

JAMES THOMSON, ANGLO-SCOT:
A RECONSIDERATION OF HIS WORKS
IN RELATION TO THE SCOTTISH BACKGROUND

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James Thomson (1700-1748) has long held an important place in English literary studies; he and his poetry have been the subject of much critical and biographical comment from his own time to the present. Yet almost no critical attention has thus far been directed toward the distinctive influences which the poet's Scottish background had upon his work. In fact, Thomson spent the first, formative twenty-five years of his life in Scotland. This thesis, which is both a biographical and a literary-critical study, attempts to discover the Scottish influences-- literary, environmental, religious, cultural and educational, social and political-- on Thomson, to examine his works with these in mind, and to show how his "Scottishness" helped to shape his poetic art.

Chapter I poses the nature and extent of the "problem" of critical failure to deal with Scottish influences on Thomson; it surveys 250 years of Thomson criticism, and moves toward a broader, working definition of literary "Scottishness" than has traditionally been applied. Chapter II re-evaluates the poet's youth in the Scottish Borders, placing him in a Scottish landscape and considering early Scottish Calvinistic and literary influences. In Chapter III, juvenile biography continues, dealing with Thomson's ten years in the Scottish capital as Divinity-student and apprentice-poet, with special attention to the literary milieu of early eighteenth-century Edinburgh. Chapter IV is a detailed study of the juvenile poems written during these significant years in Edinburgh. Chapters V and VI consider the various Scottish influences on The Seasons. Chapter V treats of The Seasons as a poem of natural description, and as such a part of the Scottish tradition. Chapter VI examines the Scottish aspects of The Seasons as a religious-philosophical poem, as a neoclassical poem, and as a socio-political poem, and also discusses the poetic language of the poem, especially with regard to vernacular humanistic and Scots dialect influences. In Chapter VII, a view of Thomson's life as a Scot in London completes the biographical work of the thesis; his Liberty and dramas are examined in this context. In Chapter VIII, Thomson's last major work, The Castle of Indolence, is shown to maintain vital continuities with the poet's Scottish background, particularly in its religious-didactic purpose, allegorical conception and poetic language. The brief concluding Chapter IX outlines the extensive influence which Thomson himself exerted over subsequent Scottish poetry.

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While virgin Spring, by Eden's flood,
 Unfolds her tender mantle green,
 Or pranks the sod in frolic mood,
 Or tunes Eolian strains between.

While Summer with a matron grace
 Retreats to Dryburgh's cooling shade,
 Yet oft, delighted, stops to trace
 The progress of the spiky blade.

While Autumn, benefactor kind,
 By Tweed erects his aged head,
 And sees, with self-approving mind,
 Each creature on his bounty fed.

While maniac Winter rages o'er
 The hills whence classic Yarrow flows,
 Rousing the turbid torrent's roar,
 Or sweeping, wild, a waste of snows.

So long, sweet Poet of the Year,
 Shall bloom that wreath thou well hast won;
 While Scotia, with exulting tear,
 Proclaims that Thomson was her son.

Robert Burns, "Address, To the Shade
 of Thomson, on crowning his Bust, at
 Ednam, Roxburgh-shire, with Bays"

CHAPTER I : THE PROBLEM OF 'SCOTTISHNESS'

In so far as a writer is 'Scottish', his 'Scottishness', even if he is himself not conscious of it, will show itself in what he writes. This is certainly true of the writer who possesses the honesty of genius, and...there can be no literature without this kind of honesty....¹

James Thomson (1700-1748) was born in Scotland and spent over half his life there-- the first, formative twenty-five years of literary apprenticeship. However, he wrote his major poetry in England, in the formal medium of Augustan English language: the standard line adopted by major Thomson critics, particularly in this century, has been to treat Thomson as an "English" rather than as a "Scottish" poet. What might this facile attitude imply? What of the neglected Scottish aspects of Thomson's work? As Tom Scott has observed, "One of the tasks before students of Scottish literature is to sort out how many writers disguised under the name of English are in fact Scots."² Thomson himself surely represents one of the most important of these Scots in literary "disguise."

Of course, "Englishness" and "Scottishness" are too vague to serve as proper literary-critical terms (except when narrowly applied to the matter of language only). They have been too often misapplied to literature in the cause of political nationalism. In the peculiar situation of England and Scotland,

the literary historian finds...that it is increasingly difficult to segregate his 'Scottish' writers, and that he has often no better excuse for a label than the accident of birth or residence, or the choice of subject or dialect....What is accepted as northern [or, southern] is accidental and external....There is laziness in this judgement....³

Laziness , indeed: this incomplete, superficial view has been the fault of most critics of Thomson. The concept of "Scottishness," its ability to inform the "honesty of genius" of a Scottish-bred writer such as James Thomson, does have critical value; it carries the broader significance of all the influences a poet's national culture has had on his art: literary, linguistic, geographical and topographical, educational, religious, socio-political and racial.⁴ Such influences on Thomson are not inconsiderable.

Scotland and England have inevitably shared many elements of their "nationalities"; each has contributed to the other's cultural development in many ways, perhaps foremost in the field of literature.⁵ The mutual influence has been so pervasive, in fact, that the English-Scottish nationality problem in literature is not necessarily a "problem" at all, but a fact of life. The critic must come to terms with the fact that there is no purely "Scottish" (other than Scottish Gaelic) or purely "English" literature independent of the other. The real critical problem lies rather in discovering, and attempting to strike a balance between, the distinctive national traits characterising English or Scottish poetry, while keeping in mind the tremendous literary cross-fertilisation between the two nations: for in the end, the literary issue cannot be one of an oversimplified "English versus Scottish" polarity, but must be more tolerant.

To say that the Scottish culture of the eighteenth century was anglicised to a great extent is true, but does not mean that it had totally discarded its own Scottish national identity; rather, the elements of English influence were most often amalgamated with the Scottish ones, to produce a uniquely "Scottish" product, especially in literature. James Thomson shared many contradictions and confusions with most edu-

cated Scots of his day, about national identity and its expression in arts and manners (Allan Ramsay, Thomson's contemporary, is perhaps the best example of such contradictory motives). Thomson was never a Scottish chauvinist, nor should his works be distorted, in criticism, to fit a nationalistic mold. Still, he did succeed in retaining most of the best benefits of his Scottish background, to the great enrichment of his poetry. An awareness of this Scottish background is one very valuable clue to the understanding of his works. Thomson, being primarily a product of the anglicised culture of eighteenth-century Scotland, was a true North Briton; he played a special role in strengthening the Union of 1707, through his literary accomplishments.⁶

The implication that Thomson represents either English or Scottish poetry exclusively, that he is an "English" or a "Scottish" poet is misleading, and not wholly fair. Perhaps the broader term "Anglo-Scot" (denoting a Scot by birth and upbringing, who has chosen to settle in England and to write in literary English rather than in Scots) is most suitable, and least charged with deceptive connotations. (One would hope that the mediocrity of so much eighteenth-century literature which has been called Anglo-Scottish⁷ will not render it a pejorative label.) "Anglo-Scot" does help to convey the critical balance for which this thesis aims, and which is so long overdue in the consideration of Thomson's works.

The critical emphasis on Thomson has shifted considerably over nearly 250 years, as Ralph Cohen illustrates in his admirable Art of Discrimination,⁸ an analysis of the changing critical reception and interpretation of The Seasons since its first appearance. Cohen sees two major periods of Seasons criticism: the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century "impressionistic" phase which placed emphasis on such qualities

as imagination and sympathy, and focused on the poem itself; and, the late nineteenth-twentieth century "organic" phase, placing emphasis on developmental and historical factors and treating the poem as a "cultural object" in a larger literary-historical scheme.⁹ These categories are generally correct, but exceptions can be found. Another way of outlining Thomson criticism, and more to the point of this thesis, could begin with an eighteenth-early nineteenth century predominantly "British" phase (part of "the temporary merging of Scottish in English Poetry..."¹⁰ of the period), characterised by an impartial acceptance of Thomson as a post-Union "British" poet, with little or no reference to his Scottish background (the notable exception being the ardent Scottish patriot the Eleventh Earl of Buchan, a Thomson enthusiast); through the later nineteenth-early twentieth century "nationalistic" phase, which allowed many critics to expound on the more superficial Scottish elements of the works (and which very often found itself in the *Kailyard*); and finally, the present, mid-late twentieth century phase of near-total neglect of Thomson's Scottish background (or at most, an implicit awareness of it, inadequately expressed). By the chief critics of this century, Thomson has been regarded simply as a poet within the broader tradition of "English Literature." The more recent major works on Thomson-- those of Douglas Grant, Ralph Cohen, Alan D. McKillop and Patricia M. Spacks-- are certainly admirable and comprehensive in their chosen spheres, but it is surprising that none of them place much importance on the aspect of Thomson as a Scot. Among the major scholars of the Augustan Age, only David Nichol Smith, himself a Scot, and his pupil John Butt have dealt thoughtfully with this issue.

The Scottish influences acting upon the young James Thomson were many and varied. They include: his Scottish Calvinistic upbringing; his

education in the Scottish tradition, and early acquaintance with a wide range of literature; the environment of his youth (not only the Border landscape but the people as well); and the complex social and political situation, in a particularly crucial period of Scottish history in which he grew up. These influences did not end the moment the poet emigrated to London; they were fundamental to the formation of his concepts of poetry and of the poet's role, to the subject-matter he chose, and to the language and style of his poetry. They continued to shape the broader philosophies-- religious, social, political-- underlying his works. Therefore, a re-valuation of Thomson as an Anglo-Scot would seem necessary. This introductory chapter will attempt to pose the nature and extent of the problem, by briefly surveying Thomson criticism, to demonstrate how the critics have dealt with (or, rather, have failed to deal with) the fact of Thomson's "Scottishness." Inevitably, the survey will center on Seasons criticism, as The Seasons was the most famous, most written-about, and surely the most "Scottish" of Thomson's works.

The Seasons was one of the most important and influential poems of the eighteenth century: literary critics praised its beauties or censured its faults, but they never failed to notice it. The poem proved the most "popular" poem of the century;¹¹ it was widely appreciated by the British reading public. In Scotland, whose people were deeply divided on the question of national identity throughout the century, the majority of professional writers on Thomson tended to gather on the "anglicising" side, especially as representatives of the Scottish Enlightenment cosmopolitan, pro-British spirit; they treated The Seasons simply as a significant piece of literature in English which happened to be by a North Briton. However, a number of Scottish readers of The Seasons as a popular poem, its amateur critics and admirers, seem to

have considered it a particularly Scottish achievement, and Thomson as a Scottish literary giant; such grassroots readers and critics whose views are recorded included Robert Fergusson and his Cape Club, Robert Burns, and James Steuart Erskine, Eleventh Earl of Buchan, all of whom were fervid Scottish patriots. In addition to these, there must have been many unheard-of readers in Scotland who revered Thomson as a national poet. Of such, John Wilson wrote (in an 1830 reply to Wordsworth's "elitist" theory about Thomson's readership):

Mr. Wordsworth ought to know that all over Scotland, 'The Seasons' is an household-book. Let the taste and feeling shewn by the Collectors of Elegant Extracts be poor as possible, yet Thomson's countrymen, high and low, rich and poor, have all along not only gloried in his illustrious fame, but have made a very manual of his great work. It lies in many thousand cottages...¹²

The anglicisers in Enlightenment Scotland probably had a variety of motives for ignoring the author of The Seasons' Scottish heritage. They may have felt some embarrassment or suppressed shame at being Scottish, as did so many "refined" Scots of the period. They may have thought Thomson's educated Scottish background indistinguishable from that of an educated Englishman of the day, or they may simply have felt that the poet's nationality was in no way relevant to a consideration of the merits or faults of the poetry itself. For whatever reasons, they strove primarily to treat Thomson's works as significant within a wider British Augustan context: the Enlightenment rhetoricians Beattie, Blair and Kames used many illustrations drawn from Thomson's works in their treatises, side-by-side with examples from the classics, Shakespeare and Milton. Kames, whose Elements of Criticism represented the new critical standard of "sensibility," did not approve of Thomson's old-fashioned, neoclassical rhetoric of "writing mechanically without taste."¹³ James Beattie's "On Poetry and Music"¹⁴ and Hugh Blair's

Rhetoric,¹⁵ however, praised Thomson highly, especially for his superior descriptive ability. Each of these critics was strongly against Scots vernacular (Beattie was also the author of a guide for those Scots who desired to rid themselves of Scotticisms in speech and writing);¹⁶ each, for example, severely criticised the "vulgar," provincial dialect of Allan Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd.¹⁷ However, all three Enlightenment rhetoricians did unconsciously acknowledge Thomson's Scottish heritage: Kames, in recognising Thomson's old-style rhetorical training, a central element of Scottish education until well into the eighteenth century, which on occasion led to "mechanical" expression; Beattie and Blair, in praising Thomson's natural-descriptive genius, a special skill found in Scottish literature (both Scots and Gaelic) long before it appeared in English literature. Beattie's admiration of Thomson's religious piety and didacticism¹⁸ was also an unconscious tribute to the poet's strict religious upbringing as a son of the Scottish Calvinistic manse and as a divinity student, which early shaped his moral values as well as his moral tone.

Patrick Murdoch, a fellow-student of Thomson's at Edinburgh College and at Divinity Hall, and a close friend throughout the London years, who became an Anglican clergyman, also stressed in his biography of Thomson¹⁹ the general importance of the poet's religious education and upbringing to his poetry, in unspoken awareness of Thomson's peculiar Scottish experience. He praised Thomson's originality in the genre of religious-descriptive poetry, and pointed to Scripture as the source of both the subject-matter and the style ("obscurity," sublimity)²⁰ of The Seasons; however, he made no explicit reference, biographical or critical, to the fact that Thomson's being a Scot and a son of the Calvinistic manse as well as a prospective divine might have had some significant influence on his poetry.

Similarly, the great majority of Thomson biographers and critics in the eighteenth century, both Scottish and English, neglected to mention Thomson's nationality and upbringing as a significant factor. These included: Robert Shiels (one of Dr. Johnson's Scottish assistants on the Dictionary),²¹ whose often-reprinted early biography (1753) first appeared in Gibber's Lives;²² John Aikin;²³ Robert Heron;²⁴ John Scott²⁵ (Scott does make one brief reference to the Scottish origin of the dying shepherd scene in "Winter," which was probably derived from John More's Strictures: Critical and Sentimental, which will be discussed below); John Pinkerton,²⁶ himself an unscrupulous angliciser of Scots literature; and, Joseph Warton.²⁷ All of these men concentrated on The Seasons itself as a product of post-Union Britain, and made scarcely a mention of any Scottish environmental or cultural influences on the poem. To a certain extent, they were right to focus their attention on the literary quality of the poem itself, without allowing any potentially harmful nationalism-- Scottish or English-- to distort their critical vision (as would occur throughout the nineteenth century). But where the literary quality of the poem, as in the case of The Seasons, grew from a number of specifically Scottish as opposed to English or "British" roots, such a viewpoint was inevitably inadequate.

There were those, however, who for various reasons did consider it important that the author of The Seasons was a Scot. In Scotland, as was previously noted, these tended to be the non-professional critics who were also Scottish patriots. John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, the "nostalgic" patriot who once advised Burns to write Scottish Georgics,²⁸ also expressed regret that Thomson and his friend David Mallet had not "trod at least in part in the [vernacular Scots] paths of Allan Ramsay.... Their acquaintance with the finest models, ancient and modern, would

have enabled them to give a classical polish to a dialect which was still spoken by people of the best fashion by education;" he felt that Thomson's natural descriptions might have been better "decked out" in "Scottish garb" and that "Scottish Georgics would have been a precious supplement to the Seasons...."²⁹ John Ramsay thus equated "Scottishness" simply with the use of "the language of tenderness and truth," Scots vernacular (a fault of many Scottish critics, even today); he felt that Thomson had abandoned his native tongue, to Scotland's great loss.³⁰ Ramsay did not realise that The Seasons were "Scottish Georgics" in a very basic sense: their Latinate language, their style, their themes derived much from Virgil, one of Thomson's chief models. Indeed, Thomson was a part of the complex Scottish-neoclassical culture of the eighteenth century.

While Ramsay of Ochtertyre felt that Thomson had abandoned Scottish concerns, David Steuart Erskine, Eleventh Earl of Buchan, took a more positive view. He was likewise an amateur literary critic, and a proto-Scottish Nationalist;³¹ he fanatically promoted both Thomson and Burns as the two chief bards of Scotland, and organised a number of celebrations to honour Thomson, for the Ednam Club at the Thomson monument near his birthplace, and also at the Thomson "Temple of the Muses" near Dryburgh Abbey.³² He was the first to use a socio-political, rather than a literary, approach to Thomson. His "Essay on the Life of Thomson,"³³ with a "Eulogy of Thomson, the Poet, delivered by the Earl of Buchan, on Ednam Hill, when he crowned the first edition of the Seasons with a wreath of bays, on the 22d of September, 1791" demonstrate a certain amount of typical Scottish schizophrenia about Thomson's place as a "British" as opposed to, or including, a "Scottish" hero; his enthusiasm and vanity led to occasional inconsistencies. However, he did touch on such important issues as: Thomson's childhood and upbringing

in rural Scotland (where the young Thomson's contemplation of the landscape and the beauties of "Tiviotdale," including the ruins of the medieval abbeys, fired his poetic sensibility), placing Rousseau-like emphasis on the importance of the early environment in fostering genius;³⁴ and especially, the Scottish political situation (the influence of Border Scotland's proximity to England, her traditional love of liberty) as expressed in Thomson's poem Liberty. The Earl of Buchan enthused: "the highest encomium of Thomson is to be given him on account of his attachment to the cause of political and civil liberty."³⁵ The Earl's Romantic vagueness and bursts of aggressive Scottish chauvinism did not allow for any more satisfying or detailed study of the Scottish aspects of Thomson's poetry than this; too often his "vanity overpowered his judgement"³⁶ of literature. However, he did make additional contributions to Thomson studies through his strong influence over the liberal periodical The Bee, or Literary Weekly Intelligencer, edited by James Anderson, which in the 1790's printed several Thomson letters as well as articles of biographical interest.³⁷

The Scottish vernacular poets Fergusson and Burns both thought extremely highly of James Thomson, and explicitly praised him as a Scottish poet. Fergusson's patriotic and social club in Edinburgh, the Cape Club, customarily celebrated Thomson's birthday with readings, songs and addresses; in fact, in certain such circles in Scotland in the late eighteenth century "Thomson's birthday received the same patriotic honour as that of Burns does today."³⁸ Fergusson, who of all the eighteenth-century Scots vernacular revival poets came closest to blending effectively Scots with Augustan poetic idioms, must have admired Thomson's neoclassical formal control as well as the energy and realistic impact of his descriptions. Burns and Thomson had much in common: especially, a deep appreciation for nature, of the Scottish scenery and

its sentimental associations, as expressed in their descriptive poetry; an awareness of man in nature;³⁹ and a strong social and humanitarian concern. Each loved all creation and continually celebrated it in his poetry. Many echoes of Thomson-- not only themes and incidents, but also certain phrases and constructions-- have been cited by Burns scholars.⁴⁰ Burns himself wrote two very revealing poems about Thomson. One, in formal English, praises him as a Scottish bard:

So long, sweet Poet of the Year,
 Shall bloom that wreath thou well hast won;
 While Scotia, with exulting tear,
 Proclaims that Thomson was her son.⁴¹

The other, in satirical Scoto-English, attacks the Scottish people who neglected Thomson in his lifetime, and the lack of patronage which forced him to go to England, and mocks the belated Scottish recognition of Thomson (specifically, the Earl of Buchan's celebrations and dedications of monuments, which Burns declined to attend):

Dost thou not rise, indignant Shade,
 And smile wi' spurning scorn,
 When they wha wad hae starv'd thy life,
 Thy senseless turf adorn.-⁴²

Like Ramsay of Ochtertyre (and a number of later, nineteenth-century critics) both Fergusson and Burns evidently felt that Thomson could have contributed more to a national poetry of Scotland, had he been encouraged to remain in his native land. Their motives were to an extent political, in counter-reaction to the pro-Union forces in Scotland, through which England had appropriated Thomson's accomplishments as her own; but they were based on appreciation of literary quality as well. In their respect for Thomson, they were not acting as professional critics attempting to influence the taste of their audience;

they were, however, able to recognise good poetry, especially that which sprang from many of the same complex Scottish roots as their own. Although they themselves chose to write in Scots, Fergusson and Burns demonstrated that vital toleration of the influence of the ascendant Anglo-Scottish culture in Scotland, in accepting Thomson proudly as a Scottish poet.

Surprisingly, it was two English critics who in this period pointed to some of the more fundamental "Scottish" influences on Thomson's poetry. John More⁴³ elaborated on the environmental factors of the harsh Scottish climate and landscape, and how they influenced The Seasons. He noted the realism of the winter description and of incidents such as the shepherd dying in the snow, taken directly from the poet's experience of the Scottish winter.⁴⁴ He wrote with some amazement, that a Scotsman could have become the "father of descriptive poetry," that "it was reserved to him, who had his birth and education among the bleak and desart wilds and hills of North Britain, to present the world with a graphical map of the year, to which there is no parallel, in this, or perhaps any other language."⁴⁵ More's references to the "bleak and desart wilds" and harsh winters of Scotland probably also carried a negative cultural implication, but at least More was willing to admit that Thomson's peculiarly Scottish experience, however "bleak," had significant bearing on his work.

Perhaps the most fair, "comprehensive" and "durable"⁴⁶ eighteenth-century critic of Thomson was Samuel Johnson. His biography of Thomson was derived largely from Shiels' and Murdoch's,⁴⁷ but his assessment of the poetry itself was his own, typically candid opinion. Like Burns, he sniped at the narrow Edinburgh literary coterie which had rejected the young Thomson and made it necessary for him to go South: "He [Thomson] easily discovered that the only stage on which a poet

could appear, with any hope of advantage, was London; a place too wide for operation of petty competition and private malignity...."⁴⁸

(It is interesting to find that Johnson, when asked to write his Lives of the Poets, saw at once that the publishers had omitted Thomson's name from the list of poets to be included in the volume. This seems to have been, as Thomson was a Scot, a deliberate snub to the rival publishers in Edinburgh, the Apollo Press, who had recently done a Lives series of its own. Johnson insisted that his Lives include Thomson, Scot or no.)⁴⁹ Johnson noted the importance of the Scottish landscape in The Seasons, particularly in "Autumn," where the poet "delights to recollect" the Jedburgh area of the Borders.⁵⁰ Johnson fully recognised Thomson's original genius as a descriptive poet:

As a writer he is entitled to one praise of the highest kind: his mode of thinking and of expressing his thoughts is original....He thinks in a peculiar train, and he thinks always as a man of genius; he looks round on Nature and on Life with the eye which Nature bestows only on a poet, the eye that distinguishes in every thing presented to its view whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained, and with a mind that at once comprehends the vast, and attends to the minute. The reader of The Seasons wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses....⁵¹

Johnson praised Thomson's appropriate and unique use of blank verse:

His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton or of any other poet than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction, are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation....His is one of the works in which blank verse seems properly used; Thomson's wide expansion of general views, and his enumeration of circumstantial varieties, would have been obstructed and embarrassed by the frequent intersection of the sense, which are the necessary effects of rhyme.⁵²

The very qualities of Thomson's poetry which Johnson highlighted-- especially his affinity for and skill at descriptive poetry and his original diction-- are in great part elements of his Scottish heritage.

Most significantly, Johnson was the critic who first called attention to Thomson's revisions, "the critical process in creation," as a characteristic of The Seasons, "who interpreted revisions as a possibility for, not necessarily an accomplishment of improvement."⁵³ Johnson discussed the effects of Thomson's many revisions of the poem, revisions which tended to remove the poem farther and farther away from its Scottish origins; he felt that while the changes generally improved the poem, they often resulted in a loss of what he called "race."⁵⁴ In Johnson's Dictionary, one of his definitions for "race" was, "A particular strength or taste of wine, applied by Temple to any extraordinary natural force of intellect. 'Of gardens there may be forms wholly irregular, that may have more beauty than of others; but they must owe it to some extraordinary dispositions of nature in the seat, or some great race of fancy or judgement in contrivance.' [William] Temple."⁵⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary includes in one "race" definition, No. 10, (a) "A particular class of wine, or the characteristic flavour of this, supposed to be due to the soil (Cf. Raciness, Racy), and (b) fig., "Of speech, writing, etc.: A peculiar and characteristic style or manner, especially liveliness, sprightliness, piquancy." The OED cites a different example from Temple, "'I think the Epistles of Phalaris to have more Race, more Spirit, more Force of Wit and Genius, than any others I have ever seen, either ancient or modern,'" (Temple, essay Learning, in Works, 1731, L.166). Clearly Johnson was exploiting Temple's pun on the vintner's term in applying it to Thomson; by it he meant not only the poet's original genius, his "raciness" and immediacy of description, but also the distinctive "racial" or native quality of the poet's expression. Such is J. Logie Robertson's plausible interpretation of Johnson's remark; the "race" or unique flavour and descriptive force of Thomson's language in the earlier versions of The Seasons seems to have come from its "native"

elements, a greater proportion of Scotticisms or northern derivatives and a more "vigorous," active and even ballad-like choice of diction.⁵⁶ "Race," which Ralph Cohen defines as a generally more direct and immediate manner of describing things,⁵⁷ might even have come in part from the rather awkward but original and expressive, "irregular" uses of language resulting from the Scottish poet's early clumsiness with formal English diction. At any rate, the "race" which Johnson perceived had almost certainly to do with the fact that Thomson was a Scots speaker;⁵⁸ Johnson's was the first attempt to explain, in terms of Scottish influence, the uniqueness of Thomson's poetic diction. "His observation of the change [loss of "race" with subsequent revisions] is only less interesting than his admission of his regret."⁵⁹ Johnson's negative remarks on Thomson (referring to The Seasons' "want of method";⁶⁰ to the "florid and luxuriant" diction, and rhetoric which is often "too exuberant, and sometimes may be charged with filling the ear more than the mind";⁶¹ to the "little regarded" and boring Liberty)⁶² have frequently been abused and quoted out of context,⁶³ notably by the Earl of Buchan.⁶⁴ Still, the praise as well as the reasonable and honest criticism given by the Scotophobe Dr. Johnson was a compliment indeed, to Thomson and to Scotland.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Scottish Enlightenment ("British") attitudes continued to dominate Thomson criticism; by this time, a certain amount of scattered information about Thomson's youth and Scottish connections had begun to emerge, through the publication of new editions and memoirs, letters and interviews, and articles on Thomson in such periodicals as Blackwood's, The Gentleman's Magazine and The Edinburgh Review, but as yet no more comprehensive consideration of Thomson as a Scot had appeared. Most writers on Thomson in

the early nineteenth century, such as William Hazlitt,⁶⁵ Sir Harris Nicolas,⁶⁶ and the Anglo-Scottish poet and critic Thomas Campbell⁶⁷ placed little or no emphasis on Thomson's nationality; there had been such a trail of Anglo-Scottish literary failures by this stage, that it was probably out of respect for Thomson that they included him in the "British" or "English" tradition without stressing his Scottishness. Ralph Cohen notes the beginnings, in this period, of a move away from purely literary-critical standards, toward the criteria of social and moral "relevance," while at the same time Thomson's audience was growing increasingly heterogeneous.⁶⁸ This trend, in which critics now endeavoured to place The Seasons in a "historical" or "developmental" context to point out its "relevance," was marked by an upsurge of both English and Scottish nationalism as a critical motive. The resulting criticism was very often narrow or wrong-headed, and posed a great danger to literary standards, especially by the later nineteenth century;⁶⁹ it held some rather unusual, inconsistent claims. For example, Edward Bulwer-Lytton exclaimed on reading the "fog" passage in "Autumn": "This is description! - and this is national - this is English!"⁷⁰ (although The Seasons contains many English scenes, this "fog" passage has long been held to be one of the more distinctively Scottish descriptions). Bulwer-Lytton also included Thomson in a trio of prominent eighteenth-century "English" poets, along with Akenside and Young. Such irrational, inconsistent "nationalistic" claims became commonplace by the later nineteenth century in Thomson criticism, as shall be seen.

John Wilson ("Christopher North"), a Scot, signalled the emergence of nineteenth-century Scottish literary nationalism, as applied to Thomson. His was the age of the great Scottish periodicals. In Blackwood's Magazine, Wilson countered Wordsworth's notion of a small, exclusive

Seasons readership by asserting that anyone who could use their senses could appreciate the poem⁷¹-- most especially the Scottish peasants, who "saw" the way Thomson did, knew the landscape and the details of life he described, and had similar feelings and intuitions about them. He likened the Scots' special closeness to nature to a natural religion of sorts, and compared Thomson's inspired nature-imagery with that of the Scriptures themselves (more in the vaguely Romantic vein, than in the rational manner of Murdoch in the previous century, who had sensibly traced Thomson's "sublimity" to direct Scriptural influence). Wilson had an interesting idea here, about certain Scottish attitudes to nature, but he failed to go beyond this general statement to posit particulars: what was the "Scottish" way of seeing? of describing? One wishes that he had better applied his Scottish literary patriotism to his otherwise sound treatment of the language, structure and originality of The Seasons-- but at least such national awareness was there, that the poem was somehow unique and perhaps better for being Scottish.

From the mid-nineteenth century into the early twentieth, the "historical" or "developmental" approach became the norm in Thomson criticism, whereby nationalism or literary patriotism was a key concept. Though The Seasons was no longer a very "popular" poem itself,⁷² it was ever in the critical eye as part of a larger tradition; there was a flood of critical comment, much of it superficial, verbose or merely wrong-headed, but its emphasis on nationalism did serve to raise many new and significant points about the relationship of Thomson's Scottish background to his work. Such points will be taken up throughout this thesis. Almost all of the Scottish critics of Thomson in this period, and a number of the English ones, now recognised that certain aspects of Thomson's poetry were directly influenced by his having

been a Scot. It is possible to survey only a sample of this overabundance of late nineteenth-century Thomson criticism here.

The importance of Thomson's childhood and upbringing in rural Scotland, the environmental issue raised in the eighteenth century and emphasised by the Earl of Buchan, continued to be a major topic with nineteenth-century critics, especially the Scottish ones. Most mentioned the influence of Border life and landscape on Thomson's poetry: some commented on Thomson's fidelity to actual Border scenes and incidents (including G. C. Macaulay, Stopford Brooke, John Veitch, Henry Grey Graham, William Bayne and J. Logie Robertson); others dealt with the inspiration of the Scottish landscape as a more generalised "impression" on the poet, which influenced his descriptive mood and manner, and sparked his initial choice of natural description as The Seasons' subject-matter (including George Gilfillan, George Douglas, J. C. Shairp, G. Gregory Smith and Hugh Miller). G. Gregory Smith, in particular, elaborated on the pre-Romantic "new atmosphere" which Thomson's descriptions, Scottish-inspired, brought to English literature when "he [had] let in the northern breezes and shown the northern colours," depicting the typically Scottish "sterner and gloomier aspects" of wild nature, especially the winter and storm scenes where the poet's manner was "least aureate and conventional."⁷³ Such environmental observations quickly became the standard fare of Thomson criticism.

More important was the emerging tendency, within the "historical" viewpoint of these critics, to place Thomson as a nature-poet in a broader tradition of specifically Scottish nature poetry. Stopford Brooke, an English critic, based much of his developmental theory of Scottish nature poetry on the vague racial premise that the "Celtic

spirit" was a strong element in the traditional feeling for nature of the Lowland poets;⁷⁴ William Bayne, Thomson's biographer, proposed a similar theory.⁷⁵ (Kurt Wittig, and especially Derick Thomson in this century make a stronger case for possible Celtic influence on Lowland literature.)⁷⁶ Brooke and Bayne rightly made a connection between the Middle Scots art-poetry of Henryson, Dunbar and Gavin Douglas, the descriptive element of the Scottish ballads, and Thomson's own natural description "for its own sake," though they did not go so far as to propose any direct Scottish literary influences; as Brooke concluded, the matter of Thomson's links with older Scottish literature was an area which had "not been enough investigated,"⁷⁷ and so it has remained. John Veitch, too, recognised a tradition of Scottish nature poetry to which Thomson belonged, though he saw it as having originated with the seventeenth-century Anglo-Scot William Drummond of Hawthornden (of course, as an Anglo-Scottish neoclassical poet Thomson does fall directly into the line of influence of Drummond-Milton, but the fact remains that nature poetry had far earlier roots in Scotland); Veitch claimed he was unable to find any influence of the ballads or of Middle Scots poetry on Thomson.⁷⁸ J. C. Shairp⁷⁹ and G. Gregory Smith asserted, on the other hand, that Thomson had inherited certain stylistic characteristics from earlier Scottish nature poetry, such as "intimacy" and realism of description, and had in turn brought these traits into English poetry. Other elements of Thomson's style were also linked with older Scottish poetry, such as his use of the "cataloguing" device in description, which Stopford Brooke disliked⁸⁰ but which Scots geologist-critic Hugh Miller appreciated for its "Scottish" application of scientific method to natural description, in treating of such vast panoramas as Hagley Park.⁸¹

In addition to the influence of Scottish landscape and literature on

Thomson's works, there grew in the nineteenth century a new awareness of the specifically-Scottish aspects governing the poet's diction, both good and bad. Otto Zippel's variorum Seasons edition⁸² at last examined in detail the important revisions to which Dr. Johnson had drawn attention in the eighteenth century. Zippel also included a brief source-study of the poem's many literary allusions. Léon Morel made a fairly thorough general study of Thomson's language and style in this period.⁸³ He analysed the Latinate diction, and Thomson's innovations in poetic diction. He also remarked briefly on Thomson's Scotticisms in the juvenilia,⁸⁴ and their relative rarity in the heavily-revised Seasons and other mature works.⁸⁵ Disappointingly, Morel did not develop any further the idea that Thomson's Latinity of diction was greatly influenced by his Scottish education, nor the matter of the poet's use of Scotticisms. G. C. Macaulay, in his biography of Thomson, likewise noted the strongly Latinate diction but failed to point to its roots in the poet's humanistic education.⁸⁶ Veitch, however, did venture to excuse Thomson's occasional awkwardness of diction with this over-simplified but provocative assertion:

But we forget that English was not his native language—that to a Scotsman one hundred and fifty years ago English was a foreign language to be learned, very much as any foreign tongue was to be acquired—that no one in Scotland spoke it in Thomson's time, and that very few indeed could write it. The persistent attempts which Thomson made to correct the heaviness, the book-gotten epithets, of his 'Seasons', shows clearly his consciousness of his imperfections; if he did not rise to the purest English, it was because no one in his time wrote it simply, or without a predominating mixture of long-syllabled classicalisms.⁸⁷

This acknowledgement that spoken English was, in a sense, a foreign tongue to Thomson, and that he had to rely on "book-gotten epithets" (in other words, that there was a split between spoken and written language in Thomson's Scotland) is vital for a further understanding

of Thomson's diction, and provides a link between the theories of Dr. Johnson and David Nichol Smith in the study of Thomson's poetic language, its merits and faults. Henry Grey Graham made a similar observation, criticising Thomson's turgid diction: "It would almost seem that, having come from Scotland, with a limited supply of English, he had worked up his epithets with a vocabulary in his earlier days."⁸⁸

Indeed, Thomson's rhetorical slips did cause him, "more than once, and with the strangest incongruity, even in diction [to] let the roughness of the bothie invade his work."⁸⁹ However, this "roughness" was part of that "race" which some critics found attractive in The Seasons. J. Logie Robertson, as was noted above, corroborated Johnson's observation on "loss of race" in The Seasons' revisions, and suggested a specifically-Scottish definition of "race" applied to the poetry of Thomson.⁹⁰ Robertson (who under the pseudonym "Hugh Hali-burton" wrote Scots verse and initiated the twentieth-century Scots Renaissance cry, "Back to Dunbar!")⁹¹ completed two important editions of Thomson, the 1891 Seasons and Castle of Indolence⁹² and the 1908 Oxford Standard Authors Poetical Works.⁹³ Robertson edited particularly the first of these from the viewpoint of Scottish literary nationalism, and not only pointed out Scotticisms which gave "race" to the poetry, but also annotated the passages with Scottish thematic or literary associations, such as those which derived from the poet's Border experience, or which paralleled descriptive passages in Burns, and so on. His 1891 edition of The Seasons remains a valuable guide to Scottish or northern language and subject-matter in the poem. In the 1908 Oxford Standard edition, Robertson's annotation is considerably less biased toward Scottish considerations, but his Preface to that edition still treats the matter of specifically-Scottish descriptive "race": "There is sound criticism in the judge-

ment of Johnson that in the process of improvement The Seasons lost somewhat of their original race or flavour. The Scotticisms, too, were expressive. And the keenness of his colour-sense, which he had inherited from his country's ballads, became dulled in deference to the taste of Pope and Lyttelton." "Loss of race," he said, was chiefly seen in the poet's substitution of less-vigorous, "tame" words and lines for the original more "robust" ones.⁹⁴ Interestingly, however, even Robertson felt that the Scots poem among Thomson's juvenilia (the only extant attempt at Scots verse attributed to him), which he nevertheless published in his Oxford Standard edition, could not be Thomson's at all. When he said scornfully that the "doggerel stanzas in the Scottish dialect are surely not Thomson's,"⁹⁶ was he speaking from some deep-rooted Scottish schizophrenia, or simply from the critical stance that the piece, "An Elegy Upon James Therburn," is bad Scots verse?

Such contradictions and inconsistencies abound in Thomson criticism of this period, most often born of complex nationalistic sentiments; maddening though they are, they often serve to point up the vital matter of broader Scottish cultural influence on the poet. The central critical paradox is embodied in two of the major biographies of the time: James Thomson is included in both the "English Men of Letters" series and the "Famous Scots" series. Where does he belong?

G. C. Macaulay's James Thomson ("English Men of Letters") denied that Thomson had been influenced by previous Scottish literature; Macaulay held that "Thomson inherited little from the Scottish school of poetry."⁹⁷ Yet he made much of the distinctive literary culture of eighteenth-century Edinburgh, which was:

to a great extent independent of the contemporary fashions in the south...[though] classical English

poetry and prose were the accepted models. The literary society of Edinburgh was never of an exclusively urban character, and Scottish poetry had to a great extent retained that traditional feeling for external nature, which had appeared, for example, in Gavin Douglas....There seems, in fact, to have been a rather singular outburst of nature poetry in blank verse among Edinburgh students of this [Thomson's] time....⁹⁸

So, in spite of himself, Macaulay acknowledged both the Scottish tradition of nature poetry and the distinctive Edinburgh Anglo-Scottish literary culture from which Thomson emerged.

William Bayne's James Thomson ("Famous Scots")¹⁰⁰ somewhat redressed the balance in recognising the importance of Thomson's cultural background, and although the biography contains a number of factual errors and is rather poorly documented, it is full of provocative speculations as well as little-known points of information about the poet's Scottish connections-- his youth, education, friends and acquaintances. It is surprising that Thomson's most recent biographer, Douglas Grant (1951) does not follow up many of the leads given by Bayne.

Indeed, by its very Anglo-Scottish nature Thomson's "North British" cultural heritage was paradoxical, but a number of critics in this period rallied to his defence, demonstrating that being Scottish and being "British" were not mutually exclusive. As Bayne declared, Thomson "was...a Scot first, and then a loyal adherent of the British constitution."¹⁰¹ J. Logie Robertson, quoting Thomson himself, best summed up the poet's allegiances:

The patriotic feeling was strong in his heart and shines out in his poetry on many occasions. He was by no means an aggressive Scot. His patriotism was for Britain....Yet one likes to remember that, as he wrote to a fellow-countryman, 'Britannia includes our native kingdom of Scotland, too'.¹⁰²

Out of all the contradictions and controversies, unsupported or narrowly nationalistic claims, the bombast and the superficiality of nineteenth-early twentieth century Thomson criticism, it is clear that awareness of Thomson as a Scot had become explicit; the significance of the poet's Scottish nationality was established. At the turn of the century, J. Logie Robertson and William Bayne seemed to point the way to future Thomson studies in this vein, but left many questions unanswered. In the twentieth century, the "developmental" critical trend has shifted away from the heavily nationalistic bias in dealing with Thomson, toward a more literary and philosophical viewpoint which has tended to play down the consideration of the poet's Scottishness. The aspect of Thomson's nationality has again become implicit, taken for granted or perhaps deliberately ignored, as it so often had been in eighteenth-century criticism; now, however, this attitude is unsupported by contemporary social or political expediency, unlike the period immediately after the Union of 1707. In fact, the opposite is true today; with the recent upsurge of Scottish nationalism, one would expect greater interest to be taken in the important matter of Scottish influence on "English" literature. In this century, the majority of those who have written on Thomson (including a host of critics who have done general studies of Scottish and Augustan literature) have certainly been aware of Thomson's Scottish heritage and have acknowledged it-- but strangely enough, the few major Thomson critics have neglected to develop this important element of Thomson's work.

Alan Dugald McKillop is to be admired for his thorough and scholarly volumes,¹⁰³ as well as for his numerous articles on Thomson. He has conscientiously and accurately authenticated most of the sources and many of the biographical details, and presented them in a straight-

forward manner; his learned interpretation of the facts is in the light of broader British and European thought, with very little specific reference to any particular Scottish implications. However, it seems always implicit in McKillop's valuable studies (as it was, to an extent, in the eighteenth-century writings on Thomson) that the poet's Scottish experience was behind the poetry he wrote.

Douglas Grant's standard biography James Thomson, Poet of 'The Seasons' (1951)¹⁰⁴ assimilates much of the information given in previous biographies, from Shiels' on, without adding much that is new; it was, of course, completed before McKillop's edition of James Thomson (1700-1748), Letters and Documents,¹⁰⁵ which contains a wealth of biographical information. Grant's biography is a useful general life of Thomson, but spends remarkably little space on the poet's Scottish years, and does not make any attempt to interpret the bare facts or to place the poet in a Scottish cultural context. (Bayne's 1898 biography, though not fully to be trusted, is more interesting in this regard; McKillop's edition of the Letters and Documents gives far greater biographical detail, even for the Scottish years.)

Ralph Cohen has written two substantial works on Thomson in recent years. His lengthy analysis The Unfolding of the 'Seasons',¹⁰⁶ is straight literary criticism of the "New Critical" variety, and entirely neglects possible Scottish influences. Cohen's interesting comparative study of Thomson criticism, The Art of Discrimination,¹⁰⁷ unfortunately does not make much distinction between Scottish and English critics and their different attitudes and critical responses to Thomson. He points out the various "nationalistic" views of the nineteenth century, and is right to reject many of them as shallow chauvinism, but he tends to dismiss them wholesale, without giving some of their more provocative ideas due credit. Indeed, Cohen himself

seems deliberately non-committal¹⁰⁸ on the issue of whether Thomson's Scottishness matters to the poetry. He has, in correspondence with the present writer, defined the Scottish influence on The Seasons as a rather negative mixture of nostalgia for the homeland, alienation and "anxiety" at being a Scotsman in England, and suppression of any evidence of his Scottishness in his poetry. He also makes vague reference to the poet's Scottish experiences of "winter" and rural life as having influenced the Seasons descriptions and his attitudes toward man in nature, but these remarks are so general as to be of little use.¹⁰⁹ One is left with the impression that Cohen does not place great importance on Thomson's Scottish background as an influence on the mature poetry.

James Sambrook, with his The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence (1972), is Thomson's most recent editor.¹¹⁰ While Sambrook largely neglects the matter of Thomson's Scottishness in this compactly annotated edition, he does adopt several of Robertson's more "Scottish" annotations from the important 1891 edition, and occasionally adds a new Scottish reference or interpretation.

Of the major twentieth-century Thomson critics, Patricia M. Spacks perhaps comes closest to a positive assertion of the importance of the poet's Scottish upbringing in relation to his work.¹¹¹ Her analysis appropriately focuses on The Seasons as primarily a nature-poem, which is also a hymn of praise to the Creator (the areas of nature and religion were, of course, the two chief thematic influences of Thomson's Scottish youth). Ms. Spacks' thesis-- that Thomson's poetry was better (i.e. more true to his youthful ideals of nature and religion) in its less sophisticated earlier versions, and that it grew worse as the Scot Thomson conformed more and more to contemporary English taste-- implicitly confirms the significance of the poet's

Scottish experience and his nostalgia for his homeland, away from which he allegedly grew the longer he lived in England.

It is the twentieth-century critics who have not concentrated exclusively on Thomson, but who have included him in their more general studies, who have come up with the most interesting insights into the relationship between Thomson's Scottish background and his work. There are many such critics. Hoxie Neale Fairchild's comprehensive survey Religious Trends in English Poetry¹¹² deals with Thomson's Scottish Calvinistic religious upbringing, and its influence on his poetry. Fairchild discusses Thomson's juvenilia, and the religious implications of the early poems, as they were influenced by both old-style and Moderate Scottish religious belief and also by secular literature. He traces the poet's broadening religious thought, which was increasingly influenced by benevolism while maintaining a certain Scottish Calvinistic "emotional" element and didactic strain, through various phases of The Seasons. He goes on to apply Max Weber's thesis (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism)¹¹³ to the Whig poet, illuminating Thomson's mature attitudes to poetry, politics and society as Thomson carried ideas of Calvinistic "duty" to work and to succeed in one's calling, and ethics of individual "progress" and "energy" into the primarily secular and social messages of Liberty and The Castle of Indolence. Fairchild's treatment of Thomson is somewhat over-simplified, particularly in his rather facile conviction that Thomson ultimately abandoned orthodox Christianity¹¹⁴ and maintained only the sentimentalised superstructure of Calvinistic thought, but it is a generally sound and useful study of the poet's religious background and development. Marjorie Hope Nicolson in Newton Demands the Muse,¹¹⁵ deals with The Seasons in its religious and scientific aspects, noting the significance of Thomson's youthful

educational experience in shaping his mature philosophy, in general terms; Herbert Drennon's study of Thomson and Newtonian science supplies the factual information about the poet's earliest contacts with Newtonianism in Edinburgh.¹¹⁶ R. D. S. Jack discusses Thomson's works in The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature,¹¹⁷ in connection with the Italian sources, and considers Thomson as one of those Scottish poets who maintained the traditional and fruitful Scottish-Continental cultural affinity. Dr. Jack calls Thomson, "the finest example of a Scotsman yielding himself to the concept of a European literature."¹¹⁸

Many issues lightly touched on in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relating to Thomson's Scottishness reappear in twentieth-century criticism. R. D. Havens feels that Stopford Brooke's Scottish-developmental theory was in some ways incomplete;¹¹⁹ nonetheless, he reiterates it: The Seasons is "Scottish throughout, it was written by a Scot, it was suggested by Scottish verses, it pictures Scottish scenes." Havens feels that the poetry is the product of an eighteenth-century Edinburgh culture which was more "natural," more conducive to nature poetry than the artificial English literary milieu.¹²⁰ Havens, however, shows little appreciation for Thomson's Latinate diction, and rather than associating the Latinate language with the poet's Scottish humanistic education, he attributes it solely to poor Miltonic imitation. In the most recent comprehensive study of Scottish literature, the History of Scottish Literature, Maurice Lindsay commits the same injustice.¹²¹ Lindsay, Agnes Mure Mackenzie,¹²² C. E. de Haas,¹²³ Kurt Wittig¹²⁴ and John Speirs¹²⁵ all see Thomson's works as part of the tradition of Scottish natural-descriptive poetry, and Thomson as the poet who carried the theme of nature-for-its-own-sake, moreover vividly and realistically described, into Augustan English

poetry. Wittig, particularly, finds significant evidence of the influence of Scottish literature and landscape on Thomson's style and themes.

Perhaps the most provocative general study of Thomson this century is that by David Nichol Smith, himself a Scot and an eminent eighteenth-century scholar.¹²⁶ He sees Thomson's "recollected emotion," his nostalgia for his homeland, as the major motivation and inspiration for The Seasons, which beneath its formalised, generalised descriptions is a true "poem from the Scottish Border,"¹²⁷ based on Scottish scenes and experiences. He feels that Thomson, no less than Burns, could only have written the highly original poetry he did because he was a Scot. Nichol Smith goes beyond the stock "landscape" argument to make a central point about the poet's diction, which critics had long avoided: he examines Thomson's Latinate poetic diction in the light of the poet's education in Latin and in classical rhetoric, claiming that, while Thomson's language might be difficult for an English reader, it is quite understandable and pleasing to a Scot, even a modern-day Scot. This, of course, he attributes to the long-standing Scottish humanistic educational tradition, whereby in Thomson's youth Latin would have been his "second language," and formal literary English his third.¹²⁸ Thomson was a Scots speaker, and retained a heavy accent and occasional use of dialect throughout his life. John Butt elaborates on Nichol Smith's observations, pointing out that "we should take care not to regard Thomson as Milton's sedulous ape," for his "latinisms came naturally to a lowland Scot writing Southern English, and his periphrases were used not to escape vulgarity, but precisely and evocatively...."¹²⁹ Butt also notes with surprise the presence of so many references to the supernatural in The Seasons; he sees these as very unusual in an Augustan

poem, and surely a Scottish element contributed by Thomson. While two major scholars of eighteenth-century literature, Geoffrey Tillotson¹³⁰ (an English pupil of Nichol Smith's) and F. R. Leavis,¹³¹ have chosen to group Thomson with the English Augustan poets in their studies, A. M. Oliver convincingly treats Thomson as a "Scottish Augustan." Oliver states that Thomson typifies the "Scottish Augustan" pattern of "education, poverty, courage, ambition, emigration and success..." and that, as the first really successful Scottish Augustan, served as an example and an inspiration to his fellow-Scots. Oliver sees as Thomson's uniquely Scottish contributions to Augustan English poetry: his evocative and realistic description of Scottish scenes; his depiction of the supernatural in poetry; and his propensity for the didactic mode.¹³² Drama scholar Terence Tobin includes Thomson in his study of eighteenth-century Scottish playwrights, in which he is mindful of Scottish influences (both positive and negative) on Thomson's choice of dramatic form (predominantly, neo-classical tragedy, though with a growing element of sentimentality or romanticism), themes (patriotism and Whig politics, humanitarianism) and "ponderous" formal diction.¹³³

The nearest twentieth-century approach to an extended study which attempts to relate Thomson's works to his Scottish cultural heritage is made in an unpublished Ph.D. thesis for Edinburgh University. Eric S. Taylor, in his "James Thomson: Poet of Nature and Reason" (1943) is mainly concerned with tracing the development of Thomson's mature philosophical and political attitudes; he wisely begins by asserting the need to re-examine Thomson's early environmental influences, to counteract recent critical over-emphasis on the poet's literary imitativeness. He advocates returning to the standpoint of the eighteenth-century "earliest critics and biographers [who] realised

that personal experience was the basis and more than the basis of Thomson's work," and who took it for granted that Thomson's genius owed much to his being Scottish.¹³⁴ Taylor was working at the same time as McKillop on Thomson sources and influences, and the two covered much of the same territory. Taylor, who unfortunately never published the bulk of his findings, was responsible for recovering the valuable Sale Catalogue of Thomson's household effects, including his library.¹³⁵ His emphasis in his thesis on the particularly Scottish elements of influence on Thomson is more explicit than McKillop's; he raises many interesting points about the poet's Scottish "personal experience," events of his early life and aspects of the continued influence of the environment and culture of Scotland on his mature thought. He does, however, feel that Thomson gradually grew away from those Scottish influences the longer he lived in England, and so he shifts his attention to more immediate influences as his critique develops.

It is felt that a more comprehensive study than any of those cited in this introductory survey can be made, though Eric Taylor's valuable contributions and guidelines will certainly be kept in mind in the present thesis, which after all starts from much the same premise. Above all, it is hoped that this thesis will cultivate a greater understanding of Thomson's works themselves, from the viewpoint of the poet's Scottish heritage. Partly through biography, partly through literary criticism, it will attempt further to identify the nature and extent of Scottish cultural influence on James Thomson and his works.

CHAPTER II : BORDER YOUTH

It was in Scotland he saw the dawns and sunrises which he described so gloriously in England. The poet precedes the poem, and Thomson was none the less a poet in Scotland that he wrote nothing sufficiently valuable for publication till he went to live in England.¹

There is little to add to the facts about James Thomson's early life presented in Douglas Grant's biography of 1951; what details Grant does not include, A. D. McKillop's excellent edition of Thomson's Letters and Documents supplies. However, these sources, even when taken together, leave a number of unsatisfactory gaps; they do not dwell on the more general cultural implications of the biographical facts. The task of the biographical chapters of this thesis will be to re-cast the emphasis somewhat, to look at Thomson in his social, religious, philosophical and political context, with special reference to his Scottish background and associations.

The Rev. Thomas Thomson (1666-1716), the poet's father, remains a shadowy figure today. Very little is known of him, though rather more has been conjectured. He was born in Ednam, Roxburghshire, a village situated on the River Eden only about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the English Border in a hilly, agricultural district.² He was the son of Andrew Thomson (descended from the family of Rousland near Kinneil),³ who was gardener to Andrew Edmonstoune of Ednam.⁴

Thomas Thomson, whose family was of humble means, chose the respectable career of the church. He studied the Humanities (M.A., 1686), then five years of Divinity at the College of Edinburgh, and was licensed to preach in 1691.⁵ His first charge was his own parish church of Ednam. Here, he married and began to raise a family, and served until

1700. In November of that year he moved to the parish of Southdean, where he remained until his death. Nothing is recorded of his character other than the conventional reference in Patrick Murdoch's (1762) biography of James Thomson: Thomas Thomson was "highly respected... for his piety, and his diligence in the pastoral duty...."⁶ Douglas Grant's description of the minister as "amiable"⁷ is unsupported; he seems to have been a retiring, little-known man.

All that can be established from Thomas Thomson's university career is that he must have been widely-read in the Latin and Greek classics, in Scholastic philosophy (and it is just possible that he met with the Newtonian teachings of David Gregory, as well), in Biblical theology, and probably, though not necessarily, in Hebrew and Ecclesiastical History. In all, his would have been a more rigorous course of study than the increasingly lax, more "Moderate" divinity curriculum of the eighteenth century which his son was to experience.⁸ One wonders whether Thomas Thomson tended toward stern old-style Scottish Calvinistic theology, or toward the ascendant Moderate views: in his student days, a university education did not necessarily "liberalise" a student's religious and philosophical views, and Thomas Thomson was really in the generation before a general Moderate trend swept Presbyterianism (and with it carried the young James Thomson). Biographers have speculated that Thomas Thomson "belonged to the revered 'Antedeluvians' - those who had lived before the flood of prelacy - and had been bred in the strictest school of dogged Calvinism, saturated besides with the superstitions of the day, credulous of ghosts and witches, 'providences' and evil spirits," that he was of the "old school," "severe, narrow, and even less likely to approve of worldly letters than the average member of his profession."⁹ Thomas Thomson

had been approved to serve in Ednam parish by a group of Presbyters who were of the "old Covenanting sort."¹⁰ Also, he certainly had close association with the Marrow Men; two of his good friends, Alexander Colden and Gabriel Wilson, were intimates of Thomas Boston of Ettrick.¹¹ While there is no concrete evidence, biographers were probably right about the general tenor of the elder Thomson's religious and moral views. Murdoch's words "diligence" and "piety" convey a son's respect (Murdoch was the poet Thomson's lifelong friend, and would probably have had this information directly from him) but little filial affection, and indeed James never mentioned his father in extant writings in any terms, affectionate or otherwise (unlike the love he openly displayed for his mother, in letters and in the poem he wrote on her death in 1725).¹² It seems possible that the father and son disagreed on matters of religion and propriety. Mr. Thomson may not have approved of his son's attempts at poetry; the Kirk did not offer patronage for the arts, and considered polite letters frivolous and potentially distracting from one's religious duties.¹³ Nor may he have approved of his son's poor scholastic record at Jedburgh Grammar School; the Kirk deplored idleness at one's appointed task¹⁴ (particularly if that "idleness" was the result of time spent dabbling in poetic fancy). Nor yet may he have approved of James's friendships with the local gentry: the old-school Scottish churchmen strongly opposed the Moderates' tendency to fraternise with the gentry, at the expense of the "common people."¹⁵ The easy-going James does not appear to have been of a notably "rebellious" nature, but the pressures imposed by a strict minister-father might well have induced him actively to seek other, more congenial and secular ways and companions outside the home. One writer on Thomson has charac-

terised the adult Thomson as a "rebel" against Scottish Calvinism,¹⁶ which is to an extent true, but this must be qualified somewhat. Thomson did reject many of the old-style, narrow Kirk attitudes, but the more rigorous elements of the religion of his youth still recur in his works, even as late as The Castle of Indolence, along with the more Moderate religious philosophy which he largely adopted and which informs his mature life and works.

The mysterious death of the Rev. Mr. Thomson could provide an important clue to the religious atmosphere of the poet's youth,¹⁷ as well as helping to explain his long-lived superstitious inclinations.¹⁸

The story of Thomas Thomson's death is recounted by George Watson, who claims that it was first told with authority by Dr. Thomas Somerville, who had it from the Rev. Mr. John Cranstoun of Ancrum, a particular friend of Thomson's youth "who shared the same room with the poet when they were studying at Edinburgh University." (Patrick Murdoch, who became a Church of England "rational" cleric, does not even allude to this story.)¹⁹ By Watson's (Somerville's) account, the Rev. Mr. Thomson was called in by the inhabitants of Wolflee or "Woolie" House, located on the lands of the Elliots of Stobs, west of Southdean on Catlee Burn,²⁰ to exorcise an evil spirit. "The folklore of that period speaks for itself how impregnated with superstitious beliefs were the minds of the people two centuries ago, and even a hundred years ago it was quite pronounced," wrote Watson; belief in spirits was so prevalent that a minister who dared to deny it would be held a heretic by his people. While performing the exorcism, the minister was struck by a ball of fire, "rendered speechless," and soon died.²¹ Thomas Thomson died on February 9, 1716, possibly from apoplexy or a heart-attack from the excitement, possibly from a fever

contracted in the winter expedition.²² But whatever really happened, local belief seems to have attributed his death to Satan, and indeed "the access of terror, which terminated so fatally, affords strong presumptive evidence that he [Mr. Thomson] entertained as grave a conviction of the reality of the scene as the awe-stricken crowd by whom he was surrounded."²³ According to this often-repeated story, the "supernatural" cause of his father's death strongly reinforced James's tendency to be superstitious, even making him afraid of being left alone in the dark at college (and thus the butt of practical jokes by his fellows).²⁴ The rational Murdoch, however, attributed the obviously powerful effects of his father's death on James to extreme grief, as the son was unable to return to Southdean from Edinburgh in time to receive the minister's last blessing.²⁵ Was this "grief" in fact remorse at differences unresolved or unforgiven? Or, did James see his father's death as somehow deserved, a punishment from God? In any case, the young Thomson seems to have been strongly infected with the superstitions attending orthodox Scottish Calvinism, particularly in rural areas such as the Borders, right through the eighteenth century. In The Seasons the theme of superstition recurs, although the mature poet was always "careful to assign supernatural experience to uneducated peasants."²⁶

What other influences might the Rev. Mr. Thomas Thomson have had on his poet-son? A. M. Oliver has said that, "Thomson is a preacher as well as a teacher,"²⁷ and indeed The Seasons is in one major sense a religious-didactic poem; Liberty and The Castle of Indolence, too, are didactic poems. The impulse to exhort his readers to do what is right might derive as much or more from his early experience of Scottish Calvinism as from Augustan public concern. Certain elements

of his rhetorical style also echo the style of the pulpit: preachers of the old school in particular could display tremendous descriptive skill, especially when portraying in very concrete and literal terms the horrors of hell,²⁸ and Thomson too is often at his most realistic and vigorous when describing the wilder, more violent and horrific aspects of nature. The central religious message of The Seasons, that of a transcendent, all-powerful and un-knowable Deity acting through Providence and whose Creation gives Him glory, ultimately affirms much that is orthodox in Scottish Calvinistic doctrine, if considerably more Moderate than Thomas Thomson's own beliefs. Liberty, and especially The Castle of Indolence, display certain ideas of progress and the work-ethic, held to be indirect products of Scottish Calvinistic thought. Finally, the poet's earliest religious education, his first introduction to literature (the Bible and other works of religion), and possibly his initial acquaintance with the Humanities as well, would have been at the hands of his father. The significant influences which James Thomson absorbed as a son of the manse of Southdean, their importance in his works, will be examined further in the critical chapters of this thesis.

Thomson's mother seems to have been of a very different personality from his father. Rather more is known of the poet's relationship with her, if only because she lived on into his literary manhood. Beatrix Trotter was the daughter of Alexander Trotter of Fogo in Berwickshire, and Margaret Home of the Homes of Bassendean ("But the Homes will have none of it, declaring that Home she may have been, but not of the fine Bassendean sort").²⁹ She was co-heiress of the land of Wideopen or Widehope on the Kale Water,³⁰ to the east of Jedburgh. She was also a distant cousin of Lady Grisell (Home) Baillie, poetess daughter of

Patrick Home of Polwarth, Earl of Marchmont; this connection was to prove useful to her son James when he sought his fortune in the south. Mrs. Thomson bore her husband nine children;³¹ she is said to have been a warm and loving mother, vivacious and imaginative,³² and almost an enthusiast in her "pious fervor" of religious feeling. It was she who seems to have inspired young James with the sweeter beauties of religion, its emotional power.³³ Douglas Grant points to the "friendly warmth" of Thomson's portrayal of cosy cottage life in The Seasons as evidence of his happy childhood; he probably was relatively happy at home, the father's concerned discipline being tempered by the mother's benevolent influence. It is also probably true that, while Thomson's father instructed the children in religious literature, the mother found time to teach them Border ballads and songs, a literary influence of a very different character.³⁴

Soon after her husband's death, Mrs. Thomson and her family settled permanently in Edinburgh, where James was a student; mother and son seem to have maintained a close relationship, and she died to his great sadness only two months after he arrived in London. Her influence on his poetry can be seen in such qualities as "sublimity" of religious and aesthetic experience and expression, deep sensitivity to spiritual and temporal beauties, a certain sentimental and benevolent moral intuition, a vivid imagination-- or, in that eighteenth-century term, "sensibility."

James Thomson was born (probably in Ednam, though possibly at his mother's Wideopen property) on September 11, 1700,³⁵ two months before his parents moved to Southdean. He spent the greater part of his childhood at Southdean; here, economic, political and geographical factors combined to make this formative period especially important

and far-reaching in its effects on him. Already a poor country, Scotland was hit by a series of bad seasons and famines, and from 1697 until 1705 the harvests were inadequate to maintain the Scottish population. There was very little industry in the country, and regions such as the Borders which depended almost entirely on agriculture were in dire straits. Thousands of the poor starved, and many emigrated.³⁶ "Continuous disastrous weather" led to an especially severe famine in 1709,³⁷ when James was a boy. While not directly dependent on agriculture for his livelihood, Mr. Thomson's large family was dependent to a great extent on the prosperity of the parishioners through tithes, and possibly through income derived from Wideopen; James would know at first hand the hardships and privations of Lowland peasant life, in many ways, as he was himself a part of rural life and activities. The Border famines and consequent poverty were partly due to the backwardness and barbarity of Scottish agricultural methods at the time;³⁸ improved English methods were not adopted on a large scale until mid-century. This attitude of resistance to change went very deep, reinforced as it was by Scottish Calvinistic religious beliefs (dependence on an all-powerful Providence, and the relative powerlessness of human works, resulting in the tendency to leave too much to Providence), and especially by the inexorable climate. (It will be seen, how Thomson grew impatient with the indolence prevalent in Scotland, and how he counter-balanced the attitude of complete dependence on Providence with the Virgilian "improving" philosophy, strengthened with hearty Protestant/Whig materialism.)

Roxburghshire, full of rivers and streams, was very liable to flooding, especially as the result of spring thaws. Winters often brought

severe snowstorms; summers were mild but humid, wet and foggy. Occasional western winds were "keen, cold, and withering."³⁹ Thomas Somerville, minister of Jedburgh, described a typical Border year as having snow all winter, which stayed long on the ground and led to late sowing, a wet and cool summer with bad hail and thunderstorms in August, and a late, poor harvest.⁴⁰ The Statistical Account for Southdean (1794) says: "The principle disadvantage is want of shelter, defence from the scorching sun in summer, and protection in winter from the piercing winds, frequent and violent rains, and destroying blasts of snow."⁴¹ Mr. Thomson's parish, then, was particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of a harsh climate: not only were crops endangered, but people's lives were also in peril, from flood and snow as well as from starvation. Such an environment surely made a deep impression on young James; his superstitions, his belief in a controlling Providence working through nature, his awareness of the sheer inscrutable power of nature over men's lives are elements of his religious philosophy which owed much to the Book of Job and to orthodox Scottish Calvinism, and more to his first-hand childhood experience. The interaction of religion and landscape gives vital force to his best descriptive poetry.

The geographical situation of Southdean is isolated, bleak, almost desolate, and "dramatic" in its contrast of the bald Cheviot Hills to the south, with the surrounding marshy moorlands. The parish is set "between the rich district to the north and the rough hill country of the Cheviots to the south";⁴² the area is "marked by variegated scenery, consisting of bold and massive heights, pastoral uplands and bleak moorlands, haughs and sylvan meads, copses, woodlands and arable lands" and many rivers and streams.⁴³ One aspect of this Border

scene is its peculiar atmospheric effect, creating strong variations and contrasts of light and shade.⁴⁴ Kurt Wittig describes the quality of Border light as eerie, "unearthly," whereby nearby objects are sharp and clear, but more distant ones are seen "as if behind a veil. (It must be due to the humidity.)" His experience of the Border atmosphere, he says, added much to his understanding of the mood of the Border ballads.⁴⁵ All who know it speak of this area as a wild, romantic landscape and emphasise its dramatic contrasts of scenery, and surely David Nichol Smith and others are right to stress its importance as an influence on Thomson's natural descriptions, and on the emotional connotations the natural setting held for him.

Also, Southdean's isolation may have had its effects on Thomson's personality; it may have reinforced his youthful shyness and apparent dullness at school and in Edinburgh, and in turn influenced his poetry, in which social life is seldom to the forefront.⁴⁶ John More, reporting that Thomson as a child often wandered off alone, felt that, "From this sauntering and pensive habit he acquired an awkwardness [sic] of manner which never forsook him, but secured an intercourse with the essence and arrangement of things, which sufficiently supplied his want of the graces with an uncommon stock of sensibility and science."⁴⁷ The Southdean setting certainly would have encouraged a contemplative temperament (according well with the Scottish Calvinistic ideals of spiritual isolation, individualism and introspection),⁴⁸ as well as an intimacy with the natural world; Thomson's juvenile religious and pastoral poems in particular, as well as parts of The Seasons, illustrate such a pensive mood-- another instance of that vital interaction of religion and landscape in his work. On the other hand, of course, such seclusion in youth might also have provoked a reaction,

in the form of young Thomson's increasing attraction to new and more sophisticated people and places, culminating in his move to London and to a life of conviviality and court involvement. In any case, the varied Southdean landscape indeed "trained Thomson to observe and describe nature in a particular way, and it will be found that its peculiarity is exactly reflected in his poetry."⁴⁹

Southdean is about seven miles from the English Border at Carter Bar. For centuries, Border raiders from both sides passed through; it was as vulnerable to political as to climatic upheavals. It is thought to have been a base of the Scottish forces for the Battle of Otterburn.⁵⁰ After the Union of Crowns such raids and counter-raids abated, but religious strife in the seventeenth century did not allow for peace. Only in the eighteenth century did the area grow quiet; indeed, with the Union of Parliaments in 1707 the Borders population dwindled considerably, as Borderers at last felt free to move south to seek new opportunities. England, so near, became highly attractive to Scots Borderers; it was, and remains today, tempting and intimidating.⁵¹ Thus James Thomson would have grown up amid very mixed attitudes toward England: his Border home was an area of long-standing antagonism with England, and its people developed a strongly nationalistic and independent spirit;⁵² yet it was in such close geographical and cultural proximity to England that, when peace came, the people were readily lured south to the promise of a better life. In time, Thomson himself followed this course and, as did so many of his countrymen in the eighteenth century, settled in England.

