permanently or completely. We see this pattern notably in the poet's statements of the general state of man, in the working out of the actions of the various books so that the struggle to attain ideal virtue never ends,<sup>34</sup> and in the poet's invocations to his Muse.

The poet invokes his Muse repeatedly during the course of the poem, and thus repeatedly calls attention to his stance. In noting this, it is important, moreover, to recall Homer's request that the Muse speak, then his apparent withdrawal while she herself utters the poem. Spenser, on the other hand, seems all the more conscious of his need for aid by the continual repetition of his prayer. He compares his abilities to those of previous poets, and in doing so further emphasizes his humility before his task: "How then shall I, Apprentice of the skill / That whylome in divinest wits did raine, / Presume so high to stretch mine humble quill?" (Proem, III. 3). Conscious of his long and difficult task, the poet begins Book VI with a reference to his "weary steps" (Proem, 1). He then notes that he nonetheless gains strength from "this delightfull land of Faery" (Proem, 1), in the next stanzas reiterates his invocative stance, and combines his notion of man and poet in an explanation of the ultimate source of his strength:

Such secret comfort and such heavenly pleasures,  
Ye sacred imps, that on Parnasso dwell,  
And there the keeping have of learnings treasures,  
Which doe all worldly riches farre excell,  
Into the mindes of mortall men doe well,  
And goodly fury into them infuse;

Guyde ye my footing, and conduct me well  
In these strange waies, where never foote did use,  
Ne none can find, but who was taught them by the Muse.

Revele to me the sacred nourserie  
Of vertue.... (Proem, 2-3)

Each time the poet thus invokes the Muse, and each time he refers to his "weary steps," Spenser reminds his reader of the high calling of the poet, of his humility before that calling, and of his determination to carry on the task. The poet creates a balance between his humility and his confidence through such reminders--a balance he reinforces by attempting the difficult task for which he has begged the Muse's aid. This sense of weakness balanced by determination and confidence is imbedded in the poem proper. The poet expresses his fear, for example, of attempting to describe the glories of the feast on Florimell's wedding day, yet goes on, "But for so much as to my lot here lights, / That with this present treatise doth agree, / True vertue to advance, shall here recounted bee" (V, III, 3). Then he proceeds to describe the feast.

The pervasiveness of Spenser's invocative stance, with its placing of the poet both in the imperfect world of man, and as a mediator between the fallen and the perfect, is clear when it appears again as a central aspect of the "Mutabilitie Cantos." Again the theme is the real (here mutable) in conflict with the ideal (eternal). As the poet prepares to write of the argument between the Titanesse and Jove before Nature's court, he once more addresses his Muse because he hopes to write of matters beyond the vision of men,

Ah! whither doost thou now thou greater Muse  
Me from these woods and pleasing forrests bring?  
And my fraile spirit (that dooth oft refuse  
This too high flight, unfit for her weake wing)  
Lift up aloft, to tell of heavens King...?

(VII, 1),

and he continues in the next stanza to accept the task and ask for aid:

Yet sith I needs must follow thy behest,  
Doe thou my weaker wit with skill inspire,  
Fit for this turne; and in my feeble brest  
Kindle fresh sparks of that immortall fire,  
Which learned minds inflameth with disire  
Of heavenly things....

(VII, 2)

Important, too, in this invocation, is the poet's emphasis on his feeling of responsibility--he must accept the Muse's call to follow her, as well as pray for her assistance in the act of following. Having completed his invocation, the poet plunges immediately, and with seeming assurance, into the poem again: "Now, at the time that was before agreed, / The Gods assembled all on Arlo hill..." (VII, 3). Although his concept of the divinely inspired poet makes him feel his mortal frailty all the more intensely, he presses on. Spenser's pervading stance as poet is a humble one precisely because he seeks the ideal world; yet his humility is balanced by a confidence that enables him to write beyond his invocation, because he believes in the efficacy of divine inspiration.

All that I have thus far argued about the centrality of Spenser's invocative stance in his works can perhaps best be summarized by a brief look at his Fowre Hymnes. Here the essence of the poet's aspirations and of his ideal poet may be seen. For although the abstract virtues Spenser embodies in The Faerie Queene are clearly of a different, often lesser order than the heavenly Love and Beauty he seeks ultimately to portray through these hymns (the latter are realities beyond fallen, mortal ken), his underlying concept of the poet's role and the inspiration necessary for carrying it out remains

consistent with that in his other works. He invokes the aid of a Muse at the start of each hymn,<sup>35</sup> moving from his opening, earthly focus to the closing heavenly one in the invocations as well as in the main bodies of the hymns. From the earthly footing of the first two hymns, the poet asks, as he begins "An Hymn of Heavenly Love," that Love (now, Christ)

lift me up upon thy golden wings,  
From this base world unto thy heavens hight.  
Where I may see those admirable things,  
Which there thou workest by thy souveraine might,  
Farre above feeble reach of earthly sight,  
That I thereof an heavenly Hymne may sing  
Unto the god of Love, high heavens king.  
(11. 1-7)

The pivotal conflict we have seen so often is again present, as the poet seeks aid in leaving behind his native, "base world," that he may see, in order to write of, "those admirable things." Further affirming his need for assistance, and his concept of the ideal poet as a man who, having been granted a special vision, can then tell other men of what he has seen, he soon halts his hymn to ask again for help:

Yet, O most blessed Spirit, pure lampe of light,  
Eternall spring of grace and wisedome trew,  
Vouchsafe to shed into my barren spright  
Some little drop of thy celestiall dew,  
That may my rymes with sweet infuse embrew,  
And give me words equall unto my thought,  
To tell the marveiles by thy mercie wrought.  
(11. 43-49)

Again, there is the conflation of man, the poet and the necessary grace of God for both if they are to rise to the ideal and eternal.

Then, in his invocation for "An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie," the poet provides what I would argue is the most emphatic and clearest expression in the canon both of the invocative stance of mixed humility and confidence he adopts throughout his works, and of the notion of the

poet's function which is inherent in that stance. He begins the hymn in rapture over the sights he has already been enabled to view, expresses his desire to go on to "tell the things that I behold" (l. 6), but then is harshly reminded of his own mortality, and says, "[I] But feele my wits to faile, and tongue to fold" (l.7). It is at this point that he turns, in all humility, to his ultimate Muse:

Vouchsafe, then, O thou most almightie Spright,  
From whom all guifts of wit and knowledge flow,  
To shed into my breast some sparkling light  
Of thine eternall Truth, that I may show  
Some litle beames to mortall eyes below,  
Of that immortall beautie, there with thee,  
Which in my weake distraughted mynd I see.  
(ll. 8-14)

Here is the ideal, divinely inspired poet of the "October Aeglogue," the poet of the letter to Raleigh who aspires above all to show the invisible, eternal truths to mortal men and thus to teach them virtue, and the poet humbled by his ideal and his task; yet here also is the poet who goes on immediately after he has completed his invocation to declare,

Beginning then below, with th' easie vew  
Of this base world, subject to fleshly eye,  
From thence to mount aloft by order dew  
To contemplation of th' immortall sky,  
Of the soare faulcon so I learne to fly....  
(ll. 22-6)

This is the continuing quest of the poet, as it is of Redcrosse, Guyon, and Artegall, and finally of man in general, as Spenser portrays it in his poems.

Over and over, Spenser returns to his invocative stance as he creates his poems. Repeatedly, he returns to the pattern of humility, then of confident forging ahead with the poem. Clearly the poet believes that his invocation is an essential act if he is to aspire

at all successfully toward his ideal. To be sure, not all poets who invoke the Muse, however seriously, are rewarded with great poetry--not even those who might deceive themselves into believing their prayers are answered. To suggest such a thing would amount to a critical absurdity. My point, however, is that Spenser's invocative stance as a seeker after divinely inspired mediation between the material and transcendent; and his belief in the possibility of such inspiration and the efficacy of invoking it, shapes the form and meaning of his poetry and is an integral part of it. Had Spenser not believed in the existence of the ideal world, and had he not believed that he had been graced, through his prayers, with the capacity to see and convey that world, his poetry would be radically different from what it is. To read Spenser's invocations in any other way drives a wedge between belief and art which I find not only unpersuasive but untenable.

### III

Edwin Greenlaw long ago argued persuasively for the kinship of Milton to Spenser. In his first article on the subject, "A Better Teacher than Aquinas,"<sup>36</sup> Greenlaw traces the influence of Spenser on Milton's philosophy, and then seeks to show, by a close analysis of specific structures and incidents in Book II of The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost, how detailed were Milton's borrowings. He argues, for example, that Adam learns of temperance and self-control by the same pattern of testing, temptation, fall and restoration as do Guyon and Redcrosse. But Greenlaw sees the relationship between the two poets as even more pervasive, reaching to the heart of their concepts of the function of poets and poetry: "...this material [structure and theme

in Book II and Paradise Lost] is presented in a way highly original with Spenser, not merely because the Legend of Guyon is an admirable example of philosophy made concrete through story, which expresses Spenser's and Milton's fundamental conception of the province of poetry, but also because the method of Spenser's allegory is unique in a sense better understood by Milton than by some of Spenser's modern interpreters."<sup>37</sup>

In a later article on the Spenser-Milton relationship Greenlaw hopes "to contribute to literary history further illustration of an extraordinary relationship between two minds of the first class, a relationship almost without parallel...."<sup>38</sup> In this essay, he sees Milton's debt to Spenser as extending from the "fundamental thesis of the justification of the ways of God to man" (p. 320), the idea of the poet's ethical role and the basic idea of the universe, to Spenser's notion of the "riddle of human life--man's relation to the scheme of things" (p. 354), and his "sense that this theme is too lofty for mortal flight unaided" (p. 355). With this overall kinship between the two poets in mind, I would like to look more closely at Milton's idea of the poet and his invocative stance, especially in Paradise Lost. I hope such an analysis will serve to show that the invocative stances of the two poets are virtually identical in detail, and, subsequently, why Spenser and Milton, more than any others, are so centrally linked in Collins' poetic theory and practice.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, paying heed to the compelling parallels between the invocative stances of Spenser and Milton should not blur equally important distinctions between the realms the two poets seek to depict through those stances. Just as one needs to recognize the difference

between the realms portrayed by Spenser in The Faerie Queene and Fowre Hymnes, so it is important to keep in mind that the invisible realm Milton portrays in Paradise Lost differs from the sphere pictured in The Faerie Queene. In Paradise Lost Milton envisions a reality that once and always exists, though it is invisible since the fall, and parts of which were invisible to man even before the fall; this is obviously a different imagining from the abstract virtues Spenser seeks to depict in The Faerie Queene. If anything it requires an inspired vision even more difficult to attain than Spenser's. Nevertheless, when this contrast has been granted, the essential stances of the two poets as they seek the Muse's aid remain so closely parallel to one another, as we shall see, that it is not difficult to understand how they became the all but inseparable idols of Collins' own search for an inspired vision.

One of Milton's clearest explanations of his idea of the poet and the nature of poetic inspiration can be found in The Reason of Church Government. There he draws together many of the facets of the tradition I have been discussing, from the overall notion of the poet as inspired by God, to the association of Pindar's "magnific odes and hymns" with the tradition,<sup>40</sup> from the conflict between the Christian Muse and the Classical nine (or the Psalms and Pindar's hymns), to the idea that the central purpose of poetry is to teach man virtue and truth by making them visible in precept and example. Because Milton's summary of this theory is, as Merritt Hughes notes, a "classic statement of the Renaissance faith in virtue and learning as the foundation of the poetic character" (p. 670, n. 174), and because it stands at the heart of Milton's idea of the inspired poet, I quote it in full. The poet's "abilities," he explains,

wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation; and are of power beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church, to sing the victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and reflexes of man's thoughts from within, all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe. (pp. 669-70, my emphasis)

It is an ambitious program for poetry that Milton thus sets out, as was that of Sidney whose theory this so much resembles, and even more that of Spenser, whose poetic theory and practice Milton emulates.

Milton's own recognition of the difficulty of adopting such a role for the poet is clear when, a few lines later, he reiterates the need for divine inspiration. The poem written in this manner, he tells us, pointing as he does so often to his need for aid beyond what was available to Classical poets, is not "to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases" (p. 671). Within these same pages, as he offers with such certainty his concept of poet and poem, he also self-consciously explains his own promise to fulfill that role, and his worry too that the reader will criticize him for not so far producing anything of real worth. The basic conflict so often felt by

the poet who wishes to place himself in this invocative tradition is thus again illustrated: Milton remains confident, yet recognizes with deep humility what his chosen role requires.

When Milton finally adopts the role of the divinely inspired epic poet in Paradise Lost and thus fulfills the promise he makes in Reason of Church Government, he places significant emphasis on his invocative stance, beginning books I, III, VII and IX with extended invocations in which he elaborates his notions of the poet, his inspiration and his poem. These invocations are not only important for an understanding of Paradise Lost, but for a full understanding of Milton's relationship to Spenser and to later poets who, like Wordsworth, emphasize parts of them, or like Collins, focus on the total stance they embody.<sup>41</sup> An analysis of these invocations in terms of the tradition we have been tracing will therefore conclude the present chapter, and prepare the way for a close analysis of Collins' own invocative stance.<sup>42</sup>

Milton expresses the entire theory of his role and his ability to assume it, as well as his notion of the theme and purpose of the poem he hopes to write, in his opening invocation in Paradise Lost. We learn there of the total poem in microcosm, along with the poet's total sense of his function in the poem and the world. Milton initially echoes the Classical invocations, then links these verbal echoes with reference to Mosaic inspiration "on the secret top / Of Oreb, or of Sinai," where the "Heav'nly Muse...didst inspire / That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed..." (I, 6-8). James Holly Hanford has pointed out how important it seems to Milton to place himself in the long line of inspired poets: "A recurrent motive in Milton's reflection rises from his sense of kinship with the great poets of the past....

Underlying this is the sense of sharing their genius and inspiration, of being one with them in a long succession of poetic greatness."<sup>43</sup>

Also important in his reference to Moses is his focus on Moses' teaching role--a role Milton makes central to the remainder of his own request for inspiration.

The poet continues his invocation by emphasizing his sense of the difficulty of writing such a poem, "I thence / Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous Song" (ll. 12-13), a song in which he "pursues / Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme" (ll. 15-6). Addressing, then, the Holy Spirit that "from the first / Wast present" (ll. 19-20) with God at the creation, Milton appeals for instruction, returning to his teaching theme: "And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer / Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure, / Instruct me, for Thou know'st" (ll. 17-19). This Spirit he associates with the creative impulse whereby God infused life into the world,

Thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss  
And mad'st it pregnant...

(ll. 17-22),

and in the invocative context hopes that a parallel creative impulse will quicken his poetic re-creation, that the Spirit might answer his prayer.<sup>44</sup> He follows this parallel with the final announcement of his purpose in the poem, in which he unites his sense of his own weakness and need for aid from Heaven, and his notion of the poet as teacher as he prays:

What in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support,  
That to the highth of this great Argument  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

(ll. 22-6)

As he begins the poem proper, having thus completed the actual invocation, he once again speaks to the Muse, implying his own weakness and further emphasizing sight: "Say first, for Heaven hides nothing from thy view...what cause / Mov'd our Grand Parents" (ll. 27-9).

Milton's plea for inspiration is thus a call for the Muse, who sees what mortals cannot, first to teach the poet by showing him what is invisible to men, so that he may then, again with the aid of divine inspiration, make hidden causes visible to mankind and become a teacher himself. This Milton combines with a pervasive and humble sense of his own inability to perform so great a task unaided. Yet, in his tone ("Say first") there is also a confidence that his invocation has been and will continue to be answered--a tone that is similar to Homer's when he, too, exhorts his Muse to speak. Milton's invocative stance, like Spenser's, is a balance between humility and confidence, between earnest prayer and faith rewarded.

With the beginning of Book III the poet comes to one of his most difficult tasks, and his invocation to Light in that book reveals his struggle. Here he hopes to portray Heaven, and God himself. As we examine Milton's prayer for the ability to accomplish this task, it is especially important to keep in mind Spenser's invocation before his almost identical effort in "An Hymn of Heavenly Beautie." First, this is the longest invocation in the poem, which in itself suggests its importance for the poet. Running through the prayer are numerous references which show his recognition of how high he presumes. "May I express thee unblam'd?" (l. 3), he asks, and notes that "God is light, / And never but in unapproached Light / Dwelt from Eternity..." (ll. 3-5). He soon repeats the tone when he wonders whether he has

addressed his Muse correctly: "Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream, / Whose Fountain who shall tell?" (11. 7-8).

The poet then alters his tone to one which, while still as humble and conscious of his high presumption, demonstrates also his belief in the possibility of success. Referring to the Muse he has already successfully invoked for Books I and II, he asserts, "Thee I revisit now with bolder wing" (l. 13), and recalls how he has

sung of Chaos and Eternal Night,  
Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down  
The dark descent, and up to reascend,  
Though hard and rare: Thee I revisit safe,  
And feel thy sovran vital Lamp....  
(11. 18-22)

Immediately after, however, he plunges back into self-doubt, recalling his own physical blindness (apt emblem of his view of man and poet), when he invokes light itself as the essence of Heaven, God and the Holy Spirit: "...but thou / Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain / To find thy piercing ray" (11. 22-4). For the next thirty or so lines the poet moves with a series of qualifying conjunctions and phrases ("But," "Yet," "Nor," "but not," "But...instead," "rather") back and forth between self-doubt and confident prayer in what amounts to a struggle not only with himself but with his Muse as well.

The pattern he thus sets up finally comes to rest with a hopeful prayer; moreover, each moment of doubt before this conclusion has had its answer. After his first reference to his blindness he continues, "Yet not the more / Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt" (11. 26-7), then proceeds to place himself once more in a tradition of past seers-- this time one of men physically blind who nonetheless were prophets with spiritual sight. Thus he gains further strength for his own task by standing among others who have succeeded, like "Tiresias and

Phineus Prophets old" (l. 36). After the next fourteen lines, in which his self-doubt is expressed in terms of being cut off now from the works of nature and "human face divine" (l. 44), and having had "wisdom at one entrance quite shut out" (l. 50), the poet reaches the conclusion of the invocation with a final qualification that becomes the consolation and strength of the poet in a fallen world, and of Adam and Eve themselves at the close of Book XII:

So much the rather thou Celestial Light  
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight.  
(ll. 51-55)<sup>45</sup>

This climax for Milton's longest and perhaps most anguished invocation is especially significant for several reasons. First, it shows the poet's ability, despite his awareness of the extreme difficulty of his task and his own personal weakness as a blind poet, to remain confident enough because of his clear belief in the efficacy of his invocations to pursue the task. Second, he stresses again the role of the poet he seeks to adopt: granted special vision, the poet shows what he sees to the rest of mankind through his poetry. Finally, Milton's invocative stance is here virtually identical to Spenser's, especially, to the latter's stance before his Muse in "An Hymn of Heavenly Beautie." Both the humility and the confidence are there, as is the focus on the poet as a mediator, with aid from his Muse, between the fallen world of man and the invisible realms of good and evil in Heaven, Hell and the world.

In his invocation to Urania in Book VII, the poet feels a certain relief in returning "to my Native Element" (l. 16) after describing the war in Heaven (by virtue of his Muse's constant aid).

He is still conscious here, though, of the dangers of his task--  
"Half yet remains unsung" (l. 21)--and feels truly safe only when he  
establishes his dependence on his Muse. In this invocation, too,  
Milton stresses his own isolation both in his blindness, and as a poet  
writing in times not conducive to such a poem:

More safe I Sing with mortal voice, unchang'd  
To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,  
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;  
In darkness, and with dangers compass round,  
And solitude; yet not alone, while thou  
Visit'st my slumbers Nightly....

(ll. 24-29)

In these lines Milton expresses the anguish of the isolated poet in a  
society where poets and poetry of the ideal are threatened; that  
Milton obviously has reference to his own specific political misfortune  
ought not distract us from the general implications of his position.  
Like Spenser's complaint in "Teares of the Muses," there is the sense  
of the poet as God's special envoy to a fallen world, the same awareness  
of the difficulty of writing a poetry of inspiration to a public no  
longer listening to God's word. The long tradition of unheeded  
prophets, both biblical and Classical, is part of the invocative stance  
of both poets.

Milton resolves the struggle, however, as he does in his invoca-  
tion to Book III, with confidence in his Muse, and prays, "still govern  
thou my Song, / Urania, and fit audience find, though few" (ll. 30-1).  
And in the final section of the invocation the poet reaffirms this  
determination by asking the Muse to "drive far off the barbarous  
dissonance / Of Bacchus and his Revellers" (ll. 32-3) that destroyed  
Orpheus, while at the same time asking her to be stronger than the  
Classical Muse. It is a forceful, though also a humble, appeal: "So

fail not thou, who thee implores: / For thou art Heavn'ly, shee an empty dream" (ll. 38-9). Then once more he continues with strength, "Say Goddess, what ensu'd" (l. 40), only because of the divine inspiration granted by the Muse.

Milton's primary focus in the final invocation of the poem, at the start of Book IX, is on his desire to transcend all previous epics. In it he argues that his task in Paradise Lost is "Not less but more Heroic" (l. 14) than Classical or other Renaissance epics. Yet even as he makes this argument his personal struggle for the strength, ability and confidence to complete his poem as it should be completed continues in the forefront; as always for him, everything depends upon whether his Muse answers his prayers. His hope for her aid, his deep humility, plus a note of doubt are evident when he ends his argument for his more heroic poem thus: he can accomplish his task only

If answerable style I can obtain  
Of my Celestial Patroness, who deigns  
Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,  
And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires  
Easy my unpremeditated Verse....  
(ll. 20-4)

Here we see his doubt in the conditional phrasing, his humility in diction like "deigns," and his belief, three-fourths of the way through his poem, that his prayers have thus far been answered.

After a review of the "long choosing, and beginning late" (l. 26) of his subject and his poem, Milton again reveals his determination to supersede earlier epic subjects, but his anguish and uncertainty remain. He worries still that if left to his own abilities alone, he may never succeed:

...higher Argument  
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise  
That name [Heroic], unless an age too late, or cold  
Climate, or Years damp my intended wing  
Deprest; and much they may, if all be mine,  
Not Hers who brings it nightly to my Ear.  
(ll. 42-7)

The misgivings of the earlier invocations haunt him yet: perhaps in this era it is no longer possible to write such a poem; perhaps his age and condition disable him to fulfill his work. And he now even worries that the climate is not conducive to his imagination. Finally, he insists that he will certainly fail without his Muse's inspiration--the blame will be on him alone, if he turns out to be unworthy of Her help. Nevertheless, having thus recorded his anguish for the fourth time, and having sought above all the necessary divine aid, the poet continues and completes Books IX through XII.

Taken as a whole, Milton's invocative stance in Paradise Lost is a sustained balance between humility and confidence, anguish and determination. Overriding all is the necessity for divine inspiration--without this, he is certain, no poem of this kind may be written successfully. The notion of the poet's function that emerges from such a theory is that he prays for a special vision so that he may then teach men by making visible to them what he has seen with the Muse's aid. The vision is a special one because this poet asks to see what is usually invisible to mortal men. The poem itself then becomes the concrete, visible embodiment of the invisible realm the poet has been enabled to see.

How close Spenser is to this stance and the idea of poet and poem it reveals should now be clear. Complaining from the beginning of the neglect of poets in his time, yet turning to his Muse in as ambitious

and grand a design as Milton's, Spenser, too, asks for a special vision of an invisible realm of abstract virtues, Heaven and Hell, so that he may show it to mankind in his poetry. I will venture to imagine Milton's firm approval of Spenser's stance at the close of the second canto of "Mutabilitie":

But thence-forth all shall rest eternally  
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:  
O that great Sabbaoth God graunt me that Sabaoths sight!

In the following chapters I shall attempt to explain what happened to this invocative tradition, and to the theory and practice of poetry it embodies, in the works of William Collins in the middle of the eighteenth century. But underlying that attempt is a larger, and, it seems to me, a crucial issue. In the concluding paragraph for his second article on the Spenser-Milton relationship, Greenlaw speaks of Copernicus, Galileo, Bruno, and Bacon as "laying the foundations for a new era."<sup>46</sup> This new view of the cosmos was to destroy the old one-- a loss, Greenlaw says, of which "Spenser and Milton were partly conscious, but their consciousness of it did not interfere with their splendid summary of the old kingdom of the mind. Since that time they have been influential. Many have repeated their formulas without depth of meaning. Others--Wordsworth, Shelley, Emerson--have borne a part in their tradition, have modified it to suit the gradual but never-ceasing change. But never since their time has the old universe of man and nature been rephrased with the authority of a divine revelation."<sup>47</sup> Collins, perhaps more acutely than any other poet in the eighteenth century, feels the inhibiting effect of this change, and is preoccupied with the loss of this authority. His struggle to recapture

it, to follow in the path set out by Spenser and Milton in order to become the kind of poet he believed them to be, is the primary subject of his poetry and the cornerstone upon which a firmer understanding and appreciation of Collins can be built.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth, enl. ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, his attack on the notion of supernatural inspiration in Leviathan (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), Part II, p. 254. Also, cf. Swift's complex, often recondite treatment of the Muse and inspiration in his early odes.

<sup>3</sup>Surprisingly few studies have seemed to recognize the general importance of the poet's invocative stance. In addition to a number of rather narrowly focused arguments about the exact identities of the Muses of Spenser and Milton (see notes 27 and 41 below), there are several notable exceptions to this indifference: E.R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard Trask (1953; rpt. New York: Harper, 1963 [orig. pub. 1948]); Herbert Read, "The Poet and His Muse," British Journal of Aesthetics, 4 (1964), 99-108; Robert M. Durling, The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965). To provide a comprehensive survey of the tradition is beyond the scope of the present study; such a study is, however, much needed. There are those, of course, who treat all invocations as mere conventions. See, for example, Gilbert Murray, The Classical Tradition in Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927), and Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949). It is to me unjustified to assume that a poet's invocation to a Muse, conventional though it may be, is either insincere or ironic when neither its wording nor its context suggests this is so. One must take a poet at his word unless there is evidence in the work to encourage another interpretation.

<sup>4</sup>Inspiration and Poetry (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1955), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>I quote from the Pope translation, The Iliad of Homer, ed. Maynard Mack, Vol. VII of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), ll. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup>Pope's note from Eustathius for the lines following 9-10 is instructive: "Here the Author who first invok'd the Muse as the Goddess of Memory, vanishes from the Reader's view, and leaves her to relate the whole Affair through the Poem, whose Presence from this time diffuses an Air of Majesty over the Relation" (Twick. Ed., p. 86, n. 11).

<sup>7</sup>The Odes of Pindar, trans. Sir John Sandys, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1937), ll. 80-83. This invocative stance pervades Pindar's works; see, for instance, Olympian Odes I, III, VI, and Nemean Odes III, V, VI. The lines quoted here are used by Collins as the epigraph for his Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects (1746). It is also significant, I think, that Collins chooses the ode form for most of his poems--Pindar is really the earliest of his idols. I will discuss the importance of this choice of epigraph and genre in Chapter III.

<sup>8</sup>C.M. Bowra, Pindar (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 4. See Bowra's entire initial chapter, "The Theory of Poetry," pp. 1-41, for a detailed and useful discussion of Pindar's poetics, and especially for his differences from Homer, Hesiod and Virgil. Both Bowra and Sandys, incidentally, emphasize the seriousness of Pindar's invocative stance and his sincere belief in the poet's need for divine assistance.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Though the contrast between Pindar and Homer is very important for Collins' place in the tradition, I should add that in such basic notions as that of the Muse as the necessary supernatural aid for the mortal poet, Pindar and Homer are, of course, quite close if not identical.

<sup>10</sup>In addition to his influence on Dante, see, for example, Merritt Y. Hughes, Virgil and Spenser (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1929).

<sup>11</sup>Virgil's Aeneis, Vol. II of The Works of Virgil, 3rd ed., trans. John Dryden (London: 1709), VI, 374-77.

<sup>12</sup>For the continuance of the Classical myths and gods (including the Muses) into the Christian Middle Ages, see Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (1953; rpt. New York: Harper, 1961 [orig. pub. 1940]). Cf. Curtius, European Literature, and Don Cameron Allen's discussion of Virgil's survival into the Renaissance in Mysteriously Meant (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970), pp. 135-62.

<sup>13</sup>For a brief discussion of the problem of balance between the theory of divine inspiration and the role of the poet's own natural abilities, see Murray, The Classical Tradition, pp. 46-7. I am especially indebted throughout the remainder of this chapter to Durling's discussion of the narrator in epic poetry in The Figure of the Poet. He notes, of the pagan-Christian dilemma, that in the Renaissance "It became less and less feasible to assume the pose of an inspired Poet unless your subject was religious. The last great traditional epic, Paradise Lost, was possible only because of Milton's sublime faith that his prayers to the Spirit were in fact being answered" (p. 9). Durling also links Virgil to this pattern (pp. 8-9). His main focus is on the poet as analogous to fictional narrator, and he does not, unfortunately, maintain a focus on the problem of inspiration itself beyond his introduction. See, however, his helpful chapters on Chaucer and Spenser.

<sup>14</sup>The Inferno, trans. John Ciardi (New York: New American Lib., 1954), II, 7-12.

<sup>15</sup>The Paradiso, trans. Ciardi (New York: New American Lib., 1961), I, 24-36. Explaining these lines in the "Letter to Can Grande," Dante emphasizes his belief in the necessity for invocation and inspiration when he says poets usually "utter a certain invocation. And this is proper for them, since they have great need of an invocation, because something contrary to the way of life common among men is to be sought from the superior beings, as a sort of divine gift." See Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1962), p. 205.

<sup>16</sup>See Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1957). Also note the discussion of invocation and the narrator's persona in Chaucer in Durling, The Figure of the Poet, pp. 44-66.

<sup>17</sup>I, 1. All quotations from Chaucer are from Works, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957). Subsequent references appear in the text.

<sup>18</sup>See Robinson's comments on the thematic appropriateness of this final invocation, and on the "religious sincerity" of the closing stanzas of the poem, pp. 389 and 837.

<sup>19</sup>For Chaucer's indebtedness to Dante in the Troilus, see Robinson, pp. 388-9 and notes, passim.

<sup>20</sup>See Lily B. Campbell, "The Christian Muse," HLB, 8 (1935), rpt. in Collected Papers of Lily B. Campbell (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), pp. 237-78, for the tradition, especially as it applies to Milton's Urania as a firmly established Christian Muse.

<sup>21</sup>Jerusalem Delivered, trans. Edward Fairfax (1600; rpt. New York: Capricorn, 1963) I, 9-13. Collins knew and praised Tasso and the Fairfax translation; see "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland," ll. 188-213. He was advertised as having written a poem praising the 1749 editor of this translation in The General Advertiser, March 27, 1750; see comments on the lines in Johnston (p. 220, n. 91) and Lonsdale (p. 516, nn. 188 ff.).

<sup>22</sup>Durling, The Figure of the Poet, deals with Tasso's problem, pp. 182-210.

<sup>23</sup>The Dark Ages and the Age of Gold (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973).

<sup>24</sup>An Apologie for Poetrie, in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1904), I, p. 192.

<sup>25</sup>Fraser, p. 275.

<sup>26</sup> Durling says of Spenser's relationship to later poets' stances, that "he does not produce the limited reality of the humanly fashioned analogue of the cosmos; he wishes to present that golden nature of which Sidney spoke--nature illumined and transfigured by the light of the transcendental. Spenser looks forward to Milton and ultimately to Wordsworth and Yeats" (pp. 236-7).

<sup>27</sup> I am especially indebted here to Gerald Snare, "The Muses on Poetry: Spenser's The Teares of the Muses," TSE, 17 (1964), 31-52. Commenting on Spenser's overall presentation of the Muses and poetry in the poem, Snare summarizes: "The Muses's votaries, those few poets, by means of inspiration, after long intellectual discipline, perceive the whole encyclopedia of truth in a harmonious and unified whole. These are the initiated, the poets the Muses find have all but disappeared. These also are the poets, the purveyors of knowledge and wisdom, who defend civilization against the incursions of barbarism" (p. 52). Others believe Spenser's attitude toward the Muses and inspiration to be serious and central: see W.L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser (London: Edward Arnold, 1925); Josephine Bennett, "Spenser's Muse," JEGP, 31 (1932), 200-19; Frederick M. Padelford, "Robert Aylett," HLB, 10 (1936), 1-48 (also see his earlier article, "The Muse of the Faerie Queene," SP, 27 [1930], 111-24); C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936); Joan Grundy, The Spenserian Poets (London: Edward Arnold, 1969); Patrick O. Spurgeon, "Spenser's Muses," Renaissance Papers (1969), 15-23.

<sup>28</sup> The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1932-57), VIII, 63. l. 1. All subsequent quotations from Spenser are taken from this edition, and are cited in the text.

<sup>29</sup> Of this despair, Snare concludes that Spenser's concern is primarily over his "realization that poetry might no longer affect men as it used to" (p. 52). For a catalogue and view of Spenser's ambiguities and seeming contradictions as a result of his uncertain vision in the midst of a breakdown of the whole epic tradition, see Michael West, "Spenser and the Renaissance Ideal of Christian Heroism," PMLA, 88 (1973), 1013-32. For other views of the paradox of Spenser's sense of inadequacy and determination to complete his task, see Harry Berger Jr., "The Prospect of Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry," SEL, 1 (1961), 93-120, and "Archaism, Immortality, and the Muse in Spenser's Poetry," Yale Review, 58 (1969), 214-31; Jerome S. Dees, "The Narrator of The Faerie Queene: Patterns of Response," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 12 (1971), 537-68. These articles emphasize what is seen as the poet's increasingly introspective stance--an emphasis which I think fails sufficiently to account for his outward turning to the Muses throughout the canon.

<sup>30</sup> Angus Fletcher, in The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), says, "The method of prophecy is to hold the eternal and the ephemeral in simultaneous copresence, balancing stable principle against unstable reality" (p. 5).

<sup>31</sup>The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes Toward a Theory of Allegoric Rhetoric in the English Renaissance (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 51. Spenser's emphasis on visual representation has been noted from another direction by Josephine Miles, Major Adjectives in English Poetry From Wyatt to Auden (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1946), especially pp. 360-88. Commenting on the particularly frequent use of sensory and visual adjectives in Spenser she speaks of "the main Spenser-Milton-Collins-Keats line" (p. 385). Also see John Bender, Spenser and Literary Pictorialism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972).

<sup>32</sup>Cf. the opening lines of the Aeneid. In the invocative stance the poets adopt, needs and purposes are, I think, almost identical, with the exception of the added responsibility imposed by Spenser's Christian concept.

<sup>33</sup>For the running debate over exactly which Muse Spenser means here, see the articles already cited by Padelford, Bennett, Spurgeon and Campbell.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), p. 314: "For none of the books of The Faerie Queene, therefore, is a true conclusion possible. The powers of darkness may for a time be held prisoner, seen in their true horror and rendered impotent, but since they are of earth's essence they will again break free and threaten destruction, night, and chaos."

<sup>35</sup>For a discussion of the Hymnes which places them in a tradition of literary hymns both in antiquity and the Renaissance, and where invocation is treated only as a convention by the author, see Philip B. Rollinson, "A Generic View of Spenser's Four Hymns," SP, 68 (1971), 292-304. See also Enid Welsford's "Introduction" to her edition of the Hymnes, Spenser, Fowre Hymnes, Epithalamion: A Study of Edmund Spenser's Doctrine of Love (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), especially pp. 36-63.

<sup>36</sup>SP, 14 (1917), 196-218. I am much indebted to Greenlaw's discussion of these matters throughout this section. Since Greenlaw's arguments of course, the shared Christian context of these poets has become a commonplace of Renaissance studies. However, the close parallel in their invocative stances has received little attention.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>38</sup>"Spenser's Influence on Paradise Lost," SP, 17 (1920), p. 321.

<sup>39</sup>Greenlaw discusses the poets and their Muses briefly. My analysis will essentially follow the broad lines he sets down, but in more detail, and focused on Collins' interests.

<sup>40</sup>Reason of Church Government, in John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 669. All subsequent quotations from Milton are taken from this edition, and are cited in the text.

<sup>41</sup> Milton's invocations have received their share of attention, from arguments about what they reveal about his theology by Maurice Kelly, This Great Argument (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1941), pp. 109-18 and passim, and Jackson Cope, "Milton's Muse in Paradise Lost," MP, 55 (1957), 6-10, to close analyses that show how much about the poem and the figure of the poet in it may be gleaned from them. See, for instance, John S. Diekhoff, "The Function of the Prologues in Paradise Lost," PMLA, 57 (1942), 697-704; R.W. Condee, "The Formalized Openings of Milton's Epic Poems," JEGP, 50 (1951), 502-08; George W. Whiting and Ann Gossman, "Siloa's Brook, the Pool of Siloam, and Milton's Muse," SP, 58 (1961), 193-205; Anne Ferry, Milton's Epic Voice (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963); and John M. Steadman, "Spirit and Muse: A Reconsideration of Milton's Urania," Archiv Fur Das Studium Der Neuren Sprachen Und Literaturen, 200.5 (1963), 353-57. Each of these contributes to an understanding of the importance of the invocations, and I am indebted to them in a general way; however, of more importance for my focus on the sense in Milton of his need for aid, of the burden being the poet he seeks to be placed upon him, and of the predicament of such a poet isolated in times neither conducive to his stance nor his purpose, are John Mulder, The Temple of the Mind (New York: Pegasus, 1969), pp. 142 ff., and A.S.P. Woodhouse, The Heavenly Muse, ed. Hugh MacCallum (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 182, 184, 228, and especially p. 250 where Woodhouse emphasizes how "thoughts of his own predicament crowd upon him," and concludes that "once more he turns for consolation, for support, for the possibility of achievement, to poetry--poetry inspired by the Heavenly Muse."

<sup>42</sup> Milton's invocative stance in Paradise Lost differs from that in the total body of his works only in being more fully developed; the stance pervades his canon just as Spenser's does his. See, for examples: "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," ll. 15-28; "At a Solemn Music"; "Lycidas," ll. 15-22; and Paradise Regained, I, 8-17. Also, see Milton's defense of the poet and inspiration in "Ad Patrem," and note the invocative tone of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." On the overall unity of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" with the rest of Milton's works, particularly in their pointing toward a heavenly vision, see D.C. Allen's illuminating analysis in The Harmonious Vision, enl. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970), pp. 3-23. The latter two poems, of course, have an especially strong influence on Collins. See Havens, The Influence of Milton, pp. 454 ff. Havens' main emphasis is on stylistic influences of Milton in the eighteenth century, whereas I believe Collins was as pervasively influenced by Spenser and Milton as Greenlaw argues Milton to have been by Spenser--particularly by the invocative stance.

<sup>43</sup> "That Shepherd who First Taught the Chosen Seed," UTQ, 8 (1939), p. 413. Hanford also argues for Milton's sincerity and for the centrality of these invocations to the poet's works: "It will not do to dismiss these and similar passages as extraneous and incidental. They are the essential Milton and the spirit which dominates them extends the shadow of its wings over his later poetry as a whole" (pp. 418-19). Hughes, in his introduction to Paradise Lost in Complete

Poems, argues similarly that we must believe it when Milton says he prays for and needs heavenly revelation. See pp. 198 ff. of his edition.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Milton's inclusion of "Eternal Wisdom" in his invocation to Urania in Book VII, "Wisdom thy Sister, and with her didst play / In presence of th' Almighty Father..." (ll. 9-11), where the poet also seems intent on associating his own creative act with the knowledge of the Creation imparted by God to Wisdom. See Hughes, pp. 345-6, n. 9, and Ecclesiasticus, 1: 4-10; Proverbs, 3: 15-19, 8: 20-31; and Wisdom of Solomon, 1: 6-7. Cf. Pope's inversion of this image in The Dunciad, where, as Aubrey Williams has firmly established (Pope's Dunciad: A Study of its Meaning [London: Methuen, 1955], especially pp. 131 ff.), the poet juxtaposes echoes of Milton's invocation to the Spirit (or Wisdom) as participant in the Creation via God's Word, with the "uncreating word" of Dulness, and the abuse of the "word" by poets in his own time. Pope thus portrays what he believes to be the decay and finally the dissolution of traditional aesthetic and moral values under the reign of Dulness--values Milton clearly embodies for Pope. The Dunciad, then, provides a significant index to the atmosphere in which Collins' early poems were written and published (the last two editions of Pope's poem came out in 1742 and 1743). This was the environment in which Collins attempted to follow the Spenser-Milton tradition, a tradition that for Pope, at least, was everywhere breaking down. Professor Williams sums up that environment thus: "Pope's war with duncery could be called...a battle over words--over a destructive use of the 'word', as the poet saw it, by the dunces in the most important areas of human experience: literature, education, politics, religion" (p. 156). And of course, there is Pope's own bleak conclusion: "And Universal Darkness buries All" (IV, 656). This was an atmosphere very much worsened even from that in which Milton felt so isolated.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Michael's instruction of Adam: "...then wilt thou not be loath / To leave this Paradise, but shall possess / A paradise within thee, happier far" (XII, 585-7).

<sup>46</sup> SP, 17 (1920), p. 359.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Of course, not merely the revolution in science caused the shift Greenlaw has in mind. The intellectual, social and economic history of the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, is a consistent chronicle of the various means by which the old order changed, yielding place to the new.

### CHAPTER III

#### COLLINS: THE EARLY POEMS

The Collins canon is unusually small; even if we count poems doubtfully ascribed to him, the total comes only to around thirty.<sup>1</sup> This is due in part, of course, to the brevity of Collins' writing career. Although such a small canon has the advantage of facilitating a comprehensive familiarity with the poet's work, there is a disadvantage as well, especially for a poet as self-conscious as Collins usually is.

It is not uncommon to hear it argued of a poet who dies young (or who, as in Collins' case, ceases to write before the age of thirty due to illness<sup>2</sup>) that certain obscurities, technical lapses or feelings of inadequacy apparent in his work may be the result merely of immaturity and inexperience. The argument typically goes on to wish the poet had lived longer, in hopes that maturity might have brought fulfillment of his youthful promise. William Hazlitt illustrates this reaction to Collins' career: "He is the only one of the minor poets of whom, if he had lived, it cannot be said that he might not have done the greatest things. The germ is there. He is sometimes affected, unmeaning, and obscure; but he also catches rich glimpses of the bowers of Paradise, and has lofty aspirations after the highest seats of the Muses."<sup>3</sup> However accurate such a view of the poet's potentiality may be in part, it seems to me that it distorts the fundamental dilemma of Collins'

theory and practice; and that it undercuts the import of the few poems in which Collins appears to be neither "affected, unmeaning, and obscure," nor inhibited by consciousness of failings, limitations, or the achieved inspiration of his predecessors.

Collins' early poems are logically more subject to application of the "immature poet" theory than any others.<sup>4</sup> Yet of the four poems known definitely to be Collins' work published in his early period, between 1739 and the crucial volume of odes in 1746, three lack the self-conscious invocative stance almost entirely. Absent with it is his anguish over the poet's function, over the inspiration he believes he needs to carry it out, and over his own ability, with or without that inspiration, to follow poets like Spenser and Milton. In one of these works, the Persian Eclogues of 1742, Collins almost totally effaces himself under the guise of translating them from the Persian poet "Mahamed." Moreover, with two of the others, the "Sonnet" (his first published poem) and "A Song from Shakespear's Cymbelyne," he has consistently and, I believe, correctly drawn high praise. Typical is Arthur Johnston's judgement that the "Sonnet" is "perfect in its expression of a poetic commonplace."<sup>5</sup> But Johnston, apparently without fully recognizing its significance, reveals the paradox inherent in the "immature poet" explanation of Collins' career when he says first that "from the age of seventeen [Collins] clearly had the ability to compose perfect poems," and then goes on several lines later to describe the poet's "growing awareness of what he lacks as a poet."<sup>6</sup>

Rather than divide Collins' poetry arbitrarily into failures resulting from immaturity and successes seen as mere foreshadowings of potential greatness, I would offer an altogether different approach,

one which emphasizes the presence side by side through the canon of what I shall term invocative and non-invocative poems. Close analysis reveals that many of the difficulties (like obscurity) which characterize Collins' work are often most obtrusive in his self-conscious invocative poems, suggesting, it seems to me, a link between such failings and the poet's frustrated search for inspiration. A pattern emerges in Collins' work of an early prominence of non-invocative poems, then obsession with invocation in by far the majority of his subsequent poems.

Given this pattern, the poems in which he does not adopt a self-conscious, self-deprecating stance take on special importance alongside those in which his focus is almost entirely on his dilemma as a poet seeking the inspiration he needs. There are only three other poems ("How Sleep the Brave," "Ode to a Lady," and "Ode on the Death of Thomson") in his work from the 1746 odes to the close of his writing career in 1749 where, as in the "Sonnet," Collins writes with unself-conscious poise and becomes, momentarily, the poet he seeks to be in his invocative poems. And in two of the remaining poems, thought they are not fully invocative per se ("Ode on the Poetical Character" and "Ode on the Popular Superstitions"), his confidence has so waned that they too are filled with self-conscious pessimism and anguish about both himself and poetry as he believes it should be written. Only if these non-invocative and the invocative poems are taken together can we gain the full picture of Collins' dilemma and its effects on the matter and form of his poetry. In other words, the kind of poem he writes from the non-invocative stance provides an important clue to what he seeks via the invocative poems; the poems Collins writes from each stance

complement and illuminate one another, and demonstrate, as we shall see, the consistency of his poetic theory and practice.

Hazlitt is certainly correct when he points out that Collins "has lofty aspirations after the highest seats of the Muses."<sup>7</sup> But the poet's consciousness of these aspirations, and of his ability to fulfill them in his poems, should not be laid to immaturity, nor his obscurities, inhibitions and insecurities to inexperience. He begins confidently enough. The tension he feels at the heart of his poetry between aspiration and achievement, theory and practice increases with maturity--not the reverse--and is the result, I believe, of his deep concern over the role of the inspired poet in his time. In the present chapter I shall examine the early period of Collins' writing career, and discuss first, what the "Sonnet" demonstrates about Collins' ability, confidence and concept of the poet's function; second, despite this initial accomplishment, his search for a form and voice in the imitative, self-effacing Eclogues (perhaps a first, though cloaked, signal of his later uncertainty); then, the inchoate realization of his dilemma which informs the "Epistle to Hanmer"--with its focus on poetry, the poet and the Muse setting the tone for the invocative stance to come; and finally, the achievement of the "Song from Cymbelyne," where Collins once again demonstrates his early ability and certainty, and reaffirms his concept of the poet's function by accomplishment rather than anguished aspiration.<sup>8</sup>

I

Beyond the sort of vague, unqualified praise Collins' "Sonnet"<sup>9</sup> drew from Johnston, little has been said about it.<sup>10</sup> Yet a closer look

reveals a finely controlled, delicately ironic love poem, remarkable as a first published effort by a poet no older than eighteen. The poet builds his embodiment of a paradox inherent in the onset of youthful love around a series of contrasts and parallels between the simple external event of meeting a young lady and his own internal reaction to her, between the event as a particular moment and as an aspect of universal experience, and between the personal myth the poet himself creates and the traditional myth of Venus' birth.