Another interesting aspect of the Southdean landscape and its influence on Thomson is the similarity between that Border area and the land of Virgil, young Thomson's classical literary model and mentor:

A careful observer has put it on record that the scenery round Mantua has in summer no inconsiderable resemblance to that of Southdean. The close sympathy which Thomson ever experienced with the 'Mantuan swain' takes a fresh suggestiveness from the existence of this agreeable particular, and it may well be, as has been thought, that 'the spirit which pervades the Georgics and the kindred spirit which animates The Seasons found their common bent, their inspiration and aspiration, from early and close acquaintance with scenery similar in beauty, variety, and the charm of pastoral repose.'⁵³

This idea is made the more intriguing when one considers that Virgil was a Northern Roman poet, of Gallic, Celtic ancestry; Thomson's identification with Virgil may have been based to an extent on the awareness that both were provincial, northern poets with "Celtic" associations.⁵⁴ This "Celtic" strain may have influenced both poets' feeling for nature in their descriptive poetry. In fact, the Jedburgh district of Roxburghshire, where Thomson went to school, had been overrun with Romans at one time; they left many artefacts, roads and ruins.⁵⁵ These Roman remains surely fascinated the young Thomson; they served to reinforce in a concrete way, the "Scoto-Roman ethos," the ideal whereby many Scotsmen identified themselves, in Thomson's day, with ancient Roman civilisation. Thomson adopted this "Roman" identification with enthusiasm, in earlier works comparing Scotland to a province of the larger Roman Empire (i.e. Augustan Britain), and later coming to think of Scotland perhaps more in terms of early Roman Republicanism (this complex issue will be dealt with in later chapters). In any case, his affinity with Virgil was more than simply a literary one; it seems also to have been based on historical and topographical, as well as cultural, factors.

These, then, were the more general environmental influences acting upon James Thomson from the time he was a small child. What of more

specific literary influences, prior to his formal education? As has been noted, Thomson's father surely instructed him in religious matters; the Bible and the Shorter Catechism were probably his chief "texts" at home. The Bible was in fact the poet's first acquaintance with formal literature, and became a major influence on both the theme and the style of his poetry. The Books of Proverbs, Job and Psalms would have been especially important in the Presbyterian manse;⁵⁶ these books combine didacticism with praise, the very motives of The Seasons. Thomson, his family and friends probably used Scots dialect in everyday speech, but the poet would have been familiar with literary English at an early age through his Biblical studies (the Authorised Version was the lyrical King James Bible), and through the "pulpit English" he would have heard (the Scottish Church was generally to the forefront of the anglicising movement in Scottish language, and had been since the Reformation).⁵⁷ "For the vast majority of [Scottish] preachers, English was the medium for praising God, and Scots, if used at all, was employed for the colloquial anecdotes, or for vigorous castigating of the sins of the congregation."⁵⁸ Mr. Thomson would have owned a number of books, "chiefly professional" (works of theology, sermons, tracts, letters), and the manse, like most cottages of the time, would probably have held such books as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.⁵⁹ The minister would also have had the books from his University studies, including texts of Philosophy and the Humanities; if young James was a curious child, he probably developed an early interest in such subjects through the reading material available to him at home. His father would also have been able to help him in his school work as he grew older, in subjects besides religion. Even strict Scottish Calvinism did not necessarily imply

"contempt for culture:" "...the great men of the Puritan movement [witness Milton, a key influence on Thomson's poetry] were thoroughly steeped in the culture of the Renaissance. The sermons of the Presbyterian divines abound with classical allusions."⁶⁰ Thus, through the Scottish Calvinistic culture of his youth, James might have been predisposed at an early age to appreciate classical literature, to an extent, especially as it was interpreted by religious writers. Thomas Thomson probably did not offer his son much encouragement in his own endeavours in the belles lettres, however; in addition to the Kirk's distrust of imaginative literature for its own sake, there was in fact very little art-literature generally available in Scotland in the early eighteenth century, following the religious strife, "poverty and narrowness" of the previous century. In James Thomson's boyhood, English books were only just beginning to penetrate in any quantities into Scotland;⁶¹ the boy began to seek literary stimulation not in Southdean manse, but where these books would be found, in the homes of Sir William Bennet, Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, and Robert Riccaltoun, the boy's tutor, as shall be seen.

James's mother, though not so well-educated as her husband, is believed to have taught her children Border ballads and folk-songs. While there are no explicit references or allusions to the Border ballads in Thomson's poetry, the folk-literature of his native Borders must nevertheless be considered as an influence on certain characteristics of his poetry, such as: his keen "colour-sense" which J. Logie Robertson says he "inherited" from the ballads;⁶² his facility in describing drama and action, particularly in the natural world; and his awareness of the supernatural and of arbitrary Providence acting through nature, themes which appear frequently in the ballads.

In addition to these childhood influences, one other source of literature might have been available to James before he entered school: the chapbooks. The main chapbook era was from about 1688 to 1830.⁶³ By the early eighteenth century, these little booklets were increasing in popularity in Scotland; they were sold, even in remote and rural areas, by travelling peddlars or "chapmen." A large number of titles might have been available to young James; the pamphlets, usually in English or a rather crude Scoto-English mix, covered a wide range of subjects, such as Scottish history and heroes, travel lore, didactic religious pieces (sermons and lesson-books), Covenanting tracts, superstitious and prophetic works (often closely associated with the religious ones), almanacs, songs and ballads, "romantic" or pastoral tales, the occasional work of Middle Scots art-literature, and other literary works.⁶⁴ Those books noted by Allan Ramsay's biographer (probably his son) as having been available to young Ramsay in the 1680's and 1690's, and to "country people all over Scotland," including a verse history of Barbour's Bruce, the history of Sir William Wallace, and poems of Sir David Lindsay,⁶⁵ were very likely in the form of chapbooks. Some of the chapbooks could have provoked a reaction in the boy James against stern old-style Scottish Calvinism, while subconsciously reinforcing his superstitions. Others could have aroused a general interest at an early age in the "outside world," both past and present (geography and history became, in a sense, his hobbies, and played an important role in his later works, especially in The Seasons), as well as in such literary modes as the allegory, the pastoral, the didactic poem, and the travelogue. In any case, it is clear that James Thomson grew up in a literate household, and in all probability met with a wide variety of literary influences even

before he began his formal education.

The poet's primary schooling, in the Scottish "democratic" tradition under Kirk authority,⁶⁶ seems to have been at the local school, located either in Southdean or possibly in the neighbouring village of Chesters.⁶⁷ The basics of Scottish elementary education were usually taught in so-called "English schools," and the work was chiefly reading, especially through "the spreading of the knowledge of the Bible." In other words, the Bible was frequently used as the textbook from which children learned to read English.⁶⁸ The Shorter Catechism was also used as a text for this purpose.⁶⁹ Thus religion and English language were commonly taught simultaneously from an early age, and Thomson would have had an earlier start than most pupils, being a son of the manse. (Small wonder, then, that the Bible became a central influence on his poetry.) In addition to reading, pupils were also given elementary lessons in writing (in horn-books or copy-books), and in some cases a very little arithmetic, using Napier's rods.⁷⁰

At the age of about twelve (1712), James Thomson entered the Jedburgh Grammar School. Jedburgh Grammar School had the reputation of being one of the best schools in the Borders at that time.⁷¹ It was located about eight miles from Southdean; the boy may have lived in the town of Jedburgh, going home at weekends. The setting of the town is in striking contrast to the barren foothills of Southdean; it is set in a richly wooded, fertile area. During this period of his life, Thomson began to write poetry. Might the change to a softer, more beautiful landscape have been one source of inspiration to him? His juvenile poems are certainly set in rather idealised, "beautiful" pas-

toral landscapes rather than in awesome, stark or "sublime" ones (though he did frequently return to the native "sublime" in his first major poem, "Winter").

The Jedburgh Grammar School is said to have been conducted in a part of the old Jedburgh Abbey at the time when Thomson was a pupil there.⁷² His schoolmaster was a Mr. James Brown, of whom nothing is known, except that a strong superstition concerning his death, in about 1720 or 1721 (not unlike that of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Thomson) survived until well into the nineteenth century. It seems that he was a good and pious man, but his wife was a "mischievous witch" of a very bad character. He reprov'd her for her conduct, and she and some witch-friends drowned him in the River Jed. "Witnesses" said that he sang the Twenty-Third Psalm while being led by a rope to the water, and that fairies danced atop the Abbey steeple at his death. The murderers were said to have celebrated the deed with wine and ale.⁷³ It seems that while young Thomson had moved to a larger town and a more enlightened academic environment, he had not escaped the atmosphere of Christian-cum-pagan superstition which permeated rural Scotland and which made such a lasting impression on him.

An early eighteenth-century curriculum for the Jedburgh Grammar School does not survive, but it can be surmised from others of the period, what sorts of lessons Thomson might have taken. The Grammar School was a "Latin School" of good reputation, probably founded in the fifteenth century. There was a separate "English School" in the town, but the older, more prestigious Latin School would almost certainly have maintained the traditional curriculum, i.e. very strong emphasis on the Humanities. It would also have required its pupils

to use only the Latin tongue at all times, or at least during school hours. The Rev. Mr. Thomas Boston (b. 1676) described his education at Duns Grammar School (in the Borders of Berwickshire, near Jedburgh) thus:

In the course of the years spent at the grammar school, I learned the Latin rudiments, Despauter's grammar, and all the authors in verse or prose, then usually read in schools....And before I left the school, I, generally, saw no Roman author, but what I found myself in some capacity to turn into English; but we were not put to be careful about proper English. Towards the end of that time, I was also taught Vassius's Elements of Rhetoric; and May 15, 1689, began the Greek, learned some parts of the New Testament, to wit, some part of John, of Luke, and of the Acts of the Apostles.⁷⁴

Boston also learned "some of the common rules of arithmetic." Boston's studies were probably typical in their heavy concentration on Latin, elementary Greek, and very limited mathematics. He does not mention any study of science; there was probably very little science taught in schools at the start of the eighteenth century, though it grew more and more popular with schoolmasters throughout the century.⁷⁵ The pupils would have learned something about philosophy (and possibly natural philosophy, or scientific theory) as well as history, through their diverse readings in Latin. Here again, as was common in primary education, religion is seen to be incorporated into the curriculum, in the form of Greek lessons from the New Testament. The Bible and Shorter Catechism would have been used by all pupils for prayers and readings, Psalm-singing exercises, and lessons in Scripture and English. (In Thomson's day, the Jedburgh Grammar School was a joint burgh-parochial school, thus under the jurisdiction of both Town Council and Kirk. The Kirk exercised strong influence over the school's curricula, the appointment of masters, religious exercises, and so on.)⁷⁶

Who were "all the authors in verse or prose, then usually read in schools..."? The Grammar School of Glasgow gave this rigorous traditional curriculum (c. 1690):

- 1st year: Rudimenta Etymologiae; Wedderburni Vocabula; Dicta Sapientum e Graecis; Erasmio Rotterdamo interprete; Catonis Disticha Libii Monita Pedagogoga; Sulpitius de Civilitate Morum; and on Saturdays, Rudimenta Pietatis, with review of the Shorter Catechism and Scripture.
- 2nd year: First part of Despauter's Grammar, with Corderius and Erasmi Majora Colloquia; on Saturdays, Confessio Fidei Latine.
- 3rd year: Second part, Despauter; with Terentius, Ovid's Epistles, Tristia, Jonae, Philologi Dialogi; Erasmus de Civitate Morum; on Saturdays, Dialogi Sacri.
- 4th year: Review of second part, Despauter, and with the third part; Ovid's Metamorphoses, Erasmi Minora Colloquia; on Saturdays, Buchanan's (Latin) Psalms.
- 5th year: Fourth part, Despauter; Virgil; Quintus Curtius; Horatius; Sallustius; on Saturdays, Buchanan's Psalms, and Tragoidiae.
- 6th year: Rhetorica Vassii; Lucan; Commentaria Caesaris; Buchanan's Historia Scotorum; and a little Greek.⁷⁷

Among Thomson's own books⁷⁸ are a number which might have been used as his school texts, including Terentius variorum; Salustius variorum; Horatius variorum; Homeri Opera, Gr. Latin (1707); Poetae Minores, Gr. Latin (n.d.); Titi Livii Historia (1635); Virgilius and Horatius (1625); Virgilius Delphini (1690); Hederici Lexicon, Gr. Latin; and so on. Some of the books of seventeenth-century date might have been handed down from his father or friends, or he may have purchased them later in Edinburgh or London (from the lengthy and varied list of his library-books, Thomson seems to have been something of a bibliophile). It is obvious that he came to know and admire

his favourites Virgil and Horace while a pupil at the Grammar School. His Latin grammar text was very probably Despauter, the standard seventeenth-early eighteenth century text in Scotland.⁷⁹ (though there were many others in use as well). Despauter, wholly in Latin, gave the classical rules of rhetoric and style, illustrated with examples from Virgil and other authors. It also included George Buchanan's De Prosodia Libellus, which set out the rudiments of Latin prosody.⁸⁰ By the early eighteenth century there had appeared many updated versions of Despauter, and considering Thomson's early attraction to literary English, it is just possible that he studied from one of these; some of these more modern versions of Despauter were forerunners of Thomas Ruddiman's Latin-with-English method in the Rudiments (1714), such as Thomas Watt's Grammar Made Easie (editions in 1704, 1708, 1714, and following). He would have learned, in addition to the basic rules of grammar and syntax, the comprehensive traditional rules governing classical rhetoric. Respect for Latin literature, and Latin culture in general, was so deeply rooted in Scotland by the eighteenth century that it had become part of the "native tradition"; "It worked primarily through the appeal of the Latin tongue and of Latin rhetorical skills to a race which has always enjoyed sonorous language and delighted in formal argument."⁸¹ (Henry Home, Lord Kames, had learned his Latin via Despauter: "Henry Home was no classical scholar...but he was no stranger to the humanistic tradition to which his Despauterius would introduce him. Here, in all likelihood, is to be found the first source of the training in rhetoric which would inform his pleading in the courts, and the foundation for his description of the beauties of language and figure in the Elements of Criticism [1762].")⁸² So too, Thomson's study of Despauter



was undoubtedly the foundation for his practise and application of "the beauties of language and figure" in his poetry. Many Scots still "thought of continuing the Roman cultural tradition," and Scotland's poverty and austerity seemed to foster admiration for "the severer Roman virtues."⁸³ Although by the turn of the (seventeenth/eighteenth) century this attitude was most strongly identified with Edinburgh and Aberdeen groups of Episcopalian, Jacobite anti-Unionists, it also extended to include many educated Presbyterian, Whig Scotsmen, including Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, young Thomson's friend in the Borders. The Episcopalian and Jacobite Thomas Ruddiman, the major Scottish Latinist of the period, admitted that, although he disagreed with the political views of George Buchanan, Buchanan's command of Latin was beyond reproach. Buchanan's works were idolised by Scottish schoolmasters, and were long important in the Scottish school curriculum;⁸⁴ his Opera Omnia became the Presbyterian-Whig "second Bible."⁸⁵ Thomson's book-list includes Buchanan's Opera Omnia⁸⁶ (dated 1715, although it did not become generally available to the public until 1722, while he was a student at Edinburgh).

An important extracurricular activity of many Scottish schools in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, growing out of the Latin curriculum, was the production of school plays. It is not known whether or not the Jedburgh Grammar School put on such plays, but it is very likely; many of the contemporary references to such productions were to Border schools. The plays were in Latin, and almost always served a pedagogic purpose; they were usually extremely dull. One of the most popular with zealous masters was Alexander Home's Bellum Grammaticale, "a serio-comic piece of portentous dulness, in which the various parts of speech are personified and appear to argue

forth their respective claims to precedence over the rest."⁸⁷

Other school plays of the time included dramatised extracts from Erasmus, Cato, Ovid, Juvenal and Persius,⁸⁸ and Terence's comedy Eunuchus.⁸⁹ It is very probable that such efforts were Thomson's first acquaintance with the drama; if a boring linguistic allegory like Bellum Grammaticale was his early idea of a play, can one wonder that his own tragedies on classical themes were less than successful?

So, James Thomson was taught at an early age at the Jedburgh Grammar School to respect the Latin language and literature, and to revere ancient Roman culture. Awareness of this educational experience, which was typical of Scottish schools of the time, is of prime importance for a full understanding of the diction, subject-matter and artistic method of his works. Thomson was a "Scottish Augustan," and as such a representative, not of a new classical-revivalist trend (as in Augustan England), but of a continuously evolving line of Scottish literary culture.

Young Thomson had the reputation of being a rather backward pupil at Jedburgh,⁹⁰ and his literary genius was certainly not apparent to his school-fellows (indeed, it was not apparent to many of his Edinburgh University classmates either). But the biographical evidence seems to suggest a quiet, shy nature and perhaps a pedantic approach to study, rather than real dulness or stupidity. He cannot have been such a poor student: his grounding in the classics was considered so solid that, upon entering the University in 1715, he was admitted directly to William Scott's Greek class, usually a second-year course⁹¹ for well-prepared students. He may have appeared slow, but there can be no doubt that as a schoolboy he was inquisitive, absorbing

knowledge and experience-- and not only literary or academic-- which was to form the basis of his life's work.

Thomson owned a number of books of English literature which are of an early date, and which he possibly had even as a pupil at school. Among them were Donne's Poems (1669), Spenser's Works (six volumes, 1715) and Milton's Paradise Lost (1711) and Paradise Regained (1713).⁹² The Spenser is John Hughes' edition, which Thomson used as his model for The Castle of Indolence; many of the archaic words in the Castle were borrowed from Hughes' Spenserian Glossary. The Milton is especially noteworthy, as it tied in with Thomson's religious upbringing and subsequently became a major influence on his poetry. As has been seen, the boy's parents probably did not encourage him to read such works of English imaginative literature, and it is not known whether his schoolmaster Mr. Brown did so, but it is certain that Thomson acquired a strong interest in English literature during his schooldays. His earliest extant poems, which of course are in English, probably date from this period (see Chapter IV below).

Although there were no circulating libraries at this time, a library was founded in Jedburgh in 1714, possibly to supplement the Humanities collection which the Grammar School undoubtedly held. Thomas Rutherford of Rutherford donated money and books for the library, to be located in the English School;⁹³ it very probably held works of English literature and criticism, which were rapidly becoming available and popular north of the Border. The pupils of the Grammar School may well have had access to this library, and it may have facilitated one of Thomson's earliest exposures to English literature.

But a far more significant source of Thomson's boyhood attraction to

English polite letters was his friendship with local residents of refined and liberal taste, who encouraged him to love and to imitate English Augustan poetry, and whose private libraries were open to him to browse at leisure. Chief among them were Sir William Bennet of Grubbet and the Sir Gilbert Elliots (First and Second Baronets) of Minto, and of course the humble but brilliant farmer-turned-clergyman Robert Riccaltoun (who, because of the enormous extent of his literary and religious influence, will be dealt with at some length). Throughout his life, Thomson was always easily impressed and influenced by the ideas of his friends,⁹⁴ so it is important to consider those friends he knew as a youth in the Borders.

After the Union of 1707, there was much improved communication between Scotland and England; Scots members of the United Kingdom Parliament such as William Bennet (in 1707-8) and later, Gilbert Elliot (Second Baronet) were at the forefront of the anglicising trend in Scottish culture. They brought back to Scotland with them English books and literary tastes, as well as English tastes in gardening and dress, and more liberal English ideas in religion and philosophy.⁹⁵ Thomson was fortunate to have known such broad-minded noblemen in his youth; they gave him encouragement and tuition where his father could not, in imaginative literature and in more liberal views generally, and with their help he broke through the isolation of the Borders and came into contact with the ascendant Anglo-Scottish culture.

Sir William Bennet the Younger of Grubbet (Second Baronet) was a very close friend of the young Thomson. They probably became acquainted through Thomson's mother, whose Wideopen property was situated just

north of the lands of Grubbet, on the Kale Water.⁹⁶ Bennet was master of the elegant seventeenth-century Marlefield House, and its gardens; he was known for his gardening skill, and devoted much effort to the "improvement" and beautification of the estate. Bennet was a colourful character, and like his father and grandfather was very active in local civil and religious affairs (his grandfather, the first William Bennet, a Presbyterian minister, was admonished by the General Assembly for his "incompatible" political activities).⁹⁷ Sir William the Younger, as a captain in the army, attended William III's return from Holland in 1688. He served as a member of the Scottish Parliament (1693-1707) and of the United Kingdom Parliament (1707-1708). He succeeded to the Baronetcy in about 1710.⁹⁸ Bennet led the militia forces in the defence of Kelso from the Jacobites in 1715; he was an ardent Whig, and probably of the Squadrone faction (that is, he would have preferred some form of devolution for Scotland rather than rule from London by an all-powerful Secretary of State for Scotland). He seems also to have been of anti-Walpole, Opposition Whig sympathies.⁹⁹ The Whigs were closely allied to the established Presbyterian Church in Scotland: "They were of the opinion that the Protestant religion and a limited monarchy must stand or fall together...."¹⁰⁰ Bennet himself was "a man of strong religious predilections."¹⁰¹ Of course, most, if not all, of Thomson's friends and acquaintances in the Borders would have been Whigs; Thomson naturally adopted Whig political views, and though he did not become active in politics until he was settled in London, his lifelong attachment was to the party which in Scotland usually implied "pro-British" and libertarian allegiance (as well as receptivity to anglicisation), rather than militant Scottish chauvinism. It is in-

teresting that Thomson would support the Opposition Whig faction, as had his friend William Bennet; it is also interesting that, while old-style "High Flying" Presbyterian ministers were often anti-Union, the Moderate, anglicising clergy toward whom Thomson gravitated were usually associated with the more generally pro-Union Whig gentry.¹⁰²

In thus coming to accept a complex set of political and religious views so similar to Sir William Bennet's own, Thomson seems to have been asserting, throughout his life, at least a partial rejection of the beliefs and values most likely held by his minister-father. Bennet was undoubtedly the person most responsible for fostering political interest in Thomson, at an early age.

It is not known just how far William Bennet supported the Union. It is likely that he had certain reservations about it, as did many Scots, and indeed he was (with Allan Ramsay) a "nostalgic Scottish patriot" member of the nationalistic Royal Company of Archers; the Archers were held to be disaffected, and were disbanded from 1715 to 1724.¹⁰³ But Bennet proved himself a wholehearted supporter of the Hanoverians against the Jacobite threat in his defence of Kelso, and probably came to hold basically pro-Union sentiments.

In literary matters as in political ones (and indeed the two were closely linked in the issues surrounding the Union of 1707), William Bennet was a curious mixture of the old and the new; he tended to admit new, more liberal ideas with tolerance and broad-mindedness. He was part of a circle of Latinist poets, which included a fair mix of Jacobites and Episcopalians and many fellow-Archers. He had the reputation of being a good Latin poet,¹⁰⁴ and "bore a high character for wit and genius, being regarded by the [Latinist] poets as a minor

Maecenas. But he was too lazy, and too fond of his bottle, to submit to the toil of composition; his effusions, therefore, were mostly extempore."¹⁰⁵ A number of Latin poems are dedicated to him in Selecta Poemata Archi. Pitcairni,¹⁰⁶ and two of his own patriotic verses in English are included in a supplement to this volume entitled Poems on the Royal Company of Archers.¹⁰⁷ The old soldier Bennet seems to have been an advocate of the "Roman ideal" in literature and in Scottish culture generally, and as such a representative of that important aspect of the Scottish tradition, the identification of Scotland with Rome and the continuation of the Latin literary culture. His tastes admitted well of English Augustan influence in the post-Union era, and his Scottish patriotism ever remained subordinate to "British" patriotism.

William Bennet was known for his refined critical sense, good taste in literature, and generosity in supporting Scottish poetical efforts. It is not surprising, then, that he was an intimate friend and patron of Allan Ramsay, the archetypal man of Scottish letters in the transitional early-eighteenth century. Ramsay, like Bennet, was a Whig who recognised the potential benefits to Scotland of the Union with England and looked to the future of his country, but who was also possessed of a strong strain of Scottish patriotism. In the collection of Archers poetry mentioned above is a Scoto-English poetical dialogue by Ramsay, "On Seeing the ARCHERS diverting themselves at the Buts and Rovers, Etc. At the Desire of Sir WILLIAM BENNET, anno MDCCXXIV," which comically contrasts the original warlike Archers with the contemporary "foppish" group.¹⁰⁸ Ramsay was a frequent visitor to Marlefield House, and wrote several poems in praise of his patron Bennet and his estate.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to Bennet (September 1722)

Ramsay wrote of Marlefield and its "delightful scenes which help us to imagine what Eden was, and [where you] have the vast satisfaction to behold the success of your own designs...."¹¹⁰ One legend had it that Bennet was the author of The Gentle Shepherd, but this was an error probably resulting from Bennet's having offered advice to Ramsay about the work; other traditions hold that Sir William Bennet the Elder (First Baronet) was the model for "Sir William Worthy," while his son was "Patie," and that Marlefield was the setting for the Scots pastoral.¹¹¹

Bennet invited the young James Thomson to visit Marlefield in his summer holidays, and extended the same generous hospitality and literary encouragement to the boy as he had to the man of letters, Ramsay. Bennet was, in fact, Thomson's first patron, and encouraged him to write English poetry, which he did from that time on. It seems almost certain that Thomson met Ramsay there;¹¹² many of Thomson's juvenile poems show a clear debt to Ramsay. Thomson was enthralled with the "Eden" of Marlefield, and with its benevolent laird, and his early "Poetical Epistle to Sir William Bennet" and "Lines on Marlefield" convey his sincere appreciation of Bennet's patronage. (These poems will be dealt with in Chapter IV.) The easy-going, hard-drinking liberal Bennet could not have been more different from James Thomson's father (one feels sure that Thomas Thomson would not have approved of his son's close association with him), but he opened a whole new world to the boy, bringing him into contact with many important influences: the politics of the Opposition Whig faction; the Scottish Latinist culture and the "Roman ideal"; the aesthetics of improved landscape gardening; and, especially, the Augustan English literary culture.

Thomson's relationship with the Sir Gilbert Elliots of Minto, though little is known of it, was probably along the same lines as his friendship with Sir William Bennet. In fact, the Elliots and Bennet were closely associated with one another in local and national political, as well as personal, matters.¹¹³ The first Lord Minto (1651-1718) was at Minto during Thomson's Border youth; the younger Gilbert Elliot (1693-1766) left Minto in 1712 to study at Leyden, then returned to Edinburgh in the 1720's, where he became a member of Ramsay's Worthy Club. Thomson's uncle and cousins had been gardeners at the Minto estate, on the Teviot;¹¹⁴ also, Thomson's closest friends in youth, William and John Cranstoun of Ancrum, seem to have had connections at Minto.¹¹⁵ Many benefits would accrue from the young Thomson's association with the learned and talented Elliot family, particularly in patronage in English letters by the elder Sir Gilbert. Minto House became famous in the eighteenth century for its extensive library, through which Sir Gilbert might have guided him. The younger Gilbert Elliot (Second Baronet) was an accomplished Italian scholar and a poet;¹¹⁶ was it at Minto House that Thomson, who later owned many Italian books and seems to have been fluent in the language, first learned the rudiments of the Italian tongue? At Minto, Thomson would have been acquainted with a broadly cosmopolitan culture in literature, art and music, as well as with people of refinement and good taste. Here, too, he might have learned from his relatives who were employed there, some of the technical aspects as well as the beauties of landscape gardening (a lifelong interest, reflected in his descriptive poetry). Here he would also have come in contact with some of the complexities of Scottish-English politics. The elder Sir Gilbert had strong reservations about the Union, and voted against it

in 1707, ending his political career.¹¹⁷ His son, however, was strongly pro-British, and maintained a close friendship with the Duke of Argyle and his brother Islay¹¹⁸ (he was of the Argathelian faction in the Scottish Whig party); Thomson was to praise Argyle as a British hero in his "Autumn." So, Thomson's experiences at Minto surely had much to do with shaping his adult attitudes and tastes.

Thomson had many other friends as a youth in the Borders, of humbler means than the Bennets and the Elliots, but who nevertheless were important in his life. The Rev. Mr. John Granstoun of Ancrum and his sons John and William were especially close. William became a physician, and Thomson's lively and informal letters to him in the 1720's and 1730's are the best source of information about the poet's early manhood, and the crucial period of his emigration south. Several of these letters refer to a mutual friend, the eccentric clergyman "MisJohn" (possibly the boisterous and comical Moderate minister, James Ramsay of Kelso, also a friend of William Bennet),¹¹⁹ another character whom Thomas Thomson would probably have deemed unsuitable company for his son. The boy James seems to have had a happy time with these friends of youth; with them he must have shared the pleasures of rural life, which he describes in The Seasons.

But perhaps the friend who had the most abiding and significant influence on the young James Thomson was Robert Riccaltoun (or Riccarton, 1691-1769). In this instance, Mr. Thomson himself chose his son's companion, to tutor the boy, possibly during the school holidays.¹²⁰ Riccaltoun undertook, "With the father's approbation, the chief direction of his [James's] studies, furnished him with the proper books, corrected his performances; and was daily rewarded with the pleasure

of seeing his labour so happily employed."¹²¹ Riccaltoun was himself well-educated; he had studied at the Jedburgh Grammar School and at Edinburgh University, and returned to farm his father's lands of Earlshaugh, in Hobkirk Parish (adjoining Southdean). He later became a Presbyterian minister (licensed to preach in 1717, soon after his pupil Thomson had gone to Edinburgh as a prospective Divinity student), and took the living of Hobkirk in 1725. There he remained until his death. Even as a young farmer, Robert Riccaltoun had the reputation of being uncommonly intelligent and imaginative,¹²² as well as good-natured and kind. His shy pupil was quick to learn under his tuition, and most importantly, followed his tutor's encouragement in the composition of English poetry; Riccaltoun himself was a poet. Riccaltoun later "modestly acknowledged...that he had considerable influence in discovering and prompting the poetical talents of Thomson, who, in his youthful days, had been his frequent visitor...."¹²³ Riccaltoun's method of fostering creativity in Thomson and in subsequent prodigies was, "to discourage to the utmost of [my] power indulging in that humour, where it requires more judgment than everybody is master of to keep imagination and fancy to their proper province."¹²⁴ Douglas Grant interprets this as teaching him "not to attempt subjects which were obviously beyond his immature powers, and to avoid that luxuriance of diction which, if we can judge from his later work, was his peculiar temptation,"¹²⁵ i.e., to write, with discipline, about what he knew. This was sound advice-- for what did young Thomson know more about at first hand at this stage than religion, and a religious attitude toward nature? These became the subject-matter of his most important juvenile poems, and of course the central themes of The Seasons.

Riccaltoun's direct literary influence on Thomson is generally held to be significant. A poem attributed to Riccaltoun entitled "A Winter's Day," or possibly another poem of similar winter description by him, now lost, was the primary model for Thomson's own "Winter" (Thomson mentions such a poem in an early letter to Cranstoun).¹²⁶ "A Winter's Day" is the only surviving instance of Riccaltoun's poetry, and will be dealt with in Chapter V of this thesis, introductory to The Seasons. However, another aspect of Riccaltoun's influence on his eager pupil Thomson, that of his religious and philosophical views, seems to have been totally neglected. As Riccaltoun's views (expressed in later prose writings, when he was a minister, though not published until after his death) form the most comprehensive parallel with Thomson's own attitudes of any of the poet's early "influences," they deserve elucidation here.

Riccaltoun became known as a distinguished Moderate divine,"the Scottish [sic] Edwards. Like him his thoughts go off into the deep shadows of metaphysics....There is the same subtlety of analysis; the same unfaltering thinking out of Bible-thoughts, however awful; the same breadth and concreteness of view; the same unobtrusive scholarship; the same reverent acceptance of what 'is written'; and the same burning presentation of 'the cross.'¹²⁷ Riccaltoun's prose Works, published in 1771-1772, include a number of essays on philosophy ("Essays on Human Nature"), theology ("Essays on Several of the Doctrines of Revelation"), and a lengthy exegesis of the Book of Galatians. The tenets expressed in Parts I and II make very striking parallels with Thomson's own views, especially as found in The Seasons. Therefore, it is worth setting these out in some detail, as the poet must have come into contact with them in a germinal state while he

was Riccaltoun's pupil.

The "Essays on Human Nature" deal mainly with theories of knowledge; Riccaltoun does not in fact dwell among the "deep shadows of metaphysics" for long, but rather advises man to avoid abstract metaphysics as far as possible,¹²⁹ and to approach knowledge through observation.¹³⁰ Thus, man must first proceed empirically toward truth, via the scientific method of Locke, Newton and later Hume; in fact, Riccaltoun shows similarities with the Scottish "common sense" school of philosophers on many points concerning the nature of man. (He thought highly of Hume, who he felt helped rather than hurt the cause of Christianity, and said that "if Hume would but declare himself a Christian, he [Riccaltoun] would undertake to vindicate his opinions and defend his orthodoxy against all his antagonists, at the bar of the General Assembly.")¹³¹ As an empiricist and a Moderate Riccaltoun allows himself (unlike the old-style Scottish Calvinists) to delight in the senses and the aesthetic pleasures they can give: "beautiful colours, figures, or arrangement and position of material objects, and the wonderful variety of sounds..."¹³² attract his attention, and strike a note familiar to readers of The Seasons. But he also makes it clear that Reason must control and interpret these sense-perceptions, to lead to truth. Again taking the humanistic, Moderate view, he respects the power of the human mind to arrive at valuable knowledge, first about man himself (echoing Hume's "science of man"),¹³³ and then about the objects and processes of life (which he illustrates with an image of farming).¹³⁴ Reason, then, is very powerful: its power extends to "imaging" (imagination), or the deduction of, for example, "all the invisible causes of the several alterations we observe on the face of the earth, throughout the different seasons of

the year; the whole business of vegetation, production of animals great and small, metals, minerals, etc."¹³⁵ (Riccartoun was close to the earth as well as to the spiritual realm; note his liberal use of very concrete imagery.) Here he asserts that the mind can, and indeed is obliged to, "improve" itself by degrees, and that it will reach its ultimate goal of truth in God in the afterlife.¹³⁶ This idea of intellectual perfectability, which Riccartoun mentions frequently, has a number of sources: the Platonic Chain of Being, with strong overtones of Christian Neoplatonism; Virgilian "improvement"; the Baconian pyramid of ascending knowledge; Lockean association of ideas; the optimism of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson about man's capabilities; the empirical methods of modern science (and of the Physico-Theologists); and even, to some extent, the concept of individual progress of the soul in Calvinism (see, for example, Thomas Boston's handling of this concept in his Fourfold State, where he puts forward the "extreme" form of the idea of "empirical immortality").¹³⁷ It is, of course, the very "rising mind" idea which appears in various forms throughout Thomson's Seasons and in other works.¹³⁸

Riccartoun does warn against the abuse of the imaginative faculty in religious matters (akin to his lesson to young authors, mentioned above, to control their poetical imagination, and perhaps showing a trace of Scottish Calvinistic mistrust of the creative imagination), but he ultimately asserts positively that, "making images" can lead to much of our "real and most useful knowledge."¹³⁹ Riccartoun's images throughout his writings are taken chiefly from the natural world, and these often from tamed, "improved" rural nature he knew as a farmer.

Thomson's early poetical exercises were thus considered by his tutor to be a significant part of the educational experience, encouraging the boy to observe nature closely and to "make images" from it, to distil knowledge and to equip himself with the means to express it: the natural-descriptive poetic mode. The greatest truths to be so pursued were, of course, religious ones, which supplied Thomson's poetry of description with a religious-didactic motive. Thomson was indeed "preoccupied with religious subjects"¹⁴⁰ even in his juvenilia. It is perhaps significant that Riccaltoun employed the conventional metaphor of God as "Author" in his writings (as did Milton, Addison, and later Thomson himself in The Seasons and the Preface to "Winter," 1726, 2nd edition),¹⁴¹ comparing Divine Creation with literary creation. He affirmed the power of "inspiration," or special gifts from God toward certain men's talent for "imaging," and thus must have given Thomson confidence that his poetic talents were God-given, that his writing of poetry was God's will (a necessary condition for a Scottish Calvinist's choice of occupation,¹⁴² and surely an early instance of such a Moderate attitude applied to imaginative literature in Scotland). This idea of the poet as "creator" became the essence of Romanticism, but oddly enough it also owed much to the element of "emotional indulgence" underlying Puritan/Calvinistic religious belief-- and to poets in this tradition, including Milton, Watts, and so on.¹⁴³ Riccaltoun was not averse to such a sensibility as he detected in his protégé Thomson, and indeed he showed him "that poetry and piety were not irreconcilable."¹⁴⁴

Riccaltoun's treatment of Scriptural Revelation, as might be expected of his literary bias, placed heavy emphasis on the concept of "images."

He took these on two levels: "natural" (relating to the Platonic idea, whereby the natural world is an imperfect image or form of the spiritual world); and, literary (specifically, individual Biblical images which have taken on the far-reaching significance of symbols). The pagan authors, said Riccaltoun, often knew the same natural images as did the Biblical authors, and described them, but they lacked the inspiration to interpret their full religious truth. His chief example of this parallel narrative tradition is Virgil's Golden Age, which is the same literal state as the account of Paradise in Genesis, or man's condition before the Fall: both accounts are based on "original facts," but only the inspired Biblical author could recognise the religious truth behind the "image."¹⁴⁵ In his Scriptural exegesis in Sections I and II (and most probably in his sermons and lessons to his congregation), Riccaltoun dealt mainly with the conventional themes of Paradise, the Fall, the present state of man, the mixed good and evil in the world, and the promise of future harmony and reconciliation (i.e. the Fourfold State of man, with the emphasis on the Old Testament): these are also the themes of Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, and of the parallel classical writings of Virgil. It is significant that Riccaltoun saw classical literature and Christian Revelation as complementary traditions (again, the Moderate attitude, conceived under the influence of a Scottish humanistic, classical-Christian education); he felt true respect for the classical authors, who did after all record much of the truth, and who were often "the greatest and most learned men."¹⁴⁶ It is hardly surprising that Riccaltoun's pupil Thomson chose the Scriptures (especially the Old Testament), Virgil and Milton as the chief models for his "imaging," his views of man in the world. Thomson demonstrates his

awareness of the classical-Christian parallel traditions even in the juvenilia, and it becomes an especially important theme in The Seasons.

In his study of Biblical symbolism, Riccaltoun came much under the influence of an amateur scientist and theologian, John Hutchinson.¹⁴⁷ Like Riccaltoun, Hutchinson was a fundamentalist, and rejected both Natural Theology and Deism; nevertheless, he attempted to relate science to religion, and to re-interpret obscure Biblical symbols by seeking their parallels in nature (for example, he felt that the mystery of the Trinity was clarified by the trilogy of natural elements, "fire, light, and spirit"). He dwelt especially on Moses's account of the Deluge-- the literal event of which he cited geological evidence-- which symbolised spiritual chaos, and made possible a "second Creation" or new order. His description of elementary chaos is vivid, and recalls Thomson's "fog" sequence in "Autumn" as well as the "thaw" scene in "Winter" (in the "fog" description, Thomson specifically alludes to the "Hebrew bard"). Like that of Paradise, the image of the Deluge was of central natural and spiritual significance in the religious-descriptive Seasons. Also common to Hutchinson, Riccaltoun and Thomson are themes such as the Neoplatonic "rising mind," as well as a general affirmation of the value of observing nature (through scientific method) to approach truths, especially religious ones. There is a further link with Thomson, in that Duncan Forbes of Culloden, an influential friend of the poet in London, was also a devoted disciple of Hutchinson.¹⁴⁸ If Thomson himself ever actually read Hutchinson, it would probably have been at Forbes's recommendation.

Riccaltoun believed that man could learn much about God through His Creation but, as did Hutchinson, he firmly rejected contemporary systems of Natural Theology or Physico-theology as being incomplete: "Our modern philosophers and natural theologians, deceive themselves and their followers....Human knowledge can never reach farther than human observation...";¹⁴⁹ "the men are so persuaded of the all-sufficiency of their own rational powers, that they scorn to have recourse to any foreign assistance, unless perhaps to men who have wrought upon the same plan before them."¹⁵⁰ So, Reason was not all-powerful: in the way of Job and Paradise Lost, and later The Seasons, Riccaltoun acknowledged the limits of Reason; he made the leap to religious faith (as Hume could not do) via a fundamentalist, and at root orthodox Calvinistic reliance on Scriptural Revelation and its supporting body of Tradition.

Riccaltoun was an optimist, and believed that, however mysterious or even malevolent God's pre-determined plan might appear to man's limited Reason, it was all-good in its fullness (which the "rising mind" could contemplate in eternity). Ralph Cohen, in discussing P. M. Spacks' The Poetry of Vision, sees just such religious optimism as the overall (no less) "unifying vision" of The Seasons.¹⁵¹ Riccaltoun's God was indeed very like the benevolent deity of Shaftesbury and his Scottish follower Francis Hutcheson, but here again Riccaltoun asserted Scottish Calvinistic orthodoxy, in his firm rejection of the Shaftesburyian tendency toward Deism or any notion of a purely mechanical universe. He upheld belief in a God actively and continually at work in the world through Providence,¹⁵² in that divine "panergism"¹⁵³ which is a part of orthodox Calvinism and which is also a significant

feature of The Seasons' world-view.

Another element of Riccaltoun's orthodoxy was a professed belief in an active devil, and possession by evil spirits. His superstition, like Thomson's own, was considerably tempered by common sense, and he admitted that physical causes might be responsible for symptoms of madness similar to demonic possession,¹⁵⁴ but nonetheless it was a real aspect of his religious belief, and understandable even in a learned Moderate clergyman who had been brought up in rural Scotland in the early eighteenth century.

So, while it can be seen that the Moderate Riccaltoun borrowed extensively from various contemporary thinkers in forming his eclectic philosophy, and showed certain humanistic, Moderate tendencies, he consistently maintained some tenets central to Scottish Calvinism: fundamental reliance on the supreme authority of Revelation (involving recognition of Reason's limits and rejection of Natural Theology); belief in an all-powerful and ever-active Providence (while allowing an amount of Augustan optimism to triumph over fatalism, entailing a rejection of thoroughgoing Deism); faith in the goodness and wisdom of God's pre-determined universal plan; and belief in the possibility of demonic intervention in men's affairs. Riccaltoun was a Moderate, but he was neither a Deist nor a Physico-theologian; he was no "heretic."

It is important to note the similarity of such views to those of Thomson, who, although he flirted with Physico-theology and its extreme of Pantheism, and also with Deism, never professed wholehearted belief in these systems,¹⁵⁵ but reasserted faith in a more orthodox deity. He also, although he exercised qualifying Augustan "rationality" to

counter superstition, never entirely freed himself from such superstition as he knew in his youth, and which was so closely linked with old-style religious belief. He in fact maintained a certain discernible Scottish Calvinistic structure of thought throughout his life. He looked ultimately to his self-acknowledged primary sources Job and Milton, and especially to the model of Moderate yet strong faith set by his mentor, Robert Riccaltoun, in shaping his beliefs. Thomson's complex Scottish Calvinistic outlook was to extend far beyond specifically religious ideas, to influence his more general attitudes to man in nature and society, as shall be examined in later chapters.

Robert Riccaltoun's views on philosophy and theology, though perhaps not fully worked out when Thomson knew him in youth, do bear striking resemblance to Thomson's mature thought. Certainly, many of the ideas Riccaltoun expresses are not original to him-- echoes of Locke, Newton, the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hutcheson and the Physico-theologians are recognisable, alongside of Old Testament, classical and Miltonic literary echoes and traditional Scottish Calvinistic strains of thought-- yet they reflect the intellectual climate of his age, and the impact of developments in Scottish Calvinism and on the Moderate Scottish adaptation of Christian humanistic culture. Riccaltoun's similarities to the "common sense" school of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers is not at all surprising, either, as they sprang from much the same intellectual background as he had. And, of course, Riccaltoun's was also Thomson's age and background. (One topic to be taken up later in this thesis will be the consideration of Thomson as, in a sense, a pre-Enlightenment Scottish poet.)

Beginning with basically the same pattern of Scottish education, both Riccaltoun and Thomson went on to develop their similar, complex interpretations of Scottish Calvinistic theology, contemporary philosophy and science, and the humanities, and to express these ideas in correspondingly similar combinations of natural, religious and literary imagery. It is most interesting to discover another Scottish expression of the eclectic philosophy of The Seasons, in prose, by a man who was the poet's teacher and friend.

Thomson's associations with Riccaltoun and with other men of God and letters, his religious and educational background, his family life with its joys and frustrations, his place in the rural Border community and as a solitary figure in the landscape, were clearly to have lasting influence on both the subject-matter and the style of his works. Here in the Borders, he first came to know and appreciate the natural world, as well as the literary models of his best poetry: the Bible, the Latin classics, and at least some formal English poetry and prose. The biographical facts of Thomson's childhood are only important insofar as they can place the poet, not only in a Scottish landscape, but in an eighteenth-century Scottish cultural context. The broad extent of these early influences will be shown in the critical discussions of Thomson's poetry and drama, below. But first, the "Scottish context" must be expanded to include Edinburgh, where Thomson spent ten years of his early manhood.

CHAPTER III : EDINBURGH YEARS

The decade (1715-1725) which James Thomson spent as a student in Edinburgh was a period of vast importance to him personally, as well as to the development of post-Union Scotland. It was a time of change, an exciting if unsettling time, for a young man to come up to Edinburgh University. The Edinburgh years of James Thomson are rather poorly documented, and existing accounts have been based in much speculation and little hard fact; still, a picture of his life there can be drawn, based on a more general view of life in early-eighteenth century Edinburgh-- the University, the social and political life, the literary culture. For Thomson himself, this was the time of his further formal education, whereby he continued his studies of the Humanities and met with new ideas in philosophy and science, and with increasingly Moderate theology, and laid the firm foundation for his mature thought. It was a time when he met many people and made numerous influential contacts in literature, art and politics. It was the decade of his serious literary apprenticeship in English poetry, especially through the "improving" club life of the town; it was the period of his first publication as a poet, and of his deep struggle to decide between the careers of Divinity and literature.

The decade 1715-1725 was no less cataclysmic for Scottish society itself, the broader context of Thomson's adolescence and early manhood. Both Thomson and his country were searching for identity, in an age of flux. Edinburgh University had undergone sweeping reforms as recently as 1708; the curriculum, under the newly-introduced professorial system based on Continental universities, was changing to accommodate the new philosophies of Locke and Newton. The Scottish Church

was undergoing gradual but momentous changes in attitude; Moderatism came to predominate, and to make room for the arts in Scotland, but not without bitter opposition. The Union of Parliaments of 1707 was only eight years old when young Thomson arrived in the Scottish capital, and though the poor country had not yet felt the expected economic benefits of union, the Scots people were hopeful; town life had begun to revive, and the "improving" impulse (partially inspired by, but not dependent upon, England)¹ was strong. Many simply equated improvement with anglicisation, but while the anglicising British culture was ascendant, a nationalistic counter-movement was gaining strength as well. The Scottish identity-crisis, the split in the national consciousness, was most clearly reflected in the blossoming literary culture; English (Anglo-Scottish), Scots vernacular, and Scottish Latinist literature each asserted its own brand of cultural patriotism. The Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1719 pointed up another deep division in the Scottish political consciousness, as for several months the country was in turmoil and the capital city itself was physically threatened.

It has been said that young James Thomson first came to Edinburgh with great reluctance, having been carried there on horseback by a servant or friend of his father's; immediately on arriving, he walked the sixty miles home again,² only to be returned to town a second time. Although this anecdote is probably fictitious, it is very likely that the shy and home-loving Thomson, uncertain of his academic abilities as well as his social graces, would be frightened of leaving home to go to University, especially with the Jacobite unrest threatening both Edinburgh and his native Borders. He did arrive in Edinburgh at last, however, to matriculate for the M.A. course. A university stu-

dent for ten years, Thomson's "adolescence was extraordinarily prolonged; perhaps he never altogether grew up."³ This is perhaps best illustrated by his juvenile poems, with their tone of religious enthusiasm and wonder alternating with stern Scottish Calvinistic rigour, their naïve themes of "love" or more properly infatuation, their eager, eclectic grasping at many diverse ideas and literary traditions. As at Jedburgh Grammar School, Thomson seems to have been considered rather dull by his fellow students at Edinburgh University. He did, however, gain some confidence and a store of learning and experience there, which prompted him, by about 1720-1721, to offer his imperfect poetical efforts to his peers and to the Edinburgh public, and by 1725 to brave the wider world of London.

When Thomson first came up to Edinburgh, he would have lived in the crowded, noisy Old Town-- vastly different from the orderly, spacious New Town of the Scottish Enlightenment period envisaged by his nephew, architect James Craig. In the Old Town, far from being isolated within the University community, Thomson would have, by necessity, mingled with all classes of people, from all walks of life: a learning experience in itself. He probably had University lodgings at first, but soon after his father died in February, 1716 his mother and brothers and sisters moved to Edinburgh, and he may have lived with them for a time. The juvenile poem "Lisy's Parting With her Cat" may have been written in this setting. Mrs. Thomson, on the advice of a clergyman friend, the Rev. Mr. William Gusthart of Crailing and Nisbet⁴ (who was transferred to Edinburgh's Tolbooth Kirk in 1721) mortgaged her "Wideopen" property and came to the town to live "in a decent and frugal manner,"⁵ according to Patrick Murdoch who must have known and admired her. She had a very large family to care for, and

was not wealthy (her total estate was valued at £18.16s.5d Sterling, or £225.17s Scots, at her death in 1725), but she seems to have kept a fairly comfortable if humble home; her Testament lists ample furniture, linens, pewter, as well as a single book, "an old incompleat Bible in quarto."⁶ Fortunately, the family was helped with expenses by James's having been selected Lowland Bursar for the Presbytery of Jedburgh.⁷ Later in his university career (in the 1720's), Thomson might possibly have shared a room with his younger friend from Ancrum, John Cranstoun, Jr. who later became a minister; Cranstoun is said to be the source for an anecdote illustrating young Thomson's strong superstition, even as a university-student: "On one occasion, his bed-mate, knowing of this weakness and participating in the desire of his fellow-collegians to have some fun at Thomson's expense, quietly quitted the bed and left Thomson to himself. The poet, soon after awaking in the dark and finding himself the sole occupant of the bed, rushed out of the room with all possible haste, loudly calling on his landlady for help."⁸ Thomson eventually overcame this debilitating superstition; he otherwise seems to have led a fairly normal student life.

Something is known of Thomson's life in Edinburgh: he studied, he participated wholeheartedly in various (especially literary) societies, and he generally seems to have enjoyed himself. A letter of 1724 to his friend Dr. William Cranstoun, John's elder brother at Ancrum, shows that he was taken up with town life, and an amused observer of Edinburgh society: "yet I am but little conversant in the Beau Monde viz Conserts balls assemblies & wher beauty shines and Coxcombs admire themselves." He did not have the means to indulge in such entertainments, nor would the Kirk have approved; more importantly, he also

implied in the same letter that such worldly pleasures would have interfered with his writing aspirations:

If nature had thrown me in a more soft and indolent mold had made me a Shapely or a S^r Fopling Flutter if fortune had fill'd my pockets (I suppose my head is empty enough as it is) had I been taught to cut a caper to hum a tune to take a pinch and lisp Nonsense with all the grace of fashionable stupidity then I could - what could I have done? - hardly write. but however I might have made a shift to fill up an half sheet with ratt me demme & interspers'd with broken Charracters of ladies gliding o'er my fancy like a passing Image o'er a Mirror.

In the letter he goes on to berate, "O ye foolish women" who cultivate beauty alone, and to elaborate on the rare combination of beauty with wit in the ladies:

Witt and beauty thus join'd would be as Shakespear has it making honey a sauce to sugar. [As You Like It, III.iii] and yet another would say that beauty divine beauty! enlivenens heightens and refines witt that even witt is the necessary resul[t] of beauty which puts the spirits in that harmonious motion that produces it, that tunes them to that extasy and makes y^m dart thro the nerves and sparkle in the eyes! -but whither am I rambling?⁹

Young Thomson was certainly an ardent admirer of female beauty even then, and would remain so. His juvenile, idealising love-verses occasionally approach "Nonsense with all the grace of fashionable stupidity"; an element of rich sensuality sometimes breaks through their conventional language, to attest to the poet's sincerity. His affairs of the heart, however, seem always to have been unrequited; there is no evidence that his youthful infatuations ever grew into serious attachments.

Thomson was by no means a "libertine" in Edinburgh, even though he did enjoy the freer, more lively and open society of the town; "the worldly and frivolous tone of some of his Edinburgh letters is harmless enough."¹⁰ When not engaged in academic or literary pursuits, he liked

to meet with friends in the "Typenny cells," or ale-cellars,¹¹ and while such "tavern adjournments" may have harmed the characters of some Divinity students,¹² Thomson seems to have found innocuous pleasure there. While in Edinburgh, he was still very much in the shadow of the Kirk (as well as of his own mother), so he cannot have led too wild a student life.

Although Thomson derived at least as much benefit from his more serious extra-curricular activities (the literary societies) and from his contacts with the broader Edinburgh community, as he did from his formal education at Edinburgh University, he did come to town primarily to obtain a university education, and this central aspect of his life there should first be examined.

Edinburgh University in the early eighteenth century was "small, poverty-stricken, ill-housed," but unlike Oxford it "had renounced the collegiate and tutorial method of teaching and had adopted the plan of teaching by Professors, on the Continental model....In this new system lay all the possibilities of specialised learning and science."¹³ The curriculum reform of 1708 "engendered a new spirit of inquiry and tolerance, which was also fostered by the increasing social and cultural interchanges with England."¹⁴ James Thomson first matriculated at the University in the autumn of 1715, to begin the general M.A. course. He was admitted as a Superveniente,¹⁵ one of those students who had been so well-grounded in Latin that they were allowed to pass over Professor Laurence Dundas's first-year Latin course (good command of Latin was very necessary to the students, as at that time all lectures were given in Latin). He thus matriculated for the second-year Humanities course in 1715, Professor William Scott's Greek class.¹⁶ Of Professor Scott's

teaching "nothing is recorded."¹⁷ Thomson again matriculated for Scott's class in the following year; the disturbances caused in the University by the Jacobite rising of 1715, as well as Thomson's personal upset by the death of his father in February, 1716 and his visit home at that time, must have put him behind in the class, and necessitated its repetition. After completing the Greek class, Thomson entered in 1717 Professor Colin Drummond's Logic and Metaphysics class. Drummond seems to have taught according to the Aristotelian traditional curriculum, "tempering Scholasticism with Ramism"¹⁸ and pronouncing "dull and antiquated doctrines";¹⁹ his course also covered the study of Rhetoric.²⁰ (The old-style Rhetoric expounded by Drummond was based on a strict adherence to the rules of Aristotle and the Humanists; the three Structures of Decorum or appropriateness, Correctness or accuracy, and the value of Imitation of the classics, of which Description was one type, governed this traditional Rhetoric.²¹ Young Thomson's enthusiasm often led him to violate the rules of Decorum and Correctness; he tended to be more strongly influenced by English Neoclassicism as presented by Addison in The Spectator, where the influence of Longinus and Horace expanded Aristotelian limitations and ultimately allowed for more subjective aesthetic criteria such as "taste" and "genius" to operate.) The study of classical Rhetoric was, of course, a long-lived and strong part of Scottish education, and a significant formative influence on Thomson's "Scottish Augustan" poetry; that he began to write in an age of changing rhetorical standards is clearly reflected in his mature works.

Thomson's fourth-year course was conducted by Professor Robert Stewart, who taught Natural Philosophy (science) and Ethics. Thomson enjoyed the study of science: "it was his favourite study at Edinburgh University."²² This class was particularly important to Thomson's developing

thought, as Stewart represented the new philosophical spirit of the reformed university. "Though it is a probability only, yet it is a strong one, that Stewart was teaching the Newtonian philosophy in 1719, when Thomson became his student."²³ Stewart "slowly discarded Cartesianism and became a cautious convert to Newtonianism. His lectures must have sown some of the seeds of James Thomson's deep interest in the modern scientific and philosophic changes which were altering man's whole conception of the universe."²⁴ There is evidence that as early as the 1720's, Stewart's course was strongly Newtonian; a transcript of his lectures of 1724 (which were probably similar to those delivered to Thomson's class in 1718) shows that while the first part of the course dealt with hydrostatics, the second part, dealing with astronomy, was "wholly and vigorously" Newtonian. What is even more important, Stewart spent much of the course in discussion of the "theological implications of these doctrines concerning planets and their orbits."²⁵ This was probably typical of the science teaching at Edinburgh at that time, when "teachers of mathematics and astronomy did not emphasize the technical parts of their subjects, but instead introduced religious and metaphysical ideas into their discussions...."²⁶ Professor Stewart in one of his lectures "even bursts into [Latin] poetry....It is not surprising that Thomson's early work is strongly imbued with Natural Theology, or that he was so early in the field of poetry on the Newtonian universe."²⁷ A. D. McKillop holds that, "We need not claim for the young James Thomson any high proficiency in Newtonian physics. He might get a smattering of the new science from the curriculum at Edinburgh, and from popular lectures...";²⁸ however, with the evidence of the transcript of Stewart's lectures, and with the strong Newtonian element of Thomson's early poetry, it does seem likely that he obtained more than just a "smattering" of the new science while a student,²⁹ and that

there was a conscious effort on his part to reconcile this science with Scottish Calvinistic orthodoxy-- a vital concern to the prospective divine. Even as a student, Thomson (like so many poets of the age) was trying to arrive at a personally satisfying and sound blend of the new science with orthodox religion. Physico-theology had come to be an important poetical theme by the early eighteenth century. Newton's work on gravitational theory, as well as the light and colour imagery of the Optics, could be found to fit with traditional religious concepts, and admiration for Newton's discoveries was also admiration for God's universal scheme. "Responsive though he was to the philosophy of... Newton, Thomson never ceased to feel allegiance to the religious and poetical heritage which had preceded his enthusiasm for...the scientist."³⁰

Very shortly after he left Edinburgh, Thomson wrote his poem "To the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton" (1727); here, his handling of the theory of gravitation depends heavily, both on the Principia itself, and on the literature of Physico-theology.³¹ The equation of Newtonian gravity with the ethical and religious concept of universal Harmony informs The Seasons, Liberty and The Castle of Indolence,³² and even the juvenile poetry (for example, "Upon Happiness") makes reference to the idea of gravity within a Neoplatonic conception of the universe. The Neoplatonic element of Newtonian physics often led to "imputation of ethical values to nature";³³ for example, the order and beauty of the natural world were seen also to represent "goodness." Stewart's teaching of Ethics possibly took this line, approximating his fellow-Scot Francis Hutcheson's adaptation of Neoplatonic-Shaftesburyian philosophy at Glasgow University in the 1720's: Hutcheson explicitly equated "beauty" with "moral goodness." Such concern with the deeper moral significance of the natural world, beyond its external appearance,

was a tremendously important influence on the young student Thomson, as reflected in his later works, particularly the religious-descriptive Seasons and the allegorical Castle.

Light-imagery, a literary convention developed from Hebrew and Neoplatonic writings through Milton, took on new importance with Newton's discoveries as revealed in the Optics. Thomson's juvenile poems do contain light as well as cosmic imagery, but it is not noticeably Newtonian at this stage, deriving rather from earlier religious and Neoplatonic sources. His light-imagery becomes more Newtonian and scientifically technical in his mature poetry, such as "Summer" and "Newton." The juvenilia have been said to "lack...colour,"³⁴ as opposed to The Seasons. Thus it is interesting to note that Robert Stewart's Newtonian teaching was at first centred on the Principia (in the 1720's), while only later³⁵ dealing in detail with light, colour and perception in the study of the Optics. Thomson's early knowledge of, and abiding interest in, Newton had clearly been stimulated by his course at Edinburgh, and he would continue to enrich it through further study, as a tutor in the private academy of the Messrs. Watts, in London. Thomson learned in Edinburgh the important lesson that theology, philosophy (including natural philosophy, or science) and poetry could be congenial disciplines, and immediately set about proving it in his writings.

Thomson was particularly fortunate in having studied natural philosophy at Edinburgh, as the university "possesses the high honour of having been the first public seminary in Europe in which Newtonian philosophy was publicly taught."³⁶ David Gregory, who was made Professor of Mathematics in 1683, lectured on Newton's Principia at the university; he became Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford in 1691. Gregory had impressed his Scottish students with Newtonianism, especially the Edin-

burgh native John Keill, who also went on to Oxford, and practised experiments in Newtonian science. "Thus, Gregory in Scotland, and Keill in England, were the first public lecturers on the 'Principia,' and both issued from the same school."³⁷ Edinburgh University had, in fact, "caught, more quickly and effectually than the English Universities... the Newtonian impulse."³⁸ Professor Robert Stewart had begun as a Cartesian, but in the university which had already established a Newtonian tradition, he rapidly adopted the new science; although by mid-century Stewart was reportedly "worn out with age, and never had excelled,"³⁹ the impact of his Newtonian curriculum must have been considerable.⁴⁰

In addition to the formal scientific curriculum of the university, in discussing Thomson's early scientific interests it is important to mention an event which occurred on March 6, 1716, the only specific event from this decade which he portrayed in his mature poetry. On that date (when Thomson may have been in Edinburgh, or may have been in Southdean following his father's death in February), the Aurora Borealis made a dramatic appearance over Scotland. Thomson probably witnessed the Aurora himself. Such an occurrence was traditionally thought of as an ominous portent.⁴¹ Following so close upon his father's strange death, the event must have made a particularly strong and frightening impression on the superstitious boy. His account of the Aurora Borealis in The Seasons ("Summer," 1727, transferred to "Autumn," 1730 ff.) is especially similar to an eye-witness account of the sighting over Edinburgh.⁴² Thomson also knew the contemporary scientific accounts of the Aurora, notably those by Edmund Halley.⁴³ It is likely that young Thomson's will to overcome his own debilitating superstition motivated him to study the new, reasonable science with such enthusiasm,

and in the broader sense, to try to reconcile the laws of nature as perceived by science, with orthodox religious belief. He hoped to be able to identify himself with the "man of philosophic eye," the curious "sage" ("Autumn," ll. 1133-4) who rose above fear and superstition through enlightened reason.

Thomson would have completed the four-year M.A. course in 1719, but he did not take the degree; this was the custom of the time, as the formal degree had fallen out of fashion in the eighteenth century. At Edinburgh University at that time, the emphasis was more on learning for its own sake than on graduation itself; this attitude prompted personal motivation to learn, rather than adherence to a strict regimen.⁴⁴ Thus, the students were allowed and encouraged to read those subjects which particularly interested them.⁴⁵ In addition to the required four-year M.A. courses, the university offered a number of optional, "public" classes or lectures which Thomson may have attended, such as the Mathematics class of Professor James Gregory which, in the Gregory family tradition, had a strong Newtonian bias.⁴⁶ In the manner of Robert Stewart's Natural Philosophy lectures, James Gregory's public lectures frequently "involved astronomical discussions out of which often grew illustrations of God's wisdom, goodness, and power."⁴⁷ Professor William Law taught a course in Moral Philosophy and Pneumatics. There is no surviving information on his curriculum, but it is known that his successor, Dr. John Pringle (c. 1741) dealt with questions of Natural Theology, and with moral and political philosophy; these he illustrated with an account of the rise and fall of the ancient governments of Greece and Rome, and "a view of that form of government which took its rise from the irruptions of the Northern nations."⁴⁸ These themes would be central to Thomson's Liberty (1735-6). From 1722, Professor

Charles Mackie of the Faculty of Laws offered a class in Universal History, and Greek and Roman Antiquities.⁴⁹ If he could have found the time off from his study for the ministry (for by that time he was in the Divinity College), Thomson might have attended some of Mackie's lectures, in view of his interest in classical literature and society. Such an interest in the classical civilisations went hand-in-hand in Scotland in Thomson's day with the respect for and emulation of the "Roman ideal" (becoming, in the later eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries, more the "Greek ideal," befitting the Athens of the North). Thomson is known to have studied Greek and Roman culture intensively, in preparation for his Grand Tour (1730-33), and he came to own many books on the topic as well as prints and drawings of classical subjects, but clearly his study of the history and civilisation of the ancient world had begun much earlier, while he was in Scotland. It will be recalled that, even as a boy in the Borders, he had begun to identify Scottish with Roman "virtues." His knowledge of Latin, and some Greek, classical literature was, of course, already considerable by the time he came as a student to Edinburgh University. He might also have become more interested in the Italian language, and in Italian Renaissance culture, through Mackie's class (it is interesting to note that Mackie, in 1721, had shipped to Edinburgh from the Continent, three copies of the drama Sophonisba,⁵⁰ probably Trissino's Italian version; Thomson wrote his version of Sophonisba in 1729-30). Mackie's course also covered British, and notably Scottish, history and antiquities.⁵¹

Outside of these optional university courses, Thomson also continued the process of self-education begun as a child in the Borders. He is said to have belonged to university debating and/or literary societies, whose object was to divest members of "the slightest trace of Scot-

ticism."⁵² His undergraduate courses must have left him ample time to indulge in literary pursuits; the MS of his juvenile poems was prepared about the end of that period (c. 1720-21), soon after he had entered Divinity Hall. There are no extant poems between the juvenile MS and his "Winter" (1726), apart from two undated pieces;⁵³ perhaps he was kept busier by his study of Divinity, and had less time for writing poetry. In any case, he continued to "improve" himself, and he did not lack for "improving" facilities in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh University library was a valuable resource. In 1708, with the reorganisation of the entire university, a library enquiry was set up to arrange a lending procedure,⁵⁴ whereby library books could be lent to students who had a warrant from one of their masters. Edinburgh University library held a large collection of books, and Thomson probably read from a wide variety of disciplines, including literature, theology, philosophy, science, history and geography, which shaped his eclectic views, as represented both in the juvenilia and in the mature writings. The bequest of William Drummond of Hawthornden's library to the university represents just one small cross-section of the literature available to young Thomson there; the Drummond bequest is rich in Greek and Latin classical literature, Scottish neoclassical literature (Buchanan), French and Italian neoclassical literature, much Elizabethan and seventeenth-century English literature, and notably, Middle Scots poetry (including Gavin Douglas's Eneados and Palice of Honour, Alexander Hume's Hymnes and Sacred Songs, Alexander Montgomerie's poems, David Lindsay's Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis, and so on).⁵⁵ In addition to the main university library, the Divinity College also had an excellent and broad-ranging library (founded 1698).

At this time, Edinburgh was the Scottish centre for publication and dis-

tribution of a variety of literature in English, Scots and Latin, which provided a rich fund of learning for Thomson and his contemporaries. The Tatler and The Spectator were readily available in English editions and in Scottish reprints; these periodicals were especially influential in conveying popular, eclectic and easily-digestible versions of contemporary thought in philosophy, science, Physico-theology and aesthetics. Joseph Addison's essays in particular acted as important intermediaries between philosophers and popular authors.⁵⁶ There is no doubt that Thomson formed many of his philosophical concepts-- Christian Neoplatonism and the "Chain of Being," Physico-theology, Newtonianism, Shaftesburyian ethics, and theories of aesthetics and the new English critical criteria-- under the influence of The Spectator. It would not be too much to say that Addison's series of essays on "The Pleasures of the Imagination"⁵⁷ served as a handbook for Thomson in his serious study of English letters. The guidelines presented there are reflected in Thomson's Preface to "Winter" (1726, 2nd edition), and each point of emphasis can be traced in execution throughout his works, especially The Seasons.

Addison's popular poetic canon, as put forward in the "Pleasures of the Imagination" essays, was an early attempt briefly to systematise English Augustan literary aesthetics (based not only on the traditional poetic of Aristotle, but increasingly on Horace and Longinus as well, and recommending the Imitation of the classics and especially of Nature itself). While Addison did not himself represent the "new rhetoric," with its growing emphasis on subjective, emotional criteria of "taste" and "sensibility," his formulae were the basis of it. The major movement from strict, traditional classical rules to more flexible aesthetic standards, which even allowed for "genius" occasionally to break

the rules, came in mid-eighteenth century Scotland. It was Henry Home (Lord Kames), Hugh Blair, James Beattie, George Campbell and others of their generation who developed and systematised a compromise between old-style, objective rhetorical rules (in which, as Scots, they were solidly trained) and new, more subjective standards. Such rhetorical analysis as they fostered in their criticism often led, paradoxically, to the "co-existence of a coolly rational tone and method with a belief in the moral value of feeling."⁵⁸ Thomson, who grew up in Scotland during the very formative years of the Scottish Enlightenment (1720's),⁵⁹ was perhaps the earliest poet actually to practise what these Scottish rhetoricians would preach later in the century. He, as they, built on a solid, traditional rhetorical foundation, heavily influenced by English Augustan neoclassicism, only to depart from its strict rules when genius or "sensibility" demanded it. Even his juvenile poems depart from those rules (not only through his inexperience and naïveté, but also through his enthusiasm for the subject at hand), although at this stage his "genius" was not often recognised or applauded, nor was it always intentional on the part of the young poet, who at first sought merely to be a model Augustan. Thomson has frequently been called a "pre-Romantic" poet, but it should be remembered that, setting the stage for Romanticism, first came the influential Scottish Enlightenment with its formulation of changing literary aesthetics. The Scottish Enlightenment in general was not merely a reflection of increasing English influence on Scotland after the Union, but was built on increasingly liberal trends within Scottish society and culture of the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries, which made Scotland even more receptive to the English ideas when they came.⁶⁰ The literati of the Scottish Enlightenment were "patriotic Scotsmen who had nevertheless sublimated their Scottishness into a comprehensive

Britishness,"⁶¹ much as Thomson had done. It is not surprising that so many of the great Romantic authors were Scots who had grown up during the Enlightenment. Thomson himself was truly a "pre-Scottish Enlightenment" poet, representing in his mature poetry not only its aesthetic ideals, but also its broader philosophies: "proper reasoning"; optimism, or belief in improvement; acceptance of new empirical science, and the courage to test orthodox religious beliefs by its methods; the recognition that man alone can imitate Nature's order (through reason and art, such as the poetic art of The Seasons); tolerance of others' views; and, especially, recognition and acceptance of reason's limits.⁶² On the whole, Thomson's philosophy as expressed in his poetry was a "common sense" as well as a "sensible" one, founded on his learning experiences in early-eighteenth century Edinburgh.

In addition to the English periodicals which were a significant influence on Thomson and his contemporary Anglo-Scots who used them as "improving" guides, more Scottish literature was rapidly becoming available to them. In Scottish publishing of the period, each of the three Scottish literary cultures-- Scots, Latin and Anglo-Scottish-- were represented; a certain "literary patriotism,"⁶³ as distinct from active, political patriotism or nationalism, grew in intensity with the Union of 1707 and Jacobite stirrings. Thomas Ruddiman, affiliated with the Tory-Jacobite minority in Edinburgh, published the works of the great Scottish Latinists, including George Buchanan's Opera Omnia, Arthur Johnston's Cantici Solomonis Paraphrasis, and (with Robert Freebairn) Florence Wilson's De Animi Tranquillitate Dialogus, as well as his own influential grammar, Rudiments of the Latin Tongue (1714), in an effort to keep alive the humanist cultural tradition in Scotland. He also made available important works of Middle Scots literature (notably, Gavin

Douglas's translation of Virgil's Aeneid, 1710) and Anglo-Scottish poetry (such as his edition of William Drummond's Works, 1711), and published a number of Allan Ramsay's early volumes. Ruddiman's tolerant "literary patriotism," in other words, expanded to embrace Latin, Scots vernacular and Anglo-Scottish publications, all to the greater glory of Scotland. James Watson was another editor and publisher who was a literary patriot; he, too, was of Jacobite persuasion.⁶⁴ His three-volume Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems⁶⁵ represented "with some accuracy what was available for re-constructing a Scottish poetic tradition," though his miscellany did show considerable "linguistic confusion"⁶⁶ of Scots and English. The Choice Collection made available important verses and songs in the vernacular, translations from the Latin of George Buchanan, and notably, works of Alexander Montgomerie (including The Cherrie and the Slae) and of Anglo-Scots Sir Robert Ayton, Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh, and James Graham, Marquis of Montrose. In the 1720's, of course, Allan Ramsay himself, a Whig-Presbyterian Scottish patriot, would make available much older Scottish literature, including long-buried works of Henryson and Dunbar, in his editions of the Ever Green and the Tea-Table Miscellany.⁶⁷ Thus, much literature, including a rapidly-growing body of Scottish literature, was available to young Thomson, whose learning experience in Edinburgh was to a great extent a process of self-education and broader cultural assimilation. His own "literary patriotism" would, of course, take the form of an attempt to make a Scottish contribution to the ascendant, anglicising British culture, by writing Anglo-Scottish poetry.

But what of Thomson's plans to study Divinity, and ultimately to become a minister of the Scottish Church? He matriculated in the Divinity

College in 1719, probably to comply with his family's expectations rather than from "free choice."⁶⁸ His undergraduate years had been a period of intense literary activity for him, culminating in a substantial body of juvenile poetry (the fair-copy MS is dated c. 1720-21), and in the publication of three of his poems in the Edinburgh Miscellany; he may have had to restrict his poetical efforts while at Divinity Hall, due perhaps to lack of time, and possibly also to the Kirk's lingering disapproval of imaginative literature.

Many changes were taking place within the Scottish Church at this time: "A general secularity and rationalism of outlook was fermenting" in early-eighteenth century Scotland, and the transition from "Reformation to the Enlightenment" was rapid and unsettling.⁶⁹ The Moderate party of the more liberal-minded, "literary and cultured clergy" came by mid-century to predominate.⁷⁰ This rising spirit of religious toleration was in part due to increased contact with England, from about 1720 on;⁷¹ liberalising trends within the Scottish Church itself ever since the late seventeenth century had made it more receptive to such English influence.⁷² The old-style Scottish Calvinistic beliefs were far from dead in Thomson's day as a Divinity student, however; as in his youth in the Borders, he would continue to come into contact with both strains of Scottish religious belief, the rigorous, orthodox Scottish Calvinism and the Moderate, "unorthodox" philosophy, and to experience the tensions between them in that time of flux.

Art-literature, the belles lettres and especially the drama, had long been "obnoxious" to the Scottish Calvinists;⁷³ "in spite of its zeal for education, one could hardly look to [the Church] to provide patronage for the arts,"⁷⁴ early in the eighteenth century. There was, however, an increasing acceptance of poetry by many within the Scottish Church,

particularly of poetry of a religious nature and purpose, such as, for example, poetry on Physico-theological "nature" themes. As Moderate rationalism increasingly tempered Calvinistic rigour and many of the old, formal religious beliefs fell away, eighteenth-century Scottish Calvinists still inherited the individualistic, soul-searching, inward-looking preoccupation and the emotional, "mystical" sensibility which were elements of their religious background.⁷⁵ A similar, moderating, distilling process had helped to shape the religious poetry of Puritan England in the previous century. Such subjective and sentimental dispositions newly freed from strict doctrinal application, naturally enough fostered a reawakened interest, in early eighteenth-century Scotland, in poetry. Léon Morel termed this the "new needs of the Scottish soul."⁷⁶ Poetry could express in a fresh, beautiful and imaginative way, those religious feelings which could not be denied; it could function as an emotional outlet, a means of sharing in God's creative power.⁷⁷ and a legitimate and even sacred act of praise, as well as a means of teaching others about God. Such an attitude of acceptance of the value of evangelical religious poetry had returned to English poetry in the seventeenth century (represented by Milton, Cowley, Dennis, Blackmore and Watts by the turn of the century) after a period of religious strife, and began gradually to gain favour in Scotland in the next century. Thomson, in his juvenile religious poetry, clearly shows such sentimentality or religious emotionalism, side-by-side with a rather heavy didacticism. His contemporary at Divinity Hall, Robert Blair, displays similar traits in his Grave.⁷⁸ Still, a major theme underlying Thomson's years as a prospective divine, as evidenced in the juvenilia, is the personal struggle to reconcile his ministerial "calling" to his poetic "calling." In the early years of the eighteenth century in Scotland, this resolution was not so easily arrived at, as it

might have been by mid-century (Blair, for example, did not publish The Grave until 1743, when the religious climate was milder and more favourable to art-literature, although he had begun the poem many years before.) Blair described his poem cautiously in a letter, as "'written, I hope, in a way not unbecoming my profession as a minister of the gospel,'" mindful as he was of his great responsibility as a spiritual leader.⁷⁹ He seems, even as late as 1743, to have harboured some doubts as to the propriety of a minister publishing poetry. It might be useful here, to compare Robert Blair's vocation as a poet with James Thomson's, as the two were contemporaries in Edinburgh society and at Divinity College.

First, a precedent should be established. Certainly, the idea that a Scottish Calvinistic minister could also adopt the role of poet was not entirely revolutionary in the eighteenth century, although it had never been very common, and the practice had lain dormant for many years. One notable precedent had been Alexander Hume (c. 1560-1609), who first took up the study of law, but "ultimately directed his views to the church; a change which appears to have been the result of a mental struggle between the desire of secular advancement and objects of a higher kind...."⁸⁰ He had early in his life written a number of poems, and he decided to have these published in 1599, as Hymnes, or Sacred Songs; these were all religious-didactic pieces, with the exception of his famous "Of the Day Estivall," a poem of exquisite and sensuous natural description. In fact, "Of the Day Estivall" was something of a curiosity, a "freak" among Hume's primarily religious verses; in his prefatory address for the volume, "To the Scottish Youth," he asserted his purpose to be the propagation of sacred poetry to replace those "prophane sonnets, and vaine ballats of loue," which

were so popular, i.e., secular poetry. "Why shuld thou not then (aspiring youth) rather bestowe thy gude gifts to the right vse, to wit, to the glory of God, and to the weil of thy brethren? which thow sall do when by thy poesie or prose thow declares the mercie, the iustice, the power, the providence, the wisdom, the holiness, the gudeness, or wondrous works of thy God vnto the world...."⁸¹ Now, the religious-didactic purpose of poetry as Hume saw it was essentially the same as both Blair and Thomson conceived it to be; however, over a century of religious strife and increasing distrust and stern censure of imaginative literature by the Scottish Kirk had intervened. Poetry, even poetry of an explicitly religious function, was not so generally tolerated in Scotland in 1700 as it had been in 1600; "such trends as the obvious narrowing of post-reformation Scottish humanism...and the growing suspicion that beauty, having a sensuous and therefore a sexual connotation, must be damaging to the Reformed soul, had begun to block the well-springs of Scottish art-poetry" even before Hume had published his Hymnes,⁸² and had continued to grow more narrow throughout the seventeenth century. By the time the young Divinity-students Thomson and Blair began to write poetry, even though it was religious poetry, they might well have had serious doubts about its reception by the Kirk. While Blair's mentor Isaac Watts (whose poetry was also an influence on Thomson's juvenilia) had long been comfortably established in the dual role of minister and poet in England, Blair himself was very cautious about submitting The Grave to the eye of the public, and especially of the Scottish Kirk. Thomson, of course, virtually abandoned his plans to enter the ministry when his "Winter" became a huge success, but remained true to his vocation as a religious poet, especially with his Seasons.

Blair's The Grave is a "sermon in verse."⁸³ Blair said that his purpose in writing it was, "to present 'a serious argument' to 'a licentious age, which cares for none of these things.'"⁸⁴ His "argument" is that "man is a sinful creature who can best avoid damnation by keeping his eye fixed steadily upon the grave."⁸⁵ It is obvious from this stern message that Blair was writing within a tradition of Scottish religion and morality preceding even the Reformation; it "harks back to the old Scottish awareness of the tragic and mysterious," and it is conscious of God, "not as deified Reason, but as Mysterium Tremendum...."⁸⁶ Blair seems to have written The Grave as part of the mid-eighteenth century Evangelical Revival, to contribute to "that general reform of British religious life which began in the 1730's with the Wesleys and continued well into the nineteenth century"; Watts and Dr. Philip Doddridge, who helped Blair with the revision and publication of the poem, were "two of the most influential dissenting divines in England- both of whom may be described as evangelical Christians of a Calvinist tendency."⁸⁷ In a letter to Doddridge, Blair refers to the fertile ground in Scotland for religious revival: "'the people of Scotland dare not say that they are Strangers to plain and Serious preaching.'"⁸⁸ Indeed, Blair's evangelical fervour frequently tends toward "emotional indulgence" in its exploitation of Elizabethan-Jacobean dramatic props and its excess of "gloom and morbidity"; one cannot read The Grave "without feeling that the melancholy and horror, both qualitatively and quantitatively, are all out of proportion to the religious element."⁸⁹ The poem's often horrendous literal-mindedness, its vivid and concrete use of unpleasant graveyard imagery, has its roots in Scottish Calvinistic sermon-rhetoric. In general, The Grave represents the more negative and sensational aspects of old-

style, evangelical Scottish Calvinism, handled with considerable poetic license.

Thomson's Seasons, on the other hand, more generally represents the Moderate Scottish Calvinistic outlook, where reason and benevolence predominate. Still, there are similarities between the "evangelical" Grave and the "enlightened" Seasons. The Seasons, being an eclectic poem with a primarily religious-didactic purpose, does not entirely forsake the old-style Calvinism of Thomson's youth. On the contrary, certain passages could almost have inspired The Grave itself, as Thomson preaches a rigorous morality, attacking vanity and delusion and warning "fond man" to prepare to die.⁹⁰ The tone of the sermon-rhetoric, the forceful didacticism is the same. The morality of Liberty and especially of The Castle of Indolence, too, while secularised, draws heavily upon Thomson's Scottish Calvinistic background. The element of rather extravagant emotionalism important in Thomson's juvenile religious poetry and in Blair's Grave, as an indirect spiritual product of Scottish Calvinism, is also present in The Seasons, though tempered with Augustan reason. Both poets seem to share a peculiar credulity, a genuine belief in the supernatural (absent from English poetry of the period); such superstition, while rooted in Scottish folklore, also played a significant part in the unenlightened religious beliefs of the country even into the nineteenth century. The Grave is "full of ghosts,"⁹¹ and they also appear on occasion in The Seasons. There are other similarities between the two poems as well. Both are in blank-verse; at the time when Blair and Thomson were students together in Edinburgh, there seems to have been a particular vogue for descriptive poetry in blank verse. The Grave is a natural-descriptive poem, to a great extent, employing abundant imagery from

nature; Scottish poet and critic Thomas Campbell, for one, praised the poem's "free, natural, and picturesque" language and imagery.⁹² Thus both The Grave and The Seasons function not only as religious poems, but also as descriptive poems, in the Scottish tradition of nature poetry. So, both Blair and Thomson ultimately found a creative outlet in the art of poetry, for their philosophies and feelings: Blair within the orthodox Scottish Calvinistic ministry (writing from the old-style viewpoint), and Thomson without (writing mainly from the Moderate stance). The two poets shared, however, the same religious background and education as Divinity students at Edinburgh University. What comprised these Divinity studies?

James Thomson's formal course of study in Divinity was almost certainly rather old-fashioned and orthodox, perhaps dull; many early-eighteenth century Professors of Divinity were said to have been so boring and prolix in their learned orthodoxy, that this in itself might have encouraged many of their students to think for themselves, and to adopt more liberal, Moderate views.⁹³ Very little formal course work was required in the Divinity College at that time; Ecclesiastical History (under William Dunlop, then Matthew Crauford) and Hebrew (under James Crauford) were not mandatory, and Hebrew especially was neglected during the century.⁹⁴ Only Professor William Hamilton's course in Divinity was obligatory,⁹⁵ and while this was probably a fairly rigorous class in the traditional manner, Thomson and his contemporaries seem to have appreciated and profited from it.

Professor William Hamilton⁹⁶ was a very learned divine, and certainly a religious conservative, but he had an open mind and kept well-informed on contemporary religious trends.⁹⁷ He was amongst the misled "Asso-

ciated Critics," a group of conservative Presbyterian clergymen who objected to Thomas Ruddiman's edition of George Buchanan's History; they felt that Ruddiman's "passion for correctness,"⁹⁸ as well as his Tory political bias, had led the editor to misrepresent their "hero." As a scholar and teacher Hamilton was a man of "wisdom and moderation."⁹⁹ His son reported that the Professor "had been in the use of recommending to his students, at the conclusion of their course, to maintain a tender and charitable respect towards their fathers in the church, who had not enjoyed the means of acquiring the literature and liberality of sentiment so amply provided in the more happy times in which their own lot had been cast."¹⁰⁰ While Hamilton himself "had a Covenanting background, and had actually been baptized at a conventicle...his teaching, while guarded and orthodox, left a different impression."¹⁰¹ Hamilton's very open-mindedness and toleration led a suspicious Robert Wodrow to remark, "'it's thought he is departed from the Calvinistic doctrine taught in the Church, though he hath the wisdom to keep himself in the clouds.'" Wodrow, borrowing the term "New Light" from his Irish friends, applied it to Hamilton's students.¹⁰² The Professor so inspired a new attitude of toleration and liberality in his students (including Thomson) that he is said to have been, even before Francis Hutcheson, the first true "teacher of the Moderates."¹⁰³

William Hamilton was "a man exceedingly loved and respected....There was a sincerity, a kindness, a vein of liberality in all he did and said, that gained him the hearts of his students, and made them enter with warmth into his views and sentiments."¹⁰⁴ Patrick Murdoch, Thomson's best friend at Divinity College, called the Professor "a gentleman universally respected and beloved, and who had particularly endeared himself to the young divines under his care, by his kind

offices, his candor, and affability."¹⁰⁵ Thomson no doubt felt the same way about Professor Hamilton, and always spoke of him with respect.¹⁰⁶ The Professor's just criticisms, therefore, would have been taken to heart by the young poet.

Hamilton's "mode of teaching theology...was in all substantial respects the same as that prosecuted by his predecessors - an exposition of the system according to one of the more approved textbooks of the continental divines, accompanied with frequent examinations, and the hearing and reviewing of theological discourses."¹⁰⁷ He was a rhetorician of sorts-- with the chief aim of preparing his students for the pulpit. It was his practise to assign the students various rhetorical tasks, including lectures and homilies, and also Scriptural exegeses called "Exercises" and "Additions" (according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Presbyterial "Exercise gives the Coherence of the Text and Content, the Logical Division, etc. The Addition gives the doctrinal Propositions or Truths [1709]"). These presentations he freely criticised, "lopping off luxuriances, and reprehending with kind severity everything that savoured of bombast or vulgarity."¹⁰⁸ (Hamilton's son Robert, who succeeded him as Professor of Divinity, was also very concerned with the polishing of the rhetorical style of his students; he gave lectures on Biblical criticism as well, which "entered, perhaps too minutely into verbal and controversial criticism.")¹⁰⁹ It is said that young Thomson delivered an Exercise for Professor Hamilton, in about 1720, probably based on a Psalm text, which was so poetical and extravagant that Hamilton "told him, smiling, that if he thought of being useful in the ministry, he must keep a stricter rein upon his imagination, and express himself in language more intelligible to an ordinary congregation."¹¹⁰ This com-

ment recalls Robert Riccaltoun's advice to the young poets under his tutelage, to keep their fancies under control. It seems that Thomson's fellow-students were amazed at his display of genius, and attempted unsuccessfully to prove that his Exercise was plagiarised;¹¹¹ thereafter, he was much admired by them, despite the Professor's disapproval. One classmate, Mr. Walter Steuart, reported to Robert Wodrow that Thomson's "genius led him to poetry when at Professor Hamilton's lessons, and his reputation was good...."¹¹² Some critics have conjectured that the overly-poetical Exercise was a rendering of Psalm 98,¹¹³ which seems the more probable, both as Thomson may have done a "lecture" on it (according to Hamilton's Notebook) and as the subject-matter is a praise of God's wonders, one of Thomson's favourite themes; others felt that perhaps it was Psalm 119.¹¹⁴ The earliest biographers do not give this information. It is possible that this "elevated" piece, which Shiels reported was in blank verse, is Thomson's juvenile poem entitled "Works and Wonders of the Almighty Power," published by Aaron Hill in the Plain Dealer (1724), and recently discovered to incorporate a paraphrase of Shaftesbury (see Chapter IV, below).

Professor Hamilton kept a meticulous record of the careers of his students at Divinity Hall, and of the various assignments they performed for him, in his Notebook,¹¹⁵ which has been preserved in the Edinburgh University Library. James Thomson from "Merse," the poet, is listed in the Notebook as having been recommended to the course by Mr. W. Douglas (probably the Rev. Mr. Walter Douglas of the Parish of Linton in Teviotdale, 1673-1727, author of Eleven Sacramental Sermons, Edinburgh, 1725),¹¹⁶ and by Mr. Simson (probably the Rev. Mr. John Simson, M.A., died 1723, of the Parish of Morebattle and Mow, a

native of Roxburghshire).¹¹⁷ Professor Hamilton divided his students into a number of groups, or "Societies," for the assignment of their various Exercises, Additions and Lectures or homilies. James Thomson was in Group 4 from 1719 until 1723, joined in that group by Patrick Murdoch in 1721-3 (Patrick, "Patie" or "Peter" Murdoch later became an Anglican divine, and remained one of Thomson's lifelong friends). Also in Group 4, in 1721, was one "Will. Riddall," probably the William Riddell who was the subject of Thomson's juvenile elegy, "A Pastoral Between Thirsis and Corydon Upon the Death of Damon."¹¹⁸ Although Hamilton carefully listed all the assignments of his students over the years, it is difficult to sort out exactly which ones were completed by Thomson the poet, as another James Thomson, from "Fiffe," entered Divinity Hall in 1721.¹¹⁹ Thereafter the Professor distinguished between the "Junior" and "Senior" Thomsons, but it is not known for sure which was the poet from "Merse" (the James Thomson in Group 4 of the Societies, however, is designated "Junior" in 1721-2). Under "Prescribed- Exercises to be Delivered," Hamilton lists:

- 1720: Jan. 9 Mr. Ja. Thomson the Addition
- 1721: Dec. 9 Mr. Ja. Thomson the Addition
- 1722: Jan. 13 Mr. Ja. Thomson Jun., a homily Matth.10.29.30.31
- 1723: Mar. 2 Mr. Ja. Thomson Sen., the lecture Ps.98
- 1724: Mar. 28 Mr. Ja. Thomson the Homily Matth.26.29

Those Exercises of 1720, 1721 and 1724 were almost certainly by Thomson the poet, and that of January 13, 1722 was probably by him. Under "Exercises they had in the Hall" (apparently a different set of Exercises), James Thomson from "Merse" is listed as having performed in February, 1720, February, 1722 and May, 1724.

Professor Hamilton's Notebook also contained a book-list, evidently a catalogue of the theological library. In 1719, two legacies added greatly to the library of Divinity Hall: those of Richard Straiton (700 volumes) and of Thomas Wilkie (400 volumes).¹²⁰ The library of Divinity Hall was well-stocked and held many items of interest; along with the "usual church fathers and calvinistic writers" was "a surprisingly broad selection of secular books...."¹²¹ There were many philosophical works, some anti-Deist tracts, a large number of books on travel, geography and history (such as Defoe's History of the Union, Wilson's History of Great Britain, Goodwin's Roman Antiquities, George Buchanan's History, Craig's Scotland's Sovereignty, History of the Turks, and so on), and even English literature (including Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regain'd). Most significantly, the library list included many books which combined "natural history with theology"¹²² (for example, several of Derham's works, Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation and On the Chaos and Deluge, Woodward's Essay on Natural History, and Clark's Sermons on the Boyle lectures). It seems clear, then, that Physico-theology was considered a legitimate and important topic of religious study in Thomson's time as a Divinity student. While, of course, Scottish Calvinistic orthodoxy did not sanction wholehearted belief in it, and even the Moderates such as Riccaltoun had reservations about its use, Physico-theology had come increasingly to be "enlisted in support of Christian revelation" by the Divinity College.¹²³ "Before leaving Scotland, Thomson had already learned to regard the physical universe and its laws in a religious light,"¹²⁴ and the impact of Physico-theology or Natural Religion on his conception of poetry, his choice of the subject of nature as divine praise especially in The Seasons, was obviously great.

Having found in most of his university courses, including Divinity, an atmosphere of toleration and acceptance of the new science, he nevertheless found it difficult to reconcile his ministerial and his poetical vocations, but along with the growing Moderate majority within the Scottish Church, he gradually came fully to accept the idea that poetry, even nature-poetry, could perform a religious function. He apparently stayed on at Divinity Hall until late 1724 or early 1725, nearly completing the required six years of study there, but not taking the necessary trials for licensing as a minister. By that time he had alternative plans in mind; he knew that he wanted to write poetry, but possibly envisaged a compromise or solution similar to that which his juvenile poetic model Isaac Watts had effected in England, of adopting the dual vocation of minister-poet. He had not yet abandoned the ministry entirely, at this stage.

Thus passed ten years for James Thomson as a student of Arts and Divinity at Edinburgh University. But how might influences outside the formal curriculum, developments in Scottish society and culture, have affected the impressionable youth? The recent Union of Parliaments in 1707 had greatly intensified Scotland's crisis of national identity, which had been growing more urgent since the 1603 Union of Crowns. Motives for the Union of 1707 had been both economic and cultural; Scots could not deny that their country was in need of an economic boost of some sort, nor could they fail to recognise that in every field, the English language had to be their medium if they hoped to attract a wider, British audience. "Geography, common sense and expediency triumphed in the Union of 1707, over history and sentiment," and poverty was perhaps the most powerful motive for the Union.¹²⁵ To many Scots, however, the Union represented the "ultimate political

defeat" for their country.¹²⁶ Although economic benefits to Scotland were expected to accrue, these were not immediately forthcoming, and for the first twenty or so years of Union, Scotland experienced "heavier taxes, more duties, vexatious restrictions, and dangerous competition with the trade of England, and a lost trade with France." Unemployment was high, industry and agriculture were slow to develop, and there were many Scottish immigrants to England and abroad.¹²⁷ Ultimately, by the 1720's and 30's, such intolerable conditions brought on a constructive "improvement" campaign from within Scotland, leading directly to the Scottish Enlightenment in the latter part of the century, but the biggest fear of many Scots-- loss of Scottish cultural identity in the accelerated flood of anglicisation after the Union-- was swiftly becoming a reality.

What was young James Thomson's opinion of the recent Union? There is no record of his political thoughts at this period, but conjectures can be offered from his literary stance; literature and politics were particularly closely tied in this period of Scottish history. Thomson was, of course, a staunch Whig and Hanoverian, as were most Presbyterians of the time, but it did not necessarily follow that he was strongly pro-Union at first; the issue was more complex than that. The old-style Presbyterian clergy (like his father) were generally anti-Union, or at least had reservations about it, while the Moderates (like Robert Riccaltoun) usually favoured it: Thomson would thus have met with both persuasions. His close friend and patron William Bennet of Grubbet, while certainly a Hanoverian supporter, probably had serious reservations about the Union; he was probably of the Squadrone faction, along with his friend, Squadrone leader John Ker, Duke of Roxburghe. The Squadrone Whigs preferred Scotland to be con-

trolled from home, rather than from London. As noted above, Bennet was a member of the Royal Company of Archers (a patriotic group suspected of disaffection during the '15), and must have held a nostalgic or sentimental patriotism for old Scotland (as opposed to active, political nationalism). Bennet was moreover a "literary patriot," and contributed to the Scottish Latinist tradition; as such, he had close ties with the Tory-Jacobite literati in Edinburgh. The idealistic concept of Scotland continuing the Roman way of life and culture went beyond Scottish neo-Latin literature, to encompass social and political concerns, and many Scots saw a parallel in the Union of Scotland with Augustan England, with the relationship of Rome to her provinces in the Roman Empire:¹²⁸ they perhaps did not approve of being a "province" of London, but after the Union, determined (as did Bennet) to make the best of it by doing their part for the good of powerful Great Britain, the new Augustan empire. (In contrast to these Scots, the more vehemently anti-Union Scots tended to identify Scotland with Republican Rome, indicating their respect for her independence and "virtues.")¹²⁹

Allan Ramsay held a similar mixture of political feelings. He was a professed Whig, but opposed the Union; his poem "The Vision" expressed his separatist, home-rule views.¹³⁰ He hoped that the Union, when it came, could prove helpful to Scotland's economy, but he too was a nostalgic patriot and an Archer, and above all a literary nationalist; he advocated Scottish self-improvement, as his poems "The Pleasures of Improvement in Agriculture" (1723), "The Prospect of Plenty" (1720), "An Address to George Drummond Lord Provost," "The City of Edinburgh's Address to the Country," and "To the Music Club" illustrate. All are "political poems designed to encourage urban reform and cultural ac-

tivities in what was threatening to become a provincial desert."¹³¹
 In other words, Ramsay wished to encourage improvement from "within the framework of the Union," to check anglicisation through a "limited nationalism" and "liberal minded patriotism," much as did his contemporary in Glasgow, the so-called "Father of the Scottish Enlightenment," philosopher Francis Hutcheson.¹³²

The young James Thomson held a deep love for Scotland, and his juvenile verses "Upon Beauty" and "Upon the Hoop" echo Ramsay's patriotic Tartana, or, the Plaid¹³³ in their overt Scottish national feeling placed above "British" patriotism. In the end, however, Thomson's literary patriotism (while not without certain nationalistic tensions and qualifications which developed as the poet experienced life in Augustan England-- see Chapter VII) was generally pro-Union, and expressed allegiance to Great Britain, always keeping in mind that, "Britannia too includes our native Country, Scotland."¹³⁴ For himself, he rejected Scots vernacular poetry (though he did attempt it once), as well as Scottish neo-Latin poetry (which he at one time called "Latin Jargon"),¹³⁵ and chose to write in his own unique, Anglo-Scottish adaptation of Augustan English verse. "One of the greatest honours of Thomson's achievement was the service he did in helping forward...the movement of a true union between Scotland and England. He burned to do his country a real service which history might acknowledge."¹³⁶ Though the stance of James Thomson and his contemporary Anglo-Scots has been called "perverted patriotism,"¹³⁷ or a sort of selling out to the more powerful England, Thomson was in fact no less a Scottish patriot than Bennet or Ramsay; he, too, wanted what he thought was best for his country, both economically and culturally, and that was to "uplift" Scotland by joining with England. He especially

hoped to bring Anglo-Scottish literature into the wider sphere of British literature, enriching it with his own worthwhile contribution. He felt that Scotland was a vital, and in no way inferior¹³⁸ part of Great Britain. His choice of English-language poetry, his adding of special Scottish strengths to it, can be interpreted as an act of positive patriotism.

There is no record of Thomson's personal reaction to the Jacobite uprising of 1715, but he certainly supported the Hanoverians in the struggle. He was probably caught up in the university's upheaval when the rebels threatened Edinburgh, and he must have felt some anxiety for his own safety; still, most, if not all, of his closest friends and family sided with the Government, and he most likely felt confident that they would ultimately triumph over the Jacobites. Probably, he shared the general Whig mixed feelings of amusement and nervousness recorded in the letters and publications of the time.¹³⁹ His friend Sir William Bennet played an active role in October, 1715, leading the militia which unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the Lowland rebels from occupying Kelso; the town was occupied for a time. When Edinburgh itself was in danger of occupation by the Jacobites in late 1715, there was some civil disorder, and the university was briefly disturbed.¹⁴⁰ Dutch troops arrived to help defend the city in December, and narrowly averted violence.¹⁴¹

The Jacobite threat was by no means done away with, however; it continued to be a very live issue throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. There was an abortive plan in 1719 in the West of Scotland; in 1724, General Wade, Commander in Chief for Scotland, began to build a vast system of roads and bridges in the Highlands to

make counter-invasion by the English possible, if necessary.¹⁴² In 1722, the Atterbury Plot failed in England. In 1745-6, of course, the major Jacobite offensive took place; Thomson was living in London at that time, and as a Scot, was very likely subjected to ridicule by some of the English despite his strong Whig allegiance. He might even have felt some defensive "nostalgic patriotism" at the time, as the defeat of the Scottish Jacobites was flaunted by the English; certainly some nationalistic tensions appear in his work of that period.

The Whigs were, however, firmly entrenched as leaders of post-Union British Government, although they were split into factions in Scotland and in England. Scottish affairs were administered through one powerful man (it was a notoriously "illiberal" system),¹⁴³ either the Secretary of State for Scotland, or when that office was temporarily out of favour, by some high Scottish official such as the Lord Advocate or the Lord President of the Court of Session.¹⁴⁴ Scottish Members of Parliament were in the small minority in London, and these were mostly chosen through the Scottish leader's influence.¹⁴⁵ The Secretary of State for Scotland, 1716-1725, was the Squadrone Whig, John Ker, First Duke of Roxburghe¹⁴⁶ (Thomson's native shire). He was a friend of William Bennet, and a subscriber to Thomson's Seasons (1730). David Mallet certainly knew the Duke,¹⁴⁷ and Thomson possibly did; he and Thomson were both of Opposition Whig (that is, anti-Walpole) sentiment. When The Duke of Roxburghe was removed from office, no successor as Secretary of State for Scotland was appointed; instead, the brothers for whom the Argathelian Whig faction in Scotland was named, John Campbell, Duke of Argyll and Islay Campbell his brother, came to hold power over Scottish affairs, making themselves "indispensible" by 1733.¹⁴⁸ In 1725, Duncan Forbes of Culloden (1685-1747),

himself an Argathelian, became Lord Advocate for Scotland; he was a good friend and patron to young Thomson. Thomson himself undoubtedly followed these "kaleidoscopic changes" in Scottish government¹⁴⁹ during his decade in Edinburgh, as he had many friends and acquaintances who were involved in politics, as he was concerned for Scotland's welfare and with Scottish-English relations, and especially as he felt increasingly drawn to the centre of British power and patronage, London. There, he would become deeply involved in the Opposition Whig cause, but while he was a student he was primarily concerned with preparing himself for a career in Divinity, or poetry, or both.

In studying the Edinburgh scene of Thomson's student years, it is helpful-- indeed, necessary-- to take a closer look at the archetypal Scot and literary figure of the period, Allan Ramsay. Ramsay (born 1686 in Leadhills, Lanarkshire) was fifteen years Thomson's senior; he was a true Anglo-Scot, his mother being English. He has frequently been labelled a cultural "schizophrenic," driven by mixed motives and torn among sentimental Jacobitism, Scottish chauvinism and Anglophilia; he was certainly not alone, and he is justly considered a representative figure of this period of flux in Scotland. His position symbolises the paradoxes in Scottish culture and national feeling after 1707,¹⁵⁰ which also continued to influence James Thomson. As has been seen, Ramsay was deeply concerned with both Scottish politics and literature (the two were especially closely linked in post-Union Scotland, where literature became the arena for the debate over national identity, after the political issue had been "decided" with the treaty of Union, and literary language both reflected and aggravated the cultural split). The issue of national identity was in fact three-sided (not merely a dichotomy, as it is usually spoken of); the

Scots vernacular poets, the Scottish Latinists and the anglicising Scottish Augustans each held their own views on patriotism and national identity, and these views were represented in the many Edinburgh literary societies which sprang up during the period. Ramsay himself was a member of a number of such clubs; he was politically active, mainly through the vehicle of his literature.¹⁵¹ Before studying Ramsay in more detail, it is necessary first to look more closely at the three facets of Scottish literary-patriotic identity in his day.

Scots vernacular poetry was identified with ardent Scottish patriotism, nationalism and opposition to the Union. Scots as a literary language was beginning to experience a far-reaching revival, thanks to publishers such as Thomas Ruddiman and James Watson. Although it had sunk to the "low" rhetorical level by the eighteenth century and was seldom used in prose by that time due to its "lacking in intellectual fibre and learned vocabulary,"¹⁵² poets such as Ramsay were again writing in Scots, and Middle Scots classics were being re-discovered and published. Ramsay himself was very influential in reviving older Scots literature and in encouraging new, with his EverGreen and the Tea-Table Miscellany. Ramsay belonged to the Easy Club, which was an early model for other "improving" groups in Edinburgh.¹⁵³ Founded in May, 1712, the Easy Club required its members to read The Tatler and The Spectator,¹⁵⁴ to foster "improvement in Conversation."¹⁵⁵ The Club grew increasingly nationalistic, however; the members, who had at first adopted pseudonyms from English literature, soon changed them to Scottish ones (Ramsay, who had been called "Isaac Bickerstaff," became "Gavin Douglas"). The Easy Club probably began to foster Scots literature itself at about this time. The Easy Club was generally anti-Union, and grew so strongly chauvinistic that it was seen as a threat

to the British Government; it was thus dissolved with the Jacobite rebellion of 1715.¹⁵⁶ As for Thomson himself, he was never drawn to such an overtly nationalistic society, and did not attempt to excel in the writing of Scots verse.

The second element of Scottish society in the early eighteenth century, which was also strongly literary-patriotic but in a slightly different sense, was the Scottish Latinist circle of poets and scholars. This loosely-defined circle, directly descended from the Scottish Latinist culture of the Renaissance and dedicated to the "continuation of the Roman world" through the preservation of Scottish classicism,¹⁵⁷ in a sort of "vernacular humanism,"¹⁵⁷ numbered among its diverse adherents physicians such as Archibald Pitcairne (died 1713), Thomas Kincaid and John Drummond, lawyers such as William Scott of Thirlstane, classicists such as Thomas Ruddiman (successor to Pitcairne as unofficial leader of the neo-Latinist group) and Professor John Ker of Aberdeen. Also connected with the group were William Carmichael of Stirling, David Drummond (president of the Royal Company of Archers), Bert. Stot, and of course, William Bennet of Grubbet.¹⁵⁸ Latin had been, it must be recalled, the formal language in Scotland for learned prose and official documents for hundreds of years; it had begun to be replaced in the eighteenth century in this capacity, not by the vernacular Scots, but by southern English. The ancient Scottish Latinist literary and cultural tradition was dying out by this time; it was a rather old-fashioned, conservative sector of Scottish culture, and ultimately "yielded to the Presbyterian Moderates" in "liberalism."¹⁵⁹ Still, it was kept alive in Thomson's day by a small number of Latinists, mainly of Tory-Jacobite and Episcopalian allegiance, but also including some more broad-minded Whigs and Presbyterians such as Bennet.

The Royal Company of Archers, that patriotic society "redolent of an older, fiercer Scotland"¹⁶⁰ which fostered a sort of nostalgic or "romantic Jacobitism," numbered most of the Scottish Latinist poets among its members. Many of these wrote Latin poetry about the Archers group itself. The Archers were so strongly nationalistic that they, like the Easy Club, were also held to be disaffected and were disbanded in 1715; they re-convened in 1724, when Allan Ramsay was admitted as a member. Ramsay wrote several poems to the Archers, including the "Archers' March," which expresses "violently patriotic" feelings.¹⁶¹ The Archers' patriotism was very closely linked, as their poetry shows, with the "Roman ideal," the parallel maintained between old Scotland and Rome, particularly in the field of military prowess. Thomas Ruddiman, classical scholar, publisher and editor, was the chief figure of the Scottish Latinist literary circle in Thomson's day. He felt that current English Augustanism, which sought to return to the classics themselves and to classical "purity," was too narrow, and inadequate in rejecting neo-Latin literature, such as that of Scottish Latinist poet-heroes Buchanan and Johnston; therefore, he could not himself accept the English classical revival. Ruddiman consolidated the Latinist element of Edinburgh society by founding the Society for Improving Classical Studies in 1718, a group which discussed philosophy and law,¹⁶² and attempted to keep alive the Scottish Latinist literary tradition. In general, the Society preserved the "Scoto-Roman ethos: that near-identification which Scottish humanists so loved to practise between the life and culture of their own day and those of ancient Rome."¹⁶³ Its idealistic continuation of "genuine classicism"¹⁶⁴ attracted both Tory and Whig members. Many Divinity students are said to have attended its meetings, to discuss

religious questions and to study the old Latin culture,¹⁶⁵ and Thomson may have been among them. In the controversy over the historical accuracy of Ruddiman's edition of George Buchanan's History, however, the Whig-Presbyterian group of very conservative "Associated Critics" (including Thomson's Professors at Edinburgh University, William Hamilton, Robert Stewart and Charles Mackie) united to oppose the predominantly Tory-Episcopalian Latinists; Thomson could have sided with the Associated Critics on this issue.¹⁶⁶

Ramsay, Thomson and David Mallet all had close friends, such as William Bennet and John Ker, among the Scottish neo-Latinists. Ramsay acquired an element of neoclassical learning, probably through translations, and also advice from Ruddiman and Ker; he wrote Horatian imitations, in Scots.¹⁶⁷ Ker had been Mallet's teacher and correspondent, and close friend; Mallet attempted some English translations of Ker's Latin verse. Thomson himself does not seem to have attempted any Latin poetry, and in fact he spoke disparagingly of some contemporary Scottish Latinist verse; commenting on one of Mallet's translations of a Latin poem by Ker, he wrote: "How dare You immerse Yourself in his Utter Darkness. Death! to sing after a Cuckow; and abett the Murderer of the Classicks....The Muses blush that these, and several Others, should be called in Imitation of the Latin Jargon; which, rather than imitated should be eschewed...."¹⁶⁸ Thomson seems to have disapproved of modern Scottish Latinist literature as being, perhaps, a futile and outdated exercise; he may have felt about it, as he felt about Scots: that it was inappropriate and archaic as a formal literary language by his day, and that it would necessarily limit the scope of the poetry as well as its audience. Also, it is undeniable that the quality of the work of most of his contemporary neo-Latinist versifiers

was rather poor; much of it was trivial, pompous and self-congratulatory. He probably felt, as did the English Augustans whom he emulated, that true neoclassicism meant a return directly to the classics, in English Imitation, rather than inferior modern Invention. Still, as McKillop remarks, "These comments by Thomson are interesting in view of the general impression that his own poetic diction is too heavily Latinized."¹⁶⁹ This is true: Thomson's Latinate, "aureate" English diction is certainly an outgrowth of his Scottish humanistic education, his upbringing in a culture which continued to identify itself with the Roman world. Thomson was clearly influenced by the Scoto-Roman cultural parallel (as seen in the juvenilia, for example "An Epistle to Sir William Bennet") and throughout his mature works; both his diction and rhetorical style, and his subject-matter, show his strong admiration for the Latin classics, and indeed for neo-classical authors in English as well. His comments on Ker and his colleagues were surely, at least in part, given tongue-in-cheek, and were also fairly justified in view of the quality of much Scottish neo-Latin poetry itself. Still, his own Scottish "Roman" heritage would not be forgotten.

The third cultural element in early-eighteenth century Scottish society was, of course, Thomson's own ascendant, anglicising group, composed mainly of the Whig-Presbyterian majority. These Anglo-Scots had a variety of motives for adopting English ways, and especially the English literary language-- some disreputable, some worthwhile; they cannot be easily categorised. It must be said that many of them sought higher social standing by rejecting Scottish language and accent and adopting English manners; such Scots were ashamed of their Scottish nationality, which they felt was inferior to the English. Other, more

practical Scots knew that writings and publications in English would attract the wider literary market.¹⁷⁰ Other Anglo-Scots had more noble motives for embracing English language and literature; these were optimistic about Scotland's "improvement," which could be more quickly and smoothly facilitated in the Union with England. Such Scots were truly patriotic "North Britons" who felt pride in Scottish potential, and hoped, not only to gain from, but also to contribute to, wider British culture. The Prefaces to the Athenian Society publications (one of the numerous "improving" societies in Edinburgh which promoted English literature, and with which Thomson was associated-- see below) make this patriotic aim clear. Ramsay, notorious for his mixed cultural and nationalistic motives, wrote a number of pieces in Augustan English in addition to his Scots verses, but these are generally inferior to the Scots ones, as he never mastered more than the mere form of Augustanism. Thomson, of course, chose English as the medium for his poetry; he did not simply copy Augustan English poetry, however, but rather used it as the basis for his unique poetic language and form, which embody many elements especially Scottish. Thomson was proud of being a Scot, and proud of being a North Briton; indeed, his Scottish contribution to poetry in the English language is invaluable.

Allan Ramsay's prolific and varied poetry was, then, his politics; it reflected complex and seemingly contradictory attitudes to national and personal cultural identity, as he was associated to some extent with all three of these facets of Scottish literary culture. Basically, though, Ramsay was a Whig and "not a fervent Royalist. He was not even anti-English except in that historical sense which made of England a traditional enemy, and the ultimate source of most of Scotland's ills....realistically, he was discontented with conditions in

Scotland, which the Union had improved, feared England's lengthening shadow, and quickly grasped the significance of a loss of national prosperity."¹⁷¹ Most importantly, "he sums up in his own personality the first phase of a national movement towards cultural recovery,"¹⁷² in which Thomson, too, was caught up, and which ultimately produced the Scottish Enlightenment.

James Thomson must have shared many of Ramsay's complex feelings about his native Scotland. His juvenilia attest to his admiration for Ramsay and his poetry; Ramsay's patriotism and Scottish nationalistic sentiment in, for example, Tartana, are echoed in Thomson's early "Upon Beauty" and "Upon the Hoop." But Thomson ultimately chose for himself a different means of resolving the issue, actually emigrating to England to represent Scotland in the field of "British" poetry, rather than remaining in Edinburgh to promote "improvement" from within, as did Ramsay.

It is very probable that Thomson knew Ramsay, as mentioned in Chapter II above, through Sir William Bennet at Marlefield; he almost certainly knew him in Edinburgh. Edinburgh at the time was, after all, a rather small community, especially within its university and literary circles. Ramsay and Thomson might also have met through their Presbyterian worship in the capital city; Ramsay, a rather liberal, Moderate Presbyterian and "conventional believer,"¹⁷³ according to tradition held a pew at the Tolbooth Kirk (where Thomson's family friend William Gusthart became minister in 1721), and only changed to the Tron Kirk later in the decade.¹⁷⁴ In addition to William Bennet, Ramsay and Thomson had many friends in common. Ramsay belonged to a group called the Worthy Club, a literary and convivial

society of important men in the Scottish society of the time. Among the Worthy Club members were several of Thomson's friends, such as Duncan Forbes of Culloden, Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto and William Aikman, the artist. David Mallet, too, knew Ramsay and assisted him in collecting material for the Tea-Table Miscellany.

Out of Thomson's and Ramsay's probable acquaintance arose a curious and long-lived legend. It seems that Ramsay frequently read drafts of his pastoral drama The Gentle Shepherd (published 1725) to friends, to solicit their critical comments and advice. This practise led to the attribution of "authorship" of the Shepherd to several different people, who probably did offer some advice about the play to Ramsay. One adviser and suspected "author" was William Hamilton of Gilbertfield.¹⁷⁵ Another of the alleged authors was William Bennet of Grubbet,¹⁷⁶ although "it is likely that Allan Ramsay was no farther beholden to him and his other friends, than for a few hints and castigations."¹⁷⁷ Also, this legend may have arisen because both Bennet's father and he himself were in exile on the Continent during the late-seventeenth century Covenanting strife, returning with William of Orange in 1688 like the Shepherd's Sir William Worthy. Sir William Bennet the Younger was also said to have been the model for "Patie," William Worthy's son.¹⁷⁸ It has likewise been suggested that the setting of The Gentle Shepherd "exactly parallels that around Marlefield House,"¹⁷⁹ so well-loved by Ramsay. Others have conjectured that the model for Sir William Worthy was Sir William Purves,¹⁸⁰ or David Forbes of Newhall,¹⁸¹ or Dr. Alexander Pennecuik of Newhall (who had also spent time in exile, to return with the Glorious Revolution).¹⁸² Newhall House in Carlops, near Edinburgh, where the Worthy Club some-

times met, has been proposed as the most likely site of the play.¹⁸³ Another possible model for William Worthy might have been Sir George Baillie of Jerviswood (husband of Lady Grisell Home Baillie, distant kinswoman of Thomson); Baillie was also exiled in Holland for three years, and returned in 1688. Like Worthy, he was known as a kind landlord whom his tenants loved.¹⁸⁴ The name "Sir William Worthy" may have been simply a compliment¹⁸⁵ to whomever the model was; it may have been suggested by the Worthy Club itself, the members of which seem to have offered liberal criticism to Ramsay on his composition of the play.¹⁸⁶

The most intriguing legend of this nature is that Thomson himself was the author of The Gentle Shepherd. If Thomson was in fact associated with the Worthy Club in some way, as seems likely, and if he attended their meetings, either at Mrs. Forbes's tavern in Leith or at Newhall House, then he might also have been a party to the literary-critical sessions on The Gentle Shepherd while it was in progress. Indeed, Thomson's literary activities during the period 1721-25 are entirely undocumented, and leave a gap for legitimate speculation. An early, unpublished reference to Thomson's alleged authorship of the play comes in a personal letter from a descendant of Thomson's family, a Miss Elizabeth Bell, to her friend Mrs. Stewart (January 20, 1829); Miss Bell wrote that a "near relation" of the poet's told her that he recalled the Rev. Mr. James Bell of Coldstream (Thomson's nephew who had projected a life and edition of Thomson in the later eighteenth century, which he never completed) as saying that he had "strong grounds for believing Thomson to have assisted Ramsay in writing The Gentle Shepherd."¹⁸⁷ James Bell had been a correspondent with the Thomson enthusiast the Earl of Buchan, who may have publicised and

embroidered the tale of Thomson as "author" of the play. The published attributions to Thomson began to appear in the late eighteenth century; they have been usefully traced by J. Burns Martin,¹⁸⁸ who of course rejects the story as utterly false. The story takes on several variations, but generally holds that Thomson, having written the pastoral, felt that it would be better received under the name of the now-famous man of letters, Ramsay. Thomson accordingly went to Ramsay's shop, and while being shaven (or, variously, having his wig curled) proposed that Ramsay "father" the work and lend his name to it. By the early twentieth century, the debate over the play's authorship had degenerated into a series of silly quibbles over whether Ramsay, as a city wigmaker, could have known about rural life and shepherding¹⁸⁹ (he in fact did), and whether as a wigmaker he would have been shaving his customer Thomson. The general consensus in the end, however, was of course that Thomson could not have been the author of The Gentle Shepherd. "The fact that Ramsay was never a barber should solve the minor problem, and the existence of early drafts of the pastorals in Ramsay's hand should convince even the most ardent Thomsonian of the error of his ways."¹⁹¹ Other disclaimers were on generic and stylistic grounds: Thomson was not accomplished (especially as a youth) in either comedy or drama, and his juvenile pastorals in English were merely "experiments" which do not at all resemble the Scots Gentle Shepherd.¹⁹² (Thomson, in fact, never acquired a strong sense of the dramatic, despite the fact that he wrote a number of dramas in later years.) Also, although "there is in Ramsay that love of the country and that personal observation of nature which was, to a greater degree, in Thomson from the beginning," Ramsay's "naturalism" of description was more in the tradition of the older Scots poets and

the balladists, and "rarely or never descends to the minute or particular, in the manner of Thomson...."¹⁹³ Leigh Hunt, among others, called the attribution ridiculous, "finding 'not a trace of resemblance to Thomson's style in The Gentle Shepherd.'"¹⁹⁴ The legend that Thomson authored the pastoral drama may contain a small grain of truth, however; the legend most probably arose from Thomson's association with Ramsay through the Worthy Club: if Thomson had sat in on the group listening to and offering advice on the drafts of The Gentle Shepherd, then he, like the others in the group, might also have been considered an "author" of it. The fact that both Ramsay and Thomson, in their own ways, set out in the Scottish tradition, to write nature-poetry can be seen by comparing Ramsay's important Preface to the EverGreen (1724) with Thomson's Preface to "Winter" (2nd edition, 1726); the similarity of their aims for Scottish nature-poetry might have reinforced the "authorship" claim. In any case, Thomson must surely have known Ramsay, for such a legend to have taken root at all.

Besides Allan Ramsay, a number of other eminent Worthy Club members were to play an important part in Thomson's future. The Worthy Club may have been the group referred to by Patrick Murdoch, of "certain learned gentlemen, into whose hands a few of Mr. Thomson's first essays had fallen," and who did not think very highly of them; these men apparently criticised stylistic improprieties while disregarding the young poet's enthusiasm and originality.¹⁹⁵ Still, members of the Worthy Club were not all negative in responding to Thomson's juvenile verse, and many of its "learned gentlemen" must be counted as important influences on his career as a poet. Thomson already knew Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto (first Earl, second Baronet) from his Border days. He almost certainly knew Duncan Forbes of Culloden in Edinburgh;

Forbes is said to have "seen a specimen of Mr. Thomson's poetry in Scotland,"¹⁹⁶ and the young poet possibly accompanied Forbes to Newhall House on occasion.¹⁹⁷ Forbes was an "intimate friend" and mentor to Thomson¹⁹⁸ after he arrived, poor and bewildered, in London. Thomson would also become a close friend of Forbes' son John or "Jock," whom Patrick Murdoch tutored in England and took on the Grand Tour. Portrait-artist William Aikman (1682-1731) was also a "Worthy"; he had studied art and classical antiquities in Italy, and returned to Edinburgh in 1712. Patronised by John Campbell, Duke of Argyle, he ultimately settled in London in 1723 (Ramsay wrote pastoral verses to him, "To Mr. William Aikman" and "Betty and Kate: A Pastoral Farewell to Mr. Aikman, when he went for London", when Aikman left Scotland).¹⁹⁹ Ramsay wrote two elegies to Aikman on his death; Mallet and Thomson also wrote elegies to him. Aikman and Thomson were very close friends in London, but they may have known one another before that, in Scotland; Thomson possibly met Aikman at Newhall. Aikman painted two oil-portraits of Thomson, c. 1725-6 in London, showing the poet as already growing corpulent and unattractive; however, an undated Aikman sketch of Thomson survives, which portrays him looking slimmer, younger and rather handsome.²⁰⁰ This sketch has been tentatively dated, c. 1720, that is, while Thomson was still a student in Edinburgh.²⁰¹ Thomson's early acquaintance with William Aikman (and possibly with Allan Ramsay, Jr. as well) may have sparked his life-long interest in and knowledge of art, as reflected in his poetry (the "painterly analogy" has frequently been applied in Seasons criticism) and in his private life (he owned many prints and pictures, as well as books on art).²⁰² Through Aikman and the "Worthies," Thomson knew (or at least knew of) Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, Second Baronet (1676-

1755); Aikman was a cousin of Sir John, and painted portraits of him and of Robert Walpole which the two exchanged. He also acted as Sir John's art agent in the London art market.²⁰³ Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, much like Sir William Bennet, lived by the Scoto-Roman ideal; he built a Palladian villa at Mavisbank, he was an antiquarian and connoisseur of classical and neoclassical art and literature, he wrote a Latin treatise on The History of the Union,²⁰⁴ and he generally created a small "Roman world" for himself in Scotland.²⁰⁵ Later, while living in London, Thomson would be called upon to exercise great tact in commenting on Sir John's rather poor poem, The Country Seat, which Clerk had sent in draft to Aikman.²⁰⁶ Another "Worthy" whom Thomson may have known was Dr. Alexander Pennecuik of Newhall and Romanno (1652-1722), author of Description of Tweeddale (1715) and of several verses of natural description. His "Morning Walk to Arthur's Seat" (1720) has been called "the first hill-poem in blank verse" (Dyer's "Grongar Hill" was not published until 1726).²⁰⁷ His Horatian piece "To my friend inviting him to the Country"²⁰⁸ possibly influenced Thomson's juvenile "Of a Country Life" (see Chapter IV, below). His nephew, Alexander Pennecuik, was a friend of Sir William Bennet, and also a poet; he wrote a Scots mock-elegy ("William Lithgow, his Epitaph")²⁰⁹ predating those by Ramsay, which might also have influenced Thomson's juvenile mock-elegy in Scots, "An Elegy Upon Jamie Therburn in Chatto." The Third Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, subscribers to the 1730 Seasons and patrons of John Gay, were also visitors to Newhall House, and Gay probably accompanied them on occasion. Thomson, whose juvenile "Of a Country Life" was primarily based on Gay's Rural Sports, might even have met the English poet there.

The one Edinburgh literary club of which Thomson was certainly a member,

was the so-called "Grotesque Club," the purpose of which seems to have been "improvement" in (English) arts and letters. For Thomson and his contemporaries who hoped for social and literary advancement, it appeared that "nothing...remained but to write classical English, which, though exceedingly difficult to men who spoke their mother tongue [Scots] without disguise, was greatly facilitated by the enthusiastic ardour with which they studied the best English authors. In all their essays at composition, it behoved them to avoid everything that could be called a Scotticism or solecism, while they endeavoured to catch the manner of their favourite writers...."²¹⁰ Thomson himself certainly needed "improvement"; his first extant letter (December 11, 1724) from Edinburgh, to Dr. William Cranstoun,²¹¹ as well as the only MS of his juvenile poems, show many irregular and inconsistent spellings (for example, the typical Scots metathesis, confusing TCH with CTH, or occasionally CT, as in "macthless," "cacth," "bewict'd"), a very weak sense of punctuation and capitalisation, and a number of Scotticisms such as "hear storied," "com'd," "lugs").²¹² There is some improvement, however, in the second and third extant letters to Cranstoun, and by the time he was writing letters home to Scotland from London, Thomson had attained considerable elegance and polish (though the occasional Scotticism still appears). "Improvement" in English cannot have been an easy task for the young Scot.

In such clubs as the Grotesque Club, "members used to submit their first essays in composition to the friendly censure of their associates";²¹³ it was thus, on the model of Continental literary societies, a "democratic" learning experience.²¹⁴ Such outspoken criticism must have been painful for the shy and self-conscious Thomson at first, but he finally did submit some of his poetry to the Club; it was not much

appreciated. Clubs such as the Grotesques, wherein the enthusiastic Anglo-Scots tended to "out-Augustan the Augustans" in trying to "enforce conformity to the 'proper,'"²¹⁵ strongly discouraged any deviation from Augustan neoclassical literary norms, any trace of "singularity, or 'originality', and egocentricity."²¹⁶ Thomson's juvenile poems were certainly not always strictly proper or decorous, nor did they succeed in conforming exactly to the rules for Augustan poetry. A number of them do, however, display an element of originality (probably not deliberate at this stage, rather born of naïveté), a spark of enlivening "enthusiasm" which Murdoch notes that the more distinguished Edinburgh literati overlooked.²¹⁷ The language of the juvenilia was not always strictly formal English; the sentimental or emotional element was not quite consistent with Augustan objectivity and dignity. The subject-matter of many of the poems, natural description, in blank verse, was also fairly new (although it was not unique to Thomson: "there seems, in fact, to have been a rather singular outburst of nature poetry in blank verse among Edinburgh students of this time," by Mallet, John Armstrong,²¹⁸ and Robert Blair²¹⁹ in addition to Thomson himself). Thomson's juvenile poems are in general mediocre-- but his rejection by the Edinburgh literati might also have been due, in part, to his very originality-- or, as the Scottish Enlightenment rhetoricians would later call it, "genius."

Added to the criticism of the "learned gentlemen" and literati, Thomson had also to endure the harsh criticism of his peers. David Mallet, also a Grotesque Club member, thus wrote of Thomson in 1726:

["Winter"] was written by that dull fellow, whom [Alexander] Malcolm calls the jest of our club. The injustice I did him then, in joining with my companions to ridi-

cule the first, imperfect essays of an excellent genius, was a strong motive to make me active in endeavouring to assist and encourage him since....²²⁰

"Mr. Thomson, however, conscious of his own strength, was not discouraged by this treatment..."²²¹ or at least he maintained a genial front, while he was forming plans to go south to England, to seek a more receptive audience for his poetry.

Very little is known of the Grotesque Club itself, except what Aaron Hill printed in his Plain Dealer (No. 46, August 28, 1724), sent to him by one "Fergus Bruce" (possibly Allan Ramsay himself,²²² or Joseph Mitchell, or even the presumptuous David Mallet). "Fergus Bruce," whoever he was, was obviously "very concerned with the social aspects of language,"²²³ and with Scottish self-improvement. Of the Grotesque Club he wrote:

A Society of Young Gentlemen, most if not all of them, Students in the University of Edinburgh, who from a Sympathy of Affections, founded on a Similitude of Parts and Genius, have united themselves into a Body, under title of THE GROTESQUE CLUB; the Reason of which Name, I shall explain in a future Paper [unfortunately, he did not do so]. Their Business, to express it in the Words of one of their own Members, is, A Friendship that knows no Strife, but that of a generous Emulation, to excell, in Virtue, Learning, and Politeness.²²⁴

Hill then printed the anonymous poem "The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power," which has ever since been included among Thomson's juvenilia; Hill had also recently published Mallet's ballad "William and Margaret" (July, 1724). In the Plain Dealer (No. 55) of September 28, 1724, "Fergus Bruce" thanked Hill for his tribute to the Grotesque Club, "But the Gentlemen of the Grotesque Club, whom you have so remarkably distinguish'd, must represent their Sentiments, in a better

Manner than I can; and I will not pretend to speak their Sense, or anticipate their Gratitude."²²⁵

It was as fellow-members of the Grotesque Club, that the students Thomson and David Mallet (1705?-1765) began their important, lifelong friendship. Mallet was the son of a gardener at Abercairny, Perthshire; he was educated there by John Ker, later Professor of Classics at Aberdeen. Mallet's real name was "Malloch"; he changed it to "Mallet" after he had settled in London. He also succeeded (unlike Thomson) in removing all traces of the Scots accent from his speech, and in ridding his expression of Scotticisms. He was thus able, later, to help David Hume purge his MSS of Scotticisms.²²⁶ Dr. Johnson remarked that Mallet, "having cleared his tongue from his native pronunciation so as to be no longer distinguished as a Scot...seems inclined to disencumber himself from all adherences of his [Scottish] original, and took upon him to change his name from Scotch Malloch to English Mallet, without any imaginable reason of preference which the eye or ear can discover."²²⁷ One reason for the change of name might have been critic John Dennis's habit of calling him "Moloch."²²⁸ In London society, Mallet was not generally well-liked, particularly by his fellow Scots; "it was remarked of him that he was the only Scot whom Scotchmen did not commend."²²⁹ Why he and Thomson remained such close friends is a mystery. Mallet, who frequently showed himself to be an egotistical, deceitful and unscrupulous man, was very different from Thomson, and even "more inferior to his amiable friend in heart than in genius...."²³⁰ But Mallet, after all, could be "a pleasant man... with much ability and excellent talk, in spite of his insufferable conceit,"²³¹ and both he and Thomson shared an overwhelming interest

in the poetry of natural description, had many old friends in common from student days, and held the same Opposition Whig political views. Mallet, who had gone to London in 1723, was undoubtedly helpful to Thomson when he arrived two years later. Mallet became tutor to the sons of the Duke of Montrose in England, and may have assisted Thomson in finding a tutorial position; Mallet, after all, clearly felt the need to assuage his conscience for having made fun of Thomson when they were both members of the Grotesque Club. Their literary association was especially close in London, as they exchanged MSS for criticism and comment (for example, Mallet influenced the "sublime" descriptions in "Winter," which in turn influenced his Excursion, 1728); they surely shared ideas on poetry even earlier, while apprentice-poets in Edinburgh.

The other literary club with which both Thomson and Mallet were associated (though they were probably not official members)²³² was the Athenian Society, a group which may have been modelled on the Athenian Society in London.²³³ This club was better-known than the Grotesque Club, because of its several publications. It has been said that Allan Ramsay was a member,²³⁴ but this is doubtful; he may, however, have been closely associated with it. The Athenian Society has been referred to as "Mitchell's Club."²³⁵ Its leader, Joseph Mitchell (1684-1738) was a contemporary of Ramsay; later, Mitchell's adverse criticism would cause both Ramsay and Thomson to fall out with him.²³⁶ Mitchell was a poet and arbiter of taste among the rising young Anglo-Scottish poets of Edinburgh. One of these young poets was John Callender of Craigforth, who wrote a fulsome "Epistle to Mr. M[itchel]l" for the Edinburgh Miscellany:

To thee, dear Friend, who prun'd my flutt'ring Wing,
 Inspir'd my Muse, and taught me how to sing,

invoking Mitchell to,

Clap but my Cheek, it will afford Delight,
 And when I err, but set me in the right;
 Approve at first my criminal Essays,
 And, with good Words, correct my Infant Lays.²³⁷

Mitchell had once intended to become a Presbyterian minister, and attended Edinburgh University for two years (1712-13), but chose instead a literary career. His early poetry, like Thomson's, was much influenced by Isaac Watts (whom he knew), and in general by the "emotional" element in Scottish Calvinism; by 1729, however, he was no longer a religious poet nor a religious man.²³⁸ As did so many of his Scottish contemporaries, Mitchell eventually went to London to practise his art; there, he joined Aaron Hill's literary circle. Mitchell would become the only critic who, for his remarks on "Winter," genuinely angered the genial Thomson. While they were still in Edinburgh, however, Mitchell must have offered no little encouragement to the younger poet.