Collins introduces the central situation abruptly: "When Phoebe form'd a wanton smile, / My soul! it reach'd not here!"<sup>11</sup> The brevity of the poem's alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines accents this opening suddenness, while the repeated exclamation marks signal the emotional intensity of the remembered moment. One recalls such equally startling plunges in medias res as Donne's "Goe, and catche a falling starre," and "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love." Collins' sudden introduction of poet and lady carries over into and emphasizes the equally sudden change in the poet's reaction that occurs in lines three and four, where the poet puzzles over the central paradox: "Strange, that thy peace, thou trembler, flies / Before a rising tear!" The suddenness of the poet's remembrance of his initial reaction to the lady, then the suddenness of the change to his present love (a change highlighted by the shift in tense in line three) are appropriate, moreover, to the theme of the poem as a whole: a young man's initiation to impetuous love. Thus briefly Collins sets up the central event of the poem--a young man and a lady exchanging glances. And the poet provides, in the process, the concrete, external level: the lady's name, her smile, her tear.

But clearly Collins' primary focus in the stanza is on the irony of the poet's internal, or psychological reactions, an irony paralleled and caused by the two seemingly contradictory manifestations of the lady's feelings, or what seem to be her feelings: the smile and the tear. In line two the poet insists that the lady's smile did not penetrate his outer defenses, while the inverted syntax, placing "My soul!" in the strong beginning position, adds to the emphasis on his innermost self. He appears to announce this with mixed triumph and amazement, the latter the result of his present conquered condition. The smile resulted from conscious artistry on the lady's part ("form'd"), and suggested that she was both playful and forward in her intentions ("wanton"). Having asserted his successful resistance to this ploy, including the morally suggestive reference to his "soul" in contrast to the lady's wantonness, the poet goes on to record the change in his reaction caused by the subsequent appearance of Phoebe's tear. Collins emphasizes the change to puzzlement by placing "Strange" at the start of line three, and adds to its sense of confused, halting thought by interrupting the line with three commas. This contrasts directly with the sudden introduction and the exclamatory tone of lines one and two. Paradoxically and ironically, he has been moved to love not by the artful smile, but by a tear. For the tear, however, the reader is not told the lady's inner motives; the focus remains entirely on the poet's discomfort as he speaks chastisingly to himself: "thy peace, thou trembler, flies..." The imagery of the cowardly soldier appropriately underlines his sense of confused defeat in the battle of the sexes. Collins thus portrays both the external and internal elements of the encounter in an extraordinarily dense four lines.

The young poet proves himself capable of even greater subtlety, however, in his handling of myth in the poem, especially in the second stanza. There, expanding the context of the first stanza, he weds the personal experience recorded in those first four lines, to the universal context of love embodied in the traditional myth of Venus' birth. Before doing so, however, in one of the poem's most significant aspects, particularly for his concept of the poet's function, Collins bridges the gap between the personal and universal with his own parallel myth in miniature for the birth of love: his love for the lady rises suddenly like Venus, "From midst the drops, my love is born, / That o'er those eyelids rove" (ll. 5-6). This contextual shift from personal to universal comes effectively with the shift to a new stanza, yet the two stanzas are tied together by the "rising" motif in the poet's love born from the "rising tear" (l. 4) and the picture of Venus, who "issued from a teeming wave" (l. 7). The poet also intensifies the appropriateness of the two myths with the fertility theme inherent in birth (and the birth of love), and particularly in his choice of "teeming" to describe Venus' wave. Thus he enforces the logical link between love and fruition. In addition, it is important to note that in introducing the universal context of the Venus myth, Collins places special emphasis on the abstract level when he refers to Venus not by name, but as "The fabled queen of love" (l. 8). In this way he holds the reader's focus both on Venus' long tradition ("fabled"), and on the universal theme of a young man's lesson in the paradox and confusion of sudden love.

Finally, tying the poem's first to its last line is the function of the lady's name on the mythic as well as the particular level.

Once Collins has established the mythic sphere with the Venus tradition in lines seven and eight, the reader may easily recognize the added though less well known dimensions of "Phoebe". There are actually two goddesses in the poem: Phoebe at the start, Venus at the finish. Their traditions effectively complement one another. "Phoebe" is often associated in mythology with Artemis, whose chief roles link her to childbearing, fertility, youth, and (fittingly paradoxical) virginity. So Phoebe functions as the particularized young lady who charms him on the level of Collins' own miniature myth, and on a level parallel to "fabled" Venus. This excursion by Collins into the role of the poet as myth-maker is of great importance for his subsequent works, where such myth-making becomes a central facet in the poet's ideal vision of his function as one who thus embodies transcendent reality.

It has not been the purpose of this discussion to make Collins' "Sonnet" bear more weight of formal complexity and meaning than its eight lines warrant, nor certainly to argue it is a "perfect" poem. I have simply tried to demonstrate Collins' subtle artistry in fashioning a coherent portrait of a young man's encounter with an earthly goddess, his own vulnerability, and love. Especially important in that portrait, as we have seen, is the poet's shrewd handling of mythic possibilities. One cannot guess, of course, what agonies the poet may have suffered in working out the subtleties of form and meaning contained in the finished work; but what is most significant is that in this poem Collins is neither inhibited by nor does he write about those agonies. He adopts the role of myth-maker and love poet with apparent ease and complete control.

II

In his "Preface" to the Persian Eclogues, one discovers a first hint of Collins' uncertainty of his ability, accompanied by a kind of retreat behind the mask of a mere translator, as well as a further indication of the poetic role he aspires to play. His mask contributes to the reader's sense that Collins, at least when writing the Eclogues, must have begun to be dissatisfied with what he saw as the possibilities of poetic achievement in England. This is apparent early in the "Preface," when he contrasts the English poetic temperament to the Persian: "...the Stile of my Countrymen is as naturally Strong and Nervous, as that of an Arabian or Persian is rich and figurative." Collins proceeds to expand briefly upon the comparison, leaving little doubt as to which temper he wishes were his own: "There is an Elegancy and Wildness of Thought which recommends all their Compositions; and our Genius's are as much too cold for the Entertainment of such Sentiments, as our Climate is for their Fruits and Spices."<sup>12</sup> In the Eclogues Collins is clearly seeking a mode in which he will be freer to write as he chooses.

Collins establishes his alleged role of translator by explaining that he obtained the original poems from a merchant, that the poet's name was "Mahamed," that Mahamed died, and so forth. Yet despite this mask Collins concludes his "Preface" with an apology for whatever infelicities he may have committed as translator: "Whatever Defects, as, I doubt not, there will be many, fall under the Reader's Observation, I hope his Candour will incline him to make the following Reflections: That the Works of Orientals contain many Peculiarities, and that thro' Defect of Language few European Translators can do them

Justice." Thus the reader comes away from the "Preface" with two strong impressions: first, Collins has serious enough doubts about his own ability, or that of any English poet to write "rich and figurative" poetry that he creates the rather elaborate ruse of "translating" it from the Persian; and second, that even with the protection of this ruse, he remains uneasy enough to apologize for defects in his "translation." Of course, a translator's apology is commonplace. However in view of Collins' later, profound awareness of his limitations, such an apology may well be taken somewhat more seriously.

The ruse nevertheless seems successful for him in the Eclogues themselves. They are, overall, as free from concern about the poet's ability to perform and as free from the invocative stance as the "Sonnet." They drew, interestingly, more attention and praise from Collins' contemporaries than any of his other poems.<sup>13</sup> Though they are perhaps not so successful by modern aesthetic standards, the four eclogues deserve more careful attention than they have thus far received. Little more than passing mention has typically been given them in either nineteenth or twentieth century appraisals. Woodhouse expresses a common view when he says they are not Collins' "true medium."<sup>14</sup> Carver echoes, "In Persian Eclogues he was striving after a style not genuinely his own."<sup>15</sup> Yet as the "Preface" demonstrates, Collins is definitely striving for a voice in these poems that is the sort of "rich and figurative" one he would like to adopt as his own.

Moreover, a closer examination of the Eclogues reveals a clearly defined picture of the poet's function as Collins saw and obviously endorsed it at this stage of his career. Indeed, it is this portrait

of the poet, along with technical elements such as the effective use of scene and time to accentuate theme, and the common topic of virtue and love, which draws the separate eclogues together into a successfully unified work. The Eclogues are thus an indispensable source for an understanding of Collins' developing ideal of the poet, and of the manner in which this poet may accomplish his goals--an ideal, I shall argue, he maintains throughout his career.<sup>16</sup>

The poet's function as it emerges consistently in the Eclogues is that he is a teacher of moral truths via their embodiment in his works as both precept and example.<sup>17</sup> That Collins firmly and without apology places the ideal poet in this traditional context is perhaps most clearly evident in the first eclogue. Subtling it "SELIM; or the Shepherd's Moral," Collins immediately presents the poet's call for the attention of the young maidens to his lesson: "Ye Persian Maids, attend your Poet's Lays, / And hear how Shepherds pass their golden Days" (ll. 1-2). Selim then as forcefully announces the substance of the lesson, and at the same time exhorts the ladies to believe in his wisdom:

Not all are blest, whom Fortune's Hand sustains  
With Wealth in Courts, nor all that haunt the Plains:  
Well may your Hearts believe the Truths I tell;  
'Tis Virtue makes the Bliss, where'er we dwell.  
(ll. 3-6)

It is equally important to notice the poet's use of personification (in line three especially) to add at least a slight visual adumbration of the abstract world of value he seeks to communicate. Later in the poem this device becomes predominant.

After this reminder that only virtue can bring lasting happiness, Collins, as "Mahamed," describes the shepherd-teacher Selim carefully:

Thus Selim sung, by sacred Truth inspir'd;  
No Praise the Youth, but her's alone desir'd:  
Wise in himself, his meaning Songs convey'd  
Informing Morals to the Shepherd Maid....  
(11. 7-10)<sup>18</sup>

This is the ideal poet Collins seeks to be throughout the remainder of his writing career. He portrays the source in inspiration, Truth, as a "sacred" goddess who exists on a plane beyond the mundane lives of most men. Only the true poet may, like Selim, attain the wisdom she imparts; only he may gain her praise by successfully "Informing Morals." Moreover, the focus of the eclogue is not only on the poet who communicates on this transcendent plane. Rather, the lesson he teaches itself develops a sustained conflict between things and ideas, material and immaterial values. Selim "taught the Swains that surest Bliss to find, / What Groves nor Streams bestow, a virtuous Mind" (11. 11-12). It is important to point out the certainty, the confidence with which Collins asserts Selim's reception of supernatural inspiration, "Thus Selim sung..." We do not even see, as the start anyway, an invocation; it has, one assumes, already been made and answered.

The entire poem from this point on is built around Selim's teaching. "Well may they please," he asks, "the Morals of my Song" (1. 20). He initially compliments the maidens' charms so thoroughly that one wonders how they can ever put aside their vanity: "No fairer Maids, I trust, than ye are found, / Grac'd with soft Arts, the peopled World around!" (11. 21-22). Just as we are becoming convinced, presumably along with the maidens, that physical beauty is enough to insure love and happiness, Selim suddenly breaks the laudatory tone, having trapped both reader and maidens momentarily: "Yet think not these, all beauteous as they are, / The best kind Blessings Heav'n can

grant the Fair!" (ll. 27-28). The praise is then fully undercut by Selim's telling the listening maidens that they are the "Self-flattering Sex!" (l. 35); and this, in turn, Selim follows with additional exhortations to take the road of virtue, rather than vanity: "Who seeks secure to rule, be first her Care / Each softer Virtue that adorns the Fair" (ll. 39-40).

Significantly, the poet then makes reference to the Golden Age "when Wisdom held her Reign" (l. 43), and underlines its importance by placing the reference in a stanza set apart by its brevity (only four lines) from the preceding stanzas.<sup>19</sup> The allusion implies the moral decay of the present and the poet's role as one who may facilitate the restoration of virtue. With his introduction of this theme, Selim adopts the role of myth-maker to further his role as teacher. In the myth he pictures the origin of those virtues he hopes the maidens will embrace. After blessing the days when Wisdom dwelled on earth among men, he speaks of how "With Truth she wedded in the secret Grove, / The fair-eyed Truth, and Daughters bless'd their Love" (ll. 45-6).<sup>20</sup> In the next stanza--also set off from the others by its brevity--the poet introduces an extended prayer to the "Daughters": "O haste, fair Maids! ye Virtues come away" (l. 47).<sup>21</sup> The prayer itself supplicates the various personified Virtues to return to earth, especially to the maidens who are now his charges. The poet provides, by personifying the Virtues, concrete details which make the abstractions more easily visible as examples to his maidens of how they should behave, and what they should believe.

Lost to our Fields, for so the Fates ordain,  
The dear Deserters shall return again.  
O come, thou Modesty, as they decree,

The Rose may then improve her Blush by Thee.  
Here make thy Court amidst our rural Scene,  
And Shepherd-Girls shall own Thee for their Queen.  
(ll. 51-56)<sup>22</sup>

Modesty, associated with the rose and blushing, is followed by Chastity, "A wise suspicious Maid" (l. 58), Faith, "whose Heart is fix'd on one alone" (l. 64), Meekness, "with her down-cast Eyes" (l. 65), and Pity, "full of tender Sighs" (l. 66). Love, perhaps because it encompasses all the others, is left fully abstract.

After he has thus called for the return of the Virtues to earth, Selim speaks once again to his charges, exhorting them in a final instruction: "By these your Hearts approve, / These are the Virtues that must lead to Love" (ll. 67-68). "Mahamed" concludes the eclogue with a final four-line stanza in which he asserts the success of Selim's song, and links it, as at its beginning, to truth: "The maids of Bagdat verify'd the Lay: / Dear to the plains, the Virtues came along, / The Shepherds lov'd, and Selim bless'd his Song" (ll. 70-73).

Collins' notion of the office of the poet is clear from this portrait of Selim. The poet is first a moral teacher. In the first eclogue we see this function fulfilled primarily by precepts uttered by Selim to the maidens. But the poet has another function, also shown clearly in this poem, without which he is unable to carry out the first. With the aid of heaven-sent, "sacred" inspiration he stands between the earthbound maidens and the transcendent domain of abstract, pure virtues. Indeed, he is poised between the visible, material universe and an invisible world inhabited by the unseen, though nevertheless, for Collins, real values, emotions, and ideas by which man has guided and understood himself through the centuries. Paradoxically-- and at the heart of the poet's difficult mediatory role--while on the

one hand the personifications are Collins' means of making the abstract visible to men, on the other his portrayal of them as unearthly goddesses further insists on their distance from the mundane, man-made conditions under which the maidens' vanity has prospered. They are distant, that is, until the poet obtains inspiration and speaks.

Thus Selim the poet must speak not only to men and maidens, but also, in a substantial portion of his poem, to the abstract, invisible world of the ideal represented by Modesty, Pity, and Love. He must do so if he is to mediate successfully between the two spheres. And he must do so, of course, precisely because Wisdom fled the world of man with Truth and Virtue at the close of the Golden Age in Collins' mythic scheme. Man is thus in need of the poet's teaching because he is, by whatever myth one subscribes to, fallen and limited in Collins' world.<sup>23</sup> The poet's condition parallels man's as it does in Spenser and Milton: as man requires aid, so the poet requires inspiration before he may become "virtuous" by fulfilling his crucial visualizing and teaching functions. As we shall see, both Collins' reliance on and his obsession with this notion of the poet grow as he matures. Yet his belief in and dependence on it early in his career are surely demonstrated by how totally it pervades the first eclogue. In addition, we are already beginning to see how Collins' concept of the poet's function determines the form, as well as the matter, of his poems. This is notably apparent in his use of personification, miniature myths amalgamated from Classical tradition and his own admixture, and prominent tones of exhortation or supplication.

It is equally important to see how such a concept of the poet's function controls each of the remaining three eclogues.<sup>24</sup> An examination

of them helps fill in various facets of Collins' theory and practice as they build on his central notion. The second eclogue, too, has as its theme a lesson in the value of true love over material riches. With its desert setting indicative of the inner thirst and pain suffered by its main character and poet, Hassan, the poem serves as an exemplum of the error of seeking wealth before love. In its initial ten lines Mahamed provides a detailed picture of Hassan passing "In silent Horror o'er the Desart-Waste" (l. 1).<sup>25</sup> The world around him is barren, with adjectives like "scanty" (l. 4), "scorching" (l. 6), "dusty" (l. 9), "dreary" (l. 10), and "desp'rate" (l. 11) highlighting the physical and psychological atmosphere. Then Hassan's own opening lines sum up the lesson he feels he has learned: "Sad was the Hour, and luckless was the Day, / When first from Shiraz' Walls I bent my Way" (ll. 13-14). This couplet serves, subsequently, as a refrain for the entire poem, and is emphasized by its repetition at the conclusion of the next four stanzas. The remainder of the poem is his explanation, in the midst of his sufferings, of the error which causes him to utter this lament. He alternates between a portrayal of those sufferings, his recollections of what he has left behind and the folly that led him here. Typical of the juxtaposition of the first two, are the lines in stanza two just before the refrain:

In vain ye hope the green Delights to know,  
Which Plains more blest, or verdant Vales bestow:  
Here Rocks alone, and tasteless Sands are found,  
And faint and sickly Winds for ever howl around.  
(ll. 25-28)

The next stanza contains the core of Hassan's message. Having provided the reader with his own sufferings as an example of the results of error, he launches into a tirade against man's, and especially

his own, folly: "Curst be the Gold and Silver which persuade / Weak Men to follow far-fatiguing Trade!" (ll. 31-32). His curse concluded a few lines later, the poet laments the general human condition in a series of questions again juxtaposing folly with joys up to now unheeded:

Ah! why was Ruin so attractive made,  
Or why fond Man so easily betray'd?  
Why heed we not, whilst mad we haste along,  
The gentle Voice of Peace, or Pleasure's Song?  
(ll. 39-42)

In the following two stanzas Hassan returns to his present fears and agonies, "When Thought creates unnumber'd Scenes of Woe" (l. 50), and imagines himself destroyed by lions, wolves, tigers and even "the silent Asp" (l. 61). After thus once more describing himself as the chief example of human folly, he enunciates his moral lesson again as well, continuing the pattern of alternating example and precept for the reader's edification:

Thrice happy they, the wise contented Poor,  
From Lust of Wealth, and Dread of Death secure!  
They tempt no Desarts, and no Griefs they find,  
Peace rules the Day, where Reason rules the Mind.  
(ll. 65-68)

Conspicuous here too, as throughout the eclogue, is the abstract plane upon which Collins constructs such lessons through personification: Peace has a "gentle voice" and "rules the Day" for the wise who are contented, though poor; Night is a "Mourner" (l. 54) with whose aid "Death with Shrieks" (l. 57) leads the lion "By Hunger rous'd" (l. 55) to prey on man.

Hassan fittingly ends his lament over his error with the most painful recollection, perhaps, of all--he has, in his folly, left true love behind: "O hapless Youth! for she thy Love hath won, / The

tender Zara, will be most undone!" (ll. 71-72). Remembering her last words to him "When fast she dropt her Tears" (l. 74), Hassan prays,

O let me safely to the Fair return,  
Say with a kiss, she must not, shall not mourn.  
Go teach my Heart to lose its painful Fears,  
Recall'd by Wisdom's Voice, and Zara's Tears.  
(ll. 81-84)<sup>26</sup>

Wisdom's appearance here, along with the love theme and overall method of this second eclogue, helps to tie it firmly to the first poem of the group. And as in Selim's lesson, the act of prayer plays a crucial role in both the poet's and man's attempt to fulfill his function. Not only does Hassan consummate his poem with the above prayer for his return home (with Wisdom's help), but Mahamed is careful in his own summation to underscore that Hassan finally "call'd on Heav'n to bless the day, / When back to Shiraz' Walls he bent his Way" (ll. 85-6). Again both man and poet in Collins' scheme depend upon the participation of the invisible world in their lives. By depicting two poets here--one functioning as preceptor, the other as preceptor and example--Collins places added emphasis on the poet's sharing in general human weakness and error. This emphasis is, understandably, of central importance in Collins' total poetics, along with the need for a prayerful tone such weakness dictates to him.

The third and fourth eclogues each present only slightly varied versions of the patterns in the first two. In "Eclogue the Third" Collins introduces the traditional contrast between the simple rural life and "the Blaze of Courts" (l. 37). "Emyra" sings this time, "Of Abra... / Who led her Youth with flocks upon the Plain" (ll. 7-8). The court is introduced when "Great Abbas" happens to meet Abra, and "woo'd the rural Maid!" (l. 23). At the close of the third stanza the

poet begins, as in the second eclogue, to recite a refrain which, predictably, carries the moral import of the story of these lovers: "Be ev'ry Youth like Royal Abbas mov'd, / And ev'ry Georgian Maid like Abra lov'd!" (ll. 25-26). This exhortation is, like that in the previous poem, repeated four times, appearing most emphatically as the final couplet. Furthermore, of special significance in this refrain is its stress, once again, on the poet's prayer-like statement as he attempts to inculcate his moral. The tone the refrain carries through the poem is thus compounded of both prayer for and exhortation to virtue.

The lovers serve as exemplars of the refrain throughout. Though Abra leaves her flocks for the "golden Pow'r" (l. 32) of the court, she goes also to be loved truly by Abbas. And more important to the moral thrust of the poem, we are told that even at court, "Still with the Shepherd's Innocence her Mind / To the sweet Vale, and flow'ry Mead inclin'd" (ll. 39-40). Abra not only maintains her own innocence despite her elevated role, but she spreads her atmosphere among her handmaidens, taking them with her to learn the simple rural pleasures, where "With Joy the Mountain, and the Forest Rung" (l. 48). Perhaps most important to the poem's moral center, however, is that Abra's influence extends to the ruler Abbas as well; he joins his queen in these simple ways, and "Sweet was his Love, and innocent his Bed" (l. 60). As the poem draws to its conclusion, exhortation to virtue comes to the fore again, this time directed especially at rulers themselves: "Let those who rule on Persia's jewell'd Throne, / Be fam'd for Love, and gentlest Love alone" (ll. 63-64). This penultimate stanza concludes with an appropriate image of the hoped-for combination

of "The Lover's Myrtle, with the Warrior's Crown" (l. 66); thus Abra and Abbas come to represent the universal as well as the particular in the poem's moral.<sup>27</sup>

In the fourth and last eclogue Collins returns to a balance between precept and exemplum. Organized around the traditional debate between two shepherds, this eclogue is a return to the joining of shepherd-poet and erring man Collins first develops with Hassan's lament in the second eclogue. Secander and Agib are in flight from their homes to escape the ruin caused by invading Tartars, but stop on a mountainside to look back on what they have left behind. Secander tells Agib, "O turn thee and survey, / Trace our sad Flight thro' all its length of Way!" (ll. 15-16). The shepherds proceed to describe the ravages they see and recall on the plain below, then come to the heart of the poem's moral in their castigation of the "Persian Lord" (l. 32), whose duty is to protect their fields. Instead of hearing their cries for help, he is "Far off in thoughtless Indolence resign'd" (l. 35), and "'Midst fair Sultanas lost in idle Joy" (l. 37).

Underlining the extent of his culpability throughout the poem is the contrast between the "fair Circassia" (l. 1) before the invasion, and now, when "Ruin spreads her baleful Fires around" (l. 52). This contrast is made especially strong by Agib's remembrance that the Lord himself has often enjoyed "these green Hills" (l. 39). Agib further heightens the contrast by a series of clauses strung together by the lament "No more" in which they enumerate all they have lost. And Secander emphasizes their frustrating loss by repeating the phrase "In vain": "In vain Circassia boasts her spicy Groves, / For ever fam'd for pure and happy Loves" (ll. 53-54).

Agib makes the final speech of the poem after these elegiac outpourings, and issues a warning to "Georgian Swains" to "learn from far / Circassia's Ruin" (ll. 59-60). If they wish to avoid a similar fate they must prepare "To shield your Harvests, and defend your Fair" (l. 62)--prepare, that is, better than Agib and Secander. Thus the shepherd-poets themselves become exempla, in addition to fulfilling their role as enunciators of moral judgement. This added role as examples of human error and weakness also assumes an emphatic position in the poem as a whole. Mahamed-Collins provides the reader with a description in the last four lines (after the shepherds have fallen silent) of fires coming nearer along the plain, and of the two men renewing their escape in terror. In this way their actions as well as their words, along with Mahamed's introductory and concluding lines, work together to form yet another eclogue in which the poet as moralist predominates.

The Persian Eclogues offer ample, clear evidence of the early importance the moral voice assumes in Collins' idea of the poet's function. They also provide, as we have seen, evidence of other, related aspects of Collins' theory and practice, such as personification and the attitude of prayer. Because of the dramatic framework whereby Collins describes and then quotes other poets in his supposed "translation" of Mahamed, these elements are straightforward enough to require little if any explication. Later, when Collins writes without the protection of such a framework and speaks directly in his own voice as poet, the poems become more complicated--both for Collins and his reader. In such poems the invocative stance becomes the pivotal means by which a further understanding of Collins' theory and practice may be achieved.

III

With "An Epistle: Address to Sir Thomas Hanmer on his Edition of Shakespear's Works,"<sup>28</sup> Collins first sketches directly the mode of the fully invocative poems to come. In his relationship to the Muse and to Shakespeare, his earliest avowed idol, Collins reveals a deepening of his personal dilemma only hinted at in the "Preface" to the Eclogues. The "Epistle" is, significantly, the first of his poems to be constructed entirely around this theme. Paying little heed to precise chronology or historical fact, Collins employs the occasion to develop a commentary on dramatic poetry in general, and to praise an ostensibly maligned and neglected Shakespeare far more than Hanmer as his editor. Throughout the poem Collins' interest is primarily in the personal implications the new edition has for him, which makes the "Epistle" more noteworthy as an index to his aspirations and ideas, particularly his notion of inspiration, than as a statement on literary history.<sup>29</sup> In what appears initially to be a typical panegyric written more to receive patronage than to give praise, Collins consistently and, I believe, purposefully, transcends the immediate and particular to focus on what are to become his abiding passions: the Muse, the achievement of his predecessors, and his own (or anyone's) inability to match that achievement in the present.<sup>30</sup>

Collins' obsession with his predecessors in the "Epistle" (in both form and content) has more often than not been cause for rather severe faultfinding by the few critics who have commented on the poem at all. With an obvious bias toward defining the true Collins as a forerunner of Romantic individualism, they quickly dismiss the poem as an imitative or overly conventional failure. Bronson is anxious

to get on to the 1746 Odes after what he considers the convention-bound early poems, and finds the "Epistle" to be the "least individual of Collins' poems."<sup>31</sup> Ainsworth argues the poem is proof of Collins' allegiance to a poetic mode he is soon to break from.<sup>32</sup> Sigworth finds nothing either penetrating or original in it.<sup>33</sup> And Woodhouse, echoing the others, says it is evidence of Collins' one foot in the Augustan tradition, but sees Collins' real significance in what he believes are Collins' later, innovative developments.<sup>34</sup> Sigworth makes a similar comment on the "Song from Cymbelyne," wondering why Collins is foolish enough to challenge comparison with Shakespeare.<sup>35</sup> All are, I think, missing the true center of his work. Collins seeks such comparison because he knows no other way to write--to be a poet, for him, is to write as his predecessors wrote, with the same inspiration and the same effects on his readers.<sup>36</sup>

Collins wastes no time in getting to his fundamental issue in the "Epistle to Hanmer." Throughout the poem he speaks of the Muse; she is, in fact, the keystone of all the poet says to Hanmer or about Shakespeare. The "Epistle" may be divided into six sections, all of which focus on the Muse and Shakespeare, simultaneously revealing Collins' fears of inadequacy and praise of his idol, and gradually detailing the qualities he seeks to inherit from him as his ideal dramatic poet. He opens the initial section (ll. 1-16) with a conventional direct address of praise to Hanmer, but quickly introduces a more pervasive theme. All seems well at first. Hanmer is "born to bring the Muse's happier Days" and "protects a Poet's Lays" (ll. 1-2); yet Collins refers to the Muse he has invoked for his own epistle with a far different tone: "Excuse her Doubts, if yet she fears to tell /

What secret Transports in her Bosom swell" (ll. 5-6). One recalls his apology in the "Preface" to the Eclogues. Collins further stresses this anxiety over whether or not his Muse will grant him inspiration by portraying her as dazzled and shy: "With conscious Awe she hears the Critic's Fame, / And blushing hides her Wreath at Shakespear's Name" (ll. 7-8). Thus the awe he registers through the picture he provides of his Muse maintains the reader's awareness of his doubts, while at the same time it underlines his praise of Hanmer and Shakespeare.

Indeed, the entire stanza moves between the poles of exhilaration and anxiety, praise and blame. Near the opening of the poem Collins provides an image of fertility to underline his praise for Hanmer's preservation of Shakespeare's works: "While nurst by you she [the Muse] sees her Myrtles bloom, / Green and unwither'd o'er his honour'd Tomb" (ll. 3-4). But halfway through the stanza he turns from praising poet and editor--amid his personal uncertainty--to assail the treatment accorded Shakespeare before Hanmer. So "Hard was the Lot those injur'd Strains endure'd" (l. 9) that "Fair Fancy wept; and echoing Sighs confess / A fixt Despair in ev'ry tuneful Breast" (ll. 11-12).

Collins' personification of "Fancy" as part of this attack, though brief, is especially significant; with it he commences his delineation not only of the neglect of his idol, but also of precisely that quality he admires most in Shakespeare--imaginative vision. Fancy is, as we shall see, central both to Collins' praise of Shakespeare in the "Epistle," and to his poetic theory as a whole, for it is the faculty which, when aided by inspiration, enables the poet to see and make visible to the reader the abstract realm.

By thus introducing the broad themes of despairing poets and a mourning Fancy, Collins begins to place his personal anxiety in the larger context provided by the imagined mistreatment of Shakespeare between his death and Collins' own time. It should be apparent that the historical fact of how Shakespeare was treated is relevant to our understanding of Collins' meaning in the poem; clearly this is how he wants us to see the fate not only of Shakespeare, but of all poets after Shakespeare, himself included. Finally, to conclude this implied censure of the reading public and complete the stanza, Collins then inverts the earlier imagery of fertility. Thus he further accentuates the view presented in the second half of the poem that since Shakespeare English soil has not nurtured great poets. Fancy wept and poets despaired with grief, he tells us, equal to that of "th' afflicted Swains... / When wintry Winds deform the plenteous Year" (ll. 13-14).

The second section, beginning with stanza two, is the longest, and takes us to the precise mid-point of the poem at line seventy-four. In it, Collins surveys the history of the Muse's granting of her inspiration via the traditional 'progress' piece.<sup>37</sup> The stanza begins, like the first two lines of the poem, conventionally enough in its statement of the progress theme: "Each rising Art by just Gradation moves, / Toil builds on Toil, and Age on Age improves" (ll. 17-18). The tradition Collins here calls to mind describes the progression of art from east to west, specifically from Greece to Rome, then on to Europe in an unbroken succession down to the present. But, also like the first stanza, Collins undercuts the progress theme immediately to expand upon his notion of the poet's predicament in his own time. The progress, at least in dramatic poetry, has not reached beyond

Shakespeare, and again, the Muse is the key to Collins' theory: "The Muse alone unequal dealt her Rage, / And grac'd with noblest Pomp her earliest Stage" (ll. 19-20).<sup>38</sup>

This said, the poet proceeds to outline what progress has occurred as he sees it. Beginning with Greek drama, Collins provides, in what he praises, a significant clue to his own aspirations. One element remains constant: the ability of the dramatist to move his audience by the power of his visual representations. In Euripides "the speaking Scenes" (l. 21) reveal Phaedra's sufferings, or they "paint the Curse" (l. 23) in Sophocles' Oedipus. Such scenes are important to Collins above all, as he shows at the end of the stanza, because of their effect on the sympathies of the audience, an effect Collins habitually tinges with moral significance: "With kind Concern our pitying Eyes o'erflow, / Trace the sad Tale, and own another's Woe" (ll. 25-26).

After praising Rome's prowess via "The Comic Sisters" (l. 28)--again the Muse is omnipresent--Collins asserts that "ev'ry Muse essay'd to raise in vain" (l. 31) an equal to Greece's tragic poets. Then he continues to emphasize setbacks with mention of the fall of Rome, until the progress rekindles under Pope Julius, who "recall'd each exil'd Maid" (l. 37) and re-established the Muse's dominion in Italy. Finally, momentarily interrupting the chronological flow of the progress up to Shakespeare himself, Collins returns to his earlier emphasis on what for him makes a poet great. The Porvencal troubadors earn a place because when they sung of love, "The gay Description could not fail to move; / For, led by Nature, all are Friends to Love" (ll. 43-44). A description or a scene that moves the audience to a sense of shared humanity emerges as a pivotal criterion for Collins.<sup>39</sup>

With the next stanza the progress reaches its pinnacle. While he does not now fully interrupt his structure to provide details of Shakespeare's greatness, Collins nevertheless highlights the moment by making this noticeably the shortest of the poem's stanzas, only six lines. More than an assertion of Shakespeare's perfect balance of the virtues Collins sees in previous poets ("Of Tuscan Fancy, and Athenian Strength," l. 48), the stanza is an insistence firm and unequivocal of the poet's dependence on a power beyond this world for his achievements. Collins opens with this brief, emphatic declaration: "But Heav'n, still various in its Works, decreed / The perfect Boast of Time should last succeed" (ll. 45-46). The rest of the stanza is Collins' amplification of that decree:

The beauteous Union must appear...  
One greater Muse Eliza's Reign adorn,  
And ev'n a Shakespear to her Fame be born!  
(ll. 47, 49-50)

The antecedant of "her" in line fifty is appropriately ambiguous, suggesting the dramatist's birth honors both the Muse and Elizabeth.

Still more important is the allusion in line forty-nine. So far as I am aware, no one has previously noticed the echo there of Milton's opening announcement and assurance in Paradise Lost of Christ's eventual coming: "...till one greater Man / Restore us..." (I, 4-5).<sup>40</sup> This echo should be stressed for two reasons: first, it shows Collins' early awareness of Milton, especially in a generally invocative context; second, in its implied comparison of Christ's power of salvation to the Muse's of inspiration, it underscores the reverence Collins has already developed for the Muse.

Having reached this climax, Collins effectively continues with the progress theme, an ironic "progress" that is now all downhill as it

moves closer to the poet's own time. We see the shift in direction from the emphatic "Yet ah!" (l. 51), straight through the remaining twenty-four lines of the stanza--and section. First he gives us England itself, "In vain our Britain hop'd an equal Day!" (l. 52), returning as he does so to the imagery of sterility with which he suggests the same falling off after Shakespeare in stanza one: "No second Growth the Western Isle could bear, / At once exhausted with too rich a Year" (ll. 53-54). As proof of his thesis the poet repeats the commonplaces about Jonson's prowess in careful artistry, and mentions Fletcher as capable of a limited scope in capturing the sufferings of "the Female Mind" (l. 60). Collins returns to Shakespeare in the stanza's conclusion, however, convinced that only he achieved true greatness: "Drawn by his Pen, our ruder Passions stand, / Th' unrival'd Picture of his early Hand" (ll. 65-66). Moreover, Collins continues to underline the import of Shakespeare's visualizing ability, the pun on "Drawn" intimating the dramatist's achievement in making the auditor both see the "Passions, " and feel them by his drawing the auditor to their representation.

Next, to complete the progress section, Collins moves quickly through France's place in the progress, coming closer still to his own century. He recycles the conventional view of the "correctness" of French drama, but reserves limited praise for Corneille, who "with "Lucan's spirit fir'd, / Breath'd the free Strain, as Rome and He inspir'd" (ll. 71-72), and for Racine. Still, these dramatists do not begin to match Shakespeare, as Collins makes quite clear in the next section. There is nevertheless one particularly significant notion in the poet's commendation of Corneille that deserves mention. Collins

subsequently elaborates on what is here only suggested--that is, that one inspired poet (in this case Lucan) may indeed inspire another. As we shall see shortly, Collins comes to depend as heavily on such poets as intermediaries between himself and the Muse as he does on direct invocation. The indirect invocative stance actually forms the fourth section of the "Epistle," where Shakespeare serves in this capacity for Collins.

Before the poet comes to that plea, however, he makes a final inversion of the progress structure in the poem's third section (ll. 75-100) by detailing his admiration for Shakespeare after having carried the progress beyond him. Though the English dramatist did not equal the correctness of the French, "Yet He alone to ev'ry Scene could give / Th' Historian's Truth, and bid the Manners live" (ll. 77-78). Continuing to underline the centrality of vision to his notion of the ideal poet, Collins introduces examples of Shakespeare's powers in this realm with the announcement, "Wak'd at his Call I view..." (l. 79), then goes on to describe scenes he recalls from the plays. Collins' previous emphasis on Shakespeare's imaginative vision forms the nucleus of this section's second and concluding stanza, where Collins praises his predecessor's ability to translate that vision to the mind of the auditor: "Where'er we turn, by Fancy charm'd, we find / Some sweet Illusion of the cheated Mind" (ll. 93-94).

After thus further accenting what he admires in his idol, Collins begins the key fourth section of the poem (ll. 101-110) with an invocation in which he asks Shakespeare thus to inspire him: "O more than all in pow'rful Genius blest, / Come, take thine Empire o'er the willing Breast!" (ll. 101-102). Collins' fervor in this plea is clear in the

prominence of exclamation points; he ends five of the stanza's six sentences with them. Apparently unsure of the efficacy of his direct invocation, the poet seeks inspiration from Shakespeare as one whose own works seem to Collins to result from a more successful relationship with the Muse. As he does so, he provides an important summary of his notion of the ideal poet's function, much as we have seen Spenser, Milton and others do when they adopt the invocative stance. After his initial plea Collins continues,

Whate'er the Wounds this youthful Heart shall feel,  
Thy Songs support me, and thy Morals heal!  
There ev'ry Thought the Poet's Warmth may raise,  
There native Music dwells in all the Lays.  
(ll. 103-106)

These lines reflect Collins' humility as a young poet speaking to the old master, his emphasis on strong emotion as necessary in both poet and auditor, his central concept of the poet's moral role, and his mixed belief (and hope) that he himself is fertile ground for Shakespeare's inspiring "Songs."

Collins returns in the conclusion of his invocation to Shakespeare to his already established focus on the poet's visualizing ability. And this time he adds to it his wish that poetry and painting might join their related powers to even greater effects: "O might some Verse with happiest Skill persuade / Expressive Picture to adopt thin Aid!" (ll. 107-108).<sup>41</sup> Not only is Shakespeare again Collins' ideal poet for the task, but Collins appears also to be wishing that his own may be the verse that persuades, although he vaguely and uncertainly pleads only, "might some Verse." His plea now reaches a crescendo in its final two lines. Seeking a revitalizing of present by past achievement through a partnership between Shakespeare, the poet who might induce

the painter to join with Shakespeare, and the painter, Collins utters parallel exclamations of hope: "What wond'rous Draughts might rise from ev'ry Page! / What other Raphaels Charm a distant Age!" (ll. 109-110).

In a fifth section (ll. 111-132) that amounts at least to a partial answer to this invocation, Collins is able to envision the possible result of such a partnership: "Methinks ev'n now I view some free Design..." (l. 111). For the remainder of his and the following stanza the poet imagines paintings (one to be based on Antony's funeral oration in Julius Caesar, the other on Coriolanus) which might be the concrete, visible representations of the human nature embodied by Shakespeare in his plays. Particularly noteworthy in this section is the recurrence of Collins' use of personification to accomplish his own verbal embodiment of human passion. His closing portrayal of Coriolanus best exemplifies the importance this device has for the poet, especially in the overall context of vision, description and finally painting that runs through the poem: "O'er all the Man conflicting Passions rise, / Rage grasps the Sword, while Pity melts the Eyes" (ll. 131-132). In this manner Collins, clearly doing his best to emulate the genius of Shakespeare, "paints" the individual character, Coriolanus, yet simultaneously suggests his participation in abstract or universal human nature--particular and abstract are held in balance, with the poet acting as the connecting rod.

Much of the final section (ll. 133-148) is a return to the original panegyric for Hanmer with which Collins began the "Epistle." But, as its opening word suggests ("Thus"), it serves too as a summation of the poem's central themes. In this section, as in the poem as

a whole, it is on these themes rather than on praise of Hanmer that one must focus. One such thematic statement is Collins' summary of his notion of the inspiring power of a poet previously successful with the Muse, as well as his lack of confidence in his own time: "Thus, gen'rous Critic, as thy Bard inspires, / The Sister Arts shall nurse their drooping Fires" (ll. 133-134). Completing his brief peroration, Collins emphasizes vision as the key to Shakespeare's inspiration of a rebirth, and repeats as he does so the fertility imagery of the first two sections: "Each from his Scenes her Stores alternate bring, / Blend the fair Tints, or wake the vocal String" (ll. 135-136).

Clearly at this point Collins has some hope for poets generally, and for himself. And as he completes the final stanza with further praise for Hanmer's "restoration," one senses this upturn even more. He compares Shakespeare's restoration to restorations of Homer's works, and Collins' England to Athens, thus neatly bringing the references to Greece early in the poem full circle, and further suggesting the potentiality of the present. Indeed, encompassing Collins' ironic inversion of the conventional progress structure and theme one may now discern a variation of a larger pattern in the poem, following another traditional scheme—a pattern of glory, ruin and restoration.<sup>42</sup> There is first the glory of past dramatic poets, beginning with Greece and progressing to Shakespeare (in Collins' view, at any rate); then the falling off from Shakespeare's own day up to and including the present; and finally the hoped for restoration that Hanmer's rescue of Shakespeare makes possible.

Collins' joining of these resonant structures enables him to provide a clear portrait of his personal ideals, frustrations, despair

and hope within the broad context of artistic decay and fruition such patterns suggest. The "Epistle to Hamner" is a significant revelation of Collins' growing sense of poetry's dependence on the Muse, and of his own inadequacy and need for assistance, if not directly from the Muse, then via indirect invocation of a successful predecessor. And through what he praises in that predecessor, the poem is the most complete demonstration to date of the difficult role Collins seeks to play as poet--a man capable of perceiving the intertwining of the particular with the abstract, the visible with the invisible realm and, through imagination and inspiration, of making that intertwining visible to other men. We can begin to see too the foundation of Collins' kinship with Spenser and Milton, whose notions of poet, invocation and poem so closely parallel his own. Especially important, in addition to all this, is that in this poem, despite its evidence of Collins' growing pessimism about his (and his era's) poetic adequacy in the shadow of Shakespeare, he nevertheless manages to conclude with rather strong hope for the improvement of both. This is not, certainly, a hope he long maintains--at least on so wide a scale--yet it prepares us well for the fourth and last poem of his early period, "A Song from Shakespear's Cymbelyne."

#### IV

In the "Song" Collins attempts to put into practice what he only hopes for in the "Epistle to Hamner." Shakespeare is the master again, and the poem is an imitation of a lyric in Cymbeline as Collins envisions it might have been written. That the poem does not have a precise relationship to the actual situation or theme of the play

should not obscure its revelation of the confident Collins, untroubled by the frustrated need for inspiration or the failure of poetry in his time.<sup>43</sup> Collins seems to be intent on proving that poetry, at least in imitation of Shakespeare's achievement, is still possible. Thus his deliberate and, as Sigworth would have it, audacious placing of himself in direct comparison with his great predecessor. Absent from this poem are the self-conscious, often despairing hero worship and the tentative aspiration of the "Epistle." If Collins' attempt to emulate or equal Shakespeare in the "Song" results from conquering those doubts and hesitant aspirations, the poet gives no hint of the struggle in his straightforward performance here. First published with the second edition of the "Epistle to Hanmer" in 1744, the "Song," in its unselfconscious, coherent presentation of its elegiac motif, reminds one most of the love "Sonnet" with which Collins began his career in 1739.

The poem's overall structure is a progress of grief for the dead Fidele. From the traditional laying on of flowers in the first stanza, the poet moves in stanzas two and three to fears of unquiet spirits associated with graveyards--though in each stanza the second half rebuts the fear imaged in the first. Then he goes on to his version of a pastoral convention with the Redbreast, representing nature, dutifully attending the grave, and in stanza five to insist on remembrance of the deceased even when other scenes and actions intrude. Finally he comes to a summation of the life, death, remembrance cycle, with corresponding assertions of love for the living and pity for the dead, as mourning runs its full course.

The focal point of the poem is, of course, the gravesite. In stanzas one through four particularly, Collins is careful to maintain

the grave's centrality as a concrete, visual reality. It is first a "grassy Tomb" (1. 1), then a "quiet Grove" (1. 6), "the Green" (1. 11), "thy Grave" (1. 12), and "the Ground" (1. 16) successively. Further underlining its centrality is the poet's use of a capitalization in each reference to the grave.

Other details fill in the scene of mourning around the grave. In the first stanza are the mourners, "Soft Maids, and Village Hinds" (1. 2), and the flowers, or "Each op'ning Sweet" (1. 3) of "breathing Spring" (1. 4). Then come the "Shepherd Lads" (1. 7) and "melting Virgins" (1. 8) of stanza two, and additional physical or natural details like the "pearly Dew" (1. 12), the "Redbreast" (1. 13), the "hoary Moss" and more "gather'd Flow'rs" (1. 15) in stanzas three and four. In the fifth stanza, though the immediate scene shifts briefly away from the grave, are the equally tangible "howling Winds, and beating Rain" (1. 17). Collins thus provides, it seems to me, concrete details just sufficient to enable his reader to imagine both the scene, and the all important action which takes place in it.

That action consists of a conflict between the proper, natural mourning and remembrance owed by the living to the dead, and the unnatural fears of ghosts, graves and death which may interfere with the demonstration of that legitimate grief. Also introduced into the conflict are the scenes in the fifth stanza, which may distract the mourner from his duty to remember. The first threat to the progress of grief appears in the second stanza. After the maids and hinds bring their flowers in stanza one, Collins abruptly presents the possible menace of unquiet spirits in lines five and six: "No wailing Ghost shall dare appear / To vex with Shrieks this quiet Grove." The

reference to the "quiet Grove" also points the reader to the poet's use of sounds to accent further the contrast between the mourners' actions and the threatening spirits. The most obvious example is the juxtaposition of the harsh gutturals in "To vex with Shrieks" with the softer consonants (appropriate to "Soft Maids" and a "quiet Grove") in line four: "And rifle all the breathing Spring."

Collins stresses the conflict and its expected outcome most significantly, however, by countering the threatening ghost with his hope in the second half of stanza two that such threats cannot deter the mourners from paying their respects and showing their love: "But Shepherd Lads assemble here, / And melting Virgins own their Love" (ll. 7-8). The same pattern of threat and rebuttal maintains the emphasis on the conflict and its resolution in the third stanza. First the poet asserts that "No wither'd Witch shall here be seen, / No Goblins lead their nightly Crew" (ll. 9-10). Then, adopting his myth-making stance, he portrays the participation of other, kinder spirits in the graveside sadness: "The Female Fays shall haunt the Green, / And dress thy Grave with pearly Dew!" (ll. 11-12). Moreover, in these lines Collins strengthens the structural and thematic parallel between the conclusions of the second and third stanzas: the tears of the virgins ("melting") are matched by the drops of dew left by the fairies.

The Redbreast's attendance at the grave in the fourth stanza is an apt sequel to the conflict developed by the preceding two stanzas. Suggesting the conventional mourning by nature in the pastoral elegy, his "kindly" (l. 14) act directly parallels the human laying on of flowers in the first stanza: he comes "With hoary Moss, and gather'd Flow'rs, / To deck the Ground where thou art laid" (ll. 15-16).

Mourning nature provides further refutation to the threatening ghost, the witch and the goblins of stanzas two and three. Together with the Shepherds, Virgins and Fays, the Redbreast assures that any possible disruption by undesirable spirits is rendered unlikely; opposed to their fearsome appearance are the cumulative acts of love and remembrance performed by men and women, kindly spirits and nature itself.