The Athenian Society published several volumes of poetry. In 1719, it seems to have brought out a collection of five translations of Horace's "Epistle to Nero," four of which were by Scotsmen: Mr. Stewart, Mr. [R.] Boyd, Mr. [C.] Cunningham and Mitchell himself. These translations were described as "below mediocrity."²³⁹ The Society also published a work called the Scots Miscellany, c. 1719, no copy of which is now extant.²⁴⁰ These poems, including the "best" one by Mallet and a "very poor" one by John Callender of Craigforth, were likewise described as "in general but indifferent."²⁴¹ Another volume,

published in London for the Athenian Society, was Lugubres Cantus: Poems on Several Grave and Important Subjects, Chiefly Occasion'd by the Death of the late Ingenious Youth John Mitchell, by Joseph Mitchell John Calendar [Callender], et. al.; ²⁴² this collection of primarily elegiac and meditative-religious poetry was in memory of the younger brother of Joseph Mitchell, John, who died in 1719, and also of a "Mr. Foord." It also served to publicise both the poetic accomplishments and the patriotism of the rising Anglo-Scottish literati, as the Preface makes clear:

It may be sufficient to tell, that besides the Charms of Nature and Friendship, which are conspicuous in these loose and careless Performances, the Zeal we have for our Country's Honour and Interest, and the Encouragement we are dispos'd to afford our Youth, who begin of late to show a noble Genius, and discover a generous Emulation in the Study of all polite Accomplishments, particularly Poetry, put us upon this Method; and we hope, since we are as good Friends to the Publick, and as seldom uneasy to it, as any Set of Mortals, no Body will deny us the Privilege of acting as well as Thinking freely, when we have a Mind.

'Ere long (if the Prospect we now have of our rising Generation in Scotland deceive us not) the World may have the Satisfaction to know, and be better entertained by them, in whose Name this Preface is compos'd by...J. Hume.²⁴³

In other words, the Athenian Society's "Method" seems to have been to make a serious point of bringing the "rising Generation" of Anglo-Scottish poets to the public notice. Though none of Thomson's early poems appear in Lugubres Cantus, those of a number of his associates were included. Joseph Mitchell wrote "Part I" of the volume; "Part II" is by John Callender of Craigforth, who also contributed to the Edinburgh Miscellany, where Thomson's first published poems appeared. Callender's poetry in Lugubres was described as, "of about the same

[mediocre] quality as Mitchell's."²⁴⁴ Among Callender's verses is the "Epistle to Robert Blair," recording his close friendship with the poet of The Grave.²⁴⁵ John Callender of Craigforth, Senior, was the father of the late-eighteenth century critic, poet and translator of the same name, who among other things edited Paradise Lost (1750). The elder Callender seems to have been a "flimsy, affected lad" who died fairly young.²⁴⁶ Other contributors of the several verses which prefixed the two Parts of Lugubres were the Scots R. Boyd, C. Cunningham and Robert Duncan. Duncan and Thomson had been classmates in William Scott's Greek class of 1715; Duncan was later ordained the minister of Tillicoultry. He "was a man of much wit and genius, and very amiable.... He got his death by travelling on a tempestuous winter day to preach at Norriestown."²⁴⁷ Among the other prefatory verses in Lugubres are ones by "A. [Ambrose] Philips" and "E. [Edward] Young," indicating some close connection between the Edinburgh Athenian Society and the "rising Generation" of English descriptive-meditative poets. (Thomson was to know Young personally in later years, in London.) Philips wrote a poem "To the Author of the First Part of the Lugubres Cantus,"²⁴⁸ that is, Joseph Mitchell, where he shows sympathy with the difficulties which aspiring Scottish poets meet:

But most they are expos'd to publick Spite,
 Who in a rude and sullen Country write.
 Ungenerous Minds, with Prejudice possest,
 Despite the Brave, and make their Works a Jest:
 While others meanly reckon Nothing fine,
 Can in a poor abandon'd Nation shine;
 That foggy Air th' aspiring Genius checks,
 And adverse Fate a noble Spirit breaks.
 As if the Oak on Mountains could not rise,
 And Palms oppress'd shoot faster to the Skies.

He calls on these young poets, to:

In spite of Censure and Misfortune rise,
Dear Youth, your rugged Land to civilize;

and finally admits,

That we must own the English Muse is yours,
With as much Right and Liberty as ours.

Edward Young, in his "To Mr. Mitchell,"²⁴⁹ hails the new Anglo-Scottish poetic effort:

Our Hopes and fond Endeavours now succeed,
Edina's Bards begin to raise their Head.

Indeed, the Lugubres Cantus was published in London, with an eye toward bringing this fresh Anglo-Scottish talent to the attention of English audiences, patrons and publishers; poets Philips and Young clearly offered the young Scots much encouragement in their literary endeavours. Lugubres Cantus is almost certainly the volume vaguely recalled by John Ramsay of Ochertyre, a volume "by that class of people [the Athenians]. I remember neither the title nor the contents, but I was struck with many verses by the author of the 'Night Thoughts,' to these juvenile poets, praising them for their generous attempt to introduce the English Muses into Scotland...."²⁵⁰

The important Edinburgh Miscellany (1720)²⁵¹ where Thomson's first published verses appeared, was another publication of the Athenian Society (this one published in Edinburgh), and likewise advertised its primary aim of encouraging young Anglo-Scottish poets, and bringing their efforts to public notice. Its Preface, by one "W. C.," is somewhat condescending and also rather apologetic for the poor quality of some of the verses in the volume:

...we have ventur'd to publish several juvenile Poems, where the Dawings [Scotticism] of a good Genius appear'd, merely to encourage the Authors, and raise a generous Emulation amongst their Companions. Perhaps our Fondness to cherish the sprightly Youth, has occasion'd some Blunders here and there in this Volume, which we wou'd not have indulg'd in the Performances of more grown People....Tho' the snarling Part of Mankind may easily find Matter to work on here; tho' they may censure, very justly, a great many Poems taken separately; yet there are also Pieces against which Malice it self can find no Exception, for the sake of which the rest may be allowed to pass Scot-free (to use our own idiom) in a Work of this Sort.²⁵²

Indeed, certain members of the rather snobbish Athenian Society may have been among those "learned gentlemen" who so severely ridiculed young Thomson's early poetry. (Does the author of the Preface, who styles himself "W. C.," perhaps speak for the Worthy Club? Might he be Ramsay himself? The Preface concludes, "Our Book-seller desires we should add, that, since there are none of our own Composures here, the second Volume...shall contain a considerable Number of them." A second volume was, however, never published.) At any rate, the Athenian Society's motive in publishing Edinburgh's developing juvenile poetry was "generous," and even Scottish-patriotic. The Preface speaks of its mission thus:

PEACE be with the Soul of that charitable and courteous Author [Shaftesbury], who, for the common Benefit of his Fellow-Creatures, introduced the ingenious Way of Miscellaneous writing! It has disclos'd those various Seeds of Wit, which lay suppress'd in many a Bosom, and has rear'd numberless Conceits and curious Fancies, which the natural Rudeness and Asperity of their native Soil wou'd have with-held, or at least not have permitted to rise above the Ground. From every Field, from every Hedge or Hillock, we now gather, as delicious Fruits and flagrant [sic] Flowers, as of old from the richest and best cultivated Gardens.

The Publishers of this MISCELLANY have the Pleasure, to entertain their Country, and particularly this good Town, with a variety of Poems, that had either never been compos'd, or never seen the Light without it....As we are conscious of the Integrity and Generosity of our Endeavours for the Honour of our Country and the Improvement of the Youth, so we dread not the Fury of those who think 'tis modish and witty to Censure....²⁵³

Several of the Edinburgh Miscellany poems themselves likewise express the Athenian Society's goals in promoting Anglo-Scottish poetry; they show awareness of Scottish potential despite cultural set-backs, the desire to build on Scottish strengths which can equal and exceed (not merely imitate) English accomplishments, and the patriotic optimism that Scotland can and will "improve" herself. This patriotic "determination that now that Scotland was North Britain its writers and thinkers should show the world that it could represent Britain proudly in the eyes of Europe and indeed beat the English at their own game by producing works...written in a pure and elegant English style,"²⁵⁴ was expressed by "J. C." (Callender of Craigforth) in the Miscellany thus:

In spite of our hereditary Snows,
Our Winds and Ice a noble Fervour glows
In Scottish Breasts, which, if improven, vyes
With English Warmth produc'd in clement Skies.²⁵⁵

Interestingly, while all the Edinburgh Miscellany poems are in English and their very presentation was patriotic in purpose, they were not limited strictly to pro-"British" or pro-Hanoverian allegiance, nor did they support wholesale anglicisation. The "Holy Ode," by an unidentified "A.," for example, is a Jacobite piece, which links Jacobitism with Scottish national identity.²⁵⁶ There is also an Archers poem in the volume, the nostalgic-patriotic "A Poem Upon the Young-Company of Archers," by Thomas Boyd,²⁵⁷ which harks back to Scot-

land's ancient glory and urges the "Caledonian youth" to continue to uphold it:

Go on, brave Youth, and still those Shafts employ,
The En'my's Terror, and the Lover's Joy.
From them the fading Thistle Help shall find,
They shall, in future Days, her Foes remind,
That tho her ancient Thorns, thro' Guilt, withdrew,
Your Darts shall Arm her terribly anew.

The patriotism represented by the Edinburgh Miscellany was, then, of a special nature, thoroughly Scottish and clearly not willing for Scotland simply to be absorbed into Great Britain, losing her national identity; the young patriots of the Athenian Society hoped to show that Scotland could be "separate but equal" to England in the production of literature in English. Thomson himself surely subscribed to such Scottish "literary patriotism," which he was never entirely to forsake.

The contributors to the Edinburgh Miscellany, whether signed, initialled, or anonymous, represented various elements: many were "young People, at School or College" such as Thomson and Mallet; some were members of the rather progressive ladies' improvement society, the Fair Intellectual Society; others were older Scottish poets whose verses had been borrowed from earlier publications (for example, there are poems by Sir Robert Ayton, Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh and James Graham, Marquis of Montrose which had been published in Watson's Choice Collection).²⁵⁸ James Thomson's contributions to the Edinburgh Miscellany, subtitled "By a Student in the University" and initialled "T.," are: "Of a Country Life" (an important pre-Seasons descriptive poem), "Upon Happiness" (a lengthy religious-philosophical piece), and "Verses on receiving a Flower from his Mistress" (a trivial courtly-love verse).²⁵⁹ "From the point of technique they are among the worst" in the volume,²⁶⁰

but they do give interesting insights into the development of Thomson's genius; they will be examined in the next chapter of this thesis.

Mallet's poems, subtitled "By a Youth in his Fifteenth Year" and initialled "D. M.," are: "A Pastoral, Inscrib'd to Mr. [Joseph] Mitchell" (a pastoral dialogue), "Chapter II of Solomon's Song" (a Scriptural paraphrase), "The Grove or Interview" (modelled on Ramsay's The Morning Interview), and "Epithalamium on the Marriage of a Friend."²⁶¹

Other contributors included John Callender of Craigforth, a Mr. Hepburn, a Mr. James Arbuckle, Robert Symmer, a Mr. Hume, and probably Robert Duncan ("D."). Several of John Callender's verses in the Miscellany, styled "J. C.," such as "The Hawk and Nightingale," "A Pastoral Song, Occasion'd by the Absence of his Friend," "Verses Sent to His Friend, with a Hare taken by his Hound in the Country," and "The Elevation," bear close resemblance to Thomson's juvenilia in both theme and style,²⁶² as shall be noted in the discussion of Thomson's juvenile poetry in Chapter IV.

Robert Symmer (variously Simmer, Symmon, or Seymour) was a fellow-student of Thomson and Mallet; he matriculated in William Scott's Greek class in 1719, and in Colin Drummond's class, 1720. He was possibly related to Alexander Symmer, prominent Edinburgh bookseller,²⁶³ or to John Symmer, burgess and merchant who stood as witness to the baptisms of several of Allan Ramsay's children.²⁶⁴ Symmer's poems, signed "S.," were said to have been written when he was aged fifteen.²⁶⁵ Like Thomson and Mallet, he too emigrated to London to seek his fortune. Symmer was among Thomson's closest friends throughout his life in England; he was part of the poet's "Scottish Circle" there.

"Mr. Hume" has been said to be Henry Home, Lord Kames himself,²⁶⁶ although

this is not certain. There were several Humes or Homes in the university community at the time; "Mr. Hume" might have been the same "J. Hume" who wrote the Preface to Lugubres Cantus. Henry Home was a law student in Edinburgh at the time the Edinburgh Miscellany was published. "Mr. Hume"'s contributions to the volume are: "To a very Poring and Speculative Gentleman," "On a Certain dull Beau at the Play-house," "Ode xxiii of Anacreon, English'd," and "A Song."²⁶⁷ The most recent biographer of Henry Home, Lord Kames believes that the poems were indeed his, and that "the role of critic had undoubtedly been thrust upon Home as a result of the singular lack of success which attended his efforts at versifying, published in the Edinburgh Miscellany." Home's close friend, poet William Hamilton of Bangour, said he, "'from Hume learned verse with sense to criticize.'"²⁶⁸ Home clearly "'had the good sense very soon to perceive that poetry was not his fort.'"²⁶⁹ It is intriguing to speculate that in youth James Thomson might have been acquainted with Henry Home, later to be Lord Kames, through the Athenian Society; developing from their similar backgrounds in pre-Enlightenment Edinburgh, in later years the poet would struggle toward a new poetry which epitomised the "new rhetoric" which the rhetorician Home would systematise in his Elements of Criticism (1762).

So, Thomson's membership in the Grottesque Club, and his association with the Athenian Society and possibly with the Worthy Club, were perhaps the most significant educational experiences for the apprentice-poet in Scotland. What he learned there, in ideas and attitudes, in language and literature, he would continue to refine throughout his career. Many of the people he met through these societies would con-

tinue to be his friends and confidants throughout his life. Thomson, as part of the "first wave" of the "improvement" campaign in eighteenth-century Scotland, was by far the most successful of Anglo-Scots of his generation, in the field of poetry.

Thomson was well-prepared, then, to embark upon a career, either as a divine, or as a poet, or both, by 1725. What had he decided to do? Some biographers have held that Thomson gave up the ministry as a direct result of Professor William Hamilton's reprimand of his poetical Psalm-exercise;²⁷² this may indeed have discouraged him, and may have whetted his interest in a poetical career, but since the incident probably occurred in about 1720 (early in his Divinity study), it could not have been the sole deterrent. Thomson in fact stayed on at Divinity College until late 1724 or early 1725, and must nearly have completed his six-year course there, though he never sat the trials. His letters to William Cranstoun from the spring of 1725 reveal much about his plans at this stage. It seems that at first he hoped for a poetical career within the ministry, the sort of double-vocation becoming common in England at that time (for example, Isaac Watts) but as yet more difficult to achieve in Scotland, where the Kirk still tended to discourage imaginative literature. Of this plan he wrote to Cranstoun (April, 1725):

twill be prodigiously difficult to succeed in the business you know I design. however come what will come I shall make an effort and leave the rest to providence. ther is I'm perswaded a necessary fix'd chain of things, and I hope my fortune whatever it be shall be link'd to diligence and honesty...succeed or not I firmly resolve to pursue divinity as the only thing now I am fitt for. now if I can't accomplish the design on which I came up [to London] I think, I had best make interest and pass my tryalls here so

that if I be oblig'd soon to return to Scotland again I may not return no better than I came away. and to be deeply serious with you the more I see of the vanity and wickedness of the world I'm more inclin'd to that sacred office.²⁷³

Eric Taylor suggests that Aaron Hill's encouragement and his publication of Thomson's "Works and Wonders of Almighty Power" in 1724, as well as the fact that his poet-friends Mitchell and Mallet had already gone there, were the influences which induced Thomson to go to London.²⁷⁴ Taylor asserts that Thomson went to London, "to write poetry of a certain kind; namely, poetry of theological content and religious purpose...."²⁷⁵ Isaac Watts may have been Thomson's model in this endeavour to become a minister and to write successful religious poetry; he certainly wanted to make a popular success of his literary efforts: "I shall do all that's in my pow'r; act, hope, and so either make something out or be bury'd in obscurity...."²⁷⁶ Watts, as shall be seen in the next Chapter of this thesis, would be a significant and usually-neglected influence on Thomson's early poetry. Léon Morel felt that Thomson may even have contemplated becoming a minister of the Church of England, as did his classmates Patrick Murdoch and Hugh Warrender; there, a greater "latitude of belief" might have been more congenial to his own increasingly Moderate beliefs.²⁷⁷ McKillop, however, holds that Thomson's plan perhaps to "pass my tryalls here" in England referred to his taking the Presbyterian trials there, at some later date.²⁷⁸

Several motives lay behind Thomson's move south. In addition to the Scottish Kirk's distrust of imaginative literature which still lingered, despite increasingly liberal views within the Kirk even in Thomson's day, and the fact that literary patrons and publishers in Scotland were

relatively few until the next decade and after, one chief motive must have been poverty, and the desire for material improvement. Thomson thus represented the typical eighteenth-century Scot's "pattern of education, poverty, courage, ambition, emigration and success...."²⁷⁹

At that post-Union time, "Scotsmen seeking fortune no longer went abroad: they just went over the Border."²⁸⁰ Thomson's desire to succeed as a poet in London was probably also a broad interpretation of the peculiarly Scottish and English Calvinistic idea of a "calling" to do God's will, with its increasing acceptance of material success and wealth as marks of God's approval.²⁸¹ His taste for a genteel life-style was no doubt developed through his early contact with the gentry such as Sir William Bennet and the Elliots of Minto; he surely hoped for a more comfortable life-style than that which the poor and restrictive minister's life in Scotland could provide.²⁸² Thomson's mother and many brothers and sisters were not well off, and he would also have wanted to assist them with his earnings (which he was later able to do, from his gains in London).

As he made his plans for a career, Thomson "received some encouragement from a lady of quality, a friend of his mother's, then in London, [and] he quickly prepared himself for his journey."²⁸³ It has generally been assumed that this "friend" (meaning "relative" in Scotland) was Lady Grisell Home Baillie (1665-1746), a distant cousin of the poet's mother.²⁸⁴ Apparently Lady Grisell offered no concrete financial help: "this encouragement ended in nothing beneficial, [but] served for the present as a good pretext, to cover the imprudence of committing himself to the wide world, unfriended and unpatronized, and with the slender stock of money he was then possessed of."²⁸⁵ Lady Grisell, however, may have played a part in obtaining for Thomson a

tutorship to the sons of Lord Binning in England, a short time later.

The Edinburgh literary scene, while "improving" rapidly, was in the 1720's still relatively narrow and ingrown; Edinburgh c. 1720 "lacked tradition, a discriminating public, intelligent criticism;" her "cultural soil" was not infertile, but it had long lain fallow.²⁸⁶

James Thomson's juvenile verses, whether for their lack of skill in imitating strictly the rules of Augustan poetry, or for their tiny spark of "indecorous" originality, or both, had not been very well-received by many of the Edinburgh literati, nor by his fellow club-members. Thus, "he easily discovered that the only stage on which a poet could appear, with any hope of advantage, was London; a place too wide for the operation of petty competition and private malignity, where merit might soon become conspicuous, and would find friends as soon as it became reputable to befriend it."²⁸⁷

In order to pursue his "calling" as a religious poet in England, young Thomson sought Letters of Introduction from several persons, including a "Mr. Elliott" (possibly the "John Elliot" who subscribed to the Seasons, 1730; probably a brother or other relative of Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto),²⁸⁸ from Thomson's family friend the Rev. Mr. Alexander Golden of Oxnam, and from some unnamed cousin of the Cranstouns.²⁸⁹ Mr. Elliott seems to have given Thomson a letter as well as some realistic advice, but Mr. Golden offered only his prayers, with which Thomson was disappointed: "he, good man recommends me to God almighty, very well; but I wish he had exerrted [some]th[ing] more of the layman on t[his occasion]...."²⁹⁰ But despite all the difficulties, and his own insecurities and fears, Thomson was determined to go south to make his way, and in late February, 1725,²⁹¹ on a rough, dark

night,²⁹² he sailed from Leith. Although he was never to see Scotland again, he "unconsciously carried with [him] part of the Scottish heritage," and "though he did not set out to revolutionise English poetry, that is precisely what his introduction of a new theme, nature, achieved in the long run."²⁹³ James Thomson "showed his compatriots that success could be won, and how it could be won."²⁹⁴

CHAPTER IV : THE JUVENILE POEMS

Almost no critical attention has been devoted to James Thomson's juvenile poems; indeed, at first glance they seem to be of little inherent poetical interest. Most are highly conventional, and "essentially schoolboy exercises"; many of them display "some happy images here and there," but are "full of awkward inversions and tasteless puerilities of expression."¹ They do, however, offer intriguing glimpses of the poet of The Seasons-- his conception of the poet's role, his aims, his developing style and subject-matter. They also contribute to a fuller picture of the diverse influences working upon Thomson in the Borders, and especially in Edinburgh-- specific literary influences as well as more general, cultural ones. Only in the juvenilia are to be found proofs of direct Scottish literary influence on Thomson, that of his contemporary Allan Ramsay himself; other, more subtle and enduring Scottish influences (religious, cultural, educational and scientific) can also be traced from this early stage. The juvenile poems are convincing evidence of certain major tensions within the young poet, tensions which he spent virtually his entire poetical career working to resolve: religious versus secular aims and concerns; the country versus the city ways of life, and primitivism versus progress; Scottish versus English or "British" allegiance; classical versus contemporary literary modes and aesthetic standards. Of these early contradictory motivations, arising in the young poet in Scotland, he was to develop his own, unique poetry. Lastly, the juvenilia serve to illustrate both the problems and the potential of Thomson's poetic language: his use of abundant Latinisms, his adaptation of the language and tone of the Bible and of sermon-rhetoric, his occasional Scotticisms (many of which were eventually purged from his mature

works), and his general awkwardness in using English expressions and pronunciations. "Scots was still strong enough to be present, at least at the back of the mind, as a medium from which [he] might have to translate or into which [he] might slip. And English had to be held at the front of the mind as the proper usage, deviations from which came in for peculiarly close attention."² This uncertainty in using the Augustan English literary language, as well as English colloquial expression, led to many a bad metrical fault, clumsy rhyme, and unfortunate choice of vocabulary (especially when using Latinisms, and formal English "poetical" diction), but it also left room for a certain element of originality. Young Thomson was groping for a literary language with which to express his eclectic verse, and although Léon Morel felt that he spent too much energy trying to expunge Scotticisms rather than trying to enrich his diction,³ very often Thomson's unconventional choice of diction in the juvenilia is surprisingly expressive and accurately descriptive, foreshadowing the unique poetic language of his mature poetry. Thomson's youthful enthusiasm perhaps allowed a certain healthy disregard for the rules of Augustan poetry (or, overcame any inhibitions due to his lack of skill); at any rate, unlike so much Anglo-Scottish poetry in the eighteenth century which was "as expression null- devoid of any sharp fidelity to something experienced at first-hand,"⁴ Thomson's poetry was redeemed to a great extent by his unconventional, original diction.

The early poems are all either in lyric or heroic-couplet form, with the exception of two blank-verse pieces. At this stage, Thomson was groping for an appropriate form, as he was for a language, for his poetry: he was to develop the blank-verse mode for The Seasons and

Liberty (perhaps, to some extent, as a release from the rigours of strict rhyme in a literary language which he initially found "foreign," difficult), to return to rhyme only when he was more sure of formal English, and had forged his own poetic adaptation of it (in the mature songs and shorter poems, and in the Spenserian Castle of Indolence).

There are too many juvenile poems to deal with each in detail. This chapter, therefore, will treat the manuscript history of the juvenilia, and will then survey the poems in their broader categories and characteristics, focusing on important and representative pieces.

The bulk of the juvenile poems was contained in the so-called Newberry MS, the origin of which is not certain. Unfortunately, the original MS is now missing, and has been since about 1970,⁵ although a photostat of this MS has recently been re-discovered. In addition to this photostat, there are two chief sources of information about the MS poems: an article by Hans Schmidt-Wartenberg (1898), wherein he gave a reading of much of the rather illegible MS, and printed some of the previously-unpublished juvenile poems from it, and an updated study by A. D. McKillop (1955).⁶ The MS was the earliest known Thomson holograph; it consisted of twenty-six folio leaves, some of which were badly damaged by the late-nineteenth century (by that time, pages 42-5 had been lost).⁷ Léon Morel recorded the tradition that Thomson prepared the fair-copy MS, entitled "Miscelany Poems," to present to the Duke of Montrose and his brother, Lord George Graham, whom he knew through their tutor, his friend David Mallet (c. 1726).⁸ Schmidt-Wartenberg was sceptical of this account of the MS's origin: "I do not know from what sources Morel gets his information so I do not know to whom to attribute this flowery language"; "It is hardly likely

that the poet put the MS together as a dedication copy because of the not very edifying contents of no. XV."⁹ (No. XV was "A description of ten o'clock of night in the Town," a rather coarse poem about Edinburgh night-life.)

The MS poems have not been dated with certainty. Schmidt-Wartenberg felt that, "the most probable assumption is that the poems originated between 1716 and 1719 and were written down toward the end of this period. It is also more probable that Mallet took the collection into custody as a memento and later [c. 1726 as Morel suggested?] turned the collection over to his high-stationed patron...."¹⁰ Two of the MS poems are rather less-polished versions of Thomson's contributions to the Athenian Society's publication, the Edinburgh Miscellany of January, 1720;¹¹ these are the poems "Upon Happiness" and "Verses On receiving a Flower from his Mistress." The remaining poems in the MS appear to have been written down at about the same time as these. Schmidt-Wartenberg accordingly dated the Newberry MS pre-1720; McKillop felt, too, that given the amateurish quality of the MS poems, "it is highly improbable that Thomson would have taken the trouble to record these pieces at any time after 1720...."¹² However, at least one of the juvenile MS poems probably dates from slightly later than this, c. 1721. This is the "Pastoral Between Thirsis and Corydon Upon the Death of Damon," where Thomson in the MS and its index noted that, "Damon" was one "William Riddell." This elegy makes it clear that William Riddell was a very close friend of the poet and his circle. A William Riddell is listed as having been in the university at the same time as Thomson; he matriculated in the Faculty of Arts, 1717-1720 but did not graduate.¹³ Also, a William Riddal entered the Divinity College in 1721, and was a member of "Society" Group 4, along

with Thomson; this was probably the same person.¹⁴ After the initial entries in 1721, however, Riddal disappears from the Divinity College records. If he indeed died in 1721, this would put the probable date of the "Pastoral" elegy at about that time. The fair copy MS was probably compiled, therefore, rather later than has been thought, c. 1721.

Determining the earliest possible dates of composition for many of the MS poems is more difficult. Sir Harris Nicolas, editor of the Aldine Edition of Thomson's poems,¹⁵ dated one of the juvenile poems from the MS ("To Sir William Bennet") at Thomson's fourteenth year (1714), but offered no proof of this assertion. Indeed, the poem may have been composed at such an early age, but the fair copy MS is certainly of a later date. As Schmidt-Wartenberg described it, there had been a date given on the title-page of the MS, which had partially worn off (the title read, "Juvenile Poems wrote by James Thomson, Author of The Seasons, at the age of 1__ Years"); however, the title-page was not in Thomson's hand, and could have been added to the MS later. This title-page is not included with the only surviving copy of the Newberry MS.

Before the Newberry MS ever reached the Graham family, it must have circulated among Thomson's Border friends. McKillop notes that some Border names appeared on the MS, notably that of "John Cranstone" written on the last page.¹⁶ "Cranstone" was probably John Cranstoun the Elder, minister of Ancrum and father of the poet's friends John and William Cranstoun,¹⁷ though it could have been the younger John Cranstoun himself. Since some of the poems are rather risqué, it seems reasonable to assume that they were thus circulated after Thomson's father's death (February, 1716) and probably after his mother had moved

to Edinburgh; the verses would almost certainly have proved embarrassing to the old-style minister and his wife. Also, while many of the poems are on religious and rural subjects, some deal with "the town," and others show the influence of Ramsay's work, c. 1717-18. At least some of the poems, therefore, would appear to have been written while Thomson was living as a student in Edinburgh, after 1716. Nearly all the identifiable influences on the juvenilia were theoretically available to Thomson before 1716, while he still lived in the Borders; he was exposed to both old-style and Moderate religious views, and to much religious literature; he had access to works of philosophy and science, as well as to the popular prose of the day, through his well-informed friends; he might even have known Ramsay's poems before their publication in Edinburgh, through William Bennet or Ramsay himself at Marlefield. He was almost certainly writing some poetry while a pupil at Jedburgh Grammar School. He could, then, have written most of the MS poems before 1716, but this is very unlikely; some few, however, may have been conceived at this early stage. It seems most probable that the MS poems were written and collected over a long period (c. 1714-1721), but that the MS itself was not compiled until the latter part of this period, as a portfolio for presentation to the Grotesque Club, and for private circulation among friends who followed his literary career from the Borders. It is said that the boy Thomson made a practice of burning his poems each New Year's Day in Southdean.¹⁸ He seems finally to have gained the confidence to preserve his poetical efforts, only as a college student in Edinburgh, far from his boyhood home, and as a member of a literary society, the Grotesque Club.

The MS passed to the Graham family, probably through Mallet, then in the early nineteenth century from a Miss Graham to Mr. William Goodhugh, a London bookseller. Goodhugh published six of the poems, carelessly edited, in his English Gentleman's Library Manual (1827).¹⁹ Goodhugh then sold the MS to bookseller Henry Colburn, who presented it to autograph-collector William Upcott. Harris Nicolas used the MS in preparing his Aldine Edition (first published 1830); he was the first editor to publish so large a number of the juvenile poems in a collected edition of Thomson's poems, but unfortunately he was a careless copyist and an unscrupulous editor. Even though the MS was still in fairly good condition when he saw it, the Aldine text "is frequently erroneous; changes as well as omissions are not infrequent, although occasionally excusable for reasons of taste...."²⁰ Nicolas also incorporated most of Goodhugh's arbitrary alterations.

Sir John Dashwood King was the next owner of the MS. It then passed to the American collector Henry Probasco, and came to the Newberry Library, Chicago in 1890 with the Probasco Collection.²¹ J. Logie Robertson may have seen this MS for his Oxford Edition of Thomson's Poetical Works (1908); some of his texts differ slightly from the previously-printed versions of the juvenile poems. He may have based these alterations simply on Schmidt-Wartenber's article, however, as he seems to have followed the Aldine edition most closely. Robertson proved yet another careless and arbitrary editor of the juvenilia. He printed the same sixteen of the twenty-nine MS verses as the Aldine had done (most, but not all, of the better or more interesting ones). He omitted several on the grounds that the MS was partially damaged or illegible, and others which were all too legible (and lewd or crude in content).²² Robertson held strongly Scottish nationalistic

views, and probably felt that it would be improper to publish such verses, as they were not "typical" of the Scottish Augustan poet, not flattering to his reputation, but unfortunately their expurgation from the Oxford Standard edition conceals something of the exploratory, experimental mind of the young Thomson, and also his underestimated sense of humour. Robertson did include two juvenile poems which were not in the MS ("Works and Wonders" and "Lisy's Parting with her Cat"), which have merely been attributed to Thomson on little evidence, while omitting others which were in the MS and more certainly by Thomson.

It is obvious, then, that Thomson's juvenile works have long been mishandled; it is unfortunate that the original of the vital Newberry MS is now lost, but on the basis of the photostat in the Newberry Library, and with the great help of the studies by Schmidt-Wartenberg and McKillop, the juvenile poems can be examined in detail. In the present discussion of the juvenilia, the best texts (those closest to the author's intention) will be used, where possible. Quotes from these MS poems will be from the Newberry MS itself (which largely lacks punctuation), with reference to Schmidt-Wartenberg's readings.

There are three surviving poems not included in the Newberry MS, but which have always been included among Thomson's juvenilia: "Of a Country Life" was one of Thomson's first publications, in the Edinburgh Miscellany (1720); "The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power" was first published by Aaron Hill in The Plain Dealer (1724),²³ there attributed to a religious-minded member of Edinburgh's Grottesque Club; and, "Lisy's Parting with her Cat" first appeared in the Aldine edition, source uncertain. It is possible that there was another collection of

juvenile poems by Thomson, no longer extant, which contained these pieces; in 1818, a Mr. Brown wrote to the Earl of Buchan that, "'a clergyman in the vicinity of Kelso [the Rev. Mr. Lundi or Lundie] has in his possession a considerable collection of unpublished juvenile poems by Thomson,'"²⁴ and advised the Earl to ask Mr. Lundie about it. Lundie, minister of Kelso, was the son of Cornelius Lundie, successor to James Ramsay at Kelso; he was the Secretary of the Ednam Club, a Thomsonian commemorative society. His collection of juvenilia may have been a different set of poems which circulated in the Borders, or it may have been another copy of the Newberry MS poems, which had remained in the hands of Border friends.

The MS poems show great variety. Some must have been written specifically for a local, Border audience, or arising from the Border youth's homesickness and nostalgia (long held to be the strongest motivation for his Seasons, written in London). Others seem aimed at a more sophisticated readership in the town, including the literati, student-friends and fellow club-members, and appear to have been influenced by life in the capital; already Thomson was beginning to demonstrate the characteristic eighteenth-century tension between local attachment and "stoic cosmopolitanism" in his attitudes.²⁵ Still others of the poems are religious exercises, written, perhaps, with an eye toward pleasing family, friends and Divinity Professors; in these, Thomson was exploring the newly-revived idea in Scottish Calvinism (though, of course, implicit in Middle Scots and even early Reformation religious poetry) that writing religious poetry might be a form of worship, a legitimate means of doing one's religious "duty" and offering praise to God, as well as performing the religious-didactic function. Especially interesting are the juvenile pieces of a class-

ical pastoral and Christian blend, which foreshadow The Seasons' genre of description-cum-divine praise. While Thomson seems to have been drawn early on to secular verse, and especially the "light erotic"²⁶ love-verse and pastoral, he perhaps felt some uncertainty about the propriety of such verse, coming from a Divinity student. He therefore adopted the sermonising rhetorical device of concluding most such verses with a didactic "moral" or a prayer-like invocation. "Too often, indeed, with his splendid abilities for higher work, did he take up the tone of the preacher, but only when he had reflected that the inculcation of some moral would in this or that connection be expected from him. It did not come spontaneously,"²⁷ and thus led occasionally to clumsy classical-Christian hybrids, most frequently in the juvenilia but also in passages of the mature works.

While recognising the weaknesses of the juvenilia, it is wise to remember that they are essentially exercises, the works of an apprentice-poet trying out various ideas in various poetic modes. They grew from a "complex of religious and literary motives,"²⁸ "a jumble of rather broad and rationalistic Presbyterianism...Newtonian science and Newtonian physico-theology; the closely related but more Neoplatonic, aesthetic and benevolistic philosophy of Shaftesbury; the common-sense ethical religion of Locke and Addison; enthusiasm for Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, and for the less purely classical aspects of Virgil; a warm affection for external nature; a sensuousness which sometimes bordered upon sensuality; and which was not unsupported by the contemporary spirit of negation."²⁹ Additional influences, both Scottish and English, can also be discovered. The important point here is that Thomson acquired this "complex" of motives as a youth in Scotland: the breadth and diversity of cultural influ-

ence is striking, yet it is typical of Scottish culture in that age of post-Union flux, the early eighteenth century. Thomson's juvenile poems well reflect the tensions and the rich texture of contemporary Scottish life.

For the purpose of this study, the juvenilia will be divided into two broad groups, secular and religious poems. Secular poems will include those with specific reference to the Scottish Borders and the city of Edinburgh, the love-lyrics, and the classical-pastorals; religious poems will include the classical-Christian blends, the Biblical adaptations, and the religious-philosophical works.

Of the secular poems, several deserve mention here, as they deal with explicitly Scottish subject-matter. Some are about Thomson's life and acquaintances in the Borders, including the Scots mock-elegy, "An Elegy Upon James [Jamie] Therburn in Chatto."³⁰ It is the only extant poem of Thomson's in Scots, and although J. Logie Robertson felt that it was "scarcely possible that this is Thomson's,"³¹ the verse occurs in the Newberry MS in Thomson's hand, and Goodhugh and Nicolas both attributed it to him. McKillop holds that, "there is no ground whatever for the editor's [Robertson's] skepticism here, except that he does not like the verses."³²

Jamie Therburn (or Thorburn) was apparently someone with whom Thomson was acquainted in the Borders, described to the Earl of Buchan by "Mr. Brown" as, "'a drunken sot."³³ Chatto was the name of a hill and homestead in Hownam Parish; Hownam touches Morebattle Parish, where Thomson's mother's property "Wideopen" was situated, and is not far from Southdean.³⁴ The poem was evidently written for a "parochial or regional audience."³⁵ The "Elegy" is a weak imitation

of the mock-elegies of Allan Ramsay ("Maggie Johnston," 1713; "John Cowper" and "Lucky Wood," 1717); these Scots elegies appear together in the second edition of Ramsay's Poems, 1718,³⁶ but Thomson probably knew of them earlier as individually-published poems circulating in Edinburgh. The verse is in the tradition of Robert Sempill's "Habbie Simson, the Piper of Kilbarchan" (for which its verse-form is named-- the "Standard Habbie," later the "Burns Stanza"). Sempill's "Habbie Simson" and his "Epitaph on Sanny Briggs" in the same form, appear in Watson's Choice Collection, Part I, 1706;³⁷ other verses in this form appear in Watson, including William Hamilton of Gilbertfield's "The Last Dying Words of Bonnie Heck," Part I,³⁸ and Alexander Pennecuik's "William Lithgow, his Epitaph," Part II, 1709.³⁹ As has been noted, Thomson probably knew Ramsay personally from an early age (if not in the Borders, through Sir William Bennet, then in Edinburgh), and might also have known Alexander Pennecuik, nephew of Dr. Alexander Pennecuik, Laird of Newhall where the Worthy Club gathered, who was also a friend of William Bennet. In any case, the boy certainly knew of the mock-elegies in Watson. His own "James Therburn" is perhaps most like Pennecuik's "William Lithgow," in its rather cruel satirical tone, its lack of affection and its outspoken, rather coarse treatment of drunkenness and sex; by contrast, Ramsay's and the other Scots mock-elegies are lighter in tone, more jovial and affectionate in humour. Thomson was merely following the established convention, by the eighteenth century, of employing Scots for low comedy; his poem also recalls the grim humour and personal invective characteristic of earlier Scottish satire or "flyting" literature. The verse by the young student of Divinity also incorporates a Biblical allusion (ll. 20-22, "Death wou'd no got the victory sae...") from 1 Corinthians 15:55;

this Biblical passage was a favourite with Isaac Watts, one of Thomson's poetical models (both Watts and Thomson apparently admired St. Paul, and alluded to his Epistles in many instances).

Thomson's mock-elegy is not well-written: Robertson may have questioned its attribution on these grounds alone, and not on the poem's Scots language and lewd subject-matter. It is in fact a "crude effort," and some saw it as proof that Thomson was right to choose English as his sole literary language,⁴⁰ thereafter.

Although the MS of the elegy was partially damaged, enough of the poem can be pieced together to emend significantly all previously-published readings. Schmidt-Wartenberg generally gave the most accurate reading, and his annotations pointed out a number of unjustified changes which had been made by previous editors Goodhugh and Nicolas, but even he was not entirely comfortable with the Scots dialect, and misread some words (for example, he perpetuated the misreading of the opening exclamation, Scots "Wow," as the standard English "Now," Stanza 1, l. 1, and so on). Goodhugh, Nicolas and Robertson all seem to have been careless copyists and misguided editors of this important Scots poem. Goodhugh arbitrarily altered the diction, removing Scots words (for example, MS "baith," Stanza 8, l. 2, to "both"; MS "com'd," Stanza 3, l. 5, to "come").⁴¹ and omitting Stanzas 5 and 6 (containing the more objectionable sexual subject-matter). J. Logie Robertson in his 1908 Oxford Standard edition seems largely to have followed the inferior Aldine text, although he did make some minor improvements. Perhaps the most interesting point about Thomson's Scots mock-elegy is that, from his own emendations to the MS, it is obvious that he was consciously attempting to make the Scots dialect more dense rather than less so, as

his subsequent editors presumed to do. Thomson crossed out the conventional English, opening exclamation "O" and replaced it with the Scots "Wow," Stanza 1, l. 1; he likewise altered "such" to "sic," Stanza 7, l. 6, and "every" to "ilka," Stanza 1, l. 2. The young poet, so clearly imitating Allan Ramsay's Scots language in the mock-elegies, was demonstrating that while spoken Scots may have been the language of his "heart," written Scots was in fact a language of the "head"; he had to think about translating the more natural written English of his poem into Scots. This important poem shows, then, just how complex the language issue was in Scotland in Thomson's day. While the "Elegy on James Therburn" is not outstanding as Scots poetry, it is intriguing in its links with the Scots mock-elegy tradition. It serves to illustrate one sort of "exercise" which aspiring Scottish poets were writing in the early eighteenth century, and shows that while Thomson decided against using Scots as his literary language, he at least once attempted to work with it.

Of the remaining secular juvenile poems, four in particular likewise reflect Ramsay's influence. The two odes "Upon Beauty" and "Upon the Hoop"⁴² praise "our dear Caledonian ladies," who wore both hoop and tartan to enhance their excelling "native beauties," and "grace fair Edina's street." Ramsay's patriotic ode Tartana, or The Plaid (1718, in "stilted English couplets")⁴³ served as Thomson's immediate model here. Thomson himself was always especially fond of Scottish ladies, and preferred them to Englishwomen.⁴⁴ "Upon the Hoop" asserts that,

Should you go search the spacious globe throughout
 You will find none so pious and devout
 So modest chaste so handsome and so fair
 As our dear Caledonian ladies are (ll. 9-12)

In "Upon Beauty" (which also recalls Spenser's Faerie Queene and Foure Hymnes)⁴⁵ the Goddess of Beauty is a tartan-clad Scots lass; in her train are the "British ladies" (as distinct from the Scottish) "who chiefly did the fair assembly grace." Here, Thomson's view echoes Ramsay's Scottish patriotism, where Scottish allegiance supersedes British.

"On Beauty" makes specific, admiring reference to Ramsay and Tartana:

Around her shoulders dangling on her throne
A bright Tartana carelessly was thrown
Which has already won immortal praise
Most sweetly sung in Allan Ramsay's lays (ll. 63-6)

The poem is also reminiscent of Ramsay's "On our Ladies being dressed in SCOTS Manufactory at a publick Assembly" ["Let Meaner Beauties use their art"] and "In Praise of Scottish Ladies."⁴⁶ The allegorical dream-vision format of "Upon Beauty," incorporating the perilous ascent to reach the palace and the Goddess enthroned, is a feature of Ramsay's English allegory "Content: A Poem";⁴⁷ Thomson's poem refers (l. 91) to the "full content" he finds with his "charming she." Both poems are in heroic couplets. Thomson's poem is not a slavish imitation of Ramsay, however; it could also be said to belong to an older tradition of Scottish courtly-love allegory (pre-dating Spenser), best represented by Dunbar's Golden Targe.⁴⁸ Thomson's dream-vision shared with Dunbar's a realism of natural description;⁴⁹ both are set in idyllic yet accurately-observed spring gardens. Sensuous realism also characterises Thomson's descriptions of women, even at this early stage (it is also strong in his MS poem "Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet"); such sensuousness (approaching sensuality) reappears in such mature passages as the tale of "Damon and

Musidora" in The Seasons. As in the Golden Targe, a very Scottish immediacy and descriptive realism breaks through the idealising convention of the courtly-love allegory. Dunbar's "Dame Beautee" becomes Thomson's "Goddess of Beauty." Dunbar's allegory was written in aureate (formal, Latinate) Scots, while Thomson's is in neo-aureate (formal, Latinate) English. As might be expected, "Upon Beauty also shows the pervasive influence of Thomson's favourite early models: the Bible, Virgil and Milton. Beauty's palace is set in a garden of Virgilian "eternal spring," which Thomson also characterises as the pre-Fall Eden of Genesis and Paradise Lost:

Here new-made Eve stood in her early bloom
Not yet obscured with sin's sullen gloom (ll. 43-4).

This conception has become familiar as the primitivistic "Golden Age" of The Seasons, blending classical with Christian myths. The garden in "Upon Beauty" also suggests the influence of L'Allegro (ll. 71-80) and Il Penseroso (ll. 56-8 and 121).⁵⁰ Classical references, conventional in Augustan poetic diction, abound ("Muse," "Philomel," "Parnassus," "Cupids," "nymphs," "Arcadia"). Beauty is personified as a sensuous pagan Goddess, and Edinburgh is the formal "fair Edina." This idealised setting is nonetheless filled with very realistic and imaginative natural description, which probably owes much to the landscape of the Scottish Borders:

The hills and vales in sweet confusion lie (l. 12);

The nibbling flocks stray o'er the rising hills
And all around with bleating music fills (ll. 13-14);

Increasing brooks roll down the mountains sides
And as the[y] pass the opposing pebbles chides (ll. 28-9).

(Much of this last line is illegible in the damaged MS; the grammatical error may or may not, therefore, be Thomson's.)

Thomson concludes this predominantly secular poem with a "prayer" of sorts, perhaps prompted by his religious upbringing:

May all the blessings mortals need below
 May all the blessings heav'n can bestow
 May ev'ry thing that's pleasant good or rare
 Be the Eternal portion of the fair (ll. 93-6).

Such a concluding invocation is typical of the juvenilia, even in such primarily secular pieces as this.

"Upon the Hoop" may have been suggested by John Gay's The Fan (1716) and other contemporary English poems by Pope, Addison and others on feminine attire,⁵¹ and possibly by Waller's "On a Girdle" (an early example of the heroic couplet form in English poetry, the form which young Thomson preferred). Thomson seems to have known Waller's poems, which were popular with Scots of his day (Ramsay's The Morning Interview, for example, opens with a quote from Waller); several of his juvenile love-poems bear resemblance to the style of the seventeenth-century poet. An edition of Waller was among Thomson's books.⁵³

The other juvenile poems probably influenced by Ramsay are two Aesopic animal-fables from the Newberry MS,⁵⁴ not included in the Oxford Standard edition, "The Fable of a Sick Kite and Its Dame" and "The Fable of a Hawk and [a] Nightingale." Another fable, listed in the Index to the MS, entitled "[The Do]g and a Piece of Flesh," was missing by the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Ramsay wrote a number of Aesopic fables in Scots rhymed couplets, published in 1722-30 but probably in local circulation earlier; he acknowledged that many of his fables were based in the French versions by LaMotte and La Fontaine.⁵⁶ One must keep in mind the long tradition of animal-tales and Aesopic fables in Scottish liter-

ature, chiefly the Middle Scots Morall Fabillis of Esope the Phrygian by Henryson (Edinburgh, 1621); Ramsay surely knew and admired Henryson's Fabillis, some of which occur in the Bannatyne MS (which Ramsay used for his EverGreen). Traditionally, Scottish animal-literature (both folk and art-literature) treated beasts as companions to man as well as representatives of the human situation, and showed deep sympathy with them.⁵⁷ While Thomson chose Aesopic fables not previously versified by Henryson or Ramsay, his fables have much in common with theirs. Aesop's fables themselves enjoyed a popular revival in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; there were numerous versions in English and other languages (Thomson himself later owned Fabulae Aesop, Greek and Latin, 1723, probably Ruddiman's Edinburgh edition, as well as Les Fables de la Fontaine in French). Some of the most popular were Gay's Fables, but these did not appear until 1727 and 1738. Thomson chose two of the better-known Aesopic fables, "The Hawk and the Nightingale" and "The Sick Kite and its Dame." "The Hawk and the Nightingale" is the oldest recognised Aesopic fable, first found in Hesiod's Works and Days.⁵⁹ The conventional moral of this fable is one of self-interest: the hawk has caught a nightingale, and though it is small, the hawk decides it is better than nothing ("Tho ne're so small loose not an interest gain'd/ Which industry or meritt has obtained").⁶⁰ Thomson's version takes a new twist, emphasising the hawk's false expectations, his vain delusions on hearing the nightingale's strong voice, and his disappointment at its small size: "thou'rt nothing but a throat." This theme (also found in two of the juvenile religious-philosophical poems, "Upon Happiness" and "A Complaint on the Miseries of This Life") surely arises from a Scottish Calvinistic, flesh-denying moral rigour, with its

Job-like warning not to place too much stock in delusive earthly expectations. Thomson's surprised hawk is drawn with an element of sly wit also found in the fables of Henryson and Ramsay. It is interesting to note that a contemporary of Thomson's, John Callender, contributed a version of the same fable, "The Hawk and the Nightingale," to the Edinburgh Miscellany.⁶¹ Like Thomson's it is in rhymed couplets, but Callender's verse follows the standard story-line of the original Aesopic fable more closely than does Thomson's. Perhaps the writing of such fables was one of the "exercises" in English poetical composition practised by Thomson and his young contemporaries in the Grotesque Club or the Athenian Society.

Thomson's second fable in the MS, "The Sick Kite and its Dame," is about a dying kite who belatedly asks for divine assistance, and conveys the moral of the original Aesopic tale ("He that tho late woud to the Gods repair,/ Must seeke their blest abodes with early prayer").⁶² Thomson alters the Aesopic story slightly by making the kite's mother, rather than the dying kite himself, the altar-robber who has angered the gods; he also places more emphasis on the kite's prophetic power, which foretells "Fate's strong-wrought chain" (l. 9) but cannot alter it, as only the gods can. The idea of "Fate" or determinism (here placed in an atmosphere of gloom, superstition and death), which acts through nature and is ultimately under God's control, would become a central Seasons theme. Even in this early fable Thomson preaches of a God (neoclassically distanced as pagan "Gods") transcendent over nature and man, and suggests that it is unwise to try to share in His omniscience. Thomson's God here is the God of orthodox, old-style Calvinism-- just and vengeful. Henryson's fable "The Preiching of the Swallow"⁶³ bears some resemblance to Thomson's fable; it too has its "emphasis on human

folly and weakness as represented by the birds," and also deals with man's relationship to Divine Providence: the swallow is able to foretell ill fortune of other birds, "by his knowledge of the natural world"⁶⁴ and not by some God-like faculty. Thomson likewise upholds man's ability to know something of God's pre-determined ways through nature, while firmly teaching the limits of human knowledge (beliefs which he would hold throughout his life). The fable's central moral, a fatalistic warning of the dire effects of sin, remains most congenial to Thomson's orthodox Scottish Calvinistic "preaching" mode:

'Accurs'd of heav'n, just reason I've to fear
The angry injur'd gods will not give ear
The sacred spoils I've from their Altars born [sic]
Justly o justly then I am forlorn' (ll. 16-19).

So, while they are cast in conventional Aesopic classical trappings, Thomson's animal-fables display another dimension as well, as he re-interpreted them in a religious light; like Henryson's fables, they cast strong Biblical overtones.⁶⁵ Thomson's animal-fables reflect a particularly Scottish Calvinistic bibliocracy, and express even at this stage certain elements of the poet's mature religious and moral philosophies.

Among the remaining "secular" poems are three of explicitly Border subject-matter, and probably of an early date: the complimentary verses "Upon Marle-fied" [sic], "A Poetical Epistle to Sir William Bennet," and the long poem "Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet." "Upon Marle-fied" ["Lines on Marlefield"]⁶⁶ is a highly conventional piece in the "country-house poem" tradition. It borrows certain lines almost word-for-word from Pope's Windsor Forest (published 1713),⁶⁷ and may also owe its conception to Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh's collection, Gelia's Country House and

Closet (verses no. 2, "The Palace," and no. 5, "The Garden"), which appeared in Watson's Choice Collection, Part II (1709),⁶⁸ and also in the 1716 edition of Mackenzie's Works and in the Edinburgh Miscellany (1720). J. Logie Robertson commented that, "in these lines may be detected traces of the influence of Virgil and Milton, and echoes of the fine old Scots ballad of Leader Haughs and Yarrow."⁶⁹ The diction of Virgil's Georgics and the setting of Milton's L'Allegro may indeed have influenced Thomson's idealised description of the Marlefield estate in this poem. The points of resemblance to the Border lyric "Leader Haughs and Yarrow," attributed to Robert Crawford (which Ramsay published in his Tea-Table Miscellany, and which Thomson probably knew)⁷⁰ are in the details of description: both poems place a great house (beautiful beyond the poets' powers to describe) in an idyllic pastoral landscape where "Flora" dwells, where plants and flowers "rise" and "rear their head," and where birds of "narrow throats" sing.⁷¹ Allan Ramsay himself had also written verses in honour of William Bennet, his family and his estate [see Chapter II, above] but these do not seem to have had substantial influence on the style or conception of Thomson's juvenile "Marlefield" verses. (Marlefield is, incidentally, mentioned in William Hamilton of Bangour's poetical catalogue of Scottish estates, in his "Horace. Book I. Ode VII. to the Earl of Stair." Hamilton was a contemporary of Thomson's in Edinburgh, and a close friend of Sir William Bennet, whom he frequently visited at Marlefield.)⁷² Thomson's poem refers thus to Marlefield's greenhouse:

Immortal Authors grace this cool retreat
Of antient times and of a modern date (ll. 33-4).

The young poet may mean by this, that it was here, where he himself came

to read both classical and contemporary literature from Sir William's library, and probably also the place where "modern" authors such as Ramsay, Hamilton of Bangour, and Bennet's fellow Scottish Latinists gathered (at least one recent critic has taken the passage as a specific reference to Ramsay and his visits to Marlefield).⁷³ The estate's "real nymphs" (l. 30) might have been Bennet's daughters, one of whom Thomson "loved" from afar [see below, "To Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet"].

The important point about this otherwise amateur and conventional verse, besides its biographical significance, is its relatively weak concluding couplet:

O may this sweet this beautifull abode
Remain the charge of the Eternal God. (ll. 37-8),

Again, the predominantly neoclassical poem in heroic couplets becomes a sort of "prayer." This is the young Thomson himself speaking-- the religious-minded Scottish Calvinistic poet who so often attached a similar prayer or pious moral injunction onto a primarily secular verse-- having dropped his Augustan guise.

The next poem in this group is "A Poetical Epistle to Sir William Bennet of Grubbat, Baronet," of which Sir Harris Nicolas cautiously noted in the Aldine editions, "This was written at a very early period of Thomson's life, probably before he was sixteen; and the reason for inserting it is, that the first productions of genius are objects of rational curiosity." Nicolas, however, held privately that he would have dated the poem closer to 1714, when the poet was aged fourteen.⁷⁴ J. Logie Robertson accordingly dated it 1714.⁷⁵ The source of this dating is unknown, but in any case Thomson's brief tribute to his

friend and first patron probably is of a very early date, and like "Upon Marlefield," was probably conceived while Thomson still lived in the Borders where his poetical career began. In the "Poetical Epistle" Thomson compares himself to Virgil, and Bennet to Virgil's mentor and patron Maecenas, who introduced Virgil to the Emperor Augustus. It is interesting to note that even at this stage, Thomson was so much influenced by the "Roman" identity of Scotland, as to compare himself, a poor minister's son, with the rural poet Virgil. The young poet invokes Bennet,

If you'll encourage her [his Muse's] young fagging flight
She'll upwards soar and mount Parnassus height

...

But if upon my flight your honour frowns
The muse folds up her wings and dying justice owns (ll. 3-4
and 9-10)

Thomson was obviously strongly influenced by Bennet's opinion, and by Bennet himself, a Latinist poet who personified the Scoto-Roman ideal. Another very different influence is discernible here as well-- that of Isaac Watts; the slightly sentimental lines just quoted closely echo Watts's lyric (addressed to God), "Asking Leave to Sing":

If thou my daring flight forbid,
The muse fold up her wings...⁷⁶

Yet again, classical and Christian influences meet in the juvenile poetry to create a new amalgam.

The third poem in this "Marlefield" group, "Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet,"⁷⁷ appears with the others in the Newberry MS, but Robertson did not publish it, possibly because it approaches sensuality, and is "decidedly gauche and presumptuous,"⁷⁸ especially for a youth of Thomson's age

who was a prospective Divinity student. With the other "Marlefield" poems, this too seems to be early, judging from its awkward metrics and diction. While Robertson and Schmidt-Wartenberg gave the title as, "Upon Miss Elizabeth Bennet," McKillop reads it correctly as "Mrs."; the title "Mrs." was occasionally used interchangeably with "Miss" or "Mistress" in Thomson's day. The poem clearly refers to Elizabeth Bennet as a young girl, her marital future unknown:

But may a polite well-bred youth
 ...
 Be the blest partner of your bed. (ll. 94, 96)

Elizabeth was almost certainly an unmarried daughter of Sir William Bennet, one year his senior;⁷⁹ from the verse's content, she seems to have been the poet's first "infatuation." The poem pours out highly extravagant praise and flattery, in the Sidney-Spenser tradition, also recalling the Scottish Petrarchan love-poetry of William Fowler, William Alexander and William Drummond. While much of its imagery is thus conventional, the poem does show an element of realism, or sensuous description (also seen in "Upon Beauty"); for example:

And endless store of balmy kisses
 For mortal men too mighty blisses
 Upon your purple lips do glow
 And breathing odours 'round you flow

What cruel charms your Breasts display
 Alas! - I die I faint away
 Whene'er I view befor mine eyes
 Your heaving snowy bosom rise

Your waist grows beautifully less
 Is slender almost to excess

...
 From thence a spacious Hoop extends
 Grows broader still as it descends... (Stanzas 10-12).

The diction and imagery are for the most part highly conventional, with the exception of the Scotticism "bypast" (l. 82),⁸⁰ and the rather unfortunate image of the "porcupine" (l. 64). The verse is in rhymed four-stress couplets, and once again brings to mind Waller, or more accurately the young Pope's imitations of Waller. Thomson's Stanzas nine, eighteen and nineteen perhaps owe something to one of these, "Of her Walking in a Garden After a Shower,"⁸¹ written 1701, published 1717. Such conventional exercises in extravagant courtly-love poetry seem to have been popular with Thomson's Scottish contemporaries as well as himself; the language and style of "Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet" is very similar to that of Mallet's early poems in the Edinburgh Miscellany, especially his "The Grove, or Interview"⁸² (modelled primarily on Ramsay's The Morning Interview, which was in turn inspired by Waller). "Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet" characteristically concludes with a neoclassical "prayer":

May Hymen pour his soft delights
 Upon your happy days and nights
 May all the kinder pow'rs above
 Remain propitious to your love (Stanza 25).

Thomson's juvenile poetry contains several other such courtly-love poems, on a smaller scale. "Verses on receiving a Flower from his Mistress" [MS, "One to his mistress upon receiving a flower from her"] was one of the three Edinburgh Miscellany poems,⁸³ slightly altered from its Newberry MS text. Again, the verse is conventional and suggests the possible influence of Waller (notably, his "Go, Lovely Rose"), and the Cavalier poets. The MS contains two similar pieces, published only by Schmidt-Wartenberg, "Upon the Sparkler," and a fragment, ["Upon a Flower give]n me by ____."⁸⁴ Two more "secular" love-poems belong more

properly to the pastoral tradition, being loosely based on Theocritus' Idylls and Virgil's Eclogues, but they also owe something to Petrarchan courtly-love conventions; "An Elegy upon Parting"⁸⁵ and "A Pastoral Betwixt Damon and Celia Parting"⁸⁶ are in the nature of highly derivative exercises, and are of little interest. It is not known whether Thomson had a specific lady-friend or friends in mind when he wrote these short love-poems, but judging both from the sensuousness which occasionally breaks through their conventionality, and from Thomson's penchant for at least partially autobiographical poetry at this stage (as in "Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet," the object of which was very real), it is probable that his "love" or "loves" addressed in the verses were real. The voice of the lovesick student-poet himself is heard in, for example, "An Elegy upon Parting," where he is so dejected that, "Yea books themselves I do not now admire" (l. 24); this line prefigures a similar lover's complaint in "Spring," l. 1016.

At least two other of the Newberry MS poems, in addition to the frank expression of love or infatuation "Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet," seem to have been omitted from J. Logie Robertson's Oxford Standard edition on similar grounds of sexual or social impropriety: "The Yeilding Maid"⁸⁷ ([sic] a pastoral of seduction, probably based on Theocritus' Eclogue XXVII, "A Countryman's Wooing"), and "A Description of ten a-clock of night in the town"⁸⁸ (a comic picture of Edinburgh's nocturnal perils of drunkenness and "gardy loo," possibly suggested by Gay's Trivia, 1716, and/or Swift's "Description of a City Shower" and "Description of Morning," from the Tatler, 1709). While "ten a-clock" is in English mock-heroic couplets, it may have borrowed from the native tradition of low Scots humour (which could be grossly explicit), and it

cannot but call to mind the later-eighteenth century Edinburgh scenes of Robert Fergusson.

Another humorous juvenile mock-epic poem which deserves mention is the delightful "Lisy's Parting with her Cat,"⁸⁹ not among the MS poems and first published in the Aldine edition (1830 ff). This verse, one of Léon Morel's favourites,⁹⁰ is included among the juvenilia in Robertson's edition, although its date of composition is unknown, presumably because the subject-matter is an incident from the poet's youth. Its close detail and vivid, affectionate description suggest that it was at least conceived while Thomson was at home with his family in Scotland. The poem is about Thomson's favourite, younger sister Elizabeth or "Lisy,"⁹¹ and her pet, and might refer to their home life in Edinburgh (c. 1716 and after). The mock-epic vehicle might have been suggested by Pope's The Rape of the Lock (1712, 1714), or by Ramsay's imitation, The Morning Interview (1716). Thomson's talent in this vein was later occasionally to be glimpsed in such passages as the hunting-burlesque in "Autumn," and the caricatures of his friends in The Castle of Indolence. "Lisy" demonstrates genial humour, no small poetical achievement, and the great depth of familial affection which he himself felt. Robertson noted that, "A copy of these boyish verses was written out by Thomson for the Lord George Graham";⁹² the gentle satire would doubtless have been entertaining to the young Grahams, Mallet's pupils in London. The erroneous legend that Thomson had written out the whole of the Newberry MS for the Grahams in 1726 [see above] had become widespread, but it seems possible that this individual poem was written out for them at that time, perhaps giving rise to the error. Thomson probably did write the poem out from memory-- and perhaps an improving memory, in about 1726.

Another explanation might be that "Lisy" herself (who became Mrs. Elizabeth Bell) may have had a copy of this verse, and passed it to her son, the Rev. Dr. James Bell of Coldstream, who intended to complete an edition of Thomson's works in the 1790's. Bell corresponded with the Earl of Buchan with regard to Thomson memorabilia and MSS, and the verse may have come through him to Nicolas, editor of the Aldine edition. The poem's style is fairly sophisticated; its diction is polished, its metre regular (unlike most of the juvenile poems). Also, "Lisy" is in blank verse, which is unusual in the juvenilia (the only other juvenile poem in blank verse is "Works and Wonders of Almighty Power," which likewise does not occur in the MS, and the origin of which is similarly uncertain). "Lisy" in its present form, therefore, may not be strictly a "juvenile" poem but one which the poet subsequently revised and polished.

Perhaps the most important genre represented in Thomson's juvenilia is the pastoral, frequently foreshadowing The Seasons' realism of natural description, love of rural life and tendency toward primitivism, and very often incorporating a strong religious element as well. That the pastoral was a very popular mode with Thomson's contemporaries in Scotland, is obvious from the predominance of pastoral pieces in the Edinburgh Miscellany.

Thomson's "secular" juvenile pastorals were, generally, much influenced by Theocritus and Virgil, and by English adaptations by Milton (L'Allegro, Il Penseroso), Pope, Gay and others. There was already, of course, a strong tradition of Scottish pastoral poetry, from Henryson's Robene and Makyne, to the Scottish Petrarchans and William Drummond, to the pastoral lyric verse which flourished especially in the Borders,

after 1603,⁹³ and the contemporary Scots and English pastorals of Allan Ramsay; Thomson undoubtedly knew the Scottish pastoral heritage in addition to the more generally recognised classical and English neoclassical models.

There are too many pastorals among the juvenilia to deal with each poem individually. A number of them, however, deserve close attention. A pastoral of considerable interest is the dialogue "Pastoral Between Thirsis and Corydon Upon the Death of Damon."⁹⁴ This pastoral dialogue is an elegy on a "Mr. William Riddell," according to the MS title and index in Thomson's own hand. McKillop was not able further to identify Riddell, except to suggest that he was a Border friend of the poet, possibly from Lilliesleaf Parish⁹⁵ (Riddell, however, is a fairly common Lowland name, and not necessarily local to Thomson's area). "Mr. Brown," in a letter to the Earl of Buchan, asserted that James [sic] Riddell was, "a fine young man, and a pleasing poet...."⁹⁶ Riddell was surely a close friend of Thomson, who praised him so warmly in the elegy, but it seems rather more probable that Riddell was a fellow college-student or Edinburgh literary colleague of the poet, judging from the content of the "Pastoral." Damon/Riddell is represented as a poet-swain among a group of such "circling swains," who gathered to sing and be merry-- perhaps the Grotesque Club? The character Corydon, who is the chief speaker in the dialogue, seems to have been Thomson, whose usual "cheerfull presence" (l. 3) and poetical efforts entertained the group. The elegy praises Damon as a learned young man, and a poet who, "In charming verse his witty thoughts array'd" (l. 34), and who was "a faithfull true and constant friend" (l. 39):

He was a pious and a virtuous soul
 And still press'd forward to the heav'nly goal^(ll. 37-8).

These last lines suggest that Riddell might also have been a fellow Divinity-student of Thomson's. Indeed, the most convincing evidence in establishing the identity of Riddell (as well as of dating the juvenile MS itself) is the fact that one William Riddel matriculated at Edinburgh University, 1717-1720, and in Divinity College in 1721, and thereafter disappeared from the rolls [see pages 145-6 above]. Thus Riddell was almost certainly a fellow-student and prospective divine, and probably a budding poet as well. The poem is cast in a well-controlled and polished (if imitative) neoclassical style, and this, too, would suggest that it is of a late date among the juvenilia (c. 1721). In the composition of this elegy, Thomson might also have been influenced by the "Poems on several grave and important subjects" written by Joseph Mitchell, John Callender and other contributors to the Lugubres Cantus (1719).⁹⁷ His neoclassical pastoral dialogue is similar to the kind of conventional elegy which his contemporaries were practising in Edinburgh.

Thomson chose the pastoral dialogue form for his elegy, his original sources being Theocritus, and especially Virgil (Eclogue V). A number of other possible influences can also be traced. Thomson probably owed something to Milton's Lycidas (Thomson's l. 15, for example, "He's dead! he's dead!.." echoes Milton's l. 8, "Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime"), and perhaps more to William Drummond's "To the Exequies of the Honourable, Sr. Antonye Alexander."⁹⁸ Thomson's and Drummond's elegies both employ the heroic couplet, and there are verbal echoes of

Drummond's elegy in Thomson's verse. In general, the element of pathetic fallacy, or sympathy with the natural world, is stronger in the two Scottish elegies, than in Lycidas. Drummond's works were readily available to Thomson, in Ruddiman's 1711 edition. It has been asserted that Drummond influenced Milton himself,⁹⁹ and of course Milton was one of Thomson's chief acknowledged models for descriptive and religious-meditative verse. Thomson would thus have found much to admire and emulate in the poetry of his countryman, Drummond. It must be said, however, that both Drummond and the young Thomson were highly imitative poets, and that the language and style of their elegies derived ultimately from established elegiac conventions, especially from the Renaissance (such as Castiglione's Alcon and Spenser's Shepherds Calender).