With the fifth stanza Collins interposes a final threat to the natural process of grief and remembrance, and thus opens the conflict once more. For the first time in the poem, the grave itself is not the central scene: it is momentarily undercut by the poet's awareness that other scenes and activities will present themselves as time passes. First we see "howling Winds, and beating Rain, / In Tempests shake the sylvan Cell" (ll. 17-18), furnishing an appropriate parallel to the intrusive walls and shrieks in the second stanza. To such a "Cell," one imagines, the poet may retire for contemplation, only to be distracted by the elements. Second, we are shown men "midst the Chace on ev'ry Plain" (l. 19). In opposition to the scene of solitary contemplation suggested by the "Cell," the hunt suggests action and a crowd. The two scenes thus give brief coverage to the broad spectrum of locales and endeavors that might induce the mourner to forget. But Collins' grammatical structure in the stanza leaves little doubt, even as one reads the first three lines, that these threats (like those in the second and third stanzas) will be refuted. He subordinates both scenes in a periodic sentence which moves swiftly and surely to its main, emphatic clause in the final line. The poet assures Fidele that even

When howling Winds, and beating Rain,  
In Tempests shake the sylvan Cell:  
Or midst the Chace on ev'ry Plain,  
The tender Thought on thee shall dwell.

Collins continues this assurance in his opening of the last stanza by explaining further that both these scenes are lonely without Fidele, and that each will, rather than cause forgetfulness, restore her to memory: "Each lonely Scene shall thee restore" (l. 21). Also important in the line is the suggestion in the word "restore" that the dead may attain a degree of immortality through the memory, or "Thought," of the living. The poet's insistence in the "Song" on both the ceremonial and the emotional expressions of grief is thus here given its fullest significance. Through the ceremony, the tears, and ultimately the poem itself the dead may be remembered, and thus continue to "live."

Before going on, however, to discuss the conclusion of the poem it is important to look back for a moment at Collins' complex embodiment of this theme of restoration in the imagery and structure of the first stanza. There he couples references to rebirth in spring with the emphasis on death inherent in the strong final position of "Tomb" in line one. Indeed, their juxtaposition in that line emphasizes a paradox of life in the midst of death by which Collins accents the hope for restoration of the dead through memory: Fidele's is not a barren, but a "grassy Tomb."

The second and dominant image of the stanza, the flowers brought by the maids and hinds, continues to emphasize life despite death. And with this image, by the sheer number of references in the three remaining lines Collins overwhelms the single reference to the grave in the first line. They shall bring "Each op'ning Sweet"; the sweets are a

part of "earliest Bloom"; and in the final impression left by the stanza, the flowers represent "all the breathing Spring." Significant too is Collins' choice of "op'ning" and "breathing"--terms which themselves contradict the closure suggested by "Tomb," and the cessation of breathing inherent in death. Even the poet's use of rhyme in the stanza serves to highlight this triumph of spring over death: "Bloom" follows "Tomb" as a reminder of both the paradox and the hope of spring near a grave. Thus Collins prepares the way for the refutation of interfering spirits, and for the restoration to "life" mourning and remembrance, that is, elegy, may accomplish.

The final stanza, then, appropriately contains the poet's direct statement of this theme, now nearly devoid of imagery. Not only shall each scene restore Fidele to memory, but

For thee the Tear be duly shed:  
Belov'd, till Life could charm no more;  
And mourn'd, till Pity's self be dead.

In addition to the stress already noted on the restorative action of the scenes, Collins insists again that "the Tear be duly shed"--that the dead, in other words, be properly and naturally mourned. And with the last two lines the poet abstractly repeats the full cycle suggested by the imagery of the first stanza: loved in "Life," Fidele will consequently be mourned--and remembered--in death until "Pity" itself no longer exists. Or at least she will be mourned until the grief of those who loved her in life has been allowed its complete, unfettered expression and purgation. One assumes too, as I suggested earlier, that the poem itself is meant to serve as part of the general grief, and as an agent of remembrance.

Collins' "Song" contains, as we have seen, sufficient concrete

details to adumbrate a scene of mourning at a grave. But, primarily through his diction, the poet places equal emphasis (and finally, perhaps, more) on his scene as an emblem of abstract or universal grief as it should proceed.<sup>44</sup> The mourners, for example, are not given individual names or characteristics, but are referred to only in conventional, artificial pastoral terms: "Soft Maids, and Village Hinds," "Shepherd Lads," and "melting Virgins." Neither does Collins furnish particulars in his presentation of flowers, another important aspect of the graveside ritual. Instead he employs periphrasis, calling them "Each op'ning Sweet, of earliest Bloom," thereby emphasizing their general or universal rather than particular qualities.

The same tendency of the poem to push toward generality is clear when Collins actually names the deceased, Fidele, only once, and that in the first line. From there on he does not remind the reader of a specific object for grief, but writes his poem so that the progress of grief and remembrance becomes the central issue. Perhaps the most effective way to highlight Collins' method is to compare the "Song" with Johnson's much cited "personal" elegy, "On the Death of Dr. Robert Levett." Such a comparison forcefully reveals how little (if at all) Collins is interested in praise for the deceased as an individual. This thrust toward the universal level culminates, fittingly, in the closing stanza. Rather than of "melting Virgins," Collins now speaks even more abstractly of "the Tear," and only very vaguely personifies "Life" and "Pity's self." Here, then, the abstract level intimated in much of the rest of the poem takes over almost completely as the poet makes his final statement of his theme.

A clear picture of the poet's function emerges from the poem which

contributes significantly to an understanding of Collins' theory of poetic creation as we have seen it begin to develop. Indeed, his function is summed up by one word: Collins employs "shall" in every stanza, thereby adopting a tone that controls and pervades his scene and its themes in a rather complex way. First of all, in its simple assertiveness, the word nearly obviates (in this poem) the question of the hesitant Collins unsure of his calling and inspiration. As he uses the word here, it becomes part stage direction, part prophecy, part moral exhortation, and part hope. As stage direction it simply manages the scene, especially its latent action: "Soft Maids, and Village Hinds shall bring." As prophecy it invests the poet with a hint of the power to see, and thus to portray, future events. Stanzas five and six provide the best example of this.

Perhaps its most important function, though, is its use as moral exhortation. Collins is not only directing his scene and prophesying the future, but is also arguing to convince his auditors of the moral obligations a loved one's death places upon them. The moral force the poet thus achieves is particularly evident in his juxtaposition in stanzas two and three of his exclusion of fearsome spirits--"No wailing Ghost shall dare appear"--and his invitation to those who dutifully love and pity Fidele: "But Shepherd Lads assemble here, / And melting Virgins own their Love." This stance, particularly evident in these two stanzas, places him literally between the visible human sphere and the shadowy, intangible domain of supernatural beings. And his adoption of such a stance, maintained as it is by the assertive "shall," suggests his belief that a poet can command both realms. In this regard Collins' use of the word "charm" in the final stanza is also

significant. He employs it often in his poetry, as he does the word "magic."<sup>45</sup> Poetry, he seems to believe, is a "charm," or magic incantation to exclude undesirable shadows and to summon the good. Moreover, Collins has constructed each of his stanzas with parallelism and subordination so that "shall" becomes the grammatical fulcrum for nearly every verb, thus every action.

Collins' "Song" is, it should be clear, a neatly structured scene, joining concrete and abstract, men and spirits, pity and fear in a series of moral imperatives about death, grief, and remembrance. The poet confidently mediates between the visible and invisible realms, between human weakness and abstract ideals of behavior and thought. He is seemingly intent first, on embodying--visualizing--abstract and insubstantial as well as physically substantial realities; second, on eliciting a proper, pitying response from his reader; and finally, on making his poem itself a memorial capable of "restoring" the dead. Such are, it will be recalled, the central facets of Collins' admiration for Shakespeare's achievement in the creation of scenes that move the hearts and instruct the morals of men. As Collins sums it up in the "Epistle to Hanmer": "Thy Songs support me, and thy Morals heal!" Although the scene Collins portrays in thus following the footsteps of one of his masters is, like the myths in his previous poems, achieved very much in miniature, it yields another important clue to the poet's early concept of his role and his ability to fulfill it. If there is a hint of the Collins predicament, however, even in the poems where he assumes his stance with such unselfconscious poise, it is surely in this miniature scale; his myths are not parts of epics, nor his scenes of five-act plays. Interestingly, despite his early assurance, he does

not appear even to attempt the scale achieved by a Spenser or a Shakespeare. Nevertheless the underlying direction seems much the same.

We have not seen how Collins' largely confident, unselfconscious mode predominates in three early poems out of four. Yet we have also observed some nagging doubts about his adequacy for his role, first in the apologetic "Preface" to the "translated" Persian Eclogues, then more fully and explicitly in the "Epistle to Hanmer." The outlines of Collins' poetic theory and practice have begun to emerge from this juxtaposition of secure and insecure performances.<sup>46</sup> To sum up: the role of Collins' ideal poet is to mediate between the tangible, earth-bound realm and an abstract, universal or transcendent reality of thought and feeling. This poet, if he receives the necessary inspiration from the Muse (who inhabits that same transcendent sphere), accomplishes his mediation by visualizing the abstract for his reader. The ultimate objective of such visualizing is usually to provide moral instruction, accompanied by an emotional as well as intellectual response in the reader. Finally, Collins' poet is subject like any man to human limitation--hence the tension between ideal and real, aspiration and achievement, adequacy and inadequacy which makes the Muse's aid so necessary. For while the poet is only human, he must transcend himself for the sake of his higher calling.

Beginning to emerge also is how closely Collins' program for poetry resembles that of Spenser and Milton. But the dilemma facing the poet who seeks to write divinely inspired poetry mediating between heaven and earth has deepened significantly since their time. Collins

does not even seem to attempt to mediate literally, as they did, between a Christian heaven and a postlapsarian world, although there were poets in his time who did try, with varying degrees of success.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the often poised Collins of the early poems is shortlived. His awareness of his dilemma soon increases substantially, as do both his consciousness of his relationship to Spenser and Milton and, most important, his dependence on the invocative stance. The close intertwining of these elements and their profound effects in Collins' subsequent poetry provide the focus for chapters IV and V.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The discovery by J.S. Cunningham of several incomplete drafts of poems by Collins, printed by Cunningham in William Collins: Drafts and Fragments of Verse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), though important, does not substantially enlarge the canon.

<sup>2</sup>Carver, pp. 166-72, disagrees about dating the end of Collins' writing career, but I find his argument unconvincing. His discussion hinges on three works--"Written on a Paper which Contained a Piece of Bride Cake given to the Author by a Lady," and two fragments in Cunningham--which cannot be conclusively dated or, as with the "Bride Cake" poem, firmly attributed to Collins. See Lonsdale, p. 406, and Cunningham, nos. 1 and 2.

<sup>3</sup>"On Gray, Swift, Young, Collins & c.," p. 154. Garrod, in his influential study, perpetuated Hazlitt's judgement when he concluded his own analysis of Collins' career by quoting Hazlitt's entire commentary as the best general statement available, pp. 120-23. See also Ainsworth, p. 114; A.D. McKillop, English Literature from Dryden to Burns (New York: Appleton, 1948), p. 220; and Sigworth, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup>Ainsworth, for example, sees a clear progression or development of Collins' poetic powers from what he calls the conventional and imperfect early poems to the perfected odes, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>Selected Poems, p. 122. Cf. comments similar to Johnston's by Ainsworth, p. 215, Sigworth, p. 88, and Carver, pp. 17-18.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>That Collins aspired higher than he may have climbed has been a commonplace of Collins criticism since Johnson said of him, "...the grandeur of wildness and the novelty of extravagance were always desired by him, but were not always attained." See Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1905), III, 337. However the exact nature of that aspiration has never been studied.

<sup>8</sup>Any discussion of chronological patterns in Collins' works needs to take into account some uncertainties about dates of composition. I do not deal with these individually, but have been careful to avoid minute arguments about year to year changes, concentrating instead on the larger and, I think, most significant patterns in his career. Usually publication dates give a sufficiently accurate picture, and are followed here unless otherwise noted.

<sup>9</sup>The title needs clarification, for the poem runs to only eight lines. As Lonsdale notes, Collins undoubtedly "meant simply 'A small poem,' the second meaning given by Johnson" (p. 365). In all likelihood the name has its origin in the Petrarchan tradition which also nourishes the form and content of the poem throughout.

<sup>10</sup>Sigworth, pp. 87-9, makes the only attempt to understand details of the poem; he mentions the paradox of smile and tear, and comments on the appropriateness of the Venus myth in the second stanza. But he fails to draw these details together to discuss the coherence of the poem as a whole. An accurate estimate of Collins' early ability requires such a discussion.

<sup>11</sup>All references to Collins' works are to the Oxford Standard Authors edition, Poems of William Collins, ed. Christopher Stone and Austin Lane Poole, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937), hereafter cited in text. "Sonnet" appears on p. 206. Despite Lonsdale's indispensable annotations, the Stone-Poole edition remains the best for the poems themselves because they are printed as they first appeared or as Collins revised them, without the extensive "modernization" indulged in by Lonsdale. Cunningham's Drafts and Fragments should of course be consulted as well. A definitive edition is still very much needed for Collins--a text combining and furthering the virtues of the Stone-Poole and Lonsdale editions, while providing a fully accurate, unmodernized text and some resolution of nagging problems of attribution. The canon has never really been firmly established. There are actually two categories of doubtful Collins poems: first, those which have long been viewed as extremely doubtful (see Lonsdale, pp. 559-66), and thus cannot merit serious consideration here; second, two poems ("Written on a Paper which Contained a Piece of Bride Cake," and "Song. The Sentiments borrowed from Shakespeare") about which, though they have been traditionally accepted into the canon, there has been some question, particularly in this century. See Lonsdale's headnotes for the problems with each. Because his is the most thorough, balanced documentation available at present on the current status of the poems, I have followed Lonsdale in determining the canon. However, though he, while noting unresolved questions about the above-mentioned poems, somewhat unaccountably includes them with definite attributions, I have chosen to discuss them briefly in an appendix.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Milton's worry over whether an epic is possible in a cold climate: Paradise Lost, IX, 44-5. As is obvious to the most casual reader of the Eclogues, whatever misgivings Collins has about English versus Persian poetry the poems themselves reflect his sustained debt to Pope's Pastorals and probably, as Sigworth suggests, p. 94, to the tradition of Renaissance pastoral generally, perhaps specifically to Spenser's Calendar. See Lonsdale for the numerous echoes of Pope.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, the unqualified commendation by J. Grainger, "Review of 'Oriental Eclogues'" (the title had been altered for the second edition), The Monthly Review, 16 (1757), 486-89. Oliver Goldsmith, speaking in 1759 of the decay of learning, angrily refers to such abuses as those heaped on the "neglected author of the Persian

eclogues, which, however inaccurate, excel any in our language...."

See An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe in Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Arthur Friedman (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), I, 315. Also see Goldsmith's somewhat more detailed comments, V, 324. Lonsdale's survey, pp. 367-68, is most helpful on the extent of the Eclogues' fame in the eighteenth century. Collins himself, however, was displeased with them in later years. See Carver, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>"Collins Reconsidered," p. 100.

<sup>15</sup>Life, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>Only Edmund Blunden, in the introductory study for his edition, The Poems of William Collins (London: Chiswick Press, 1929), p. 162, has even vaguely seen the Eclogues as foreshadowing Collins' later work.

<sup>17</sup>There is general agreement that a moral or didactic theme is central to pastoral poetry at least from Virgil into the seventeenth century. See, for example, discussions of the tradition in such standard studies as those of W.W. Greg, Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama (London: A.H. Bullen, 1906), and Hallett Smith, Elizabethan Poetry (1952; rpt. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1968), especially pp. 1-63. J.E. Conleton, in Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England 1684-1798 (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1952), still the best full-length study of the genre during the eighteenth century, agrees; however, he notes that after controversy developed in the later seventeenth century over the provenance of pastoral, conventional elements (including the moral emphasis) gradually succumbed to attack and died out. Seeing Pope as the last great practitioner of traditional pastoral, Conleton regards Collins' use of an exotic setting as proof that he should be classed with "Romantics" who rebelled against the conventional mode. See Conleton, pp. 126-7, and R.F. Jones, "Eclogue Types in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century," JEGP, 24 (1925), 33-60, who argues similarly. Certainly the conventional moral focus of pastoral poems--the century, incidentally, does not seem to have made any significant distinction between "pastoral" and "eclogue" (see Johnson's definition, and Conleton, pp. 6-10)--up to and including Pope would have conditioned Collins' audience to expect a moral, even in an exotic setting. My own position on Collins' place in the tradition is that such conventional elements as the moral theme and the ancient conflict between country and court, not to mention his stylistic and formal indebtedness to Pope's own Pastorals, far outweigh the exotic setting in his Eclogues, allying them more to the conventional than the experimental in the genre. If Collins is to be proven a conscious rebel, the Eclogues seem a poor source for evidence.

<sup>18</sup>For l. 8, the 1757 edition has: "Nor praise, but such as Truth bestow'd, desir'd." See Stone-Poole, p. 312, for this and all other such variants as recorded below.

<sup>19</sup>See the discussion of this facet of pastoral tradition in the introductory material, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, ed.

E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, Vol. I of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, gen. ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 15-20, 42-7.

<sup>20</sup>The 1757 edition has "Immortal Truth," l. 46. The change is significant for the poet's myth-making role here.

<sup>21</sup>There is an obvious inconsistency in this myth of the Virtues' birth. Truth is a goddess in lines 7 and 8, yet should be a god to wed Wisdom (another goddess). Such problems exist in Collins' poetry, and it is sometimes best not to attempt explaining them away. For an over-ingenious attempt to do just that for some of Collins' later poems, see Michael Gearin-Tosh, "Obscurity in William Collins," Studia Neophilologica, 42 (1970), 25-32. I shall have more to say subsequently on the subject of obscurity resulting from Collins' increasing sense of his dilemma.

<sup>22</sup>For ll. 53-4, 1757 has: "Come thou whose thoughts as limpid springs are clear, / To lead the train, sweet Modesty appear." It is fitting that in the later version, Collins has added particular emphasis to the poet's desire for a visible return--he implores Modesty to "appear."

<sup>23</sup>In this sense Collins would seem to warrant firm placement on the Augustan humanist side of the "pre-romantic" question, though one ought not argue perhaps his belief in human limitation as precisely Christian. Most often Collins suggests man's fallen condition through Classical myth and in his own language. Nevertheless, certain biographical details, along with his admiration for Spenser and Milton, may encourage us to see his overall view of man both in and outside his poems as essentially parallel to their Christian view, despite the absence of their more explicitly Christian terminology. I shall discuss this fully in chapter IV. For my understanding of the humanist ethos I am indebted particularly to Paul Fussell, The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965).

<sup>24</sup>Numerous critics have noted the pervading moral tone of the first eclogue. See, for example, John Langhorne, "Observations on the Oriental Eclogues and Odes" (1765; rpt. in the Aldine Edition, 1853), pp. 107-8; and Bronson, Poems, p. lviii. But none seems to have recognized the centrality of the poet's moral thrust in the second, third and fourth. Only Garrod comes close when he calls those parts of the Eclogues "nearest to interesting...which emphasize the duty of poetry (even amatory poetry) to moralize..." (pp. 15-16). I, however, find the moral function of the poet to be a governing force throughout these poems, not merely in parts. See also Bronson, p. xlii.

<sup>25</sup>For "Desart-Waste," 1757 has "boundless waste."

<sup>26</sup>For l. 83, 1757 has "O! let me teach my heart to lose its fears."

<sup>27</sup>Cf. the Renaissance tradition, especially in painting, of Venus' chastening of Mars. Collins, with his extensive knowledge of an interest

in the Renaissance (one of his unfinished projects was a History of the Revival of Learning; see Johnson, Lives of the Poets, III, 335, and Lonsdale, p. 392, n. 35), may well have intended such a comparison. It is certainly appropriate to the moral theme of his poem. For the allegorical aspects of the Venus-Mars tradition, see Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1968), pp. 86 ff.

<sup>28</sup> I base my reading on the second edition of the poem (1744), in which Collins made several changes; however its basic theme and structure remain nearly constant in both editions. See n. 29 below for a key exception. Poole includes both the 1743 and 1744 editions, reprinting the latter as Appendix I. One assumes the substantive changes of the later edition best reflect Collins' final intentions for the poem. For the altered passages see Lonsdale, pp. 389-400.

<sup>29</sup> One must, it seems to me, agree in part with Johnston's estimate of Collins' exaggeration of previous neglect of Shakespeare, as well as his concomitant overstatement of Hanmer's restoration and his often careless chronology: "He invents the situation of Shakespeare neglected and despised by all but Hanmer, not, presumably, out of ignorance, but as a compliment to the editor and as a neat structure for his poem" (p. 131). Collins' revisions for the 1744 edition demonstrate that Hanmer himself is not of central importance to him--in it the references to Hanmer are reduced. Cf. Lonsdale, p. 388. The theory that the historical distortions prove Collins careless or ignorant is a commonplace that itself distorts the poem.

<sup>30</sup> One should at this point note the overall pattern of Collins' literary relationships up to and including the "Epistle to Hanmer," particularly with regard to the subsequent dominance of Spenser and Milton. Collins' own probable perspective will thus be clearer as it develops during this period. As will shortly become apparent, the qualities Collins admires in Shakespeare are not radically unlike those he later seeks to emulate in Spenser and Milton. All three together actually form the nucleus of his poetic hero worship. But given the centrality of the invocative stance in Collins' work, Spenser and Milton finally assume a more important place both for him and for us due to their own dependence on that stance. His indebtedness to Pope continues, of course, in the epistle form and couplet style, although in the second edition of the "Epistle" Collins seems to have made a careful effort to diminish verbal echoes of Pope. See Lonsdale's notes for these attempts and the parallels. Also, Collins' silent emulation of Pope needs to be distinguished from his later declared, fervent wish for kinship with his other masters.

<sup>31</sup> Poems, p. xliii. He goes even further in his displeasure, saying the "Epistle" is not even poetry, and that "Collins had attempted the battle of Pope without Pope's weapons" (pp. lviii-lix).

<sup>32</sup> Poor Collins, p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> William Collins, pp. 95-6.

<sup>34</sup>"Collins Reconsidered," p. 94.

<sup>35</sup>William Collins, pp. 97-8.

<sup>36</sup>On the broadest dimensions of eighteenth-century poets' obsession with great poets of the past, see Bate, The Burden of the Past. Bate's thesis is that the problem was a psychological one, self-imposed. He summarizes it this way: the poet's predicament is "his nakedness and embarrassment (with the inevitable temptations to paralysis or routine imitation, to retrenchment or mere fitful rebellion) before the amplitude of what two thousand years or more of art had already been able to achieve" (p. 95). Bate argues that the mid-eighteenth century is the prime locus for this theme, and that poets since then have remained under its spell. I would add only that the search for sources of poetic inspiration is a vital facet of this dilemma, while agreeing with Bate that we must not oversimplify by merely listing instances of, for example, Wordsworth's identification with Milton, but that we should seek the nuances such relationships suggest about precisely why one poet wishes to emulate another. See Bate's conclusion, pp. 130-34. To make just such a search is a basic purpose of the present study. Donald Greene, "The Burdensome Past," SBT, 14 (1972), 81-90, and "Rejoinder to W.J. Bate and Donald M. Hassler," SBT, 14 (1973), 257-65, has rather unsparingly and, I think, with some distortion, attacked Bate's thesis. Greene objects that poets have always said they felt inadequate or invoked a Muse's aid, but have nevertheless then gone on to write great poetry; nor does Greene see any proof that the problem is more severe in the eighteenth century. To answer such objections one need only note the significant increase in self-consciousness and self-explanation in the work of such poets as Gray, Blake, Wordsworth and Keats, where whole poems are devoted to the dilemma, suggesting that its unsettling effects are far greater for late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century poets than was typical in the past. The poet and poetry itself become the central focus of so much of the poetry by great and less great poets alike after 1740 (into our own time) that one wonders how Greene can dismiss Bate's thesis so quickly and totally. In addition to Greene's comments, see Bate, "A Reply to Donald Greene," SBT, 14 (1972-3), 163-68, and Donald M. Hassler, "The Greening of Literary Studies," SBT, 14 (1972-3), 169-70.

<sup>37</sup>John R. Crider, "Structure and Effect in Collins's Progress Poems," SP, 60 (1963), 57-72, has pointed out Collins' use of this theme not just in the "Epistle to Hanmer" but in several of his other poems as well. For a suggestive general account of the progress convention, see Williams, Pope's Dunciad, pp. 42-8.

<sup>38</sup>The pun on "Stage" is typical of a cleverness in Collins that is not usually granted him. Cf. puns on "feet" in later poems.

<sup>39</sup>The notion that the poet should move his reader's emotions is put forth with renewed vigor in the eighteenth century as part of developing theories of the "sublime" in nature and art. This affective theory is, indeed, one of the primary means by which the sublime is defined. See Samuel H. Monk's indispensable study, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (1935; rpt. Ann

Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960). The theory was not, however, invented by eighteenth-century aestheticians of the sublime, nor was it strictly the result of Longinus' rise as the ultimate authority on the sublime. As Monk shows, the affective theory had been an important aspect of treatises on rhetoric since Aristotle. See especially pp. 11 ff. It is actually a commonplace, as is the concomitant belief that visual representation is essential in putting the theory into practice. See also the important study by David B. Morris, The Religious Sublime: Christian Poetry and Critical Tradition in 18th-Century England (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1972), particularly the final chapter, pp. 197-232. Though neither Monk nor Morris discusses Collins directly, each helps provide the necessary context of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory within which he should be read. Cf. Martin Price, "The Sublime Poem: Pictures and Powers," Yale Review, 58 (1969), 194-213. What is significant in Collins' adherence to such commonplace theories, of course, is his stress on the invocative stance and all this implies. For pertinent changes in the commonplaces, including increased emphasis on the poet's individual vision and his duty to move the passions, see Morris, pp. 48-78, and 155-96.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dryden's similar echo (and theme) in "To Congreve," especially ll. 45-6. Collins' allusion appears, however, to be directly to Milton; his wording is much closer to Milton's than is Dryden's.

<sup>41</sup> For helpful discussions of the tradition of literary pictorialism in general, including the eighteenth century, see Rensselaer W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," Art Bulletin, 22 (1940), 197-269, and William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York: Knopf, 1957), pp. 252-82. The best study of pictorialism that deals specifically with the eighteenth century, with a perceptive chapter on Collins, is Hagstrum, The Sister Arts. Speaking of Collins' descriptions of external nature, but with relevance to the entire canon, Hagstrum argues, "Collins is not essentially a landscapist...his colors are seldom natural but usually allegorical and moral" (p. 278), and demonstrates Collins' allegiance to allegorical rather than landscape painters. So many critics have noted Collins' emphasis on vision and visualizing (including personification) that it would be pointless to cite them individually here. However of special help to anyone working on the mid and late eighteenth-century poets are: Bertrand H. Bronson, "Personification Reconsidered," ELH, 14 (1947), 163-77; Earl R. Wasserman, "The Inherent Values of Eighteenth-Century Personification," PMLA, 65 (1950), 435-63; Chester F. Chapin, Personification in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry (New York: King's Crown Press, 1955); and Spacks, Poetry of Vision. Both Chapin and Spacks devote useful chapters to Collins.

<sup>42</sup> For the ethical and aesthetic values inherent in this structure, see Maynard Mack's discussion of its history in both classical and Christian literature in his "Introduction" to Pope's Essay on Man, Vol. III, Twick. Ed. (1950), pp. 1 ff. Also see the discussion of the pattern by Audra and Williams as it figures in the Essay on Criticism, a poem similar in some of its preoccupations to Collins' "Epistle," Twick. Ed., I, 227-32.

<sup>43</sup>Probably Collins' title would more accurately introduce the essence of his poem were it something like, "A Song Suggested by Shakespeare's Cymbeline." Sigworth, for example, argues the poem is not at all faithful to the spirit of Shakespeare's scene, p. 98. For a survey of eighteenth-century attitudes toward and imitation of Elizabethan poets, including discussion of Collins' place in the shifting notions of the time, see Earl Wasserman, Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1947). Wasserman's comments on imitations of Shakespeare's lyrics (which were common) are especially helpful. See pp. 187 ff. His thesis is that not until very late in the century did poets attempt any truly accurate reproduction of the "style and manner of the Elizabethan lyric" (p. 191). Overall, other critical comment on the poem gives it praise equal to that accorded the earlier "Sonnet." Johnson liked it well enough to append it to Cymbeline in his 1765 edition of Shakespeare. Despite such praise, only Johnston has provided anything close to a detailed reading of the work, pp. 147-8.

<sup>44</sup>Several scholars have reappraised the "poetic diction" of the eighteenth century, attempting, contrary to nineteenth-century prejudices, to show that its use had definite philosophical and aesthetic principles behind it more often than not. Perhaps most important, especially in showing the poets' discriminating use of the diction as an expression of the universal and general, is Geoffrey Tillotson, Augustan Poetic Diction (1961; rpt. London: The Athlone Press, 1964). See also C.V. Deane, Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Nature Poetry (Oxford: Kemp Hall Press, Ltd., 1935); John Arthos, The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1949); and Paul Fussell, Theory of Prosody in Eighteenth-Century England (New London: Connecticut College Monograph, 1954).

<sup>45</sup>For a listing of the exact locations, showing the frequency of Collins' use of these and related words, see A Concordance of the Poetical Works of William Collins, compiled by Bradford A. Booth and Claude E. Jones (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1939).

<sup>46</sup>Although as I have explained elsewhere there is no definitive agreement on the inclusion of several questionable poems in the Collins canon, those most often linked to him seem to participate in the general patterns and preoccupations of his work. See appendix. The same holds true, as Cunningham has shown, of the Drafts and Fragments, several of which were early versions for poems published in Collins' lifetime. Lonsdale, p. 523, argues that they date from Collins' early period; however, due to their fragmentary nature I shall not attempt close analyses of them in this study.

<sup>47</sup>Morris, The Religious Sublime, deals with them comprehensively.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DILEMMA:

#### ODES ON SEVERAL DESCRIPTIVE AND ALLEGORIC SUBJECTS (1746)

In Chapter X of Rasselas Johnson has Imlac deliver to the young prince a "Dissertation Upon Poetry" in which he describes the qualities and labors required of a true poet. When Imlac has listed seemingly endless attributes, and begins to feel the onset of "the enthusiastic fit," Rasselas proclaims "Enough! Thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet."<sup>1</sup> A similar despair resides at the center of Collins' dilemma, unrelieved by Johnson's comic tone. Yet Collins' burden is even greater than Imlac's, for he seeks to write a species of divinely inspired poetry--a requirement Imlac neglects to mention--comparable to the achievement of the greatest poets. Moreover, he seeks to do so in an increasingly secular time when he finds it difficult to believe such inspiration and such poetry are still possible.<sup>2</sup> Collins subscribes to a poetic theory which had long been, as I tried to show in chapter I, on the defensive, particularly from the Renaissance onward.

Nowhere in Collins' work is this dilemma more central and more deeply felt than in the poems for which he has long been best known, the Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects of 1746.<sup>3</sup> They have also long been recognized as central to his work not only chronologically, but thematically and stylistically as well.<sup>4</sup> But such recognition has often been accompanied by either a stated or implied

view that these poems represent a sharp turning point in Collins' career, and that only in them does he find his true voice.<sup>5</sup> Their self-consciousness, their focus on literary topics, and their emphasis on emotion and imagination as keys to successful poetry have all been so widely pointed out as to become commonplaces in Collins criticism, not to mention indispensable to anyone seeking to approach Collins solely as a pre-Romantic.

Such centrality ought certainly to be granted the Odes, and such aspects of them ought to be underlined. But taken alone as the essential Collins, they can cause serious distortions in our understanding of the poet's work. Too seldom have they been viewed in the necessary context of the entire canon. Seen thus they come into focus not as radical, "Romantic" departures from the poet's early work, but rather as continuations and deepenings of the theory and practice, content and form already emergent in those early poems. If we are to distinguish the Odes from Collins' earlier work, it should be by recognizing in them a greater sense of urgency--no less than an obsession--about his dilemma, with the concomitant rise to dominance of the invocative stance, and the arrival of Spenser and Milton as his chief idols.

## I

It is profitable to pause over the title page of the original 1746 edition of the Odes before proceeding to the poems.<sup>6</sup> From it one may infer much about the continuity of Collins' poetic theory, his desired literary ancestry, and even the tone and structure of the poems which follow. They are to be, we learn, "Descriptive and Allegoric." With "Descriptive" Collins maintains his earlier emphasis on the poet's

visualizing function; with "Allegoric" he makes immediately clear his desire to place himself in the Spenserian tradition. In these odes, we must expect, Collins will attempt more explicitly than ever before in his career to fulfill the role he was beginning to establish for himself from his earliest works: to make visible and compelling to his sensual-bound audience a transcendent, abstract realm of pure emotion, virtue or idea through his mid eighteenth-century version of the myth-making, allegorical imagination, and most important, through the invocative stance.

Lastly, and equally important, we learn from the epigraph on the title page of Collins' kinship with the invocative stance of Pindar-- a stance, we recall, which reflects the earlier poet's obsession with his need for the Muse's aid, and which prompts him to make the call for that aid central to his poetry rather than a prelude to it (from Pindar's ninth Olympian Ode, the epigraph translates, "Would I could find me words as I move onward as a bearer of good gifts in the Muses' car; would I might be attended by Daring and by all-embracing Power!" [ll. 80-3, Loeb ed.]). Indeed, Collins' choice of the ode form itself as his dominant genre from 1746 on surely reflects more than a mere following of fashion. Rather, it allies him to Pindar's pleas for the Muse's favor, for as Carol Maddison has shown, the ode was traditionally a statement of intense supplication, and always had "something of the priest-prophet about it."<sup>7</sup>

The invocative stance pervades the Odes from the start. Here we see a Collins whose early doubts about his adequacy for the role he set for himself have come to dominate his writing: poetry for him now is synonymous with invocation. His anguished search for inspiration

leads to self-consciousness and self-doubt which all but cripple the poet in his attempt to achieve that response from the Muse which was, for Spenser and Milton before him, a poem's successful, non-invocative completion.

The stance controls the first poem in the volume, the "Ode to Pity," from the poet's opening call to his final uncertain, if hopeful and determined, plea. He begins in the first stanza to establish his role:

O Thou, the Friend of Man assign'd,  
With balmy Hands his Wounds to bind,  
And charm his frantic Woe:  
When first Distress with Dagger keen  
Broke forth to waste his destin'd Scene,  
His wild unsated Foe!  
(ll. 1-6)

The poet's intense invocative stance is prominent in his initial address, "O Thou," which suggests immediately Collins' sense of distance from the Goddess Pity--She is not "you," but "Thou." The address is also an emotional one, which places both the poem as a whole and the mood of the poet in the fervent, prayer-like tone he maintains throughout. Collins thereupon broadens the framework of his prayer when he refers to Pity as the "Friend of Man." It is apparent that his invocation has for its goal the aid not simply of poets, but of all mankind; his plea is for moral as well as aesthetic aid and healing.

This wider moral context is sustained in the following line, where Collins' description of the Goddess may suggest a pitying Christ's role as man's physician.<sup>8</sup> Then the final lines of the stanza, by recalling man's fall and ejection from Paradise, clearly "his destin'd Scene,"<sup>9</sup> account in part, of course, for the poet's own present distress. Coming as they do in the midst of his plea for Pity's healing powers,

they also suggest his role as one who may, through his poetry, contribute at least to a partial restoration of man's prelapsarian state.

In the second stanza the poet invokes Euripides and the tragic miseries he portrayed, and then entreats the Goddess Pity to

Receive my humble Rite:  
Long, Pity, let the Nations view  
Thy sky-worn Robes of tend'rest Blue,  
And Eyes of dewy Light!  
(ll. 9-12)

Collins chooses his words carefully here. His maintenance of the fervent tone of the first stanza is obvious. But the poet's stance is further indicated when he refers to his poem as his "humble Rite." Again he reminds us of his distance from the Goddess. Also, the prayer-like tone of the entire poem is underlined by Collins' use of the word "Rite" itself. Too, "Rite" accents the magic nature of the powers of both the Goddess and the successful poet; in the first stanza Pity is "assign'd" to "charm" man's woe, and in the second Euripides is a "magic Name" (l. 7). Thus Collins in effect offers Euripides as a talisman capable of producing miraculous results not only in his auditors, but in the poet who cites him as well. Finally, Collins' recognition of his own necessary humility in the role he seeks to play suggests his identification with weak, limited man, who must approach heavenly entities humbly if at all.

The broad moral and aesthetic context within which Collins writes his poem is indicated once again by his plea to Pity to "let the Nations view" Her robes and eyes. The poet seeks to mediate not just for himself but for all men and all nations. And, significantly, he seeks to do so by inducing Pity to make Herself visible ("view") to men. Then, in the following line, Collins attaches cosmic, indeed heavenly,

implications to the Goddess--and begins to adumbrate Her appearance-- by describing Her robes as "sky-worn"; the phrase also preserves the poet's sense of his distance from the Goddess. That Pity is indeed regarded by the poet as divine in origin is further demonstrated by his use of the color blue which, among other things, connotes heaven, the abode of gods and immensity.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the fact that Her robes are of "tend'rest Blue" is appropriate for a Goddess whose quality is the tender emotion of compassion. The reference to "Light" in the last line of the stanza also contributes to the reader's sense of Pity's origin with divine powers, especially in view of Collins' emulation of Milton.

Collins' introduction of Euripides in this stanza has other important implications as well. As Euripides was able to articulate the "Griefs" of humankind in his tragedies, so Collins prays to Pity for the ability to translate the abstract world for man: "By all the Griefs his Thought could frame, / Receive my humble Rite" (ll. 8-9). In addition, however, Collins indicates, by his initial invocation of Euripides "By Pella's Bard, a magic Name," the manner in which the poets (and poems) of the past serve to mediate between present poets and the eternal abstractions about which it is always the poet's duty to write. Moreover, he seems to indicate that a great writer like Euripides not only moves his audience (the modern poet himself in this case) but can move Pity as well--can thus inspire the abstract virtue in men. Hence the great poets of the past are those who, like priests, make men aware of and open to the abstract realm of pure virtue, idea or emotion and, at the same time, make that transcendent realm available, visible, to man's limited understanding and feeling. And this becomes Collins' own

goal as well, though in so much of his poetry he speaks only of his hope of achieving it.

In the third stanza Collins realizes that there is another poet from the past who is also a successful mediator, and who is neither chronologically nor geographically as far distant as Euripides. Thomas Otway's success in moving Pity to respond through his tragic creations is contrasted in the closing three lines of the stanza with the now "Deserted Stream, and mute" (l. 15) which flows through Euripides' Greece. The river near the village of Otway's birth "too has heard thy [Pity's] Strains, / And Echo, 'midst my native Plains, / Been sooth'd by Pity's Lute" (ll. 16-18). The choice of the lute is significant here, for as a traditional instrument of divine praise it intimates the ultimate proximity of Pity to heaven in Collins' mythic scheme. Collins is, of course, considering Otway, as he had Euripides, as an additional mediator between himself and the divine essence of Pity. Not only does Collins himself attempt to adopt the role of mediator in the poem, but he also sees these poets of the past in the same light; their practice of poetry is his model, their success is his inducement and his hope. All three are priests serving the same aesthetic and moral Goddess, but Euripides and Otway have proved their efficacy, while Collins has yet to prove his. Indeed, before long that very success of past poets becomes more a burden than a blessing to the unproven Collins.

That he views Otway as a divinely inspired poet whose mediation has been successful Collins makes clear in the fourth stanza. The broadly prayer-like tone of the poem is crucial in this clarification as it continues to widen the frame Collins establishes in the earlier

stanzas. Pity's influence is infused into the infant Otway in the manner of a religious annunciation: "There first the Wren thy Myrtles shed / On gentlest Otway's infant Head, / To Him thy Cell was shown..." (ll. 19-21). The wren is appropriately chosen, for its prowess as a songbird links it to the poet's utterance as song, and the verb "shed" may be especially important for its intimation of the "shedding" of grace from heaven on man, an intimation made more forceful in the last line of the stanza.<sup>11</sup> The following passage from Romans 5: 3-5 is perhaps not the direct subject of Collins' allusion in these lines, but it does suggest the notion of visitation by the Holy Spirit which seems to underlie them: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Of course, the lines also suggest the poet-prophet link in their parallel to the special sight granted men like Moses and Tiresias ("thy Cell was shown").

The stanza then concludes with Otway's "soft Notes" (l. 23) answered by those of Pity's "Turtles" (l. 24); surely the religious texture of the poem thus far and Collins' view of poetry as invocation and prayer encourage the reader to wonder at least whether Collins means these doves to be analogous to the Dove as the Holy Ghost, the great inspirer of Pity in Western myth. And certainly, the high seriousness of Collins' overall tone as he prays supports such an analogy as an appropriate expression of how profoundly he regards his calling, and the necessity for supernatural inspiration it thrusts upon him. It is best, however, to postpone full discussion of this

pivotal issue until we come to Collins' central statement of his theory in the "Ode on the Poetical Character."

The poem's muted religious motif is expanded with the introduction of Pity's "Cell," where Otway is introduced to Her notes and they are mixed with his own "soft Notes unspoil'd by Art" (l. 23). Collins' introduction of the "Cell" is part of the myth-making procedure he so pervasively employs. The "Cell" is a kind of mythic center of Pity's poetic and moral essence. It is not a location so much as the archetypal holy place where the divinity is solicited and received. Too, the centrality of vision in Collins' concept of the poet's role asserts itself once more: Pity's "Cell was shown."

Collins again suggests a religious context for his invocation when, in the fifth stanza, the "Cell" becomes Pity's "Temple" through the assistance now of Fancy's power, coupled with his own thought: "Pity, come, by Fancy's Aid, / Ev'n now my Thoughts, relenting Maid, / Thy Temple's Pride design" (ll. 25-7). That the poet sees Her now, however briefly, as a "relenting Maid" presages an element of confidence and success for his invocation; as the poem proceeds, though, this hint of achievement pales beside the poet's continued pleading and tenacious but obviously unrequited hope. Even in so minute an instance the pattern of Collins' theory and practice throughout his career thus asserts itself as he vacillates between moments of confidence and ever-present doubts.

This passage is a particularly vital one in that it clearly reveals Collins himself as mediator; he has completed that part of his invocation where he cites mediating poets of the past who succeeded in obtaining through their poetry both a response from their audience and

from the Goddess Pity. Collins now attempts to build upon the past, seeking directly the abstraction which made both distant and near past similar in nature. Again, he adopts the tone of fervent invocation present in the first two stanzas, and asks Pity to come to him. And that very tone underlines how insufficient the Goddess' "relenting" seems to him, yet also how determined he becomes with the slightest encouragement.

The crucial phrase is "by Fancy's Aid." Pity is that elevated, divine abstraction whose response the poet ultimately seeks; but She is not a poetic faculty per se, that is, She cannot be immediately responsive to the invocation. She does respond, however, through Fancy, and Fancy, responsive to the poet's thought, produces through invocation the Temple of Pity, the place of worship of this ultimate abstraction. This is the heart of Collins' myth. Of the origin of Fancy, in Collins' theory at any rate, I shall have more to say subsequently. Suffice it to say here that the poet, through his articulation of thought and feeling, aided now by Fancy, may create the structure within which earth-bound man may view, and be influenced for the good by, the heavenly essence of the emotion Pity, Who will willingly (he hopes) come to Her own Temple.

Of this Temple or Shrine Collins writes: "Its Southern Site, its Truth compleat / Shall raise a wild Enthusiast Heat, / In all who view the Shrine" (ll. 28-30). The "Southern Site" refers perhaps to the Mediterranean area, which would suggest to Collins' contemporaries increased imaginative powers;<sup>12</sup> it may also refer simply to the south of England, where Otway received Pity's powers in the past. In any case, the site would be appropriate as a center of poetic inspiration,

or "Enthusiast Heat." The insistence of the poet on the "Truth" of his creation is indicative perhaps of Collins' usual moral as well as aesthetic focus, while "compleat" may suggest the absolute need in his scheme for a union of human endeavor with divine or supernatural imagination before any lasting poetry can be created. Finally, the power of the emotion that is to be elicited is clearly revealed by the "wild Enthusiast Heat."

In stanza six Collins renews the allusion to the weak, degenerate human condition which figures prominently in the first stanza. Upon the walls of the Shrine, paintings (reflecting again Collins' belief in the Sister Arts and vision as central to the poet's role as embodiment of the abstract realm) will represent "How Chance, or hard involving Fate, / O'er mortal Bliss prevail" (ll. 32-3). The Muse of Tragedy will prompt the Goddess "Picture's" hand thus to record "each disastrous Tale" (l. 36). Man, then, is ruled by harsh forces and disasters. It is this state which the poet, through his excitation of Pity, exists to improve.

In the final stanza Collins once more pleads for Pity's favor, that he may be allowed to dwell with Her and "In Dreams of Passion melt away" (l. 38). That he asks to be "Allow'd" (l. 39) reemphasizes his humility and recognition of his own limitations. The reciprocal relationship noted earlier between the poet and Goddess is repeated here. The poet asks for Pity's aid in the process of articulating his vision of the human condition; She responds through the "Dreams of Passion," that is, Fancy, which can teach him to write a better poem. The final aim is to gain sufficient poetic skill from his proximity to the abstract world to make Pity "again delight / To hear a British

Shell!" (ll. 41-2). So it is that he dedicates himself: he will repeat the ritual of his invocation until the inspiration comes.

In other words, the poet who dwells with Pity does so in order to make Pity responsive both to man and poet.<sup>13</sup> Pity's influence will then presumably be felt among men generally, thus bringing them all closer to the transcendent or superhuman realm of pure abstraction, pure virtue. This conclusion recalls Collins' early obsecration to Pity to "let the Nations view" Her. He maintains that broad moral and social context throughout the poem; neither the poet nor the reader ever loses sight of the ultimate role of the poet as an instructor of morals and a mediator between all men and the favor of heavenly entities.

The anguished tone of pleading which governs much of the "Ode to Pity" and reaches its climax in the final stanza is itself an important indication of Collins' idea of his role as a poet and of his ability to fulfill that role. Most significant of all, however, is his conclusion of his invocation to Pity with only hope for the future--"Till Thou again"--rather than any sense of present success.

All that I have argued thus far about Collins' invocative stance has a direct bearing upon this tension between theory and practice in his poetry. That tension manifests itself in the "Ode to Pity" each time the poet pleads for the Goddess' favor. He does not see himself in a state of grace, so to speak, at the moment of his writing. Indeed, the fact that he must ask for aid at all suggests his concern about his limitations. In this sense he, like Spenser and Milton, allies himself with postlapsarian man, with all his attendant weakness and confusion; at the very best Collins never prays to his mythic Goddess as any more than a novice in this poem. One can thus begin to see

what has been so thoroughly overlooked by Collins' critics when they have dealt with this tension as something explicable outside the poems, particularly by the "young poet" approach: that is, that the dilemma inherent in the distance between Collins' theory and his practice of it, is the very substance of his poetry.

## II

The next poem in Collins' volume of odes, the "Ode to Fear," provides probably the best example of the conjunction in his work of fervent invocation and an obscure syntax, of intense self-consciousness and a consequent failure of poetic expression. Certainly the poet projects no more confidence in his inherent abilities here than in the previous poem. And, as before, the invocation itself is the poem--an invocation whose only firm conclusion is renewed hope and dedication, but not a fulfillment of the poet's vision comparable to those of old.

Nowhere does Collins' precise meaning seem more elusive than in the vague opening six lines of this ode. Note particularly the rather complex punctuation (semi-colon, colon, two commas and two exclamation points), the delayed appearance of the precise subject of his address ("Fear," l. 6, postponed with the indefinite "Thou" and "whom," l. 1, and "Who," l. 3), and the overall periodic structure of the sentence. The difficult syntax of such an opening reflects the poet's obvious attempt to phrase his initial address so carefully, respectfully and comprehensively, that he packs too much into too few lines. Collins' acutely self-conscious stance, and his obvious worry over his fitness for a successful invocation of Fear as he mythologizes Her into another transcendent Goddess, are, I believe, responsible in part for just such

failures of precise utterance, lapses which have for so long been barriers to readers' appreciation of the poet's significance.<sup>14</sup> One might summarize, I suppose, by saying that Collins simply tries too hard--thus, his intense struggle to achieve the successful invocation proves its own undoing. For Collins the invocation is self-defeating.

And yet, the theory and structure of his work previous to the "Ode to Fear," combined with the obvious attempt somehow to capture his own sense of terror in Fear's presence, do make a coherent reading possible. In those opening lines Collins frames an invocation which immediately praises (indeed exalts) the Goddess Fear as "Thou, to whom the World unknown / With all its shadowy Shapes is shown" (ll. 1-2). The "World unknown" is that realm of pure abstraction which contains "shadowy Shapes" that are "unknown" and apparently "unreal" (l. 3) to the unaided vision of man; that is, until they have been given substance by the poet once Fear has answered his invocation. And until She has done so, the "Shapes" must be equally "unreal," of course, to the poet. In this case the "Shapes" are the dark forces of violent evil that are abroad in the fallen human world. Collins ties these "Shapes" to traditional connotations of evil when, beginning a few lines later in the poem to describe Fear's "Train" (ll. 9 ff.), he employs such phrases as "Phantoms" (l. 16), "Deeds accurs'd" (l. 17), "Fiends" (l. 18), and "ghastly" (l. 24). Thus only through Fear's inspiration of poet and poem can man grasp the true, universal essence of these dark forces, forces he ordinarily apprehends only in fragmented glimpses.

By calling upon Fear and acknowledging Her ability to see and respond to the abstract essence of particular human fears and the evils

which cause them ("Who see'st appall'd th' unreal Scene"), the poet establishes his faith in Her vision. Collins' choice of the word "Scene" also foreshadows his emphasis in the epode on past dramatic evocations of Fear which the Goddess had inspired and in turn responded to. In addition, the word continues the poet's obsession with vision itself. Moreover, it is Fancy's grace which has enabled this response and this faith to exist: "While Fancy lifts the Veil between" (l. 4). The link between man and the transcendent, the poet and the abstract realm is thus clearly established.

Collins proceeds with his invocation immediately, calling to Fear more passionately now as he, in turn, as a result of his invocation and Fancy's aid, claims to be able to see Her: "Ah Fear! Ah frantic Fear! / I see, I see Thee near" (ll. 5-6). With this revelation a crucial facet in Collins' approach to the abstract powers is evident: he struggles to describe the physical, as well as intellectual and moral characteristics of the Goddess. She is "frantic," and the shortened lines, along with the exclamatory tone they introduce, suggest the poet's own awed and terrified reaction to the Goddess. Nevertheless, he constructs some visual description of the abstraction which serves as an incarnation of the transcendent spirit of universal Fear on earth. Thus, through his myth-making, allegorizing procedure, Collins attempts to prove himself worthy of the poet's role by demonstrating to Fear that he does see Her, and that he can mediate between Her transcendent realm and man by making what is invisible (in its pure form) visible in poem or play in order to move men to their proper response to that abstraction. Thus the poet hopes to educate his auditors.

It is significant that in this attempt, as in nearly all Collins'

personifications of divine or otherworldly abstractions, the nature of the emotion or quality personified is both literary or aesthetic and moral. It is well to keep in mind that Fear is an aspect of tragedy, for example, but also that ultimately it is an equally important aspect of the human reaction to the power of evil or, in another context, the powers of heavenly agents. This is underlined by the poet's method of describing the divine Fear--neither the poet nor the reader ever actually sees the Goddess in every physical detail, just as Moses does not actually see God as we would see our next-door neighbor. Part of the mystery with which the poet surrounds Fear in his prayer is analogous to the confusion of man when he is confronted with suggestions of terror and the supernatural as opposed to total, concrete representations of them. Of course Christ is the most significant exception in the Christian scheme, but we have already seen that Collins regards his era as one in which such heavenly participation has been withdrawn from earth because of its unworthiness. The poet's awesome task is to induce the divine essence represented by his Goddesses to return.

This accounts for the suggestive and intimative, rather than explicit, procedure Collins follows in his personification of the Goddess Fear. What the poet portrays is Her "hurried Step" and "haggard Eye" (l. 7). Then, after reiterating his own complete submission to the power of the Goddess, "Like Thee I start, like Thee disorder'd fly" (l. 8), Collins describes the attending spirits of Fear. Again, he presents no detailed picture; Danger has "Limbs of Giant Mold" (l. 10), "stalks his Round, an hideous Form, / Howling amidst the Midnight Storm" (ll. 12-13), and throws himself on the edge of a cliff to sleep. The precise character of this phantom is thus revealed only by giant

limbs, the way He moves, and the landscape He inhabits, all of which are also indicative of Collins' emphasis on the awe and terror evoked by the sublime in nature as a reflection of a transcendent power.<sup>15</sup>

After he has described the additional spirits which accompany Fear in this same suggestive manner, Collins repeats his prayer by virtue of his own tentatively demonstrated ability to see and to embody Fear in his poetry: "Who, Fear, this ghastly Train can see, / And look not madly wild, like Thee?" (ll. 24-5). This emphasizes what Collins had stated earlier in his description of the Goddess and Her train of monsters, a point implicit in his rhetorical question: "What mortal Eye can fix'd behold?" (l. 11) the image of Danger which attends Fear and which the poet has expressed. Collins affirms in this way his own humble recognition of Fear's divine or supernatural power (he is "mortal"), his prayer for the ability to make the abstraction visible to men, and his faith that men will consequently shun the evil which is embodied in such a "ghastly" retinue.

Personification is therefore once again crucial to Collins' mediation between the heavens and earth in several ways. Initially it provides the poem with a framework through which the poet may speak to heavenly entities, just as the God of the Old and New Testaments is actually the personification of the supreme being to whom man addresses his prayers. Collins also employs his ability to embody the abstract world through personification to produce a hymn of praise to the power of Fear and as proof to the Goddess that he is capable of moving men by thus translating Her influence to them. Finally, if his wish to serve Fear in this way is granted, it is through allegory and dramatic representation of fearful action that the poet may ultimately move men.

This last, of course, can only be accomplished if Fear will consent to give Her influence once again to the poet, and thence to man in general, on earth.

In order to bolster his invocation Collins proceeds from his description of Fear and Her train in the strophe to the epode, where, amplifying his allusion to Sophocles' "Vengeance" in line twenty,<sup>16</sup> he recalls Fear's previous gifts of Her power to earthly poets. As he typically does, Collins pleads that just as "In earliest Grece to Thee with partial Choice, / The Grief-full Muse address her infant Tongue" (ll. 26-7), so he hopes now Fear will respond to his choice of Her. Collins then observes that Aeschylus, although he prayed for and received Fear's favor, chose to indulge his patriotic urge instead. This serves to underline Collins' own willingness to accept Her favor, for though he by no means condemns Aeschylus for following another route, he does suggest by his reference to him in this context that he will not so refuse Fear's favor.

Although there is some confusion as to exactly which Greek dramatist Collins cites in the third stanza of the epode (an obscurity caused again, one suspects, by the poet's self-doubts--doubts which repeatedly distract him, it appears, from clarity), his reason for citing past possessors of Fear's favor remains the same. He continues here and in the fourth stanza to emphasize the successful evocations of Fear which the plays of the Greeks accomplished. After citing the success of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus, Collins returns to his earnest, self-conscious praise of the Goddess whose aid he seeks:

O Fear, I know Thee by my throbbing Heart,  
Thy with'ring Pow'r inspir'd each mournful Line,  
Tho' gentle Pity claim her mingled Part,  
Yet all the Thunders of the Scene are thine!  
(ll. 42-5)

This ties the epode both to the strophe and the antistrophe, where Collins' primary approach to the Goddess is through his humble praise of Her and through his own ability to feel and, he hopes, to realize Her power.

Before the poem's conclusion is examined, it is important to note a further way in which Collins expresses the aspirations of his thought and feeling to both the Goddess and his reader. The strophe is cast in tetrameter couplets (except for line nine where the rhyme is broken, perhaps to emphasize Collins' introduction of his description of Fear's "Train") which scan rapidly, suggesting the heightened emotion of the poet as he reacts to and expresses the feeling Fear inspires in him. In the epode, Collins radically alters his meter to pentameter lines rhyming a b a b. These lines read more slowly, and thus suggest the poet's somewhat more composed contemplation of Fear's past appearances on earth. Then, with his transition to the passionate supplication of the antistrophe, Collins once again employs a tetrameter line for the most part, and couplet rhyme; the lines once more read quickly to their conclusion. In this manner Collins makes all of the elements of his prayer support his plea for the favor of Fear. Still, his sustained self-doubt in the poem belies such control, and underlines again the tension between aspiration (or self-doubt) and achievement. Collins seems unable to resolve it with any lasting confidence.

In the antistrophe Collins returns to the primary thrust of his ritual--his hope that Fear will respond to his call by returning to dwell again on earth, and thus enable him to feel Her full influence and to express it to other men:

Thou who such weary Lengths has past,  
Where wilt thou rest, mad Nymph, at last?  
Say, wilt thou shroud in haunted Cell,  
Where gloomy Rape and Murder dwell?  
(ll. 46-9)

The Cell in which the poet hopes the Goddess will dwell on earth is a familiar sight in Collins' prayers. The poet's questions here are intended to discover where the Goddess will wish to concentrate Her influence if She returns to earth. Collins creates the proper atmosphere for Fear's Cell with his repeated reference, particularly recalling lines one through three, to the evils (Rape, Murder, violent death by drowning) of man's existence which he, the poet, hopes Fear will induce men to shun. Yet his interrogative syntax at the same time underscores his continued doubt of success, now or in the future.

With lines fifty-two and fifty-three Collins slows the reader's progress for the transition from the description of Fear's Cell to his final supplication; the lines are long (pentameter) and are composed primarily of accented syllables which lend them a heavy, deliberate quality. Thus, following the exclamation which ends his description of Fear's possible Cell, the poet proceeds with his invocation: "Dark Pow'r, with shudd'ring meek submitted Thought / Be mine, to read the Visions old, / Which thy awak'ning Bards have told" (ll. 53-5). Here Collins places even stronger emphasis on his extreme humility, and again reminds Fear of the poets She has favored with the all-important faculty of vision in the past. He then underlines his reverent faith in the Goddess by saying that he hopes to "Hold each strange Tale devoutly true" (l. 57), and that he prays Fear will never find him to be so weak that he is totally "o'eraw'd" (l. 58) by Her presence. The suggestion is that if he is so moved as to become incoherent, his

mediation will be a failure. It is necessary that the poet impose some order on his emotional energy, for in Collins' scheme consecration belongs to the Bard who is able to articulate the unspeakable visions of an invisible world. But again, as these lines so clearly show, his invocation for that role is filled with a crippling self-doubt.

In the final lines of the poem Collins renews his citation of poets who were successful mediators in the past by his mention of his early idol, Shakespeare, and maintains the solemn, religious tone of his plea by his reference to the dramatist as "sacred" (l. 65) and as Fear's "Prophet" (l. 66). In referring to Shakespeare Collins also employs his typical mode of prayer: "By all that from thy Prophet broke, / In thy Divine Emotions spoke" (ll. 66-7); in other words, by virtue of the fact that Fear previously gave an English poet Her favor, Collins pleads with Her to do the same for him: "Teach me but once like Him to feel: / His Cypress Wreath my Meed decree, / And I, O Fear, will dwell with Thee!" (ll. 69-71). The phrasing here suggests that if Fear will answer his prayer, Collins will dedicate himself, as poet-priest, to Her service.<sup>17</sup> However it is an "if" Collins does not easily or often surmount; he fails to here and, in the main, in the next poem in the volume, the "Ode to Simplicity."

### III

Just how single-minded Collins' quest for divine aid from the Muse has become is clear when one sees that the form of his invocation remains consistent in nearly all of the poems in his volume. There may be variations in stanzaic and metric patterns, but the basic elements are always present as Collins pursues his need for aid with

self-conscious anguish. The "Ode to Simplicity," for example, provides a significant demonstration of how consistently Collins employs this basic ritual, despite the poem's modified stanzaic and metric pattern. The ode consists of nine stanzas of six lines each, the lines vary in length according to a set pattern in all stanzas, and the rhyme scheme is identical in each stanza. Although this pattern is very different from the one Collins develops in the "Ode to Fear" and somewhat different from the one he employs in the "Ode to Pity," all three poems are identical in their fundamental prayer motif, and in the obsessions it reveals.

Collins begins the "Ode to Simplicity," typically, by immediately suggesting his distance from the Goddess by addressing Her with the formal "O Thou..." (1. 1). From this point on in the first stanza the poet sets up an encomium to Simplicity which is anything but simple. In Collins' mythic time scheme the last three lines should actually be first; in them he praises the Goddess as She "Who first on Mountains wild, / In Fancy loveliest Child, / Thy Babe, or Pleasure's, nurs'd the Pow'rs of Song!" (11. 4-6). Her first appearance on mountains further underlines Her distance from man; there She gives birth to Fancy, nourishing it with the "Pow'rs of Song," or poetry itself.

The broad scope of these powers is suggested in the first three lines of the stanza, especially by Collins' emphasis on the fact that Simplicity's "Numbers" or verses are "warmly pure, and sweetly strong" (1. 3). By employing these oxymoronic phrases Collins suggests the complex and paradoxical world which is the province of the Goddess. And most important, Simplicity and Her song have been taught by "Nature" (11. 1-2)--by which Collins would seem to imply both the

finest of human nature as in Augustan Rome or the Golden Age in Greece, and the ordered world of physical nature (rivers, flowers) as representative of divine order on earth<sup>18</sup> --to articulate man's thoughts and feelings in that response of the divine to the human which we have observed before in Collins' myth. The inversion of the sequence of events in this stanza and its complicated syntax combine to produce an obscurity which Collins places in meaningful contrast in succeeding stanzas to the power of the Goddess to whom the poem is written. The obscurity represents the only achievement available to the unaided poet; the power of the Goddess, what is possible through successful invocation.

As he moves into the second stanza Collins continues to praise the Goddess and to elaborate, significantly, on both Her moral and aesthetic qualities. She has a "Hermit Heart" and "Disdain'st the Wealth of Art, / And Gauds, and pageant Weeds, and trailing Pall" (ll. 7-9), all of which suggests that She remains distant from the corrupt world of man and at the same time that She disdains artfulness for its own sake just as She despises the false show of a gaudy funeral; "genuine Thought" (l. 2) is the burden of Her response to man. Collins further praises Her moral integrity by referring to Her as a "decent Maid" (l. 10) and as a "chaste unboastful Nymph" (l. 12). Thus he maintains the reader's awareness of both the visible virtues of the Goddess and the implied weakness of prideful man. Her humility furnishes the proper pattern for man and poet alike to follow; Collins thereby begins to teach himself as preparation for teaching others.

Also typical of his method in his poems generally is Collins' brief, intimative description here of the physical presence of the

Goddess; She is "In Attic Robe array'd" (l. 11), the allusion to Greece foreshadowing Collins' later association of Her with that nation. This initial phase of the poet's prayer concludes with his passionate repetition of his invocative stance: it is "to Thee I call!" (l. 12).

Having thus personified or incarnated and praised Simplicity, Collins begins the next phase of his prayer: his initial supplication based on the previous infusions of the Goddess' power on earth. The familiar phrasing is once more present:

By all the honey'd Store  
On Hybla's Thymy Shore,  
By all her Blooms, and mingled Murmurs dear,  
By Her, whose Love-lorn Woe  
In Ev'ning Musings slow  
Sooth'd sweetly sad Electra's Poet's Ear....  
(ll. 13-18)

As he does in the "Ode to Fear" Collins alludes to the successful mediation of Sophocles, and he provides the reader with a note to ensure his understanding of the reference to the nightingale in lines sixteen through eighteen as a songbird "for which Sophocles seems to have entertain'd a peculiar Fondness."<sup>19</sup> By the virtue of Greece itself, the last "green Retreat" (l. 21) of Simplicity before "holy Freedom died" (l. 23) and left no equally fit place on earth for the Goddess to dwell, Collins prays for Her return to him.<sup>20</sup> As before, his dilemma forces itself upon him: what can a poet who believes the true sources of inspiration long ago ceased to be available to man do but pray obsessively for their restoration?

Stanzas three and four reveal how carefully Collins maintains the relationship between form and meaning in the poem. Yet again, it should be noted, his obvious control of his medium gives him little

or no encouragement about his ability. His diction in these stanzas is elaborate. He develops an emphatic parallelism, depending upon "By," which introduces the main phrases of the third stanza and begins the fourth; he uses nouns as adjectives by adding a "y" ending, which is an integral part of the most artificial diction of eighteenth-century poems; he creates the synaesthetic images of "mingled Murmurs" (l. 15) and "warbled Wand'rings" (l. 21), the oxymoronic "sweetly sad" (l. 18), the alliteration of the lines "In Ev'ning Musings slow / Sooth'd sweetly sad Electra's Poet's Ear"; and he includes such standard periphrastic images as "enamel'd Side" (l. 22) for a bank of flowers--in short, he employs a profusion of poetic artifice in a very few lines. This, coupled with the inversion and syntax we noted in the opening stanza, contributes to the sustained complexity of much of the early part of the poem, a studied contrast to the subject.

But in the fifth stanza, with the completion of his initial supplication, Collins introduces a very different style.<sup>21</sup> This stanza is quite simple and easily understood:

O Sister meek of Truth,  
To my admiring Youth,  
Thy sober Aid and native Charms infuse!  
The Flow'rs that sweetest breathe,  
Tho' Beauty cull'd the Wreath,  
Still ask thy Hand to range their order'd Hues.  
(ll. 25-30)

By emphasizing in this way the tension between the elaborate diction and syntax of his unaided poem to Simplicity, and the very clear, uncomplicated form of his invocation when he most earnestly states his need for divine aid (a power suggested, typically, by his reverberating word "Charms"), Collins underlines both his own limitation (he is but an "admiring Youth") and his ability to transcend it, if only he can gain Simplicity's favor.

This stanza also contains the culmination of the poet's emphasis on the past favor granted to Greece. The dominant image of that nation is the flower ("honey'd Store," "Thymy Shore," and "Blooms" in stanza three, and "enamel'd Side" in stanza four), and Collins turns it to his point in stanza five. Just as Simplicity aided the flowers of Greece, so now he pleads with Her to aid his flowers and his world.

From line thirty-one through line forty-eight Collins concurrently praises Simplicity and mourns Her passing from the world of man with the advent of corruption in Rome; the passage of course parallels and amplifies the passing of Simplicity from Greece in the preceding stanzas. As he engages in this alternate praise and lamentation, Collins prepares the Goddess for his closing supplication, for his poignant reaction to Her retreat from the world accentuates his respect for Her virtue both in art and in life generally. It is also important to note that throughout these lines Collins' primary emphasis is on his acknowledgment of the world's imperfect state. The Goddess remained in Rome only so long as that nation "could none esteem / But Virtue's Patriot Theme" (ll. 31-2). Collins thus adds another nation where Simplicity once gave Her favor, in support of his plea for Her to come now to him.

In stanza seven Collins reverts to his lament:

No more, in Hall or Bow'r,  
The Passions own thy Pow'r,  
Love, only Love her forceless Numbers mean:  
For Thou hast left her Shrine,  
Nor Olive more, nor Vine,  
Shall gain thy Feet to bless the servile Scene.  
(ll. 37-42)

No more in either public ("Hall") or private ("Bow'r") life does man play anything but a "servile Scene." Note also the religious coloring

of the diction as the God fails to "bless" the scene. Collins suggests the present moral chaos of a fallen world with his stress on the now enslaving passions of men, and on the degradation of love, which becomes a deserted shrine. And he further emphasizes the failure of poetry by punning on "Feet" in line forty-two. The stanza thus closes on a rather despairing note, not unusual at this time for Collins, with the symbols of peace and resurrection (olive and vine) unable to restore Simplicity's presence in life or in poetry.

Moreover, the stanza significantly amplifies the role of Freedom in the poem. Collins has already presented "holy Freedom" as the essence of the past Golden Age (of Greece, then of Rome) which provided a fertile soil for the Goddess Simplicity and, consequently, great art. The theme establishes a political parallel to the contrast between such a Golden Age and the tyranny of man's present fallen, "servile" state. Collins thereby underlines his belief in the intimate, reciprocal relationship between politics and art, and continues to place his personal struggle in a broad historical as well as moral context. Too, the Freedom theme suggests Collins' longing for the freedom to write as he chooses--freedom, that is, from his dilemma.

It is also most significant that here, where Collins again underscores his existence in an imperfect world as a flawed man, the syntax of the lines again becomes rather obscure. His reference to "Love," for example, is ambiguous due to its syntax and Collins' word choice. Are we to interpret "mean" as a verb, "to signify or have meaning," "to pity," "to mediate"; or does it function as an adjective, suggesting "of low estate," "ignoble" (note the array of possibilities in the OED)? If it does not operate as a verb, then where is the verb the line seems

to call for? This also suggests the additional obscurity of the referent for "her." Does it refer to Love or to Simplicity, the latter being the obvious referent of "Thou" in the following line? Probably in the case of "mean" all the suggested denotations support Collins' theme of the decay of "meaning" in the present. Yet such uncertainties do retard the reader's progress, and lend the stanza an atmosphere somewhat less than simple. A further problem worth noting is caused by Collins' allusion to the rather obscurely related symbolism of olive and vine: it is not simply translatable into the poem's themes either. The presence of such complications in a prayer for Simplicity's aid serves repeatedly to remind the reader of the crucial difficulty the poet must surmount if he ever wants to be successful, that is, to communicate to his auditors. Collins deliberately continues, therefore, to play one style against the other.

The penultimate stanza of the "Ode to Simplicity" is perhaps its most important single one--it is, indeed, a synecdoche for the poem as a whole. It demonstrates, on the one hand, Collins' poised mastery of his medium and, on the other, the poet's persistent lack of confidence in himself, his era, and ironically, in the very theory of inspiration on which he has all along pinned his hopes. In it Collins embodies the full conflict established in the play between two styles in this ode, and, on a larger scale, the contradictory impulses which continue to thrust his dilemma upon him.

The stanza is first of all Collins' statement of his passionate belief in the necessity of Simplicity's return to the world:

Tho' Taste, tho' Genius bless,  
To some divine Excess,  
Faints the cold Work till Thou inspire the whole;

What each, what all supply,  
May court, may charm our Eye,  
Thou, only Thou can'st raise the meeting Soul!

The poet achieves a balance in these lines between a superficial complexity and an underlying simplicity. The complexity consists primarily of the stanza's extended parallelism, balance and repetition ("Tho'," "tho'"; "What," "what"; "May," "may"; "Thou," "Thou"). In addition to this parallelism within lines, the stanza, actually a single compound-complex sentence, breaks into two three-line sections, each consisting of a preparatory, qualifying clause followed by a concluding independent clause, the latter in each case appropriately containing Collins' declaration of the need for Simplicity's aid.

Balancing this structure is the stanza's direct, unambiguous and lucid meaning; here we find none of Collins' earlier obscurity. For though the parallelism and repetition do call attention to the stanza's stylistic devices, at the same time they make it one of his most emphatic statements of his predicament. The devices in this stanza are quite distinct in their effects, for example, from those in the third. Rather than slowing the reader with their uncertain syntax or emblems, their effect is to distinguish clearly between unsuccessful and successful poetry, with Collins almost drumming his message at us in his fervor. These two modes with which Collins develops his prayer to Simplicity--the elaborate and the austere--converge in subtle juxtaposition to suggest more fully than ever the power of his dilemma.

His struggle becomes clear in the first half of the stanza. Collins' lack of confidence leads him to conclude that even with the aid of heaven-sent "Taste" and "Genius" ("bless" indicates their role), even though they can inspire the poet to a "divine Excess," he will

have only a "cold Work" without Simplicity's unifying ("inspire the whole"), clarifying force. He feels compelled therefore to qualify his notion of divine inspiration, and he thus reveals the apparently unlimited weight of his self-doubt. The very "divine Excess" he has repeatedly prayed for now seems a hollow goal, for he realizes that the inspiration must be transmuted if the poet is to make it apprehensible to his readers. The Goddess Simplicity must be the agent of this conversion.

In the last half of the stanza Collins' doubts pierce even closer to the heart of his poetic theory. He aptly develops a more complex statement in these three lines, though we must still not confuse complexity with obscurity: the meaning remains clear. He calls into question not only the efficacy of Taste and Genius, but his theory of the power of verse to "charm our Eye" as well. Tied to "court" by the balanced parallelism of line forty-six Collins' pivotal word "charm" is also devalued. It stands in the same relation to Collins' earlier development of "charm" as synonymous with the magical powers of verse, that "court" here does to "Love"--and even the latter has been debased by Collins' image of the deserted shrine it has become in the present. Both words are also depreciated by their subordinate position, and especially by the uncertain force suggested for them by "may" in the line. This, in turn, undercuts the poet's entire theory of vision, a concept, as we have seen, on which he builds his whole ideal of the way poets both receive their inspiration and embody it in order to teach their auditors. Collins is absolute, as in the first half of the stanza, only in the main clause at its conclusion: his emphatically repeated "Thou" enforces his exclamation there as he invokes Simplicity's crucial aid again.

What finally emerges from the stanza is a Collins who has manifestly come to believe so little in himself or his era that he must qualify even his trust in his theory of an ideal divine inspiration: no limited or partial inspiration will do. Put another way, the stanza is the poet's declaration of his total dependence on the Muse. His self-doubts, fed by his belief that he as a poet and men in general are such severely limited creatures that they must have aid from heaven if they are to write or live well, leads him to conclude that even the Simplicity which makes poems comprehensible must come from above, and not from the poet's own labors. Ironically, this declaration appears in a stanza which everywhere demonstrates Collins' achieved mastery of his medium, presumably in part through the very Taste and Genius he undercuts from the start. As before in his work, such mastery gives him little or no satisfaction. The true sublime seems always out of reach. Only with the added help of a Goddess Simplicity can the souls of poet and man rise toward heaven ("raise the meeting Soul"); only thus can they be truly charmed.

In the final stanza Collins again rejects reliance solely on taste and genius: "Of These let others ask, / To aid some mighty Task, / I only seek to find thy temp'rate Vale" (ll. 49-51). Thus Collins separates himself from other, lesser poets who depend only on such limited inspiration. The true poet will lastly seek Simplicity's aid in order to make his vision clear to his auditors. The "temp'rate Vale" here is reminiscent of the Cell where the poet seeks both to worship and to receive the favor of the Goddess; it is an appropriately restrained, natural shrine where Collins fervently hopes She will respond by enabling him to mediate and thereby teach intelligibly:

"Where oft my Reed might sound / To Maids and Shepherds round, / And all thy Sons, O Nature, learn my Tale" (ll. 52-4). With this address to Nature echoing the first line of the poem, Collins brings his invocation full circle, thus reiterating the reciprocal relationship among the transcendent realm above, Nature as its visible representative on earth, and the poet. Each will, he hopes, respond to the others, and man ("thy Sons") will learn the purest virtues. Lastly, and most significantly, Collins' "might" reiterates the almost overwhelming self-doubt that permeates these first three odes. This "might" joins his retreat at the start of the stanza from "some mighty Task" to underscore his specific timidity of the epic: again his dilemma asserts itself, for the epic was, of course, precisely the form in which his chief idols excelled. His rejection thus seems more envy and frustration--sour grapes, if you will--than true commitment to lesser genres. It is a bleak closing, only superficially disguised by Collins' hopeful tone.

One cannot overstress the importance of moral instruction as Collins' ultimate goal in the "Ode to Simplicity," as elsewhere. It is the key to the penultimate stanza and to the play between styles throughout. No amount of divine inspiration can enable the poet to fulfill this crucial part of his role unless it includes Simplicity's all-encompassing gift of clear meaning, meaning that is comprehensible to the poet's readers. Thus Collins' focus on the contrast between an ornate, often obscure style and a straightforward, lucid one; thus his qualms in the penultimate stanza concerning the efficacy of any limited inspiration by Taste and Genius.

Clearly then, Collins follows a ritual in these poems through

which he hopes to intercede between heaven and earth, between an invisible abstract sphere and man; the pattern of his prayer or invocation is consistent, as we shall see further, in the majority of his works. First the poet invokes the personified abstraction or Goddess and proceeds to suggest Her religious or moral, as well as aesthetic perfection and powers; second he cites past nations and poets who have successfully evoked Her response and who have, in turn, made men respond to Her through their poetry, and he laments the failure of men to continue to deserve Her favor after those times; and finally, he supplicates the Goddess to return to earth where he promises to worship and serve Her with faith.<sup>22</sup> The key, however, is his recurring sense of failure, a sense one sees most clearly in this very obsession with the invocative stance.

#### IV

The "Ode on the Poetical Character" is the first of but three non-invocative poems in the group of twelve odes. For this reason alone it requires special attention. But its importance in the Collins canon goes far beyond this, for in it he makes his most explicit statement of his total poetic theory, of his devotion to Spenser and Milton, and of his notion of his personal fitness to put his theory into practice. And though the poem is non-invocative, Collins' voice in it, in contrast to his previous non-invocative poems, is anything but confident or unselfconscious. Moreover, the change to a non-invocative yet self-conscious stance may well mark further deepening of the poet's sense of his dilemma. Despite its movement beyond invocation, a mood--even a certainty--of failure haunts the "Poetical Character" from

its opening "If," where Collins doubts his ability to "read aright that gifted Bard" (ll. 1-2), to its closing "In vain..." (l. 72).

The poem has long been rightly regarded as central to any understanding of Collins' theory of the poet, and as such it has received more than its share of critical attention.<sup>23</sup> Woodhouse finds the poem to be "an allegory whose subject is the creative imagination and the poet's passionate desire for its power."<sup>24</sup> Ainsworth reaches a rather typical conclusion about the nature of the true poet as it emerges from the poem: "Such a poet is divinely favored. He is both poet and prophet. His poetic power is ecstatic and visionary; and he feels deeply the enthusiastic warmth that true imagination imparts."<sup>25</sup> Sigworth notes the poem's participation in the sublime, its "rhapsodic" structure (which he does not sufficiently explain), and praises Collins' myth-making powers.<sup>26</sup>

As is quite apparent, the poet's involvement with imagination or "fancy" in this poem has been fully recognized, though the tendency remains to separate Collins' ideal poet who possesses imagination from his own poetic practice in which he talks about imagination, but is never quite as visionary or imaginative as most critics would like him to be. The situation is further complicated by the critics' disposition to interpret Collins' notion of the imagination as primarily a faculty of the human mind, although it may well be divinely inspired, and their failure to understand the full moral significance of the poet's relationship with the world of abstractions to which imagination is the key.

The problem is, evidently, that while Collins does talk a good deal about the imagination, it is never for him an end in itself.

Patricia Spacks sees the "Ode on the Poetical Character" as representative of Collins' participation in the critical tradition which assumes that poetry is the result of both the "image-making power and of divine inspiration," and she regards Collins' ideal poet as "literally a seer."<sup>27</sup> The notion would not seem inaccurate, but for the decisive conclusion Spacks announces a few paragraphs earlier: "The poet's glory has nothing to do with his role in the world, nothing to do even specifically with his accomplishment; it is the product simply of his visionary power and of his feeling.... The triumph of poetry is its potentiality for expressing vision, and the poet's vision is self-justifying. A poem need simply be."<sup>28</sup> It may be that in Collins' view the "poet's glory" has little to do with his public role, though I doubt it, but he does have definite public goals. Moreover, Collins' poetic hesitancy and insecurity, his consistent striving for what he cannot do, hardly suggests a poet who finds his vision "self-justifying." Collins' justification, the end of his poetry, is not his vision but its efficacy in producing emotional and moral changes in his readers. The imaginative vision is a means to that end.

Once this reservation has been made, however, it should be understood that, in addition to his role as mediator, Collins does regard the successful poet as a man blessed with imagination; and that the "Ode on the Poetical Character" does contain his most important revelation of this concept. Only through this faculty does Collins believe the poet can fully transcend the limitations of his earth-bound position. It is the possession of fancy which enables the poet finally to attain his goals.

In "Poetical Character" Collins sets forth mythically this concept

of the true, ideal poet who transcends his limitations fully, and the predicament in which he finds himself in the present. Collins' myth-making ability also receives perhaps its fullest revelation here; it is only through an interpretation of this myth that the poem can be properly understood. Establishing a doubtful voice at once with the "if" clause, Collins begins the poem with a crucial allusion to Spenser ("Him whose School above the rest / His Loveliest Elfin Queen has blest," ll. 3-4) as the creator of a myth which portrays the exclusive nature of a "magic Girdle" (l. 6) given to those few who possess true purity. That Collins regards Spenser as one of those poets who represent his ideal is immediately suggested by his reference to him as "that gifted Bard," a reference he expands later in the poem by allusion to Spenser's invocative stance, along with Milton's.

Collins also begins to build the same broad moral and religious context that is developed in "Pity" and "Fear" when he describes the tourney at which the girdle was awarded as "solemn" (l. 7); and the fallen, corrupt condition of the majority of those who seek the girdle is indicated by Collins' choice of words like "unblest," "loath'd," "dishonour'd," "hopeless," and "baffled" (ll. 13-15) to describe them. They seek the girdle in vain because of their impurity; the girdle is preserved instead for the truly chaste, "unrival'd Fair" (l. 5) by "some hov'ring Hand, / Some chaste and Angel-Friend to Virgin-Fame" (ll. 10-11). Again, "chaste," "Angel," and "Virgin" all intimate the marked moral and religious contrast between the one who possesses the necessary virtues and the sinful ones who do not. And of course "some hov'ring Hand" indicates the divine role in the process.

Collins forms these first sixteen lines into an epic simile in

which the nature of the "Cest" of Fancy is elaborated as similar to the nature of the girdle in Spenser's allegory in The Faerie Queene, for at the conclusion of the description of the Spenserian legend, he writes:

Young Fancy thus, to me Divinest Name,  
To whom, prepar'd and bath'd in Heav'n,  
The Cest of amplest Pow'r is giv'n:  
To few the God-like Gift assigns,  
To gird their blest prophetic Loins,  
And gaze her Visions wild, and feel unmix'd her Flame!  
(ll. 17-22)

Just as the girdle of chastity is given only to the one purest "Fair" in Spenser's myth (and Collins reads Spenser in this to suit his own purpose<sup>29</sup>), so the "Cest," which is emblematic of Fancy, is given only to a very few of the most virtuous men who aspire to be poets. The divine origin of the Cest is clear, as is the poet's recognition of that origin. Fancy is to him "Divinest Name," and the Cest itself is "the God-like Gift," which intimates its parallel to God's gift of grace. In contrast to the "unblest" seekers after the girdle of chastity in the Spenserian allegory, the loins of the few to whom Fancy's Cest is given are "blest." All of these aspects of Collins' portrayal of the power of Fancy contribute to that expanding moral and cosmic meaning which lends the poem a universal context far beyond the immediate aesthetic interests of the poet. Collins continually alludes to a larger spiritual world where the poet's struggle is ultimately one between good and evil men as well as good and bad art.

In the epode Collins continues this process with a description of the creation of the "Band" (l. 23) or Cest of Fancy, thus revealing his concept of the true origin and nature of poetic inspiration itself. As Earl Wasserman has suggested, it is most important that we recognize Collins' careful adaptation of Scriptural imagery in order to identify

Fancy with the divine Wisdom (the Word) which was with God during the creation of the world.<sup>30</sup> Wisdom-Sapience is personified in a number of biblical books, including Psalms and particularly the Wisdom literature of the apocrypha, where She is portrayed as the mediator between God's thought and the actual expression of that thought in material creation. Collins, too, boldly personifies Imagination, which becomes a Goddess not only in the company of God, but actually "wooing" Him. In Collins' mythic representation of this mediation, God calls "with Thought to Birth" (l. 25) the universe; but it is the "lov'd Enthusiast" (l. 29) who is with God during the creation, as Wisdom was in the Bible, and who, amidst the harmony of heaven where "Seraphic Wires were heard to sound" (l. 34), "from out the veiling Cloud, / Breath'd her magic Notes aloud" (ll. 37-8).

Collins thus develops his notion that Wisdom and Fancy are one. The true poet's act of creation through his use of the Word as it is passed from the creating thought of God through Wisdom, is to be seen in a direct line of descent.<sup>31</sup> Fancy is not, then, a human, but a divine faculty which is given only to the most virtuous men. The "Notes" of Wisdom-Fancy<sup>32</sup> mediate between God's thought and the material creation and "Thou, Thou rich-hair'd Youth of Morn, / And all thy subject Life was born!" (ll. 39-40). Thus the sun and all earthly life were created; thus the poet and his poetic world were created.<sup>33</sup>

Collins' view of the poet as a conveyor and sustainer of heaven's light to earth's darkness parallels this notion of God's creation. When seen in this regard, the great importance, the extreme gravity of the poet's role in Collins' eyes, and especially of his conveyance of the Word, is accentuated. The poet, who by Wisdom-Fancy's aid

brings "All the shad'wy Tribes of Mind" (l. 47) into the light of truth ("Truth, in sunny Vest array'd," l. 45), shapes the world of abstract moral values into poetic allegories in order that he may restore the moral fiber of men. This, then, is the basis for Collins' invocations to the "shad'wy" abstract Goddesses in his other poems. Moreover, they are thus intimately associated with the creation as it expresses the mind of God.

We grasp the full importance of this mythic reference to Wisdom-Fancy, however, only when we recall the invocative employment of the same figure by both Spenser and Milton. We can then see just how closely Collins ties his own theory of invocation, inspiration and creation to theirs. All three poets associate their poetic acts of creation with God's through the Holy Spirit; and thus Collins instructively echoes a crux in his mentors' invocative stances. Johnston makes the link more precisely when he points out that "Spenser, remembering Proverbs, vii. 29-31, writes of Sapience as sitting in God's bosom, 'The sovereign darling of the Deity' ('Hymn of Heavenly Beauty,' l. 183)."<sup>34</sup> A few lines later, significantly, after attempting to describe Her, Spenser adopts a stance which further demonstrates Collins' relationship to him: "How then dare I, the novice of the art, / Presume to picture so divine a wight..." (ll. 225-6). And he concludes the stanza as tellingly: "Ah! gentle Muse, thou art too weake and faint, / The pourtraict of so heavenly hew to paint" (ll. 230-1). The fundamental distinction between the two poets comes into sharper focus: for Collins, such humility is seldom either a prelude to or a part of sustained accomplishment--at least in his own view.<sup>35</sup>

Collins' awe at the nature of his calling is evident in his description of "Ecstatic Wonder, / List'ning the deep applauding Thunder" (ll. 43-4) near the creating act of Wisdom-Fancy. Both the awe and the thunder also suggest the sublime character of the process in its immensity as Collins perceives it, and account for his stress on the creative act as it connotes God's own infinite power. But almost as if his recognition of the sublimity of his chosen calling and of God's capacity causes him to recall the more poignantly his own weak and limited nature as a mere man, Collins soon lapses into his plaintive realization of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of attaining his goals:

Where is the Bard, whose Soul can now  
Its [Heaven's] high presuming Hopes avow?  
Where He who thinks, with Rapture blind,  
This hallow'd Work for Him design'd?  
(ll. 51-4)

As he employed Euripides and Otway as successful past mediators in his attempt to attain a response from Pity, so now Collins alludes directly to Milton's creative genius in the hope that he may continue the progression of true poets from Spenser through Milton to himself. He thus pursues his attempt to give himself equal stature by association with them, and by their mediation between himself and heaven. Collins imagines Milton on a "Cliff, to Heav'n up-pil'd" (l. 55) in an Eden similar to the one he created in Paradise Lost, where he is close to the divine power which favored him. By alluding to Milton's accomplishment Collins seemingly reminds heaven that man has indeed received favor through the invocative stance before. Milton heard "its native Strains" (l. 66) and could reach the "ancient Trump" (l. 67) which was hung there for the chosen few to use. Collins' portrayal of the "Trump"

as ancient suggests again the line of poets from immemorial time in which he wishes to place himself.

Retreating from the poetry of mere secular concerns that is here represented by Waller,<sup>36</sup> Collins continues: "With many a Vow from Hope's aspiring Tongue, / My trembling Feet his [Milton's] guiding Steps pursue" (ll. 70-1); but at the very moment of his greatest hope that his prayer may be answered, his "trembling Feet" (Collins once again refers to both his physical and metric feet) foreshadow the downfall caused by his inherent human weakness. Up to this point the poem's meter has moved steadily along, but Collins accentuates his failure to reach his goal when, in line seventy-two, he breaks the rhythm: "In vain--Such Bliss to One alone, / Of all the Sons of Soul was known" (ll. 72-3).

The conclusion Collins reaches in the poem has a tragic finality to it; one is struck by a sense of the failure of very high aspirations. Collins believes he cannot carry on the divine bardic tradition from Spenser and Milton because "Heav'n, and Fancy, kindred Pow'rs, / Have now o'erturn'd th' inspiring Bow'rs, / Or curtain'd close such Scene from ev'ry future View" (ll. 74-6). The indication here is that the covenant between the true poets of the past who were worthy of favor, and the divine powers who could give their grace to men, is now forever broken; the line will not continue from Milton to Collins. That power or wisdom and imagination which makes it possible for the poet to create scenes which inspire men to moral goodness is in his time denied him. Now, unlike the conclusions of the previous three odes where some hope remains, there is none. This is the core of Collins' vision of the "Poetical Character."

At this point another important distinction between Collins and Spenser needs to be made in order to clarify the nature of their total relationship. Collins' worry is not so much Spenser's that poetry may no longer affect men, but that the poet himself may no longer write poems which affect men. In this difference may lie a central reason for Spenser's ability to go beyond the invocative stance to write the poems he prays for, whereas Collins can so seldom get beyond himself. While such a distinction between poem and poet may seem an overly fine one, its effects on the works themselves are obvious enough.

V

Because Collins' explicit analogy in the "Poetical Character" between God's creative Word and his own forms the basis for his entire poetic theory--particularly for his invocative stance--our examination of that analogy necessitates a further consideration of the overall religious texture of his verse. This is especially true when one recalls the pervasive Christian orientation behind the stances of his two chief idols.

In his discussion of Collins' use of the forms of prayer, Johnston argues that the poet speaks almost exactly as does the Christian praying for grace; indeed, he carries the argument so far as to cite what he believes to be intentional, exact parallels between Collins' lines and the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>37</sup> Though these parallels are perhaps not as convincing as Johnston would like them to be, the two pieces of biographical evidence he cites to show Collins' personal allegiance to the Christian faith (and, presumably, to its traditions of poetry) demand more careful attention. First, he notes the significant

coincidence that Collins was thinking about and actually seeking admission to the Anglican priesthood during the general period when the Odes were being composed (1740-46).<sup>38</sup> Second, he recounts the even more significant story Johnson tells of a meeting with Collins at Islington. Johnson remembers that Collins "travelled with no other book than an English Testament, such as children carry to the school; when his friend took it into his hand, out of curiosity to see what companion a Man of Letters had chosen, 'I have but one book,' said Collins, 'but that is the best.'"<sup>39</sup>

To interpret Collins' insistence upon his own and mankind's humble, weak condition, and his equally insistent need for external aid if he is to be either a good man or a successful poet, as anything but Christian would be, I believe, to risk misunderstanding the whole drift of his poetry. It is the Christian doctrine of fallen man and the saving Grace of God, ultimately, that best explains his obsessive allegiance to divine Muses, to heavenly abstractions, to Spenser and Milton--and indeed to the invocative stance which is the primary subject of this study. Moreover, the relative paucity of explicitly Christian terminology cannot be used to argue that Collins is a wholly secular poet any more than it can be used to prove that Johnson's Rambler essays are not fundamentally Christian arguments. Paul Fussell has acutely reminded us that the traditional theory of genres inherited by the eighteenth century dictated careful distinctions between, for example, sermons and moral essays, religious poems and lyrics, the ones written in Christian language, the others in a Christian era. This "force of genre" (the phrase is Fussell's) had not diminished in Collins' time, and it governed the works of the century's writers more fully

than we sometimes care to admit.<sup>40</sup>

I would certainly not want to argue that Collins is a Christian poet in the sense in which Donne and Herbert, or Spenser and Milton are. Yet neither do I believe his poetry, and especially his invocative stance, can be properly understood without seeing its fundamental relationship to the tradition of Christian poets invoking a Christian Muse--and to the decline of that tradition in the eighteenth century. The tension in Collins' poetry between poetic faith and poetic failure reflects perhaps the larger tension in the era between religious faith and religious decline. Like the Methodist movement emerging in his day, Collins aimed to revitalize his faith by means of an intense, passionate recommitment to its origins and its values; like the era in which he lived, he was unable to reverse the steady movement toward a secular nineteenth century. His attempt and his failure are the true subjects of his poetry.

It is in this grave context that we must view Collins' prayers to his aesthetic and moral Goddesses for poetic and moral salvation. The prayers of fallen man to God for grace surely underlie Collins' humble, anguished pleas to the Muse, however overlaid they are by his personal mythic scheme and vocabulary. And it is precisely because the invocative stance of Spenser and Milton seemed, indeed was, more difficult than ever to adopt in his own era that Collins resorts to so personal a mythos, as Blake and Wordsworth were to do after him. Regardless of how difficult that stance had become, however, at the heart of Collins' poetry is his wish somehow to write the kind of divinely inspired, visionary poetry his idols wrote. Then, because he is no less aware than we of how far short he falls, his dilemma becomes more and more

the self-inhibiting core of his poetry, despite all his efforts to transcend it. That he continues to seek his goal despite the gloomy prospect of the "Ode on the Poetical Character" is a significant indication of his struggle for faith. No doubt as a Christian and as an aspiring poet, to despair is the very worst of sins.

## VI

And transcend his dilemma he does, albeit in one of his briefest poems. In "Ode, Written in the beginning of the Year 1746" Collins manages to write, on his own less grand scale, just the sort of poem he has been invoking, and with an apparent confidence which utterly contradicts the hopeless conclusion of "Poetical Character." Coming immediately after "Poetical Character" in the original volume, its position itself highlights the strong contrast between the two poems, and lends the latter poem special significance as a revelation of the non-invocative, assured side of Collins' poetic voice. In it the poet seems, if only momentarily, to attain a state of grace as a result of his aspirations as a novitiate in prayer.

In "How Sleep the Brave" (its popular title) Collins expresses compassion for and pays homage to patriots who have given their lives for their nation.<sup>41</sup> However, the poet's personal expression is secondary to his revelation, presumably to his reader, of the homage paid by heaven to the dead heroes. He sets the encomiastic and explanatory tone and theme of the poem with his opening exclamation, which also contains an underlying query: "How sleep the Brave, who sink to Rest, / By all their County's Wishes blest!" The ensuing lines are the poet's portrayal of exactly how they do sleep when blessed not only by their

nation but by heaven itself.