Other, more immediate influences on Thomson's elegy might include Pope's pastoral "Winter,"¹⁰⁰ (an elegy in the dialogue form, which likewise influenced Thomson's "Winter"), the elegies of Isaac Watts (there are many verbals echoes of Watts' elegies in Thomson's, partially reflecting common sources such as Virgil and Milton, but close enough to make it probable that Thomson occasionally borrowed directly from Watts), and the Scots pastoral-dialogue elegies of Allan Ramsay. Ramsay wrote a number of such serious Scots elegies in the dialogue form, including "Richy and Sandy" (1719, on the death of Addison) and "Keitha: A Pastoral" (1721).¹⁰¹ The latter elegy, particularly, uses many Scots words in a distinctly "Miltonic" context. By Thomson's day, in fact, there was a well-developed canon of formal Scottish elegiac verse,¹⁰² in English, Scots and Latin, which would have been known to the young apprentice-poet.

Thomson's style in the "Pastoral" elegy shows reasonably strong rhetorical control, no doubt the product of his Scottish education. It is a well-balanced verse in dignified heroic couplets, making good use of parallel and antithesis ("I fear to ask and yet desire to know," l. 12; "How as in years so he in virtue grew," l. 24; and so on), and of repetition ("He was a faithfull true and constant friend / Faithfull and true and constant to the end," ll. 39-40; "He's dead! he's dead!...", l. 15; and the "echo" image, l. 8 and ll. 57-9). The element of pathetic fallacy (all nature sharing in the poet's grief) is especially strong, and foreshadows The Seasons' treatment of man in nature (for example, the dejected lover in "Spring"); in this stylised description in the "Pastoral" elegy, he follows most closely his fundamental source, Virgil's Eclogue V, where likewise the rocks and groves echo the speaker's grief. There are additional echoes in Thomson of the pathetic-fallacy description in Pope's "Winter" (mute birds, drooping flowers, the retirement of the speaker to dwell in nature's solitude). The elegies of Watts are also echoed in Thomson, for example, Watts' "To the Memory of My Honoured Friend, Thomas Gunston, Esq." (Watts' "And bid the brook, that still runs warbling by, / Move silent on, and weep his useless channel dry," ll. 5-6, is echoed in Thomson's "Ye gliding brooks O weep your channels dry," l. 51, and so on).¹⁰³

The diction of Thomson's elegy is competently chosen, not striking or elegant but simple, restrained; beyond its Renaissance antecedents, it shows an even greater debt to classical literature (chiefly, Virgil) and to its Augustan English neoclassical adaptations. The language is generally Latinate, also indicating the Virgilian model as well as

reflecting the Scottish humanistic tradition to which he was educated. Here is a passage to illustrate:

Thir.
 Say tell me true what is the dolefull cause
 That Corydon is not the man he was
 Your chearfull presence used to lighten cares
 And from the plains to banish gloomy fears
 Whene'er unto the circling swains you sung
 Our ravish'd souls upon the musick hung
 The gazing list'ning flocks forgot their meat
 While vocal Grottoes did your lays repeat
 But now your mirth our gravity rebukes
 And in your down-cast and desponding looks
 Appears some fatal and impending woe
 I fear to ask and yet desire to know^(11. 1-12)

Note especially the heavier Latinisms such as "gravity," "desponding" and "impending." Young Thomson seems to have used in this poem a rather limited stock of words, and especially rhyme-words, perhaps as a result of his uncertainty about formal English diction, but he used them, if conventionally, to sound and decorous formal effect.

Another pastoral poem where Thomson made use of stylised, conventional rather than realistic natural description is the brief "Upon May";¹⁰⁴ such conventional portrayal of mild spring is typical of Scottish poetry, in contrast to the generally more realistic descriptions of winter and inclement weather. Dunbar's May in the Golden Targe, when "Anamalit was the felde wyth all colouris," becomes Thomson's May, when with "colours lavish nature paints" (l. 5). Scottish poems which possibly suggested the subject to Thomson might have included George Buchanan's religious-descriptive verse "Calendae Maiæ" (translated by Thomson's contemporary at Divinity Hall, Robert Blair, into English),¹⁰⁵ and Alexander Scott's "Of May"¹⁰⁶ (which Ramsay published in his Ever-Green). The primary English influence on both the theme and the style

of Thomson's poem seems to have been Milton's "Song on May Morning"¹⁰⁷ (like Thomson's, in rhymed couplets) and more generally, L'Allegro. Thomson's "Upon May" is fairly representative of his juvenile pastoral poems, that is, a conventional, pleasant-enough combination of standard neoclassical poetical elements, showing competent formal control and a rather limited vocabulary (which, though occasionally lacking propriety or precision, was at least used generally grammatically correctly, and with few Scotticisms).

But even in the juvenilia, Thomson did not always adhere strictly to pastoral descriptive convention. Some of the poems show considerable originality. Two of the pastoral-descriptive poems are especially interesting, as they clearly foreshadow the nature poetry of The Seasons. Both are set specifically in rural Scotland, where the poet first began to write. "The Morning in the Country"¹⁰⁸ shows the strong influence of L'Allegro (ll. 41-68 and ll. 72 ff. of Milton's poem) in its descriptive details and its diction (for example, the lark as morning's herald; morning clad in "thousand liveries"; the cock and hens; the central figure of the shepherd; the "dew" shining on the fields; the "shrill" notes of the birds; and so on). But while the exercise is largely derivative, the description of the shepherd wrapped in his plaid, with "dear crook" and dog, is probably drawn directly from Scottish Border life. In addition to Milton's pastoral descriptions, Allan Ramsay's poetry, too, almost certainly inspired Thomson to create a rural descriptive piece of his own,¹¹⁰ and specifically, to treat of Scottish scenes in "native" pastoral poetry.¹¹¹ Judging from the extent of borrowing, and from the rather clumsy style (particularly, confused subject-verb agreement, as, "The crowing cock and clatt'ring hens awakes / Dull sleepy clowns...", ll. 9-10; also, use of stilted or

imprecise diction and excessive use of inversion to fit the heroic couplet rhyme scheme) this poem seems to be an early one, possibly even conceived or begun in the Borders. The immediate sources of most of Thomson's diction here can be readily traced to his primary juvenile models: Milton; Virgil (for example, in the use of periphrasis such as "fleecy care," l. 15, and other Latinate diction); Scottish usage ("therwith," l. 6, might be considered a Scottish usage, and "plaid," of course, comes from the Gaelic plaide-- Thomson was probably thinking of Ramsay's Tartana as well as the pre-Gentle Shepherd pastorals such as "Patie and Roger" here); and the lyrical, elevated English of the Authorised Version. The significant point about this novice exercise is that, in it, Thomson set out to describe a familiar Scottish scene, though dressed in borrowed garb to an extent.

A similar native pastoral poem, but one that is far better and probably later in date, is the important "Of a Country Life" (one of the three Edinburgh Miscellany poems),¹¹² which does not appear in the Newberry MS. It was possibly composed for presentation to the Grotesque Club or the Athenian Society. In this poem, critics¹¹³ have rightly seen the first real hint of the author of The Seasons' talent for descriptive poetry, his tendency to equate "primitive" rural life with innocence, and also the germ of specific scenes, descriptions and poetic use of language in The Seasons.

"Of a Country Life" shows similar awkwardness of diction to "The Morning in the Country," but its syntax is generally more carefully polished. It, too, is derivative and in the nature of an exercise; in it, Thomson likewise attempted to cast real Border experience into the literary models he knew. In doing so, he seems to have been experi-

menting with the new, more realistic native pastoral mode being promoted by John Gay in England and emulated by Ramsay in Scotland, while at the same time keeping in mind his chief model in the classical pastoral, Virgil. The pastoral "Of a Country Life" is set "on the banks of soft meandering Tweed," and portrays rural pleasures, the changing seasonal activities of the country, and particularly the sports of fishing and hunting (presented with humanitarian concern for the animals' welfare, also a feature of The Seasons' sporting scenes). The poem concludes with a panegyric on the joys of rural life. "Of a Country Life" is immediately patterned on John Gay's Rural Sports (1712-13; revised 1720),¹¹⁴ which in turn was a "georgic" modelled on Virgil's Georgic II, extolling rural life while praising man's ability to order and control nature in the rural environment. The convention of the "happy swain" is ultimately Horatian (Epode II), and was adopted by Virgil; it became a popular subject of neoclassical poetry. The theme was a favourite one with Scottish poets, who lived in a predominantly rural society; variations on the theme included: William Drummond's "The Praise of a Solitarie Life" (based on Marino's translation of Virgil);¹¹⁵ Sir Robert Ker's "In Praise of a Solitary Life";¹¹⁶ Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh's "The Praise of a Country Life" (in heroic couplets, like Thomson's poem);¹¹⁷ the anonymous "Happy Clown" in Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany;¹¹⁸ Ramsay's own verses, the Song of Sir William Worthy in The Gentle Shepherd (III.i) and his "The Happy Man";¹¹⁹ and Dr. Alexander Pennecuik of Newhall's "To my friend inviting him to the Country" ("Sir, fly the smoke and clamour of the town, / Breathe country air..." is similar to Thomson's opening).¹²⁰ Thomson's "Of a Country Life" in fact foreshadows several of his own later poems in praise of rural life, in addition to abundant Seasons

passages; these include the shorter poems "Contentment," "To Dodington: The Happy Man," and "Hymn on Solitude," as well as the description of the farm of the Knight of Arts and Industry in Deva's Vale in The Castle of Indolence (Cantos XXV-XXVIII).¹²¹ Thomson's chief English models in this "georgic" mode, in addition to Gay's adaptation of Virgil, were probably Milton (L'Allegro) and possibly the lyrics of Watts (such as "Happy Solitude").¹²²

Thomson's attempts at realistic description through a re-working of Rural Sports, and his choice of diction for this description, are the most notable features of "Of a Country Life." Like Gay's poem, Thomson's is in heroic couplets. Gay's is longer, more detailed and more strictly Virgilian than Thomson's, but Thomson's is perhaps the more interesting poem for the element of originality it shows in the poet's handling of the "georgic" mode. His juvenile verse is revealing of the kind of poetical exercise he and his Edinburgh contemporaries were engaging in, the problems he encountered with the English poetic language, and surely, the feeling of homesickness for the rural Borders which the young poet knew as a student in the "noisy," "smoaky" town.

Much of Thomson's description in "Of a Country Life" might seem to be somewhat imprecise; it is not so detailed as Gay's (or Virgil's) georgics, and Thomson's unfamiliarity with literary English might be at least partially responsible for this. He seems to "fumble towards meaning like a man in the dark...The impression...is that the poet was writing in a foreign language."¹²³ Insofar as Thomson was a Scots speaker, formal Augustan English was a "foreign language" for him. "Of a Country Life" was, however, written with real Scottish Border life in mind, and the young poet's attempts to deal with realistic, native

description did occasionally produce original, effective expression (almost by accident, it appears). Thomson's literary "foreign language," compounded with the new demands of "native" pastoral, had its advantages; he was obviously struggling here, trying to find a fresh means of describing the sounds and sights of Border life. He was experimenting with poetical diction, and his language needs ultimately led him to break through the bounds of Augustan convention. He employed Latinate classical and Augustan diction along with more familiar, colloquial (English) words; his was a mixed diction, and it had mixed results. On the whole, however, "Of a Country Life" is a surprisingly carefully-worked poem, considering its author's youth and inexperience, and the difficult tasks he set himself in the art of poetry.

A significant quality of Thomson's unusual diction in this poem is its frequent embodiment of the choice of sound over sense. Occasionally he chose words merely to fit the rhyme or metre; occasionally his choices reflected Scottish pronunciation (for example, "plough" [pleugh] rhymes with "renew," ll. 19-20; "haste" with "last," ll. 63-4; "about" with "shoot," ll. 80-1; and so on). In general, the diction follows a standard more in keeping with Scots language than with Augustan English; that is, onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance and consonance (sound effects) play an integral part in the descriptive function of the words themselves to a far greater extent (such words tend frequently to be action words, as well-- verbs and adverbs, along with adjectives). By using such pithy and expressive "imitative" words in conjunction with his more formal Latinate vocabulary, Thomson was consciously trying to lend new immediacy and realism to his scenes, and was very often successful.

The first section of "Of a Country Life" (ll. 1-20) tends to concentrate on the description of the sounds of the country (unlike Gay's Rural Sports, where sound and sight impressions are blended throughout). Thomson opens with a conventional city-country contrast, preferring to the "Clamours of the smoaky Towns" and their "rude Noise," the pleasant rural sounds:

Nought but soft Zephyrs whisp'ring thro' the Trees,
 Or the still Humming of the painful Bees;
 The gentle Murmurs of a purling Rill,
 Or the unweary'd chirping of the Drill;
 The charming Harmony of warbling Birds,
 Or hollow Lowings of the grazing Herds;
 The murm'ring Stock-Doves melancholly Coo
 When they their loved Mates lament or woo;
 The pleasing Bleatings of the tender Lambs,
 Or the indistinct mum'ling of their Dames;
 The musical Discord of chiding Hounds,
 Whereto the echoing Hill or Rock resounds;
 The rural mournful Songs of love-sick Swains,
 Whereby they sooth their raging am'rous Pains;
 The whisling Musick of the lagging Plough,
 Which does the Strength of drooping Beasts renew. (ll. 5-20)

Among the abundant, well-chosen onomatopoeic participles are: "whisp'ring"; "still Humming"; "murm'ring"; "purling"; "chirping"; "warbling"; "mum'ling"; "chiding"; "whisling"; and, "lagging." There is effective use of alliteration: "murm'ring...melancholly...Mates" ("m" alliteration sets a low-key, mournful or subdued mood); "Rock...resounds" (imitates the rock's echoing effect, against the accurate Latinism "resounds"); "Songs of love-sick Swains...sooth" (soft "s" alliteration contributes to the "soothing" effect). More important is the poet's deliberate use of assonance and consonance in this passage: "Murmurs...purling" (imitating the gentle sound, as well as action, of the stream); "charming Harmony...warbling" (itself a "harmony" or agreement of sounds); "hollow Lowings" (recreating the recurring deep sounds of the cattle--

Thomson was clearly fond of this particular phrase and the sound-effect it created, as it reappears in "Spring," l. 201); "pleasing Bleatings" (again, imitating the sound of the lambs' cry). Even where the description itself is not particularly apt, and sound precludes sense, the attention young Thomson paid to sound-effects is noteworthy: "indistinct mum'ling of their Dames" (the image this creates is rather awkward, yet the multi-syllabled Latinism "indistinct" in conjunction with the more colloquial "mum'ling" does create an interesting "mumbling" effect); or, "whisling Musick of the lagging Plough" (while it is not made clear whether the plow or the plowman is whistling-- and this may be an echo of Milton's whistling Plowman in L'Allegro-- "lagging" is nonetheless effective in describing the action itself).

Following this passage, Thomson in ll. 21 ff. makes a transition from aural to more visual description:

And as the Country rings with pleasant Sounds,
So with delightful Prospects it abounds. (ll. 21-2).

He pictures each season in miniature (again departing from Gay, who describes at this point one typical, temperate day). Thomson uses conventional and strongly Virgilian language to describe the very brief spring, summer and autumn scenes (for example, "sweet Spring"'s "painted Flow'rs," l. 26, also recalling Dunbar's "anamalit" aureation, and "Fields array'd in Green"; "full loaden Vales" and "bearded Groves" which "portend" the "Sickle," ll. 31-2; reaping of the Honours of the Plains," l. 34) in contrast to the fuller, more detailed and original description of winter:

Anon black Winter from the frozen North
 Its Treasuries of Snow and Hail pours forth;
 Then stormy Winds blow thro' the hazy Sky,
 In Desolation Nature seems to ly.
 The Unstain'd Snow from the full Clouds descends,
 Whose sparkling Lustre open Eyes offends.
 In Maiden-white the glit'ring Fields do shine,
 Then bleating Flocks for want of Food repine,
 With wither'd Eyes they see all Snow around,
 And with their Fore-feet paw and scrap the Ground,
 They chearfully do crop th' insipid Grass;
 The Shepherds, sighing, cry, Alas! alas!
 Then pinching Want the wildest Beast does tame.
 Then Huntsmen on the Snow do trace their Game.
 Keen Frost then turns the liquid Lakes to Glass,
 Arrests the dancing Riv'lets as they pass.

(ll. 35-50)

Thomson is perhaps most realistic in "Of a Country Life" when he describes the plight of animals and of man in winter; his knowledge of the hardships of winter in the country, based in his experiences in the Scottish Borders, as well as his own sympathetic feelings, are in evidence here. This description of winter foreshadows The Seasons' "Winter" in many details: the storms, the shining fields of snow, the suffering animals pawing the ground, the wild animals "tamed" by the harsh season, the hunt, the frozen waters. Each of these aspects of the winter scene is described at greater length in "Winter." The young poet's rather unusual use of the word "wither'd" (l. 43) is worth noting in this passage, for he apparently uses it here in a particularly northern or Scottish sense, meaning "trembling" (Chambers Scots Dictionary) or shivering, as from the cold.¹²⁴ "Wither" became one of the poet's favourite words, and recurs frequently in his later works. Also worth noting is the adjective "insipid," describing the grass (l. 45); Thomson uses it here in its original Latin sense, as "tasteless." His use of Latinisms thus, with their original Latin meanings transferred directly into English, is a

characteristic of the language of his mature poetry, especially in The Seasons. The "winter" passage in "Of a Country Life" serves to illustrate two points which are typical of Scottish poetry in general: the especially realistic, detailed descriptive treatment of winter, Scotland's "longest" and most immediate, harsh season; and the strong element of humanitarian concern for and sympathy with animals as they struggle along with man in the difficult environment.

Continuing his primarily visual description of rural life, Thomson next follows Gay's lead in treating the country sports of angling, hare-coursing and fowl hunting, sports in which he himself may have participated as a youth in the Borders. Here, "Of a Country Life" demonstrates a competent re-working and condensation of Gay's model poem. Thomson borrows much from the English poet (for example, the verb "twich" [sic], l. 58; Gay, too, uses "twitch" to describe the action of pulling the fishing line-- the spelling of the verb in the Edinburgh Miscellany may be a misprint, or it might represent Scottish metathesis), while adding his own touches to the descriptions. Again, the scenes in "Of a Country Life" are seen to be prototypes of scenes in The Seasons; the angling scene would recur in "Spring," and the hunting scenes in "Autumn." Typically, Thomson's diction here is most accurate and original in describing action and movement in nature: the pike "flounces," (l. 65, an unexpected word, found in Pope's Iliad, Book 21.414 but possibly also related to the Scots "flounge," Scottish National Dictionary-- as shall be seen in the language of The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence, Thomson's background as a Scots speaker seems to have predisposed him to choose certain less-common, expressive descriptive words which bear close resemblance in sound and sense to Scots words); the hare "scours with all her Force" (l. 72); the hawk

beats down the "flut 'ring Fowl" (l. 79, the "f" alliteration imitates the sound of wings beating, reinforced by the onomatopoeic word "flut'ring"); and so forth. Thomson's choice of diction was very often rather unusual, but effective in describing the precise action he intended; the roots of the unique poetical diction which he forged for The Seasons and the Castle are to be found even here, in the juvenilia.

The rural description now moves from sports to a pastoral, idyllic scene which could in fact represent an idealised Border scene, including bathing in the stream (Jedwater?) and tuning the oaten reed to "rural strains" (Thomson's own first attempts at poetry?):

When the Noon-Sun directly darts his Beams
 Upon your giddy Heads, with fiery Gleams,
 Then you may bathe your self in cooling Streams.
 Or to the sweet adjoining Grove retire
 Where Trees with interwoven Boughs conspire
 To form a grateful Shade—their rural Swains
 Do tune their Oaten Reeds to rural Strains.
 The silent Birds sit list'ning on the Sprays,
 And in soft charming Notes do imitate their Lays,
 There you may stretch your self upon the Grass,
 And lull'd with Musick to kind Slumbers pass;
 No meagre Cares your Fancy will distract,
 And on that Scene no tragick Fears will act,
 Save the dear Image of a charming She,
 Nought will the Object of your Vision be. (ll. 90-104)

One glaring error in grammar occurs here: "their," l. 95, which should be "there." This may have simply been a printer's error, or it may have been due to Thomson's lack of skill with English diction; Robertson corrected the reading for the Oxford Standard edition. This highly stylised pastoral scene is not found in Gay's Rural Sports, and may owe something to L'Allegro. The concluding stanza of the poem is Horatian in spirit, and also introduces the typical "prayer" element

(again, not found in Gay's poem):

Away the vicious Pleasures of the Town,
Let empty partial Fortune on me frown;
But grant, ye Pow'rs, that it may be my Lot
To live in Peace from noisy Towns remote. (ll. 105-8)

"Of a Country Life" provides an intriguing hint of the mature Thomson's poetic themes and methods: the use of English and Latin literary models, to adapt his own Scottish experience to poetic expression; the use of a mixed Latinate and colloquial diction, with its occasional awkwardness and, more frequently, its striking and unexpected descriptive power; the close observation of nature, and the favourite theme of man and animals in the complex natural world; and, the closing "prayer" or hymn-like element (culminating in The Seasons' "Hymn"). Here, in this prototype of The Seasons, is the earliest real glimpse of the poet who ultimately "broke through the hollow [Augustan] style, and brought men face to face with the real outward world of sight and sound, and touched, too, not unfrequently on some of its finest lessons...."¹²⁵

Some of the more interesting juvenile poems are those which are explicitly religious in nature. Some are religious pastorals, some are religious-philosophical or meditative works, and others are "purely" religious exercises such as the Scriptural paraphrases. What do they tell us about the young Thomson's religious beliefs? Hoxie Neale Fairchild holds that the juvenilia, "in general...exhibit the influence of secular literature and a broad and slightly soft type of religion upon a youth whose background is conventionally pious....The rarity of definitely Calvinistic notes, however, is significant."¹²⁶ By "Calvinistic notes," Fairchild no doubt means the old-style, stern

Scottish Calvinism of the poet's father and his generation, and while such notes are rare in the juvenilia, they are by no means absent (note, for example, the uncompromising religious implications of the animal-fables, which condemn vanity and greed, and allude to concepts of the Deity built on determinism and Providence, stern Divine justice and retribution). Such concepts, preached in the poet's didactic mode, and echoing the powerful rhetoric of the pulpit, recur throughout the juvenile religious poems as well as in The Seasons, Liberty and especially The Castle of Indolence. Thomson's vein of old-style Calvinistic moral rigour, awareness of man's Fallen state, is clearly a product of his strict religious upbringing. The powerful emotional or "mystical" strain which runs through the juvenile religious poems is likewise an influence of his Scottish Calvinistic upbringing; while one critic has said that, "Thomson's religious feeling is related rather to the dignity and gentlemanliness of Addison than to the emotionalism of Isaac Watts,"¹²⁷ this certainly does not apply to the juvenilia, where the influence of Watts in particular and of Calvinistic emotionalism in general is very strong. The theory that young Thomson "rebelled" against his Scottish Calvinistic past¹²⁸ as soon as he began to write poetry is not accurate, therefore; although the influences of secular literature, philosophy and science can certainly be detected in the juvenilia, they occur here mostly as Thomson attempted to reconcile them to his religious goals. He continued to think of himself as a prospective divine of the Scottish Church, even when he left Edinburgh to go to London; he seems to have gone there to write a specific type of poetry, that is, primarily religious poetry.¹²⁹ He certainly did not abandon religious faith at this stage, or indeed at any later stage; he could be considered "unorthodox" only

insofar as the Moderates within the Scottish Church were "un-orthodox." His juvenile religious poems do show considerable Moderate influence, in keeping with general trends in the Church in the early-eighteenth century (the Moderates were led, as might be expected, by the more liberal clergy in Edinburgh, where Thomson was a student at that time). Identifiable "Moderate" traits, which came to predominate in the juvenile religious verse as well as in the later works, include: increased trust in humanism and neoclassicism, reinforcing Scriptural truth [cf. Robert Riccaltoun, Chapter II, above]; interest in the positive aspects of natural religion or Physico-theology, and in the new empirical science; admission of increasing respect for human "reason"; and prevailing religious optimism, emphasising God's benevolence and love rather than his stern justice, and bearing the influence of the philosophy of Shaftesbury and Christian Neoplatonism (this aspect would build on the already-present "mystical" or emotional disposition attributed to old-style Scottish Calvinistic belief). These liberal ideas were tempered, however, by the awareness of the limits of reason in the face of God's omniscience and omnipotence, held by Thomson and most of the Moderates. So, even in the juvenilia, the direction which Thomson's mature religious thought would take becomes clear; while strongly influenced by secular disciplines, and especially by Moderate trends within the Scottish Church, he would nonetheless maintain a core of conventional religious faith throughout his life.

A number of the juvenile poems are cast in the pastoral mode, while at the same time introducing explicitly religious themes (such a blending of secular with religious poetry has been seen, to a lesser extent, in the allegory "Upon Beauty," above). Thomson's religious

pastorals attempt to fuse classical pastoral conventions with the language and themes of the Bible and of traditional hymns and meditative literature (a powerful synthesis perfected in certain passages of The Seasons). Such religious pastoral works as Rapin's Eclogae Sacrae¹³⁰ seem to have influenced the poet and his contemporaries in Edinburgh; the classical-Christian pastoral was a popular exercise with them (for example, David Mallet's youthful "A Pastoral Inscrib'd to Mr. M[itchel]l," from the Edinburgh Miscellany).¹³¹ As poetry, Thomson's juvenile religious-pastorals are not entirely successful, and usually fail to effect a convincing blend. They are revealing, however, of the debt Thomson owed to his early models in the Renaissance tradition, such as William Drummond and Milton. In general, these verses exemplify the poet's thorough grounding in Christian Humanist ideals, through his sound Scottish education; they also prefigure the significant classical-Christian themes of The Seasons.

"A Pastoral Betwixt David, Thirsis, and the Angel Gabriel"¹³² is a pastoral dialogue, and celebrates the birth of Christ. Virgil's prophetic Eclogue IV was possibly an influence; the Georgics' "Golden Age" of Eternal Spring underlies the Miltonic "Paradise," which forms Thomson's vision of the redeemed Christian world here. Thomson's play on light and darkness imagery in the poem echoes Milton's imagery in both Paradise Lost and the ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity."¹³³ There are several verbal echoes of this Miltonic ode on the identical theme, in Thomson's "Pastoral," such as: "Came gliding musick, heav'nly sweet and loud / With sacred raptures which my bosom fires" (ll. 4-5) which recalls Milton's "When such musick sweet / Their hearts and ears did greet....As all their souls in blissful rapture took" (ll. 93-8);

and Thomson's "The joy that shall their oozy channells swell" (l. 26), which recalls Milton's "And bid the weltring waves their oozy channels keep" (l. 124). Pre-Miltonic Scottish analogues might include William Drummond's verses "The Angels for the Natiuitie of Our Lord" and "For the Natiuitie of Our Lord."¹³⁴ The first of these poems, the Angel Gabriel's address to the shepherds, is in the plain style; its quality of almost naïve simplicity resembles that of the Angel Gabriel's speech and the angels' chorus in Thomson's pastoral dialogue (ll. 11-16). In contrast, Drummond's second Nativity poem is in the more formal, aureate style; it is the shepherds' song, and more closely resembles Thomson's shepherds' dialogues (ll. 1-10, 21-40). Both Drummond and Thomson use strongly Neoplatonic light-imagery here (recalling Dunbar's aureate "Of the Nativitie of Christ,"¹³⁵ as well as the light-imagery of Milton's "Nativity" ode). There are a number of verbal echoes of Drummond's second Nativity poem in Thomson's; Thomson's,

Thou fairest morn that ever sprang from night
Or deck'd the opening skies with rosie light
Well may'st thou shine with a distinguish'd ray (ll. 31-3)

recalls Drummond's,

O than the fairest Day, thrice fairer Night!
Night to best Dayes in which a Sunne doth rise,
Of which that golden Eye, which cleares the Skies,
Is but a sparkling Ray, a Shadow light. (ll. 1-4).

Also, Thomson's image of the "Immortal green" "Eternal spring" (ll. 22-3) which banishes "wintry horrors" (l. 21) echoes Drummond's image of the "Flowres in Winter" blooming (l. 9).

One further possible source for Thomson's "Pastoral" on the Nativity is Isaac Watts' "The Nativity of Christ" ("Shepherds, rejoice")¹³⁶ which, like Thomson's poem, also owes something to Virgil and Milton. Thomson's "Chorus of Angels" (ll. 17-20) is in the same lyric form as Watts' verse (ABAB, iambic four-stress alternating with three-stress lines). Thomson's concluding line, "Shepherd let's go and humbly kiss the Son" (l. 40) echoes Watts' "Go, shepherds, kiss the Son" (l. 16).

It is perhaps appropriate here, to discuss the importance of the poetry of Isaac Watts as an early influence on Thomson-- an influence that has been largely neglected. The poetry of the English Calvinist Watts, like Thomson's, shows the influence of a strong classical education, and reflects admiration for Virgil as well as for the religious poetry of Milton. Watts also owed much to the Cambridge Platonists and to Shaftesbury, as did Thomson. Watts' verse is primarily lyric, and might often be accused of being banal; similar sing-song rhythms and trivial rhymes can also be found in many of Thomson's early lyrics (Watts, however, intended many of his lyrics to be sung, while Thomson did not). The chief purpose of Watts' poetry is to praise the Creator; he does so with humility and wonder, treating the natural world with love and respect as an important step for the ascendant mind and spirit toward this Christian Neoplatonic God. His relationship with the Deity is deeply personal; the poetry, like the young Thomson's, is usually subjective. Watts' religious beliefs were tinged with enthusiasm, sentimentality, or that certain "sublime" religious emotionalism¹³⁷ which counterbalanced puritan austerity (but

was nevertheless an element of puritan religious disposition). Hoxie Neale Fairchild sees just this type of emotionalism in Thomson's early religious poetry, and traces it ultimately to the poet's mother, who was a religious enthusiast.¹³⁸ After all, Beatrix Trotter Thomson was alive and living in Edinburgh near her son, when he was a Divinity student and was writing the majority of these poems! It is fitting that Isaac Watts should have been admired by Thomson and his fellow-Divinity students and budding poets. Thomson's associate Joseph Mitchell, for example, dedicated his Jonah (1720) to Watts; there is also "An Ode to the Rev. Mr. Isaac Watts" in the Lugubres Cantus, by "D. V. M." [Mallet, perhaps?].¹³⁹ The English divine's non-conformist religious beliefs showed the same tendency towards moderation and optimism which would increasingly characterise Scottish Calvinism in the eighteenth century. Watts had succeeded in reconciling his religious beliefs with his poetic vocation-- Thomson's goal; Watts' poem "Two Happy Rivals: Devotion and the Muse"¹⁴⁰ exemplifies the dilemma and the potential solution.

Among Thomson's juvenile religious pastorals, two poems most explicitly attempt to join Virgilian with Biblical and Miltonic convention; these are "A Pastoral Entertainment describ'd,"¹⁴¹ and "A Dialogue in praise of the pastoral life."¹⁴² "A Pastoral Entertainment" begins by describing a light-hearted pastoral feast, celebrating "each revolving year" (l. 7), showing the influence of Virgil's "Golden Age" concept and of his diction; the scene itself is probably based on L'Allegro. This conventional pastoral abruptly shifts to make a heavy religious point (influenced by Scripture and by Paradise Lost) in the concluding four lines:

In antient times so pass'd the smiling hour
 When our first parents liv'd in Eden's [bower]
 E're care and trouble were pronounc'd ou[r doom]
 Or Sin had blasted the creation's blo[om.] (ll. 44-7)

"A Dialogue in praise of the pastoral life" is likewise heavy-handed in its attempt to express a religious message through the pastoral mode. This poem was even more seriously damaged in MS than "A Pastoral Entertainment," and thus was not published by Robertson in the Oxford Standard edition. Here, the dialogue opens with a rather interesting Biblical theme (reinforced by the Horatian-Virgilian "happy swain" motif): the important role of the shepherds as the first recipients of the "joyful news" of Christ's birth. In Stanza 5, however, the poem suddenly shifts to solely secular, conventional pastoral expression ("I love the cottage and the country fare..," and so on), and loses the originality of its opening idea. The awkward fusion of conventional pastoral with religious elements in these two poems would seem to suggest an early date; they seem to have been mere exercises, written before the poet had learnt subtly to incorporate his religious beliefs within the poetry of natural description. The poems are interesting, primarily as illustrations of Thomson's conception of rural life and occupations (though highly stylised here) as somehow innocent, virtuous and even sacred; they are an early hint of the primitivistic strain which runs throughout The Seasons and is also important in The Castle of Indolence.

Scriptural paraphrases were the basis of the "Exercises" prepared for Divinity College classes by students in Thomson's day, as can be seen from the various assignments given by Thomson's Professor, William Ham-

ilton (listed in his meticulously-kept Notebook).¹⁴³ Professor Hamilton, it seems, discouraged overly-poetical, "flowery" versions of the Scriptures in these Exercises; there is a long-standing tradition that James Thomson was once reprimanded by the Professor for delivering some extravagantly poetical religious Exercise on a Psalm passage.¹⁴⁴ Such Scriptural paraphrases as these Exercises could be useful as practise-pieces for poetically minded young students, and Thomson and his contemporaries frequently used the Bible as a convenient text for poetical embellishment. Thomson's early three-stanza verse paraphrase of the "Song of Solomon, chap. I, ver. 7"¹⁴⁵ is such a Scriptural re-working, rendered as a fairly competent Augustan pastoral lyric. David Mallet, too, did a version from the "Song of Solomon, chapter II"; this was published in the Edinburgh Miscellany¹⁴⁶ as an extravagant courtly-love dialogue in heroic couplets.

Another of young Thomson's early Scriptural pieces, a verse paraphrase of "Psalm 104"¹⁴⁷ in heroic couplets, is deserving of attention here, as it shows some originality and poetical talent. The MS verse was published by Goodhugh (in part), by Nicolas, and by Robertson (who used the Aldine text, which differs slightly from the MS). As so many Scottish and English students had traditionally been called upon to render translations and verse paraphrases of the Psalms, no small number of these achieved publication. The young Milton did several of these (Psalms 114 and 136 at age fifteen; Psalms 1-8 in 1653; Psalms 80-88 in 1648).¹⁴⁸ Pope, in 1710, did a paraphrase of Psalm 91 in Augustan heroic couplets, published in 1717.¹⁴⁹ Sir Richard Blackmore did a version of Psalm 104 rather similar to Thomson's own;¹⁵⁰ his Paraphrase of the Book of Job, and some Select Psalms (1700) would have appealed to Thomson, as would have Watts' classical-Miltonic Psalms

(1719).

Psalm-translations and paraphrases had long been a popular literary exercise in Scotland, among Scots and Latinist, as well as Anglo-Scottish, poets.¹⁵¹ In Scotland, Psalm 104 itself was an especially popular subject. Latinists George Buchanan, Arthur Johnston and a host of others (including George Eglisam, Thomas Hope of Craighall, David Hume, Thomas Reid, William Stuart of Ochiltree, Henry Henderson of Elphinstone, Ninian Paterson and Archibald Pitcairn) all did Latin versions of Psalm 104, which were published together in Poetarum Scotorum Musae Sacrae (1739).¹⁵² Here, Buchanan's and Eglisam's were compared, in a "poetical duel" which, of course, Buchanan "won." (Thomson was later to own this important volume of Scottish Latinist poetry.)¹⁵³ George Buchanan's Latin Psalms were certainly available to Thomson in youth, in a number of editions of Poemata quae extant; Buchanan's Psalms had long been studied in Scottish schools. In English, David Murray of Gorthy, author of a version of Sophonisba which Thomson may have known [see Chapter VII, below] published a translation of Psalm 104, in 1615.¹⁵⁴ Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh published a "Metaphysical"-style English interpretation of Psalm 104 in rhymed couplets.¹⁵⁵ One version of the Metrical Psalms themselves, which may have influenced Thomson here, was a Scottish production of King James VI & I and Sir William Alexander.¹⁵⁶

It is significant that Thomson, too, chose Psalm 104 as the subject of his lengthy juvenile verse-paraphrase. This Psalm treats of what became known by the eighteenth century as Physico-theology: the knowledge of an all-powerful and benevolent God through the wonders of His Creation, and the sacred role of all Creation (and especially of the poet)

to praise God. The conventional metaphor of God as "Author" (also found in Milton, Shaftesbury, Addison and Blackmore, et. al., and in prose works of Robert Riccaltoun)¹⁵⁷ opens the poem; again, the young poet seems to be striving to reconcile his two "callings" of poetry and Divinity, through Physico-theology. It is not surprising that his "Psalm 104" bears similarity to Blackmore's Psalm-versions, as well as to his Creation (1712), in that tradition. Physico-theology was to become a central unifying theme of Thomson's poem of religion and nature, The Seasons.

English critic and literary patron William Benson, who was later involved in the controversy over the relative merits of Buchanan's and Johnston's Latin Psalms and who supported Johnston's in opposition to Ruddiman,¹⁵⁸ praised young Thomson's "Psalm 104." He "admired the full diction and distinctive thought of these verses, which, despite faults and occasional lapses, rise far above a literary exercise." Benson also felt that Thomson's literary endeavours might well meet with encouragement in London; Benson's praise may have been an added incentive for him to go south.¹⁵⁹

Thomson's "Psalm 104" follows the Metrical Psalm (Authorised Version) exposition most closely, using "the original as a basis for descriptive embroidery"¹⁶⁰ and also employing his own strongly Latinate language and eye for accurate natural description. The form he chose for the paraphrase recalls the dignified heroic couplets of Pope's early "Psalm 91" paraphrase. Thomson's rhymes are for the most part well-chosen, with but a few doubtful ones (such as "Thee"/"die," ll. 99-100, which probably, in fact, represented the Scottish pronunciation). The

iambic pentameter occasionally fails, or more often forces an awkward pronunciation, but on the whole the Psalm is forward-moving, positive and vividly descriptive.

The diction Thomson chose to recast the Psalmist's descriptions of nature came from many sources; the eclectic language here could make an interesting subject of study in itself. One source is, of course, the Bible itself, and also the Book of Common Prayer, for the formal "Thou" address, and the archaic "st" verb-ending used throughout ("Canst thou," l. 2; "thou said'st," l. 16; "thou did'st," l. 13; "cover'd'st," l. 18; and so on). Latinate vocabulary predominates, borrowing Virgilian descriptive epithets ("rocky caverns fruitfull moisture weep / Which sweetly thro' the verdant vales doth glide," ll. 24-5; "He doth the clouds with genial moisture fill," l. 42; and so on) and employing Virgilian periphrasis ("bleating kind," l. 30; "feather'd nation," l. 36). This brief passage will illustrate the poet's use of Latinate diction within the Scriptural context:

The feather'd nation by their smiling sides
 In lowly brambles or in trees abide
 By nature taught on them they rear their nests
 That with inimitable art are dress'd
 They for the shade and safety of the wood
 With nat'rall musick chear the neighbourhood
 He doth the clouds with genial moisture fill
 Which on the [shr]rivel'd ground they bounteously distill
 And nature's lap with various blessings croud
 The giver God all creatures cry aloud (ll. 36-45, MS;
 italics added)

Other Latinisms which stand out in Thomson's rendering of Psalm 104 include: "erect," l. 60; "decline," l. 70; "implore," l. 78; "ad-journs," l. 87; "liberal," l. 101; "extend," l. 106; and so forth.

Much of the Latinate language of the poem, as might be expected, also

strikes a Miltonic note ("primogenial light," l. 5; "Ethereal road," l. 11); other Miltonic echoes are found in the details of description, such as God's "daz'ling bright" robes, l. 6, the "glim'ring light" of dawn, l. 81, the moon "riding" high, l. 68 (echoing Il Penseroso), and similar light and cosmic imagery. There are some echoes of Pope's more unusual diction as well ("flounce" recurs, l. 93; "wantonnes" as a verb, l. 47, is also found in Pope's Odyssey, XI.554).

Thomson's description of the floods "Shrunked with in the limits of their shoar," l. 22, is possibly an echo of George Mackenzie's "Psalm civ," "The trembling Floods soon shrunk within their Shore," l. 20; Thomson would surely have known Mackenzie's near-contemporary English version of the Psalm, published in his Works (Edinburgh, 1716). Thomson's diction in "Psalm 104" also includes a number of his favourite "poetical" words (or, words which James Beattie listed as English archaisms, chiefly limited to poetical use by the eighteenth century except in Scotland, where, he said, they were still in everyday use): such words as "warbling," l. 31; "meads," l. 46; "morn," l. 87; and, "lays," l. 111.¹⁶¹ Much of the descriptive language which Thomson chose for his "Psalm 104" is of similar quality to that of "Of a Country Life": unusual, and through sound effects, realistically expressive (for example, the kenning-like compound "Swift wing'd winds," l. 12; "mazy way," l. 31; "murm'ring world," l. 71; lark "flick'ring on her nest," l. 80; stork's "cackling cries," l. 63; ship's "scud," l. 96; and so on). Such exploitation of onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance and consonance for descriptive effect, is a particularly strong characteristic of the Scots language, as has been suggested. The poem has at least one Scotticism or northern archaism, "stand fast for ay," l. 16. From this abbreviated view of Thomson's eclectic diction in his

Psalm-paraphrase, it can be seen that the young poet made the popular Psalm 104 his own song of praise, forging a new poetical language to bring the metrical Psalm-chant to descriptive life, while at the same time professing his life-work:

I'll to God's honour consecrate my lays
And when I cease to be I'll cease to praise (ll. 111-2)

The final Psalm adaptation among the juvenilia is the "Hymn to God's Power" ["Hymn on the Power of God"],¹⁶² which is a rendering of Psalm 148; Thomson's version is a lyric, and a rather looser paraphrase than "Psalm 104." Only Schmidt-Wartenberg published the full text from MS (Goodhugh, Nicolas and Robertson omit Stanza 6, "Ye dreadful monsters of the deep..."). Again, the lyric is on a Physico-theological theme; it praises "The God of nature," l. 32, and foreshadows the "Hymn on the Seasons," which is also loosely based on Psalm 148.¹⁶³ Thomson's version owes much to Blackmore's Creation (Book VII), and especially to Isaac Watts, whose own version of Psalm 148 takes the same lyric form as Thomson's (ABAB, iambic four-stress lines alternating with three-stress lines).¹⁶⁴

While these Scriptural paraphrases among Thomson's juvenilia might be termed "purely" religious in theme, the final group of his early religious poems could be called religious-philosophical, as the poems borrow much from the concepts and the imagery of near-contemporary metaphysics to express a predominantly orthodox religious viewpoint. One important such poem, "The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power,"¹⁶⁵ was not in the Newberry MS, and was first published by Aaron Hill in his London periodical the Plain Dealer (1724). It is presented as one ex-

ample which Hill offered to the English reading public, of Edinburgh's flowering of young poetical genius (Mallet's "William and Margaret" was another); this genius was brought to Hill's attention by a correspondent calling himself "Fergus Bruce" (possibly Allan Ramsay himself).¹⁶⁶ Hill did not name Thomson as the author of "Works and Wonders," but simply attributed the piece to a member of the Grotesque Club in Edinburgh, a club which fostered "A Friendship that knows no Strife, but that of generous Emulation, to excell, in Virtue, Learning, and Politeness"; he described the poem as,

conceiv'd, and express'd, with all the Clearness, Depth, and Strength, of an experienc'd Philosopher, by a Member of this Grotesque Club, who was in his Fourteenth Year only, when he compos'd, in Blank Verse, a Poem, now in my Hands; and founded on a Supposition of the Author's sitting, a whole Summer Night, in a Garden, looking upward, and quite losing himself in Contemplation on the Works and Wonders, of Almighty Power, - If this was a Subject naturally above the Capacity of so very a Boy, to what a Degree does it increase our Wonder, when we find it treated, in this Masterly Manner.¹⁶⁷

Robertson published the poem among the juvenilia, while Goodhugh and Nicolas had not; the attribution to Thomson has never conclusively been traced. It seems odd that Robertson published this poem (he also tampered with the text), while he neglected to publish a number of the better-documented MS poems. At any rate, no wonder that the poem sounded to Hill as if it had been written by an "experienc'd Philosopher": Herbert Drennon in this century found that the poem is, "almost in toto...a metrical rendering of a number of passages in Shaftesbury's Moralists, a philosophical rhapsody (1709)."¹⁶⁸ The poem is in blank verse (as was previously noted, there are no blank verse pieces in the MS, and the only other blank verse poem generally included among the juvenilia is "Lisy's Parting with Her Cat," of a possibly slightly later

date). Blank verse, however, was most appropriate for a paraphrase of Shaftesbury, who deplored rhyme. Again, the mysterious "age fourteen" dating occurs; it is possible that Thomson wrote it at that early age (or, he might have re-worked a very early poem at a somewhat later time, nearer 1724), but judging from its philosophical content and from its use of blank verse (usually associated with the poet's mature works), "Works and Wonders" was probably a rather later juvenile exercise, written during his student days in Edinburgh.¹⁶⁹

As McKillop points out, Thomson's numeral "9"'s closely resemble his "4"'s,¹⁷⁰ and if indeed the poet had noted the age of composition on the draft MS of the poem sent to Hill, it could have been "age 19" misread as "14." It is not known how Hill came to possess the poem; Ramsay, Mallet or Hill himself (who may have met Thomson on a visit to Edinburgh) might have persuaded the young poet to submit his poem for publication.

It seems at least possible that this poem was the very "discourse on the Power of the Supreme Being," in "sublimely elevated" blank verse, which Thomson wrote as an Exercise for his Divinity class, and for which he was reprimanded by Professor William Hamilton for being overly poetical, and "improper."¹⁷¹ It has also been said that Thomson's fellow-students suspected this Exercise as a plagiarism, but could not trace its source.¹⁷² Indeed, if this were the same piece, the source (Shaftesbury) was not to be traced until Drennon's discovery in this century.

At least one critic felt that Professor Hamilton's alleged criticism of Thomson's "poetical" style in this Exercise was the reason for the poet's decision to leave Divinity College and go to London,¹⁷³ but

Thomson in fact had not given up his ministerial vocation at that stage. Another critic links Thomson's decision to go south, specifically with Aaron Hill's encouragement in publishing "Works and Wonders."

The theme of "Works and Wonders" is, once again, Physico-theology; Shaftesbury's thought in these passages from the Moralists shows a strong general influence of Neoplatonism, and especially of the Cambridge Platonists. The religious enthusiasm and emotional tone of Thomson's interpretation might also owe something to Watts (who likewise admired Shaftesbury and the Cambridge Platonists, and incorporated Christian Neoplatonic thought into many of his lyrics). Thomson again asserts his role as a religious poet:

Yet may I, from thy most apparent Works,
Form some Idea of their wondrous Author;
And celebrate thy Praise, with rapt'rous Mind. (ll. 18-20)

Fairchild sees in this poem the seeds of Thomson's future "Deism" (so-called), or rather "soft" religion;¹⁷⁴ in fact, the young poet made very few changes in the Deist Shaftesbury's ideas throughout. (It is worth noting that he did replace one of Shaftesbury's terms, "discovery," with the word "ken"-- a poetical archaism which is also a Scotticism-- l. 24.) In typical fashion, however, Thomson did depart from Shaftesbury to make his own humbly moralistic statement which reflects the Scottish Calvinistic emphasis on the limits of reason:

But, 'tis too much for my weak Mind to know:
Teach me, with humble Reverence to adore
The Mysteries, I must not comprehend! (ll. 37-9)

Another of the juvenile religious-philosophical poems, "A Complaint on the Miseries of this Life,"¹⁷⁵ is much closer to the stern old-style Scottish Calvinistic "mood of his [Thomson's] father...where, alarmed by the wickedness of mortal existence, the young poet prays to be led untained [sic] through the world to heaven."¹⁷⁶ Here, the young poet shows deep awareness of the depraved state of the Fallen world. The poem's theme-- the "fading fleeting joys" of earthly life, the body as a dark prison for the soul versus the bright eternal joys of Heaven-- is traditional in Christian Neoplatonism, and has any number of medieval and Renaissance antecedents in meditative literature (one Scottish example is Dunbar's "Of the Warldis Vanitie").¹⁷⁷ Thomson's verse, in fact, has an especially strong seventeenth-century flavour and recalls William Drummond's poems in Urania, or Spirituall Poems, "What Haplesse Hap had I now to bee borne" (also appearing in revised form as "The Court of True Honour" in Flowres of Sion), and "Why (worldlings) doe ye trust fraile Honours Dreames?"¹⁷⁸ This second Drummond poem alludes to "Eden's foolish Gard'ner" (l. 14), a symbol for death and the Fall which is also found in Andrew Marvell's "Damon the Mower," and especially in his "The Mower Against Gardens."¹⁷⁹ The unmown fields represent Eden's unspoilt Nature, before sin and death intrude; Thomson uses this conceit (ultimately, an allusion to Job 14.2) in "Miseries," thus referring to his awaited death:

I'll smiling fall like mow'd flow'rs
I'll gladly spurn this cloging clay
And, sweetly singing soar away. (ll. 16-18)

Biblical influence is obvious; the poem carries the general message of Job, and alludes also to Ecclesiastes ("Yea what is all beneath the sky /

But emptiness and vanity," ll. 23-4). The predominant imagery is Neoplatonic light and darkness imagery, and its use here recalls Drummond as well as Milton (Il Penseroso, Paradise Lost). The poem's lyric form, its flesh-denying theme, its emotional and enthusiastic tone, as well as details of diction and imagery, suggest the significant influence of Watts as well. Thomson's poem, which moans, "In the lone grave I long to rest," l. 27, also begs comparison with the work of his contemporary at Divinity College, Robert Blair. Blair, of course, wrote very much under the personal influence of his mentor Watts; like Thomson's juvenile "Complaint," his The Grave preaches the message of Job.¹⁸⁰ The Grave¹⁸¹ looks forward to the release of a holy death, and concludes with the symbol of the soul, as a bird, returning to heaven:

Thus at the Shut of Ev'n, the weary Bird
Leaves the wide Air, and in some lonely Brake
Cow'rs down, and dozes till the Dawn of Day,
Then claps his well-fledg'd Wings, and bears away. (ll. 764-7)

This conventional symbol, which also recurs in the lyrics of Watts, forms part of Thomson's mixed metaphor quoted above, "...sweetly singing, soar away," l. 18. Another contemporary verse in the same vein, John Callender's "The Elevation" (published in the Edinburgh Miscellany),¹⁸² uses strikingly similar themes and symbolism to Thomson's and Watts' poems, and demonstrates the popularity of such "enthusiastic" religious lyric poetry in Scotland in Thomson's day.

Thomson's poem of world-weary complaint concludes with a typically Calvinistic prayer, placing ultimate faith in God's Word (Revelation) as the soul's best guide through "corrupt life" to heaven:

Thy word, O Lord, shall be my guide
 Heav'n wher thou dwellest is my goal
 Thro' corrupt life grant I may glide
 With an untainted upward soul
 Then may this life this dreary night
 Dispelled be by dawning light. (ll. 31-6)

The final religious-philosophical poem to be dealt with is the most complex of all, the lengthy "Upon Happiness."¹⁸³ It is probably of a late date among the juvenilia; it occurs in less-polished form in the Newberry MS and is one of the three Edinburgh Miscellany poems. "Upon Happiness" is over-ambitious, and its intriguing and complex literary and philosophical content leads one to suspect a direct source; a search turned up not a single, comprehensive source, however (like the poet used for "Works and Wonders"), but numerous analogues and indirect sources. The poem is eclectic, and as a synthesis of a variety of religious, philosophical and scientific influences, illustrates one popular mode of thinking or set of ideas in the young poet's day. Like "Miseries," "Upon Happiness" reflects chiefly Christian Neoplatonic writings, both prose and poetry, which are built on the "rising mind" concept of the ever-improving intellect and ascending scale of knowledge; the poem seems to have been especially strongly influenced by the Cambridge Platonists and their disciples. (It will be recalled that Robert Riccaltoun's writing also demonstrated strong Neoplatonic influence, and that the optimistic "rising mind" concept was, by the eighteenth century, frequently associated with empirical, and particularly Newtonian, science-- see Chapter II, above.)

Briefly, "Upon Happiness" depicts the first-person speaker contemplating

earthly life and the means to happiness, sleeping and entering a dream-vision wherein he climbs the steep Mt. Contemplation. From the mountain he looks down upon vain men and their delusive pleasures; here the poem changes from first-person narrative to direct address, and the tone becomes moralistic, didactic. He expounds the joys of virtue and the horrors of eternal damnation, holding with the orthodox Scottish Calvinistic view that this virtue, while it gives pleasure to man, will not of itself guarantee election to heaven (i.e., predestination). The tone then shifts again, to enthusiastic, highly emotional expression; the speaker pledges to devote himself to duty in God's service, whereby he will find the greatest possible earthly happiness. He describes, in near-mystical terms, the ultimate happiness of the beatific vision in eternity: God is Light, God is the goal of the "rising mind." God is the Neoplatonic Form of perfection, and the centre of all bliss. The speaker finds such brightness overwhelming, beyond his humble powers to "drink in"; he has reached the limits of human reason and knowledge on earth. He descends Mt. Contemplation, and the vision ends.

Christian Neoplatonism (the application of the philosophy of Plato to the beliefs of the Christian religion) came to Thomson in the eighteenth century, through a complex line of development: broadly, from medieval philosopher Plotinus, to the Renaissance Humanists such as Marsilio Ficino (his Treatise "Of the Mind" has many points of resemblance to Thomson's thought in "Upon Happiness"), to the seventeenth-century group of English philosophers and divines, known as the Cambridge Platonists, to their disciples who developed new interpretations and expressions of Neoplatonic thought, such as John Norris of Bemerton, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Henry Grove, and Isaac Watts. An example of Scottish Christian Neoplatonic prose, undoubtedly known to Thomson, is William

Drummond's essay on mortality, Cypresse Grove.¹⁸⁴

Herbert Drennon cites John Norris of Bemerton's essay, "An Idea of Happiness" (6th edition, 1717)¹⁸⁵ as the most important prose model for Thomson's poem. Norris (1657-1711) was an Anglican divine, poet and essayist who was a disciple of the Cambridge Platonist school; he came to hold benevolistic views similar to Shaftesbury's¹⁸⁶ (whom Thomson much admired and emulated, as in the juvenile poem "Works and Wonders"). Norris was also associated with the Athenian Society in London¹⁸⁷ (which is thought to have been a model for the Athenian Society in Edinburgh). Norris's essay "An Idea of Happiness,"¹⁸⁸ while by no means Thomson's sole source for this poem, does seem to have set the general pattern for it; Thomson distilled the abstract philosophy, the framework of ideas found in Norris's essay, and placed it in the dream-vision vehicle, which he adopted from other sources. There are many close verbal echoes of Norris in Thomson's "Upon Happiness," including: Cartesian "appetite" (Norris, pp. 320-1; Thomson, l. 10); the notion of life's delusive pleasures, which tend to disappear with "Fruition" (Norris, p. 324; Thomson, ll. 64 ff.); the allusion to St. Paul, of men seeing through "false Glass" (Norris, p. 326; Thomson, l. 134); the "perpetual Round" of earthly pleasure (Norris, p. 331; Thomson, ll. 84 ff.); the image of the fairies' dance (Norris, p. 331; Thomson, ll. 90-3); the notion that tomorrow will be the same as today (Norris, p. 331; Thomson, ll. 94-5); the concept that Virtue is an instrument of human happiness (Norris, p. 340; Thomson, ll. 89-101); the value of Contemplation (Norris, pp. 343-4; Thomson, ll. 33-66 ff.); Contemplation of God as being a "Praeludium" of eternal bliss (Norris, p. 344; Thomson, l. 105); the central image of the "Mount" as the way upward to God's presence (Norris, p. 349;

Thomson's Mt. of Contemplation, ll. 34 ff.), and the final passage bringing philosophical speculation to a close. Norris's

I shall not venture to Soar any longer in these Heights; I find the Aether too Thin here to Breath in long, and the Brightness of the Region flashes too strong upon my tender Sense; I shall therefore hasten to descend from the Mount of God, lest I grow Giddy with Speculation... (p. 338)

is closely paralleled in Thomson's philosophical "descent":

These Realms of Light no further I'll explore,
And in these Heights I will no longer soar:
Not like our grosser Atmosphere beneath,
The Aether here's too thin for me to breathe.
The Region is unsufferable bright
And flashes on me with too strong a Light.
Then from the Mountain, lo! I now descend,
And to my Vision put an hasty End. (ll. 152-9)

Of course, Norris's essay itself is something of an eclectic expression of Neoplatonic ideas, and he and Thomson might simply have had some sources in common (by the late seventeenth century, there was a great volume of prose and poetry based on Christian Neoplatonism). Still, the considerable number of verbal parallels and the similarity of Norris's abstract philosophy to Thomson's poetical exposition of it, make it highly probable that "Upon Happiness" was, at least in part, based on Norris's essay.

What of more immediate influences in Christian Neoplatonism on the young Thomson? The Scottish Church itself was influenced to a great degree by the Neoplatonic thought of Shaftesbury and his followers, particularly the Moderate faction; Francis Hutcheson, it will be recalled, was a Moderate Presbyterian, major disciple of Shaftesbury and first philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment. It is not surprising that the Moderate divine Robert Riccaltoun, Thomson's tutor, was strongly in-

fluenced by Christian Neoplatonism. In his essay "Of Happiness and Perfection in general, absolute and limited,"¹⁸⁹ he distinguishes between the "limited, dependent" happiness which man can know on earth as he "improves" himself by degrees via the ladder of ascending knowledge or "rising mind," and the "absolute, independent, and every way perfect happiness" which the perfectible intellect achieves in possession of the "perfect good," the knowledge of God in eternity. Riccaltoun surely discussed such notions of human "happiness" with young Thomson in the course of his tuition, although, of course, Riccaltoun's writings on the subject were not published until much later.

Even writers in the old-style Scottish Calvinistic tradition were influenced to an extent by the mystical element of Christian Neoplatonism. Thomas Boston in his Fourfold State (1720, newly-published when Thomson was at work on "Upon Happiness"), for example, in describing the fourth "State" of eternal life, employed certain conventional Neoplatonic images.¹⁹⁰ Like Thomson, Boston too referred to St. Paul, I Corinthians. xiii.12, who taught that man on earth can know God and Heaven only "as by a glass." Perfect happiness would only be reached in Heaven, in the "inconceivable glory" of the beatific vision (unlike his graphic descriptions of hell, Boston was at a loss for words to describe the wonders of Heaven). It is most interesting to note that Boston's explanation of the "rising mind" concept takes the rather more extreme form of "empirical immortality," that is, the saint or "knower is immortal, and knowledge will advance to infinity in other higher stages of life....What we have here is the reinterpretation of the idea of the chain of being to make room for progress." This particular reinterpretation, which is "at once ethical, religious and scientific," is the one which Thomson himself adopts most frequently in his treatment of Neoplatonism and the

"rising mind."¹⁹¹ It recurs in his mature works, and is present even in "Upon Happiness," as the

...boundless Ocean of untainted Bliss,
For ever open to the ravish'd View. (ll. 145-6)

The Christian Neoplatonic conception of "happiness," and its expression in traditional imagery (while associated with Shaftesburyian optimism, and Newtonian science) was not, therefore, incompatible with orthodox Scottish Calvinism and its ideas of the fourth spiritual "State" of eternal life, and of the individual progress of the soul.

Besides these contemporary Scottish Calvinistic expressions of Neoplatonic thought and the theme of man's search for happiness, another very fruitful source available to young Thomson was the Spectator, which frequently treated of such philosophy in a rather more easily digestible, popular manner in its essays. This periodical was widely read and influential in early-eighteenth century Edinburgh, especially among aspiring Anglo-Scottish authors. A number of these essays also employ the dream-vision allegorical format, similar to Thomson's; among them are essays by Addison, Steele, John Hughes and Henry Grove.¹⁹² Addison's No. 159 (September 1. 1711), the "Vision of Mirza," describes a difficult ascent into the contemplative state, where future happiness is glimpsed.¹⁹³ His No. 413 (June 24, 1712, in the "Pleasures of Imagination" series) holds that life is a "pleasing delusion," and that the contemplation of God leads to true happiness. Steele's No. 460 (August 18, 1712) is an allegorical vision, as is his No. 514 (October 20, 1712), which is modelled on Virgil's Georgic III and describes a steep climb up Mr. Parnassus, a glimpse downward at Vanity, the meeting with Contemplation, and ultimate happiness where Virtue dwells. John Hughes's¹⁹⁴

No. 237 (December 1, 1711) has several verbal parallels with Thomson's "Upon Happiness" (for example, the Miltonic allusion, to Paradise Lost l. 557, to the fallen angels' "in wand'ring mazes lost," echoed in Thomson's description of vain men, who "hunted Trifles in an endless Maze," l. 39; and the allusion to St. Paul, also found in Norris's "An Idea of Happiness" and in Boston, "We see but in part, and as in a glass darkly," echoed in Thomson's l. 134). Hughes equated happiness with "enlarged contemplation of the Divine Wisdom" in the afterlife, the ultimate goal of the "rising mind" described by Thomson as the sublime beatific vision. The most significant Spectator contributor in the Christian Neoplatonic vein, whose writings bear strongest resemblance to Thomson's poem, was Henry Grove (1684-1738). Grove wrote four essays for the Spectator (Nos. 588, 601, 626 and 635, Volume VIII, 1714). Grove was an English Presbyterian divine, a "zealous disciple of Newton," and close friend of Isaac Watts (he and Watts were both tutored by one Thomas Rowe, a "zealous Cartesian"). Grove laid great stress on the "reasonableness" of Christianity, and on the moral argument for a future state....The function of morality, [he held] is to meet the universal demand for happiness" on earth.¹⁹⁵ Like Thomson in "Upon Happiness," he held that while Virtue did not earn election, it was nonetheless the best way to earthly happiness. His Spectator No. 635 (December 20, 1714) treats of religion and Newtonian science, and their relation to the Neoplatonic ascending scale of knowledge, which ultimately leads to perfect happiness in the eternal contemplation of God. Thomson, too, was concerned with reconciling his new-found scientific knowledge with his religious faith, and with fitting these to a framework of Christian Neoplatonic philosophy. Grove, like Thomson, depicted the "steep ascent of truth"; he preached the vanity of earthly pleasure-seeking, and

"beholds with pity the grovelling multitude beneath" (Thomson refers to the "grov'ling Prejudices" which man must discard in order to scale Mt. Contemplation, l. 29). Grove, again like Thomson, stressed the Neoplatonic metaphor of the body as prison (Thomson's l. 135, the "Cage of Clay"); he likewise taught Shaftesburyian "benevolence," resembling Thomson's "Vertue," as the best means to true happiness on earth. Grove's thought-- his Moderate though Dissenting religion, his deep interest in philosophy and in science-- recalls Robert Riccaltoun's views, and so would have had great appeal for the young Thomson.

Christian Neoplatonism was a very popular theme, not only with writers of prose, but also with Scottish and English poets, from the Renaissance on. Florentius Volusenus ("Florence Wilson," 1500-1547), Scottish Latinist philosopher and poet, wrote religious poetry based on optimistic Neoplatonic philosophy, such as his Latin "Ode" (translated into English by Thomson's contemporary, Robert Blair);¹⁹⁶ the "Ode" contrasts deceitful, transitory earthly pleasures with the perfect bliss of eternal life. Like Thomson's "Upon Happiness," the "Ode" teaches that man can know something of this perfect happiness through Contemplation, and can attain the highest earthly happiness by practising Virtue. Both Wilson and Thomson point to the Cross of Christ as the model and inspiration for a virtuous life. The "Ode" was included in Wilson's Latin treatise, De Animi Tranquillitate, 3rd edition (1707) published by Ruddiman; Blair's translation was not published until 1747, but may have been completed much earlier, possibly when he was a student at Edinburgh. Wilson's Neoplatonic writings were almost certainly known to young Thomson, and may have helped to form his concepts of Christian Neoplatonism.

Many of William Drummond's religious verses show the strong influence of Neoplatonism, which he acquired from various French and Italian Renaissance sources. The best example is perhaps his "An Hymne of the Fairest Faire" (derived from Ronsard's "Hymne de l'Eternité").¹⁹⁷ Drummond's "Hymne" is a Christian Neoplatonic allegory of extravagant praise, incorporating a number of Neoplatonic literary conventions. It employs a very great deal of (pre-Miltonic) cosmic and light-imagery as well as the traditional symbols of God as the attracting centre of the Neoplatonic concentrically-circled universe (ll. 293-4, echoed in Thomson's l. 18 and l. 144), the earth as a prison (or "Taile," l. 333), and the familiar allusion to St. Paul (ll. 330-1, "Heere where as in a Mirrour wee but see, / Shadowes of shadowes Atomes of thy Night"). Both Drummond's and Thomson's poems are in heroic couplets. Other analogues to Thomson's ideas and imagery are Drummond's verses from Flowres of Sion, the sequence of poems [i], [ii], [iii] and [iv].¹⁹⁸ Verse [iv] is entitled "Worlde's Ioyes are Toyes"; the "toy" metaphor is also found in Thomson's poem:

So that our Grieffs are greater than our Joys,
And real Pain springs from fantastick Toys. (ll. 70-1)

In Thomson's own day, the poetical subject of man's search for happiness through Christian Neoplatonism (especially in the attempt to reconcile religious belief with philosophical and scientific truth) was highly popular. Of the numerous poetical examples of it, the nearest contemporary parallels to Thomson's complex concept of Christian Neoplatonism in "Upon Happiness," are to be found in the

works of English poets Blackmore and Watts. McKillop cites Blackmore's "Happiness Discover'd" (1696; reprinted in A Collection of Poems on Various Subjects, 1718)¹⁹⁹ as a major source for Thomson's poem. Blackmore's poem in heroic couplets describes man's futile search for worldly happiness; delusive pleasures are contrasted with the goal of the "rising mind," true happiness in God. Blackmore's treatment of delusive earthly joys (which "dissolve and disappear, when close embrac'd," l. 6) is very similar to Thomson's view ("...Pleasures in Fruition fade. / Enjoyment o'er them throws a sullen Shade," ll. 64-5). Both poems follow the pattern of rejection of the world and determination of the speaker to strive for the "Eternal bliss" of Heaven. There are several verbal echoes of Blackmore in Thomson's poem (for example, Blackmore's "Delights that always grow, and never cloy," l. 45, is echoed in Thomson's, "For Vertue's Pleasures never, never cloy," l. 101-- this line is not in the MS version of the poem).