Collins introduces heaven to the scene of the graves through his often-pleaded-for ability to see and personify the abstract world and thus make it visible to men

When Spring, with dewy Fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallow'd Mold,  
She there shall dress a sweeter Sod,  
Than Fancy's Feet have ever trod.  
(ll. 3-6)

Capturing the physical essence of Spring with his characteristically suggestive concentration on an isolated image ("Fingers" as they consecrate the already blessed graves), Collins underlines his eulogy by insisting that the Spring shall thus bless a "sweeter Sod" than the Goddess Fancy has ever visited before. This implies not only that the graves themselves are holy, but that the consecration being accomplished by the poet as he writes, with Fancy's aid, increases the holiness of the ground and the men who lie there. In other words, the poem simultaneously discloses three consecrations of the graves: the nation has blessed them; the poet as prophet predicts that heaven will consecrate the ground; and the poet, by embodying the heavenly powers as he writes, accomplishes a final and permanent consecration which is the poem itself. The process very closely resembles the threefold consecration the poet manages in the "Song from Cymbelyne."

The concluding lines of the poem contain a full procession of heavenly visitors to the patriots' graves. Here Collins underlines his position as mediator when he says: "By Fairy Hands their Knell is rung, / By Forms unseen their Dirge is sung" (ll. 7-8). These Hands and Forms are indeed unseen by the poet's auditors, yet the sounds they create are reported by him; and, as the entrances of Honour and Freedom

in the concluding lines attest, he is able to see when others cannot. Collins' personification of these last visitants to the graves is once again a suggestive one, emphasizing the religious nature of their homage: Honour is "a Pilgrim grey" (l. 9), and Freedom will "dwell a weeping Hermit there!" (l. 12). That Honour is a pilgrim dressed in a drab, monastic color intimates that the graves themselves are now a religious shrine. Freedom's weeping accentuates the funereal atmosphere of the entire poem, and also stresses to the poet's audience the poignant nature of the sacrifice of the dead in order to preserve Freedom in their nation. Freedom's role here should remind us, too, of Collins' assertion of Her importance to both political and artistic well-being in the "Ode to Simplicity." This adds to the value of men's sacrifice for Her sake in "How Sleep the Brave."

This brief allegory is, when seen in conjunction with Collins' aspirations in his other poems, another example then of the kind of poem he wishes to write but which usually seems to him to be out of his reach. In it he embodies his vision of the spiritual world so that it may be apprehended by the people of the nation for whom these men gave their lives. By doing so he hopes to bring both himself and his readers into closer proximity to that spiritual world. Indeed, it is that other world which here establishes the true value of the sacrifice made by the dead. Poetry, whether cast in the form of an earnest entreaty for the ability to mediate between heaven and earth, or whether it is that mediation as prayer or allegory or both, is the means to Collins' end. That end is, as has already been said, the moral restoration and spiritual inspiration of the poet and his auditors.

But, as we shall now see, Collins could never sustain such transcendence of his dilemma. It haunts and inhibits his work through the remaining Odes, and casts its shadow even over his last known poem, "An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The History of Rasselas, ed. Gwin J. Kolb (New York: Crofts, 1962), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Morris, The Religious Sublime, is indispensable on the struggle facing the explicitly Christian poets, and much that he says is equally helpful for an understanding of Collins' less tangible stance as mediator between the transcendent and the mundane. Though, as Morris shows, there were exceptions among poets in Collins' time who were still able to claim divine aid and proceed to write Christian poetry, Collins seems to have been little encouraged by their efforts. See also Morris' useful additions to such customarily cited causes for the decline of religious poetry and belief in divine inspiration as the rise of rationalism, pp. 198-232. His overall analysis of problems confronting Christian poets is fully appropriate to poets writing less explicitly religious poetry; indeed, all poetry was affected by the forces Morris discusses. His failure to make this clear for the mid-century poets constitutes my only objection to a study to which all students of the period are otherwise much indebted.

<sup>3</sup>Critics have attempted to explain Collins' preoccupations in them in various ways. Most common is the pre-romantic revolutionary reading prevalent, as we have seen, in so much Collins criticism. There have also been attempts to see an organizing principle in the volume. S. Musgrove, "The Theme of Collins's 'Odes,'" N&Q, 185 (1943), 214-17, 253-5, argues with some justification that the individual poems have meaning only when seen merely as parts of the total volume, a volume unified by its focus on the qualities of the "True Poet" (p. 215). Less acceptable is Musgrove's insistence that the subjects of the odes do not "seem calculated to lead a poet to that self-revelation which we find in the greatest English Odes" (p. 215). Ricardo Quintana, "The Scheme of Collins's 'Odes on Several...Subjects,'" in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 371-80, discerns a different unifying focus, and divides the poems into those dealing with "kinds" of poetry and those with political or social themes. Both Musgrove and Quintana are forced to acknowledge glaring exceptions to their theses for poems like the "Ode to Evening" that do not seem to fit. I shall take up the odes in the order of their original publication in the edition of December, 1746, believing that a pattern of invocative and non-invocative poems emerges as the key to their meaning, as it did in his early work.

<sup>4</sup>John Langhorne began the trend in his 1765 edition (the first complete collection) of Collins by placing them in the forefront with his enthusiastic praise in the appended commentary. See his "Observations

on the Oriental Eclogues and Odes," rpt. with Brydges' essay in the Aldine Ed., especially pp. 118-47. Langhorne's view of the central purpose of the Odes is also opposite: They convey, he says, "through the effects of the pencil, the finest moral lessons to the mind" (p. 119). His belief that they are the essential Collins has been shared by most critics since. In the most recent anthology of mid and late eighteenth-century poetry, Patricia Meyer Spacks selects eight of eleven Collins poems from their number. See her Late Augustan Poetry (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973). Of course, the Odes achieve some of their importance through their sheer bulk in the small Collins canon: there are twelve in all.

<sup>5</sup> Sigworth is representative: "...nothing Collins had previously done could have led anyone to anticipate...the total effect of the volume" (pp. 98-9). Sigworth also asserts their importance not only for Collins' work, but for the century as a whole; unfortunately, he is not clear about precisely why they are so crucial.

<sup>6</sup> See the useful, attractive reprint of that edition published in the Noel Douglas Replicas series (London: Noel Douglas, 1926).

<sup>7</sup> Apollo and the Nine: A History of the Ode (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1960), p. 4. For a somewhat cursory attempt to place Collins' use of the ode in the context of 17th through 19th-century versions of the genre, see George N. Shuster, The English Ode from Milton to Keats (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1940), especially pp. 186-213. Shuster does aptly point out, however, that the ode was used as a mode of praise and worship from Pindar through the eighteenth century and beyond, and regards Pindar and David the Psalmist as the primary influences on the English form; see pp. 6, 12, and 50 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Johnston, p. 151, n. 2, links this line to the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke, 10: 33-4.

<sup>9</sup> Johnston, p. 151, n. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Spacks, Poetry of Vision, p. 75, where, for example, she notes the allusion to blue as the traditional color of the robes of the Virgin Mary. Johnston links the color to truth, p. 152, n. 11.

<sup>11</sup> See Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960). Tuveson's analysis is relevant to my argument here, but his study of the relationship between imagination and grace is weakened by his insistence on that relationship as a guiding pattern throughout much of the aesthetic debate of the eighteenth century.

<sup>12</sup> See "The Author's Preface," Book III of Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy, ed. James A. Work (New York: Odyssey Press, 1940), where this idea is parodied, proving that it was current in Collins' time. In view of the pervasive prayer-like tone of Collins' poems, we should also not overlook the fact that Pity's temple is located in the area which gave birth to Christianity. He may have meant to suggest a link, though rather opaquely.

<sup>13</sup>The pattern established in the "Ode to Pity" is especially similar to that of the "Ode to Fear," as we shall see (though, too, the pattern remains fairly constant in all his subsequent invocative poems). This may be due in part, of course, to the often noted likelihood that the two poems developed in Collins' mind as companions based on the poet's familiarity with and interest in Aristotle's Poetics. Johnson once saved Collins from a bailiff by engaging him to translate the Poetics "with a large commentary." See Lives of the Poets, III, 336. The project, so far as is known, never reached completion.

<sup>14</sup>Johnson recalled that his "efforts sometimes caused harshness and obscurity," Lives of the Poets, III, 338, while this writer has often seen undergraduate and graduate students alike dismiss Collins on encountering such passages. Among other noteworthy examples, see the opening of "Ode on the Poetical Character."

<sup>15</sup>See Tuveson on the natural sublime, pp. 68-71, and Morris.

<sup>16</sup>Johnston, p. 156, nn. 20-3, observes that the "references to Vengeance and to the hounds ["that rav'ning Brood of Fate," l. 22] whom none may escape...assist the transition to the Epode, which deals with fear as it is contained in and evoked by Greek tragedy."

<sup>17</sup>Spacks, Poetry of Vision, p. 77, recognizes the "religious awe" and language which are particularly evident in the concluding lines of the poem, but she typically fails to go beyond her notion that for Collins the abstract world is essentially literary, and that his poetry is concerned with imagination and emotion for their own sake.

<sup>18</sup>Collins is, in my opinion, working directly in the tradition of "nature" as it is expressed by Pope in Windsor-Forest. See the introduction to that poem in Audra and Williams, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, pp. 133-4, and the poem itself. Also see the discussion of "nature" in the introduction to Essay on Criticism in the same volume, pp. 220-1.

<sup>19</sup>Poems, p. 251.

<sup>20</sup>Collins again puns on "Feet" in line twenty-four, referring to both the physical and the metric feet of Simplicity.

<sup>21</sup>See Spacks' analysis of what she argues convincingly is Thomas Gray's deliberate playing off of artificial poetic diction against a more prosaic and realistic language, Poetry of Vision, pp. 90-103. Collins does the same.

<sup>22</sup>For instructive parallels to these elements in the broad structure of prayer (i.e. adoration, thanksgiving for previous aid, propitiation for man's past sins, and petition for present and future aid), cf. "The Lord's Prayer" and the invocative stance of Milton and Spenser.

<sup>23</sup>For the details of the various arguments and cruxes, see Lonsdale's notes to the poem.

<sup>24</sup>"Collins and the Creative Imagination," p. 60.

<sup>25</sup>Poor Collins, p. 98.

<sup>26</sup>William Collins, p. 106. Also see E.L. Brooks, "William Collins's 'Ode on the Poetical Character,'" CE, 17 (1956), 403-4, on religious ideas in the poem.

<sup>27</sup>Poetry of Vision, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>29</sup>See Johnston's comment on this, p. 165, n. 5.

<sup>30</sup>Wasserman, "Collins' 'Ode on the Poetical Character,'" p. 96.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Wasserman, p. 97, who makes a similar point.

<sup>32</sup>The compound phrase is Wasserman's.

<sup>33</sup>The controversy (see, for example, Carver, p. 128) over whether Collins means the "Youth" to be Apollo as poet or the sun is unnecessary; both meanings are present, for Collins operates by analogy.

<sup>34</sup>See Johnston, p. 166, n. 29. The key lines in Milton occur, as we saw in chapter I, in Paradise Lost, I, 17-22, and VII, 9-11.

<sup>35</sup>Spacks, Late Augustan Poetry, p. 258, finds that despite Collins' doubts about "the highest poetic achievement" in "Poetical Character," "its tone denies that assertion, suggesting Collins's own intense lyric ambition." But ambition, as Collins' verse nearly everywhere reminds us, is not synonymous with achievement.

<sup>36</sup>I cannot agree with Wasserman that Collins considers Spenser a part of Waller's school (p. 107) as it contrasts with Milton's divine one. Such a contrast is made between Waller and Milton, but Collins admires Spenser quite as much as he does Milton. He accentuates Milton's greatness perhaps only because he is closest to his own time. Milton also seems to supersede Spenser in degree ("Such Bliss," l. 72), rather than quality, for both wrote the same kind of poetry--especially in Collins' view.

<sup>37</sup>Selected Poems, pp. 124-5.

<sup>38</sup>See Carver, pp. 35 ff.

<sup>39</sup>Lives of the Poets, III, 339. Also see Hill's note to this passage.

<sup>40</sup>See Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing (New York: Harcourt, 1971), especially pp. 62-90, 136.

<sup>41</sup>This ode has been more fortunate in its critical treatment than Collins' other non-invocative poems thus far. There are especially

helpful readings by both Spacks and Johnston, to which my discussion is indebted. See Spacks, ed., Eighteenth-Century Poetry (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 1-liv, and Johnston, p. 170. Their emphases differ somewhat from mine. Spacks particularly notes the apparent paradox of the absence of living human mourners at the graves, thus the seemingly fruitless sacrifice of the dead. I agree with Spacks, however, that this paradox is reconciled by the spiritual universe Collins introduces.

## CHAPTER V

### ODES (CONTINUED) AND FINAL ATTEMPTS

Despite the unselfconscious posture of "How Sleep the Brave," the remaining odes in the 1746 volume demonstrate only too clearly Collins' inability to maintain an uninhibited, non-invocative stance. Directly succeeding "How Sleep the Brave," the "Ode to Mercy" provides ample evidence of how briefly Collins was able to retain his poise. In it he returns to the invocative stance, which continues to determine the structure and meaning of nearly all his poems.

#### I

Collins' invocation to Mercy is constructed primarily as an attempt by the poet to prove first that his nation, and second that he himself is worthy of the Goddess' present and future favor. He focuses, in the first nineteen lines, on the present and past aid given by Mercy to men in general and to England in particular; then he turns, in the final seven, to his desire to show himself a deserving mediator for the future by virtue of his special visionary powers. Of course, Collins' public and private, present and future goals ultimately merge within the total invocative stance, and they overlap at times through the poem. But his marked shift of emphasis as he begins the last seven lines justifies making this structural division central to our consideration of the poem, rather than the usual one signaled by the strophe and antistrophe.

Intent from the start on his invocation as an instrument for the moral improvement of England, Collins begins by stressing Mercy's divine origin and power. First, his usual call, "O Thou" (l. 1), establishes his distance from Her and sets the tone of address as prayer. Then, picturing Her as "a smiling Bride" (l. 1) balancing Valour in battle, he describes the Goddess as "Gentlest of Sky-born Forms" (l. 3), and Her Songs as "divine to hear" (l. 4). As Johnston suggests, Collins surely seeks to parallel these Songs of Mercy with his own poem, for Her Songs are the means of Her victory over Valour's "fatal Grasp" (l. 5); as She influences Valour, so the poet hopes to influence Her, then his readers.<sup>1</sup>

Repeating his respectful address in lines seven and eight, Collins makes clear just how privileged and rare a vision he seeks: "Thou who, amidst the deathful Field, / By Godlike Chiefs alone beheld...." The poet's vision must, therefore, attain the status of such chiefs if he is to see Her and take the crucial step of describing Her. Since Collins emphasizes that She is visible to these chiefs "alone," one must conclude that the portrait of Her thus far in the poem represents merely his attempt to prove himself worthy of a more complete vision--though he does not yet turn overtly to such a personal plea. His concern at this point remains with establishing the Goddess' divine origin and power, and Her distance therefore from common men.

Just as Mercy is "Pleading" to save the "Youth who sinks to Ground" (l. 10), the poet pleads for his nation by announcing to Her that "Before thy Shrine my Country's Genius stands, / And decks thy Altar still, tho' pierc'd with many a Wound!" (ll. 12-13). In addition to sustaining the reader's awareness of Mercy's divine role ("thy

Shrine," "thy Altar"), these lines underscore the poet's sense of his identity with his countrymen's needs and prayers: he speaks of "my Country's Genius." Even more significant is Collins' introduction of the nation's worship at Her altar. With passionate repetition, and with vision as the pivot he says, "See, Mercy, see" how the nation prays "with pure and loaded Hands" (l. 11). Most important of all, however, lines eleven through thirteen are Collins' attempt to prove to Mercy that the nation is worthy of Her attention. They serve as a report to the Goddess that the spirit of the nation is dedicated to Her, and the report itself becomes that dedication articulated and made permanent by the poet's words. In this way Collins brings the people of England to the Goddess and expresses their thoughts and feelings to heaven.

A crucial shift in tense separates the opening six lines of the antistrophe from the strophe. In the strophe Collins employs only the present tense, thus underscoring Mercy's active, present powers and the nation's urgent need of them. The tense also emphasizes England's current worship of the Goddess. But in the third stanza (after an initial present tense reference to "he whom ev'n our Joys provoke," accenting the "Fiend's" present threat and therefore again their immediate need of aid) Collins introduces the past tense. By doing so he expands his argument for the worthiness of his countrymen: not only do they worship Mercy's present powers, but they also recall Her past aid in preventing the "Fiend of Nature" from making England "his Prey" when he "join'd his Yoke" (ll. 15-16) to attack.

The Fiend, of course, is Satan,<sup>2</sup> and by introducing the conflict between this emblem of evil and the goodness of Mercy Collins intimates the perpetual struggle between these forces for the soul of man. Also

latent in these first six lines is the role of poetry as a chief aid in the struggle against the Fiend; Collins thus places the moral impact he seeks to have on his readers on an even more universal plane, suggesting again the gravity of his task.

Of equal importance in these lines is the poet's continued association of himself with his audience, particularly with its limitations and vulnerability. The Fiend is "he whom ev'n our Joys provoke" and it is "our Isle" (l. 16)--my italics--which he has attempted to defeat. Collins speaks for himself as well as for his nation in praising and thanking Mercy for saving England. At the same time, the poet leads his audience (or congregation) upward, through the invocative stance, toward a vision of the "sweet Abode" (l. 17) from which the Goddess comes, and prepares to make his request for future aid.

The most significant lines of the poem with regard both to the poet's moral goal and his attempt to achieve the prerequisite of a successful invocation, are the last seven. It is here that Collins turns briefly but emphatically from asserting the nation's worthiness to a self-conscious endeavor to affirm his personal fitness for his task. The key lines in the declaration begin the stanza; Collins there concludes his portrayal of Mercy's defeat of the Fiend: "I see recoil his sable Steeds, / That bore Him swift to Salvage Deeds..." (ll. 20-1). Stressed by its position in the line, Collins' "I see" is the overt culmination of his implicit attempt to prove his worth through imaginative vision in the first nineteen lines. Now he claims explicitly to see the Fiend's defeat, with his mind's eye, and the shift back to the present tense underscores the immediacy of the vision.

With this claim as his base, the poet proceeds with his last call

to the Goddess ("O Maid," l. 23). He reminds Her that, in return for Her aid in expelling evil, "for all thy Love to Britain shown" (l. 23), "To Thee we build a roseate Bow'r" (l. 25). Again, the poet leads his earthly audience in announcing England's present worship of the Goddess, thereby reaffirming the nation's worthiness. Also, he states emphatically in the final line that "Thou [Mercy], Thou shalt rule our Queen, and share our Monarch's Throne!" This introduces the poet's hope that the success of his invocation will make itself known in Mercy's future ("shalt") aid. But, significantly, it is no more than an aspiration, the realization of which seems indefinitely postponed. Still, the invocation, for Collins, is the poem.

His invocation to Mercy now includes the present, past and future, and encompasses not only the general populace of the nation--to which he once more links himself in the repeated "our"--but also its ruler. The poet's shift in this line to the future tense and the throne aptly rounds out the movement of the poem as a whole toward a universal framework for his prayer. As usual, the goals Collins seeks to attain through his invocative stance are far-reaching public as well as private ones--which explains why so much of the "Ode to Mercy" focuses on proof of a nation's and, clearly most difficult for him, his own, worth.

## II

The "Ode to Liberty" may be viewed, in part, as an expanded version of the "Ode to Mercy," especially in its sustained focus on the moral health of the poet's readers. Perhaps the pivotal difference is that Collins' lack of confidence is explicit in "Liberty," whereas in "Mercy" it is, as we have seen, mainly implied. Collins also returns

in "Liberty" to the idea (much elaborated) of political freedom as essential to the health of civilization in general and art in particular which he began to express in "Simplicity."<sup>3</sup> Because he sees the Goddess Liberty as having such a fundamental role in all of civilization, his self-conscious lack of confidence in addressing Her, as well as his consequent inability to proceed beyond his invocation, take on special significance as further revelations of the force of his dilemma. The "Ode to Liberty" is also important, it should be noted, as the third longest poem in the Collins canon, behind only the "Epistle to Hanmer" and the "Ode on the Popular Superstitions."

Skeptical questions about the abilities of poets both present and future, vehement attempts to prove himself a worthy mediator by virtue of his dedication, and momentary hopes for the future govern much of the poem. Collins opens, indeed, with twelve lines of questioning, which firmly establish the tone of what follows. The effect is heightened by the length of the two key questions (only two sentences make up the full twelve lines) with which the poet proclaims his doubts. First, he asks

Who shall awake the Spartan Fife,  
And call in solemn Sounds to Life,  
The Youths, whose locks divinely spreading,  
Like vernal Hyacinths in sullen Hue,  
At once the Breath of Fear and Virtue shedding,  
Applauding Freedom lov'd of old to view?  
(ll. 1-6)

As he continues, one senses the questions are merely rhetorical, for they seem to lead to none but negative responses--responses born out by the remainder of the poem:

What New Alcaeus, Fancy-blest,  
Shall sing the Sword, in Myrtles drest,  
At Wisdom's Shrine a-while its Flame concealing,  
(What Place so fit to seal a Deed renown'd?)  
Till she her brightest Lightnings round revealing,  
It leap'd in Glory forth, and dealt her prompted Wound!  
(ll. 7-12)

The negative undercurrent of these lines is also reinforced later by the pattern they introduce: the westward progress of Liberty from Greece to Britain. As fundamental to the structure of this ode as it is in the "Epistle to Hanmer," this progress has an almost identically ironic conclusion, which will be evident. In neither does the progress reach fully to Collins' own time.

Important too in these opening lines is Collins' typical accumulation of a religious vocabulary. It has the effect primarily of confirming the poet's idea of the reverence owed not only to the Goddess Liberty, but to the poet who can affect an audience which partakes of Her divinity by worshipping Her. Such a poet must create "solemn Sounds" to influence Youths with "locks divinely spreading," and this "New Alcaeus" must also be "Fancy-blest." In addition, one notes Collins' continued emphasis on vision: the Youths "lov'd of old to view" Freedom.

This preparation complete, Collins formally initiates his invocation:

O Goddess, in that feeling Hour,  
When most its Sounds would court thy Ears,  
Let not my Shell's misguided Pow'r  
E'er draw thy sad, thy mindful Tears.  
(ll. 13-16)

Clearly Collins wishes to be the "New Alcaeus." The Youths of the past both deserved and inspired the Goddess Freedom's favor and love; he seeks to induce the young men of his nation to merit Her love equally

through his own "solemn Sounds." Yet in the same breath he undercuts his desire with his fatal lack of belief in his worth. He cannot trust his poetry's "misguided Pow'r," and fears he may influence the Goddess inappropriately by mention of Her "destruction" at the fall of Rome.

Despite such recurring doubts about his ability, Collins perseveres. He turns the traditional progress to his purpose at first by praising Liberty's staying power in the hope that She will respond to his invocation. Much of the remainder of the poem is devoted to this survey of Her ruin in Rome, then of Her preservation in nation after nation across Europe until She finally comes to rest, in Collins' myth, in England (the details of the progress fill the epode and the antistrophe). The laudatory mode of the survey is suggested immediately after the poet recounts how "all the blended Work of Strength and Grace" (l. 23) was "to thousand Fragments broke" (l. 25) when Rome fell. Collins declares to Liberty,

Yet ev'n, where'er the least [Fragments] appear'd,  
Th'admiring World thy Hand rever'd;  
Still 'midst the scatter'd States around,  
Some Remnants of Her Strength were found....  
(ll. 26-9)

The poet thus continues to encourage a response to the Goddess in his audience by praising the strength and virtue of those nations where Her influence was received and preserved in the past. At the same time he asserts the Goddess' lasting strength, and implies his personal worthiness as mediator by his very description of this progress of civilization--especially when it culminates in his own nation.

The progress reaches England in the conclusion of the epode:

The Magic works, Thou feel'st the Strains,  
One holier Name alone remains;  
The perfect Spell shall then avail,  
Hail Nymph, ador'd by Britain, Hail!  
(ll. 60-3)

Collins makes this climactic statement a subtle plea revolving around his notion--asserted throughout his poetry--of the potential "Magic" of his verse. Effectively ambiguous, "works" suggests both the noun and verb forms of the word: as a noun, it sums up the poet's just concluded praise of the "Magic" power of Liberty's past accomplishments; as a verb (perhaps its prevalent sense here), it forms the basis for one of Collins' hopeful moments. He appears to seek an incantatory effect from his present tense statement, "The Magic works, Thou feel'st the Strains," for without delay he presumes to predict the result of his work's success: "The perfect Spell shall then avail." Simultaneously, he praises both Britain ("one holier Name") and the Goddess ("Hail Nymph"), stressing in the process the nation's worthiness due to its faithful prayers. The Goddess is "ador'd by Britain."

Finally, however, one must note a certain disquieting ambivalence in these lines. It results from Collins' brief present tense usage at the end of a survey of past achievements, which is then followed by the return to the past tense at line sixty-three. Perhaps he means only to employ a historical present, in which case even the momentary personal confidence of these lines is lost. Such subtle mixtures of hope and despair continue to reside at the center of Collins' invocative stance.

Somewhat tangentially, Collins returns in the antistrophe to embellish the manner of Liberty's arrival in Britain. The passage seems primarily to be the result of Collins' fascination with the idea of continental drift,<sup>4</sup> but it also adds detail to his portrait of his deserving nation, and thus bolsters his argument for Liberty's renewed aid. Most important are the final four lines of the section, which

form a second climax in Collins' search for Liberty's help. In them Collins sums up England's separation from the continent and the creation of smaller islands offshore as both a tribute by heaven to Liberty's greatness, and as a testimony to England's worth:

For Thee consenting Heav'n has each [the islands] bestow'd,  
A fair Attendant on her sov'reign Pride:  
To Thee this blest Divorce she ow'd,  
For thou hast made her Vales thy lov'd, thy last Abode!  
(ll. 85-8)

All the ingredients of the poet's theory of inspiration and hope for success in attaining it are here. A "consenting Heav'n" makes all things possible; heaven's agent, Liberty, enables the "blest Divorce" to take place; and finally, the Goddess honors Britain--and gives hope to the poet--by making the nation Her "last Abode" in Her long westward march.

The progress now nearly complete, Collins goes on in the second epode to recall the glory of Liberty's past favor in "our Isle," where "Thy Shrine in some religious Wood, / O Soul-enforcing Goddess stood!" (ll. 90-2). He sustains his emphasis on Her heavenly origin, obviously attempting still to obtain Her aid by praise in addition to recalling the past moral infusions. The Shrine was in a "religious Wood" where the Goddess could affect men's souls, and there they often met "thy Form celestial" (l. 94).

But at this point Collins' confidence wanes and the memory of past achievements calls to mind the failure of the present. Though the Goddess has reached Britain, Her progress has not continued into his own era, and he cannot now find Her Shrine: "Tho' now with hopeless Toil we trace / Time's backward Rolls, to find its piace" (ll. 95-6). The poet's assurance has weakened so far, indeed, that he even undercuts

Liberty's previous progress: not sure where, due to his limited vision, the destruction of Her Shrine occurred, he suggests Denmark or Rome, then sums up his sense of isolation, believing "in what Heav'n-left Age it fell, / 'Twere hard for modern Song to tell" (ll. 99-100).

From here on the poem's conclusion consists of Collins' juxtaposition of pessimism and faint hope, which once again reveals the poet's continual struggle with his dilemma. As usual, just as one decides Collins has given up under its weight (as in the preceding lines), he partially qualifies that doubt:

Yet still, if Truth those Beams infuse,  
Which guide at once, and charm the Muse,  
Beyond yon braided Clouds that lie,  
Paving the light-embroider'd Sky:  
Amidst the bright pavilion'd Plains,  
The beauteous Model still remains.  
(ll. 101-6)

Somewhere in heaven, the poet strives to believe, the pure idea and form of Liberty exists even now. But, after several lines in which he insists on the greater blessing of actually being in heaven where one may hear Druid poets sing and play "th' immortal String" (l. 112), Collins sinks anew into despair in the face of his immediate task:

How may the Poet now unfold  
What never Tongue or Numbers told?  
How learn delighted, and amaz'd,  
What Hands unknown that Fabric rais'd?  
(ll. 113-16)

These lines mark the poet's return to the questioning mode of the poem's opening lines. And in contrast to Spenser and Milton, with whom he shares this awed stance in the attempt to express the invisible realm ("Hands unknown"), Collins' despairing emphasis is on the apparently insurmountable problem for him of doing so "now." They knew the dilemma, but could still overcome it.

Striving yet, however, he attempts to demonstrate his ability by recording his vision: "Ev'n now before his [Collins'] favor'd Eyes..." (1. 117). The hope remains. In fact, he seems almost to believe he has actually received Her favor, though his assertion of it so late in the poem makes it appear as if he protests too much, and it is undercut by "seems" in the following line. Nevertheless, he pursues his vision. Also, in the process of proving his own worth he maintains his hope of recalling England's greatness so that the Goddess will answer both with moral strength. After he describes Liberty's heavenly Shrine he seeks to have Her influence known by those who witness Her glories, as well as England's:

There on the Walls the Patriot's Sight,  
May ever hang with fresh Delight,  
And, grav'd with some Prophetic Rage,  
Read Albion's Fame thro' ev'ry Age.  
(11. 125-8)

Indeed, his own expression of the glories of the Shrine and its Goddess may, he certainly hopes, amplify his persuasion of his readers to accept Her influence if She bestows it.

Collins' reference to future ages here sets the stage for his final plea. He begins this ultimate call by asking "Ye Forms Divine, ye Laureate Band"--those past poets whose successful mediation has earned them a place near Liberty's "inmost Altar" (11. 129-30)--to assist his own mediation, demonstrating his still keen sense of personal limitation. Also still dedicated to his goal, however, Collins adds personification to his plea, hoping first that the "Laureate Band" will "Now sooth Her" (1. 131), and that the Goddess will then mediate Her influence to earth via "Blithe Concord's social Form" (1. 132). But his success remains only a potentiality in these lines, for Collins

continues to vacillate between hope and doubt. He is not yet able to say that Concord will come to the nation's aid; he asserts only that she "can" control even Anger (l. 133). A similarly implied conditional tone manifests itself to the very end of the poem, where all Collins can manage is his typical desire for future inspiration from the Goddess.

In that last verse paragraph he does turn, despite his uncertainty, away from himself to his fundamental moral purpose. In order to facilitate Liberty's return from heaven he pledges what he hopes will be the full dedication of the people to Her power and virtue:

Her let our Sires and Matrons hoar  
Welcome to Britain's ravag'd Shore,  
Our Youths, enamour'd of the Fair,  
Play with the Tangles of her Hair,  
Till in one loud applauding Sound,  
The Nations shout to Her around,  
O how supremely art thou blest,  
Thou, Lady, Thou shalt rule the West!  
(ll. 137-44)

His concern with the moral fiber of all mankind, and not just that of his own nation, becomes paramount. He begins with the respected, elderly citizens of England, proceeds to the opposite end of the spectrum of society, then includes "Nations" and finally the entire western world in what he prays will be the kingdom of the Goddess. The movement from microcosm to macrocosm is paralleled and amplified by the movement from the calm of the simple "Welcome" to be given the Goddess by the elders, to the "Youths" who are to be "enamour'd" of the Goddess and will demonstrate their passion by playing with the "Tangles of her Hair," and lastly to the acclaim She will receive in the crescendo of the nations' shout.

It is also worthy of note that Collins usually places his most

emphatic statement concerning the welfare of his readers at or near the conclusion of his poems, as he does here; in this sense, the entire invocation is a prelude to his final prayer for them as well as for himself. Moreover, the all but universal focus he attains in this ode shows both the magnitude of his task and how far beyond himself he is at times able to look. But once again, despite those few moments of hope and near success, Collins' poem is, as these closing lines also demonstrate, no more than a plea for the future, no more than wishful invocation to a distant Goddess who remains aloof to the end. All Collins manages is a sweeping dedication to Her return in the hope that She will answer.<sup>5</sup>

### III

Several points should be stressed at the outset about the next poem in the volume, the "Ode to a Lady on the Death of Colonel Ross in the Action of Fontenoy." First, it is the only one of the twelve odes in the 1746 group to have been published separately at an earlier date.<sup>6</sup> Also, it is the third and last poem in the volume in which Collins does not employ the invocative stance. Finally, and closely related to its non-invocative mode, the poem is strikingly similar in its subject matter, its tone and its mythic structure--even down to its exact phrasing--to both the "Song from Cymbelyne" and "How Sleep the Brave."

If we recall for a moment that those two poems are probably Collins' most complete achievements of that visionary mediation through poetry which he elsewhere so obsessively invokes, we may well expect the "Ode to a Lady" to demonstrate another full transcendence of his

dilemma. Moreover, Collins' non-invocative stance, plus his focus beyond himself or poetry per se and instead almost totally on the encouragement of moral vigor in his country, would seem to support such a conclusion. However, when one examines the ode carefully, its close resemblance to the "Song" and "How Sleep the Brave," coupled with an explicit moment of doubt near its conclusion, suggests a different view. Rather than revealing a confident Collins, the "Ode to a Lady" may well exemplify yet another facet of his inhibition. Not only has he become all but bound for the duration of his writing career to the invocative stance (within which, as we have already seen, much repetition of both structure and phrasing also exists), but when he does break away from it he does so via a single, severely limited, elegiac mode.

At the very least this third encounter with the genre raises the question of whether at this point in his career Collins is capable of anything beyond a rather narrow poetic range, even in his most unselfconscious moments. The inhibiting effects of his dilemma appear to be spilling over from the invocative to the non-invocative poems. On the other hand, such an interpretation should not contradict or significantly qualify what I have previously argued to be Collins' genuine non-invocative achievement in either the "Song" or "How Sleep the Brave." For the key here is not so much the recurrence of the elegiac mode in itself. Rather it is the lack of confidence inherent in the combination of that recurrence with Collins' recourse to a previously published poem in a volume elsewhere composed entirely of new efforts.

A brief comparison of Collins' mythic imagery and the diction of

the three poems will sufficiently indicate the extent of their resemblance to one another. Various elements from each of the other two poems come together in the "Ode to a Lady." Perhaps the first to attract the reader's notice is Collins' portrait of mourners in attendance at the grave. The "Village Hinds" who mourn Fidele in the "Song" become "the Village Hind" who attends the "sacred Spot" (l. 16) in the "Ode to a Lady"; and the "Fairy Hands" and "Forms unseen" of "How Sleep the Brave" are the "Aërial Hands" that "shall build thy Tomb" (l. 20). "Freedom" and "Honour" also figure prominently as mourners in both "How Sleep the Brave" and "Ode to a Lady."<sup>7</sup> And of the numerous examples of similar phrasing, probably the most distinct is the echoing of "By all their Country's Wishes blest" in "How Sleep the Brave" by "His Country's Vows shall bless the Grave" (l. 14) in "Ode to a Lady," and of "She there shall dress a sweeter Sod" in the former to "With ev'ry sweetest Turf shall bind" (l. 17) in the latter. Also revealing is the appearance in the "Ode to a Lady" of words like "Turf," "Sod" and "Grave" which are typical of Collins' diction in the other two poems. All these factors contribute to the extreme similarity among the three works.

Beyond supplying such evidence of the increasingly inhibitory consequences of his dilemma, the "Ode to a Lady" is important for its demonstration of Collins' persistent ideal of his ultimate and weighty task as a moral teacher on a national scale. His ostensible aim in the poem is to comfort the lady in her bereavement. But in order to accomplish this, Collins as myth-maker envisions the nation as a whole mourning the deaths in the battle: "While, lost to all his former Mirth, / Britannia's Genius bends to Earth, / And mourns the fatal

Day" (ll. 1-3). Concluding in the second stanza that the lady will remain grieved because of "The Thoughts which musing Pity pays, / And fond Remembrance loves to raise" (ll. 7-8), while also recognizing Fancy's darker side (ll. 10-12), the poet proceeds with a prophetic, mythic portrayal of the public reaction to the battle and the death of the nation's defender, Ross. The picture includes living and dead, earthly and heavenly mourners. Indeed, Collins appears to lose sight of the lady herself altogether as he describes the honors the heavenly powers will heap upon the dead: "Blest Youth, regardful of thy Doom, / Aërial Hands shall build thy Tomb, / With shadowy Trophies crown'd" (ll. 19-21), and a tearful Honor will "sigh thy name" (l. 23).<sup>8</sup>

In the succeeding stanzas Collins continues this broad, public portrayal of the nation's loss of the battle, and of the mourners for the dead soldier. The "warlike Dead of ev'ry Age" (l. 25) and the ancient chiefs of the nation will honor the dead; the sons of Edward III will wish to fight to avenge the wrong done to England (ll. 31-6); and the personified Goddess Freedom lies as though raped, "Her Garments torn, her Bosom bare...Her matted Tresses madly spread" (ll. 38, 40). Then, in stanza eight, having thus prepared the way for arousing the indignation of the present defeated, grieving population by demonstrating the zeal and success of past heroes (as he does elsewhere those of past poets), Collins comes to his central point. He exhorts the people to restore the Goddess by suggesting that if they do not do so, Her crucial favor will be lost to England:

Ne'er shall she leave that lowly Ground,  
Till Notes of Triumph bursting round  
Proclaim her Reign restor'd:

Till William seek the sad Retreat,  
And bleeding at her sacred Feet,  
Present the sated Sword.<sup>9</sup>  
(11. 43-8)

Thus Collins can be seen to develop much of his poem with the moral and political strength of the nation in mind; he hopes to persuade the people to defend their country's honor, and thereby to restore through his mediation the influence and favor of heaven. The Goddess' "sacred Feet" clearly fix Her point of origin.

It is only in the final two stanzas that Collins returns overtly to the original purpose of his poem. He does, however, accomplish the transition fairly smoothly. He has presented these "pictur'd Glories" (l. 50), he suggests, in order to soothe the lady's heart through his visionary powers. In this way he fuses the public and personal segments of the poem. Just at this crucial juncture, though, Collins' first explicit doubt about his poem's success also comes to the fore, and thus undercuts the assured tone of all that precedes it. Echoing his uncertain opening to another non-invocative ode, "Poetical Character," he opens the ninth stanza with a diffident suggestion that his verse may be too feeble, "If, weak to sooth...", and ends it with a second "if" clause.

Yet in spite of such doubt, he completes the clauses with another hopeful conclusion. In the tenth and last stanza he expands the fusion of national and personal, and once again turns from himself to accentuate the public force he hopes his poem will have. The stanza is an especially important one too in that it demonstrates again that Collins hopes to write both for a present and for a future audience. Seeming almost to hope for success through mere assertion, he insists that even "If" all of these glories he has thus far "pictur'd" fail to comfort

the lady, he can promise her that

Where'er from Time Thou court'st Relief,  
The Muse shall still, with social Grief,  
Her gentlest Promise keep:  
Ev'n humble Harting's cottag'd Vale  
Shall learn the sad repeated Tale,  
And bid her Shepherds weep.  
(ll. 55-60)

Collins also makes such a promise possible here by shifting from his own ("These," l. 50) attempts to the impersonal, cosmic realm of poetic inspiration represented by the "Muse." Not only will the Muse induce "social Grief," but She will express it and permanently embody it both for the nation as a whole and for the small village where the lady lives. Not only will the lady be soothed by the "gentlest Promise" of the Muse, but the "Shepherds" of the village will be taught in future times about the virtuous sacrifice of the dead and will weep for them.<sup>10</sup> This will, presumably, make them as responsive to Freedom and Honor as were their predecessors.

Collins is still not able to assert, however, that the Muse will do this through him specifically. He never fully overrides the doubt raised in stanza nine. When we combine this doubt with the circumstances of the poem's publication and its self-imitative quality, it is clear that the "Ode to a Lady" is, like the "Ode on the Poetical Character," far from expressing the unqualified confidence of Collins' earlier non-invocative poems. That he continues to hope at all is a measure of his dedication to the poetic theory and accomplishment of his predecessors.

#### IV

The "Ode to Evening," significantly, begins with its own extended

(fourteen lines), uncertain "if" clause,<sup>11</sup> the first two lines of which set the tone for all that follows: "If ought of Oaten Stop, or Pastoral Song, / May hope, O pensive Eve, to sooth thine Ear...."<sup>12</sup> The remainder of the poem is cast in this typically humble, self-centered invocative stance as he pleads with the Goddess for Her aid in embodying Her essence in his "Song." All the key elements we have been tracing in his invocative mode are here: in addition to the self-doubt inherent in the opening "If" and the tentative "May," there are the "hope" with which the poet manages at times to balance his pessimism, and the respectful "thine" which reminds us of his distance from the abstract realm the Goddess occupies in Her pure form.<sup>13</sup>

In the remaining twelve lines of the conditional opening clause Collins attempts to prove his powers of description to the Goddess rather subtly by seeming at first to be suggesting only how Her own sounds sooth Her: if any pipe or song may move Her, "Like thy own brawling Springs" (l. 3).<sup>14</sup> But as he does so he is, in fact, beginning to embody Her atmosphere himself. After he repeats his call to Her, "O Nymph reserv'd" (l. 5), thus underscoring Her reticence toward him and the stubborn difficulty of his undertaking, he continues with his attempt to prove himself while preparing simultaneously for the key invocation that closes the long subordinate clause. He continues to construct the Goddess' setting around the repetition of "now," appropriate first because Her coming is determined by time, but also because Collins is seeking both to locate himself in Her surroundings as he writes, and at the same time to induce Her immediate arrival by creating that scene. His tone is nearly insistent as he asserts, "now the bright-hair'd Sun / Sits in yon western Tent" (ll. 5-6), and "Now Air is

hush'd" (1. 9).

Finally in line fifteen we come to the last "Now," and he completes the opening sentence with the main clause containing the invocation toward which the preceding lines have drawn us:

Now teach me, Maid compos'd,  
To breathe some soften'd Strain,  
Whose Numbers stealing thro' thy darkning Vale,  
May not unseemly with its Stillness suit,  
As musing slow, I hail  
Thy genial lov'd Return!

(11. 15-20)

The lines summarize Collins' firm belief in his need for external aid ("teach me"), his reserve about his putting the Goddess' teaching into practice ("Whose Numbers...May not unseemly with its Stillness suit"), and his concomitant reverence for Her as a superior being ("Maid compos'd," "I hail..."). The very form of his invocation underscores the poet's remoteness from the Goddess, and demonstrates his need: his call is an ardent exclamation, while Her essence, on the other hand, is suggested by the terms "compos'd," "soften'd," "Stillness" and "genial."

Having made his fundamental plea, Collins goes on in the rest of the poem to elaborate the mythic setting of Evening within which he aspires to experience the essence of the Goddess. The portrait, by which the poet once more attempts to mediate between the abstract and the particular through his visualizing powers, actually breaks into two rather distinct sections. The first, beginning immediately after the initial invocation, maintains Collins' focus on his personal quest for the ability to see Evening fully, and runs to line forty. In this section the reader experiences Evening as a realm of mythic "Elves" (1. 23), "many a Nymph" (1. 25), and the Goddess' "religious Gleams"

(l. 32), which cause the "Walls" of "some Ruin" to "more awful nod" (ll. 30-1), until finally Her "Dewy Fingers draw / The gradual dusky Veil" (ll. 39-40).<sup>15</sup> Collins also employs personification to capture the atmosphere of the scene, as along with the Elves and the Nymph, "The Pensive Pleasures sweet / Prepare thy [Evening's] shadowy Car" (ll. 27-8). But he fills the scene too with more realistically described details of both sight and sound, particularly in the closing lines of the section, ranging from "chill blustering Winds, or driving Rain" (l. 33), to "Wilds, and swelling Floods, / And Hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd Spires" (ll. 36-7), with "their simple Bell" (l. 38).<sup>16</sup>

Twice in this section Collins injects a significant note of personal striving, indicating that he still finds himself unsure of both the efficacy of his earlier invocation and the accomplishment of these very lines. The first takes the form of an additional plea to the Goddess: "Then let me rove some wild and heathy Scene..." (l. 29). Indeed, the entire opening description of this section is actually a preparation for this line: "when...the...Pleasures...Prepare" the Goddess' Car, "Then..." the poet asks Her permission to "rove."

The second personal reference appears only a few lines later, where Collins expresses another momentary doubt and repeats his request for the Goddess' aid:

Or if chill blustering Winds, or driving Rain,  
Prevent my willing Feet, be mine the Hut,  
That from the Mountain's Side,  
Views Wilds....<sup>17</sup> (ll. 33-6)

The "if" here links this hesitation to the sustained self-doubt of the poem's opening lines, while the poet's reference in the same breath to "my willing Feet" seems a futile profession; his desire remains greater than his accomplishment. Still, he continues to hope for vision ("be

mine the Hut...That...Views"), and the invocative stance continues to control the poem.

In the final twelve lines of the ode, however, he does move from his personal obsession to a universal embodiment of Evening, which includes reassertion of his moral role. The section begins with Collins' personification of each of the four seasons in relation to the Goddess Evening's own atmosphere, and demonstrates that Her manifestation on earth transcends time though it is also a function of it. Even "Winter," who, unlike the others, does not adopt a worshipful stance before the Goddess (Autumn, for example, "fills thy Lap with Leaves," l. 45), but instead "rudely rends thy Robes" (ll. 46-8), does not disturb Her eternal composure. Her reign is still "thy quiet Rule" (l. 49).<sup>18</sup> And throughout the changing seasons, Collins finally exhorts and hopes,

Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, smiling Peace,  
Thy gentlest Influence own,  
And love thy fav'rite Name!<sup>19</sup>  
(ll. 50-2)

Her influence will transcend the physical beauties he has portrayed to this point, and will also go beyond the aid he has sought as poet ("Fancy"), to be felt in the realms of human relationships ("Friendship"), knowledge ("Science"), and in the universal calm of the "Peace" it can enhance.

Collins' personification of these additional abstract entities further suggests that their influence on mankind is contingent upon the success (in this instance) of his invocation to the all-encompassing Goddess, Evening, who will reciprocate by influencing the likes of Fancy and Peace. Evening's moral inspiration can thus only be received by the generality of men through two levels of mediation: the poet's, and that represented by these figures. The poem's conclusion is, in

this sense, a subtle reiteration by Collins of his distance--and mankind's--from the heavenly essences to whom he prays, and therefore of the complexities involved in gaining their favor. The next ode in the volume provides an interesting contrast to this twice removed invocation.

V

In the "Ode to Peace" Collins makes yet another attempt to achieve his ideal role as mediator for his nation's moral welfare through the invocative stance. And this time the attempt is unrelieved (as so often before) even by such objectively descriptive moments as were made possible by the somewhat more immediately tangible qualities of Evening. For here, instead of striving to gain the favor of the Goddess Peace indirectly through Evening's grace, he returns to his accustomed mode and prays to Her directly from start to finish. One is tempted, indeed, to see the "Ode to Peace" as a deliberate sequel to the conclusion of the "Ode to Evening." In this sense the two poems may be viewed as consecutive efforts by the poet to gain a reluctant Peace's favor toward both himself and England--the one through indirect, the other through direct invocation. And although Collins' deletion of "Peace" in the 1748 "Ode to Evening" indicates that perhaps he had second thoughts about such a relationship, nevertheless the unmistakable connection in the original volume provides important additional insight into the poet's obsessive pursuit of his goal.

His supplicating voice apparent in the usual opening address, "O Thou," the "Ode to Peace" begins with Collins' mythically expressed lament for the departure of Peace from the nation. This first stanza

obviously recalls the classical myth of the passing of peace from the world at the close of the Golden Age.<sup>20</sup> Collins suggests the purity of the Goddess Peace through his reference to Her "golden Hair" (1. 2), and stresses Her present distance from worldly chaos in Her retreat to "thy native Skies" (1. 3). War now holds sway over the earth (Britain, specifically), having arrived in an "Iron Car" (1. 5) drawn by vultures, in appropriate contrast to the attendant emblems of Peace, the turtle-doves of the first line.<sup>21</sup> It is also significant that the skies to which Peace returns are Her "native" abode; as he does habitually in these prayers, Collins clearly portrays the abstraction he personifies as an entity which originates far above the world of man, presumably in the heavens.

Another important indication of the condition of the world at the start of the poem is the closing line of the first stanza: War descended on England "And bad his Storms arise!" The Iron Age is by tradition the period of decay, wickedness and chaos in both nature and the affairs of men, and it customarily corresponds, of course, to the Fall in Genesis and its results. Thus the stage is set for the attempted mediation by the poet in bringing about a restoration of order and virtue.

Collins then turns from establishing Peace's absence to a hopeful if momentary prophecy in preparation for Her consent to his plea:

Tir'd of his rude tyrannic Sway,  
Our Youth shall fix some festive Day,  
His sullen Shrines to burn....  
(11. 7-9)

War's "sullen Shrines" contrast sharply with the promised "festive Day" when the nation's Youth "shall" destroy them; the poet's prediction of their overthrow bodes well for the future of virtue and

Peace. Moreover, Collins seeks the return of a more permanent order than the destruction of the shrines of War alone might offer. Peace must respond to man's need and Herself return:

But Thou who hear'st the turning Spheres,  
What Sounds may charm thy partial Ears,  
And gain thy blest Return!  
(11. 10-12)

Collins' "But" abruptly interrupts his expectant tone, however. Here again we are witness to the crux of the poet's invocative, mediatory role with all its inherent difficulty. He must attempt, despite the extraordinary competition provided by the harmony of the heavenly spheres, to produce "Sounds" in his verse which will make the divinely conceived abstraction responsive, that is, will induce Her to return from the heavens to establish Her influence in England once more.

The reappearance of the word "charm" in this context points to the poet's burden as well by recalling Collins' theory of the magical, unearthly powers his poetry can achieve only if adequately inspired. And his conviction that he is earthbound is made clear, of course, by his acute awareness of the difficulty his words will encounter in attempting such a mediation unaided. His very wording suggests his self-doubt: "What Sounds may charm thy partial Ears." Though the line initially conveys a questioning tone, it becomes an even more emphatic expression of doubt when he concludes it instead as an exclamation of impossibility in the following line. The tone is finally one of anguish and frustration.

Yet in the face of such doubt Collins still affirms his stubborn hope when, in the third stanza, he continues to articulate his thoughts and feelings, supplicating Peace to restore order, "O Peace, thy injur'd Robes up-bind" (l. 13), and to "own thy holier Reign" (l. 18)

in England again. As mediator, the poet continues to support his plea with his mythic assurance to Her that the devout "British Lion" (l. 16), emblem of the nation for which he speaks, "Lies stretch'd on Earth to kiss thy Feet" (l. 17). The invocative posture governs the poet's plea in the final stanza too:

Let others court thy transient Smile,  
But come to grace thy western Isle,  
By warlike Honour led!  
(11. 19-21)

These lines sustain Collins' prayer for the return of a permanent, not a passing, peace. And, with his introduction of "warlike Honour," he emphasizes that this peace is to be a victorious one; his theory of poetry easily allows him here to adapt his abstract world to the exigencies of public policy.

Collins concludes with the indication that when Peace and Honour are wed, the people of England will continue their adoration of Them, presumably led by the poet himself. That the people will "adore" (l. 23) Peace's choice of Honour as Her spouse is a further token of the poet's attitude as he addresses the Goddess; he continues to underscore both Her heavenly essence and his own lowly position in contrast to it. The "Ode to Peace" therefore provides one more demonstration of Collins' inhibiting obsession with the invocative stance, of his inability to go beyond it to a sense of the fulfillment of his role, and of the basis for the still pervasive distance in his work between theory and practice, Muse and poet, Goddess and man.

## VI

Most critics have viewed "The Manners. An Ode" as evidence of a radical change in philosophical and aesthetic direction for Collins,

usually basing their reading on a tenuous link between his departure from Oxford and the poem's opening farewell to cloistered metaphysics. As Langhorne put it, "it seems not improbable that the author wrote it about the time when he left the university [early 1744]; when, weary with the pursuit of academical studies, he no longer confined himself to the search of theoretical knowledge, but commenced the scholar of humanity, to study nature in her works, and man in society."<sup>22</sup>

Most recently Johnston, following Langhorne closely, has emphasized the conflict in the poem between Platonic idealism and truths perceived by the senses alone. In a note to line two, he explains that "Collins is saying farewell to the study of Plato, for whom the one thing that exists and can be known is Mind. Plato distinguishes between Intellect and Sense-Perception, and for him perfect knowledge is the knowledge of Ideas obtained by the Soul unhampered by the body and its sense-perceptions."<sup>23</sup> Johnston's notes do provide a helpful exposition of this central conflict, based on the numerous specifically Platonic references in the ode. But his insistence that Collins rejects the abstract sphere outright greatly oversimplifies the poem by ignoring the poet's equally strong desire to mediate between the two realms, rather than to abandon one utterly for the other.

When we understand Collins through his obsession with the invocative stance, the ode may be read most effectively as an abortive attempt to renunciate obscure philosophical inquiry in favor of what he calls the "Scene-full World" (l. 78). But the invocative mode of that attempt remains, significantly, the same.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the very form in which Collins casts his farewell undermines his purpose. For while he seeks to abandon the standard abuses associated with pure

thought, he simultaneously prays to and envisions personified abstractions which in part represent it, as well as the world of the senses. Moreover, this invocation, like his others, ends with no certainty of the Muse's response; hope, as usual, is Collins' only comfort. Despite his wish to escape his past obsessions, they continue to entrap him.

With his opening, "Farewell" section (ll. 1-18), Collins announces his desire to leave behind him the "dim-discover'd Tracts of Mind" (l. 2).<sup>25</sup> And for the rest of this section, and also in the verse paragraph immediately following it, he does indeed seem to wish to abandon as well the poetic theory he has heretofore so consistently maintained. Terms with key associations for him in the past, like "magic," "Fairy," "Fancy" and "enchanted," appear here in a new and negative context to make a strong comment on his notion that poetry must embody an abstract realm. He insists, perhaps with some frustration, that "No more I search those magic Shores, / What Regions part the World of Soul" (ll. 6-7); he vows that "If e'er I round such Fairy Field, / Some Pow'r impart the Spear and Shield" (ll. 9-10) which will prevent his indulging "the Wizzard Passions" (l. 11) and "Giant Follies" (l. 12) such realms encourage; and he bids "Farewell" to the "Porch...

Where Science, prank'd in tissued Vest,  
By Reason, Pride, and Fancy drest,  
Comes like a Bride so trim array'd,  
To wed with Doubt in Plato's Shade!  
(ll. 13-18)

Fancy, so crucial to Collins' usual pleas for vision, is clearly undercut by this context, though the poet nowhere else so sharply expresses the commonplace eighteenth-century view of the poetnial ill effects of imagination.<sup>26</sup> It is thus noteworthy that he does so here, attacking the misuse of Fancy when it is employed to clothe

Platonic abstractions in the guise of Science: the clothing is insubstantial ("tissued") and enhances the wedding of Science to Doubt. In the "Ode on the Poetical Character" She was, one recalls, "to me Divinest Name." Where in the past he has habitually doubted only himself or his era (the key exception being the "Ode to Simplicity" where he also doubts his overall theory), he now questions his entire ideal of the visionary poet, probably due to his feelings of failure in past efforts.

Also important is Collins' uncomplimentary reference a few lines later to "meddling Art's officious Lore" (l. 31), which will "Reverse the Lessons taught before" (l. 32) by "Observance" (l. 20) of life and nature first-hand, "Alluring from a safer Rule, / To dream in [Art's] enchanted School" (ll. 33-4). Coming from a poet for whom Art in its various forms is fundamental to the moral vigor of nations, and is the pervasive subject of his poetry, this is very significant indeed as an indication of how completely he wishes to turn away from his usual theory and practice. Moreover, Collins seems to be questioning even Spenser's influence in his reluctant acknowledgment of the "enchanted School." It is difficult to ignore the possibility that this is a covert allusion to "Him whose School above the rest / His Loveliest Elfin Queen has blest" ("Poetical Character," ll. 3-4). All, from the "dim-discover'd Tracts" to the "magic Shores," and finally "meddling" Art, appears to be interfering with the poet's concrete experience of "Life's wide Prospects" (l. 22). He had said of his past efforts near the start of the poem, remember, that he sought "Truths which... / My silent Search in vain requir'd" (ll. 3-4).

These farewells and disclaimers are firmly contradicted, however,

by the form of the poem as it develops after the "Farewell" section. For in line nineteen Collins introduces the first of a series of invocations, around which he constructs the remainder of the ode. Though he continues to abjure the contemplative life through them, at the same time he implicitly reasserts his old poetic theory, unchanged in its underlying concept.

In the first of four distinct invocations he addresses "Observance," a "Youth of the quick uncheated Sight," whose "Walks...more invite!" (ll. 19-20), and asks (beginning, as usual, "O Thou," l. 21) if He will

To me in Converse sweet impart,  
To read in Man the native Heart,  
To learn, where Science sure is found,  
From Nature as she lives around:  
And gazing oft her Mirror true,  
By turns each shifting Image view!  
(ll. 25-30)

First of all, these lines bear a striking resemblance to his prayers in the odes to "Pity" and "Fear," especially to ll. 54 ff. of the latter, and point us to the very close similarity of the remainder of "The Manners" to those two poems generally. Most important beyond the reappearance of this invocative stance itself here--along with Collins' usual humility and self-consciousness--is the emphasis on vision. The personified "Observance" is appropriate for the poet's opening invocation because of His "uncheated Sight," and Collins hopes he can "each shifting Image view!" Thus, regardless of whether he seeks to express an invisible, unearthly realm or "Life's wide Prospects," vision imparted by a god-like figure external to the poet is basic to Collins' ambitions. He is even compelled to hail "Heav'n" in his second invocation, perhaps to justify his attack on "Art's officious Lore," and to praise his decision to alter his focus: "Thou Heav'n, whate'er of

Great we boast, / Hast blest this social Science most" (11. 35-6).<sup>27</sup>

He continues to contradict his farewells in the succeeding lines, particularly those concerned with "magic" and "Fancy." After at least nominally abjuring both in the opening section, he now undergoes a retirement to a "Cell," almost identical to his vision-producing ritual in previous poems:

Retiring hence to thoughtful Cell,  
As Fancy breathes her potent Spell,  
Not vain she finds the charming Task,  
In Pageant quaint, in motley Mask,  
Behold before her musing Eyes,  
The countless Manners round her rise....  
(11. 37-42)

His vocabulary of the magic power of imagination pervades the passage. Whether he wants to abandon "magic Shores" or not, Fancy's "potent Spell" is necessary to the "charming Task" of aiding the poet's vision-- a vision underscored again when he singles out "her musing Eyes," exhorting the reader to "Behold" the scene She conjures.

That scene, far from departing from Collins' previous preoccupation with the embodiment of the abstract, is cast from the same mold as a presentation of pseudo-mythological figures and personifications. While he gazes, with Fancy's aid, at the "white-rob'd Maids" (1. 45) and "laughing Satyrs" (1. 46) who represent the Manners, he suddenly becomes aware of a more significant entity: "But who is He whom now she views, / In Robe of wild contending Hues?" (11. 47-8). The question introduces Collins' third invocation:

Thou by the Passions nurs'd, I greet  
The comic Sock that binds thy Feet!  
O Humour, Thou whose Name is known  
To Britain's favor'd Isle alone:  
Me too amidst thy Band admit....<sup>28</sup>  
(11. 49-53)

He now bases his hopes for poetic success on "the Passions" (the

Manners as they appear in life) that have "nurs'd" Humour or the Humours (the Manners as they appear in art) in the past, and on a new medium for him, comedy, which portrays those Passions. The lines gain added force too, when we recall that the very next poem in the volume is entitled "The Passions. An Ode for Music." Moreover he has certainly not truly abandoned the abstract for the tangible, since "Humour" personifies the idea or essence of comedy, not its individual manifestations. Also, the poet addresses Humour as a god who has "favor'd" England, subtly placing Him in the gallery of heavenly essences to whom he has prayed similarly throughout the Odes. The same format governs Collins' single portrait of a member of Humour's "Band" or train, "the young-eyed healthful Wit" (l. 54)--another personification of an abstract entity.

The series of invocations reaches its climax in the final twenty lines of the poem. This fourth and last prayer, like its predecessors, demonstrates that despite his desire to establish a new direction, Collins still depends totally on the assistance available from sources external to him, sources he regards as transcending individual human limitations. He prepares for the invocation proper by citing past literary successes as he has done so often before (this time from prose fiction), in hopes they will dispose the Goddess Nature to favor him with an equal ability to portray the Manners.

By old Miletus who so long  
Has ceas'd his Love-inwoven Song;  
By all you taught the Tuscan Maids,  
In chang'd Italia's modern Shades:  
By Him, whose Knight's distinguish'd Name  
Refin'd a Nation's Lust of Fame;  
Whose Tales ev'n now, with Echos sweet,  
Castilia's Moorish Hills repeat:  
Or Him, whom Seine's blue Nymphs deplore,

In watchet Weeds on Gallia's Shore,  
Who drew the sad Sicilian Maid,  
By Virtues in her Sire betray'd...<sup>29</sup>  
(11. 59-70)

Especially important here, and predictable, is that for each writer he cites, Collins singles out his success as an inculcator of morals. He praises "Miletus" for "all you taught the Tuscan Maids"; Cervantes because he "Refin'd a Nation's Lust of Fame"; and Le Sage because he "drew the sad Sicilian Maid, / By Virtues in her Sire betray'd..." This too links this poem to his notion of the writer's role in his other works.

Having thereby established his claim to Nature's attention, he pleads, at last,

O Nature boon, from whom proceed  
Each forceful Thought, each prompted Deed;  
If but from Thee I hope to feel,  
On all my Heart imprint thy Seal!  
Let some retreating Cynic find,  
Those oft-turn'd Scrolls I leave behind,  
The Sports and I this Hour agree,  
To rove thy Scene-full World with Thee!<sup>30</sup>

This is, of course, both an invocation and a closing farewell to "Those oft-turn'd Scrolls." But the critical revelation in these lines is the reemergence of Collins' self-conscious lack of confidence and only tremulous hope for the attainment of inspiration. His "If but from Thee" is an expression of self-doubt that has become typical of his verse; coupled with "I hope" it gives strong emphasis to his uncertainty. This line, together with the vehemence conveyed by the paragraph's two exclamation points, dominates the tone of the entire invocation--even when the poet seems more certain of himself in the last four lines. The four pronoun references to himself are an index to his self-consciousness throughout the passage.

Thus, once he has issued his opening farewells, Collins' stance in "The Manners" becomes thoroughly consistent in theory as well as practice with his other invocative poems. While he may have wished to shift the basis of his writing away from a Platonic vision, he either would not nor, more likely, could not bring himself to abandon the invocative stance as the pervasive means by which he hoped to achieve his goals. Finally, it remains to be emphasized that whatever his reasons for choosing to bid farewell to Platonic idealism, his turn toward the "Scene-full World" is not really a significant departure from his other works even in subject matter. As we have repeatedly seen, his poems and his chosen idols have as their ultimate purpose the betterment of the nation's "Manners" and morals. He has all along dealt with what Langhorne called "nature in her works, and man in society."

## VII

Collins' sense of his dilemma is certainly not diminished in the final poem of the 1746 Odes, "The Passions. An Ode for Music." As has been true in nearly all the Odes, the invocative stance is a key determinant of its form and meaning, even though the invocation itself does not begin here until over three-fourths of the way through the poem. Primarily a hymn in honor of Music--and the Passions it inspires--the ode is nevertheless also a commentary on the state of the arts in general in Collins' time as he sees it.<sup>31</sup> As such, it is especially important as an index to the poet's attitude toward his dilemma at the close of this volume composed largely of attempts to overcome it.

In the first of the ode's three main divisions (ll. 1-16), Collins introduces the mythic action on which he bases his subsequent portrayal of the Passions as individual figures. He begins by confirming Music's origin. Like his other Goddesses, She is a "Heav'nly Maid" (l. 1), and inhabits a "magic Cell" (l. 4) from which Her inspiration emanates to affect the Passions. Also, though for convenience my analysis is written mainly in a form of the historical present, Collins is careful to emphasize, significantly, that all of this took place only in the past, "While yet in early Greece she [Music] sung" (l. 2). He undercuts his own medium right away too when he describes the Passions as "Possess beyond the Muse's Painting" (l. 6) by Music's charms. Stressing the Goddess' power over the Passions with separate lists of Her effects--they are "Exulting, trembling, raging, fainting" (l. 5), and "Disturb'd, delighted, rais'd, refin'd" (l. 8)--the poet explains with still another list that "once...when all were fir'd,

Fill'd with Fury, rapt, inspir'd,  
From the supporting Myrtles round,  
They snatch'd her Instruments of Sound,  
And as they oft had heard a-part  
Sweet Lessons of her forceful Art,  
Each, for Madness rul'd the Hour,  
Would prove his own expressive Pow'r.  
(ll. 9-16)

Inspired as Collins would surely like to be, the Passions take over; the stage has been set for their performances.

The poet's description of them is obviously an attempt, paralleling theirs, to "prove his...expressive Pow'r" as well. Consequently this second section, set off from the first and third by its irregularly indented lines (perhaps meant to suggest the erratic moods it depicts), is the poem's longest. It is here (ll. 17-94) that Collins once again essays the role of mediator between the abstract and the palpable by

personifying each Passion. Following his firmly established theory of the centrality of vision to his mediation, he places as much stress on visual details and action in this section as he does on the sounds themselves. Each figure actually plays a brief scene in broad theatrical fashion. Fear, for example,

...his Hand, its Skill to try,  
Amid the Chords bewilder'd laid,  
And back recoil'd he knew not why,  
Ev'n at the Sound himself had made.  
(11. 17-20)

Later, with a bit more detail, Collins describes how "with a Frown,

Revenge impatient rose,  
He threw his blood-stain'd Sword in Thunder down,  
And with a with'ring Look,  
The War-denouncing Trumpet took,  
And blew a Blast so loud and dread,  
Were ne'er Prophetic Sounds so full of Woe.  
(11. 39-45)

Here we are given a rather complete scenario, including the manner of Revenge's movements, His props, and an alliterative report of the sound He makes on a particular instrument--a sound supposedly suited, of course, to His abstract quality.<sup>32</sup>

In other portraits Collins also sustains his mythological setting by describing a Passion's effects on its animated surroundings. We are shown not only the usual details, for example,

When Chearfulness, a Nymph of healthiest Hue,  
Her Bow a-cross her Shoulder flung,  
Her Buskins gem'd with Morning Dew,  
Blew an inspiring Air, that Dale and Thicket rung  
(11. 70-3),

but also Diana and Her attendants nearby:

The Oak-crown'd Sisters, and their chast-eye'd Queen,  
Satyrs and sylvan Boys were seen,  
Peeping from forth their Alleys green....  
(il. 75-7)

Collins maintains the dramatic and visual coherence of the scenes at least partially by having several of the Passions interact with or interrupt each other. Hope is interrupted by Revenge, Revenge is then soothed by Pity, and Love and Mirth assist in "Joy's Ecstatic Trial" (11. 80 ff.). There seems to be no overall pattern in the Passions' order of appearance, however, except perhaps in the ironic placement of Joy last, just prior to the invocation where the mood is anything but joyful. This very absence of pattern underlines the volatile nature of such emotions.

His description of the Passions' performances concluded, Collins now turns to his final prayer in the Odes. It is an extremely important passage, for it reveals what one must assume to be Collins' notion of the availability of artistic success at the close of both "The Passions" and the volume as a whole. The latter is, as we have seen, an extended series of invocations through which he has sought to achieve his ideal of poet and poem, a series seldom leavened with confidence either in himself or in his era. When we view the final section of "The Passions" in this context, as we must, it is a dismal conclusion indeed.

Collins opens with two anguished questions, each one recalling the present gap between the heavenly Muse and the earthbound poet-man:

O Music, Sphere-descended Maid,  
Friend of Pleasure, Wisdom's Aid,  
Why, Goddess, why to us deny'd?  
Lay'st Thou thy antient Lyre aside?  
(11. 95-8)

Several lines later, after he has assured Music (and himself) that She "Can well recall" (l. 102) the art She once inspired "in that lov'd Athenian Bow'r" (l. 99), an inspiration he has just mythically

recreated, he poses yet another half supplicatory, half accusatory question: "Where is thy native simple Heart, / Devote to Virtue, Fancy, Art?" (ll. 103-4). This time the query encompasses Collins' poetic theory in its entirety. First it expands the poem's frame of reference to include art in general, and not just music. Second, in the process of stressing the Goddess' devotion to Virtue and Fancy it reminds the reader that these are also the subjects of Collins' poetic devotion, that through Fancy's aid he consistently hopes to instill Virtue in his auditors. In this way he implicitly ties his own goals to Hers.

Both this link and his earlier insistence that the Goddess can recall Her past infusions of grace prepare for Collins' plea for Her to "Arise as in that elder Time" (l. 105) and grant his era Her "diviner Rage" (l. 111). He then contrasts "that God-like Age" (l. 107) with "this laggard Age" (l. 112), and claims that Music's ancient inspiring powers surpassed even "Caecilia's mingled World of Sound" (l. 114). And his closing four lines--while partaking of the hope inherent in any prayer--are an absolute declaration of the supremacy of past art over present; as such, they form an inescapable pessimistic comment on the poet's own era:

O bid our vain Endeavors cease,  
Revive the just Designs of Greece,  
Return in all thy simple State!  
Confirm the Tales Her Sons relate!  
(ll. 115-18)

Clearly Collins sees no escape from his dilemma except through just such an unqualified return to the past, whether that past is constituted by the inspiration granted ancient Greece, or Spenser and Milton. His present efforts are, he believes, in vain. Nor does the fact that

he insists on this in the midst of yet another invocation mitigate his judgement of the present.

Thus Collins' setting of the Passions' concert "While yet in early Greece [Music] sung" prepares the way for his insistence on the failure of his own time in the invocation.<sup>33</sup> In this important sense all that precedes the invocation leads inexorably toward its bleak denouement. Moreover, his assertion of Music's present failure to inspire becomes a part of the larger pessimism about the arts in general which pervades the Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects from the beginning, and which contributes so much to Collins' awareness of his dilemma as he attempts to regain the "diviner Rage" of the past. That he concludes the volume with this, one of his gloomiest, least hopeful invocations, is perhaps a significant indication, too, of how unsuccessful all his previous invocations and attempts must have seemed to him. In any case, the sustained disenchantment of this final invocation undercuts the few glimpses of success found in other odes in the volume.

The Odes of 1746 do mark, then, the full emergence of the invocative stance and Collins' confining dilemma as the correlative and all-encompassing determinants of his poetry. It only remains for us to consider his final two published attempts to surmount the dilemma and the stance: one, the "Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson," a partial success; the other, "An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland," a last anguished and unfulfilled pursuit of a solution.

VIII

In the "Ode on the Death of Thomson" (first published in 1749) Collins focuses primarily on simultaneously expressing and eliciting the public homage due the dead poet, James Thomson. The poem is, in fact, another elegy very close to the restricted mode he returned to in the "Ode to a Lady." Once more, when he is able to transcend the invocative stance the achievement is marred by the repetition of what are by now a self-evident mythic action and wording portraying a procession of mourners to the gravesite.

There is no need to pause at this point for a detailed demonstration of the poem's proximity to Collins' other elegies. One example should suffice: as in the others, he assures the dead that "Hinds, and Shepherd-Girls shall dress / With simple Hands thy rural Tomb" (ll. 39-40). Similar echoes could be chosen at random from any part of the poem. On the other hand, it must be said in praise of Collins' achievement in the ode that his creation of a shifting visual and emotional perspective by placing himself in a boat passing the gravesite on the Thames is an effective expansion of his earlier efforts in the genre.<sup>34</sup> Still, the elegy does serve as a reminder that Collins' unselfconscious, non-invocative stance is seldom the unqualified transcendence of his dilemma it may appear to be when viewed in isolation.

Aside from reminding us of the poet's limitation, the ode is important in two other ways. First, it adds to our understanding, through his praise of Thomson, of Collins' ideal poet--especially through his use of the term "Druid" to characterize him.<sup>35</sup> And second, it provides a further revelation (as did the "Ode to a Lady") of

Collins' ultimate concern with encouraging the right conduct of his audience on a national scale, in this case due respect for the dead Thomson.

Collins' references to Thomson as a "Druid" (in both the opening and closing lines, significantly), despite Mrs. Barbauld's belief that "there is no propriety" in them,<sup>36</sup> and as a "Sweet Bard" (l. 27), are totally appropriate to his and Thomson's ideals of the poet's role. As J.M.S. Tompkins has shown, Collins could count on a whole series of associations regarding Druids being made by many in his audience, "...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 the sea."<sup>37</sup> Tompkins also remarks that Druids were traditionally seen as the guardians of the interdependent ideals of freedom, virtue and culture which Collins emphasizes throughout his poetry.<sup>38</sup>

Although all these qualities are certainly inherent in Collins' repeated association of Thomson with the Druids, he chooses to highlight the poet's role as "Meek Nature's Child" (l. 36) above the others. It is primarily on this relationship between Thomson and Nature that Collins builds not only his praise for him but his simultaneous urging of his audience's responsibility.

He begins the poem by placing the scene of Thomson's grave clearly before his reader's eyes: "In yonder Grave a Druid lies / Where slowly winds the stealing Wave!" (ll. 1-2). Then, by portraying the homage that will be paid the dead poet by Nature, he prepares his audience for

his insistence that it, too, has an obligation: "The Year's best  
Sweets shall duteous rise / To deck it's Poet's sylvan Grave!"

(ll. 3-4). Collins' opening reference to Thomson as a Druid also intimates the moral and religious obligation of the readers, for he had been, Collins suggests, their priest as well as Nature's--a suggestion he makes explicit in the poem's closing line.

In the second stanza Collins continues to stress the obligation of his audience through his comment that the dead poet's "airy Harp" (l. 6) will be placed on the grave in order that those still living who mourn the poet's death "May love thro' Life the soothing Shade" (l. 8). Then in the third stanza he points to his audience again when he foretells that in the future "Maids and Youths shall linger here" (l. 9) and continue to be moved and influenced by the dead poet's Harp. As he does in so many of his other poems, Collins also uses the word "shall" both as prophecy and as a veiled command to his readers. He charges them that "Remembrance oft shall haunt the Shore" (l. 13), and thus stresses by suggestion that his readers must do as Remembrance does.

The poet employs "shall" in this way through the somewhat despairing sixth stanza ("what will ev'ry Dirge avail?" l. 22), and in the seventh utters one of his strongest urgings to his audience by cursing any man who fails to honor Thomson's grave:

Yet lives there one, whose heedless Eye  
Shall scorn thy pale Shrine glimm'ring near?  
With Him, Sweet Bard, may Fancy die,  
And Joy desert the blooming Year.

(ll. 25-8)

There can be no doubt how strongly Collins feels about the public function of poetry. This stanza is the climax of the poem; in the next two stanzas the poet begins to withdraw from the scene and bids

his poetic comrade adieu. He returns to his readers directly, however, in the final stanzas. Again, Collins assures Thomson that his grave will not be neglected in the future, and simultaneously charges his auditors to follow his prescription: "...and Shepherd-Girls shall dress / With simple Hands thy rural Tomb."

In the eleventh and last stanza Collins promises Thomson not only that the young will pay him homage, but that all England will mourn his passing:

Long, long, thy Stone and pointed Clay  
Shall melt the musing Briton's Eyes,  
O! Vales, and Wild Woods, shall He say  
In yonder Grave Your Druid lies!  
(ll. 41-4)

Collins thus turns his poem on the death of a fellow poet into an edict requiring that his readers show the proper grief for their dead priest. At the poem's start, Thomson is "a Druid"; at its finish he has become, significantly, "Your Druid." In addition to underlining Thomson's close relationship to external nature, Collins thus further stresses that the responsibility for mourning him has been placed on the shoulders of the people of the entire nation both in the poem's present and in the future. This is Collins' primary aim.

One should emphasize too, before going on to the "Popular Superstitions," that Collins continues to make his interposition between the abstract sphere and his audience central to his teaching in the "Thomson" ode. His mythic vision of the abstract figures of Remembrance, Love and Pity as mourners in stanzas four and six demonstrates in pure form the proper reactions of the individuals who should regret Thomson's death. In similar fashion Collins follows elegiac tradition in imbuing Nature throughout, as we have seen in part, with a sense of grief. In

addition to the instance in the first stanza and the "lorn Stream" and "sullen Tide" of line twenty-nine, the personified "cold Turf hides the buried Friend!" (l. 32), "the Fairy Valleys fade" (l. 33) because "Dun Night has veil'd the solemn View!" (l. 34), and "The genial Meads assign'd to bless / Thy Life, shall mourn thy early Doom" (ll. 37-8).

The "Ode on the Death of Thomson" is Collins' last effort in his accustomed elegiac manner. Taken on its own limited terms it is an effective embodiment of his poetic aims, unblemished by the poet's obsessive self-doubts. But in the next, and last poem known to have been written by him, Collins longs for a totally new cultural environment, one in which he believes the unconstricted practice of his poetic theory would still be possible in his era. His dilemma is never far from his thoughts about poetry.

## IX

Collins wrote the partially invocative "Ode to a Friend on his Return &c."--its title changed by its first editors to its more commonly known form, "An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, Considered as the Subject of Poetry"--in late 1749 or early 1750. However it was not published until 1788, twenty-nine years after Collins' death, from a manuscript in which one full stanza, a number of lines and segments of others were missing. Attempts have been made to repair these imperfections by inference, but no more complete text has surfaced since then.<sup>39</sup> Because the poem as it has come down to us has therefore to be considered incomplete, one must exercise the utmost caution in attempting a close reading, although it is one of Collins'

most important works. Its key patterns do emerge clearly, however, despite the persistent gaps.<sup>40</sup>

The "Friend" of the original title is John Home, whose return to Scotland from England occasioned Collins' paean to the "Popular Superstitions."<sup>41</sup> On the surface a poem politely wishing Home (also an ambitious writer) good literary fortune, the ode is more fundamentally an expression of Collins' almost desperate envy of the cultural atmosphere of the Scotland to which Home returns. Collins distinguishes throughout between himself and Home, between his own inhibiting poetic surroundings and what he believes to be Home's limitless prospects and materials. This contrast underlies the structure and tone of the entire poem.<sup>42</sup>

Patricia Spacks argues that this turning by Collins toward a new culture and subject in the Scottish superstitions "displays a broadening of his range" and "represents a new direction for his talents, but one which, unfortunately, he never followed more fully."<sup>43</sup> But as an examination of the details of Collins' envious contrast of himself to Home will reveal, the ode is really not a departure at all. No less than his other poems, it is rooted in his anguished desire to write in a milieu where widespread belief in the immanence of an invisible, supernatural realm in human affairs would make his ideal of the poet's visionary role accessible. The poem is a departure, then, only in its specific subject matter as a possible mode for resolving his dilemma; the dilemma itself remains, along with Collins' consistent poetic theory.

Collins confirms his respect for Home in the first stanza, addressing him formally with "Thou," and immediately sets up the

contrast between them that is the basis for the rest of the poem. He rather self-deprecatingly asks Home, "while these Numbers boast / My short-liv'd bliss" (ll. 9-10), not to "forget my social Name / But think far-off how on the Southern coast / I met thy Friendship with an equal Flame!" (ll. 10-12). Then in the closing lines of the stanza, setting the tone for all that follows, Collins both praises the very different land to which Home returns, and half advises, half adjures him to take the fullest advantage of it:

Fresh to that soil thou turn'st, whose ev'ry Vale  
Shall prompt the Poet, and his Song demand;  
To Thee thy copious Subjects ne'er shall fail  
Thou need'st but take the Pencil to thy Hand  
And paint what all believe who own thy Genial Land.  
(ll. 13-17)

The strong implication of these lines (one made thoroughly explicit later on in the poem) is that Home's "soil" is far more "Genial" to poetry than Collins' "Southern coast." Not only does it offer "copious Subjects," but far more important to Collins, it offers an atmosphere in which "all believe" in those "Subjects"--that is, in the super-natural.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the familiar poetic theory is already emerging: the poet's primary function is to "paint," to make visible, that unseen realm.

In the next and longest section, beginning with the second stanza and running through the tenth, Collins variously encourages, instructs, advises and exhorts Home in order to make him wholly cognizant of the advantages he is heir to, and totally aware of how to use them. He begins the section forcefully, insisting that Home has no alternative but to follow his advice: "There must Thou wake perforce thy Doric quill / 'Tis Fancy's Land to which thou set'st thy Feet / Where still, tis said, the Fairy People meet" (ll. 16-20). Fancy's presence has

convinced Collins (not surprisingly) of the validity of his notion of Scotland as fertile soil for poetry. Hoping it will also convince Home, he goes on to describe more specifically the available materials, materials only Fancy can reveal. "Airy Minstrels warble jocund notes" (l. 25) and "Airy Beings awe th'untutor'd Swain" (l. 30). These supernatural entities take their places in Collins' pantheon side by side with the fairies, spirits and abstractions clothed as Goddesses of his previous work.

Foreseeing Home's possible resistance, and therefore continuing to press his argument, Collins tells him, "Nor Thou, tho learn'd, his [the Swain's] homelier thoughts neglect / Let thy sweet Muse the rural faith sustain" (ll. 31-2). Then, in sketching the Muse's power he puts forth the most important reason for his notion of Home's advantage: these are the supernatural "Themes of simple sure Effect / That add New conquests to her boundless reign / And fill with double force her heart commanding Strain" (ll. 33-5). The "boundless reign" of the Muse, and Her consequent ability to move men's emotions--these have been the perpetual goals of Collins' career, and his failure to believe he could attain them, the continual source of his frustration and inhibition.

In the third stanza Collins brings, as we should expect, the authority of the past to his argument. It is, significantly, to one of his foremost idols that he turns. He reminds Home,

Ev'n yet preserv'd how often may'st thou hear  
Where to the Pole the Boreal Mountains run  
Taught by the Father to his list'ning Son  
Strange lays whose pow'r had charm'd a Spenser's Ear....  
(ll. 36-9)

In addition to maintaining his stress on the power of the material

available to his friend, Collins thus suggests that Home should aspire, as we know he does, to place himself in such a poetic lineage. In the remainder of the stanza Collins pursues this argument by citing more past and present sources of Home's unlimited potential, for "At Ev'ry Pause, before thy Mind possest, / Old Runic Bards shall seem to rise around" (ll. 40-1); even the "well-taught Hind" (l. 44) or "Shepherd" (l. 48) will supply him with material for his verse to make it capable of inspiring men.

The fourth stanza prepares for the ode's most extended example of the material Home may choose from. Collins' entire focus in on advising Home of the centrality of a special vision both to one's apprehension of the subject matter he is recommending, and to its successful embodiment in poetry. "'Tis thine to Sing," he counsels Home, "how framing hideous Spells / In Skys lone Isle the Gifted Wizzard Seer... / ...dwells" (ll. 53-6), and "How They whose Sight such dreary dreams engross / With their own Visions oft astonished droop" (ll. 57-8). The poet must, Collins intimates, emulate such vision, because these men "see the gliding Ghosts unbodied troop" (l. 60), and "For them the viewless Forms of Air obey / Their bidding" (ll. 65-6). Seers like these, furthermore, "heartless oft like moody Madness stare / To see the Phantom train their secret work prepare!" (ll. 68-9). Since the poet's key task in Collins' scheme is to visualize these "viewless Forms of Air," he can learn much from the inspired vision of these men; he must not only portray these seers in his verse, but learn also how to see what they see in order to command it in his verse.

The next four stanzas contain Collins' attempt to demonstrate to Home just the sort of portrait of the "secret work" of Phantoms that is

open to him.<sup>45</sup> He retells, in appropriately careful visual detail (though certainly not, as I have explained previously, visual detail in the accustomed twentieth-century sense), the legend of the drowning of a "luckless Swain" (l. 104) by "the Kaelpie's wrath" (l. 137). Stylized though it is, the portrait is vivid. We see the Swain, "bewilder'd in the dank dark Fen / Far from his Flocks and smoaking Hamlet then!" (ll. 105-6); the "whelming Flood" (l. 110) which drowns him because "His Fear-shook limbs have lost their Youthly force / And down the waves He floats a Pale and breathless Corse" (ll. 119-20); and the vaguely terrifying "Grim and Griesly Shape" (l. 114) of the Kaelpie. And the description of the possible return of the Swain's spirit is even more graphic. In addition to the pathetic picture of his waiting family, Collins explains that the spirit, if it comes, will have a "moist and watry hand" (l. 129), a "blue swoln face" (l. 131), and will be "Shivring cold" (l. 132) when it speaks.

Collins aptly reemphasizes to Home at this tale's conclusion that "Unbounded is thy range, with varied style / Thy Muse may... / ...extend her skirting wing" (ll. 138-40), and he cites additional examples to support his contention further. Then, having thus prepared the way, in the tenth stanza he reaches a crucial point in his argument. As he had done so often with his predecessors in his other poems, he now assumes a variation of his invocative stance for the first time in this ode, in order to ask Home himself to serve as a mediator for him. Having first encouraged Home to "Go just, as They, their blameless Manners trace!" (l. 158), he pleads that his friend will "Then to my Ear transmit some gentle Song / Of Those whose Lives are yet sincere and plain" (ll. 159-60). This is the first explicit appearance of

Collins' underlying envy of Home's heritage and poetic future. And it reminds us too, that Collins, despite his obvious belief in Home's advantages and abilities, still lacks confidence in his own.

These two stanzas form the culmination of the poem's second section, containing Collins' advice to Home and his arguments for its legitimacy. It all comes down, ultimately, as it nearly always does for Collins, not to his hopes for others but to his plea for himself. He is never far from that fatal self-consciousness.

As though he suspects his personal aspirations may suggest doubts to Home about the quality of his advice, Collins becomes more defensive in the eleventh and twelfth stanzas than he has been previously. He acknowledges the traditional assault on poets who employ the subject matter of legend and the supernatural when he assures Home, "Nor needst Thou blush that such false Themes engage / Thy gentle Mind..." (ll. 172-3). Collins' answer to the attack is to cite past authority again with another of his idols. These subjects are valid,

For not Alone they touch the Village Breast,  
But fill'd in Elder Time th'Historic page  
There Shakespeare's Self with evry Garland crown'd  
In Musing hour his Wayward Sisters found  
And with their terrors drest the magic Scene!  
(ll. 174-8)

Also, Collins' use of the key word "magic" here underlines both the kind of subject matter he praises in Macbeth in these and subsequent lines, and its power to affect those who experience it in study or theater. He closes the stanza on a note different from that with which he began it, returning with the help of Shakespeare's example to his confident urging of Home to

Proceed nor quit the tales which simply told  
Could once so well my Answering Bosom pierce  
Proceed, in forcefull sounds and Colours told  
The Native Legends of thy Land rehearse  
To such adapt thy Lyre, and suit thy pow'rfull Verse.  
(ll. 183-7)

Nevertheless in the next stanza, spurred no doubt by a combination of the conventional challenge to this subject matter and his personal doubts, he is on the defensive once more. This time, in what is perhaps the most significant facet of his apologia, Collins echoes the defensive stance taken by Tasso in the opening stanzas of Jerusalem Delivered, while at the same time citing him as an example to encourage Home:

In Scenes like these which daring to depart  
From sober Truth, are still to Nature true  
And call forth fresh delights to Fancy's view  
Th'Heroic Muse employ'd her Tasso's Art!  
(ll. 188-91, my italics)

Thus Collins places his defense of his poetic theory and practice in the increasingly embattled context of the Renaissance represented so clearly, as we saw in chapter I, by Tasso's invocation.<sup>46</sup>

In the remainder of the stanza Collins elaborates on Tasso's poetic accomplishments, especially focusing on their effects on him ("How have I trembled," l. 192; "How have I sate," l. 196). And, as he had done at the close of the first stanza in praising the advantages of Scotland to Home, he underscores faith as the key to the creation of this sort of poetry. He speaks of Tasso as a "Prevailing Poet, whose undoubting Mind / Believ'd the Magic Wonders which He sung!" (ll. 198-9). Whether or not one can be certain Tasso did indeed believe so completely, it is clear that Collins wants to believe he did, and that for him such belief is crucial to the portrayal of "Magic Wonders." Again, his dilemma is always near the surface of his poetry as he seeks that

necessary atmosphere of belief, in what he conceives to be his own more skeptical time and place.

Collins becomes increasingly self-conscious as the poem approaches its conclusion. The impression builds steadily, from his request that Home "transmit some gentle Song" to him in the tenth stanza; to his recollection in the eleventh of how Shakespeare's and perhaps Home's tales of Scottish superstitions "Could once so well my Answering Bosom pierce"; to the references just noted to Tasso's affective powers. It is not surprising, then, that in the final stanza this growing self-awareness culminates in a return to the invocative stance.

In the first of two separate prayers which make up the stanza, Collins salutes Scotland, emphasizing his respect for the land and at the same time his sense of his remoteness from it: "All Hail Ye Scenes that oer my soul prevail / ...at distance hail!" (ll. 204-7). Then to this reiteration of his distance from those inspiring scenes, he adds a line that is typical of his mingled hope and self-doubt: he tells the Scenes, "The Time shall come, when I perhaps may tread / Your lowly Glens..." (ll. 208-9). His uncertain "when I perhaps may" all but cancels out the determined "shall" in this, Collins' last known expression of his tortured poetic aspirations.

The closing invocation is Collins' straightforward plea to the supernatural realm in the hope that the inspiration he himself feels so cut off from, may come to Home's aid:

Mean time Ye Pow'rs, that on the plains which bore  
The Cordial Youth, on Lothian's plains attend  
Where'er he dwell, on Hill or lowly Muir  
To Him I lose, your kind protection lend  
And touch'd with Love, like Mine, preserve my Absent Friend.  
(ll. 215-19)

Thus the pattern of the final stanza contains in microcosm the design of the poem as a whole: a contrast between the poetic achievements available to Collins, and those available to Home--with the latter emerging as far less limited and much more certainly attainable than the former.

The "Ode on the Popular Superstitions" brings us to the conclusion of our analysis of the Collins canon. We have seen him develop from a predominantly confident, often accomplished young poet into a writer largely obsessed with and inhibited by his personal dilemma as he seeks to follow in the steps of his poetic idols. We have seen the invocative stance take over all but a very few of his poems from the Odes onward. And we have witnessed the limited range even of the few non-invocative poems he manages after 1744.

Now, with our survey in chapter I of the invocative tradition Collins inherited from his idols, and our subsequent analysis of its impact on the dilemma of his theory and practice in mind, we are ready to deal with the final question of Collins' relationship to romanticism. In the next chapter I will attempt to reassess that relationship by examining the role of invocation in several of the works of John Keats, the poet among Collins' successors with whom he has perhaps the most in common.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Johnston, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup>See Lonsdale for a discussion of a specific historical occasion for the poem, and a possible historical identity for the "Fiend," pp. 438, 440. His suggested allusions to the 1745 invasion by the Young Pretender are interesting, but are not relevant to my focus here. Collins undoubtedly means to include both a historical and a symbolic framework.

<sup>3</sup>This basic idea was, of course, not at all a new one; see Johnston's headnote to the poem, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup>For the tradition as Collins inherited it, see Lonsdale, p. 448.

<sup>5</sup>Martha Collins, "The Self-Conscious Poet," pp. 370-2, has an interesting discussion of Collins' prominent use of both future and past tenses, in which she argues it is symptomatic of the poet's avoidance of the present due to his lack of confidence in it.

<sup>6</sup>There were three lifetime editions of the ode: first, it appeared in Dodsley's Museum for June 7, 1746; second, in Odes, December of that year; and third, in the second edition of Dodsley's Collection, 1748. For the second edition (followed here) Collins added stanzas seven and eight, and altered stanza four; in 1748 he omitted seven and eight and made additional changes in four. For probable political reasons behind most of the changes, see Lonsdale, pp. 455-6 and passim. Minor variants also occurred in a manuscript seen by Thomas Warton. A complete listing of the various changes appears in Stone-Poole, pp. 313-14. Also recorded there are variants noted by Warton; Lonsdale, p. 455, gives details. I have chosen the December, 1746 text as the basis for my reading, because Collins' inclusion of the poem in that volume strongly suggests he wished it to be read as a part of the group. Also, the almost certain political motivation for the majority of the changes makes them relatively unimportant to my concerns. Pertinent variants, however, will be recorded in subsequent notes.

<sup>7</sup>Lonsdale, p. 458, suggests that some of the changes Collins made in the 1748 edition may actually have been an attempt to avoid the poem's resemblance to "How Sleep the Brave." His notion seems especially convincing when applied to the removal of "Freedom" in 1748. Such recognition on Collins' part would further demonstrate his growing awareness of the effects of his dilemma, despite his inability to conquer it; however if he really meant to remove such likenesses, he did a less than thorough job. Honour's role, for example, remains intact.

<sup>8</sup> The 1748 edition has "O'er him, whose doom thy virtues grieve, / Aërial forms shall sit at eve / And bend the pensive head" for these lines.

<sup>9</sup> William is the Duke of Cumberland, son of George II, who commanded the English army at Fontenoy and Culloden. See Johnston, p. 185, n. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Johnston, p. 186, n. 58, observes that Harting is "a village 12 miles north of Chichester, presumably where Elizabeth Goddard, to whom the poem was addressed, lived."

<sup>11</sup> Johnston says "If" is "an unlikely word" (p. 127) in this position. In the context of Collins' pervasive self-doubt, however, the word and its emphatic placement seem totally appropriate and effective. Johnston does point out the strong influence of the word on the remainder of the poem. The "Ode to Evening" has received more individual attention from critics in the past than any of Collins' other works, perhaps in part because of its usefulness in linking Collins to the "return to nature" theme of the pre-romantic approach. These critics have illuminated a number of important aspects of the poem which need not be covered in detail here. Henry Pettit, "Collins's 'Ode to Evening' and the Critics," provides a convenient summary and interpretation of criticism up to 1964. The following also deserve mention: F.R. Leavis, Revaluation (1947; rpt. New York: Norton, 1963), pp. 131-3, comments instructively on the extensive echoes of Lycidas in the poem, though I cannot agree that they are at all unconscious; McKillop, "Collins's 'Ode to Evening'--Background and Structure," is helpful mainly on the relationship between Collins and Thomson; Brown, "On William Collins' 'Ode to Evening,'" concludes at one point that "The poet...is essentially identical with his muse, Eve..." (p. 145) and later that the ending is "joyous and triumphant" (p. 149)--conclusions I would have to qualify in view of Collins' sustained invocative stance; and Kallich, "'Plain in Thy Neatness': Horace's Pyrrha and Collins' Evening," discusses Horace's influence on Collins' portrait of the Goddess.

<sup>12</sup> As was "Ode to a Lady," the "Ode to Evening" was printed in a second edition in Dodsley's Collection in 1748. Again because of the importance of seeing the 1746 Odes as a unit, I follow the original 1746 version here while noting relevant 1748 variants, beginning with line two: 1748 has "May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear" (see Stone-Poole, p. 314).