The tone of the religious lyrics of Isaac Watts, strongly influenced by the Cambridge Platonists especially in their more mystical, sentimental flights, was an important influence on the young Thomson which must not be underestimated. The second part of "Upon Happiness" (ll. 94 ff), where Thomson successively preaches a warning of the limits of man's reason to know God, devotes himself enthusiastically to the service of God, and reaches a high pitch of Neoplatonic rapture in approaching the bright beatific vision, shows the considerable influence of Watts' religious-philosophical thought, his poetic diction, and especially his enthusiastic, intensifying tone. Watts' trilogy of poems "True Learning," "True Wisdom" and "True Riches"²⁰⁰ bear especial thematic resemblance to Thomson's Neoplatonic search for

happiness. There are a great many verbal echoes of these and of other Watts lyrics in "Upon Happiness." Watts' "True Riches," for example, refers to the "Hills of contemplation," l. 38; his "To Mitio, My Friend: An Epistle," includes a rather explicitly physical, sentimental description of Christ's death on Calvary which is similar to Thomson's, ll. 112-3.²⁰¹ Watt's "Earth and Heaven" describes delusive earthly bliss thus, recalling Thomson:

In our embrace the visions die,
And when we grasp the airy forms,
We lose the pleasing dream.²⁰²
(ll. 17-19)

Watts' imagery of earth as prison, and of the soul's flight up to Heaven at death occurs in many of his poems, echoed in Thomson's,

What cruel Bands are those to Earth that ties
Our souls from soaring to their native Skies?^(ll. 135-6)

The list of verbal echoes of Watts in Thomson's juvenile poetry, and particularly "Upon Happiness," could go on and on. It seems reasonable to conclude that, at this stage at least, the poetry of Isaac Watts was as strong an influence on Thomson as it was on Robert Blair, Watts' Scottish protégé.

One further contemporary poetical influence on the abstract religious philosophy contained in "Upon Happiness" should be mentioned here: this is the influence of the young poet's peers, his fellow-poets in Edinburgh. In fact, a number of the verses in Lugubres Cantus and in the Edinburgh Miscellany deal, in whole or in part, with the Christian Neoplatonic themes of "Upon Happiness," such as the previously-mentioned poem by John Callender, "The Elevation." The subject seems to have been a popular exercise for these aspiring Anglo-Scottish poets,

some of whom were Divinity students. One in particular, [John Callender's] "On Happiness," published in Lugubres Cantus (1719)²⁰³ is especially similar to Thomson's "sermon" against the vain world, his allusion to the "rising mind," and his anticipation of the true happiness of Heaven. Thomson may have had his colleague Callender's "Happiness" poem in mind when he set out to write his more ambitious allegory.

Thomson's "Upon Happiness" was written with a long, complex tradition of religious and "knightly-quest" allegory behind it. There are innumerable analogues in imaginative literature for Thomson's semi-allegorical dream-vision vehicle in "Upon Happiness." Such "psychological allegory," where the emphasis is on the internal rather than the external world of man, had been important in European literature since the Middle Ages.²⁰⁴ Shakespeare's dramas built around Neoplatonism, A Midsummer Night's Dream and Twelfth Night, as well as Milton's masque Comus,²⁰⁶ may have been more direct sources, for Thomson's magic-spell, sleep and dream sequence (ll. 19-24) and the Fairies' dance (ll. 88-93). Léon Morel noted that such "supernatural" scenes would naturally have appealed to a Border Scot, brought up on similar folklore.²⁰⁷ There was also, of course, an important tradition of Scottish allegory, from which Thomson probably drew as well. The dream-vision allegorical vehicle had been adopted wholeheartedly in Scotland, by such poets as David Lindsay (The Dreme) and Alexander Montgomerie (The Cherry and the Slae). One such allegory in particular, Gavin Douglas's Middle Scots dream-vision The Pallice of Honour,²⁰⁸ may also have been an influence on Thomson; it represents a Scottish re-working of the complex European tradition of allegory. Its "dream-framework and the shock awakening at the end," its journey up a high

mountain, its affirmation that "virtue alone is the path to true honour" ("For vertew is a thing sa precious, / Quhair of the end is sa delicious")²⁰⁹; its religious message, all approximate the pattern of Thomson's allegorical "Upon Happiness." Douglas's Middle Scots poem, which possibly influenced Spenser himself²¹⁰ and which Thomson almost certainly knew, was possibly a significant influence on his Castle of Indolence also [see Chapter VIII, below]. "Contemplation," the name of Thomson's mountain, is a standard allegorical figure, personified or otherwise represented by Virgil (Georgic III), Spenser, Bunyan, Watts and the Scot Hamilton of Bangour,²¹¹ among many others. The motif of a difficult ascent to reach some transcendent Good (with the attendant danger of slipping back down) is also highly conventional, and ultimately recalls the Sisyphus myth. Thomson uses this upward-struggle theme to symbolise the (individualistic, Scottish Calvinistic) lonely spiritual ascent to perfect happiness and truth in God. Spenser's "An Hymne of Heavenly Beauty" describes such an ascent of the "rising mind" through Contemplation, above the false "base world" to find true happiness in the beatific vision.²¹² Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (probably known to Thomson from childhood) and its earlier Scots analogue, John Burel's verse Passage of Pilgrimer (published in Watson's Choice Collection, Part II, 1709)²¹³ are plainer allegories portraying the same perilous uphill quest. Perhaps the most interesting contemporary analogue is Allan Ramsay's Content: A Poem,²¹⁴ an allegorical dream-vision (possibly influenced by The Palice of Honour) to which Thomson's "Upon Happiness" bears unmistakable resemblance. Both poems are in English heroic couplets; there are many verbal echoes of Ramsay in Thomson's poem. The speaker of Content falls into a "gentle slumber," and "mimic fancy op'd the following scene,"

11. 131-2, just as to Thomson's speaker, "while mimick Fancy did her Vigils keep; / ...Unto my Sight a boundless Scene did ope," ll. 22 and 36. Like Thomson's speaker, Ramsay's undertakes an uphill journey, spurning the world's "Fantastic Joys" (Content, l. 477); he watches vain men fail to gain audience with the Goddess Content. Finally, by practising virtue, Ramsay's speaker achieves true earthly happiness, or Content. Thomson surely knew Ramsay's poem (published 1721), and seems to have intended to write his own, more religiously-oriented equivalent. Ramsay's Content may be rated with Norris, Blackmore, Watts and Gavin Douglas as possible prime influences on Thomson's "Upon Happiness." "Upon Happiness," then, is an eclectic expression of Christian Neoplatonic religious and moral philosophy within the traditional vehicle of the allegorical dream-vision. As such, it is most interesting as a prototype of Thomson's last work, The Castle of Indolence (1748).

What can be said of the language and style of "Upon Happiness," a poem which apparently derives from such a wide variety of thematic sources? Predictably, the imagery and diction of the poem are also eclectic, in keeping with the various source material. The language of philosophy and science (natural philosophy) is abundant: "appetite fixèd as the pole," "extended will" (Descartes); "ether," "praeludium" (Norris); "attracting centre" (Newton); "atmosphere"; "compass"; and so on. It frames the dream-vision, and conveys the metaphysical nature of the poet's quest. It is interesting to note that, where Thomson begins the poem with a Ptolemaic (earth- or man-centred) image, such as George Buchanan's treatise De Sphaera is founded upon²¹⁵ ("the furious sun's" "circle" around the earth, with which he compares his thoughts' "bolder journey" in search of "Th' attracting Centre of the

humane [sic] Mind," ll. 15-18), he concludes the poem with the modern and more scientifically accurate Copernican image (Sun-centred universe, which is also the Christian Neoplatonic symbol for God-centred perfection and universal harmony). Blackmore's "Happiness Discover'd" expressed the same idea thus:

I find my Soul is from her Center driv'n
While here misplac'd she strives and aims at Heav'n.
(ll. 31-2)

Thomson likewise expresses this fundamental truth of Christian Neoplatonism:

In beauteous Nature all the Harmony
Is but the Echo of the Deity,
Of all Perfection who the Centre is. (ll. 142-4)

In The Seasons, Thomson would often associate the concept of universal harmony with Newtonian "gravity." Thus, in "Upon Happiness," his Neoplatonic "rising mind," his journey up the Mt. of Contemplation, has led the speaker (surely, the Divinity-student Thomson himself) to complementary philosophical and scientific truths. These truths could reinforce, rather than detract from, his orthodox religious belief in a transcendent, omnipotent and omniscient Deity and also his awareness of the limits of human reason in knowing Him.

Thomson's "vision" in "Upon Happiness" can be divided roughly into two parts: the opening, first-person narrative (ll. 1-93), and the direct-address, sermon-like didactic portion (ll. 94 ff) which develops to a high emotional pitch (this pattern approximates the two-part structure of The Castle of Indolence, the narrative quest and the "sermon"). The diction and imagery of the first, or pilgrimage/journey

sequence, borrows much from the above-mentioned allegorical and dream-vision models: Spenser (the archaic diction such as "methought," "methinks" belongs to the Faerie Queene-inspired magic spell scene); Milton (the description of the fairies' dance echoes Comus and L'Allegro); Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress; Ramsay's Content; and so on. A number of images are derived from less-obvious sources; Thomson's "toys" or vain, delusive pleasures, for instance, are couched in the images of: "foolish Boys on sunny Summer Days, / Pursuing Butter-flies" (ll. 40-41, echoing Shakespeare's Coriolanus, Act IV, Sc. 6, l. 94);²¹⁶ the elusive figure which "fix'd [men's] ravished gaze, / But nigh at hand it mock'd their fond Embrace" (ll. 50-51, which recalls Marlowe's shade of Helen in Dr. Faustus); and the "Water-Dog," who "when he has, panting, at his Prey arriv'd, / The Coxcomb fooling- suddenly it div'd; / He, gripping, is almost with Water choak'd" (ll. 54-8, a lively image probably drawn from the poet's own Border experience). Thomson's use of numerous visual, concrete images for "vanity" recalls Scottish Calvinistic pulpit-rhetoric, with its abundant use of such graphic imagery, to serve a didactic purpose.

In the more heavily didactic second half of the poem (as in Canto II of the Castle) can be seen most clearly Thomson's heritage of Scottish Calvinism: its sternly moralistic, didactic tendency as well as its emotional, mystical element and also its more Moderate interest in the "reasonable" disciplines of empirical philosophy and science. The influence of the Bible itself is obvious here: the Old Testament (l. 119, "And Vengeance pour'd on Trampers on his Blood," from Isaiah 63.3; l. 150, God called "Jehovah") and the New (l. 134, "darkly here the God-Head we survey," St. Paul, I Corinthians 13.12; ll. 112-13, the description of the Crucifixion, "Here you'll behold upon the fatal

Tree / The God of Nature bleed, expire and die"). The rhetoric of the Scottish Calvinistic pulpit can be heard in the poem, as the emotional tone builds up from heavy didacticism ("For such as 'gainst his holy Laws rebel, / And such as bid Defiance to his Hell," ll. 114-15) to enthusiasm ("Then sure you will with holy Ardours burn, / And to seraphick Heats your Passion turn," ll. 122-3, and soon). Thomson is orthodox in his characterisation of the Deity as "awful" (l. 106), "just, as well as good" (l. 118), omnipotent through "Providence" (l. 127), and the highest object of man's love and praise, the ultimate source of "Happiness." The young poet clearly demonstrates his awareness here (as throughout his mature poetry) of the limits of man's reason on earth, and of the mystery of God and His Divine Plan which will be revealed to the "rising mind" only in the afterlife, or fourth "State." In this second section of "Upon Happiness," are to be found the strongest echoes of Thomson's models Job, Milton, Watts and Scottish Calvinistic writers such as Thomas Boston. Here, actual verbal echoes of Milton's Paradise Lost and Watts' rapturous lyrics occur most frequently. The degree of influence of philosophy and empirical science on Thomson's Neoplatonic conception of the Deity and His universal plan is neither unusual nor original in "Upon Happiness," but does perhaps indicate a disposition toward a more Moderate, optimistic religious outlook than that of his father's generation. Young Thomson's God is the Neoplatonic Form and "Centre" of "all Perfection" (l. 144), portrayed in traditional Christian Neoplatonic light-imagery (echoing Paradise Lost, IX.1083-4) as "insufferable bright." This God is also, even at this stage, the "God of Nature" (l. 113), to Whom Thomson was always able to relate most closely and to Whom he would direct his poetic masterpiece, The Seasons.

Stylistically, "Upon Happiness" is of little interest, in contrast to its intriguing thematic complexity. Its heroic couplet form, Thomson's favourite verse form in the juvenile poems, was probably suggested by Blackmore's or Ramsay's poems on similar themes; Thomson's couplets here are typical of his early poetry in their occasionally faulty scansion and rhyme. Also typical is the occurrence of awkward inversions of syntax to force a rhyme. The chief interest of the poem remains its broadly eclectic content, over which Thomson exercised variable control, and its similarly eclectic language and imagery. Christian Neoplatonic philosophy draws the poem's many analogues loosely together, and through the allegorical dream-vision vehicle, affirms the poet's orthodox, if increasingly Moderate, Scottish Calvinistic beliefs at this stage as well as his newly-acquired knowledge of empirical natural philosophy.

"Upon Happiness" is another, more complex exercise in reconciliation, as are so many of the juvenile poems; here, Thomson was trying to reconcile not only the art of poetry, but the disciplines of philosophy and science as well, to his still-strong Scottish Calvinism and his ministerial vocation. The poem, while obviously over-ambitious for such a youth, shows Thomson attempting to deal with widely various material, in a primarily religious poem, to make it his own, as he would succeed in doing in The Seasons. It makes elaborate testimony to Thomson's growing self-confidence as a poet, and above all, to the breadth of learning and literature to which he was exposed as a student in Scotland.

Thomson's juvenile poems, on the whole, are not strikingly original, nor do they display precocious poetic talent. They are, after all, the exercises of an apprentice. They do, however, evidence a wide variety of ideas and influences-- some contradictory (country versus city, primitive versus progressive, Scottish versus English, classical versus contemporary, and especially, religious versus secular) acting upon the young poet. He first experienced these tensions, and attempted to come to terms with them, in Scotland. These tensions, reflected in his early poetry, tell us much about Thomson as an individual, and about the society in which he lived. When he wrote these poems, in adolescence, he was in a state of flux, as was his nation. He continued to struggle with these internal and external conflicts throughout his life; they remained potent forces in his writings, making possible his unique poetry. The juvenilia are important as proof that Thomson's basic philosophies, his attitudes to life and art, were formed in Scotland; they foreshadow many elements of the poet's later works, especially The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence. They illustrate the wide variety of literature (including much by Scottish authors), philosophy and science which Thomson came to know in the Scottish culture of his youth. The juvenilia demonstrate the limits and the potential of Thomson's chosen literary language, and his motivation to forge from formal English a new poetic language, for his new poetry of religion and nature.

CHAPTER V : 'THE SEASONS' (I)

Even though James Thomson did not go down to London with the poem "Winter" in his pocket (as legend has it)¹ he did go with a headful of ideas on religion, science, philosophy and literature, and a heart full of nostalgia and love for his native Scotland. Thomson truly carried the germ of The Seasons with him when he left Scotland; it is no wonder that this, his first major poem, begun just after he arrived in England, is the most thoroughly "Scottish" of his mature works.

What elements of the native Scottish literary tradition did Thomson bring to England and to The Seasons? They are many, and complex. First, much Scots "art" literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance is dominated by religious-didactic purpose, frequently expressed from a surprisingly personal, subjective stance (the narrator placing himself in the poem). The Seasons, too, is governed by religious-didactic motives, and the "wandering" speaker (the subjective "I") who appears from time to time is Thomson himself. Second, these older Scots poets were writing through a long tradition of Scottish classicism and Christian Humanism, to which Thomson was an heir. Third, the literary language which the Makars and their seventeenth-century counterparts developed was an eclectic blend of vigorous Scots, "aureate" Latinate diction, and Southern English; the trend was toward expansion and enrichment of poetic language, and such was Thomson's method as well. Fourth, and most importantly, these Scots poets chose natural description as the rhetorical vehicle for a great many of their works. Much detailed and accurate description (not given purely "for its own sake," yet carrying much greater weight in the broader significance of the poetry) was a notable aspect of formal poetry in Scots,

as well as of Scottish Gaelic and folk-literature, long before it was a major feature in English poetry. This presentation of particulars and details within the landscape, the sharp colour-sense, the strong strain of realism even in works of a basically allegorical or symbolic nature, far surpassed any such concept of descriptive immediacy in the English tradition.² It was this characteristic of Scottish poetry, especially, which Thomson adopted and brought into Augustan English poetry.

More specifically, Scottish poetry of natural description tended to show these traits: fondness for portraying sharp contrasts and paradoxes in nature; a strong sense of man's camaraderie with animals in nature, that deep humanitarian sympathy which led to frequent literary paralleling of animals' with man's situation; and, a penchant for describing the harsher and more violent aspects of nature, and especially the Scottish winter season. These elements, too, are central to The Seasons, as shall be demonstrated. First, a brief survey of the descriptive tradition in Scottish poetry will offer some clues as to why Thomson chose this vehicle for his Seasons.

Seasonal description in poetry has never been exclusive to Scotland, of course. Complex and highly symbolic seasonal "schemes" in the visual arts as well as in poetry have existed in Western European tradition from classical times through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, "and in poetry itself there were innumerable works in the pastoral tradition referring more or less explicitly to the course of the seasons."³ In addition to such conventional, stylised seasonal portrayals, there developed a more realistic strain of "winter" description, within Old and Middle English alliterative verse; Sir

Gawain and the Green Knight, for example, is set for the most part in winter, and the "double...character" of the season (indoor festivities and warmth, outdoor "old, pale sun, frost, sleet and rain") "provides the poet with a set of strong contrasts between spring living and winter living, as physical correlatives for his moral theme."⁴

Gawain is probably a Northern Midlands, rather than a Southern English, work. The description of vivid "winter" scenes in poetry seems therefore to be an alliterative, rather than a purely "Scottish," one. Still, long after alliterative verse on the Old English pattern had died out in England, it survived in Scotland, and indeed "flourished vigorously."⁵ Kurt Wittig notes that Sir William Craigie attributed this survival to the quantity and the quality of the Scots diction, which is "very rich in words" and which also employs strong accentuation, leaning "so heavily on the initial consonant." But Wittig feels that there was still another reason for the appeal of alliterative verse to Scots poets; he suggests that the heavy alliteration which was part of the formal intricacy of Irish and Scottish Gaelic poetry predisposed contemporary Scots poets (from the fourteenth to well into the sixteenth centuries, particularly) to use much alliteration, for "even if there was no direct influence there must have been a common taste in a public that was partly bilingual."⁶ Apparently, along with this continuing interest in alliterative verse in Scots poetry, so survived the particularly vivid and realistic manner of describing the winter season. Anonymous Scottish alliterative poems such as Rauf Coilyear and The Awntyrs of Arthure are two examples; each has an amount of realistic winter description in its setting.⁷ Even after the true alliterative verse-line died out in the north, the tendency to use abundant decorative alliteration, especially in passages of natural de-

scription, as well as the predilection for "winter" or other such scenes of harsh, wild nature, remained strong in Scots poetry. This tradition of natural description in Scots poetry is the inheritance of James Thomson in The Seasons.

Much has been made of the importance of "winter" in Scottish poetry, and rightly so, for this subject of natural description does seem to figure most prominently, and with the most originality and realism. In addition to the literary and linguistic influences of alliterative verse with its winter descriptions, there was another reason for its appeal to Scottish poets, and that was the real presence of the often-harsh and inclement northern climate itself, which was a ready subject for these poets, particularly those from the chilly east coast; they would naturally incorporate such immediate, directly-felt experience of their environment into their descriptive poetry, especially as the conventions of pastoral poetry of more temperate southern climes were simply not adequate for them. Robert Henryson clearly worked within this northern "winter" tradition; two works, The Testament of Cresseid and the fable "The Preiching of the Swallow,"⁸ are most often cited as illustrations. The Testament is a Scots supplement to Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde; the poet-narrator begins the Prologue by placing himself in the icy Scottish winter season, then retiring to his fire-side. Such description of the vivid contrast between outdoor cold and indoor comfort is an important element in Scottish "winter" poetry, and occurs several times in The Seasons' cottage-scenes. In the Testament, ironically, the apparently-winter scene is actually set under the sign of Aries, that is, it is intended to be in the spring. The unseasonably cold weather metaphor is carried throughout the poem.⁹ The "winter-like" spring, besides acting as a symbol here, is also at times a Scot-

tish reality.

"The Preiching of the Swallow," set in Scotland,¹⁰ more obviously sets out to teach the moral significance of the nature it describes; the description is part of a larger religious-philosophical scheme. "Preiching" posits the same concept which would form the basis of seventeenth-eighteenth century Physico-theology: that God is manifested in His Creation (nature), and can be known through nature. Henryson's fable qualifies this with the further teaching that man's knowledge of God is limited until its fulfillment in eternity. For all his modifications of attitude over the years, Thomson always adhered firmly to such a creed; it forms the very basis of the religious-didactic Seasons. Of the four brief "season" cameos preliminary to the fable itself, it has been said that "Somer" and "Harvest,"¹¹ and to some extent "Ver,"¹² are more generally conventional, employing stylised, Mediterranean descriptive elements and more aureate language in contrast to the more realistic "Wynter." This is not strictly the case: there are elements of descriptive convention, such as were found in Gawain, in Henryson's "Wynter," just as there are realistic, closely-observed details in "Somer," "Harvest" and especially "Ver."¹³ Still, "Wynter" (in two stanzas, longer than the "Somer" and "Harvest" scenes) is perhaps the most recognisably Scottish of the descriptions, most clearly based on the poet's own experience of a wet, windy and cold season on the east coast of Scotland. Significantly, Henryson's denser use of northern alliteration and of vernacular (less-aureate) Scots diction complements his Scottish "Wynter" description (much as Thomson's use of stronger alliteration and more colloquial language heightens the vigorous descriptions in many passages of The Seasons, espec-

ially of Scottish scenes), demonstrating the link between the alliterative and the "winter" descriptive traditions in Scottish poetry.

In the fable proper, birds (which also figure significantly in The Seasons) function both as real animals and as allegorical personifications.¹⁴ Henryson shows the sympathy with animals as man's fellow-creatures, which runs right through Scottish literature; a variation of the dual real-allegorical role of animals works in The Seasons, where animals are described for their own sakes and as members of the beautiful and various Creation, as well as representing the human situation (recall, too, the role of birds in Thomson's didactic juvenile fables). Henryson's method of employing extensive dramatic personification of nature, to enhance natural description,¹⁵ is also Thomson's; it was, in fact, a classical convention, maintained and developed as part of the Scottish Humanist heritage. What is original to the Scottish poets, and especially to Thomson, is the very strong emphasis on the "Book of Nature" as chief teacher of moral and spiritual truth, with newly realistic and pleasing natural description as the most powerful vehicle for expressing this truth.

David Lindsay's Prologue to The Dreame,¹⁶ like Henryson's Testament, places the narrator in a vividly-depicted and uncomfortable winter setting; he recalls summer longingly. Summer is again distanced and conventional in concept, whereas winter is immediately present, in the usual Scottish attitude. The element of contrast between stylised summer and realistic winter is again important.

In the poetry of William Dunbar, too, are found some notable seasonal references: the contrast between the recognisably Scottish setting of "Meditatioun in Wyntir,"¹⁷ with its characteristic attitude of disgust

at the inclement season, and the conventional "May" described in the Golden Targe,¹⁸ is a pertinent example. Dunbar's chief interest, however, was not in natural description, but in the manner of his verse;¹⁹ his remarkable virtuosity with a great variety of metrical forms, as well as his more complex "aureate" diction, point up the Makars' experimental tendency and their openness to the continual enrichment of their literary language, which is comparable to Thomson's in the eighteenth century.

Such an attempt to stretch Middle Scots to its fullest expressive potential, primarily to be applied to natural description, is most apparent in the poetry of Gavin Douglas. His Scots version of Virgil's Aeneid, the Eneados (1513; Freebairn and Ruddiman edition, 1710) becomes a thoroughly Scottish rendering of Virgil,²⁰ a faithful translation by a Scottish classicist, yet filtered through a perceptive and keen Scottish experience to give it more descriptive force, and in parts more poetic force, than the original. The cool, controlled classic gains vigour with Douglas's particularly northern descriptive connotations; the strength of Scots for concretising individual, small scenes, as well as for depicting action and movement, reinforces Virgilian imagery to the utmost. Douglas aureated his diction far more liberally than did his fellow-Makars; besides borrowing a great many Latinate words, especially from his primary source, he also introduced far more Southern English words and constructions into his elevated literary language. Douglas's successful attempt to expand and enrich the Middle Scots literary language for the fullest expressive, and especially descriptive, force is highly comparable to Thomson's equally sincere attempt to enhance formal Augustan literary English, by adding many Latinate words, as well as a number of coinages and compound-

epithets, and expressions deriving from spoken Scots.

As a descriptive poet, Douglas is likewise highly comparable to Thomson, three centuries on. Both poets borrowed freely from poetical (and especially classical) conventions of dynamic personification and abstraction, combining these with fresh description taken from personal observation and experience of the natural world. Douglas's Prologues to the Books of the Eneados are wholly of his own composition, and in them occur his most extensive "seasonal" passages, showing the distinct influence of Scottish experience. Prologue VII typically and subjectively describes the harsher, more disagreeable aspects of winter, in realistic, heavily-alliterative Scots vernacular terms; John MacQueen, for one, has pointed out the similarity between Douglas's Prologue VII and Thomson's "Winter."²¹ By comparison, Prologue XII ("May") and Prologue XIII ("June") are more conventional, Mediterranean-set scenes in more aureate diction²² (yet even these temperate scenes make some particularly Scottish connotations, which might have their source in native seasonal songs).²³ Douglas elaborates on, delights in his descriptions for their own sake, to a far greater extent than even Henryson. Douglas's Prologues, like that of Henryson's Testament, were preliminary to the central human drama of the story itself, but even within the body of the Eneados natural description holds a far more important place than it had, even in the original Virgil. Douglas enhanced Virgil's descriptions of storms, floods, mountains, and so on, with details from his own Scottish experience,²⁴ much as Thomson would enhance Virgil's Georgics with Scottish experience in The Seasons. Both Douglas and Thomson appreciated Virgil's descriptive skill, and the generally strong awareness of the physical world in both Scottish poets

owes much to the Georgics.²⁵ Also, the elements of superstition and reference to the supernatural, while present in Virgil, figure significantly in Scottish literature and folklore, and play an even greater role in Douglas and in Thomson than in their Virgilian models. It should be noted here that this element of superstition in poetry is by no means exclusive to Scottish poetry, but that (like "winter" description) it did linger in Scottish poetry long after it had lost importance in other Western European, including English, literature. Such references to superstition and the supernatural in Scottish poetry by Thomson's day and even after, were distinctive in that there lay behind them an element of genuine belief, reinforced by the long survival of such superstition in Scottish folklore. English poet William Collins' "An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland" (c. 1749, addressed to his friend, Scottish playwright John Home), for instance, recognised and treated of this theme as a particularly Scottish one.²⁶ The episode Collins described of the drowned cottager vainly awaited by his wife and children (Stanzas VII-VIII) was probably suggested by Thomson's "Autumn," ll. 1145-1164, on the cottager lost in the swamp.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially, many more Scottish antecedents to Thomson in "seasonal" and descriptive poetry appeared; these continued to grow in purely descriptive (as opposed to symbolic) emphasis. Alexander Montgomerie, poet and songwriter, was a master of sensuous description and much of his allegory The Cherry and the Slae²⁷ (which Thomson could have read in Watson's Choice Collection) derives from close observation and precise representation of the natural world. Alexander Hume's extraordinary "Of the Day Estivall"²⁸ depicts the various aspects of a typical, "ideal" June

day; Thomson, in "Summer," would also adopt the "ideal day" framework. Hume's delightful poem is certainly an early instance of poetic natural description for its own sake, of pure concentration on the natural scene as the poem's subject; while not explicitly religious, it has a "deep and sweet religious feeling" about it,²⁹ arising from a love of nature as God's Creation, and without being didactic or dogmatic. William Drummond of Hawthornden, too, made sympathetic natural description the vehicle for much of his religious-meditative verse. Certainly a great many of Thomson's better Seasons descriptions join nature with implicit religious feeling in this way, without belabouring the underlying didactic, Physico-theological aim. King James VI & I composed four "Seasons" sonnets³⁰ where, again, "Winter" is the most realistic. These sonnets are not great poetry, but they do illustrate a particularly Scottish pattern of seasonal poetry. King James interestingly states his explicit aim in these verses, of recreating the sense-experiences of each season, of making them real and tangible to the reader. His sonnets are, in a way, little emblems for Thomson's Seasons: "Springtyme" refers to the Virgilian "Eternal Spring" idea, which is important in Thomson; "Sommer" is replete with conventional heat and light imagery, such as governs Thomson's "Summer"; "Harvest"³¹ portrays the reapers, the human "industry" of Thomson's "Autumn"; and "Winter," with its sustained and transformed water-imagery, its heavier alliteration, and its especial Scottish immediacy compares with Thomson's first Season, "Winter." King James's blend of seasonal poetic convention with descriptive details from his own experience, clearly foreshadows Thomson in the Scottish tradition of natural description.

Whether or not the Scottish tendency to excel in the poetry of natural description is a "racial" heritage as many would have it,³² cannot be proven, of course. Still, societies do tend to look at things in certain ways as artistic culture develops, in response to many factors such as geography and climate (important influences, as has been suggested, on the Scottish "winter" literary tradition), politics, education, history, religion, and so forth. The aesthetic response is therefore shaped by sociological factors. But if a "racial" tendency to excel at close observation and vivid poetical description could somehow be "traced," it might possibly be shown to have come into Scottish literature through the Celtic strain. William Bayne, one of Thomson's biographers, traced this "Celtic" strain from the Strathclyde Welsh to the Lowlanders of Thomson's region.³³ Kurt Wittig asserts that certain resemblances in literary conception (i.e., the prominent theme of natural description) do occur between the Scottish Gaelic and Lowland cultures.³⁴ Derick Thomson, too, places great emphasis on the importance of this "bilingualism" in the Lowlands, which influenced not only poetic themes, but also versification and language,³⁵ including words for natural features such as "brae," "cairn" and "glen." Oral transmission of literature in bilingual Border areas could account for such cross-cultural similarities transmitted from Gaelic literature as: attention to very close visual description of small scenes; strong concretising ability; extensive use of personification, dynamically with description, to "make all nature a living being";³⁶ precise detailing, including frequent use of the listing or cataloguing method; deep love and respect for the natural world, which heightens descriptive impact; and, a concern for strict form in poetry. These

characteristic methods of Scottish Gaelic poetry can also be seen in many passages of The Seasons.

In surveying the tradition of Scottish nature-poetry, the Scottish ballads must also be mentioned. They too convey descriptive immediacy and lively action; they are close to nature and exhibit a strong pictorial and colour-sense.³⁷ The ballads' sense of drama and movement is approximated in Thomson's portrayal of the natural world, dynamically and dramatically, in process. "In Scotland, 'the interactions of learned and folk poetry are never long quiescent, and in Lowland Scotland the native and scholarly streams constantly replenished one another.'"³⁸ This interaction is demonstrated by such parallels as the image of Hell as a Scottish "winter" scene (damp, murky, foggy rather than fire-and-brimstone) in the ballad "The Daemon-Lover,"³⁹ and likewise in the art-literature of Gavin Douglas's Eneados,⁴⁰ thence to Thomson's Castle of Indolence (Canto II, Stanza LXXVIII). In the ballads,⁴¹ in the Scots poetry of the Makars, and in Thomson's Seasons, descriptions of winter and harsh or violent, wild nature are particularly vivid. In addition to their general descriptive influence, these characteristics of the Border ballads are especially relevant to the conception of The Seasons: their strong fatalism in the face of nature's mysterious forces (see Thomson's interpolated tale of "Celdon and Amelia" in "Summer"-- at times, "Providence" acting through nature, is precariously close, for a poem of predominantly Augustan optimism, to the ballads' fatalism!); ribald or grotesque humour (such as is seen in the "Autumn" hunt-burlesque, which moves from simple, drunken fun to disturbing, surrealistic sense-distortion); and, a preoccupation with the supernatural (which recurs surprisingly often among peasant characters in The Seasons, though always accompanied by

the poet's "rational" Augustan qualification). Also, the language of the ballads has been said to bear relation to old Court Scots, in its formality and dignity as a literary language;⁴² as such, it is also similar in nature and purpose to formal Augustan English, the basis for Thomson's literary language. The formal devices of strong alliteration and use of emphatic, dramatic pauses, also characteristic of the ballads, are used to good effect by Thomson in The Seasons.

In the rapidly anglicising, post-Union Scotland of the early eighteenth century, the complex Scottish tradition in poetry, particularly nature-poetry, would gain new vigour in two new strains of development: on the one hand, in the Scots vernacular revival, led by Allan Ramsay, and on the other hand, in the Scottish Augustan, or Anglo-Scottish, adaptations of descriptive and religious-didactic poetry. Ramsay, in his Preface to the EverGreen, thus praised the Scottish nature-poetry tradition as represented by the "good old Bards" in his volume:

Their poetry is the Product of their own Country, not pilfered and spoiled in the Transportation from abroad: Their Images are native, and their Landskips domestick; copied from these Fields and Meadows we every Day behold.

The Morning rises (in the Poets Description) as she does in the Scottish Horizon. We are not carried to Greece or Italy for a Shade, a Stream, or a Breeze. The Groves rise in our own Valleys; the Rivers flow from our own Fountains, and the Winds blow upon our own Hills. I find not Fault with those Things, as they are in Greece or Italy: But with a Northern Poet for fetching his Materials from these Places, in a Poem, of which his own Country is the Scene; as our Hymners to the Spring and Makers of Pastorals frequently do.⁴³

Indeed, the practise of many Anglo-Scottish poets had thus far been merely to borrow conventional pastoral imagery ("Mediterranean," idealised) for their nature scenes, especially those of spring and sum-

mer. However, a number of young Scottish Augustans (Scots attempting to write poetry in Augustan English) of Ramsay's day were equally unhappy with this facile borrowing of second-hand, "foreign" descriptive imagery; they tried consciously to incorporate more closely observed and realistic "native" Scottish imagery into their English-language poems. Thomson, of course, would become the foremost of these Scottish Augustan descriptive poets. Ramsay's own example and advice probably had something to do with the interest which Thomson and his contemporaries showed in reviving Scottish descriptive poetry.

Two contemporary Anglo-Scottish verses have been cited as direct influences on Thomson and The Seasons in this regard. As both are of uncertain provenance, their degree of influence on Thomson (or, his on them) cannot be determined. However, they are interesting as examples of the new type of Scottish Augustan descriptive verse being written in Thomson's day.

Robert Riccaltoun wrote a poem, descriptive of a winter scene, which is known to have inspired Thomson to begin his own "Winter":

Mr. Rickleton's poem on winter, which I still have,
first put the design into my head, in it are some
masterly strokes that awaken'd me.⁴⁴

It has long been taken for granted that the verse "A Winter's Day," first published in Savage's Miscellany in 1726, was this very poem of which Thomson wrote. "A Winter's Day" was given in the Miscellany as having been written by the "author of the celebrated ballad of William and Margaret," "in a state of melancholy" (i.e. David Mallet), but it was published again in 1740 in the Gentleman's Magazine,⁴⁵ as, "Written by a Scotch Clergyman. Corrected by an Eminent Hand." "A Winter's

Day," then, might have been Riccaltoun's poem, "possibly revised and falsely claimed by Mallet."⁴⁶ In fact, the "Scotch Clergyman" has never been identified with certainty; even if the verse were by Riccaltoun, it might not have been the one which inspired Thomson's "Winter." In any case, the "Eminent Hand" was almost certainly the unscrupulous Mallet, who, in a letter to John Ker, did claim the poem as his own⁴⁷ (although at least one critic and Thomson editor, Allan Cunningham, thought that the "Eminent Hand" might have been Thomson himself⁴⁸ -- it seems more probable, however, that Mallet added the attribution to the "Scotch Clergyman" at Thomson's insistence). Thomas Somerville, minister of Jedburgh, reported that Riccaltoun himself "mentioned that a poem of his own composition, the subject of which was the description of a storm or the effects of an extraordinary fall of snow on the hill of Ruberslaw, suggested to Thomson the idea of expatiating on the same theme, and produced the divine poem of his Winter..."; Riccaltoun also said that his poem had been published in an Edinburgh periodical, c. 1718-1719, but neither Somerville nor anyone since has been able to discover it.⁴⁹ This periodical could have been the Athenian Society's Scots Miscellany (no longer extant; c. 1719), but there is no proof of this. The identification problem occurs in that "A Winter's Day," while it does describe a storm, does not mention either snow or a hill; thus a belief arose that there must have been two "winter" poems, possibly both by Riccaltoun, one "A Winter's Day" and the other a poem about a Border snowstorm, now lost. G. C. Macaulay, for example, felt that the poem to which Thomson referred was not "A Winter's Day" but "another poem by Riccaltoun....The description of this poem [a snowfall on Ruberslaw] does not apply to 'A Winter's Day' as we have it."⁵⁰ "A Winter's Day," if indeed it was by

Riccaltoun (and the Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae lists it among his publications),⁵¹ does seem to bear the mark of considerable revision by the "Eminent Hand" of Mallet, who courted the sublime and the sensational in poetry.⁵² "A Winter's Day," in Augustan English heroic couplets, does describe what is apparently a Scottish Border winter scene, with effective alliteration and assonance:

Rough, rugged rocks, wet marshes, ruin'd tow'rs,
 Bare trees, brown brakes, bleak heaths, and rushy moors,
 Dead [sic- for 'dread'] floods, huge cataracts, to my
 pleased eyes
 (Now I can smile!) in wild disorder rise. (ll. 39-42)

The storm of the poem is wet and windy (just prior to mentioning Riccaltoun's verse, Thomson wrote in his letter quoted above, of "terrible floods, and high winds, that usually happen about this time of year").⁵³ The images of dull, fading colour and disorder are in fact very like Thomson's imagery as he describes the first and second "Winter" storms and flood; the use of extensive personification, combined with realistic descriptive details, in "A Winter's Day," is also similar to Thomson's. The speaker of "A Winter's Day" embraces the season's "welcome horror" (l. 50), as Thomson does the "kindred Gloom: Wish'd, win'try Horrors" ("Winter," 1726, 1st edition, ll. 5-6); the speaker's "Black melancholy" mood recalls Thomson's "Philosophic Melancholly" ("Winter," 1726, 1st edition, l. 66; transferred to "Autumn," 1730), his pleasure in the familiar season. Thomson's letter to Cranstoun also describes such sentiments, attendant on the "beloved gloom" of the "fading" year.⁵⁴ References to the supernatural, a particularly Scottish theme in eighteenth-century poetry, figure significantly in both "A Winter's Day" and Thomson's "Winter" (and indeed, the entire Seasons).⁵⁵

There are major differences between the two poems, however. "A Winter's Day" is so thoroughly steeped in pathetic fallacy that it grows self-indulgent, emotional, even morbid; Thomson never allows his sentimentality to go so far. Thomson ultimately looks forward to renewing spring, whereas the speaker of "A Winter's Day" wishes that winter, with "All nature in Agony with me" (l. 38), would stay forever. The stifling pathetic fallacy of the verse overpowers some striking descriptive touches. This exaggerated emotional element, coupled with a focus on the heightened "sublimity" of the Scottish winter scene, is surely due to Mallet's influence; it is difficult to imagine that the reasonable, Moderate Robert Riccaltoun, who had warned young Thomson to avoid "luxuriance of diction" and to discipline his poetic imagination [see Chapter II above] would have composed such thoroughly gloomy, self-centred and emotional verse! Whether or not this was the same poem which Thomson so admired and emulated, cannot be determined; indeed, Mallet's "correction" might even have been influenced by Thomson's "Winter" (1726) itself, which Mallet knew in MS and which influenced his own more sensational Excursion (1728). All that can be said with certainty is that Riccaltoun did write a descriptive "winter" poem in English, which directly inspired the author of The Seasons.

Another Scottish Augustan "winter" description, which is also said to have directly influenced Thomson's "Winter," is of equally uncertain provenance. Like "A Winter's Day" it may have influenced "Winter," or vice-versa. The "Imitation of Shakespeare" (or, "Winter")⁵⁶ by John Armstrong, a medical student at Edinburgh, is said by his publisher to have been,

...made when he was very young. It help'd to amuse the solitude of a winter past in a wild romantic country; and, what is rather peculiar, was just finished when Mr. Thomson's celebrated poem upon the same subject appeared. Mr. Thomson, soon hearing of it, had the curiosity to procure a copy by the means of a common acquaintance.⁵⁷

The publisher goes on to say that Thomson showed the verse to Mallet, Aaron Hill and Edward Young; Mallet was so impressed that he at first wished to help the young author publish it. "But Mr. Mallet altered his mind," and the poem was not published until 1770. This statement by Armstrong's publisher in the late-eighteenth century is the only "evidence" that the poem was written independently of Thomson, but the tradition has survived that Thomson saw the MS of Armstrong's "Winter" only after the first edition of his own "Winter" had appeared, in March 1726.⁵⁸ Armstrong's piece has thus been tentatively dated, c. 1725.

John Armstrong (later a physician and close friend of Thomson among his "Scottish Circle" in London), was a son of the manse from Castleton, Roxburghshire. He would have been only sixteen years of age at the time, if his poem was written in 1725; the fact is that no-one really knows when the verse was written. It is, of course, possible "that Armstrong's poem was written independently of Thomson's, and that... the resemblances which are to be found in certain points between this piece and the later [1726, 2nd edition and ff.] editions of Thomson's "Winter," are due to borrowing by Thomson, who soon became personally acquainted with Armstrong,"⁵⁹ but again the "evidence" is sparse. Armstrong's and Thomson's "Winter" poems have many close similarities; their primary source, the Scottish Border winter, was the same. Of course, Shakespeare was Armstrong's acknowledged model; Eric Taylor

notes that Thomson's "Winter," too, is the most "Shakespearean" of The Seasons.⁶⁰ The similarities in the two blank verse poems are so numerous, however, that they seem clearly to have resulted from direct literary influence of one upon the other. The fact that there are more points of resemblance in diction and descriptive detail between Armstrong's "Winter" and the later editions of Thomson's "Winter," would seem to suggest that Thomson was influenced by Armstrong's MS poem,⁶¹ and that he continued to draw from it as a rich source through several Seasons revisions. However, the fact remains that there are many important parallels between Armstrong and even the first edition of Thomson's "Winter" (March, 1726), which have been ignored: either Thomson was influenced by Armstrong's MS poem before "Winter" was first published (he might even have seen the MS poem in Scotland, in Edinburgh or the Borders, before he left to go south), or, Armstrong was first influenced by the MS or more probably the first published edition of Thomson's "Winter," and his own verse was written later than 1726, thereafter setting up a mutual influence between himself and Thomson, when Armstrong had come to London and the two had grown to be close friends. The parallels between Armstrong and the first edition of Thomson's "Winter" include: similar overall thematic development (imagery of wetness, Border waters, the freeze, the snowstorm, the thaw, and the stormy peril at sea) and similar controlling, "transforming" imagery (water and ice, shapelessness and "disorder"), as well as more detailed points of description. In both Armstrong and Thomson ("Winter," 1st edition, 1726) occur such typical Border scenes as: the schoolboy sports on ice; the shepherd and starving flocks; the sheep buried in the snowdrift; the birds, made tame by winter's hardship, visiting the cottagers; and, the cottagers by the fireside telling

tales (in Armstrong, specifically ghost-stories; made so by Thomson, 1730 ff). The realism of Armstrong's Border observations is striking; like Thomson, he makes use of much personification, effectively to increase the vigour of the descriptions. An imaginative detail used to contrast with winter's snowfall, is Armstrong's desert sandstorm (ll. 88-94); in a later edition of The Seasons (1744) Thomson added a similar sandstorm ("Summer," ll. 759-79). But with all of these similarities, who influenced whom? Mallet again plays some rather suspicious role; was he the "common acquaintance" who introduced Armstrong's MS poem to Thomson, or perhaps Thomson's MS poem to Armstrong? If Thomson had first borrowed from Armstrong's poem, did Mallet suppress its publication to protect Thomson from charges of plagiarism, or so as not to dim Thomson's accomplishment in "Winter"? Or, more likely, did Mallet decide not to publish Armstrong's poem out of self-interest, so that he might borrow from it himself to write his Excursion (1728 --there are a number of close descriptive similarities, such as the sandstorm and the polar ice scenes)? Despite the late claim of Armstrong's publisher to the contrary, it seems most likely that Thomson's "Winter" (1st edition, 1726) first influenced young Armstrong, whose poem in turn may have suggested revisions and additions to his friend Thomson for later versions of "Winter." The answer may never be known.

These Anglo-Scottish "Winter" poems by Riccaltoun and Armstrong cannot, then, be treated with any certainty as immediate influences on Thomson's "Winter"; while most scholars simply accept them as such,⁶² A. D. McKillop implies doubt that "A Winter's Day" is the same poem by Riccaltoun which inspired Thomson,⁶³ and indeed in all of his important works on Thomson he does not once even mention Armstrong as a source.

One contemporary Scottish Augustan who certainly did influence-- and was influenced by-- Thomson, was his lifelong friend David Mallet. Thomson and Mallet exchanged MSS and ideas, and influenced one another's writing of the blank verse poems The Seasons and The Excursion.⁶⁴ Their mutual poetic influence may have begun as early as their student days in Edinburgh (incidentally, it was Mallet who suggested to Thomson the "Newtonian" description of gems in "Summer," deriving from the poets' strongly Newtonian scientific education at Edinburgh University;⁶⁵ Mallet's Excursion, like Thomson's Seasons, includes lines of praise for Newton). Thomson's influence on Mallet seems to have been the stronger, at first: "The Excursion, written virtually as an imitation of the original versions of 'Winter' and 'Summer,' had in turn a direct influence on the later versions of 'Summer.'" Mallet, like Thomson, was drawn to primarily descriptive verse; both were fascinated by visual effects in poetry. Further, both poets went beyond the strictly Physico-theological religious purpose of their increasingly "sublime" descriptions, to put more emphasis (in the Scottish tradition) on description for its own sake.⁶⁶ Thomson, in fact, encouraged Mallet to include sublime and highly dramatic scenes from nature in The Excursion,⁶⁷ such as the plague and contagion, the thunderstorm and the fear of the guilty (Mallet's guilty man is specifically a murderer), the polar ice and arctic winter (scenes which also occur in The Seasons); however, Thomson himself generally used such sublime descriptive effects with more moderation and restraint than did his "misguided" imitators including Mallet.⁶⁸ Mallet added to this catalogue of descriptions in The Excursion an earthquake and a volcano. Thomson also prescribed the Scottish element of the super-

natural or grotesque to Mallet,⁶⁹ who likewise took it to extremes of the sensational not attempted by Thomson, though this theme does figure significantly in The Seasons.

To whatever extent the poems of Robert Riccaltoun, John Armstrong and David Mallet influenced The Seasons, such contemporary works serve to illustrate the kind of poetry being written in Thomson's day by a group of young Scottish poets; they show that the Scottish tradition of dynamic natural description was very much alive, and injecting new force into Augustan English poetry of the early-eighteenth century. These Scottish Augustans simply proved to be more concerned with the value of realistic, closely-observed and accurately-described nature in poetry, than did contemporary English descriptive poets including Pope (Pastorals, Windsor Forest), John Philips (Cyder, 1706), Ambrose Philips (Pastorals, 1709), William Hinchcliffe (The Seasons, 1718), and even John Gay (Rural Sports, 1713), who still tended to rely more heavily upon seasonal and descriptive conventions. Thomson, of course, would prove the best, most famous and influential of the Scottish Augustans, with his Seasons.

What sort of poem, then did Thomson intend The Seasons to be? In bringing his Anglo-Scottish cultural background to Augustan English poetry, he developed a new and fruitful generic blend, composed of many different sources. The Seasons is a wide-ranging, detailed and deeply-felt descriptive poem. Not less, it is a religious poem, an enthusiastic prayer of praise as well as a Physico-theological exposition. It is a didactic poem, encompassing not only religious, but philosophical, moral and scientific concerns as well. It is a neo-classical poem, or "georgic." It is an Augustan public poem, making

socio-political assertions on behalf of Great Britain, and especially the progressive Whig cause. (It is also, in a sense, a pre-Romantic poem, revealing the poet's personal feelings about the nature he describes, the God he worships.) The Seasons is all of these and more; its complex interaction of themes, genres and styles makes the poem Thomson's unique, and in great part uniquely Scottish, achievement.

Thomson prefixed his second edition of "Winter" (June, 1726) with a noteworthy Preface (dropped in 1730, with the first collected Seasons). This brief essay⁷⁰ is Thomson's own apology for poetry, and as such is a valuable asset to any study of the poet; it outlines his early ideals, of which he never allowed himself to lose sight, despite many textual revisions and modifications in attitude over the years. It helps to explain the thematic and formal bases for the later Seasons.

The Preface is couched in relatively smooth, urbane Augustan English prose, witty and rational, and modelled on the best Spectator style, which the young poet must have practised as a student in Scotland. A year as a tutor and a working poet in London would have helped him to work out some of the awkwardness in familiar English prose expression, which as a Scot he undoubtedly experienced at first (the telling exception "friskish," which is a coinage possibly derived from Scots, remains in the Preface). The Preface is rhetorically well-balanced: Thomson's Scottish training in classical rhetoric served him well. He uses persuasive logic against the enemies of poetry, as he argues its value. Significantly, he begins by linking the poet's "divine art" with Revelation itself; the Bible is poetry, "the peculiar language of heaven." He exclaims, "let poetry once more be restored to her ancient truth and purity; let her be inspired from heaven,

and in return her incense ascend hither." Poetry as Revelation, as well as a sacred offering of praise from the poet, is already a familiar theme in Thomson; as has been seen, Riccaltoun probably had much to do with instilling these concepts of Revelation and inspiration in the young poet, and his juvenilia make clear his acceptance of the poet's sacred role. The ideal of the predominantly religious purpose of poetry informs The Seasons, from the first edition of "Winter" through all the versions of the collected poem.

Having established the religious purpose of poetry, Thomson in the Preface goes on to criticise current "notorious abuses of Poetry"; he recognises that something has been lost in the poetry of the English Augustans-- a genuine concern for man's spiritual edification. He calls for a poetic "genius," with "the true interest of virtue, learning, and mankind entirely at heart," to uplift the "divine art" once more, thus establishing the didactic motive which forms a significant part of The Seasons. Thomson's image for the barren contemporary literary scene, a "wintry world of letters," is apt and prophetic: he himself, a Scotsman from a truly "wintry" clime and a culture considered equally "wintry" by most Englishmen of his day, would become the very "genius" who would give spiritual meaning to "Winter," and to The Seasons. He himself would introduce the Scottish theme of natural description as the true "native poetry" needed to enliven poetry in English. Thomson's call for "native poetry" recalls Ramsay's Preface to the EverGreen, two years previous, which likewise encouraged the development of the Scottish descriptive tradition; if The Gentle Shepherd could be called a Scottish product of the "contemporary argument for a truly native pastoral,"⁷¹ then surely The Seasons could be so called as well. Thomson writes, "I know of no

subject more elevating, more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment, than the works of Nature. Where can we meet with such variety, such beauty, such magnificence? All that enlarges and transports the soul! What more inspiring than a calm, wide survey of them? In every dress nature is greatly charming...there is no thinking of these things without breaking into poetry." Thomson here paraphrases Addison's "Pleasures of the Imagination" essays in the Spectator ("such variety, such beauty, such magnificence"),⁷² and also Francis Hutcheson's thought in An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design (1725),⁷³ on the beauty of uniformity-in-variety, perceived in the natural world. Thomson's important letter to William Cranstoun, echoed in the Preface, refers specifically and with nostalgia to the variety, beauty and magnificence of the Scottish landscape which he misses in England:

this country, I am in, is not very entertaining. no variety but that of woods, and them we have in abundance. but where is the living stream? the airy mountain? and the hanging rock? with twenty other things that elegantly please the lover of nature?—Nature delights me in every form...⁷⁴

Thomson's Preface then acknowledges the wider nature-tradition in literature, which strongly influenced his own concepts of the art: to these "best...Poets," ancient and modern, "The wild romantic country was their delight," as it was his own in Scotland. He praises Job, "which, even, strikes so forcibly through a mangling translation,"⁷⁵ is crowned with a description of the grand works of Nature; and that, too, from the mouth of their Almighty Author." He then praises the natural description in Virgil (who likewise influenced Thomson's forebears in descriptive poetry, the Middle Scots Makars such as Gavin Douglas). He illustrates with his own translation, in English blank verse, of a

passage from the Georgics II.475-86,⁷⁶ the sort of exercise at which he was adept, owing to his thorough classical education. His early familiarity with Virgil would, of course, strongly influence both the language and the themes of The Seasons. Job and Virgil are thus Thomson's two acknowledged models for the type of poetry he hoped to write in The Seasons; they exemplify the classical-Christian parallel traditions, the Humanism to which Thomson was educated in Scotland, and which informs The Seasons and all his works. Thomson's aims in writing The Seasons, as expressed in his Preface of 1726, were "to give the reader some of that true pleasure which [the seasons], in their agreeable succession, are always sure to inspire into my heart" (i.e. to describe nature lovingly, for its own sake), and through giving pleasure, to reveal deeper religious truths and also to make a sacred offering to the Creator.

The Seasons has most often been considered a "Scottish" poem by virtue of its Border-inspired and other Scottish scenery. While this is by no means its sole claim to "Scottishness," it is nonetheless a significant aspect of the poem. The basis for very many of the descriptions (within the overall concept of poetic natural description as a Scottish tradition) is indeed the pleasing "variety" of the Scottish landscape, which Thomson found lacking in England. David Nichol Smith asserts that:

The scenery which inspired The Seasons was the daily scenery of [Thomson's] youth, viewed through 'a kind of glory.' He may refer to many countries, but what he has experienced as a lad is behind what he tells us... even in [the "foreign" or generalised scenes] we discover the recollected emotion as, amid the distractions of the great city, he cherishes the memory of his early home.⁷⁷

Thomson began "Winter," his first Season, with strong emphasis on accurate description, based on personal observation of nature. Over several revisions of The Seasons, many of his descriptive passages grew to include scientific (especially Newtonian) material; Thomson also added new passages of various types of description, such as further adaptations of conventional material (drawn from Virgil, Milton, the Scriptures, pastoral convention, and so on), and much "foreign" seasonal descriptive material based on his reading of geographical and travel-literature. To accompany and explain these broader descriptions, he also added much abstract and didactic comment. Such revisions can best be seen in the evolution of "Winter," which changed most drastically and serves to illustrate the types of revisions which Thomson made, up to and including 1746. Thomson's revisions were aimed at comprehensiveness of his seasonal vision, not only to strengthen the visual and spatial⁷⁸ range of The Seasons, but also to contribute to a deeper understanding of the subjects of his descriptions: the vital relationship between man and Nature, and both of these to God. Some of the revisions and additions are successful, some less so, but the descriptive backbone of "Winter," and of each Season, based on the poet's own observation and experience, remains strong.

First, therefore, a survey of The Seasons as a descriptive poem will be conducted, keeping in mind Thomson's important contribution to the long tradition of Scottish poetry of natural description, and noting the more recognisably "Scottish" aspects of the descriptions themselves (the remaining thematic, as well as stylistic, aspects of the poem will be treated in Chapter VI). The first Season to appear was

"Winter" (March, 1726); it was published and printed in London by two Scotsmen, John Millan and Archibald Campbell, respectively. This first edition of "Winter," a brief 405 lines, was composed soon after Thomson's arrival in England, and in many instances it is the best example of Thomson's adaptation of the Scottish literary tradition of "winter" description to Augustan English poetry. By 1746 (the year of the poet's final revisions) it had grown to a great length of 1,069 lines. The first "Winter" included several passages which were transferred in altered form to "Autumn" in 1730; these include: clouds and light ("Autumn," ll. 956-63); the solitary wanderer in "withering copse" (ll. 970, 1003); "Philosophic Melancholly" (ll. 1004 ff.); the poet's retreat of "high embowering Shades" and "twilight Groves" (ll. 1030-36); the "humid Evening" of fogs and vapours, with the "fair Moon" (ll. 1082-1102); and, the "dew" (ll. 1065-71). These transferals illustrate Thomson's personal feeling that autumn is the most congenial season for philosophical meditation (as he makes clear in his letter to Cranstoun in Scotland: "Now, I imagine you seized w^t a fine romantic kind of melancholy, on the fading of the Year. Now I figure you wandering, philosophical, and pensive...while deep, divine Contemplation, the genius of the place, prompts each swelling awfull thought"), dated c. October, 1725.⁷⁹ The fact that the seasonal transition from inclement autumn to winter in Scotland is very subtle, might account for these passages having been originally part of "Winter"; after he had spent an autumn in the south, the poet would have been more aware of the sharper seasonal change there, and so perhaps felt the need to move the relevant passages to "Autumn" in 1730.

The winter season must have made a particularly strong impression on

young Thomson in Scotland, for in the period of the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries, all Europe was experiencing very severe cold weather, a "little ice age" associated with very low solar activity.⁸⁰ In a passage little altered from the original (1726), the powerful, personified "Winter comes to rule the varied year," and is familiar, indeed welcome to Thomson:

...Welcome kindred glooms!
 Cogential horrors, hail! With frequent foot,
 Pleased have I, in my cheerful morn of life,
 When nursed by careless solitude I lived
 And sung of Nature with unceasing joy,
 Pleased have I wandered through your rough domain;
 Trod the pure virgin-snows, myself as pure;
 Heard the winds roar, and the big torrent burst;
 Or seen the deep-fermenting tempest brewed
 In the grim evening-sky. Thus passed the time,
 Till through the lucid chambers of the south
 Looked out the joyous Spring—looked out and smiled.
 (ll. 5-16)

(This and subsequent quotations from The Seasons will be taken from J. Logie Robertson's Oxford Standard edition of Thomson's Poetical Works, 1908, reprint 1971, unless otherwise noted.) This opening passage refers to the poet's apprenticeship in wintry rural Scotland; it tells of his juvenile attempts at nature-poetry based on the well-known Scottish scene. "Lucid chambers of the south,"⁸¹ from which "joyous Spring" "smiled," refers to the attractive warmth of a spring sun; it might also refer to the "Spring" of young Thomson's new life and literary opportunities in the south, in England, which opened to him in the spring of 1725. The passage also establishes winter's central paradox of beauty ("welcome," "pure") and horror (gloomy, "rough," "grim"), or as Ralph Cohen puts it, "deformity and preservation of nature" (Cohen further identifies among Thomson's "Scottish" characteristics in The Seasons, his ambiguous attitude to winter's

forces).⁸² Thomson's greeting to winter echoes Milton's Paradise Lost, I.250, Satan's greeting to Hell, thus joining Scottish "winter" description with the notion of "hell," albeit welcome. As a two-sided season of both familiarity and sadness, "Winter" reflects Thomson's mood at the time he began to write the poem; his mother had recently died in Scotland, and the young poet was painfully homesick in the strange city of London. Therefore, "the poem must be considered not only as an objective description of nature but as a subjective expression of his spiritual condition at the time."⁸³ Each of Thomson's Seasons is built around such a central paradox ("Spring," love and its frustrations; "Summer," power and violence; "Autumn," fulfillment and barrenness).⁸⁴ Around its basic paradox, Thomson constructed in "Winter" (1726) a well-balanced, descriptive and religious poem. While its shape became distorted by the numerous geographical, socio-political and scientific additions which Thomson made over the years, the descriptive core of 1726 remained intact.

There is much personification of nature in "Winter" and throughout The Seasons, combined with realistic detail; this is one example of Thomson's device which Cohen terms "illusive allusion," whereby the poet re-works and adapts a convention (here, a conventional personification) to his own purposes, chiefly by making it more realistic and true-to-nature. With clever "illusive allusion," Thomson is able to exploit the tension between literal (descriptive, detailed) and metaphorical;⁸⁵ his fresh use of personification is in the Scottish tradition, both of the poetry of the Makars and of the Gaelic poets. Like each of the Seasons, "Winter" is described through a set of relevant "transforming" images;⁸⁶ "Winter"'s imagery is that of pale colour or whiteness,

deceptiveness, shapelessness and deformity, and especially of water in its various forms (rain, snow, ice, fog, flood). The "colourless" or subdued-colour imagery of "Winter" (and also of "Autumn," as the two more "Scottish" seasons) contrasts with the strong colour imagery of "Spring" and "Summer," and is consistent with the "bleak and dull" colouration of the landscape in certain Scottish Border areas such as Southdean.⁸⁷ Winter's arrival is typically lacking in colour, disorderly (images of dull colour include: "wan" rays, l. 49; "long dark night," l. 50; "sable cincture" and "shadows," l. 54; "deep-tinged," l. 55; "dun discoloured flocks," l. 64; "brown deluge," l. 77; images of disorder include: "untended" flocks, l. 65; "loose disjointed cliffs," l. 68; "fractured mountains," l. 69; "brawling brook," l. 69). Here follows the first major descriptive event of "Winter," the personified rain-storm, first of three "Winter" tempests. Storms occur in all Seasons, linking them to one another and best illustrating Thomson's skill at describing dynamic nature-in-process. The storm comes thus:

Along the woods, along the moorish fens,
Sighs the sad genius of the coming storm;
And up among the loose disjointed cliffs
And fractured mountains wild, the brawling brook
And cave, presageful, send a hollow moan,
Resounding long in listening fancy's ear.

Then comes the father of the tempest forth,
Wrapt in black glooms. First, joyless rains obscure
Drive through the mingling skies with vapour foul,
Dash on the mountain's brow, and shake the woods
That grumbling wave below. The unsightly plain
Lies a brown deluge; as the low-bent clouds
Pour flood on flood, yet unexhausted still
Combine, and, deepening into night, shut up
The day's fair face... (ll. 66-80)

As J. Logie Robertson notes,⁸⁸ this appears to be a Cheviot scene; Thomson grew up in such an area of many mountains, hillside caves,⁸⁹ and streams. The element of superstition, too (the "moan" in "listening

fancy's ear") is Scottish. The following domestic scene of the cottagers by the "enlivening blaze" telling tales while the storm rages (ll. 89-93) is likewise a typically Scottish contrast of indoor comfort with outdoor cold and natural violence, and recalls not only Henryson and David Lindsay, but also "social" scenes in the later-eighteenth century vernacular poetry of Burns ("Tam O'Shanter," ll. 37-52) and Fergusson ("The Farmer's Ingle"), and so on.⁹⁰ A. M. Oliver says that while beside such convivial scenes in Scots poetry Thomson's are restrained and "decorous," they still suggest "what that life meant to the people, and how rich it must have been in inspiration to the young poet, with its jests and games, its traditional music and dancing, and the 'goblin story' arousing superstitious horror."⁹¹

This scene is followed by a vigorous description of the flooding river; J. Logie Robertson again points out that this river in spate, roaring down the mountainside, "is doubtless the Tweed, or one of its tributaries."⁹² This passage, which may refer to the same or a similar Border scene as the destructive "Autumn" flood (ll. 332-343), was part of the original "Winter" (1726), but was revised for the better in 1730, with the addition of adjectives of even more "race" and descriptive force.

From this lively scene, Thomson abruptly shifts to invoke "Nature! great parent! (ll. 106-117), then back to description as the winter's second (wind) storm brews (ll. 118 ff). Here, the imagery of chaos or disorder is even more pronounced, as is the imagery of subdued colour: the sun "Uncertain wanders" (l. 120); "reeling clouds / Stagger ...dizzy...doubting" (ll. 121-2); air is "fluctuating" (l. 126); stars are "obtuse," "shivering" (l. 127) and sporadically "shoot athwart

the gloom" (l. 128); the sky is "pallid" (l. 118); the moon is "Blank in the leaden-coloured east" (l. 124) and "wan" (l. 125). In a passage added in 1744 and influenced by Virgil's Georgics I, the animals sense the storm's coming (ll. 132-45); Thomson's own observations and innovative language enhance the description here, especially the vivid portrayal of the birds' distress before the storm: rooks are "clamorous"; cormorant "wheels from the deep, and screams along the land"; "The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky clouds." Thomson's skill at choosing apt descriptive adjectives, and especially verbs and adverbs, which marks his finest and most immediate descriptive passages, is evident here. Thomson is at his best when portraying not merely visual, static nature, but action and movement, which, in a sense, links him with the dramatic Border ballads; he is able to apprehend the dramatic element in the natural world, as well as to support it with a wealth of realistic and accurate detail.

The wind-storm at sea (ll. 155-74) was greatly enlarged from the original (1726) version; it becomes rather verbose and repetitious, especially in its patriotic references to British sea-power, but retains much vigorous descriptive detail. The storm on land (ll. 175-201) is more within the poet's own Scottish experience; it rages in a landscape of forest and mountains. It is interesting to recall that Thomson, in London and its suburb Richmond where he wrote The Seasons, lived far away from any mountains (his homesick letter to Cranstoun asks, "where is...the airy mountain?" in England);⁹³ such mountain-scenes as this occur frequently in The Seasons, and surely draw upon his nostalgic recollection of the wilder landscape of his native Borders. It is said that, "When Thomson heard of an epic written by a poet who lived all his life in London, he pronounced it impossible. 'Why, the

man never saw a mountain!"⁹⁴ The windstorm surrounds both "cottage thatched" and "lordly roof," and "Sleep frighted flies." Here, too, the important element of superstition recurs:

Then, too, they say, through all the burdened air
 Long groans are heard, shrill sounds, and distant sighs,
 That, uttered by the demon of the night,
 Warn the devoted wretch of woe and death. (ll. 191-4)

This scene recalls Martin Martin's description, in his Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, of the Hebridean superstition of the "loud noises" like human voices which the islanders heard in certain haunted regions.⁹⁵ The qualifying "they say," typical of Thomson when referring to the supernatural, was present even in "Winter" (1726). The storm continues to intensify, until God ("Nature's King") commands a calm; the 1726 version of this passage, which made more thoroughgoing use of personification (the "chidden" storm "begins to pant," and "dies") proved more effective than the more abstract revised passage (2nd edition 1726 and ff). After the storm, personified Nature is exhausted ("weary clouds," "drowsy world") and ultimately sleeps, allowing a transition to a meditative passage (ll. 205-16), and thence to a very personal prayer ("Father...teach me Thyself!" ll. 217-22).

"Winter"'s third storm, the snowstorm (ll. 223 ff) marks a return to realistic natural description, accompanied by the controlling imagery of disorder, shapelessness, water (transformed into snow), and pale colour (first "dun," then white, "wild dazzling waste that buries wide / The works of man," ll. 223 and 239-40). Thomson's snowstorm (which is said to bear some resemblance to a snowstorm in Pope's translation of the Iliad, Bk. XII),⁹⁶ is probably drawn chiefly from the poet's Border experience; Roxburghshire is an area subject to very

severe snowstorms.⁹⁷ The description of the hungry animals-- the wild birds including robin redbreast (added, 2nd edition 1726) "Tamed by the cruel season," the sheep seeking the "withered herb" in the snow-- is actually a refinement of the winter-scene in Thomson's juvenile "Of a Country Life" (ll. 42-7). Thomson's sympathy with animals, the humanitarian feeling he exhibited even in the juvenilia, is well-demonstrated here, as elsewhere in The Seasons, as he urges, "Now, shepherds, to your helpless charge be kind..." (ll. 265 ff.). Such sympathy has always been a special feature of Scottish literature; "It is...possible that humanitarianism was more wide-spread among educated Scotsmen than among Englishmen, the latter being more hampered by the fetish of respectability."⁹⁸ Such scenes describing the harsher side of the paradox of "Winter," are surely Scottish; A. D. McKillop asserts that, "This is directly from Thomson's knowledge of the hard winters of his native country."⁹⁹ Thomson follows this scene with the horrors of the flock of sheep buried in a snowdrift, then the man lost and dying in the transformed, deceptively snowy landscape. "Distress from accidents of this kind, must not be unfrequent in a mountainous and thinly-inhabited country, like Scotland."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, such accidents still occur today, as in the particularly harsh winter of 1977-1978, when men were buried in automobiles for days at a time, and such like. Thomson's swain's awful death (added, 2nd edition 1726) is visualised in such a straightforward, immediate manner, reinforced with heavy alliteration, that it recalls the directness and violence of the ballads; it is a horrible scene, as the poet seems fatalistically to accept the inevitability of death, and is especially effective in contrast to the warmth of the cottage hearth and family-love which await the swain:

...On every nerve
 The deadly Winter seizes, shuts up sense,
 And, o'er his inmost vitals creeping cold,
 Lays him along the snows a stiffened corse,
 Stretched out, and bleaching in the northern blast.
 (ll. 317-21)

Thomson's genuine awe and fear of the harsh winter's dangers were clearly a part of Scottish rural life as he knew it. These descriptions of violent nature lead him into a lengthy religious-didactic passage in Augustan abstraction (ll. 322-88), but he follows this with yet more wintry horrors.