<sup>13</sup> Collins' second version of line two clearly makes his reverence for the Goddess even more explicit with the adjectives "chaste" and "modest," while it also adds to his implied feeling of remoteness from Her purity. She is angelic, he merely human.

<sup>14</sup> For "brawling," 1748 has "solemn," which, not unlike the changes in line two, suggests Collins' desire to establish the Goddess' awe-inspiring presence, and adds to the reader's sense of the sanctity of the poet's invocation.

<sup>15</sup>In 1748 lines 29-32 appeared as follows:

Then lead, calm Vot'ress, where some sheety lake  
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallow'd pile,  
Or up-land fallows grey  
Reflect it's last cool gleam.

It is difficult to understand why Collins would change "religious gleams," since it so effectively suits his reverence for the Goddess, and since his other changes do not fit any pattern of removing this tone. Indeed, at least one other change ("love" to "hymn," l. 52) does the opposite.

<sup>16</sup>Responding no doubt in part to this juxtaposition of an artificial poetic diction with a more straightforward description, Merle Brown, p. 145, argues that "the essence of poetry and the essence of evening are the same in this ode." I would add that such a confluence of styles is a function of Collins' ideal of the poet as one who brings together the abstract and the sensuous. The former nearly always enters his poems via a self-consciously poetic diction.

<sup>17</sup>The textual variants for lines 33-4 in 1748 are negligible; see Stone-Poole, p. 314.

<sup>18</sup>For this line, 1748 has "So long, sure-found beneath the Sylvan shed."

<sup>19</sup>Variants in the 1748 edition may be of particular interest: for "smiling Peace" 1748 has "rose-lip'd Health"; and for "love" 1748 has "hymn," as noted above. The removal of "Peace" has minor consequences for my reading of these lines, as well as for the probable relationship between the "Ode to Evening" and the "Ode to Peace." It seems most likely that Collins deleted "Peace" precisely because the poem to that Goddess follows the "Ode to Evening" in the 1746 volume, and thus the change should not affect our understanding of the poet's fundamental meaning in either poem. The change to "hymn" supports the earlier tone of reverence for Evening.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Ovid, Metamorphoses, I, 89 ff. Johnston, p. 191, points out more specifically the myth of Astrea, and also notes Collins' almost certain allusion here and throughout his poem to Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." See Johnston for the exact lines involved.

<sup>21</sup>While obviously the prime meaning of doves here is their association with Peace, it is worth pointing out that the proximity of the dove image to the Goddess or abstraction again suggests the analogy to the Christian trinity--it is a neat coincidence at the very least. In this sense, Grace also departs from the world with Peace. Such an interpretation is also supported when Collins implores Peace "to grace" England in the final stanza.

<sup>22</sup>"Observations," p. 142. See the opening paragraph of Johnston's headnote, p. 193, for the most recent manifestation of this argument.

There may be textual as well as interpretive reasons for questioning this notion, as Lonsdale, pp. 469-70, points out.

<sup>23</sup>p. 194.

<sup>24</sup>Lonsdale's brief summary of seventeenth and eighteenth-century usage of the term "manners" is also helpful in determining more precisely the meaning of Collins' poem. He quotes Dryden's "Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern" perhaps most cogently. The Manners, Dryden explains, are "the Passions, and, in a larger Sense, the Descriptions of Persons, and their very Habits" (The Poems and Fables of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970], p. 526). Also see Dryden's examples, pp. 526 ff. Such predominantly literary contexts of the term's characteristic usage help to dispel any facile theory that Collins expresses a desire to abandon books for life in the poem. He is, as we shall see, as self-consciously literary in his ambitions here as he is in the majority of his other works: the ability to see and then describe the "Manners" is the main object of his aspiration in the ode.

<sup>25</sup>For the proximity of Collins' formulae in "The Manners" to Milton's in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," see Johnston, pp. 125-6.

<sup>26</sup>Langhorne, reacting in a typically eighteenth-century way, speaks of dangers "when the mind goes in pursuit of visionary systems," and of perils in store for a mind with the "capacity to think abstractedly" (p. 143) as probable underlying reasons for Collins' farewell. Cf., of course, chapter XLIV of Rasselas, "The Dangerous Prevalence of Imagination."

<sup>27</sup>There has been some argument about the opening of these lines. Garrod proposed changing "Thou" to "Tho'," and his suggestion was adopted in the Stone-Poole edition. Because there seems to be no convincing evidence in the text to support such a change, I have quoted the original. See Lonsdale, pp. 472-3 for the details.

<sup>28</sup>Line forty-nine was subject to another of Garrod's capricious emendations: the original "Thou" he thought should be "Tho'." And again, though his suggestion was accepted in the Stone-Poole edition of 1937, I have followed the original here. Lonsdale covers the details once more. He correctly argues that Collins almost certainly meant to link Humour and the Passions, using the broader meaning of Humour as "temperament" in addition to the narrower sense of "comedy" (p. 475). It is also well to remember at this point that usage in his time made Manners synonymous with both "Passions" and "Humours."

<sup>29</sup>Collins supplies notes identifying the subjects of his allusions in these lines: he explains Miletus as "Alluding to the Milesian Tales, some of the earliest Romances"; "Him" (l. 63) as "Cervantes"; and "Him" (l. 67) as "Monsieur Le Sage, Author of the incomparable Adventures of Gil Blas de Santillane...."

<sup>30</sup>Johnston's evidence for the similarity of these final two verse paragraphs to the forms in the Book of Common Prayer is worth noting.

For the first paragraph he cites the "obsecration in the Litany, where the suppliant begs for Grace by virtue of the Acts of Christ, 'By the mystery of thy holy incarnation, by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision, by thy baptism, fasting and temptation. By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial'" (p. 124), and so on; for the second, he cites the prayer "'O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give'" (p. 124). He also points out, p. 125, that the former is a rhetorical formula employed by Fletcher, Milton and Pope (probably among others).

<sup>31</sup>For a discussion of the running debate in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries over the precise relationship between poetry and music as sister arts, see James Kinsley, "The Music of the Heart," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 8 (1964), 5-52. Collins' ode participates in a well-known tradition: poems in praise of music and its facility in arousing or calming the passions belonged to a recognized genre in his time. Dryden and Pope, and a host of minor poets, had worked in it (especially, of course, for the annual celebration of St. Cecilia's Day). Dryden, as Lonsdale points out (p. 479), may have been the strongest influence on Collins' poem; see his "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" and "Alexander's Feast." Additional backgrounds of the genre may be found in Robert M. Myers, "Neo-Classical Criticism of the Ode for Music," PMLA, 62 (1947), 399-421, and particularly in D.T. Mace, "Musical Humanism, the Doctrine of Rhythmus and the Saint Cecilia Odes of Dryden," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 27 (1964), 251-92. Stylized portraits of the Passions alone were also conventional in the period: see Brewster Rogerson, "The Art of Painting the Passions," JHI, 14 (1953), 68-94.

<sup>32</sup>Collins attempts throughout, also quite conventionally, to link sound and sense. The notion that this is possible was basic to theories about the close relationship between music and poetry, and about their effects on their auditors.

<sup>33</sup>The notion that music declined steadily after Greece's Golden Age was another commonplace of the genre. See Mace, "Musical Humanism," pp. 252-69. However in view of Collins' personal obsession with the artistic bankruptcy of his generation, such a commonplace takes on added significance.

<sup>34</sup>This aspect of the poem has been amply discussed elsewhere by E.M.W. Tillyard, "William Collins' 'Ode on the Death of Thomson,'" REL, 1 (1960), 30-8, and briefly by Johnston, p. 206. Particularly important is the parallel of the spatial movement of the boat and the temporal of the coming of nightfall--the latter quite appropriate to the elegiac mood. Johnston also notes the larger temporal shift from remembrance of the past, to present mourning and then to future memory of Thomson. He also comments on the vague change in seasons, moving toward winter.

<sup>35</sup>We may well note in this regard that Thomson's own chosen poetic lineage is dominated, like Collins', by Spenser and Milton.

The role of the latter is everywhere apparent in The Seasons; that of the former, especially in The Castle of Indolence, "Written in Imitation of Spenser." Thomson, of course, like Spenser and Milton, was able to get beyond his invocative stance. This may account in part for Collins' esteem.

<sup>36</sup> As quoted by Lonsdale, p. 487; see his summary of the entire controversy concerning the term's precise meaning for Collins, pp. 487-8.

<sup>37</sup> "In Yonder Grave a Druid Lies," RES, 22 (1946), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 5. Tompkins includes an equally revealing sketch of Thomson's own use of the Druidic tradition, particularly his portrayal of them as moral and religious counsellors, pp. 12-14.

<sup>39</sup> For all textual details regarding the ode, I am especially indebted to Claire Lamont, "William Collins's 'Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland'--A Newly Recovered Manuscript." RES, NS 19 (1968), 137-47. She provides a history of the manuscript, including the interpolations made for the 1788 Edinburgh edition. Except for those editorial additions, the manuscript, she concludes, "gives a new authority to the text of the poem as it had previously come down to us" (p. 147). Also see Lonsdale's extremely helpful detailed summary of the ode's full textual history, a necessary complement to Lamont's work, pp. 492-501. Both Lamont and Lonsdale discredit the anonymously edited text printed by Bell in London in 1788--a text unfortunately taken as authentic by many nineteenth-century editors (and one, Blunden, in the twentieth).

<sup>40</sup> I base my reading on the manuscript as transcribed by Lamont, letting the gaps stand. For the attempts to fill them, see Stone-Poole, where the 1788 edition (Edinburgh) is followed with the interpolations in brackets. Lamont lists the few substantive variants between the manuscript and the 1788 edition, p. 146. None radically alters the poem's meaning.

<sup>41</sup> See Lonsdale, p. 492, for details of the friendship.

<sup>42</sup> Johnston mentions that a "my"--"thy" contrast pervades the poem, p. 211.

<sup>43</sup> Late Augustan Poetry, p. 277.

<sup>44</sup> In her perceptive study, The Insistence of Horror: Aspects of the Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), Patricia Spacks argues that Collins' dominant attitude toward the popular superstitions and belief in them is ambiguous, pp. 70-4. Accusing Johnson of oversimplification in finding Collins guilty of "passive acquiescence" to popular tradition, Spacks goes on to assert, "it would be truer to say that he longed for such acquiescence, but never totally achieved it" (p. 70). This is certainly behind Collins' envy of Home's native surroundings, as Spacks points out. However she seems convinced Collins' problem lies only

in his personal inability to believe, while I would argue it is a combination of his personal uncertainties and his conviction that his audience, too, must believe. In other words, Collins' dilemma here, as elsewhere, is a function of the total environment within which the poet must write.

<sup>45</sup>The precise transition from the fourth to the fifth and sixth stanzas is unavailable, since it is here that the largest gap in the manuscript occurs. All of the fifth and probably eight lines of the sixth stanza are missing. But because when the poem begins again the tale of the Kaelpie is already in progress, it is safe to assume, I think, that most of the gap originally contained the opening of this legend.

<sup>46</sup>Collins was very familiar, it bears repeating, with Tasso in the Fairfax translation; see Lonsdale, pp. 565-6.

## CHAPTER VI

### COLLINS AND KEATS: THE MUTUAL DILEMMA

In order to sharpen our understanding of Collins'--and his era's--relationship to the Romantics, we must begin to focus our attention more precisely than has been done typically in the past. Instead of depending on the usual facile generalizations about what constitutes "pre-romanticism," we need to look much more closely at what unites, and separates, the poetic theory and practice of individual poets in the two periods.<sup>1</sup> With the invocative tradition and Collins' obsession with the invocative stance before us we now have, I think, a firmer basis for proceeding with that more precise assessment. Moreover, as we do so we will do well to remind ourselves that while Collins' meaning as a poet must lie in the achievement (or lack of it) of his poetry per se, his canon can effectively instruct us concerning the changes occurring everywhere in eighteenth-century English culture, changes which indicate the larger transition from the Renaissance to the modern world. An assessment of Collins' relationship to romanticism remains--despite past distortions--a necessary subject in any attempt to understand that transition and its effect on the English poetic tradition.

An analysis of his relationship to romanticism best begins, I believe, with Keats, for Keats shares Collins' dilemma perhaps more fully and intensely than any poet of the romantic period. And their

sharing goes far beyond the obvious fact that each poet's career was cut off prematurely. As W.J. Bate has definitively shown, Keats, along with nearly all the other poets of his time, was throughout his brief writing career plagued by the anxiety inherent in "the vivid awareness of what the great art of the past has achieved," and "by the poet's or artist's embarrassment before that rich amplitude."<sup>2</sup> The recurring self-doubts and inhibitions, the repeated turning to the nature and worth of poetry itself as the central subject of his poems, and especially the persistent anxiety over his ability to attain the ideal of inspired poethood represented for him as for Collins by such idols as Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton--in short, all the self-conscious symptoms of the dilemma we have traced through Collins' works are as notably present in those of Keats. Bate puts it most succinctly when he says, "in no major poet, near the beginning of the modern era, is the problem met more directly than it is in Keats."<sup>3</sup> And despite Keat's continued efforts to hope, his doubts caused him to fall back again and again, both in his poems and his letters, into expressions of humility and despair.<sup>4</sup> The inspired poetry he sought to write, mythically yoking the immortal and spiritual with the earthly and tangible realms in a manner equal to the similar achievement of his idols, usually seemed to him, as to Collins, beyond his reach.<sup>5</sup>

By far the most important tie between Collins and Keats, however, is yet another symptom of their shared dilemma as poets in an increasingly secular age (and one that has been neglected by the critics): the invocative stance. For although the stance remained important to many of the romantic poets, to none was it more crucial than to Keats.<sup>6</sup> A glance through the Keats canon demonstrates how very frequently he

resorts to the invocative mode, not only in the odes of 1819 and in the invocations in major efforts like Endymion and Hyperion, but in a host of minor poems as well. It is for this reason above all that we may perhaps most profitably turn to Keats in order to reassess Collins' relationship to romanticism, and to discover at the same time what became of the invocative tradition we have been tracing since Homer. The latter is particularly important because the romantic era produces the last significant appearance of a widely shared, serious desire by major poets to achieve through invocation the role of the inspired poet-seer of old.<sup>7</sup>

My primary aim in this chapter is not to provide anything like an exhaustive analysis of the Keats oeuvre (nor is one either necessary or possible in this study). Rather, I will examine Keats's invocative stance briefly in several poems representative of his early, middle and later writing in order to discern the broad pattern of his work within the context of that stance. In this way I hope to suggest the close resemblance between the stances--and dilemmas--of Collins and Keats.<sup>8</sup> In addition, important differences between them emerge. I begin with the very early "Specimen of an Induction to a Poem," then consider "Sleep and Poetry," that revealing summation of Keats's early ambitions and doubts; proceed to Endymion and Hyperion from the mid-career; and close with the "Ode to Psyche," "To Autumn" and The Fall of Hyperion. Finally, I offer a tentative conclusion regarding the extent to which Keats's total response to the dilemma differs from Collins', and most important, why--a conclusion which includes a summary reflection on the course of the invocative tradition as we have surveyed it up to 1820, and on Collins' pivotal place in it.

I

All the key elements of the Collins dilemma are prominent in Keats's "Specimen of an Induction." The young poet feels bound by his ambition to essay anew a poetic mode which reached its apogee in a previous era: "Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry."<sup>9</sup> In addition to expressing his zeal, Keats suggests the degree to which he feels bound to this antique genre of visions of "white plumes" (l. 2) and the magic of "Archimago's wand" (l. 6), when he repeats the resolute "must" four more times in the poem's relatively brief span of sixty-eight lines. And the repetition underscores his sense of personal urgency: "We must" (l. 8), "I must" (twice, ll. 11 and 12), and "Yet must I" (l. 45).

Just as conspicuous as this mixture of determination and limitation are Keats's self-doubt, poetic hero-worship (here of Spenser, of course), and, most important for our purposes, the excessively humble, impassioned invocation to Spenser which forms the climax of the "Induction." As he describes the tale he "must" tell, the difficulties he will encounter press upon him, moving him to ask plaintively, "Ah! shall I ever tell its cruelty, / When the fire flashes from a warrior's eye...?" (ll. 23-4), and again a few lines later, "No, no! this is far off:--then how shall I / Revive the dying tones of minstrelsy...?" (ll. 31-2). Along with the self-doubt underscored by each question, one observes the fundamental dilemma which haunts Keats in the second: how can a modern poet equal the greatness of past poets?

These questions lead the poet inevitably to his call to Spenser for help, a call to the idol who represents for him the greatest of past achievements in the chivalric mode: "Spenser! thy brows are arched, open, kind, / And come like a clear sun-rise to my mind"

(11. 49-50). Thinking thus of Spenser's example so comforts Keats that he feels encouraged enough to pray, as Collins so frequently does, to his poetic idol as his heavenly Muse:

Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully  
Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh  
My daring steps: or if thy tender care,  
Thus startled unaware,  
Be jealous that the foot of other wight  
Should madly follow that bright path of light  
Trac'd by thy lov'd Libertas; he will speak  
And tell thee that my prayer is very meek;  
That I will follow with due reverence,  
And start with awe at mine own strange pretence.

(11. 55-64)

Whatever encouragement or confidence Keats may feel as he begins this prayer is dispelled or at least significantly diminished in the reader's mind by the intense self-deprecation which permeates the passage. Indeed, the poet's meekness and awe here also nearly overpower and certainly undercut the reassurance with which he attempts to conclude the "Induction": "so I will rest in hope / To see..." (11. 65-6).

We know, of course, that this very combination of extreme humility and rather unpersuasive hope habitually underlies Collins' invocative stance; yet the passage contains an even more direct reminiscence of Keats's predecessor. Keats's reference to his "daring steps" as he seeks to follow Spenser's example cannot help but recall Collins' wish to follow Milton when, near the close of his "Ode on the Poetical Character," he says, "With many a Vow from Hope's aspiring Tongue, / My trembling Feet his guiding Steps pursue" (11. 70-1).<sup>10</sup> And Collins' hope too is a flimsy one, for as we remember, in the remaining lines of the ode he concludes that his pursuit is utterly "In vain..." (11. 72 ff.).

Of course one would expect such hero-worship and self-conscious uncertainty in this, the very earliest work of so young a poet. However the "Induction" proves typical in nearly every way except stylistically of much of Keats's other early work, right up to Endymion in 1818. "To Hope," the three early verse epistles (to George Felton Mathew, George Keats and Charles Cowden Clarke), and "I Stood Tip-toe" certainly confirm the pattern. And nowhere are the preoccupations more evident than in "Sleep and Poetry," by common consent the most important of Keats's early statements of his poetic aspirations and his notion of his personal fitness to attain them. Almost from the start the poem records Keats's anguished vacillations between his hope and determination on the one hand, and his self-doubt and despair on the other. From it emerges a portrait of a poet acutely aware of the gap between his high ideals (ideals based primarily on the achievements of past poets) and the boundaries of poetic possibility in his own era.

The initial forty-six lines form a prelude to the poet's opening invocation by establishing his deep reverence for the incomparable splendor of Poesy: "It has a glory, and nought else can share it: / The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy" (ll. 24-5). Then with the invocation itself (ll. 47-63) the reader is introduced to the same self-deprecating, tentatively hopeful novice in prayer who invokes Spenser's aid in the "Specimen of an Induction." Here he prays to divine Poesy itself, clearly convinced that his own powers alone are insufficient for attaining his visionary goals: "O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen / That am not yet a glorious denizen / Of thy wide heaven..." (ll. 47-9). It is a statement of dedication he repeats a few lines later in prayer-like fashion, having also underscored his desire for

kinship with the prophetic tradition by asking Poesy, "Should I rather kneel / Upon some mountain-top until I feel / A glowing splendour round about me hung...?" (ll. 49-51). Finally he makes his humble plea to Poesy despite being "not yet" initiated to the high company:

...yet, to my ardent prayer,  
Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air,  
Smoothed for intoxication by the breath  
Of flowering bays, that I may die a death  
Of luxury, and my young spirit follow  
The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo  
Like a fresh sacrifice; or, if I can bear  
The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the fair  
Visions of all places.... (ll. 55-63)

For approximately the next one hundred lines Keats outlines in more detail his poetic ambitions, should his prayer be answered. But his hopes and plans are then undercut by a sudden awareness of present realities in lines which recall Collins' self-defeating struggle to believe present poetic efforts capable of standing beside the glories of the past. First the poet seems utterly hopeless when he announces, "The visions all are fled" (l. 155); still, he refuses to accept the consequences of such a realization, and three lines later insists, "but I will strive / Against all doubtings" (ll. 159-60). From this point Keats's vacillations between despair and determination begin to occur in more and more rapid succession, suggesting more confusion and more difficulty for the poet trying to gain a sure sense of balance by weighing his ideals against his abilities. At the center of this growing uncertainty lies the problem of past poets' achievements, achievements which both encourage and threaten the young poet. Immediately after his "but I will strive" Keats asks, and then answers, the key questions which face him as they faced Collins before him:

Is there so small a range  
In the present strength of manhood, that the high  
Imagination cannot freely fly  
As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds,  
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds  
Upon the clouds? Has she not shown us all?  
(ll. 163-8)

His answer is unusually decisive, but still past tense: "Here her altar shone, / E'en in this isle..." (ll. 171-2). After asking rhetorically "who could paragon" (l. 173) such attainment in his own time, the poet repeats his belief in the glories of the past: "Aye, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd / With honors..." (ll. 178-9). This affirmation Keats follows immediately with still another question, emphasizing further the gap between past greatness and his era: "Could all this be forgotten?" (l. 181).

The poet's predictable answer actually introduces another aspect of his view of the past. "Yes," he argues, "a schism / Nurtured by foppery and barbarism, / Made great Apollo blush for this his land" (ll. 181-3). Thus he launches into his celebrated attack on neo-classicism, which he blames for undermining the Muses' love affair with England. The attack itself is not very convincing and was already becoming an empty, oversimplified convention by Keats's time. But it is significant in that it leads Keats into his second invocation (ll. 207-29), a passage which inaugurates perhaps the most perplexing series of vacillations between hope and self-doubt recorded thus far by the uncertain poet. Wondering how the Muses reacted to what he sees as the debased efforts of the neo-classicists, Keats asks first,

O ye whose charge  
It is to hover round our pleasant hills!  
Whose congregated majesty so fills  
My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace  
Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,  
So near those common folk; did not their shames  
Affright you? (ll. 207-12)

And a few lines later, clearly suggesting his respect for eighteenth-century poets like Chatterton (and Collins?) who were not, in his view, of the Boileau school, the poet asks the Muses, "Or did ye stay to give a welcoming / To some lone spirits who could proudly sing / Their youth away, and die?" (ll. 217-19).

Then, just as suddenly as he had appeared to despair at line 155, he resolves to "think away those times of woe" (l. 220), and speaks it seems with total and somewhat unaccountable confidence in the Muses' present favor, perhaps thinking of Wordsworth's achievements: "Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed / Rich benedictions o'er us..." (ll. 221-2). But though the rest of the invocation affirms this confident tone, it ends as abruptly as it began when Keats goes on to say, "These things are doubtless: yet in truth we've had / Strange thunders from the potency of song" (ll. 230-1), and calls the themes of his contemporaries "ugly clubs" (l. 234). Again, not many lines later the poet alters his tone yet once more to insist as abruptly as before, "Yet I rejoice" (l. 248). The rigors of Keats's struggle are apparent.

In the last third of the poem, however, Keats gradually manages to push his doubts--and these rapid vacillations--into the background with only a few overt struggles when he fears failure again ("But off Despondence! miserable bane!", l. 281, for example). Though he baldly reasserts his grand ideal of Poesy (ll. 290 ff.), he is able to forestall further lapses into despair of ever realizing it only by lowering his sights, saying, "For sweet relief I'll dwell / On humbler thoughts..." (ll. 312-13) and "peaceful images" (l. 340). In addition to this compromise the poet retreats further from his ideal by shifting his focus rather arbitrarily back to the value of Sleep, with which

he had opened the poem, and to memories of the comforting shelter of Leigh Hunt's cottage with its store of busts of past poets. And though all these consolations have apparently enabled Keats to determine, as he declares in the closing lines, to write this very poem, one comes away from it with the sense that the poet has failed to resolve the tensions he confronts so clearly and steadily in the first two-thirds of the work.

Indeed, one cannot help feeling that Keats himself could not have been content with a retreat instead of a solution. Such "humbler thoughts" and "peaceful images" are hardly satisfactory substitutes for the "Visions of all places" or "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (ll. 124-5) which he aspires to express earlier in the poem. Like Collins, Keats continually attempts to surmount or at least to live peaceably with his dilemma; but also like Collins, the symptoms of that dilemma--his repeated invocations, his pervasive self-consciousness, and his recurrent doubts about himself and the modern era--combine to overthrow or undercut any hopes or consolations he attempts to express. Most important, as with Collins, one never concludes an invocation in Keats's early work with any confidence that a satisfying response has been made by the Muse.

## II

If the conflict between Keats's ideals and his limitation, between hope and doubt, is never fully resolved in "Sleep and Poetry," there is little more sustained assurance to be found in Endymion. Before the reader even begins the poem a "Preface" proclaims Keats's lack of confidence. There, after announcing his regret at publishing the poem

at all due to his manifest "inexperience" and "immaturity," Keats goes on to call it "a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished"<sup>11</sup>-- a well known description one might accurately apply not only to Endymion and in some respects to other important Keats poems (the Hyperions, in particular), but certainly to much of the Collins canon as well. Moreover, even when Keats expresses some hope of later success with mythological subjects in the closing paragraph of the "Preface," he does so amid the perennial self-doubt and general misgiving about poetic possibilities in his time which so plagued and inhibited Collins: "I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell."

Assuming the conventional allegorical interpretation of the poem's main narrative depicting Endymion's tortured quest for union with his dream goddess (whom Robert Graves would call a manifestation of the universal Muse or White Goddess) to be correct, his search on one level images forth rather vaguely the earthly poet's quest to achieve his divine poetic ideal, or what Endymion calls "A fellowship with essence" (I, 779), and what Collins seeks to embody in his abstractions-made-goddesses. It is a search which comes, even on the literal level, to an abrupt, contrived "happy ending" as unsatisfying as that of "Sleep and Poetry." Surely it is safe to conjecture that this sudden resolution of Endymion's inner conflicts is one of the sources of Keats's embarrassment in the "Preface," where he confesses to feeling that the poem's four books "are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press." But the underlying personal quest of Keats himself as it surfaces in the poem's several invocations comes to no such

resolution, sudden or otherwise. It is in these recurrent moments of fervent prayer and frustrated self-doubt that the mood of the "Preface" makes itself felt most strongly throughout the poem; Keats's invocations reveal a struggle no less excruciating and no less central to the poem than that of Endymion.

The poet's initial invocation appears not far into Book I where, about to describe the procession of worshippers to the altar of Pan, Keats pauses to pray for the assistance of the Muse:

O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue falter  
In telling of this goodly company,  
Of their old piety, and of their glee:  
But let a portion of ethereal dew  
Fall on my head, and presently unmew  
My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,  
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.  
(ll. 128-34)

In addition to establishing the poet as a weak mortal who, like Endymion, must receive divine assistance in order to attain the fulfillment of his aspirations, these lines introduce a self-abasement which becomes severe self-doubt as the poem progresses. However neither the tone nor the content of this invocation differs much, say, from those uttered by Dante when he is about to embark on what he considers to be a difficult passage. Yet the comparison Keats stresses in closing between his "stammer" and Chaucer's song does suggest a more radical humility, especially in the face of the ever-threatening predecessor poet, than Dante--or even Milton--expresses.

Keats's uncertainty and disgruntlement concerning the efficacy of his invocations, and indeed about his whole career up to and including Endymion, surface next early in Book II. First he expresses his frustration, after having just stated his belief in the value of poems on the subject of love:

Fearfully  
Must such conviction come upon his head,  
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,  
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,  
The path of love and poesy.

(ll. 34-8)

But then, after wavering momentarily as he had done repeatedly in "Sleep and Poetry," he somehow manages to go on with the same dogged determination which enabled him to bring that poem to its conclusion, however summarily. The act of writing itself, he seems to believe (or tries to), is preferable to silence:

But rest,  
In chafing restlessness, is yet more drear  
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear  
Love's standard on the battlements of song.

(ll. 38-41)

Continual effort alone, then, must take the place of a Muse when Keats writes half as declaration, and half as request: "So once more days and nights aid me along, / Like legion'd soldiers" (ll. 42-3). But for all his determination, the military imagery in these lines also sustains his emphasis on the difficulty of the effort.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, when no amount of such perseverance seems capable of forestalling the despair the poet registers in h's next invocation--an invocation which does not appear, significantly, until Keats has completed over six hundred uninterrupted, non-invocative lines. Those lines provide him with no apparent consolation as he utters perhaps his most anguished plea thus far in his work. About to describe the meeting between Endymion and his goddess, Keats appeals for aid to Homer's ancient source:

Helicon!  
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!  
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er  
These sorry pages; then the verse would soar  
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark  
Over his nested young... (ll. 716-21)

Except for the poet's rather harsh self-deprecation, this request might be viewed merely as another traditional prayer for aid before he begins a difficult passage. Such a conventional view of the invocation is ruled out quickly, however, by what immediately follows it, for Keats proceeds to record a cheerless vision of the availability in his time of the inspiration he needs:

...but all is dark  
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount  
Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count  
Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll  
Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll  
Is in Apollo's hand....

(11. 721-6)

These lines could as well have been written by Collins, who had himself declared despairingly in "Poetical Character" (as elsewhere) that "Heav'n, and Fancy, kindred Pow'rs, / Have now o'erturn'd th' inspiring Bow'rs, / Or curtain'd close such Scene from ev'ry future View" (11. 74-6).

Keats does manage to go on, of course, where Collins could not, but not without uttering one more lament for his era's inability to attain immortal inspiration through the invocative stance:

Yet, oh yet,  
Although the sun of Poesy is set,  
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep  
That there is no old power left to steep  
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.

(11. 728-32)

Moreover, it seems to me, one's reading of the succeeding non-invocative, unselfconscious lines cannot help but be tinged somewhat by such unrelieved gloom and frustration as Keats here expresses. The invocation and his conviction of its failure cannot, at any rate, be easily dismissed when we come to judge the work's overall success or failure as a poem--a judgement which has most often found its flaws to be more

prominent than its beauties. If, as I have argued all along, invocation is an integral facet of the poem in which it appears; and if, as is certainly clear, Keats believes divine inspiration to be both necessary to Endymion and unavailable: then the final realization that the poem is seriously flawed should seem inevitable, as indeed it does.

In Keats's only explicit reiteration of his lack of confidence in Book III, one gets a more specific indication of just how the poem is being affected adversely by the poet's invocative dilemma. He is again painfully conscious of the difficult task he has taken on when he says, just prior to the Hymn to Neptune,

O 'tis a very sin  
For one so weak to venture his poor verse  
In such a place as this. O do not curse,  
High Muses! let him hurry to the ending.  
(ll. 937-40)

And hurry to a close he appears to do, both here and more important, at the conclusion of Book IV.

Keats begins the fourth book with the poem's longest invocation, an expanded restatement of the same despair of success which has pursued him since Book II. Indeed, at this point one begins to notice how the mere repetition of this frustrated invocative stance alone reflects Keats's obsession both with the stance and with the dilemma it embodies. The same iteration, we recall, is a key indicator of Collins' predicament. The poet appears unable to transcend the thought of the greatness of past poets who have successfully called on the Muse. After recounting how long the "Muse of my native land" (l. 1) had waited "in a deep prophetic solitude" (l. 9) while inspiration flowed in other lands, Keats comes to the days when finally Her favor was known in England.

O thou has won  
A full accomplishment! The thing is done,  
Which undone, these our latter days had risen  
On barren souls. (ll. 17-20)

He emphasizes next the weakness and limitation of the mortality he shares with other men--a mortality which "confines, and frets / Our spirit's wings" (ll. 21-2) and leaves their lives, significantly in this context, "uninspired" (l. 25). Keats finally completes this call to his Muse by insisting paradoxically that, despite his desire to be one of those "who shrives / To thee" (ll. 26-7), and despite his preparatory address to Her in the preceding lines, "then I thought on poets gone, / And could not pray:--nor can I now--so on / I move to the end in lowliness of heart" (ll. 27-9).

Keats's inability even to ask for the Muse's aid in these lines suggests that his confidence in himself, his era and invocation has reached a new low. At the same time it adds to the significance of his final invocation in Endymion. In it he asks his Muse two questions which grow directly out of his earlier failure to ask Her for aid, and which suggest Keats's flirtation with a notion that forms the basis of a crucial distinction between Keats and Collins. They are questions, in any case, which Collins would never and could never ask. After having begun to describe the flight of Endymion and his Indian Maid from earth--a description almost any previous poet would have assumed required divine inspiration--Keats asks:

Muse of my native land, am I inspired?  
This is the giddy air, and I must spread  
Wide pinions to keep here; nor do I dread  
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance  
Precipitous: I have beneath my glance  
Those towering horses and their mournful freight.  
Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await  
Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid?--  
(ll. 354-61)

Although some self-doubt underlies the mere asking, this is also nevertheless a hint of newfound confidence in Keats. His earlier fears seem subdued for the moment; he is certain he sails, and certain he sees what is beyond ordinary mortal vision. Is it possible he does so without inspiration, indeed without even praying for it? Collins, on the other hand, always knows when he is not inspired, and never imagines the possibility of such visionary success without the Muse's aid. Keats's questions do not, of course, totally obviate his continuing struggle, for latent in them too is the poet's fervent wish that he is inspired. What they do suggest is that at least the possibility of an alternative to the long, binding invocative tradition has occurred to him: the poet's imagination as its own source of inspiration. And Keats does go on from here to finish the poem without further overt doubts.

The total pattern of Keats's invocations in Endymion, when coupled with the sense of absolute failure he recorded in the "Preface" after the poem was completed, forms a strong counterpoint to his last call to his Muse, to the resolution of Endymion's own inner conflicts which Keats contrives in the closing lines, and even to the undeniable fact that the poet does get beyond his invocations to complete the poem. While Keats shows his mortal hero achieving union with the immortal realm of divine essence, he clearly feels such union is no longer available to himself as a mortal poet--at least at this stage of his career, and in this era. Neither, it follows, does he regard the act of invocation itself to be efficacious any longer, an act he still feels compelled to perform amid all his doubts. Moreover, if the poet himself is unable to achieve total union with the immortal sphere

through invocation, then Endymion's success seems a rather hollow one, or at least it raises some question about Keats's apparent self-contradiction. Perhaps he regards such union to be possible only within the confines of mythic romance; but not to be within the reach of a poet in England in 1818.

Despite the almost totally unrelieved despair Keats expresses in most of his invocations in Endymion, in a little over four months (and in the most difficult of personal circumstances: he was nursing his dying brother Tom) he began the writing of Hyperion--an effort at least as ambitious in scope, if not more so, as Endymion. Hyperion was to be, after all, an epic in the Miltonic tradition and style. Collins, we recall, though he was equally ambitious to attain the Miltonic sublime, could never bring himself to attempt the epic in this way. More significant even than the attempt, though, is the poet's widely acknowledged success in the first two books, which reveal a definite advance from the immature Endymion. Much has long been made of Keats's achievement of total objectivity and the complete absence of self-consciousness or doubt from his stance in Books I and II. And one cannot deny that he attains them, particularly in Book I. Furthermore, even when he does make his first reference to the Muse in the poem early in Book II, he does so with an almost Homeric self-effacement in the certainty that She is in complete control of the poem: "For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread, / Who shall delay her flight?" (ll. 82-3). He makes this assumption of inspiration, it bears underlining, without having uttered a single invocation requesting it or, most important, wondering if it is available to him.

The first (and only) invocation finally appears in Book III, and

Keats seems equally certain in his assumption that the Muse has been in control all along. Here the poet merely asks the Muse to shift Her focus from the fallen Titans to Apollo:

O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes;  
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire:  
A solitary sorrow best befits  
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.  
Leave them, O Muse! for thou anon wilt find  
Many a fallen old Divinity  
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.  
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,  
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe  
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute;  
For lo! 'tis for the Father of all verse.  
(11. 3-13)

These lines are in part simply a call for the Muse's continued divine assistance, and even if we accept Bate's notion that their almost mechanical nature (unusual for Keats) may in itself be a clue to underlying difficulties that surface later on, Keats nevertheless also speaks with enough assurance that he even appears to be advising the Muse.<sup>12</sup> Taking Her aid for granted, the poet seems equally concerned with telling Her how to proceed with that aid and why. The only really explicit hint of frailty in the passage comes in line four, where Keats explains that the Muse is "weak to sing such tumults dire." Yet this also bears no resemblance to the self-doubts which pervade Keats's usual invocative stance, for he attributes the weakness here not at all to himself personally, but only to the Muse.

The apparent confidence and the manifestly objective achievement of the first two books continue almost unchanged after this invocation for an additional 123 lines, seeming to vindicate Keats's newfound assurance. But then perhaps the most significant fact about Hyperion, particularly in view of my concerns in this study, intrudes: it is only a fragment. Despite his completion of two books of rather

impressive, totally detached epic narrative, and despite his presumption of his Muse's grace, Keats was unable to go on. The abrupt breaking off at line 136 certainly calls the poet's prior confidence into question: how are we to interpret that poise in light of the paradox of Keats's ultimate failure with the poem? And what, finally, is the relationship between the poet's poise up to the break, the break itself, and the conspicuous self-doubt, even despair, in Keats's previous work? And these questions inevitably involve the larger one that is asked perennially: why was Keats unable to finish Hyperion?<sup>13</sup>

However difficult it may be to answer such questions, one inference is, it seems to me, unavoidable. The fact that Hyperion is only a fragment, combined with the poet's recurring self-doubt elsewhere, often to the point of despair, finally makes one seriously doubt, along with Bate, the effectiveness if not the sincerity of Keats's confident invocative stance prior to his breaking off. While it can never be proven conclusively, the reader strongly suspects that Keats's uncertainties about his ability and about the efficacy of invocation itself may well have been a factor--even though he does not allow them overt expression in this poem.

Two of Keats's letters to George and Georgiana Keats provide hints that he was not progressing well with the poem, and thus help to confirm that suspicion. In the first, written between the 16th of December, 1818 and the 4th of January, 1819, Keats reports, "Just now I took out my poem to go on with it--but the thought of my writing so little to you came upon me and I could not get on...."<sup>14</sup> And in a letter begun on the 14th of February, 1819 he seems to be having more serious trouble when he says, "I have not gone on with Hyperion--for

to tell the truth I have not been in great cue for writing lately--I must wait for the sp[r]ing to rouse me up a little."<sup>15</sup> But the spring brought no significant renewal of his progress with Hyperion. Thus, just as Collins' few non-invocative poems ultimately represent only a very limited kind of success, so Keats's first totally detached, confident reliance on his Muse is undermined in the end by the poet's failure to complete the work in which it appears. On the other hand, just how suddenly and how fully the coming months did rouse Keats upon new directions has long fascinated both his admirers and detractors alike; I shall focus on that rebirth in the third and final section.

### III

Any discussion of Keats's continued attempts to rely on the invocative stance in his later works must begin, of course, with the "Ode to Psyche." Not only is it important as the first of the great odes of 1819, but also as the first of Keats's later works to be confined totally to invocation--a circumstance determined more, I believe, by Keats's continuing struggle to surmount his dilemma than simply by his choice of the ode form alone. Indeed that choice in itself was probably conditioned, as it almost surely was for Collins, by Keats's quest for the external, divine inspiration he thought he needed. Particularly significant too is the realization that here, just when we would hope to see the poet furthering the detachment and assurance he had begun to show early in Hyperion (a promise certainly fulfilled in part by a less ambitious work like The Eve of St. Agnes written in January and February of 1819), Keats turns instead to a stance in which he appears superficially at any rate to be as inhibited, as

obsessively self-centered, and as uncertain of success as Collins.

At first glance, the "Ode to Psyche" seems to parallel both the tone and the key structural elements of the majority of Collins' odes very closely. In fact, the poem is probably the nearest of any in the Keats canon to Collins' prevailing framework of humble prayer to a transcendent Goddess.<sup>16</sup> For the Keats of the "Ode to Psyche" the invocation has again become the entire poem, as it had been for Collins. The pronounced similarities between the two poets' stances begin to be apparent at once with Keats's opening, vehement call, "O Goddess!" The poet then immediately underlines his sense of humility and weakness in presuming to pray to Her when he asks the Goddess to "hear these tuneless numbers" (l. 1). And growing inevitably out of this self-deprecation is the poet's uncertainty a few lines later as to whether the special vision he hopes to record was a dream or a waking truth: "Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see / The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?" (ll. 5-6).

Like Collins too, Keats proceeds in the remainder of the first stanza to establish his worthiness of the Goddess' attention and favor by describing his vision of Her with Cupid. In the second stanza the poet continues to bolster his plea, now by flattering Psyche as the "loveliest vision far / Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!" (ll. 24-5). He also prepares the way here for his supplication in the next stanza by arguing that Psyche, as a latecomer to the mythic pantheon, has no traditional temple of Her own; nor has She been sung by any choir or "pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming" (l. 35). In other words, the modern poet who wishes to be Her choir need fear none of that inhibiting competition from earlier poets of which Keats has so often written

before, and which so thwarted Collins' efforts.

In yet another arresting parallel to Collins' invocations, Keats next laments precisely that present failure of belief in the supernatural realm which forms the basis of the invocative dilemma of both poets. The lament opens the crucial third stanza where the poet makes his major plea to the Goddess; Keats writes, he tells Her,

too late for antique vows,  
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,  
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,  
Holy the air, the water, and the fire....  
(ll. 36-9)

From this lament, Keats moves on paralleling the movement of Collins' invocations, to a reassertion of his vision; then to the central invocation itself (ll. 44-9); and finally closes the poem by fervently dedicating himself to the Goddess ("I will be thy priest," l. 50), by promising to create a temple where She may be worshipped, and at last by focusing on the abstract plane the Goddess represents--"Love" (l. 67).

These very similarities to the usual Collins posture, however, close as they are, serve ultimately to accentuate the fundamental divergence between the two poets' stances which emerges in the climactic third stanza, and which makes Keats's promise in the fourth possible. For it is obvious that in quoting the lament of the third stanza, I ignored the operative "though" which precedes "too late for antique vows" and which significantly qualifies the entire passage. Unlike Collins, for whom recognition of the failure of traditional belief in the supernatural is usually cause for despair, Keats here takes that failure almost as a challenge to be met and overcome. And overcome it he does, with a certainty previously unmatched either in the "Ode to

Psyche" or his other work, and a certainty upheld by his prior recognition that his prayer to Psyche has no precedent. The poet completes his statement on the modern failure of belief in lines which also intimate the turn of the main clause, "Yet even in these days so far retir'd / From happy pieties..." (ll. 40-1); then finally he proclaims to Psyche that, despite this unfavorable atmosphere,

thy lucent fans,  
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,  
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.  
(ll. 41-3)

Keats has made his assertion all the more momentous, of course, by postponing it during almost six subordinate lines. But most significant of all is one's recognition that this is no commonplace assertion of vision. In the invocation which, appropriately, follows directly after it, Keats is not requesting that he be inspired, for this has already been achieved, he seems totally confident, through his own inherent power to see and sing--"by my own eyes inspired." Such a stance was simply not possible for Collins, or for Keats either up to now, although the latter's questions in the final invocation of Endymion do suggest its possibility, as we have noted. All Keats does pray for in his central plea is the privilege (justified by his self-inspired song) of becoming the choir that latecomer Psyche missed, "Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat / Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming" (ll. 48-9).

Still, one must not allow the poet's certainty of inspiration in the ode to induce any overstatement of his confidence. True, in the final, dedicatory stanza Keats does pledge to the Goddess, "Yet, I will be thy priest, and build a fane / In some untrodden region of my mind" (ll. 50-1), and "A rosy sanctuary will I dress / With the

wreath'd trellis of a working brain" (ll. 59-60) presided over by "the gardener Fancy" (l. 62). And it is precisely his prior assurance of a self-actuated inspiration that has made these promises of a wholly inward consecration possible. That assurance, however, as well as the devotion it fosters, remains dependent upon the Goddess' sanction, for which the poet asks in the heart of his invocation. Moreover, the closing stanza (as is typical with Collins) is written totally in the future tense, describing only what Keats hopes to be able to accomplish. This lingering contingency--along with the poet's uncertainty early in the poem--thus renders some caution necessary, especially when the critic attempts a final assessment of Keats's attitude toward his Muse in his career as a whole. This qualification is in no way meant, however, to reduce the equally undeniable importance of Keats's unprecedented faith in the visionary capacity of the human mind unassisted as he expresses it so forcefully in the third stanza of the "Ode to Psyche."<sup>17</sup>

Nor was the promise of that faith to go wholly unfulfilled. For in the weeks and months following the writing of the "Ode to Psyche" Keats gave evidence of having undergone what must be one of the most extraordinarily rapid poetic developments in literary history, culminating in his fine control and absolute self-possession in the ode "To Autumn" in September of 1819. Whether or not Keats's achievement in this one poem marks, as is often argued, his attainment of complete and final conquest of his dilemma I shall discuss in due course. What there can be no doubt of is that in "To Autumn" (and to a lesser degree, of course, in the "Ode to a Nightingale," the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and the "Ode to Melancholy" of the same year) Keats almost

overnight, it seems, found himself able to escape the torturous confines of the poem as invocation, and thus to transcend the anguish and self-doubt that had so inhibited both him and Collins. Extensive analysis or even quotation of this much analyzed and universally lauded poem to demonstrate its near perfection as a work of art would be superfluous here; Keats's accomplishment is there for anyone to see. Bate probably sums it up best when he says, "The distinctive appeal of 'To Autumn' lies not merely in the degree of resolution but in the fact that, in this short space, so many different kinds of resolution are attained."<sup>18</sup>

More relevant to the matter in hand is the exact degree to which Keats was now capable of surpassing Collins, while working nonetheless within the invocative stance. The approach which most effectively reveals the ode's distance from the Collins mode is to compare it to its nearest relative in the Collins canon, the "Ode to Evening."<sup>19</sup> Both poems are, first of all, invocative throughout; and both are addressed to a Goddess who personifies observable, tangible qualities in external nature, rather than abstractions. But there the substantive similarities end.

Several distinct and highly instructive differences between the two poems, on the other hand, should be even more readily apparent. From the first two lines of the "Ode to Evening" (beginning, as we recall, with "If" and "May" respectively) the prevailing tone is one of uncertain hope and striving, whereas in "To Autumn" all is plenitude, repose and reassurance--even with the intimations of mortality which gather in the final stanza. Another distinguishing factor is that underlying the entire "Ode to Evening" are the poet's repeated pleas

for the Goddess' favor and assistance, whereas "To Autumn" is nothing more than a hymn of praise to the season; the poem is totally devoid of entreaty. Finally, and perhaps most important, the "Ode to Evening" reveals Collins in his usual, intensely self-conscious bearing, with a steady flow of personal pronouns. But in "To Autumn," as Bate observes, "The poet himself is completely absent; there is no 'I'..."<sup>20</sup> Keats has thus succeeded, momentarily at least, in totally overcoming his personal obsession with the gap between his aspirations and his accomplishments, while at the same time transforming the invocative stance in a way which in all probability did not even present itself to Collins. For Collins it was always a means to an unfulfilled end; for the Keats of "To Autumn" it is its own fulfillment.

While the previous summer had seen Keats working on the equally unselfconscious, non-invocative Lamia (perhaps along with several sonnets, though the form was becoming less and less satisfying to the poet<sup>21</sup>), it had also seen him begin a final struggle to revise Hyperion. That struggle, significantly, was taking place both before and after the writing of "To Autumn." The resulting poem--like its predecessor, only a fragment--contains conclusive evidence to counter the tempting notion that the great odes, and especially "To Autumn," represent a secure or sustained mastery by Keats of the dilemma that lies at the core of his career.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, now that we are about to consider finally just how far Keats transcends the Collins dilemma when his career is taken as a whole, the anguish and self-doubt which dominate The Fall of Hyperion must enter briefly into the discussion.

Instead of developing and refining the epic objectivity he had achieved in the first two books of Hyperion, Keats becomes more

self-conscious by far in the second attempt. Indeed, he is so uneasy with the role to which he aspires that he must spend almost the whole of the first three hundred lines of Canto I in preparing for, justifying, explaining and generally supporting his claim to have his invocation answered by Moneta with the granting of a special vision. Only after he has defended not just himself but the role of poets in general against Moneta's attack does he invoke Her aid as the climax of the Induction (ll. 282-90), and then go on with the main narrative concerning Saturn, Hyperion and the rest. But no amount of vindication of his role appears to suffice as a counterbalance for his doubts. The poet's underlying misgivings and excessive humility surface again and again, both in explicit terms and in his general bewilderment as he gropes his way self-consciously through his dream encounter with Moneta.

Keats seems unduly defensive, in fact, from the introductory stanza, where he first asks, "Who alive can say / 'Thou art no Poet; mayst not tell thy dreams'?" (I, 11-12), and then concludes the stanza uncertain of his own status: "Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse / Be Poet's or Fanatic's will be known / When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave" (I, 16-18). The most important revelation of his need to justify himself comes, however, in the poet's subsequent debate with Moneta when Keats has the Goddess voice the classic attack on the visionary poet: "What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe, / To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing..." (I, 167-8). And although Moneta makes a distinction between poet and dreamer a few lines later, we have already seen that Keats is uncertain which he is. Thus it comes as no surprise when he concludes his defense of poets in general by reemphasizing his own self-deprecation in rather drastic terms:

If it please,  
Majestic shadow, tell me: sure not all  
Those melodies sung into the world's ear  
Are useless: sure a poet is a sage;  
A humanist, Physician to all men.  
That I am none I feel, as Vultures feel  
They are no birds when Eagles are abroad.  
What am I then?<sup>23</sup> (I, 186-93)

Following Moneta's rather cryptic differentiation between the poet and the dreamer, Keats first curses bad poets (including himself, should that be called for), then betrays his continued perplexity--he is even left speechless at one point (I, 228-31)--and finally receives Moneta's somewhat inexplicable benediction: She explains She will "be kind to thee for thy goodwill" (I, 242). Though he remains terrified by Her presence, his desire to share in the Goddess' vision holds him, and after She has parted Her veils he musters the courage at last to invoke Her grace in the climax of his long Induction:

'Shade of Memory!'  
Cried I, with act adorant at her feet,  
'By all the gloom hung round thy fallen house,  
By this last Temple, by the golden age,  
By great Apollo, thy dear foster child,  
And by thyself, forlorn divinity,  
The pale Omega of a wither'd race,  
Let me behold, according as thou said'st,  
What in thy brain so ferments to and fro.'  
(I, 282-80)

Keats's demeanor in these lines clearly marks his return, brief though it is, to a stance very closely akin to that of Collins: the humble prayer for a vision not usually granted to ordinary mortals.

His invocation complete after so precarious and extensive a preparation, Keats goes on, now quite unlike Collins, to begin to describe the vision Moneta has granted him. But there are more misgivings, including even an apology for the length of the Induction (I, 464-8). And when we come to the poem's fragmentary close only a

short distance into the second canto, we are again confronted (as in Hyperion) with the probability that Keats's doubts, so often expressed here and throughout his career, have overcome his belief in the efficacy of invocation--indeed in the very possibility of visionary poetry, of seeing "as a God sees" (I, 304).

The ode "To Autumn," then, can hardly be viewed as anything more than a moment of calm amid Keats's enveloping struggle with his dilemma as a poet aspiring to write visionary poetry in an increasingly secular age. Moreover, as the poet's letters indicate, his uncertainty and disenchantment extended ultimately even to the poems in which the struggle is not at all apparent, such as Isabella and to a lesser degree The Eve of St. Agnes.<sup>24</sup> And in his last known poem, the much admired sonnet "Bright Star," Keats's prevailing tone is one of intense and frustrated personal striving after a distant, unattainable ideal: "Bright Star! would I were steadfast as thou art...." Neither the aspiration nor the painful awareness of the gap between the ideal and the actual was ever far from his consciousness.

Thus it is simply not possible, it seems to me, to conclude that Keats ever achieved a sustained transcendence of the dilemma he shared with Collins. It always returned to haunt and inhibit him, particularly in those poems where he sought most to follow in the steps of his idols by receiving an inspiration equal to theirs. In this sense his vacillation during his career between doubt and occasionally unself-conscious assurance is not really much unlike that of Collins. Collins, on the other hand, never transformed the invocative stance into a "To Autumn" or an "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Neither did Collins ever

find the confidence or the determined ambition even to attempt the long poem which his desire to emulate Milton, for example, should have dictated. Keats made such attempts repeatedly, as we have seen, though without complete success. By the time of his death Keats had, in fact, managed to overcome the invocative dilemma in more poems by far, with more varied forms expressing constantly maturing themes, than the more inhibited Collins had done, and in less time. Keats, in other words, never ceased to search for and try out different modes and ideas through which he might be able to transcend the dilemma.<sup>25</sup> All this, coupled with--and perhaps the cause of--the remarkable stylistic development he was making in the last year of his writing, suggests that what one must hesitate to say of Collins one may confidently say of Keats: had he lived longer, he would almost certainly have gone on to develop not only the sort of transformation he accomplished in "To Autumn," but also new ways to surpass his own earlier obsessions.<sup>26</sup>

Now we must turn to the more difficult (and necessarily more tentative) question of why Keats demonstrated some promise of transcending the Collins dilemma. One must concede right away, of course, that Keats was undoubtedly the better poet overall, with a superior native talent. But this obvious truth actually throws little if any light on the central topic which has concerned us throughout this study--that is, the changing attitudes of poets toward the Muse and divine inspiration as they are revealed in their invocative stances, and the effects those changes have on their works. Indeed, who is to say finally how much being a "better poet" depends on the cultural atmosphere in which one writes? After all, Spenser and Milton had themselves begun to feel the growing pressure the visionary posture was

being forced to bear, though their achievement does not appear to have been seriously hindered by it. Only a Homer, perhaps, could be free to adopt the invocative stance with seemingly absolute confidence and simplicity, turning the telling of his story over totally to the Muse's control and becoming himself no more than a disembodied voice as Her medium. In the Renaissance the stance had become a much more personal expression of the poet's aspirations, needs and doubts.

By Collins' time, as we have seen, the pressure of the dilemma facing a poet who aspired to the role of divinely inspired mythmaker had greatly increased. This was due both to the accelerating subversion of the authority of the supernatural realm by secular forces, and to the shadow cast by the towering achievements of Spenser and Milton. Nowhere are the effects of that pressure more evident than in the Collins canon, in which the dilemma has become an obsession, and the invocative stance very nearly the sole determinant of structure and meaning. What had once been no more than the necessary prelude to the inspired vision that constituted the poem proper, was now the poem itself, frustrating and inhibiting even the most vehement attempts to surmount it. Also, the pervasive and constricting self-consciousness inherent in the stance dominates not only Collins' poems, but the work of poets long after invocation as such had become so sterile that it too had begun to disappear, particularly in our own century. Collins' stance thus signals the full onset of a dilemma poets have not yet conquered.

But Keats, though he certainly shared the same dilemma, and to a significant degree the reliance on the invocative stance as well, wrote with several advantages his predecessor did not enjoy. First, Keats had the example--and thus at least the indirect encouragement--of

Wordsworth's probing of the inner nature of the human mind. Wordsworth's was an enterprise very different from the more impersonal, objective narratives set forth by Spenser or Milton, or Homer. And it was an exploration for which Wordsworth had been careful to establish the authority of his own Muse within the invocative tradition represented by Milton's Urania. In The Recluse he invokes Her aid, "Urania, I shall need / Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such / Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!" (ll. 769-71), because of the difficulty of the study he proposes, "when we look / Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man..." (ll. 783-4).<sup>27</sup> Collins had no such powerful example among his contemporaries of a way to transform the tradition he aspired to follow into a mode possible in his own era. Thus he could never say, as Keats did in the sonnet to Haydon, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning" (l. 1), nor could he be reassured that "These, these will give the world another heart, / And other pulses" (ll. 11-12). To Collins it must surely have seemed that the only possible way to become a visionary poet of the sublime was to follow Milton literally--an enterprise destined, as we well know, for failure in the 1740's.

Also an important advantage to Keats (though one more difficult to document) was his somewhat more comfortable distance from achievements like Milton's. For Collins, Milton's invocative stance and the accomplishment it fostered were too immediate a threat. But once Keats had been confronted with the extreme difficulty of following at all closely in Milton's footsteps, particularly in Hyperion, he could perhaps more readily accept the very different, inner quest which was being established as the mode of his later era. This may account in part, at least, for the sudden achievement of the great odes not long

after he had given up the first Hyperion. Finally, and closely related to this advantage of distance, Keats lived in a culture much further along the road to complete secularization than did Collins. The divine aid the poet-prophet had traditionally sought by invoking the heavenly Muse might begin to seem somewhat less obligatory. Thus Keats may have found himself growing more readily able to accept the "natural supernaturalism" of his era, rather than insisting rigidly (and suicidally) on the absolute, external authority of a transcendent Goddess. He could, as he puts it in the "Ode to Psyche," be "by my own eyes inspired." Such factors almost certainly combined to make it possible for a poet like Keats to begin to see, and more important, to accept the fact that the inspired poetry of past greats like Milton was no longer within reach in its prior form, and therefore to turn in other directions more suited to his time.

One cannot conclude an essay on Collins and Keats, of course, without a last word on Collins' relationship to romanticism in general, and especially regarding the "pre-romantic" label that was for so long the only lens through which his work was viewed. Although the phrase has been in disfavor in recent years, one suspects it is still heard all too often in the classroom. The more accurate assessment of the relationship is, as I have tried to suggest, to say that Collins' successors shared his dilemma whether consciously or not, and often the intensely self-conscious invocative stance which accompanies it. Nor is the reason for this sharing far to seek, for from the late Renaissance onward into the nineteenth century the invocative stance--and all it represents--was becoming more and more difficult to achieve due to the same regularizing forces. The poets are simply reacting, in other

words, to the same changes. This is very different from arguing that Collins and his contemporaries were somehow groping toward or foreshadowing a poetic mode they could not possibly foresee. Moreover, the most significant aspect of the dilemma finally is the individual poet's total response to it. And here Collins and his successors, including Keats, ultimately diverge.

We have thus seen the invocative stance, so crucial for so long to the form and meaning of the works of many of the most important poets from Homer through Keats, evolve from the self-effacing, confident brevity of the Iliad to the complex personal struggle involving almost three hundred lines of The Fall of Hyperion. We have seen it develop from a simple prayer for divine assistance and authority, into a repository for the aspirations, disenchantments and fears of inadequacy which have troubled poets increasingly over the years as the Renaissance gave way gradually to the Modern predicament, producing at last the wholly secular poet: an isolated introvert who dares to depend on nothing beyond himself, and least of all on divine inspiration.

But most important, we have seen the crippling effects of these changes in the microcosm of one struggling mid eighteenth-century poet's works. Collins is one of the earliest poets in whom those effects are so clearly visible, and certainly the first in whom they are so devastating. For him, as for so many of his contemporaries, the Renaissance achievement represented the only true ideal. Ironically, it was precisely that notion which ultimately trapped Collins, for his era provided in many ways the last significant expression of that ideal of both poet and man. Unable to go either backward or forward with any assurance, he was suspended in an endlessly recurring, unfulfilled

invocation through which he could, in the end, only bemoan his fate:

"Heav'n, and Fancy, kindred Pow'rs, / Have now o'erturn'd th' inspiring  
Bow'rs, / Or curtain'd close such Scene from ev'ry future View."

It remained for the Romantics to revive and redirect the hope for a rebirth of a visionary poetry in the tradition of Spenser and Milton, mediating between a fallen reader and the transcendent realm of abstract ideas and pure spirit. But whether that hope was, or ever could be, fulfilled by them, or by any poet since, is still a matter for debate. Surely the self-conscious triviality of so much contemporary poetry suggests that it could not. For though poets in the main no longer seem as aware of the source of their paralysis as were Collins and Keats, its presence is equally unmistakable in their work. It is because Collins' poetry occupies such a critical place in the development of this paralysis that it continues to warrant our careful attention.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Earl R. Wasserman's The Subtler Language (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1959) remains one of the very few, and perhaps the most significant, partial exceptions to the usual approach. And even this valuable study takes no notice of the mid-century poets, concentrating instead on Pope and Shelley.

<sup>2</sup> John Keats (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), p. viii. I am deeply indebted throughout this chapter to Bate's fine analysis of Keats's life and work, especially to his sustained focus on the poet's struggles in the face of the inspired achievement of his predecessors. Also see Harold Bloom's essay on the same topic, "Keats and the Embarrassments of Poetic Tradition," in From Sensibility to Romanticism, pp. 513-26; and A.P. Antippas, "Keats's Individual Talent and Tradition," TSE, 20 (1972), 87-95, who disagrees with Bloom's contention that Keats was able to transcend the dilemma fully in his later works. Bate falls somewhere between the two on this key issue, about which I shall have more to say later.

<sup>3</sup> John Keats, p. viii. Bate has of course also shown, in far more general terms, the prevalence of the dilemma over the whole period from 1750 on; see his Burden of the Past.

<sup>4</sup> Antippas, "Keats's Individual Talent," provides a brief but convincing survey of the evidence for these lapses in all phases of Keats's career.

<sup>5</sup> Major Keats scholars have long agreed that such a notion of the poet's role as myth-maker attempting to mediate between abstraction and tangible reality is fundamental to his theory and practice. See, for example, Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (1937; rpt. New York: Norton, 1963), pp. 81-128; Earl Wasserman, The Finer Tone (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1953); and Walter H. Evert, Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965). That Keats relies on Spenser and Milton as key exemplars of this role is also indisputable. This notion of the poet's function is in itself a significant link between Collins and Keats.

<sup>6</sup> For an idea of the importance of invocation to Wordsworth and Keats's other contemporaries, see M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York: Norton, 1971), especially pp. 21-32; also see Abrams' penetrating discussion of the great importance attached throughout the romantic period to the poet's visionary powers (powers traditionally thought to be dependent, of course, upon successful invocation),

pp. 375-408. In his Fearful Symmetry (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), Northrop Frye sees Blake as engaging in the same struggle for the prophetic vision through invocation as that which haunted Collins and his contemporaries, pp. 161 ff. Regarding the careers of Collins and Blake as belonging to one era in this sense especially, Frye explains that these "poets were once more reaching towards a claim to divine inspiration which all the orthodox churches would have denied" (p. 169). Bloom argues along similar lines in The Visionary Company, viewing all the romantics as sharing the quest for an inspired vision that is basic to their claim to poethood. A comprehensive scrutiny of the role of invocation in English romantic poetry will have to wait for another, and much needed, study.

<sup>7</sup> Although I shall not attempt to argue that Keats's place in the invocative tradition is necessarily typical of all the Romantics, it is well established that he shares with his contemporaries certain key preoccupations regarding the poet's function and the problems inherent in fulfilling it. See, for example, Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism, and Thomas Vogler, Preludes to Vision: The Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart Crane (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), plus the other studies mentioned in the preceding note. How Keats's attempted or achieved solutions to the problems differ from those of his fellow poets constitutes yet another issue, and one with which I am not concerned here.

<sup>8</sup> Any discussion of Collins' relationship to his successors raises the question of direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious influence, verbal echoes and so on. A number of critics have pointed out what they believe to be specific, conscious echoes of Collins' phrasing and imagery in Keats's poems, arguing that Keats was well acquainted with Collins' work, and that he was influenced by him. For some convincing specific echoes and influences, see Blunden, Poems, p. 172; Takeshi Saito, "Collins and Keats," TLS (Nov. 20, 1930), p. 991; Claude Finney, The Evolution of Keats's Poetry, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1936), pp. 59, 62, 639, 643 and passim; Ainsworth, Poor Collins, pp. 269 ff.; and Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition, pp. 34-6, 82-3, plus several notes in his edition of Keats, Selected Poems and Letters (Boston: Houghton, 1959), pp. 306, 312 and 324. The pattern of this evidence does not, however, enable one to conclude that Keats was specifically aware of Collins' invocative stance or even of his sharing in his own struggles. This does not mean, on the other hand, that the basic affinity between the two poets is not a very strong one, as I shall attempt to demonstrate. And Keats certainly knew Collins' work. More general ties between them have been argued by Shuster, The English Ode from Milton to Keats; Bloom, in both The Visionary Company (especially pp. 7-15) and The Anxiety of Influence; and Bate, Burden of the Past. Unfortunately that extremely helpful additional source for Keats's thought, his letters, provides no clues to his thinking about Collins. That Keats was aware of his predecessor is all one may conclude from them; he mentions him only once, to record merely that he has heard Hazlitt's lecture on Collins and his contemporaries. See The Letters of John Keats, ed. Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), I, 237. The letters add significantly, however, to the evidence of the poems in showing the extent of Keats's struggles

with the Collins dilemma; this theme in the letters is thoroughly covered by Bate, John Keats.

<sup>9</sup>The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H.W. Garrod, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 12, 1, 1. All subsequent references to Keats's poems are to this edition, hereafter cited in text.

<sup>10</sup>To my knowledge this extremely significant Keats echo of Collins has not been noted previously. Keats's early period was, of course, the time of his deepest immersion stylistically and otherwise in the mid and late eighteenth-century poets, as well as in Spenser.

<sup>11</sup>Garrod prints the "Preface" as it appeared with the first edition of Endymion in 1813, p. 64.

<sup>12</sup>For Bate's comments, see John Keats, p. 403. He goes on to say that the invocation "suggests how numb [Keats's] usually perceptive faculties were as he continued to force himself" (p. 404), and implies that Keats's repetition three times in the first five lines of his call for the Muse to shift Her focus ("O leave them...") also suggests the poet's growing anguish about his progress. Bate also calls Keats's phrases, "solitary sorrow" and "lonely grief," "nakedly subjective, far from fulfilled by the lines that follow" (p. 404). But though these factors may intimate Keats's uncertainties, they are still a far cry from the intensely self-conscious anguish about the Muse and inspiration we have observed before in his works.

<sup>13</sup>For a circumspect consideration of possible answers to this last question, see Bate, John Keats, pp. 405-10.

<sup>14</sup>Letters, II, 14-15. Keats had in all likelihood completed the poem as far as we now have it by the early fall of 1818; his progress had thus been impeded for some time already when he wrote this letter.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>16</sup>Bloom, "Keats and the Embarrassments of Poetic Tradition," p. 516, observes that the "Ode to Psyche" lies in a poetic line stretching back to Collins' era, and singles out the "Ode on the Poetical Character" as representative of the tradition. Even more significant, however, is Bloom's rather casual but relevant remark on the larger tradition of which both Collins and Keats are a part: "Farther back was the ancestor of all such moments of poetic incarnation, the Milton of the great invocations, whose spirit I think haunts the 'Ode to Psyche' and the 'Ode to a Nightingale,' and does not vanish until 'The Fall of Hyperion' and 'To Autumn'" (p. 516). Exactly.

<sup>17</sup>In The Visionary Company, Bloom correctly views this as "Keats's special accomplishment" (p. 14). He adds that Collins, whom he calls "one of the doomed poets of the Age of Sensibility" (p. 14), fails because he can neither go back to Milton's vision, "nor has he yet learned the Wordsworthian metaphysic of internalization that will be available to Keats" (p. 15). Bloom thus touches briefly on the core of the Collins-Keats relationship.

<sup>18</sup> John Keats, p. 581. Bate's entire discussion of the poem is extremely helpful; see pp. 580 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Blunden, Poems, p. 172, not only argues the general proximity of the two poems, but believes that in "To Autumn" Keats specifically and consciously echoes Collins' ode. He insists, for example, that Keats's "thou hast thy music too" is the opening note of "Evening," and that Collins' bat and beetle are Keats's gnats and swallows.

<sup>20</sup> John Keats, p. 581.

<sup>21</sup> For Keats's attitude toward the sonnet, and the problems of dating his later efforts, see Bate, John Keats, pp. 495-8, and 618-20.

<sup>22</sup> Morris Dickstein, Keats and His Poetry: A Study in Development (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 262, states the issue succinctly when he says of "To Autumn" that it "should not be used to prove that [Keats's] poetic career culminates in impersonal serenity and naturalistic harmony...."

<sup>23</sup> There is some doubt as to whether Keats meant to include lines 187-210 in a final version of the poem, but they are far too significant to be completely discarded without more definite evidence of the poet's intentions. See Bate, John Keats, pp. 599-600, and Bush, Poems, p. 358.

<sup>24</sup> See Letters, II, 162, 174 and passim.

<sup>25</sup> For the radical new approach he was taking in The Fall of Hyperion, for example, while still attempting to keep as much of the original Hyperion as possible, see Bate, John Keats, pp. 585 ff.

<sup>26</sup> On the poet's rapid stylistic maturation, see especially Bate, John Keats, and the same writer's The Stylistic Development of Keats (1945; rpt. New York: Humanities Press, 1962).

<sup>27</sup> Poetical Works, V, 338.

## APPENDIX

### TWO POEMS OF DOUBTFUL ATTRIBUTION

Traditionally but inconclusively attributed to Collins, the two poems "Song. The Sentiments borrowed from Shakespeare" and "Written on a Paper, which Contained a Piece of Bride Cake given to the Author by a Lady," both probably belong to his early period, at least prior to the 1746 Odes.<sup>1</sup> Both are non-invocative, for the most part un-selfconscious and coherent performances which further demonstrate (if indeed they are his) Collins' confident control before the full onset of his dilemma.

The "Song" is another of Collins' brief elegies and is, as Lonsdale points out, extremely derivative in nature.<sup>2</sup> Not unlike his work as a whole in this, even its title proclaims the poet's reliance on his predecessors. Moreover, conventional elements of the pastoral elegy provide its very simple structure.<sup>3</sup> The deceased is mythologized in traditional pastoral terms as the shepherd, "Young Damon" (l. 1), "whose tongue / Could tune the rural lay" (ll. 13-14). The poet initially reports the fact of Damon's death in stark terms, "Young Damon of the vale is dead," and then makes the first of several references to the universal grief accorded him: "Ye lowland hamlets moan" (l. 2).

These two key aspects of the elegiac mode--the reminder of the physical reality of death, and the consequent universal mourning--

alternate through the rest of the poem. After telling the reader of the hamlets' grief, Collins focuses on Damon's grave, "A dewy turf lies o'er his head, / And at his feet a stone" (ll. 3-4), and next on "His shroud, which death's cold damps destroy, / Of snow-white threads was made" (ll. 5-6). The alternating pattern continues when Collins concludes this second stanza by recording that "All mourn'd to see so sweet a boy / In earth for ever laid."

The following stanza deals again primarily with the physical reality of death in the poet's introduction of another pastoral convention. But subtly linking it to the grief of the previous line, Collins presents the flower symbolism for nature's grief by having them strewn on the grave by mourners:

Pale pansies o'er his corpse were plac'd,  
Which, pluck'd before their time,  
Bestrew'd the boy like him to waste,  
And wither in their prime.  
(ll. 9-12)

In the fourth stanza the poet utters his own grief in the traditional, anguished question, "But will he ne'er return...?" (ll. 13-14), then answers it by turning back once more to the physical detail: "Ah no! his bell of peace is rung, / His lips are cold as clay!" (ll. 15-16). The reader's vision now remains focused on the body into the penultimate stanza, which is set at an apt hour: "They bore him out at twilight hour, / The youth who lov'd so well" (ll. 17-18). Finally the alternation closes effectively with one more expression of both the poet's and the universal grief, "Ah me! how many a true-love shower / Of kind remembrance fell!" (ll. 19-20), and with the individual grief of one maid in the last stanza. Collins' repeated reminders of the physical reality serve to legitimize the grief he has recorded, while

the closing two stanzas form a peroration of the poem's total pattern. Although other aspects of the poem would probably reward further analysis, the "Song" is, one may at this point safely conclude, an effectively constructed, if certainly a minor, adaptation of the conventional pastoral elegy.

Equally free of doubt about his poetic abilities is Collins' performance in "Bride Cake," a poem which exemplifies his poetic ideals more fully than the "Song" and is therefore, I think, more likely to be his. Based on the popular superstition that those who place a piece of wedding cake under their pillows will dream of their lovers, the poem is a mythic portrait of magic charms and an invisible, supernatural reality, as well as an exhortation to virtue in those who would destroy the magic by stealing the cake. At the same time, much like Collins' earliest poem, the "Sonnet," it is a comment on the paradoxes of love.

In its simplest terms the poem's "plot" may be summarized this way: in the first stanza Collins asks his friends not to steal the cake, and in the second he explains why--that it was "The secret present of a matchless maid" (l. 8); in stanzas three through five he outlines the qualities of such "matchless" ladies and the nature of love; in the sixth stanza he hopes the cake will be efficacious; and in the closing two stanzas he renews his plea for his friends to "leave this fatal place" (l. 28) without disturbing the ritual.

Woven into this simple structure, however, is Collins' vision of supernatural powers which affect men's actions and emotions. On this level the poem touches on mysteries belied by the apparent simplicity of its occasional subject; that is, both Collins' hope for the potency

of the cake and his urging of virtue in his friends depend on the favor of a cosmic realm which transcends the poem's seemingly mundane pretext.

This universal sphere makes itself known initially through Collins' inflated terminology in the first stanza, whereby the threatened theft of the cake takes on the dimensions of the eternal struggle between good and evil. He refers to the cake as "hallow'd" (1. 2) and as "the sacred prize" (1. 3). Those who would purloin it, on the other hand, would do so "By search profane" (1. 2), and the poet asks them to forbear the prize "With virtue's awe" (1. 3). Moreover, Collins underscores the immanence of unseen forces in the cake itself, forces which presumably have made it "sacred." It is "This precious relick, form'd by magick pow'r" (1. 5), it has been placed beneath the poet's "haunted pillow" (1. 6), and it "Was meant by love to charm the silent hour" (1. 7) of sleep.

In the next three stanzas Collins indirectly sketches the character of his (and all) "matchless" ladies under the guise of his own myth delineating the ingredients of this "magic" cake. Once again, the supernatural is in control as Venus, "The Cypryan queen, at hymen's fond request, / Each nice ingredient chose with happiest art" (11. 9-10). The dominant motif in his description is the commonplace argument of love poetry that the essence of woman as well as love is paradox--a mixture envisioned here as the conscious design of the Goddess, who ensures that "pains that please, are mixt in every part" (1. 12). Collins extends both his myth and the theme of paradox in the following stanzas. "With rosy hand the spicy fruit [Venus] brought / From Paphian hills, and fair Cythera's isle" (11. 13-14), but "tempered

sweet with these the melting thought, / The kiss ambrosial and the yielding smile" (ll. 15-16). And perhaps the entire portrait may be summed up with the following line, where the poet speaks of "Ambiguous looks, that scorn and yet relent" (l. 17).

Collins continues to function as myth-maker in the sixth stanza, where he maintains his belief that supernatural forces are the key to his desire to dream of his lover. It is they who have legitimized his aspirations:

Sleep, wayward God! hath sworn while these remain,  
With flattering dreams to dry his nightly tear,  
And chearful Hope, so oft invoc'd in vain,  
With fairy songs shall soothe his pensive ear.

The poet's reference to Hope as "so oft invoc'd in vain" is interesting too as an ironic prophecy of the remainder of Collins' career as he would come to view it. But here it is clearly an allusion solely to the long tradition of hopeful lovers in which the poet places himself.

The final two stanzas contain Collins' repeated exhortation of his friends not to interfere, a plea he makes on several levels. First, in the penultimate stanza, he appeals to their senses of friendship and common humanity, for they too may one day suffer the pangs of love's paradox:

If bound by vows to friendship's gentle side,  
And fond of soul, thou hop'st an equal grace,  
If youth or maid thy joys and griefs divide,  
O much intreated leave this fatal place.

Then in the last stanza he calls on their respect for the transcendent realm, envisioned again by Collins the myth-maker,

Sweet Peace, who long hath shunn'd my plaintive day  
Consents at length to bring me short delight,  
Thy [his friends'] careless steps may scare her doves away,  
And grief with raven note usurp the night,

who effectively contrasts the symbolic doves of the Goddess with the "raven note" of profaning discord threatened by his friends. This return at the poem's close to the cosmic scale and to Collins' plea to the friends rather deftly rounds out his dual focus, first on the poem's ostensible occasion, and most significantly, on his portrait of the role of the supernatural in human affairs. In this latter sense, "Bride Cake" is a successful achievement for Collins in that poetic role he was to seek passionately to play throughout his writing career.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Lonsdale's headnotes, pp. 403-4, and 406.

<sup>2</sup>The chief sources are Ophelia's mad scene in Hamlet, and perhaps one of David Mallet's ballads, "William and Margaret." See Lonsdale, p. 404.

<sup>3</sup>The poem is a good deal simpler, in fact, than Collins' typical elegies, with their portrayal of mourning by both actual persons and representatives of the invisible or fairy realm. The absence of these latter here is a significant factor in my own hesitation to attribute the "Song" to Collins without qualification. Lonsdale, p. 405, remarks on the extreme simplicity of the final stanza as possible evidence it was not written by Collins, but does nothing further with his observation.

LIST OF WORKS CITED

- Abrams, M.H. The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition. 1953; rpt. New York: Norton, 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature. New York: Norton, 1971.
- Ainsworth, Edward Gay. Poor Collins: His Life, His Art, and His Influence. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1937.
- Allen, Don Cameron. The Harmonious Vision. Ed. ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970.
- Antippas, A.P. "Keats's Individual Talent and Tradition." TSE, 20 (1972), 87-95.
- Arthos, John. The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1949.
- Bate, Walter Jackson. The Burden of the Past and the English Poet. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England. 1946; rpt. New York: Harper, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. John Keats. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Reply to Donald Greene." SBT, 14 (1972-73), 163-68.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Stylistic Development of Keats. 1945; rpt. New York: Humanities Press, 1962.
- Beers, Henry A. A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century. New York: Holt, 1910.
- Bender, John. Spenser and Literary Pictorialism. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972.
- Bennett, Josephine. "Spenser's Muse." JEGP, 31 (1932), 200-19.
- Berger, Harry Jr. "Archaism, Immortality and the Muse in Spenser's Poetry." Yale Review, 58 (1969), 214-31.

- Berger, Harry Jr. "The Prospect of Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry." SEL, 1 (1961), 93-120.
- Bernbaum, Ernest, ed. Anthology of Romanticism. 3rd ed. New York: Ronald Press, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Guide through the Romantic Movement. 2nd ed. New York: Ronald Press, 1949.
- Blaydes, Sophie B. Christopher Smart as a Poet of His Time. The Hague: Mouton, 1966.
- Bloom, Harold. The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Keats and the Embarrassments of Poetic Tradition." From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle. Ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965, pp. 513-26.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry. Rev. and enl. ed. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971.
- Blunden, Edmund, ed. The Poems of William Collins. London: Chiswick Press, 1929.
- Booth, Bradford A. and Claude E. Jones, comps. A Concordance of the Poetical Works of William Collins. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1939.
- Bowra, C.M. Inspiration and Poetry. London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Pindar. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964.
- Bronson, Bertrand. "Personification Reconsidered." ELH, 14 (1947), 163-77.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Pre-Romantic or Post Augustan Mode." ELH, 20 (1953); rpt. Facets of the Enlightenment. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968, pp. 159-72.
- Bronson, Walter C., ed. The Poems of William Collins. The Athenaeum Press Series. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1898.
- Brooks, E.L. "William Collins's 'Ode on the Poetical Character.'" CE, 17 (1956), 403-4.
- Brown, Merle E. "On William Collins' 'Ode to Evening.'" EIC, 11 (1961), 136-53.
- Brydges, Sir Egerton. "An Essay on the Genius and Poems of Collins." The Poetical Works of William Collins. The Aldine Edition of the British Poets. London: William Pickering, 1853, pp. xiiii-lxxiii.

- Bush, Douglas. Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry. 1937; rpt. New York: Norton, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. Selected Poems and Letters by John Keats. Boston: Houghton, 1959.
- Butt, John, et al., eds. The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope. 11 vols. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1938-69.
- Campbell, Lily B. "The Christian Muse." HLB, 8 (1935); rpt. Collected Papers of Lily B. Campbell. New York: Russell & Russell, 1968, pp. 237-78.
- Carver, P.L. The Life of a Poet: A Biography of William Collins. New York: Horizon Press, 1967.
- Chapin, Chester F. Personification in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry. New York: King's Crown Press, 1955.
- Ciardi, John, trans. The Inferno. New York: New American Library, 1954.
- \_\_\_\_\_, trans. The Paradiso. New York: New American Library, 1961.
- Cohen, Ralph. "The Augustan Mode in English Poetry." ECS, 1 (1967), 3-32.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Unfolding of the Seasons. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970.
- Collins, Martha. "The Self-Conscious Poet: The Case of William Collins." ELH, 42 (1975), 362-77.
- Condee, R.W. "The Formalized Openings of Milton's Epic Poems." JEGP, 50 (1951), 502-08.
- Congleton, J.E. Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England 1684-1798. Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1952.
- Cope, Jackson. "Milton's Muse in Paradise Lost." MP, 55 (1957), 6-10.
- Crider, John R. "Structure and Effect in Collins's Progress Poems." SP, 60 (1963), 57-72.
- Cunningham, J.S., ed. William Collins: Drafts and Fragments of Verse. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.
- Curtius, E.R. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. Trans. Willard Trask. 1953; rpt. New York: Harper, 1963 [orig. pub. 1948].
- Dacus, Leo Thurman. "William Collins' Poetry: Theory and Practice Compared with Joseph Warton's." Diss. East Texas State, 1970.

- Deane, C.V. Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Nature Poetry. Oxford: Kemp Hall Press, Ltd., 1935.
- Dearnley, Moira. The Poetry of Christopher Smart. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969.
- Dees, Jercme S. "The Narrator of The Faerie Queene: Patterns of Response." Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 12 (1971), 537-68.
- Dickstein, Morris. Keats and His Poetry: A Study in Development. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Diekhoff, John S. "The Function of the Prologues in Paradise Lost." PMLA, 57 (1942), 697-704.
- Dryden, John, trans. Virgil's Aeneis. Vol. II of The Works of Virgil. 3rd ed. London: 1709.
- Durling, Robert M. The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965.
- Evert, Walter H. Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965.
- Fairfax, Edward, trans. Jerusalem Delivered. 1600; rpt. New York: Capricorn, 1963.
- Ferry, Anne. Milton's Epic Voice: The Narrator in 'Paradise Lost'. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963.
- Finney, Claude. The Evolution of Keats's Poetry. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1936.
- Fletcher, Angus. The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Fraser, Russell. The Dark Ages and the Age of Gold. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973.
- Friedman, Arthur, ed. Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith. 5 vols. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966.
- Frye, Northrop. Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility." ELH, 23 (1956), 144-52.
- Fussell, Paul. The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965.
- U \_\_\_\_\_ . Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing. New York: Harcourt, 1971.

- Fussell, Paul. Theory of Prosody in Eighteenth-Century England.  
New London: Connecticut College Monograph, 1954.
- Garrod, H.W. Collins. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. The Poetical Works of John Keats. 2nd ed. Oxford:  
Clarendon Press, 1958.
- Gearin-Tosh, Michael. "Obscurity in William Collins." Studia  
Neophilologica, 42 (1970), 25-32.
- Gilbert, Allan H., ed. Literary Criticism: Piato to Dryden. Detroit:  
Wayne State Univ. Press, 1962.
- Grainger, J. "Review of 'Oriental Eclogues.'" The Monthly Review,  
16 (1757), 486-89.
- Graves, Robert. The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic  
Myth. Enl. ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966.
- Greene, Donald. "The Burdensome Past." SBT, 14 (1972), 81-90.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Rejoinder to W.J. Bate and Donald M. Hassler." SBT, 14  
(1973), 257-65.
- Greenlaw, Edwin. "A Better Teacher than Aquinas." SP, 14 (1917),  
196-218.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Spenser's Influence on Paradise Lost." SP, 17 (1920),  
320-59.
- \_\_\_\_\_, et al., eds. The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum  
Edition. 10 vols. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1932-57.
- Greg, W.W. Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama. London: A.H. Bullen,  
1906.
- Grund, Joan. The Spenserian Poets. London: Edward Arnold, 1969.
- Hagstrum, Jean H. The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary  
Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray. Chicago:  
Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Hanford, James H. "That Shepherd who First Taught the Chosen Seed."  
UTQ, 8 (1939), 403-19.
- Hassler, Donald M. "The Greening of Literary Studies." SBT, 14  
(1972-3), 169-70.
- Havens, R.D. "Discontinuity in Literary Development: The Case of  
English Romanticism." SP, 47 (1950), 102-11.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Influence of Milton on English Poetry. Cambridge:  
Harvard Univ. Press, 1922.

- Hazlitt, William. "On Gay, Swift, Young, Collins, & c." Lectures on the English Poets. Ed. William Carew Hazlitt. London: George Bell & Sons, 1903, pp. 138-63.
- Hight, Gilbert. The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949.
- Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958.
- Hopkins, Robert. The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1969.
- Hughes, Merritt Y., ed. John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose. New York: Odyssey Press, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Virgil and Spenser. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1929.
- Johnson, Samuel. The History of Rasselas. Ed. Cwin J. Kolb. New York: Crofts, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Lives of the English Poets. Ed. George Birkbeck Hill. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1905.
- Johnston, Arthur, ed. Selected Poems of Thomas Gray and William Collins. 1967; rpt. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1970.
- Jones, R.F. "Eclogue Types in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century." JEGP, 24 (1925), 33-60.
- Kallich, Martin. "'Plain in Thy Neatness': Horace's Pyrrha and Collins' Evening." ELN, 3 (1966), 265-71.
- Kelly, Maurice. This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's 'De Doctrina Christiana' as a Gloss Upon 'Paradise Lost.' Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1941.
- Kinsley, James. "The Music of the Heart." Renaissance and Modern Studies, 8 (1964), 5-52.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. The Poems and Fables of John Dryden. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970.
- Lamont, Claire. "William Collins's 'Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland'--A Newly Recovered Manuscript." RES, NS 19 (1968), 137-47.
- Leavis, F.R. Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry. 1947; rpt. New York: Norton, 1963.
- Lee, Rensselaer W. "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting." Art Bulletin, 22 (1940), 197-269.

- Lewis, C.S. The Allegory of Love. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936.
- Lonsdale, Roger, ed. The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith. 1969; rpt. New York: Norton, 1972.
- Mace, D.T. "Musical Humanism, the Doctrine of Rhythmus and the Saint Cecilia Odes of Dryden." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 27 (1964), 251-92.
- Mackail, J.W. "Collins and the English Lyric in the Eighteenth Century." Studies of English Poets. London: Longmans, 1926, pp. 137-58.
- Maddison, Carol. Apollo and the Nine: A History of the Ode. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1960.
- McKillop, Alan D. "Collins's 'Ode to Evening'--Background and Structure." Tennessee Studies in Literature, 5 (1960), 73-83.
- \_\_\_\_\_. English Literature from Dryden to Burns. New York: Appleton, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Romanticism of William Collins." SP, 20 (1923), 1-16.
- Miles, Josephine. Major Adjectives in English Poetry From Wyatt to Auden. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1946.
- Monk, Samuel H. The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England. 1935; rpt. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960.
- Morris, David B. The Religious Sublime: Christian Poetry and Critical Tradition in 18th-Century England. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1972.
- Mulder, John. The Temple of the Mind: Education and Literary Taste in Seventeenth-Century England. New York: Pegasus, 1969.
- Murray, Gilbert. The Classical Tradition in Poetry. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927.
- Murrin, Michael. The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes Toward a Theory of Allegoric Rhetoric in the English Renaissance. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969.
- Murry, John Middleton. Countries of the Mind: Essays in Literary Criticism. New York: Dutton, 1922.
- Muscatine, Charles. Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1957.
- Musgrove, S. "The Theme of Collins's 'Odes.'" N&Q, 185 (1943), 214-17, 253-5.

- Myers, Robert M. "Neo-Classical Criticism of the Ode for Music." PMLA, 62 (1947), 299-421.
- Nelson, William. The Poetry of Edmund Spenser. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963.
- Ovid. Metamorphoses. Trans. Frank Justus Miller. The Loeb Classical Library. 2 vols. London: Heinemann, 1916.
- Padelford, Frederick M. "The Muse of the Faerie Queene." SP, 27 (1930), 111-24.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Robert Aylett." HLB, 10 (1936), 1-48.
- Peckham, Morse. "A Survey of Romantic Period Textbooks." CE, 20 (1958), 49-53.
- Perkins, David, ed. English Romantic Writers. New York: Harcourt, 1967.
- Pettit, Henry. "Collins's 'Ode to Evening' and the Critics." SEL, 4 (1964), 361-69.
- Phelps, William Lyon. The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement: A Study in Eighteenth Century Literature. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1893.
- Pittock, Joan. The Ascendency of Taste: The Achievement of Joseph and Thomas Warton. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.
- Price, Martin. "The Sublime Poem: Pictures and Powers." Yale Review, 58 (1969), 194-213.
- Quayle, Thomas. Poetic Diction: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Verse. London: Methuen, 1924.
- Quintana, Ricardo. Oliver Goldsmith: A Georgian Study. New York: Macmillan, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Scheme of Collins's 'Odes on Several...Subjects.'" Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature. Ed. Carroll Camden. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 371-80.
- Read, Herbert. "The Poet and His Muse." British Journal of Aesthetics, 4 (1964), 99-108.
- Renwick, W.L. Edmund Spenser. London: Edward Arnold, 1925.
- Robinson, F.N., ed. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957.
- Rogerson, Brewster. "The Art of Painting the Passions." JHI, 14 (1953), 68-94.

- Rollins, Hyder E., ed. The Letters of John Keats. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958.
- Rollinson, Philip B. "A Generic View of Spenser's Four Hymns." SP, 68 (1971), 292-304.
- Saintsbury, George. "Young, Collins and Lesser Poets of the Age of Johnson." The Cambridge History of English Literature. Ed. A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller. London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1913. X, 138-56.
- Saito, Takeshi. "Collins and Keats." TLS (Nov. 20, 1930), 991.
- Sandys, Sir John, trans. The Odes of Pindar. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1937.
- de Selincourt, Ernest and Helen Darbishire, eds. The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth. 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940-49.
- Seznec, Jean. The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art. Trans. Barbara F. Sessions. 1953; rpt. New York: Harper, 1961 [orig. pub. 1940].
- Shuster, George N. The English Ode from Milton to Keats. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1940.
- Sigworth, Oliver. William Collins. New York: Twayne, 1965.
- Smith, G. Gregory, ed. Elizabethan Critical Essays. 2 vols. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1904.
- Smith, Hallett. Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression. 1952; rpt. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1968.
- Snare, Gerald. "The Muses on Poetry: Spenser's The Teares of the Muses." TSE, 17 (1964), 31-52.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. The Insistence of Horror: Aspects of the Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Poetry. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. Late Augustan Poetry. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Poetry of Vision: Five Eighteenth-Century Poets. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967.
- Spurgeon, Patrick O. "Spenser's Muses." Renaissance Papers (1969), 15-23.
- Steadman, John M. "Spirit and Muse: A Reconsideration of Milton's Urania." Archiv Fur Das Studium Der Neuren Sprachen Und Literaturen, 200.5 (1963), 353-57.

- Sterne, Laurence. Tristram Shandy. Ed. James A. Werk. New York: Odyssey Press, 1940.
- Stone, Christopher and Austin Lane Poole, eds. Poems of William Collins. Oxford Standard Authors. 3rd ed. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles. "William Collins." The English Poets. Ed. T.H. Ward New York: Macmillan, 1880. III, 278-82.
- Tillotson, Geoffrey. Augustan Poetic Diction. 1961; rpt. London: Athlone Press, 1964.
- Tillyard, E.M.W. "William Collins' 'Ode on the Death of Thomson.'" REL, 1 (1960), 30-8.
- Tompkins, J.M.S. "'In Yonder Grave a Druid Lies.'" RES, 22 (1946), 1-16.
- Tuveson, Ernest Lee. The Imagination as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960.
- Vogler, Thomas. Preludes to Vision: The Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart Crane. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971.
- Wasserman, Earl R. "Collins' 'Ode on the Poetical Character.'" ELH, 34 (1967), 92-115.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Finer Tone. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1953.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Inherent Values of Eighteenth-Century Personification." PMLA, 65 (1950), 435-63.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Subtler Language: Critical Readings of Neoclassic and Romantic Poems. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1959.
- Welsford, Enid, ed. Spenser, Fowre Hymnes, Epithalamion: A Study of Edmund Spenser's Doctrine of Love. Oxford: Blackwell, 1967.
- West, Michael. "Spenser and the Renaissance Ideal of Christian Heroism." PMLA, 88 (1973), 1013-32.
- Whiting, George W. and Ann Gossman. "Siloa's Brook, the Pool of Siloam, and Milton's Muse." SP, 58 (1961), 193-205.
- Williams, Aubrey. Pope's Dunciad: A Study of its Meaning. London: Methuen, 1955.

Wimsatt, William K., Jr. and Cleanth Brooks. Literary Criticism: A Short History. New York: Knopf, 1957.

Wind, Edgar. Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance. Rev. ed. New York: Norton, 1968.

Woodhouse, A.S.P. "Collins and the Creative Imagination: A Study in the Critical Background of His Odes." Studies in English by Members of University College, Toronto. Ed. Malcolm W. Wallace. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1931. pp. 59-130.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Heavenly Muse. Ed. Hugh MacCallum. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Poetry of Collins Reconsidered." From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle. Ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965, pp. 93-137.

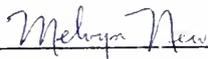
Wurtsbaugh, Jewel. Two Centuries of Spenserian Scholarship (1609-1805). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1936.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Philip D. Marion was born on July 29, 1947, in Little Falls, New York. He attended Rollins College, from which he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in June, 1969. He received a Master of Arts degree in English from the University of Florida in August, 1971, and since then has pursued his studies for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English. From September, 1971 to June, 1975, Mr. Marion taught as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of English.

He is married to the former Joanne Burroughs.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



---

Melvyn New, Chairman  
Professor of English

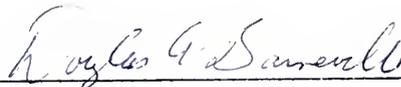
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



---

Aubrey L. Williams  
Graduate Research Professor of  
English

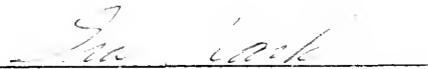
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



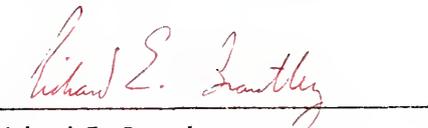
---

Douglas A. Bonneville  
Professor of Romance Languages and  
Literatures

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Ira Clark  
Associate Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Richard E. Brantley  
Associate Professor of English

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December, 1976

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, Graduate School

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



3 1262 08666 234 2