The next passage of "Winter" (ll. 389-413) is an example of Thomson's drawing from material he had read in travel-literature, and enhancing it with details from his Scottish experience or folk wisdom. While the scene itself is not Scottish, the poet's Scottish background seems to have predisposed him to choose such a scene, and to write about it as he did. This blending of "foreign" with Scottish information and impression occurs a number of times in The Seasons. Here, he refers specifically to the (probably Italian) "Alps, / And wavy Appenines and Pyrenees," but the conception of the scene probably owes something to his Scottish background as well, as:

Cruel as death, and hungry as the grave!
 Burning for blood, bony, and gaunt, and grim!
 Assembling wolves in raging troops descend. (ll. 393-5)

These lines seem to speak from an older Scottish poetry, carried over in north and west Britain from the Old English. The first two lines are divided by a strong caesura, and l. 394 in particular could almost have come straight from Northern alliterative verse; it follows the characteristic pattern, as the two stresses of the first half-line

alliterate with the first stressed word of the second half-line. The short-syllabled language, too, is Teutonic rather than Latinate (in contrast to the Latinate "assembling" in l. 395). Thomson goes on to describe the wolves preying on horse and bull, human baby, lion, and, gruesomely, even "On churchyards drear" to 'dig /The shrouded body from the grave; o'er which, / Mixed with foul shades and frighted ghosts, they howl" (ll. 410-13). Again the voice of Scottish folklore, strongly tinged with superstition and fear, is heard. In creating this gruesome scene, Thomson has perhaps drawn from Scottish life and legend, consciously to reinforce the Alpine scene, and to add to the sublime or sensational character of the violent "Winter." The passage, while most effective in itself, seems oddly raw and undigested, perhaps too sensational even for the eclectic Seasons. Wolves were, in fact, gone from England by the time Thomson wrote this passage (added, 2nd edition 1726), but they were still in Scotland, and the poet probably knew tales of such horrors.¹⁰¹

The passage on the avalanche (ll. 414-23), probably based on an Alpine event, was added to these wintry horrors in 1744. All of these descriptions contribute to the "violent," terrible side of paradoxical "Winter." From here, the speaker shifts to another typically Scottish retreat, from the harsh outdoors to "A rural, sheltered, solitary scene; / Where ruddy fire and beaming tapers join / To cheer the gloom" (ll. 429-31). Here follows a lengthy catalogue (ll. 433-616) of ancient Greek and Roman, then more recent British (Milton, Pope, Hammond) Worthies.

Description resumes (l. 617 ff.) with another convivial, indoor domestic scene; J. Logie Robertson says with certainty, "The scene is Scottish."¹⁰²

Around the fire, merry villagers tell "the goblin-story," "Till superstitious horror creeps o'er all" (yet another reference to the supernatural), make jokes and dance "to notes / Of native music" to pass the winter night. Thomson contrasts such innocent pleasures with the "false enchanted joy" of city and court entertainments. The "aureate" court scene is superficial yet attractive (as indeed it would have been to the rural-bred Scot newly arrived in London):

The glittering court effuses every pomp;
 ...beamed from gaudy robes,
 Tapers, and sparkling gems, and radiant eyes,
 A soft effulgence o'er the palace waves... (ll. 640-3)

He then portrays the drama, his own favourite urban (London) entertainment, affectionately (ll. 646-55).

After a conventional compliment to Lord Chesterfield (ll. 656-90, added 1744), Thomson returns to pure natural description, and the frost. This passage was considerably expanded (from the original twenty-two lines to nearly 300), as the poet gradually added scientific and pseudo-scientific information, as well as much "foreign" geographical material, to the basic British winter scene. The descriptive core of the "freeze" passage retains its immediacy (such a scene was on the poet's mind as early as "Of a Country Life," ll. 49-50, where he pictured "Keen Frost then turns the liquid Lakes to Glass, / Arrests the dancing Riv'lets as they pass"), and indeed gains force with the addition of more visual and aural details and fanciful "scientific" speculation (for example, the alleged cleansing effects of freezing on the earth; the microscopic structure of frost). These descriptions, in contrast to the previous harsh scenes, represent paradoxical "Winter"'s beauty: "aureate" language abounds ("shining atmosphere," l. 697;

"luculent" rivers, l. 710; "crystal pavement," l. 729; "starry glitter, glows," l. 741; "myriads of gems, that in the waving gleam / Gay twinkle," ll. 787-8; and so on). Such descriptive diction bears comparison with the similar aureate language used to describe the bright court-scene, quoted just prior to this natural scene (the court itself was a man-made and superficial, yet appealing, indoor "winter" beauty). In the freeze, the controlling "Winter" water image has again been transformed, literally frozen into light.

Thomson had briefly mentioned winter sports in "Winter" (1726, ll. 321-4), but expands this scene in later editions; here, he specifically sets the ice-skating and sledding activities in Germany, Scandinavia and Russia, but such sports may also have been a part of his own Scottish experience. In describing winter sports, he also makes a brief attack on hunting (ll. 788-93), which he feels increases the season's destructiveness; this sentiment was elaborated in "Autumn."

Now, Thomson shifts his descriptive focus to the frigid zone and its inhabitants, in foreign descriptions (chiefly added after 1738) which move in a broad and rather chaotic sweep. These lengthy additions reinforce, in their extremes, winter's violent impact; they come from a wide variety of travel and geographical literary sources, and besides broadening the range of "Winter" description, they help to carry on the sociological debate between the values of Primitivism and Progress. Some of the more sublime, dramatic scenes here influenced Mallet's Excursion,¹⁰³ or were in turn influenced by it,¹⁰⁴ as both poets strove to inject more of the "sublime" into their descriptive poems.

Thomson's descriptions here show some imaginative touches, especially

where his own Scottish experience might contribute to his visualisation, his realisation of a scene in the frigid zone, for example, the Northern Lights which he himself may have seen over Scotland, "By dancing meteors then, that ceaseless shake / A waving blaze refracted o'er the heavens" (ll. 859-64; note, too, the scientific term "refracted"); or, the picture borrowed from Mallet, of "snows...on snows," "mountains...on mountains piled" (ll. 904-10). On the whole, however, the scenes in the frigid zone thus given second-hand are weighted with generalisation, abstraction and didacticism, and lack the immediacy of the poet's first-hand descriptions, drawn directly from personal (often Scottish) experience.

Such realistic description is taken up again with the "thaw" passage (ll. 988 ff.), very probably depicting a Border scene:

Muttering, the winds at eve with blunted point
Blow hollow-blustering from the south. Subdued,
The frost resolves into a trickling thaw.
Spotted the mountains shine: loose sleet descends,
And floods the country round. The rivers swell,
Of bonds impatient. Sudden from the hills,
O'er rocks and woods, in broad brown cataracts,
A thousand snow-fed torrents shoot at once;
And, where they rush, the wide-resounding plain
Is left one slimy waste...(ll. 988-97)

J. Logie Robertson compares this passage with another Scottish scene, from Burns's "Brigs of Ayr": "Aroused by blustering winds and spotting thowes," and so on.¹⁰⁵ From the original (1726) version of the thaw, Thomson retains the vigour of his description of the rivers in spate, and moving out to sea.

The final passage of natural description in "Winter," which echoes Pope's juvenile pastoral "Winter,"¹⁰⁶ depicts the personified season as victor over Nature:

'Tis done! Dread Winter spreads his latest glooms,
 And reigns tremendous o'er the conquered year.
 How dead the vegetable kingdom lies!
 How dumb the tuneful! Horror wide extends
 His desolate domain... (ll. 1024-8)

Personified Winter's desolation stands as the conventional warning to "fond man" of his own approaching "winter" of old age and death. This sermon-like passage (ll. 1028 ff) foreshadows the morality and the rhetoric of Blair's Grave.¹⁰⁷ Thomson retains, from 1726, his expression of the partial evil-universal good idea (ll. 1065-7), revised and made clearer in 1730; he replaces the original rather bland conclusion to "Winter" with a new, more relevant and effective symbol for the happiness of the afterlife:

The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
 And one unbounded Spring encircle all. (ll. 1068-9)

Only after "Winter" (1726) had proven a popular success, did Thomson decide to complete a poetic seasonal-cycle. Next in order of composition came "Summer" (1727) which, being the other seasonal extreme, has several important parallels with "Winter." "Summer," however, was in an important sense farther removed from the poet's own experience; the shorter, cooler Scottish summer had not inspired the poet to describe, as had pervasive winter, and in the tradition of Scottish nature poets, he tended more frequently to draw from outside sources (both idealising literary conventions, and factual geographical and scientific material) for his "Summer" descriptions. Here, pastoral conventions (classical and Miltonic) play almost as important a role as they do in "Spring." The more remote, sensational "tropical" geographical additions, illus-

trating the season's extremes not found in Britain, compare with those of the frigid zone in "Winter," and likewise contribute to the Primitivism-Progress issue. In contrast to the Scottish descriptive core of "Winter," however, Thomson's "Summer" is in general the most Augustan, abstract and "public," and the least personal and particular, of The Seasons.

Thomson's original plan for "Summer" was to describe a single, typical summer's day. The predominant "transforming" imagery here (as also in "Spring") is of light, heat and colour, and (to a lesser extent) water and storms, which serve as linking images throughout The Seasons. The Sun becomes the chief symbol, embodying the central paradox of the season's (and taken symbolically, God's) beneficial and enlivening, yet potentially dangerous, power; Cohen terms the season's paradox "power and violence."¹⁰⁸

The personified "meek-eyed morn" of the summer's day appears (ll. 47-66), and soon "Young day pours in apace," opening a generalised though probably Scottish description:

The dripping rock, the mountain's misty top
Swell on the sight and brighten with the dawn.
Blue through the dusk the smoking currents shine;
And from the bladed field the fearful hare
Limps awkward; while along the forest glade
The wild deer trip, and often turning gaze
At early passenger. Music awakes,
The native voice of undissembled joy;
And thick around the woodland hymns arise.
Roused by the cock, the soon-clad shepherd leaves
His mossy cottage, where with peace he dwells,
And from the crowded fold in order drives
His flock to taste the verdure of the morn. (ll. 54-66)

This passage strongly recalls the juvenile "Morning in the Country,"¹⁰⁹ where L'Allegro combined with the poet's first-hand Border observations,

as influences. The passage is followed by a paean to the Sun, where the descriptive lines, "On rocks, and hills, and towers, and wandering streams / High-gleaming from afar" (ll. 89-90) occur; J. Logie Robertson feels that, "The scene is apparently Cheviot-side."¹¹⁰

Thomson generally preferred such "varied" mountain prospects, with their "large-scale light effects" (such as were familiar views of his Border youth), to the more "horrid" or sublime foreign mountain scenes¹¹¹ which appealed more to his compatriot Mallet.

In the Hymn to the Sun (ll. 81-198) Thomson makes it clear that God and the Sun are not synonymous; God is "Light Himself," but also the transcendent "Maker" of light and the Sun.¹¹² In this passage, Thomson's skilful "illusive allusion" blends conventional Biblical, Neoplatonic, Miltonic and scientific light-imagery with imaginative first-hand description. Appropriately, "Summer," with its emphasis on light and colour, is the Season where "reminiscences of the Newtonian theories most abound."¹¹³ Thomson was in the midst of writing "Summer" when his hero Isaac Newton died (March, 1727); the poet interrupted "Summer" to compose his "To the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton," where the influence of the Optics is similarly strong.¹¹⁴ For example, Thomson in "Summer" illustrates the breaking up of sunlight into colours (ll. 140-59). This important "spectrum" passage vividly describes the fanciful process of the formation of the various gems, deep in the earth, from sunlight's strength.¹¹⁵ Thomson combines understanding of the Newtonian spectrum, possibly learnt, to some extent, in Edinburgh, with a genuine aesthetic appreciation of the rich colours of light themselves, "compact" in the gems; further, the gems are portrayed as reflecting the various faces of nature (for example, the amethyst, purple evening; the emerald, green spring; and so on). This

passage, where scientific knowledge combines with wonder at a natural phenomenon, parallels the Newtonian "rainbow" passage in "Spring." The Newtonian influence of the Principia also plays a part, as Thomson describes Newtonian gravity:

'Tis by thy [the Sun's] secret, strong, attractive force,
As with a chain indissoluble bound,
Thy system rolls entire... (ll. 97-9)

Following this exuberant hymn, comes another domestic descriptive passage (ll. 199 ff), combining, as in similar "Winter" scenes, realistically-observed and probably Scottish details,

...the potent sun
Melts into limpid air the high-raised clouds
And morning fogs that hovered round the hills
In parti-coloured bands...

with conventional images,

Half in a blush of clustering roses lost,
Dew-dropping coolness to the shade retires;
There, on the verdant turf or flowery bed,
By gelid founts and careless rills to muse.

This idyll leads into the playful, closely-observed description of the "little noisy summer-race," the periphrastically-grouped summer insects (with a reference to their predators, the "quick-eyed trout" and "darting salmon," ll. 253-4, probably a Border recollection); the clever mock-heroic description of the spider (ll. 268-80) with its element of the Scottish grotesque, is a notable example of the poet's hyperbolic vein of humour. The scientific description of microscopic organisms (ll. 281-317, transferred from "Spring," 1744) follows; Thomson was rather morbidly fascinated with this "enlightened"

view of minute nature, which provokes some religious-didactic comment (ll. 318-51).

Next, Thomson shifts his focus again to describe two rural scenes, the hay-making (added 1730), described in generalised, conventional pastoral imagery, and in contrast, the sheep-shearing (added 1744), described with vigour and much loving detail, undoubtedly recalling scenes and activities from the poet's Border youth. This passage also illustrates Thomson's sympathy with animals ("Fear not, ye gentle tribes!" and so on). A rather pompous paean to rural industry follows, then Thomson describes the heat of noon (ll. 432-464); this passage, which shows summer's destructive power, makes skilful use of pathetic fallacy, as man and all nature "wither" and "pant" as one. Unfortunately, the description lost much of its immediacy with the removal (after 1738) of a brief but observant portrayal of the physical and psychological effects of excessive heat on man; this description of dizziness, double-vision, ringing in the ears, sweating and shivering, and heart-sickness¹¹⁶ (comparable to the "drunken" scene in "Autumn"), was an especially intriguing handling of the surrealism of distorted sense-impressions. (The passage may have been thought too subjective, but for Thomson, a corpulent Scotsman in a warmer, more southerly climate, it was probably based on true experience!) "Summer"'s speaker then takes shelter to meditate in the cool, shady grove, described in conventional, pastoral terms, with strongly Virgilian (Eclogues) atmosphere. Amid this generally conventional, idealised scene, Thomson's description of the waterfall (ll. 590-606) is worth noting; altered from its original, it has lost some "race" and accuracy, but retains the vigour of a directly-observed phenomenon. Thomson's waterfall strongly recalls Alexander Montgomerie's lively description

of a waterfall in The Cherry and the Slae (Watson's Choice Collection, Part I, 1706),¹¹⁷ which makes equally effective use of the sound-effects of alliteration and onomatopoeia.

Now, a wider geographical vista opens to the reader (ll. 629 ff), as the speaker travels to the torrid zone. This lengthy addition parallels "Winter"'s frigid-zone scenes, and similarly tends to unbalance the proportions of the Season. Here, less-realistic description occurs; a tropical paradise is imaginatively described, and exotic names of plant and animal life, places, and rivers mingle with classical allusions ("Pan," "Pomona,"¹¹⁸ "Bacchus," "Jove," "Philomel," "Flora") to set the remote and idealised scene. Thomson's conception of this scene was influenced by Job, Chapters 40-41, and also perhaps by his correspondence with his Scots friend William Paterson, who lived in the tropics, at Bridgetown, Barbados.¹¹⁹ The luxuriance of the scene is achieved, not so much with sensuous, directly-experienced description, but with such abundant connotative language, and with many general images of size, fullness, excess ("redoubled," "full," "bounteous," "beyond," "exuberant," "prodigious," "profusely," "boundless," and so on). The essential paradox of "Summer" is not forgotten, however, as Thomson goes on to illustrate the horrors of the tropics: vicious beasts, violent sea- and sand-storms, slavery,¹²⁰ human passion and violence, plague. These (like the arctic extremes in "Winter") contain occasional effective descriptive details, such as the citrus grove (ll. 663-8), the archetypal serpent (ll. 898-912, combining realism with Biblical and Miltonic overtones), the sandstorm (ll. 959-77) and the putrid swamps (ll. 1026-34), but these are chiefly of a fanciful, rather than a realistic, nature; they derive mostly from

second-hand material, transformed by the poet's vivid imagination.¹²¹ Thomson's more sensational "Summer" descriptions were partly under the influence of Mallet, but Thomson generally left more such scenes (such as the drought and famine, earthquake, volcano) to his friend, to use in his Excursion.

"A nearer scene of horror" calls the wandering speaker "home" from the tropics, to Britain (ll. 1102 ff), to depict a familiar, temperate-zone thunderstorm. Here, characteristic of Thomson's better descriptions, personification or representation in human terms, plays an important role in the description of the storm, and enhances the sense of natural drama: "darkness broods" and "growing, gains / ...possession of the sky"; "wrathful vapour"; "baleful cloud"; "war / Of fighting winds"; "muttering earth"; "scowling heavens"; "tempest growls." The description is not merely visual, but strikingly aural as well; it illustrates Thomson's *forté*, the portrayal of nature's events in dramatic, well-paced and intensifying action and movement, for example:

The lightnings flash a larger curve, and more
The noise astounds, till overhead a sheet
Of livid flame discloses wide, then shuts
And opens wider, shuts and opens still
Expansive, wrapping ether in a blaze.
Follows the loosened aggravated roar,
Enlarging, deepening, mingling, peal on peal
Crushed horrible, convulsing heaven and earth. (ll. 1136-43)

The description of lightning, struggling despite rain and hail, "Ragged and fierce, or in red whirling balls" (l. 1148), followed soon after by the comment, "Guilt hears appalled" (the Old Testament fear of Divine vengeance),¹²² "And yet not always on the guilty head / Descends the fated flash" (ll. 1169-71), might betray the poet's deep uneasiness and fears over his father's strange death (Thomas Thomson

was allegedly struck down by a "ball of fire," see Chapter II above). The storm itself is set in a mountainous, rural landscape recalling the Borders, and in addition to the Welsh "Carnarvon," "Penmanmaur" and "Snowdon" he specifically mentions the storm's impact in Scotland, on "the heights of heathy Cheviot" and also in the "utmost isles" of Thulé. Thomson's preoccupation with death by lightning was probably an attempt to overcome the old-style Scottish Calvinistic superstition that a violent and sudden end by natural forces, like his father's, was the punishment of a vengeful God, and to assert his belief in a benevolent Deity. He had originally included a description of both a group of lightning-struck cattle (perhaps suggested by Martin Martin's A Description of the Western Islands, where Martin depicts such an event in Orkney),¹²³ and a shepherd killed by lightning, but after 1738 he omitted the shepherd as somewhat redundant, as the following interpolated tale portrays a similar strange death. The tale of "Celadon and Amelia" (ll. 1171 ff) is the first of three such interpolated tales in The Seasons. The simple tale's description is elevated and idealising, deriving largely from pastoral convention; innocent Amelia is struck down, and her lover Celadon is despondent until the sun comes out, and, in pathetic fallacy, he is cheered sufficiently to refresh himself with a swim. Despite the tale's pastoral trappings, however, the death of Amelia is imbued with almost ballad-like fatalism; the fleeting image of the once-lovely "blackened corse" (l. 1216) recalls the random, grotesque violence which is a recurrent theme of Scottish folklore. The refreshment of the despondent lover Celadon again recalls Alexander Montgomerie's The Cherry and the Slae,¹²⁴ where the speaker, another melancholy lover, repairs to the river bank, "where Hope grew with Despair."

A transitional passage here, a straightforward description of the healthful benefits of swimming (with reference to the mens sana in corpore sano philosophy of the Romans),¹²⁵ leads swiftly into the second interpolated tale, "Damon and Musidora" (ll. 1269 ff). Again, an idealised classical-pastoral setting is described, with an allusion to the Greek myth of Paris on Mt. Ida (ll. 1304-7). In the final version of this tale, there is but one "nymph," Musidora herself, but in the original version Damon spied three bathing nymphs; in addition to the allusion to the Judgement of Paris,¹²⁶ this might also have been suggested by a similar passage in The Gentle Shepherd (Act I, Scene ii) where Jenny and Peggy wash half-naked in the stream while hidden Patie watches.¹²⁷ An anonymous song in Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany, "Song CV" ("On a bank of flowers")¹²⁸ also bears striking resemblance to Thomson's tale; it recounts the story of Damon, who sees the sleeping Celia and desires her. She wakes and flees, and he regrets the lost opportunity for love. One further analogue might be the Apocryphal story of Susanna and the Elders. Interestingly, among Thomson's possessions were prints of both the "Judgement of Paris" and "Susanna and the Elders."¹²⁹ The original version of the tale of "Damon and Musidora" left Damon undiscovered by the nymphs; he merely learnt of adult love from afar. The revised version (1744 ff) has, however, often been censured as being gratuitously sensual, with its idealising yet graphic description of Musidora, who this time sees Damon and gives him hope that his love will be requited.¹³⁰ Thomson's hearty, rather explicit sensuality here, surpassing conventional descriptive epithets for female beauty, recalls the poet's juvenile "To Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet." Indeed, the purpose of the mock-heroic¹³¹

"Damon and Musidora" within The Seasons as a whole is not clear (unlike "Celadon and Amelia," which illustrates nature's violence and raises the theological questions of the nature of God and His Providence, and the possibility of "predestination"); in any case, however, Thomson's refreshingly realistic, candid treatment here does tend to bring the predominant pastoral-conventionality of "Summer" down-to-earth.

Now, the poem returns to the afternoon of the "ideal" summer's day, inspiring a lengthy abstract passage of personal reflection and public, patriotic panegyric (ll. 1371-1437). The sparse description within the passage includes a "picturesque" prospect-view of the specifically English scene, "Augusta" (i.e. London and the Thames Valley); the elements of the landscape are listed (in the Scottish "cataloguing" manner) rather than described in detail, a method Thomson would use again, effectively to control and present the broader vista (for example, "Spring"'s Hagley Park passage). In general, the "Britannia" panegyric is rather dull and verbose, and illustrates Thomson's weakness, confirmed in Liberty, in handling abstract ideas on a large scale, without the constant support of natural description. As part of the "Britannia" passage, Thomson lists the heroes of "British" culture and civilisation, including the guiding spirit of "Summer," Newton (ll. 1560-3). J. Logie Robertson, for one, was indignant that this address to all Britannia does not mention a single Scotsman. The original (1727) "Summer" had included a brief tribute to Scottish Worthies here, but this was shifted to "Autumn" (ll. 878-949) in 1730; Robertson calls this transferred passage, "both tardy and meagre justice...."¹³² The English roll-call leads to a praise of the "daughters of Britannia," the English ladies (ll. 1580-94), recalling the

juvenile "Upon Beauty" and "Upon the Hoop," which paid similar tribute to British womanhood (though in these earlier poems, Scots lassies were first among British ladies). Following a praise of British naval power, the "Britannia" panegyric concludes with an Augustan invocation (ll. 1602-19) asking God to bless the "empire" with the "saving Virtues."

Having removed some redundant tropical-desert descriptive material here (1744), Thomson returns again to the "ideal" day (ll. 1620 ff), characteristically blending convention and personification with more immediate description: "Low walks the sun," and sunset is portrayed in rich, aureate terms. Evening then "takes / Her wonted station"; Thomson subtly describes the gradually-deepening darkness, accompanied with a rising breeze, carrying a delicate "whitening shower" of thistledown such as he had probably watched in Scotland. Intermingled with these descriptions are brief didactic and reflective comments.

Night falls, and another very Scottish scene follows, as "His folded flock secure, the shepherd home / Hies" with the milkmaid (ll. 1664 ff). Thomson, who was in youth terrified of the dark, includes in his description of nightfall references to the supernatural, to the "fairy people" who gather on summer nights ("as village stories tell," he typically qualifies it), as well as to the more sinister graves of suicides and to the "lonely tower" which the homeward-bound rustics avoid, because ("So night-struck fancy dreams") these places are haunted by the "yelling ghost" (ll. 1672-81). Such scenes of fear and superstition were clearly a part of Thomson's youth in the Scottish Borders, recalled with a shudder even in the poet's adult years. Robert Blair's The Grave would also describe, with a similar sense of

credulity, such haunted graveyard scenes, as well as preaching against the horror of suicide.¹³³

Welcome light (the controlling "Summer" image) now returns, transformed into the faint "twinkle" of the glow-worm, the star Venus's shine, and then the strange and "wondrous" comet. Another comet scene, or more properly a description of the Aurora Borealis, was originally given here, but was transferred to "Autumn" in 1730. The comet description which remains in "Summer" (ll. 1706-29), with its scientifically-observed "huge vapoury train" and "long ellipsis," was revised in 1744, possibly immediately influenced by the "appearance of a conspicuous comet that was discovered in December, 1743 and reached its perihelion in March 1744,"¹³⁴ or by an even earlier comet, one which appeared over London and Edinburgh in early 1742.¹³⁵ The 1744 comet was witnessed and recorded in Scotland by Alexander "Jupiter" Carlyle and by Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, among others; Clerk interpreted it as a presage of the Jacobite rebellion.¹³⁶ Thomson's comet in "Summer" leaves the ignorant "fearful murmuring crowds" in amazement and terror of what it might portend; they are contrasted with the,

...enlightened few,
Whose godlike minds philosophy exalts, [and who]
The glorious stranger hail. (ll. 1714-16)

This passage and others on the same pattern in The Seasons (notably, the "Autumn" description of the Aurora), demonstrate Thomson's characteristic qualification of superstition, the distancing of it from himself and his own beliefs; he obviously desired to rid himself of such deeply-engrained early fears and, through his increasing know-

ledge of rational philosophy and science (including Newton's laws), to be among the wise "enlightened few." Thus follows his concluding Augustan paean to "Serene Philosophy" (ll. 1730-1805), which, through reason, leads up to the ultimate Light of Truth, God; the summer's day ends on this optimistic note.

"Spring" (1728) is in many ways similar to "Summer": it, too, has a greater proportion of pastoral-conventional material than do the colder, more inclement "Scottish" Seasons "Autumn" and "Winter"; like "Summer," it also has more specifically-English scenes (Hagley Park, and, again, "Augusta," as prospect-views of the English landscape) than do the more inclement Seasons. Neoplatonic and Newtonian light, and especially colour, imagery is again significant. Gravity imagery also figures in "Spring": Thomson identifies this season's goal of natural "harmony" (i.e. Perpetual Spring) with Newtonian gravity,¹³⁷ and finds the central Neoplatonic concepts of the "rising mind" and the "Great Chain of Being" (which he sees as being held together by harmony/gravity) congenial to Newtonian empiricism. His method is therefore to describe the effects of the spring season on all nature, ascending the rising scale of being. "Spring" is in one way like "Autumn," however, in that it represents a more temperate, transitional season than the extremes of "Winter" and "Summer"; its description is generally, therefore, more "picturesque" than "sublime" or sensational. The central thematic paradox governing "Spring" is love, and its pain and frustration.¹³⁸

The description opens (ll. 11-47) with the delicately described "trembling year," that uncertain period between winter and spring, followed by the "moving softness" of warming winds, which signal the

husbandman to plough and sow; J. Logie Robertson remarks here that, "Thomson's knowledge of the work of the farm...was altogether drawn from the Scottish Lowlands."¹³⁹ (This was not wholly true, as Thomson did read much on the subject, but the poet's basic knowledge of agriculture was certainly drawn from personal experience and observation.) "Spring"'s effects begin with the germination of vegetable life, as the "penetrative sun" warms the earth; this brief but carefully-worked and complex passage (ll. 78-113) describes the gradual growth, flowering and potential fruition of all vegetable life, with sensuousity: not only the vivid colours, but the scents and tastes (for example, the synaesthetic "taste the smell of dairy," l. 107), the textures, the sounds of the rural scene contribute to the broad prospect of bright "Augusta" (the London region) in spring. Again, a storm (ll. 143 ff.) figures in the seasonal description, and this time it is not violent, but rather a "lovely, gentle, kind" shower, nourishing and enriching the earth. With realism and genuine observation, Thomson accurately describes the calm before the storm, the soft rain, and the glowing, enlivening landscape after rain; a rainbow ("Newton...thy showery prism," ll. 208-9) then appears. Here, Thomson combines scientific description with his delight in the purely visual. He shows his knowledge of Newtonian optics (from the point of view of the "sage-instructed eye"), and also captures the simple swain's wonder at the beautiful "amusive arch." The rainbow (Biblical symbol of covenant, or harmony between God and his Creatures, the theme of "Spring") recurs in *Liberty*, V, ll. 549 ff.

In a clever interplay of literal with metaphorical ("illusive allusion," or the descriptive re-working of convention), Thomson portrays the Golden Age, in terms of the total harmony of nature in times past, con-

trasted with modern disharmony, i.e. the Fallen World of depraved "Nature disturbed" (l. 307); in Thomson's Fallen World, passion reigns over reason (a characteristic Augustan definition). Thomson's "prime of days" blends the Virgilian Golden Age of the pastoral ideal (Georgics II, and especially Eclogues IV)¹⁴¹ with the influence of the Eden or Paradise of Genesis and Milton, illustrating the strength of the poet's use of the classical-Christian parallel traditions which were the foundation of his Scottish Humanistic education. This passage (ll. 234-271) originally included a twenty-eight line description of the Golden Age as a lush, extravagant Eden-gone-wild, full of sensuous, concrete detail and also reinforced with imagery from Virgil, Genesis and Milton; "Some of this is grotesque enough to be ridiculous, but there is also much of that raciness which Johnson missed in the later editions"¹⁴² of The Seasons. The removal of this passage in 1744 left the more decorous, restrained description on its own.

From the Golden Age, Thomson goes on to describe the Deluge resulting from the Fall, again blending natural description with conventional religious symbolism and with the added dimension of scientific speculation. In addition to the poet's main sources for this passage, there were some precedents in Scottish religious-didactic literature. Arch-Calvinist Thomas Boston, for example, in "proving" the corrupt, depraved "Second State" of human nature, not only attributed the literal Flood to man's sin, but also described it metaphorically: "Whence is the deluge of sin on the earth, but from the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, the heart of man...."¹⁴³ In Middle Scots literature, David Lindsay in the didactic Monarchie, Book I, also depicted the Fall and the breaking up of the earth, and resulting Flood.¹⁴⁴

Thomson's chief scientific source here was Thomas Burnet's Theory of the

Earth (Sacra Telluris Theoria, 1681-9); Burnet held that under the earth was a great abyss of waters, that the flood was a result of a sudden crack in the earth's surface, and that when the waters subsided the face of the earth was ruined and "defaced" by mountains and other "geological monstrosities."¹⁴⁵ Another influence might have been the pseudo-scientist and theologian John Hutchinson [see Chapter II, above] whose interpretation of Moses (Genesis) was very similar to Burnet's.¹⁴⁶ It will be recalled that Thomson's close friends Riccaltoun and Duncan Forbes were disciples of Hutchinson.

Thomas Burnet further held that before the flood, "there was no obliquity of the ecliptic, and in the more favored zones eternal springtime reigned."¹⁴⁷ But with the flood, as Hutchinson added, "The Course of Nature was to be controuled and inverted by him, whom they had ungratefully forgotten, the supreme Lord of nature."¹⁴⁸ (Hutchinson was also attacking his contemporary Physico-theologians here.) Milton described this theory of the earth's being tilted at the time of the Flood, in Paradise Lost, X.651-707.¹⁴⁹ Thomson, too, asserts that the Deluge was responsible for disturbing the one "great Spring" of natural harmony, and that "The Seasons since have, with severer sway, / Oppressed a broken world" (ll. 317-8 ff).

Following some philosophical reflection on the Fallen World, and then a strongly-worded humanitarian (even "vegetarian") defence of innocent domestic animals, slaughtered by "ensanguined man" for food (ll. 340-373), Thomson added in 1744 a passage on angling (ll. 379-466). This famous passage has often been praised for its vigorous and realistic description in the clever mock-heroic vein.¹⁵⁰ Again, Thomson is shown at his best, describing action and movement, or drama

in nature. "The whole passage is clearly a recollection of the day's fishing on the Upper Jed, or some one or other of its tributaries";¹⁵¹ "as Thomson wrote, his thoughts reverted from Richmond to the streams of the Merse."¹⁵² A specifically Scottish reference here is to the flowering "elder" (l. 446), which is "not the common elder but the red elder found in Scotland and N. E. England."¹⁵³ The germ of the angling passage is found in Thomson's juvenile "Of a Country Life"; again, it illustrates the poet's typically-Scottish humanitarian concern, even for the worm and the baby fish, although at the same time his enjoyment of the sport itself is undisguised. Herein lies the paradox of "Spring": pleasure and pain.

Following this lively scene, Thomson's enthusiasm at the beautiful prospect of the spring landscape causes him to raise the fundamental question of the descriptive artist:

...But who can paint
 Like Nature? Can imagination boast,
 Amid its gay creation, hues like hers?
 ...If fancy then
 Unequal fails beneath the pleasing task,
 Ah, what shall language do? (ll. 468-75 and ff.)

This, too, approximates "Spring"'s paradox of love (of natural beauty) and frustration (the poet's inability to imagine, let alone describe, nature adequately). Here, he states his poetic aim, not necessarily to enhance or improve upon God's Creation in Nature, but to try to recreate its own true beauties as far as he is able. "Yet, though successful, will the toil delight" him (l. 480).

Here follows a carefully-controlled description of an English garden-walk with "Amanda" (Thomson's Scottish lady-friend, Elizabeth Young, ll. 483-555); the specific reference to her was added in 1744. The

speaker guides the reader through the garden, closely observing the bees at work, then pointing out the broader prospect-view, and finally focusing on the colourful flower-bed where he delights in naming (in English, Latin, Greek) the individual species, cataloguing as he describes them in their great variety. In this passage, pastoral convention ("the rosy-footed May / Steals blushing on," ll. 489-90, and so on), and much natural description based on the poet's close observation and loving attention to detail, combine in effective "illusive allusion." This passage is also an instance of Thomson's practical knowledge (he, of course, knew much about the art and science of landscape gardening),¹⁵⁴ reinforcing his native sensibility, his keen perception and deep feelings about nature.

From spring's influence on the vegetable world, the poet's "theme ascends" (ll. 572 ff.) to a lengthy description of the season's effects on the animal world, i.e. the paradoxical love and pain or frustration. Again, literary convention (chiefly, the influence of Virgil's Georgics III) and Thomson's own immediate description blend, to portray animal "love." Thomson is especially realistic, affectionate and detailed in his description of the actions of nesting, hatching, and flight of the birds, which he must have observed many times at first-hand, in youth (compare the sympathetic "robin redbreast" and similar passages in "Winter," as well as the accurately-described sea-fowl in "Winter" and the migratory birds in "Autumn"). Such sympathy (as well as human identification) with birds is part of the Scottish humanitarian tradition in literature, such as has been seen in Henryson's "Preiching." To this first-hand description, Thomson adds some second-hand descriptive material here, the mention of the eagle on St. Kilda (a part of Scotland Thomson never visited, ll. 755-65), revised with considerable

loss of "race" in 1744 from a more sharply visual and energetic passage¹⁵⁵ (the original, however, did not specifically mention the Scottish island location-- the poet seems to be relying in the revised version on the connotative force of the place-name of St. Kilda, rather than on his imaginative, descriptive powers). Thomson's description of the "Spring" activities of the birds is aural, as well as visual and kinetic: the birds unite in a chorus of love, and the "love-song" metaphor recurs throughout "Spring" as one aspect of the harmony of the season which Thomson envisages. The love theme then continues, with a description influenced by Virgil, of spring's effects on the higher animals (ll. 789-830), the bull, the horse, and the sea-creatures. Here, the poet refuses to go into detail (unlike Virgil) on the passionate, violent side of animal love, as his more gentle "love-song" forbids it.¹⁵⁶

After a brief description of a (Scottish) shepherd and his joyful flock, and a prayer to God, the source of Love, the love theme ascends still higher to describe spring's effects on man, both pleasurable and painful. To illustrate man in ideal harmony with nature, Thomson injects here a compliment to his friend Lord George Lyttelton, whom he considered the epitome of such harmony, and describes in glowing terms Lyttelton's English estate, Hagley Park (ll. 904-22 and 950-62). This passage is one of the most often-cited examples of Thomson's versatile descriptive skill. Again, the speaker (Thomson himself) guides the reader through the scene, encompassing a vast and varied prospect, with his "enumerative" or cataloguing technique (a method frequently found in Scottish literature, both Scots and Gaelic, as well as in classical literature). Scots geologist and poet Hugh Miller, who visited Hagley in the nineteenth century, perhaps best appreciated

Thomson's accuracy in describing the "undulating" landscape of Hagley, and the poet's understanding of the "osteology" of the scene;¹⁵⁷ Miller also praised Thomson's skilful cataloguing of only the main features of the broad landscape, while omitting details which would distract the reader from the overall grandeur of the view:

The entire prospect...enabled me to understand what I had used to deem a peculiarity...in the landscapes of the poet Thomson. It must have often struck the Scotch reader, that in dealing with extended prospects, he rather enumerates than describes. His pictures are often mere catalogues...in which the entire poetry seems to consist of an overmastering sense of vast extent, occupied by amazing multiplicity....[Yet Hagley is] a multiplicity, which neither pen nor pencil can adequately express; and so description, in even the hands of a master, sinks into mere enumeration. The picture becomes a catalogue; and all that genius can accomplish in the circumstances is just to do with its catalogue what Homer did with his, - dip it in poetry.¹⁵⁸

The Hagley passage also illustrates Thomson's continuing interest in landscape gardening, begun in Scotland; Hagley represents his mature taste for more "natural" gardens, such as had become the fashion, in contrast to the more formal ones (such as William Bennet's) which he would have known in youth. The selective composition of the Hagley description is also an example of Thomson's "painterly" technique, possibly influenced by his early contact with such artists as William Aikman, as well as his own study of art and art history.

Here, Thomson shifts to preach upon, then to describe, the dark side of the paradox of human love in "Spring," the pain and heartsickness of unrequited love. Pastoral convention (such as, for instance, Virgil's Eclogues, Theocritus's Idylls and Milton's Il Penseroso, had established) and rather extravagant pathetic fallacy inform the description of the dejected lover, yet a strong element of personal experience is

also present, Thomson's unrequited love for his compatriot Elizabeth Young, adding psychological truth and immediacy. The poet was revising this portion of "Spring" in 1743-44, at the height of his passion for her. First, Thomson describes the realistic response of solitary retirement to "sympathetic glooms." Here, even "Books are but formal dulnes, tedious friends" (l. 1016), recalling the juvenile poem on the same theme, "An Elegy upon Parting" ("Yea, books themselves I do not now admire," l. 24). The speaker writes passionate love-letters (or, poems) in the night, and tosses and turns sleeplessly (Thomson, too, wrote abundant and extravagant love-letters and poems addressed to Miss Young, his "Amanda").¹⁵⁹ When he does at last sleep, his dreams are torturous, such as the dream of drowning, alluding to the tale of Hero and Leander.¹⁶⁰ "These are the charming agonies of love, / Whose misery delights" (ll. 1074-5), and also inspires poetry; he wrote to Miss Young of the paradox of love, his "dear exquisite Mixture of Pleasure and Pain"¹⁶¹ which is also the paradox of the "Spring" season. Next, Thomson describes the extreme, abnormal love, or that jealousy and despair bordering on insanity, which is ultimately destructive (ll. 1075-1112). These dramatisations of the disturbed and distorting psyche in unrequited love compare with the dropped "heat" passage in "Summer," and with the "drunkenness" passage in "Autumn"; they are uncannily accurate in their physiological and psychological truth. Following this realistic passage comes an idealised picture of perfect human (married) love, which the poet so longed to enjoy with Miss Young but never achieved:

An elegant Sufficiency, Content,
 Retirement, rural Quiet, Friendship, Books,
 Ease and alternate Labour, useful Life,
 Progressive Virtue, and approving HEAVEN.
 These are the matchless Joys of virtuous Love. (ll. 1161-65)¹⁶²

This idyllic conception leads to the didactic concluding passage of "Spring": as in "Winter," the conventional emblem of the seasons as stages in man's life recurs. In married love, the joy and harmony of "Spring" rule throughout life, and into the "perpetual Spring" of afterlife.

Thomson's final Season was "Autumn," which appeared in 1730 with the first collected edition of The Seasons, published by the Scot Andrew Millar in London. The poet exclaims:

...Whate'er the Wintry frost
Nitrous prepared, the various-blossomed Spring
Put in white promise forth, and Summer-suns
Concocted strong, rush boundless now to view,
Full, perfect all, and swell my glorious theme. (ll. 4-8)

"Wintry" Scotland indeed "prepared" Thomson to write his "perfect" poem, The Seasons; "Autumn" now completed the cycle. "Autumn" is second only to "Winter" as a particularly "Scottish" and inclement Season; it marks a return to the predominance of realistic, first-hand, directly-observed descriptions (in contrast to the more conventional, warmer Seasons, "Spring" and "Summer"), and it contains much recognisably Scottish description as well as Thomson's explicit comments and implicit feelings on the contemporary Scottish situation, her history and her politics. Thus, here also he "fondly tries / To mix the patriot's with the poet's flame" (ll. 21-2). The controlling imagery, like that of "Winter," is again transforming water and muted colour, shapelessness and disorder. "Autumn"'s central paradox is that of fruitfulness and desolation or decay (as Cohen puts it, "fulfillment and barrenness");¹⁶³ the paradoxical feeling of pleasing

sadness, or "Philosophic Melancholy" (recalling the "charming agonies" of "Spring" love) which the season arouses, pervades much of the description. Mellow autumn was Thomson's own favourite season for poetical composition,¹⁶⁴ inviting contemplation. He wrote to Lyttelton,

As [my visit to Hagley, 1743] will fall in Autumn, I shall like it the better, for I think that season of the year the most pleasing, and the most poetical. The spirits are not then dissipated with the Gaiety of Spring and the glaring light of Summer, but composed into a serious and tempered joy— The Year is perfect.¹⁶⁵

As noted previously, the original (1726) "Winter" included a number of scenes, more properly located in "Autumn"; Thomson transferred them to his favourite season in 1730, when he completed the seasonal cycle.

"Autumn" enters, personified as a jovial swain, "Crowned with the sickle and the wheaten sheaf" (ll. 1-3). The image "Crowned with the sickle" apparently confused one of Lyttelton's young sons when he first heard Thomson read the passage aloud, but when questioned the poet "'said something, in no very clear manner, of a custom the reapers have in Scotland of putting their sickles round their heads in the intervals of labour."¹⁶⁶ The first natural-descriptive passage (ll. 23-42) is a brief, generalised but acutely-observed rich autumn landscape, subtly transforming as the breeze rises; Thomson's description of the shifting light-effects, alternating sun and shadow on the golden fields, is superbly accurate. The rural scene inspires the lengthy and didactic "Industry" panegyric (ll. 43-176), representing the Scottish Calvinistic work-ethic which is the central theme of The Castle of Indolence, and paralleling the patriotic "Britannia" passage in "Summer." The "Industry" passage is followed by the third inter-

polated tale of The Seasons, "Palemon and Lavinia" (ll. 177-310).

"Palemon and Lavinia," set in an idealised pastoral landscape, is the story of a poor gleaner in the field, the once-fortunate and high-born Lavinia, and the nobleman Palemon, who loves her and removes her to a better life. The pastoral story is loosely based on the Biblical tale of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 2.16).¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, the tale is also on the plot of Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd (1725),¹⁶⁸ which Thomson surely knew; in the Scots pastoral, Patie, a nobleman in disguise, loves the poor but lovely shepherdess Peggy, and it is discovered that (like Lavinia) she is high-born. Patie vows to take Peggy to Edinburgh, where Art can enhance her Nature, just as Palemon will "transplant" Lavinia to the richer soil of his "garden," enhancing her natural charms and cultivating their joyful and productive love. This tale shows Thomson's willingness to believe that Art can, in some cases, improve upon Nature. J. Logie Robertson¹⁶⁹ sees this, along with the "Industry" passage as a whole, as a contradiction of the poet's earlier declaration of love for wild, unimproved nature (for example, "Spring," ll. 468-79, "But who can paint / Like Nature?" and so on): "was this the result of his five years' residence in England surrounded by the influence of the artificial school?" In this "Autumn" tale, however, Thomson refers to the basic civilising arts, with ultimately Virgilian faith in man's ability to control nature, to bring it to its fullest potential (culminating in the Knight's quest in The Castle of Indolence). The Whig belief in "progress" of civilisation was certainly in operation here, as well. "Nature" remains supreme for Thomson, however. In the "Spring" passage, the poet referred rather to the representative arts of painting and poetry, which can imitate or enhance certain aspects of the nature they describe, but cannot, to the eternal frustra-

tion of artist and poet, recreate nature's beauty in its full glory. Lavinia's beauty and purity remain her basic "nature," which Palemon will merely "to advantage dress."

Thomson resumes natural description with a vigorous, compact description of "Autumn"'s destructive storm and flood (ll. 311-43), through transforming imagery of water, and also disorder, chaos. (Thomson's "Winter" thaw is also followed by flooding, probably a common occurrence in the hilly, stream-filled Borders.) This season's storm, like those of "Winter" and like "Summer"'s thunderstorm, is destructive and desolating, a sudden, unexplained act of natural violence such as fostered the deep fatalism of Thomson's fellow-Borderers. Characteristically, however, Thomson does not linger on fatalistic response, nor does he attempt to explain the mystery of so great an apparent evil, which he accepts as part of God's hidden plan (with an attitude not far removed from the Scottish Calvinistic interpretation of determinism or "Providence"). He goes on to show his deep sympathy with the ruined husbandman (ll. 341-50), launching into didacticism as he implores the "masters" of the land to care for their poor labourers (ll. 350-59).

The acclaimed hunting passage follows, depicting another sort of autumnal violence, this time perpetrated by man (ll. 360 ff.). Again, Thomson reaches back to his juvenilia for the theme: "Of a Country Life," after its angling scene (cf. "Spring"), describes both fowl-shooting and hare-coursing (these themes were suggested to the young poet by Gay's Rural Sports, and at first-hand by his own Border experience). Thomson in "Autumn" adds a stag-hunt to these scenes. In "Autumn," the poet's sympathy is very clearly with the hunted animals; his humanitarian sentiments are again aroused. Man, who hunts chiefly

for sport, is contrasted with the beasts of prey, who must hunt to live; he is the "steady tyrant" (l. 390), the "worst monster that e'er roamed the waste" (l. 393)--this is one of Thomson's several attacks on hunters in The Seasons, including "Autumn," ll. 983-7, "mingled murder," and "Winter," ll. 788-93, hunters "adding to the ruin of the year"; in "Spring," ll. 340 ff, he even attacks man for slaughtering domestic sheep and cattle for food when earth's vegetable stores are so bountiful).

The sympathetic description of the hunted hare (which was vigorous even in the germinal "Of a Country Life" passage) is closely-observed, realistic and dramatic. The stag-hunt (usually considered an "English" scene, though possibly based on Scottish scenery and experience)¹⁷⁰ is rather more sentimental, and moving ("The big round tears run down his dappled face," l. 454).¹⁷¹

The description of the hunt itself leads to a lively burlesque, a caricature of the hunters themselves at the hunt-board. The rich and various scene begins as a clever "illusive allusion" to the mock-heroic, a light-hearted "Horatian" satire on the debauched hunters, with a strong element of realistic detail. The passage moves beyond this, however, to reveal the darker side of the incident; Thomson betrays stern Scottish Calvinistic disapproval, as well as disgust, underlying his obvious amusement at the orgy. His urge to didacticism, anticipating the individualistic moral rigour of The Castle of Indolence, surfaces here. The scene represents yet another sort of violence, a "social slaughter" (l. 561), as "lubber Power in filthy triumph sits," and the survivor, "Perhaps some doctor of tremendous paunch," "a black abyss of drink," "Laments the weakness of these latter times" (ll. 562,

565-6; 569). The poet's portrayal of this scene goes beyond the limits of Augustan good manners and decorum, to display a particularly Scottish sense of humour: the hint of wildness, excess, grotesque exaggeration as the hunters grow more and more drunk, is unmistakably Scottish. Lively social-drinking scenes themselves are a recurring theme in Scottish literature, particularly in the vernacular (for example, Burns's "Tam O' Shanter" and "Scotch Drink"; Ramsay's "Elegy on Maggy Johnston"; Fergusson's "The Daft Days"; as well as scenes from Walter Scott in Rob Roy, Waverley, and so on). Thomson's imaginative description is not quite so good-natured as these, though; its more exaggerated aspects rather recall the extravagant skirmishes of the "flyting" tradition, as well as the element of the grotesque in, for example, Dunbar's "The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis," and the bizarre caricatures of the Anglo-Scottish novelist Smollett. The scene is fairly typical of Thomson's ribald, rather coarse or wild but very Scottish sense of humour, and looks forward to the caricatures and especially the more extreme grotesque descriptions in The Castle of Indolence.

Thomson's clever manipulation of the gradually worsening orgy-scene is remarkable; the description is controlled by the "Autumn" images of wetness and disorder, as they transform. The apt imagery of wetness, in a clever interplay of literal with metaphorical, pervades the description: "brimming bowls / Lave every soul, the table floating round" (ll. 535-6); "they swim in mutual swill" (l. 538); "gradual sinks their mirth" (l. 552); "their feeble tongues / ...Lie quite dissolved" (ll. 552, 554); "double tapers dance, / Like the sun wading through the misty sky" (ll. 555-6); "a wet broken scene" (l. 560); and "steeps them drenched in potent sleep" (l. 564). Thomson's description

of the hunters' increasingly distorted, drunken perceptions of sight and sound, is especially accurate, realistic¹⁷² (cf. the removed "heat" passage in "Summer," and the lovesickness described in "Spring," where similarly, the senses are distorted). Thomson's hunt-burlesque is, then, a unique blend of several elements-- mock-heroic satire, broad and exaggerated "Scottish" humour, a hint of Scottish Calvinistic didacticism, and realistic and surrealist description-- which results in a rich and highly successful passage.

After a brief didactic passage, then a conventional pastoral interlude re-establishing harmony, comes the orchard scene (ll. 625-51), a multi-sensuous description owing something to John Philips' "georgic" Cyder, and much to Thomson's own sense-perceptions. He refers first specifically to the "gentle race" of pears (in the Jedburgh area, it seems, pear-orchards were prolific in the eighteenth century),¹⁷³ then to the apples, which were Philips' inspiration. The speaker (Thomson) wanders through the country seat of his friend George Bubb Dodington at Eastbury, Dorset (ll. 652-82, another varied prospect, paralleling Hagley in "Spring"), and there discovers more exotic fruits-- peach, plum, nectarine, fig and grape-- prompting a swift imaginary excursion to more southerly, winemaking climes (ll. 683-706). Next (ll. 707 ff.) Thomson begins another of his exceptionally accurate descriptive sequences, opening with a realistic Scottish scene in the imagery of dampness, lack of colour, shapelessness: the "doubling fogs around the hill" which obscure the,

...mountain, horrid, vast, sublime,
 Who pours a sweep of rivers from his sides,
 And high between contending kingdoms rears
 The rocky long division...

This is evidently a description of the mists over Carter Fell, a mountain overlooking the Jed Valley of his Border homeland.¹⁷⁴ The Cheviots did indeed mark a "rocky long division," the Border between the pre-Union "contending kingdoms" of Scotland and England; the division is here blurred by fog (an unconscious allusion to the post-Union blurring of national distinctions, with ambiguous connotations?). The eerie phenomenon of the fog's magnification of objects and of the human form,

...beyond the life
 Objects appear, and, wildered, o'er the waste
 The shepherd stalks gigantic, (ll. 725-7)

certainly occurs in the uplands of Scotland, and Thomson had probably witnessed it himself.¹⁷⁵ The fog description is also analogous to the universal Chaos before God had established Order, as portrayed by the "Hebrew Bard" of Genesis (ll. 731-2), whom Thomson acknowledges here.

From the fog passage, Thomson goes on to speculate at length on the origins of the earth's rivers (ll. 736-835), blending pseudo-scientific, exotic (such as the evocative names of the world's rivers) and fanciful, with purely descriptive terms. He uses much second-hand material here, but he uses it with great imagination reinforced with personal observation (including, no doubt, Border experience) not always present in the many "foreign" descriptions added to "Winter" and "Summer." He first describes the "vain / Amusive" percolation theory,¹⁷⁶ then the more scientifically-accurate condensation theory (added 1744),¹⁷⁷ capturing the dynamic natural processes, both fanciful and factual.

Again making effective use of second-hand descriptive material, Thomson moves to a descriptive survey of the migratory birds (ll. 836 ff), leading him to focus on the birds,

...where the Northern Ocean in vast whirls
Boils round the naked melancholy isles
Of farthest Thule, and the Atlantic surge
Pours in among the stormy Hebrides (ll. 862-5)

Hence occurs the most explicit and extensive Scottish passage in The Seasons; its germ was transferred from "Summer" (1727) to "Autumn" in 1730. In the opening Scottish scene, "Thule" refers to the Orkney and Shetland Islands, while the "Hebrides" are the western islands off Scotland;¹⁷⁸ these are scenes which Thomson never visited, but which he nonetheless describes vividly. The migrating birds, for example, like,

...living clouds on clouds arise,
Infinite wings! till all the plume-dark air
And rude resounding shore are one wild cry. (ll. 868-70)

The poet has taken most of the factual material behind these Scottish island scenes from Martin Martin's A Late Voyage to St. Kilda (1698) and A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland (1703; 2nd edition 1716),¹⁷⁹ transforming the remote region into a dynamic landscape. He also describes the activities of the self-sufficient "plain harmless native," such as Martin recorded him, tending his flock and "herd diminutive," and gathering sea-birds' eggs and feathers, and fish (ll. 871-8). This brief view of the islanders presents them in a favourable light of positive, well-adapted primitivism comparable to that of the Laplanders in "Winter."

Thomson then goes on to describe the imaginative prospect of "Caledonia

in Romantic view" (ll. 880-93), a passage which very possibly owes something to David Lindsay's vision of Scotland in The Dreime (c. 1528).¹⁸⁰ It also prefigures later-eighteenth century "Romantic" concepts of Scotland, and especially her more remote regions, which works such as Macpherson's Ossian would popularise. Like Lindsay, Thomson delights in the rich variety, the great magnitude and the natural beauty of his homeland: "airy mountains"; "waving main"; "forests huge, / Incult, robust, and tall"; "azure lakes...extensive"; "watery wealth / Full"; "deep and green...fertile vales"; all in a prospect stretching from the gentle Tweed to the sublimity of "Orca's or Betubium's highest peak."¹⁸¹ The prospect-view is again presented with the cataloguing, enumerative method.¹⁸² Thomson's reference to the "airy mountain" occurs in his often-cited letter to William Cranstoun,¹⁸³ where he laments the lack of variety such as he knew in Scotland, in the English landscape. He does not miss the opportunity to inject a very personal, parenthetical tribute to the Border area of his youth, to,

...the Tweed (pure parent-stream,
Whose pastoral banks first heard my Doric reed,
With, silvan Jed, thy tributary brook)(ll. 889-91)

This proud prospect leads Thomson into significant reflections on Scotland's people, her history and culture, her potential for progress (themes also treated in Lindsay's Dreime), and her heroes (ll. 894-949). These implications will be discussed as part of the "socio-political" aspect of The Seasons, in Chapter VI.

Description of the autumn season itself resumes with imagery of loss of colour, as the leaves gradually fade and grow brown, and the

shadowing sunlight weakens (ll. 950-63). The description of a clouded sky with rays of sun breaking through (ll. 957-63) was originally part of "Winter"; the scene is of a particularly Scottish aspect, especially in the original version:

...Sometimes, a Fleece
 Of Clouds, wide-scattering, with a lucid Veil,
 Soft, shadow o'er th' unruffled Face of Heaven;
 And, thro' their dewy Sluices, shed the Sun,
 With temper'd Influence down. ("Winter," 1726; ll. 29-33)

The speaker, "solitary and in pensive guise," walks through the autumnal landscape, delicately described in terms of dying, discord (versus "Spring"'s harmony, especially reflected in the birds' song), falling, loss of colour and shape, and desolation; the whole process of the season's gradual transformation is portrayed from the point of view of the poet's own acute and sympathetic observation. Alliteration and much personification help to facilitate the description here. Typically, Thomson is at his best and most original when describing such nature-in-process. The whole "desolated prospect thrills the soul" (l. 1003), as (in another passage transferred from "Winter"), personified "Philosophic Melancholy" enters (ll. 1003-1081), inspiring the season's paradoxical mood of pleasurable sadness, and its attendant benevolent sentiments. Yet again, Thomson's letter to Cranstoun comes to mind,¹⁸⁴ in which he described the "fine romantic kind of melancholy," the "beloved gloom," the "divine Contemplation" which the Scottish late-autumn inspired in him. The description here (ll. 950 ff) uses much of the same wording, and closely resembles the Scottish scene near Ancrum which Thomson pictured in that nostalgic letter:

Now I figure you [Cranstoun] wandering philosophical,
 and pensive, amidst the brown, wither'd groves: while
 the leaves rustle under your feet. the sun gives a
 farewell parting gleam and the birds 'Stir the faint
 note, and but attempt to sing.' then again, when the
 heavns wear a more gloomy aspect, the winds whistle and
 the waters spout, I see you in the well known Cleugh, be-
 neath the solemn Arch of tall, thick embowring trees...
 [Italics added]

Clearly, Thomson had this very Border scene in mind when he wrote the passage for "Winter" (1726).

"Philosophic Melancholy" leads the contemplative speaker to a high pitch of religious enthusiasm (ll. 1030-6). Following this outburst, he reasserts his hearty Augustan optimism in an abstract passage (ll. 1037-81, added 1744) inspired by Cobham's (Pitt's) estate at Stowe; this third "estate" passage (after Hagley and Dodington's Dorset seat) again indicates Thomson's interest in landscape gardening, the achievement of the "regulated wild" (l. 1055) of improved nature.

Thomson returns to autumnal natural description as the personified "humid evening," bringing "rolling fogs," enters. The personified moon rises; this delicate, sensuous "transforming" description (ll. 1088-1102) of the moon's seeming-movement and the "pale deluge" of her spreading white light, was transferred from "Winter" (1726). The whitening landscape of "skied mountain," "shadowy vale," "rocks and floods" might be a Border scene from Thomson's youth. The following passage (ll. 1108 ff) was originally a part of "Summer," and parallels the comet passage there; it describes what Thomson calls a "blaze of meteors" (more properly, the Aurora Borealis). This vigorous description of the "meteors," as

...ensweeping first
 The lower skies, they all at once converge
 High to the crown of heaven, and, all at once
 Relapsing quick, as quickly re-ascend,
 And mix and thwart, extinguish and renew,
 All ether coursing in a maze of light,

is strikingly similar to an account of the Aurora Borealis which appeared over Scotland and Northern Europe on March 6, 1716, which the poet himself may have witnessed; the author of that account, William Whiston, also termed the phenomenon a "meteor."¹⁸⁵ Thomson also describes the "contagious...panic" of the crowd, and their terrified superstition that the phenomenon is a portent of evil. In the popular imagination, the Aurora resembles a bloody battle, as seemingly

...armies in meet array,
 Thronged with aerial spears and steeds of fire;
 Till, the long lines of full-extended war
 In bleeding fight commixed, the sanguine flood
 Rolls a broad slaughter o'er the plains of heaven.
 (ll. 1117-21)

Such a cosmic occurrence was traditionally associated with ominous portents; such sources which Thomson surely knew were Shakespeare (Julius Caesar II.ii), Milton (Paradise Lost II.533-8 and IV.1518), and Marlowe (Tamburlaine 2.IV.i),¹⁸⁶ as well as ominous meteors or comets in Virgil (Georgics I) and William Hamilton of Gilbertfield (Wallace).¹⁸⁷ Thomson here portrays the majority of witnesses as superstitious, but "Not so the man of philosophic eye / And inspect sage" who views the "waving brightness" with curiosity, wonder and scientific interest; again, the poet is seen deliberately to qualify superstition, distancing it from his rational, knowledgeable self and hoping to be identified with the "man of philosophic eye."

Now, night falls, and darkness is described as the ultimate image of

colourlessness and disorder:

...Sunk in the quenching gloom,
 ...
 Order confounded lies, all beauty void,
 Distinction lost, and gay variety
 One universal blot...(ll. 1138-43)

A swain on horseback wanders, lost in the dark, "Full of pale fancies and chimeras huge" (l. 1147), recalling the poet's extreme youthful fear of the dark. Like the family of the cottager lost in the snow in "Winter," wife and family await the swain in their cosy cottage. Thomson presents two alternative endings to this scene: horse and rider might be led to their deaths in the swamp by deceptive "wild-fire" (will-o'-the-wisp), or they might be saved by the clearer light of the "meteor," St. Elmo's Fire. This fearful and dramatic scene could well be Scottish, an experience of which Thomson had heard in his youth; the situation also recalls the wild ride of Burns's "Tam O' Shanter."¹⁸⁸

A new "Autumn" day dawns (ll. 1165 ff), described in "aureate" terms of gold and blue similar to the description of the opening scene of the poem. The ruined bee-hive is revealed, which prompts a didactic passage (ll. 1172-1207), but the harvest-home is joyful, so the villagers celebrate in a "lively dance" (ll. 1208-1234), probably inspired by native Scottish country life. Thomson concludes "Autumn" with a panegyric to rural, pastoral life and an invocation to his chief inspiration, Nature:

...From thee begin,
 Dwell all on thee, with thee conclude my song;
 And let me never, never stray from thee!(ll. 1371-3)¹⁸⁹

The "Hymn of The Seasons" (118 lines), which concludes The Seasons as a whole, restates Thomson's basic religious-philosophical and didactic aims; it includes an enthusiastic rendering of Psalm 148,¹⁹⁰ replete with natural imagery. The poet's bringing of The Seasons to a close with a hymn or prayer will recall his characteristic conclusion of a great many of the juvenile poems with such prayers. Here, however, the poet ultimately finds words and images too limiting and cannot fully describe his praise and love for God. His final powerful gesture is thus to summon Silence:

Come then, expressive Silence, muse his praise. (l. 118)

CHAPTER VI : 'THE SEASONS' (II)

The Seasons is predominantly a poem of abundant and accurate natural description (much of it based on or inspired by Scottish scenery and events, and the poet's nostalgia for his homeland), and is thus a part of the Scottish tradition of nature-poetry, as has been illustrated in Chapter V, above. But while truth-to-nature in description is the most prominent and original thematic feature of the poem, other essential themes are interwoven with it throughout, to create the complex whole. Thus, as well as being a poem of natural description, The Seasons is also a religious-didactic and philosophical poem, a socio-political poem and a neoclassical poem. Each of these facets of The Seasons will be treated in the present chapter, followed by a discussion of the style and particularly the unique literary language which Thomson developed for his eclectic work.

The primary motivation behind The Seasons remains a religious one, encompassing prayer and praise, didacticism and contemplation. As Thomson's Preface of 1726¹ has shown, the poet conceives his role to be a religious one, as he works through his "darling theme" ("Hymn," l. 94), the vehicle of natural description. In England, Thomson could live comfortably in the role of religious poet: there were no religious strictures on imaginative literature operating there, as there had been in Scotland for so long, and he still held the option of becoming a minister as well as a poet, should he decide to take his trials. Also, the Scottish Calvinistic view of worldly success in one's "calling," as an indication that one was doing God's will, that one was "elected" in the eyes of God, must have been encouraging to

Thomson, especially with the great success of "Winter."

Natural description, of course, does much directly to facilitate Thomson's religious purpose. In many instances, he blends description with religious significance, using natural imagery and religious symbolism to reinforce one another; in other instances, a purely descriptive passage will inspire him to follow it up with a religious or didactic comment.

Where Thomson blends description with religious symbolism, he is demonstrating that "illusive allusion" method whereby he reinforces personal observation and accurate description with a subtle re-working of literary convention; his sources for such religious convention were most often the Scriptures (especially the Old Testament), Milton and Christian Neoplatonism. Such passages include: the Golden Age, Eden-Fall-Deluge sequence ("Spring," ll. 237 ff); the tropical Paradise-serpent description ("Summer," ll. 854 ff); the pre-Creation Chaos and fog passage ("Autumn," ll. 707 ff); the Biblical allusions behind the tales of "Damon and Musidora" and "Palemon and Lavinia"; and the descriptions of God as the source of "Light" and the Sun ("Summer," ll. 81 ff). Thomson's conceptions of the Golden Age-Eden also illustrate the parallel classical-Christian Humanistic tradition which the poet drew upon from his Scottish upbringing and education: the Virgilian parallel myth reinforces conventions established in Genesis and enriched by Milton. Thomson represents the Fall as "Nature disturbed" (by man), reflected in universal chaos; the Deluge, for example, calls to mind the idea put forward by John Hutchinson (and Robert Riccaltoun), of natural "symbols," real events and characteristics of the natural world which also represent Scriptural, spiritual truths. (This tradi-

tion of "natural" symbolism was important in medieval Biblical allegory, as "factual" allegory,² whereby facts of history were shown also to be "types" of New Testament Revelation.) Thomson's indignation at man's Fall from order to depravity is expressed in Augustan terms, strengthened with the discernible influence of the emotional and strongly literal-minded, concrete Scottish Calvinistic pulpit-rhetoric. His portrayal of the Deluge combines imaginative natural description with conventions from Genesis and Paradise Lost, plus the new dimension of scientific data. His "Summer" tropical paradise, borrowing from Job as well as from travel literature, is a similar blend of literal and metaphorical elements; Thomson thus achieves maximum force of expression by exploiting the tension between the real and the ideal. The "Autumn" fog scene makes explicit reference to the "Hebrew Bard" of Genesis, and his description of pre-Creation Chaos; it was also influenced by Thomson's own experience of the misty Scottish climate. As has been noted, "illusive allusion" to the Biblical stories of Ruth and Boaz, and to the Apocryphal tale of Susanna and the Elders, adds resonance to the interpolated tales of "Palemon and Lavinia" and "Damon and Musidora." The conventional Hebraic-Neoplatonic-Miltonic symbolism of God as "Light" or "Sun" blends convincingly with accurate description, as well as Newtonian science, especially to inform the Seasons of light and colour, "Spring" and "Summer."

Thomson's religious goals in The Seasons were two: to praise and pray to God, and to discover and teach His truth. The element of Divine prayer and praise permeates the entire poem. Thomson's very personal, individual relationship with his God (a Scottish Calvinistic attitude) is made clear throughout The Seasons, as the personal pronouns "I" and "me" (expressing the poet's own voice) recur in spite of the poem's

"public," Augustan framework, in the spiritual contexts of prayer, praise and meditation: "Hail, Source of Being! / ...To thee I bend the knee," ("Spring," ll. 556-8, and so on). Further, he envisages all Nature offering continual praise to the Creator, and especially urges man to join the praise: "Can he forebear to join the general smile / Of Nature?...come, ye generous minds" ("Spring," ll. 871-2 and 878); and,

And yet, was every faltering tongue of man,
Almighty Father! silent in thy praise,
Thy works themselves would raise a general voice
("Summer," ll. 185-7).

The praising function of The Seasons was, aptly, much influenced by the Psalms; the concluding "Hymn of the Seasons," for example, is based on Psalm 148 (with the added influence of Paradise Lost V.153-208),³ as was the juvenile "Hymn on the Power of God." The "Hymn of the Seasons" is perhaps the best and most extensive illustration of the Psalm influence on Thomson. Another, similar passage in "Winter" (ll. 106-117) also shows the influence of Psalm 148; here, however, the song addresses not God Himself, but "Nature! great parent!" This and similar invocations to Nature (for example, "O Nature! all-sufficient! over all / Enrich me with the knowledge of thy works," "Autumn," ll. 1352 ff; "These, as they change, Almighty Father! these / Are but the varied God. The rolling year / Is full of thee," "Hymn," ll. 1-3; "In these green days...We feel the present Deity," "Spring," ll. 891 ff; "God of Seasons," "Hymn," l. 93; and so on) coupled with the relentless personification of the natural world, have led critics to suspect Thomson of Pantheism, of worshipping nature itself as a "God," and of blurring the distinction between them.⁴ While Thomson clearly rejoiced in being able to know something of God in His various Creation, and while he loved the natural world the more deeply as a

Creation of his God, the facile charge of Pantheism is unfounded, as the poet makes clear in other Seasons passages. God is not identical with nature, although nature can lead to God and "Snatch me to heaven" ("Autumn," l. 1354). Thomson invokes all nature to join in praise of the transcendent God ("Hymn," ll. 37 ff.) who is "Nature's King" ("Winter," l. 197, recurring in Liberty III.556). He sings "Of Nature...and Nature's God" ("Summer," l. 555): God is not nature, but is distinct from it, and the Ruler over it. The Seasons in general is much concerned with exploring the relationship of man with nature, as man seeks harmony with nature; God ("Providence") constantly watches over this earthly struggle, and offers hope and succor ("Winter," ll. 1020-23). Thomson's conception of the Deity as transcendent yet omnipresent, continually acting in the natural world through Providence, therefore represents orthodox Calvinistic "panergism,"⁵ and not Pantheism.

Critics⁶ focusing on Thomson's deep admiration for the natural laws of the universe have likewise charged him with Deism, with worshipping a mechanistic universe set in motion by a retiring "clock-maker" Deity. Neither is this a fair claim, despite the poet's respect for and understanding of the Copernican system, Newtonian gravity, and other universal laws: again, he makes frequent reference to his God as being ever-active in the world, a concept of Deity which is an orthodox Scottish Calvinistic belief. For example, Thomson praises the orderly planets, and the seasons "Minutely faithful: such the all-perfect Hand / That poised, impels, and rules the steady whole!" ("Summer," ll. 41-2). This passage (added 1744), in the present tense, clearly describes an active Deity, in contrast to the passage it replaced (1727-38), which might well have been interpreted as Deistic, or describing

a "clock-work" universe ("...seasons faithful; not eccentric once: / So poised and perfect is the vast machine!"). Thomson thus seems to have grown aware that his earlier expression might savour too strongly of Deism, and he was careful to alter it, to reassert his belief in God's ever-active role in the universe. While Thomson was certainly under the influence of Shaftesbury's (Deistic) benevolism to a degree, he never wholeheartedly embraced Deism, but rather resembled the Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson in many ways, in his concept of Deity (that is, Moderate, though within the framework of Scottish Calvinism). Other Seasons passages reinforce Thomson's belief in an active, immanent God: "[But,] should He hide his face, the astonished sun / And all the extinguished stars would, loosening, reel / Wide from their spheres, and chaos come again" ("Summer," ll. 182-4, echoing Psalm 104); [God as] "The eternal cause, support, and end of all!" ("Summer," l. 191, another instance of a 1744 revision made less deistical in implication, from the earlier "cause, the glory, and the end of all"); "by whose Almighty nod the scale / Of empire rises, or alternate falls" ("Summer," ll. 1602 ff); "Providence, that ever-waking Eye" ("Winter," ll. 1020 ff); and "the mighty hand / That, ever busy, wheels the silent spheres" ("Hymn," ll. 29-30 ff). Even in the seemingly random acts of nature, God carries out His providential and mysterious plan (approaching a concept of determinism): thunder is "by the powerful breath of God inflate" ("Summer,"¹⁷²⁷⁻³⁸ l. 1131); Amelia's death is not a vengeful act of God, but still a work of "Mysterious Heaven!" ("Summer," ll. 1204 ff); the comet and Aurora Borealis illustrate God's immanent power, the microscopic world His wisdom; the winter storm is stopped when "Nature's King.../ commands a calm" ("Winter," ll. 197-201); and so on.

Thomson's God, then, is neither Pantheistic nor Deistic (although the poet certainly knew of and considered such beliefs, and his means of expression was to some extent influenced by them). Throughout The Seasons Thomson continued to maintain the orthodox Scottish Calvinistic belief in the Providence of an ever-active God who is "both immanent and transcendent,"⁷ above Nature and above any concept of mechanism or "blind fate," both just and benevolent, all-powerful and all-wise. Thomson's metaphors for God are conventional: "Light Himself" ("Summer," l. 176); "Father" ("Summer," l. 186); "Great Shepherd" (usually the Christian metaphor for Christ, which Thomson here applied to God the Father, "Hymn," l. 74); "Author" (Preface of 1726, et. al.). The poet specifically mentions "Providence" as well, on a number of occasions. Thomson's concept of the Deity bears the influence of both schools of the Scottish Church, the old-style Scottish Calvinism and the Moderate view. His representation of God did "soften" over the years: whereas he had once described the Old Testament God's "wrath" and "speedy sword of justice" ("Spring" 1727-38, a twenty-one line passage where in the final version only ll. 861-6 remain),⁸ his emphasis was increasingly upon a "smiling God" (l. 862, more in keeping with the harmony of the "Spring" season of love). He never wholly abandoned the orthodox belief in a powerful and just Deity, however (witness the several stern didactic passages in The Seasons, chiefly on the sin of vanity); he basically continued to assert Job-like faith that God's justice would be carried out in the afterlife. Thomson's God, like Job's, offers hope in eternal life, and grace to bear the hardships of imperfect, temporal existence (of which The Seasons describes many). Thomson's increasing expressions of optimism about God's mysterious,

benevolent plan were entirely consistent with the Moderate trend within the Scottish Church.

While important, the "praising" role of The Seasons is perhaps secondary to the poem's central Physico-theological purpose. Physico-theology is the study of God through his Works. Thomson, who loved the natural world and understood much about its scientific laws, found Physico-theology especially appealing; he knew of it through his mentor, Robert Riccaltoun, who had stressed the importance of "natural images" to the understanding of Revelation, no doubt through Professor William Hamilton at Divinity College, and through his own reading of Physico-theological poetry such as Blackmore's Creation (1712) and Paraphrase of the Book of Job (1700), and prose such as Ray's Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation (1691) and Derham's Physico-Theology (1713). Calvin himself expressed the philosophy thus:

The right way to seek God, and the best rule we can follow, is not to force ourselves with too bold a curiosity to inquire into his majesty, which we ought rather to worship than investigate too curiously, but to contemplate him in his works, by which he renders himself near and familiar to us and, we might say, communicates himself.⁹

One significant set of conventional metaphors which recurs in The Seasons, built around Physico-theology, is that of nature as a "Book," with God as its "Author" and the poet Thomson as "translator" or mediator between God and other men:

To me be Nature's volume broad displayed;
And to peruse its all-instructing page,
Or, haply catching inspiration thence,
Some easy passage, raptured, to translate,
My sole delight... ("Summer," ll. 192-6)

He also writes that he will,

...meditate the book
Of Nature, ever open, aiming thence
Warm from the heart to learn the moral song.
("Autumn," ll. 670-2)

The metaphor of God as "Almighty Author" is, of course, highly conventional, and occurs in many of Thomson's sources, among the most important of which are: Milton (Paradise Lost III.374, "Author of all Being"); Addison (Spectator No. 413, "Supreme Author"); Robert Riccaltoun ("Of Happiness...", "great Author and Creator"); and, Francis Hutcheson (Concerning Moral Good and Evil, "Author of our Nature").¹⁰ Calvin, too, wrote of the "book of life."¹¹ In Thomson, the metaphor of God as "Almighty Author" first occurs in his Preface to "Winter" (2nd edition, 1726), where God is Author both of Nature, and of the descriptions of Nature in Revelation, specifically in Job. References in The Seasons itself are found in "Spring" ("The informing Author in his works appears," l. 860) and in "Summer" 1727-38 (altered to "Father" in 1744, l. 186). This set of metaphors illustrates Thomson's acceptance of the sacred role of poet, and his association of God's Divine creativity with poetic inspiration; it is also the most appropriate expression of the learning and teaching functions of the Physico-theology of The Seasons, where nature's various workings are emblems for religious truths, both great and small.

Thomson expressed his study of God through nature in The Seasons, chiefly within the framework of the Christian Neoplatonic "rising mind," which has been shown to be an important concept in both old-style and Moderate Scottish Calvinistic thought (i.e. Boston and Riccaltoun), a popular Spectator theme, and a central influence (through Shaftesbury,

Watts, and others) on Thomson's juvenile religious poetry and that of his contemporaries who published in the Edinburgh Miscellany and Lugubres Cantus. The best illustration was, of course, the young poet's "Upon Happiness." Man's "rising mind," or rational, improving intelligence, can work gradually up through the parallel scale in nature, the "Great Chain of Being" (the natural order or hierarchy), studying the various works of the Creation and learning more and more about the Creator in the ascent. Newtonian empiricism aids the Physico-theologist in his quest for truth, as it reveals the "Chain"; the theory of gravity acts as a convenient symbol in The Seasons, holding the "Chain" together and representing the harmony or unity-in-variety of the poem's vision.¹² Although science and reason cannot lead to the ultimate goal of the "rising mind," the beatific vision and the revelation of God's total plan for the universe, they can lead some way on earth toward knowledge of the Deity. The "rising mind" will be fulfilled only in the afterlife, when, freed from the body, it can continue to approach God's perfection. Thomson clearly felt that such a philosophy was an important, workable and orthodox religious tenet; he referred to it in several letters, for example his letter to William Cranstoun of [October 20, 1735]:

This, I think, we may be sure of: that a future State must be better than this; and so on thro the never-ceasing Succession of future States; every one rising upon the last, an everlasting new Display of infinite Goodness!¹³

In The Seasons the "rising mind"-Great Chain idea is most pervasive in "Spring," which is thematically constructed around it (God's love is made manifest, from vegetable life up through man, who looks forward to the perfect love of God in the afterlife), as well as in the "Hymn,"

Thomson's "rising" religious-philosophical song of praise. The Neoplatonic concept appears in some form in each of The Seasons. In "Spring," ll. 556 ff., the poet describes the progress of love and addresses the Creator:

Hail, Source of Being!...
 ...to thee my thoughts
 Continual climb, who with a master-hand
 Hast the great whole into perfection touched.

In "Summer," ll. 1803-5, he concludes the paean to Philosophy with:

The final issue of the works of God,
 By boundless love and perfect wisdom formed,
 And ever rising with the rising mind.

In "Winter," ll. 606-8, he describes it yet again, as

...the mind,
 In endless growth and infinite ascent,
 Rises from state to state, and world to world.

The "Hymn" describes the afterlife, ll. 100 ff, where, "with new powers, / [I] Will rising wonders sing." The Great Chain is referred to in "Spring," (l. 378, "From stage to stage, the vital scale ascends") and "Summer" (l. 334, "The mighty chain of beings").

As in the juvenile "Upon Happiness," Thomson's imaginative "rising mind" in The Seasons occasionally leads him to the heights of religious mysticism, that emotional outlet for intensely personal Calvinistic soul-searching. "Summer," ll. 540 ff., where contemplation inspires in the speaker "a sacred terror, a severe delight," leading him "up the mount, in airy vision rapt," recalls that juvenile poem; again, he "wakes," to return to natural description. In "Autumn," "Philosophic Melancholy," ll. 1030-6, leads him to perceive "voices more than human,"

until he checks himself with, "Or is this gloom too much?" (l. 1037).

"Autumn"'s concluding invocation is enthusiastic:

O Nature! all-sufficient! over all
 Enrich me with the knowledge of thy works;
 Snatch me to heaven; thy rolling wonders there,
 World beyond world, in infinite extent
 Profusely scattered o'er the blue immense,
 Show me; their motions, periods, and their laws
 Give me to scan; through the disclosing deep
 Light my blind way: the mineral strata there;
 Thrust blooming thence the vegetable world;
 O'er that the rising system, more complex,
 Of animals; and, higher still, the mind,
 The varied scene of quick-compounded thought,
 And where the mixing passions endless shift;
 These ever open to my ravished eye—
 A search, the flight of time can ne'er exhaust:
 ("Autumn," ll. 1352-66)

This passage shows Thomson's ecstatic "rising mind" leading to increased knowledge of this world and an idea of the next. The "Hymn" (ll. 100 ff) expresses a similar intellectual and spiritual flight, until "I lose / Myself in him, in light ineffable!" From his limited earthly stance, "Silence" becomes his only possible response. Of the "Hymn," Patrick Murdoch says, "'the theology of it, allowance made for poetical expression, is orthodox.'"¹⁴

Thomson's "rising mind," then, is clearly limited; his "visions" are in the realm of the irrational, the hopeful, the imaginary as yet, and he is careful to check himself, to regain rational control (usually by returning to natural description, coming literally down-to-earth). The poet expresses numerous times in The Seasons his awareness of the limits of reason and science, of the "rising mind" in earthly life, as well as his strong belief in God's mysterious but benevolent and wise plan: God has "fixed us in a state / That must not yet to pure perfection rise" ("Spring," ll. 375-6); He "dwells awfully retired / From

mortal eye" ("Summer," ll. 177-8). Reason can deal with complex and abstract notions, but cannot reach the "world of spirits," where

...the cloud,
 So wills Eternal Providence, sits deep.
 Enough for us to know that this dark state,
 ...
 This infancy of being, cannot prove
 The final issue of the works of God. ("Summer," ll. 1795-1803)

Man's partial, "bounded view" sees arbitrary "deemed evil" in God's scheme ("Winter," ll. 1066-7), but in the afterlife the apparent evil is recognised to be good: "From seeming evil still educing good" ("Hymn," l. 114),

...The great eternal scheme,
 Involving all, and in a perfect whole
 ...
 To reason's eye refined clears up apace.
 ("Winter," ll. 1046-9)

As Thomas Boston expressed this philosophy,

Natural knowledge will be brought to perfection, by the light of glory. The web of providence, concerning the church, and all men whatsoever, will then be cut out, and laid before the eyes of the saints: And it will appear a most beautiful mixture; so as they shall all say together, on the view of it, he hath done all things well.¹⁵

Thomson's idea of God's mysterious, thoroughgoing and all-wise plan, while ultimately couched in terms of Moderate optimism, is in fact not far removed from the orthodox Scottish Calvinistic belief in determinism; like the Moderates he simply tended, for the most part, to play down the more extreme or arbitrary interpretations of this belief. In his insistence on the limits of reason, Thomson clearly echoes his mentors and models Job, Milton and the Scottish divines (including Riccaltoun): all of these recognised that man's reason is not perfectible

on earth,¹⁶ i.e. that even Physico-theology and empirical science cannot lead him to full knowledge and understanding of God's pre-determined plan. Such fulfillment will come to the "rising mind" only in the afterlife. Thomson's "Augustan optimism" is well-founded on strong religious faith, that God's Providence is ultimately benevolent, but the poet's optimism is always tempered by his awareness of man's limits. Patricia M. Spacks defines as the central paradox of The Seasons, that:

Man is at his best in attempting to understand the workings of the world around him; yet the workings of that world are such that man can never fully comprehend them....This is Thomson's spirit throughout The Seasons: scientific in its desire to 'see' and understand the workings of natural force, reverent in its recognition that it is finally impossible to understand - and that this fact itself affirms the greatness of God.¹⁷

Ralph Cohen calls this the "unifying vision" of The Seasons,

that God's love and wisdom, only fragmentarily perceptible in the beautiful and dangerous aspects of man and nature, will become fully perceptible in a future world. Thomson's 'vision' evokes sentiments of beauty, sublimity, benevolence, fear and anxiety so that the reader may be led to believe in, to love, to trust, and to fear God's power.¹⁸

Thomson's predominant religious optimism was, therefore, hard-won and far from exclusive: God's mysterious plan, wise and benevolent though it may be, left a vast unknown realm to intimidate the superstitious poet. Instances of his fears of the supernatural and unknown, and his almost-as-frequent attempts to qualify his superstition, are numerous in The Seasons; they are clearly products both of the "irrational" element of old-style Scottish Calvinism, and of the superstitious Border folk-culture of the poet's youth. Examples include: the "fairy people" and "yelling ghost" ("Summer," ll. 1664-81); the portentous comet ("Sum-

mer," ll. 1700-29); balls of fire, lightning and thunder, and Amelia's death by lightning ("Summer," ll. 1128 ff); the battle-like Aurora Borealis ("Autumn," ll. 1115-37); the voice of the "demon of the night" who warns the "devoted wretch of woe and death" ("Winter," ll. 191-4; "devoted" possibly links superstition specifically with unenlightened religious belief here, though "devoted" in the eighteenth century also meant "doomed," OED, and Thomson may have had in mind the fear of guilt or predestination); the "foul shades and frighted ghosts" of the desecrated churchyard ("Winter," ll. 409-13); and the "goblin-story," raising "superstitious horror" ("Winter," ll. 619-20). It was a great struggle for Thomson himself to try to overcome such fears of the supernatural, as were part of his Scottish upbringing; his attempt to rid himself of these fears, through reason, religious optimism and scientific knowledge, was consistent with the Moderate trend in the Scottish Church itself, which adopted the benevolistic and rational emphasis such as that which Francis Hutcheson, Scots follower of Shaftesbury, expressed. But Thomson, like the Scottish Calvinists and even the Moderates such as Robert Riccaltoun, never embraced Augustan optimism unreservedly. The leap to faith was not an easy one.

The most obvious consequence of man's limited understanding of God's pre-determined scheme, as amply illustrated in The Seasons, is the problem of evil in the world. Critical indignation over Thomson's "failure" to "solve" the problem of evil is hardly justified, however.¹⁹ He sees two types of evil in the world, human sin ("real" evil, resulting from the Fall and man's depravity, which he attacks through stern didacticism) and natural evil, seemingly-arbitrary or unexplained natural violence in the world ("apparent" evil, which is really part of God's over-

all plan). Both types are demonstrated in The Seasons.

Thomson was deeply aware of the Fallen world (see "Spring," ll. 272-308); he laments "these iron times, / These dregs of life" (echoing Thomas Boston's "dregs of time")²⁰ in a world where corrupted, uncontrolled human passion has overcome Reason, where "dark disgust and hatred, winding wiles, / Coward deceit, and ruffian violence," Anger, Envy, Fear and Grief reign, where "social feeling" is "extinct." While Thomson's Fall is thus described as loss of Reason and social order, couched in Augustan abstract terms, it is a very real Fall nonetheless. He draws from Scriptural and classical sources to depict the Paradise-Golden Age, and especially from Genesis to describe the Deluge (he does not use the "serpent" myth here, but does allude to it in "Summer," ll. 897-912). Man, whom the poet frequently describes as a tyrant and destroyer of the natural world, has lost control, has "disturbed" Nature; the Deluge is the result of man's Fall from order, his original sin. Thomson always showed far greater awareness of the limits of man, of his capacity for evil, than did such optimists as Shaftesbury: this was the poet's Scottish Calvinistic heritage. His frequent didactic "sermons" within The Seasons, particularly those against vanity and greed, attest to his acknowledgement of the imperfect, Fallen world, the second or "depraved" State of man. The poet would again make clear his strong sense of sin and the human capacity for evil in The Castle of Indolence.

This Fallen world, or "Nature disturbed," is full of apparent evils--paradoxical in God's "good" Creation which Thomson does not cease to praise. Of the seemingly-random events of violence in the natural world, such as the destructive "Autumn" flood, the death of the swain

in the snowstorm, the Palermo earthquake (alluded to in "Autumn," l. 1204) and the death of Amelia by lightning, Thomson is also clearly aware, yet he accepts these events almost fatalistically. His interpretation of them, however, takes the Moderate rather than the old-style line; he does not attribute such tragic incidents directly to Divine vengeance (as his stern Scottish forebears would have done, such as David Lindsay in The Monarche, who portrays the evil Tullus Hostilius being directly punished by God for his sins, in death by lightning).²¹ Thus, in a commentary removed from the poem in 1730, Thomson explained that Amelia's death was in no way a personal punishment from God; in later versions, the lines

And yet not always on the guilty head
Descends the fated flash ("Summer," ll. 1170-1)

sum up his attitude. Remaining always aware of man's Fallen, limited nature, Thomson holds the line that such apparent evils in nature are but "fated" parts of God's totally wise and benevolent pre-determined scheme, which will be revealed in the afterlife. Divine justice was to be administered not in man's lifetime, but in the afterlife. Emphasising God's benevolence in the Moderate manner, Thomson maintained Job-like faith that this evil-seeming natural violence, directed by an "arbitrary" God, was in fact part of God's perfect plan for mankind. The poet never set out fully to explain the ways of God to men, because he realised that his human limits prevented him. His "failure" to "solve" the problem of evil in man and in nature, was in essence the Scottish Calvinistic solution: awareness and acceptance of the Fallen world; acceptance of the duty to preach the potential for harmony on earth and the ultimate goal of harmony in heaven; and, optimistic faith,

tempered by Moderate influence, in God's benevolent master-plan.

Thomson's code of ethics, as expressed through The Seasons' didacticism, is mainly an outgrowth of his religious background (strains of both old-style and Moderate Scottish Calvinism are discernible); it was also influenced by his study of Shaftesbury and especially his Scottish disciple Hutcheson, and especially, of course, by his deep study of the Book of Nature, which can help to inspire virtuous sentiments and which teaches the "moral song" ("Autumn," l. 672).

From the Old Testament (notably Job and Ecclesiastes), from the other-worldly, flesh-denying aspect of Christian Neoplatonism (recalling the juvenilia such as "Upon Happiness"), and primarily from old-style Scottish Calvinistic moral rigour, comes Thomson's stern message of the sinfulness of human vanity and of the snares of delusive temporal existence: pride, idleness, waste, frivolity (this hard message would be reiterated in Liberty, V, and in The Castle of Indolence). The darker side of the Book of Nature itself reinforces the lesson that life on earth is unpredictable, harsh and often violent, as The Seasons abundantly illustrates. In this didactic vein, Thomson clearly echoes the emotional, intense Scottish Calvinistic pulpit-rhetoric of his father's generation, for example:

Ah! little think the gay licentious proud,
Whom pleasure, power, and affluence surround—
They, who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth,
And wanton, often cruel, riot waste—
Ah! little think they, while they dance along,
How many feel, this very moment, death

...

...Thought fond man
Of these, and all the thousand nameless ills
That one incessant struggle render life,
One scene of toil, of suffering, and of fate,
Vice in his high career would stand appalled,
And heedless rambling Impulse learn to think. ("Winter," ll. 322-

53)

Thus far, this passage bears comparison with such Scottish Calvinistic tracts as, for example, Thomas Boston's Fourfold State, on "State IV. Head I. Of Death." Boston's lengthy diatribe, liberally illustrated with Scriptural quotes, likewise exemplifies the forceful rhetoric of the Scottish Calvinistic pulpit, for instance:

Man's life is a vain and empty thing while it is:
 It vanisheth away; and lo! it is not, Job vii.6.
My days are vanity... Having thus discoursed of death,
 let us improve it, in discerning the vanity of the world;
 in bearing up with Christian contentment and patience,
 under all troubles and difficulties in it; mortifying our
lusts; in cleaving unto the Lord with purpose of heart, on
 all hazards; and in preparing for death's approach... Let
 us hence, as in a looking-glass behold the vanity of the
world; and of all these things in it, which men so much
 value and esteem, and therefore set their hearts upon....
 But look into the grave, O man, consider and be wise;
 listen to the doctrine of death; and learn....²²

Thomson's attack on vanity also looks forward to his contemporary Robert Blair's The Grave, in which the message of mortality as well as the manner of exclamatory direct-address are strikingly similar to his own; their source in stern old-style Scottish Calvinism is, of course, the same.

But with the introduction of the Augustan abstracts "Vice" and "Impulse," however, the tone of Thomson's didactic passage has already begun to shift; the passage continues,

The conscious heart of Charity would warm,
 And her wide wish Benevolence dilate;
 The social tear would rise, the social sigh;
 And, into clear perfection, gradual bliss,
 Refining still, the social passions work. ("Winter," ll. 354-8)

Now, the "rising mind" has led optimistically to the other, more positive strain of moral didacticism in The Seasons, which was chiefly in-

fluenced implicitly by the New Testament and explicitly by contemporary, optimistic interpretations of Christian Neoplatonic philosophy. (Another passage similar to that just quoted, which likewise illustrates Thomson's carefully-controlled movement from old-style to more Moderate attitudes and their corresponding tones, is found in "Winter," ll. 1028-49.) God's Book of Nature also offers examples of its teaching in this happier, benevolent vein, its natural beauties giving rise to noble and generous feelings in man. This moral theme of Thomson's is built (like the juvenile "Upon Happiness") around the concept of "Virtue" as a key to earthly bliss and the source of a certain moral "pleasure" or happiness in earthly life:

...Virtue sole survives-
Immortal, never-failing friend of man,
His guide to happiness on high...("Winter," ll. 1039-41)

Characteristically, the poet stops short of asserting that "Virtue" itself will earn man salvation, but merely speaks of it as an earthly guide toward heaven. The highest virtue for Thomson is love, and specifically "social love" or selfless benevolence, as he is seen to move outside of Calvinistic "spiritual isolation" and into a public, moralistic role. Such a tendency was consistent with the Moderates' emphasis on Christian conduct above rigid doctrinal concerns, and their attempt to integrate religious with social purpose.²³ Of such "social love" Thomson wrote to Aaron Hill:

The Social Love, of which you are so bright an Example,
tho' it be the distinguishing Ornament of Humanity, yet
there are some ill-natur'd enough to degrade it into a
Modification of Self-love, according to them, its Or-
iginal. Those Gentlemen, I am afraid, mingle their
Tempers too much with their Speculations....²⁴

In this letter of 1726, Thomson is probably referring to Mandeville, whose satirical Fable of the Bees (1714) took such a stance; or, he might possibly be referring to La Rochefoucauld. Although A. D. McKillop feels that Thomson's reference in this letter is "probably too early to be called Hutchesonian,"²⁵ it seems at least possible that the poet is echoing the Scottish philosopher here, whose An inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue...In which the principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury are explain'd and defended, against the author of the Fable of the bees had appeared in 1725.²⁶ In fact, Thomson seems very often to agree more wholeheartedly with the views of Hutcheson than with those of the Deist Shaftesbury himself. Hutcheson, whose Scottish "common sense" philosophy kept him from excess of optimism and enthusiasm, held that benevolence, or "social" love and moral goodness, are "disinterested," that is, independent of self-interest or "natural" and egocentric moral goodness. Thomson felt that benevolence or "social love" was not necessarily innate in man (as Shaftesbury might have it), but that it had to be cultivated; Hutcheson, too, felt that man would arrive at an idea of what the "public good" might be, through the proper exercise of reason in the cultivated Moral Sense.²⁷ The concept of the moral sense was present even in old-style Calvinism. Calvin himself,²⁸ and Scottish Calvinist Thomas Boston, for example,²⁹ both acknowledged man's moral sense, but they held it to be depraved, badly damaged by the Fall. Thomson and Hutcheson, even in their Moderate optimism, still retained some of the caution of their Calvinistic forebears about the limited powers of human reason to inform the moral sense.

Thomson's concept of "social love" and its application in acts of unselfish "public" virtue, necessarily raises the question of his views on

the orthodox Calvinistic doctrine of justification by faith alone. In truth, like most of the Moderates, Thomson had rather put such points of strict Calvinistic doctrine aside³⁰ in favour of broader tolerance and religious optimism as well as social concern. Also, the notion of "works" as proofs of man's election, while not authentic Calvinism, had crept into English and Scottish Calvinism to an extent;³¹ this notion of the spiritual value of work would give rise to the so-called "work-ethic" which Thomson propounds in The Castle of Indolence. Thomson himself rather evades the doctrinal complexities by maintaining only that acts of "Virtue" are of value on earth, and can help approximate heavenly happiness; even in the Castle, he never goes so far as to say that works can justify "election" or guarantee salvation, but merely facilitate an earthly "regeneration" of sorts.

Thomson did feel that the beauties of nature could be conducive to the cultivation of the Social Virtues to some extent (examples include: "Spring"'s Hagley Park and its benevolent influence over the good Lord Lyttelton; "Autumn"'s "Philosophic Melancholy" which excites the disinterested moral sense; and "Autumn"'s "Happy Man," whose benevolence is nurtured by the peaceful rural life). Both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson define "Virtue" as a kind of Beauty, an agreement with God's universal harmony,³² but Shaftesbury's aesthetic equation of Beauty with Benevolence is not exactly Hutcheson's-- or Thomson's-- position (Shaftesbury does not distinguish between the sense of Beauty and the Moral Sense as does Hutcheson).³³ Any such attribution of "goodness" to the beauty of aesthetic perceptions would have been, of course, rejected by the old-style Scottish Calvinists; Thomas Boston warned that, "Man is never more blind than when he is looking at the objects that are most pleasing to the sense."³⁴ Moderate Hutcheson, however, holds that

"natural" goodness of objects is perceived by the senses as pleasurable Beauty and harmony, unlike the higher "moral" goodness or disinterested Benevolence, which is an idea recognised by the cultivated Moral Sense in acts of unselfish "public" virtue.³⁵ Neither do Thomson's "beautiful" scenes necessarily of themselves inspire higher "social love"; these gentle, temperate scenes (Thomson's Britain, Virgil's Italy) can simply help to lift man's spirit outside himself by setting an atmosphere where man is not forced (as in the "Summer" tropics, where the lush landscape fails to give rise to the civilising virtues) to struggle for survival, but may cultivate unselfish public concern. Thomson, Hutcheson and Shaftesbury all agree, though, that Benevolence, promoting the general good, is the highest and best Virtue.

Thomson's "social love" is closely linked with his deep-seated humanitarianism, his concern for all creatures. He did not simply adopt the idea of such benevolence from the philosophers Shaftesbury and Hutcheson; his humanitarian concern for all creatures-- man and animal-- is not only an Augustan "public Virtue," but also a product of the poet's rural upbringing, in which man had to seek harmony with all creation, to co-operate and promote the general good, in order to survive and thrive. In general, Thomson (like Hutcheson) shows greater awareness of the "stern realities" of the universe than Shaftesbury;³⁶ his moral ideas, including the acceptance of the Fallen world and its "stern realities," ultimately derived not from Shaftesbury but from his acknowledged model Job,³⁷ and from the lessons of the Book of Nature in Scottish Border life.

The Seasons has frequently been commented upon and criticised for failing to bring specifically Christian reference into its religious

message.³⁸ Thomson's own practise of formal religion did rather decline over the years in London, although he remained a very religious man; his friend Lyttelton tried to "convert" him back to churchgoing³⁹ (Lyttelton's own "conception of Christianity had become unusually strict"),⁴⁰ and Thomson had apparently expressed certain religious doubts.⁴¹ The poet's sole reference to Christianity in The Seasons is pejorative ("Summer," ll. 854-5, where he describes the tropics as "The seat of blameless Pan, yet undisturbed / By Christian crimes and Europe's cruel sons"); his attitude, in the historical sense, is clear. He is disillusioned by the gross violations of "social love" committed in the name of Christianity over the centuries. He probably also had in mind Christian Scotland's long and bitter religious strife. In any case, Scottish Calvinism had always been a bibliocracy drawing heavily upon Old Testament Revelation, particularly as typological allegory of the New Testament message;⁴² it is not surprising that almost all of the poet's specific religious allusions and references in The Seasons are to the Old Testament rather than the New. Even Thomson's juvenilia show this Old Testament orientation, despite their having been influenced by Christian Neoplatonism, Isaac Watts, and so on; God in the Second Person of Christ is very rarely mentioned. Further, Thomson's scanty reference to Christ was consistent with the Moderate approach generally; this reticence about the life and death of Christ in the Moderates' teaching,⁴³ despite their emphasis on Christian conduct, was a central factor in their alleged "unorthodoxy" in the eighteenth century (and led to a charge of Arianism). This is not to say, however, that Thomson himself did not believe in Christ (see, for example, his anonymous Preface to the 1738 edition of Milton's Areopagitica,⁴⁴ where he refers to the "Kingdom of Christ" and

to "Our Saviour"). Lyttelton affirmed that, "Thomson, I hope and believe died a Christian."⁴⁵ Thomson's ethical teachings clearly derive from the Christian virtues, emphasised by the Moderates, of love and humanitarian concern for one's fellow-creatures; The Seasons is, ultimately, not "alien to Christianity" by any means.⁴⁶ Thomson's social didacticism develops from his Christian benevolistic ethics, as he rails against social crimes (for example, "Autumn," ll. 502-609, the drunken "social slaughter"; "Autumn," ll. 1172 ff, the ruined bee-hive as an emblem of man's destructiveness; and, "Winter," ll. 359-75, the penal abuses in need of reform) and urges man to cultivate "social love" and benevolence (for example, "Spring," ll. 1113 ff, the rewards in afterlife, of disinterested virtue in marriage; "Autumn," ll. 167-70, the call for generosity to the poor gleaners; "Autumn," ll. 570-609, the gentle, feminine virtues; "Autumn," ll. 1235 ff, the Happy Man, who, contrary to Thomson's austere upbringing, "Nor purpose gay, / Amusement, dance, or song, he sternly scorns: / For happiness and true philosophy / Are of the social still and smiling kind," in a conscious rejection of old-style Scottish Calvinistic strictures on innocent social pleasures; "Winter," ll. 265 ff, the plea to the shepherd to be "kind" to his charges; and, "Winter," ll. 572-652, "the friend," exemplifying the social virtues to be emulated).⁴⁷ While Thomson in later years was perhaps not a paragon of formal Christian religious practise, "as to the heart of a Christian he always had that, in a degree of perfection beyond most men I have known."⁴⁸

In treating of The Seasons as a religious poem, it is most important to recognise the continuity between the young poet's religious beliefs and his mature expressions. Undoubtedly, he was influenced in various ways by new, more liberal trends in religion and philosophy; he grew

increasingly Moderate, and optimistic, in his religious outlook, and he avoided in The Seasons personal identification with established Christianity. But, as has been demonstrated, religious purpose continues to motivate the poem. The roots of Thomson's mature religious philosophy were firmly planted in Scotland: both old-style and Moderate Scottish Calvinism, the Bible and pulpit-rhetoric, and the study of traditional theology and moral philosophy, as well as Physico-theology and the religious implications of the new science, were all part of his Scottish experience. Evidence of these early Scottish influences is abundantly present in Thomson's juvenile poetry, where both the praising and the teaching roles operate, where both the wrathful God and the gentle God of love appear, where Physico-theology or the study of nature leads the young poet to the immanent yet transcendent, ever-active Creator, where religious enthusiasm, Neoplatonism, Christian Humanism, superstition and reason, interact; these very elements are the elements of The Seasons as a religious poem. The God of The Seasons may be most fully manifest to Thomson through His works of nature, but He nonetheless retains the attributes of the just and wise Deity of Scottish Calvinism, acting through Providence according to His predetermined plan. Thomson would keep a certain basic core of religious faith, much of it founded upon the teachings of the Scottish Church, throughout his life and work. Even where the old-style beliefs had given way to more Moderate views, he would maintain certain old-style structures of thought (such as the stern, though secularised, parable of "Regeneration" portrayed in The Castle of Indolence). Allowing for strong Moderate Scottish influence on Thomson, and insofar as the Moderates could be considered orthodox Christians within the Scottish Church, the poet's "religious faith was, upon the whole, perfectly

orthodox"⁴⁹ in The Seasons, and so it would remain. As Patrick Murdoch affirmed, Thomson's "devotion to the Supreme Being, founded on the most elevated and just conceptions of his operations and providence, shine[s] out in every page."⁵⁰

* * *

While the next aspect of The Seasons is secondary to the basic religious-descriptive nature of the poem, it is nevertheless an important aspect, especially as regards Thomson's additions of various types of descriptive-didactic material in later versions: The Seasons is, to a great extent, a socio-political commentary. Thomson's concern for society, for the public welfare, is obvious in his ethical pronouncements, such as the reforming "Jail Committee" passage ("Winter," ll. 359-88), which are based on his benevolistic creed. He is no less concerned with the individual's (especially, the Briton's) right to freedom (for example, his indignation at the "free-born Briton to the dungeon chained," "Winter," l. 371; and, his comment on the "cruel trade" of slavery, "Summer," l. 1019, in the tropics where "Liberty retired," ll. 951-7).⁵¹ Such concerns culminated in the abstract, didactic Liberty (1735-6), where Thomson explores the "theory of the operation of free reason and natural virtue,"⁵² and in his anonymous Preface to Areopagitica,⁵³ where he asserts that liberty is basic to religious belief, to the exercise of reason to seek truth, and to the practise of virtue. Liberty, or individual and national freedom, was of course a central Whig cause; it was of special significance to a Scotsman, whose nation had a history of political domination at the hands of the English. Many Scots viewed the recent Union of 1707 as a final loss of Scottish freedom and national identity; Thomson, as a pro-Union Whig,

probably viewed it as an achievement of greater "freedom" and opportunity for Scotland, as part of powerful Great Britain.

The Seasons, even in its first versions, displayed strong human interest as it focused on man's relationship to God and Creation. Patricia M. Spacks, for one, feels that Thomson increasingly failed to integrate successfully, man within his natural environment, as he revised The Seasons; she holds that Thomson betrayed his original natural-religious ideals, his "vision," when he continued to introduce moral and socio-political themes, placing man and his actions increasingly to the fore.⁵⁴ Ralph Cohen, however, rightly says that Spacks' "nature" criterion is too limited, and fails to take into account the fundamental presence of man, who "walks superior" in the poem even in its early versions.⁵⁵ A much earlier critic, Scot James Beattie, had praised The Seasons' central human interest, which gave the religious-descriptive poem "stability and elevation."⁵⁶

The chief socio-political theme to emerge from the varied descriptions of places and people in The Seasons is the debate over whether the "primitive" life or the "progressive" life is the more desirable. Both classical literature and contemporary travel-literature (from which Thomson drew additions, 1730 ff. and chiefly in 1744) contribute to the debate. Thomson never presents a clear-cut solution to this question. Even where he contrasts simple, rural amusements (story-telling, folk-dancing) with the "intense" and "false enchanted joy" of the pursuit of pleasure in the "progressive" city (gambling, glittering court entertainments, "Winter," ll. 617-55), he does not consistently present the Augustan stereotype of "country good" versus "city evil." Rather, he seems almost to delight in the court's super-

ficial brightness, and especially in that urban amenity, the drama (which he himself, despite the Scottish Calvinistic strictures of his youth, enjoyed and contributed to, in London). Indeed, this element of enjoyment of sophisticated urban attractions is understandable to an extent, given the poet's isolated youth and strict upbringing. What, then, was his position on "primitivism" versus "progress"?

At times, Thomson seems simply to assert that country life is better and more innocent; such passages, like the juvenile georgic "Of a Country Life," are those most clearly influenced by Virgil and Horace. They include: "Spring," ll. 67 ff. ("Ye generous Britons, venerate the plough," a paean to rural industry); "Spring," ll. 234-71 (the pastoral Golden Age); "Spring," ll. 1113 ff. (the joys of married love, set specifically in "retirement, rural quiet" and mirroring the seasons's natural harmony-- Thomson describes a similar ideal in a love-letter to Elizabeth Young of 1743);⁵⁷ "Summer," ll. 423-31 ("A simple scene: yet hence Britannia sees / Her solid grandeur rise," i.e. Britain's greatness founded on healthy rural economy); "Autumn," ll. 1235-51 ("The happiest he!" panegyric to rural life, where "Simple truth, plain innocence" dwell, and which links rural life with the Golden Age, "The life / Led by primeval ages uncorrupt / When angels dwelt, and God himself, with man!"); and "Winter," ll. 843-86 ("Thrice happy race!" or the primitive, peaceful life of the Laplanders, free from "legal plunder and rapacious" power of progressive societies). Thomson also refers to the Lapps in Liberty III, ll. 520-3 (there is a similar "primitive" passage in Beattie's The Minstrel, 1771).⁵⁸ "Autumn"'s natives of St. Kilda (ll. 871-8) are similarly unspoilt and well-adjusted; Thomson's source Martin Martin described in detail their innocence, love, freedom from avarice and "true liberty."⁵⁹ Thomson's

reference to them is brief, however, and does not figure centrally in his primitivism-progress debate; this is perhaps due to the poet's reluctance to admit of such pure primitivism in his native Scotland, now part of "progressive" Great Britain.

In other instances in The Seasons, "primitivism" or the simple life close-to-nature, is not so innocent or appealing. Most instances of unhappy primitivism occur in the less-temperate Seasons of "Winter" and "Summer," in the regions of the arctic and the tropics, where Thomson added more extreme descriptive material derived from second-hand sources to enhance the "sublime" effect. The speaker first perceives the tropical jungle in "eternal prime," as a lush, exotic and idealised paradise, a sort of Golden Age of innocence, "a happy isle, / The seat of blameless Pan" ("Summer," ll. 853-4). He soon becomes aware of tropical evils; it is a delusive paradise of "dreadful beauty" (l. 643) and "barbarous wealth" (l. 644), where an "Ill-fated race" (l. 875) lives in violence and unruly passion, lacking the social, civilising virtues. It is the home of the archetypal Serpent. It is interesting to note that Scottish Calvinist Thomas Boston, for one, wrote of evil, unregenerate man in terms of being "natural" man, thus linking primitivism with original sin.⁶⁰ Similarly, "Winter"'s native Siberians, who unlike the Laplanders have failed to adapt to their environment, live in primitive, uncivilised isolation.

Is "progress," then, a product of refined, civilised urban life? Thomson's view of "progress" is not necessarily urban either, although it does take into account the city's amenities and particular achievements ("Full are thy cities with the sons of art; / And trade and joy, in every busy street," "Summer," ll. 1457-8; the improvements of Czar Peter

the Great in Russia which helped "cities rise amid the illumined waste," "Winter," l. 973). In Liberty, the poet is more extravagant in his praise of cities:

'August around what public works I see!
Lo! stately streets, lo! squares that court the breeze;
...
See! long canals, and deepened rivers join
Each part with each, and with the circling main
The whole enlivened isle... (Liberty V.701-2; 709-10)

(This was the quote used by Thomson's nephew, architect James Craig, to crown his plan for the New Town of Edinburgh, 1766.)⁶¹ Cities do represent one form of progress for Thomson, and play a particular role in a society's development; they nurture the arts, as Thomson well knew, and chiefly, they are the centers of trade and certain types of industry, about which Thomson became increasingly enthusiastic as the century progressed. His Whig party took most of the credit for such achievements of British commerce.⁶² Thomson did, however, recognise that cities also tended to encourage certain vices of over-civilisation, especially vanity and greed.

Another alternative exists: "progress" could also occur in a predominantly rural society, as Thomson's model Virgil in his Georgics clearly demonstrated. Man's adaptation to, control of the rural environment through careful husbandry was not less "progressive" than the culture and commerce of the city, and was in fact the basis of sound national culture and economy, and world power. In "Summer," ll. 352-431, the poet first describes a British, possibly Scottish, pastoral scene, then exclaims:

A simple scene! yet hence Britannia sees
 Her solid grandeur rise: hence she commands
 The exalted stores of every brighter clime,
 The treasures of the sun without his rage:
 Hence, fervent all with culture, toil, and arts,
 Wide glows her land: her dreadful thunder hence
 Rides o'er the waves sublime, and now, even now,
 Impending hangs o'er Gallia's humbled coast;
 Hence rules the circling deep, and awes the world.

(Incidentally, one critic has pointed out the similarity of Thomson's message here with Burns's in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," XIX, "From Scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs," and so on.)⁶³ Thomson's two lengthy Whig panegyrics in The Seasons, "Britannia" ("Summer," ll. 1438-1619) and "Industry" ("Autumn," ll. 43-150) refer to both rural and urban, city and country civilisation and "progress." Both Virgil and Thomson saw two sides to the primitivism-progress issue: each type of society had its own advantages and drawbacks, potential benefits and abuses. John Chalker has thus posited the most compelling interpretation of Thomson's seeming-ambivalence, in comparing it with Virgil's: both poets promoted the civilising virtues, in a "nostalgic progressivism"⁶⁴ which appreciated the joys possible in a simple, natural, rural life, but also recognised that man must make full use of his potential as an intellectual being, promoting the social virtues and adapting to his environment, with the responsibility of seeking harmony within the universal order of Creation. The Scottish Calvinistic work-ethic, most apparent in The Seasons' "Industry" passage ("Autumn"), reinforces Thomson's "nostalgic progressivism," and becomes, in the social application of secularised structures of religious thought, a central theme of The Castle of Indolence.

Thomson's ultimate "solution" is that which might be expected of a Scot who grew up in the as-yet rather primitive and isolated Border

country and loved it, and who had "progressed" to Edinburgh, then to London, to practise his art. Edinburgh retained, even in the eighteenth-century, a somewhat rural atmosphere, reflecting the chiefly rural character of Scotland as a whole.⁶⁵ Even when he went south, Thomson chose to settle in Richmond, at the time in the country outside London, though near enough to the city for the poet to partake of its amenities. His literary solution of "nostalgic progressivism" is a similar compromise, and in great part an outgrowth of his upbringing in Scotland, an unspoilt country life which was close to nature and had given him much pleasure and poetic inspiration, but a life which needed, as he well knew, to be "improved" culturally and economically; a similar ambivalence over primitivism versus progress occurs throughout Anglo-Scot James Beattie's The Minstrel.⁶⁶ Thomson's "nostalgic progressivism" is not a simple solution, but the best answer to a complex debate which adds substantially to the "variousness" and scope of The Seasons. Thomson handles this issue again in Liberty and in The Castle of Indolence, leaving no doubt that he tends to support such qualified progressivism.

Thomson's "nostalgic progressivism" is, of course, closely linked to his views of national potential, to his strong patriotism for "Britannia" (which "too includes our native Country, Scotland").⁶⁷ Thomson's "systematic use of the word 'British' and 'Britannia' was significant: the Scots were in no way inferior...";⁶⁸ he does, however, separate the "British" (here, exclusively English-- "Summer") and Scottish ("Autumn") Worthies passages (perhaps to acknowledge Scotland's distinct national and cultural identity despite the Union). Thomson's Opposition Whig stance remained optimistic, and basically pro-Union: for example, he describes the peaceful lambs, watched over by their

shepherd in the Border scene, gamboling

...around the hill—the rampart once
 Of iron war, in ancient barbarous times,
 When disunited Britain ever bled,
 Lost in eternal broil, ere yet she grew
 To this deep-laid indissoluble state... ("Spring," ll. 840-5)

The "broil" alludes to long-lived Scottish-English antagonism and Border warfare, the "indissoluble state" to united Great Britain.

Thomson saw the Union of 1707 as Scotland's opportunity for improvement or "progress" within Great Britain, while at the same time evidencing deep nostalgia for her distinctive landscape and life, her national identity. He hoped Great Britain's progress would be Scotland's progress as well; his ideal for an improved Scotland was itself a sort of "nostalgic progressivism." The key "Scottish" passage in "Autumn" demonstrates his concern for Scotland, and his hopes for her future. A brief version of this passage first appeared in "Summer," following the "British Worthies" passage; Thomson moved it to "Autumn" in 1730. It is not known why he transferred it, though autumn is a more typically Scottish and inclement season, and indeed the poet's favourite. He may have wanted to make the point that Scotland's distinctive culture and her poor economy were, in a sense, "fading" like the season, and badly in need of regeneration and "harvest."⁶⁹ This interpretation parallels the central paradox of "Autumn," barrenness and fruition; the benefits of the Union, the Scottish "harvest," were in 1730 not immediately apparent in Scotland. Poor Scotland probably did look as if it were "fading" and barren to Thomson from his point of view in prosperous London. The Scottish passage in "Autumn" was very possibly influenced by Scottish poet David Lindsay's The Dreame,⁷⁰ on a similar pattern, as was noted in Chapter V. Following

the prospect-view of "Caledonia," where Thomson lists Scotland's many natural resources (forests, lakes, fertile valleys, rivers), he goes on (like Lindsay) to praise the Scots themselves; his native pride is obvious: "a people, in misfortune's school / Trained up to hardy deeds, soon visited/By Learning," " a manly race / Of unsubmitting spirit, wise, and brave (ll. 894-7) yet who struggled in vain, "as well unhappy Wallace can attest" (l. 900) to keep Scotland free. Wallace is the first of Thomson's three "Scottish Worthies"; he surely appears here through the recent influence of William Hamilton of Gilbertfield's Wallace (the contemporary Scoto-English rendering, in rhymed couplets, of Blind Hary's epic, 1721). The Scots were

...of unequal bounds
 Impatient, and by tempting glory borne
 O'er every land, for every land their life
 Has flowed profuse, their piercing genius planned,
 And swelled the pomp of peace their faithful toil.
("Autumn," ll. 903-7)

The poet thus acknowledges with pride the Scottish contributions to European war and peace, culture and society. His phrase "unequal bounds" is intriguing: by it, he means not merely Scotland's "unjustly narrow territorial boundaries,"⁷¹ but a much broader, more significant socio-political view of the Border between "contending kingdoms" (ll. 712-14) Scotland and England. He seems to refer to Scotland's situation under English political domination, as well as to the country's natural limitations (often-harsh climate, geographical isolation, rugged topography), and to her "primitivism" (i.e. hitherto unimproved agriculture and industry, and a cultural life set back by the rigours of the Scottish Calvinistic Reformation). In other words, Thomson acknowledged that the Scots found themselves "bound" in many ways, and hampered from achieving equality with the neigh-

bouring, dominant English culture; "unequal" was substituted for the earlier "ignoble" (1730-38), expressing nationalistic indignation at Scotland's traditionally weak position. Scots had, therefore, to leave Scotland to achieve their highest potential; this probably represents a self-conscious statement of the poet's own decision to go south to seek literary fortune. Even Thomson's pro-Union, "British" patriotism did not blind him to the inequality, the poverty, the element of "primitivism" which still bound Scotland. Thus, he pleads:

Oh! is there not some patriot in whose power
That best, that godlike luxury is placed,
Of blessing thousands, thousands yet unborn,
Through late posterity? some, large of soul,
To cheer dejected Industry, to give
A double harvest to the pining swain,
And teach the labouring hand the sweets of toil?
How, by the finest art, the native robe
To weave; how, white as Hyperborean snow,
To form the lucid lawn; with venturous oar
How to dash wide the billow; nor look on,
Shamefully passive, while Batavian fleets
Defraud us of the glittering finny swarms
That heave our friths and crowd upon our shores;
How all-enlivening trade to rouse, and wing
The prosperous sail from every growing port,
Uninjured, round the sea-encircling globe;
And thus, in soul united as in name,
Bid Britain reign the mistress of the deep?
("Autumn," ll. 910-28)

Thomson's heartfelt call for leadership to develop Scotland's tremendous potential echoes the message of Lindsay's Dreme, where Lindsay beseeches the Scottish King, James V, to govern more wisely and well.

Thomson clearly felt, then, that the Union of 1707, while vitally important, was still a nominal union only, and only the hoped-for improvement of Scottish industry (linen and textile, trade and commerce, fisheries) and agriculture would bring the Scottish economic health which would signify true equality and unity with England. Thomson main-

tains his "nostalgic progressivist" stance here, in especially promoting the rural (and particularly Lowland and Border) occupations of linen manufacturing and agriculture, along with the more centralised industries. He says that Scotland must learn to contribute her share to Great Britain's progress and prosperity, if she wishes to enjoy the benefits of the Union. Thomson recognises that Scotland is indeed full of natural and cultural resources, not least her hardy and intelligent people, but also implies that the Scots had not yet learned how best to use those resources, that Scotland's progress was, as yet, potential. While Scots had long carried their genius to other lands, "As from their own clear north in radiant streams / Bright over Europe bursts the boreal morn," (ll. 908-9), they seemed to Thomson to have done little to develop their full potential at home (his attitude, as he criticises the "shamefully passive" Scots, recalls Jonathan Swift's paradoxical pride and pity, his impatience with Ireland, as he recognises his own country's untapped potential). Thomson revealed his attitude in a letter to Aaron Hill, about Scotland, which he referred to as,

that neglected Corner of the World, [of]
depress'd Merit, uninform'd Beauty, and
good Sense cloath'd in the Rags of Language.⁷²

Thomson shared this attitude of impatience and concern with many others. Martin Martin, in his Description of the Western Islands of Scotland,⁷³ wrote of the natural resources of the islands, including rich soil, fish and hearty man-power, and expressed the wish that they would be "improved." Union agent Daniel Defoe's Caledonia: A Poem in Honour of Scotland and the Scots Nation (1706) was on the theme of, "Wake, Scotland, from thy long lethargic dream"; he hoped to encourage, through

the Union of 1707, Scottish development of agriculture, fishing and trade.⁷⁴ Allan Ramsay wrote several Scottish "improvement" poems, such as the "Pleasures of Improvements in Agriculture," which "sounds a note of urgency and concern about the waste of good fertile Scottish land through ignorance and neglect."⁷⁵ Also, Thomson's friend Duncan Forbes of Culloden wrote:

I do in Truth - what all pretend and most men believe they do; I love my Country.- This Disposition has moved me to do, what every Man ought to do, to give Attention to its Interest, and to endeavour to promote its Good.

But Forbes realised that unless a "Miracle interpose" and "unless the People are brought, in spite of inveterate Prejudices, to know and to pursue their real Interests," ruin would come to Scotland. Forbes admitted, with frustration, to "rooted Prejudices," "gross Ignorance," and "stupid Indifference" in his fellow-Scots. His pamphlet Some Considerations on the Present State of Scotland in A Letter to the Commissioners and Trustees for Improving FISHERIES AND MANUFACTURES,⁷⁶ quoted here, is an eloquent plea for Scots to help themselves, to make the Union work. Thomson clearly felt such frustration, yet he was ultimately optimistic about Scottish potential for improvement; he kept well-informed on the Scottish development plans of "patriots" such as John Campbell, Duke of Argyle, and Duncan Forbes (the second and third "Scottish Worthies" of The Seasons) and read much on the subject, collecting contemporary pamphlet-literature on such Scottish schemes.⁷⁷ He also kept closely informed on the Scottish situation through friends in government positions, such as Forbes and his secretary George Ross, and Sir Andrew Mitchell. So, James Thomson's patriotism for Great Britain by no means excluded Scotland; rather, he singled out his nat-

ive country for a special word of encouragement, aware as he was of her tremendous potential and need of strong leadership. His concern for Scotland, where many friends and family-members still resided, was deep and genuine.

Thomson's exaggerated and occasionally bombastic "British" patriotism (a prominent feature of Liberty, first glimpsed in The Seasons) might be interpreted to be a result of his insecurity and "shame" at being a Scot in prejudiced London, particularly while Jacobitism remained a threat. This could be true to some extent-- as a sort of overcompensation or defence mechanism on a subconscious level, perhaps-- but his conscious motives were good: he seemed to want to will the Union of 1707 into being, to the benefit of all Britain, including Scotland. His exuberant Britishness was entirely consistent with his pro-Union, progressive Whig allegiance, espoused even as a youth in Scotland, and was in no way anti-Scottish.

* * *

Discussion of Thomson's British patriotism cannot help but suggest the final major theme of the poem, The Seasons as a "neoclassical" work; Thomson's patriotic and neoclassical goals reinforce one another throughout the poem. As has been shown, Virgilian "nostalgic progressivism" informs Thomson's own socio-political ideals. Other classical ideas likewise helped to shape the poet's political views. Thomson consciously drew parallels between Britain and the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations; he addresses his muse thus:

And oft, conducted by historic truth,
 You tread the long extent of backward time,
 Planning with warm benevolence of mind
 And honest zeal, unwarped by party-rage,
 Britannia's weal...

...
 You draw the inspiring breath of ancient song,
 Till nobly rises emulous thy own.
 ("Spring," ll. 926-35)

In particular, Thomson drew parallels in The Seasons with the Roman Empire; this was not, of course, unusual in the English Augustan Age, but as has been suggested, Thomson's especial identification with Rome first grew from his Humanistic education in Scotland, and from the significant Scottish cultural attitude of national identification with Rome. Thomson's patriotism for Great Britain was thus strongly coloured by examples of patriotism from the ancient world, and particularly Virgilian Rome. Thomson sings of the importance of rural industry to Britain: "Such themes as these the rural Maro sung / To wide-imperial Rome" ("Spring," ll. 55-6). It will be recalled that the poet Thomson had once, in the juvenile "Epistle to Sir William Bennet," identified himself with Virgil, and Sir William Bennet with Virgil's patron Maecenas. Scotland is "Caledonia," the "Hyperborean" (far north)⁷⁸ province of the empire of "Britannia," whose centre (paralleling the City of Rome) is "Augusta" (London).

Thomson's Roman identification in The Seasons is thus mostly with the Roman Empire; he was proud for Scotland to be a province of the great British Empire (unlike the anti-Union Scots, whose "Roman" identification was more probably with the more democratic ideals of the Roman Republic-- they saw independent Scotland "die" with the Union, as the Roman Republic had died with Caesar).⁷⁹ Thomson himself likes to dwell on the decline of the Republic, the "purple tyranny of Rome" ("Summer,"

l. 758) under tyrant Julius Caesar; he describes how, "from stooping Rome / And guilty Caesar, Liberty retired"⁸⁰ (see also Liberty III.460). It was perhaps only natural that the Whig Thomson, of the party representing freedom and liberty, should identify with the opponents of dictator Julius Caesar (including Cato and his Pompeian party), and with the enlightened Augustan Age of Roman Empire. Still, Thomson's "Roman" identification in The Seasons is not exclusively with the Augustan Empire; there is even at this stage a strong element of admiration for the social "virtues" of early Republican Rome as well. To an extent, the poet can be said to have embraced at the same time both Republican and Imperial ideals; this dual allegiance, as it reflected Thomson's socio-political attitudes to Britain and to Scotland as her "province," would come into a sort of open conflict later, in Liberty⁸¹ and in the plays, where the emphasis shifts to predominantly Republican preference. (This tension will be further examined in Chapter VII.)

Another reference to Thomson's model Virgil, "The Mantuan Swain," occurs in "Spring" (l. 456), and yet another in "Winter" (ll. 530-2): "Fair, mild, and strong as is a vernal sun: / 'Tis Phoebus' self, or else the Mantuan swain!" (originally, in "Winter" 1726, "Maro! the best of poets and of men!"). This last reference forms a part of Thomson's lengthy list of his chosen classical heroes. Neoclassicist Milton, another of the poet's important models, represents the "British Muse" in this classical roll-call, and is placed on a level with Virgil and Homer as the chief poets. The catalogue, expanded in 1730, also includes a praise of Pope (ll. 550-4). This list first lauds thirteen Greek and eleven Roman military and political heroes, many of whom were represented in the "long-lived volume" (l. 437), probably Plutarch's Parallel Lives.⁸² Of these heroes, Thomson praises their social vir-

tues (i.e. "social love," disinterested benevolence, and especially unselfish patriotism) above all. He found these virtues in heroes representing both the Republic and the Empire of Rome. Among the Roman heroes, who "Their dearest country they too fondly loved," are Cincinnatus (l. 512), Thomson's favourite Roman Republican patriot,⁸³ and Cato (the Younger, hero of Addison's tragedy Cato, 1713; Thomson saw this play very soon after arriving in London, and its manner influenced his own dramas. It is interesting to note that Francis Hutcheson cites Cato in his treatise "Concerning Moral Good and Evil," as an example of unselfish patriotism where public triumphs over private good).⁸⁴ The roll of classical heroes of culture, chiefly literature, follows the list of patriots.⁸⁵ Thomson, steeped in the history and literature of the ancient world as a youth in Scotland, felt close affinity with these "mighty dead" whom he so admired; he was able to "hold high converse" with these "First of your kind: society divine!" (l. 541). He continued to be inspired by their patriotic virtue and their literary achievement, and in this "Winter" passage demonstrated the strong classical and historical awareness which pervades The Seasons, and which would inform Liberty and the dramas.

Two further key passages in The Seasons likewise demonstrate classical, chiefly Roman Imperial, influence on Thomson's British patriotism: the progressive "Britannia" sequence ("Summer," ll. 1438-1619) and the "Industry" passage ("Autumn," ll. 43-150). The pompous "Britannia" passage is a "patriotic panegyric...highly characteristic of the eighteenth-century English Georgic; the model is Virgil's praise of fruitful, prosperous Italy...cf. Georgics II.138-76."⁸⁶ It is an enthusiastic (at times, Liberty-like in bombast and chauvinism) praise of Great Britain's abundant resources and achievements, including her

chief resource, her "generous youth" (l. 1467). In general, the passage represents Roman ideals transported to British soil.⁸⁷ The paean to "Happy Britannia" is followed by another roll-call, this time of "British Worthies" (here, exclusively English-- as previously noted, the "Scottish Worthies" were transferred to "Autumn"). Thomson commends the "Worthies" of government and politics, science, philosophy and literature with frequent use of classical parallels (for example, Thomas More is "Like Cato firm, like Aristides just, / Like rigid Cincinnatus nobly poor," ll. 1491-2; Bacon is "Plato, the Stagyrate, and Tully joined," l. 1542), affirming Thomson's sort of "classical hero-worship."⁸⁸ The passage concludes with an abstract, Augustan invocation (ll. 1602-19) to "O Thou, by whose Almighty nod the scale / Of empire rises, or alternate falls," to "Send forth the saving Virtues round the land / In bright patrol—white Peace, and social Love," and so on. Thomson thus links the rise of "empire" (implying Britain's aspirations to empire) with Divine intervention or Providence, and especially with the presence of the social virtues; Liberty (1735-6), based on such a benevolistic ethical creed,⁸⁹ would trace in detail the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman empires in history, and would also hail the growing empire of "Britannia."

The "Industry" passage, which praises British industry and expounds the "generalized Whiggish myth of progress based on Lucretius V.925-1457 with hints of Virgil, Georgics I.125-46,"⁹⁰ reiterates the Georgics premise (reinforced by the Scottish Calvinistic work-ethic, looking forward to The Castle of Indolence) that human labour can adapt to and control nature to a great extent, to raise the labouring people from a primitive to a progressive, civilised society. This passage is followed by the illustrative tale of "Palemon and Lavinia," appropri-

ately set in an idealised, classical-pastoral landscape.

These are but the most notable of numerous classical-patriotic references in The Seasons. It is important to remember that Thomson was first introduced to the classical world as a youth in Scotland, and that his strong admiration and emulation of classical concepts of nationalism and patriotism, and particularly his identification of post-Union Britain with Rome, were shaped to a very great extent by the prevailing Scoto-Roman ethos and by the broadly Scottish Humanistic culture of his day. Such classical ideals of patriotism also inform his other works, the "epic" Liberty, as well as the neo-classical tragedies (which make veiled comparisons with the contemporary political situation), occasional poems such as the famous "Britannia" and the song "Rule, Britannia," and The Castle of Indolence.

Not only were Thomson's socio-political, "nostalgic progressivist" and patriotic attitudes influenced by the classics: classicism permeates The Seasons, especially in the Virgilian description which renders the poem in great part an "Anglo-Scottish Georgic." Even as a youth, Thomson practised the georgic mode; his "Of a Country Life" is an imitation of Gay's Rural Sports, itself modelled on Virgil's Georgics II. As has been seen, The Seasons adopts several scenes from this juvenile piece, including the hunting and angling sequences. Thomson certainly identified with his model Virgil (the rural singer of the new Roman Empire), and saw himself as the rural singer of the British Empire. Thomson's and Virgil's northern provincial, rural experiences, hundreds of years apart, were nonetheless similar. Their more temperate Italian and British countries were felt to be the most conducive to the progress of civilisation and the "social virtues." Like Virgil,

Thomson preferred to meditate on the works of nature in rural solitude; there, both poets studied the complex relationship of man to nature, and expressed optimism that man could learn to order, control and enhance nature, sometimes achieving fragile harmony with it. Both the Georgics and The Seasons exemplify literary Art controlling Nature, chiefly through their realistic natural description. Virgilian description reinforces, helps give shape to Thomson's descriptions of recollected Scottish scenes in many instances (much as Virgil's Aeneid was the basis for Gavin Douglas's realistic Scottish descriptions in his translation, the Eneados). In many Seasons scenes, the strong influence of Virgilian description and detail can be discerned. The description of the second (wind) storm of "Winter" incorporates many details from Georgics I; the passage (which grew even more explicitly Virgilian from 1730 on) depicts the storm itself, as well as the animals' response--- the disturbed sea-birds, the heifer sniffing at the coming storm in the air-- in Virgilian realistic detail. Virgil's sympathy with animals, engaged with man in the struggle to survive nature's violence, appealed to Thomson, whose humanitarianism is notable throughout The Seasons; again, classicism reinforces Thomson's native Scottish sentiments and experiences. Thomson's advice to the husbandman ("Winter," ll. 265-75) specifically echoes Georgics III. Another "Winter" scene, the frozen swain, is a variation on Virgil's frozen cattle, Georgics III. While Thomson's addition of increasingly sensational, extreme seasonal material in "Winter" was partly due to Mallet's influence, and to the growing popularity in the eighteenth century of Longinus' theory of the "sublime," Virgil too had introduced such "foreign" illustrative material to broaden the scope of the Georgics; Thomson's "Thrice happy race" of

Laplanders, primitives who have successfully adapted to a harsh environment, compares with Virgil's "Scythian Nations" (Georgics III.349-83), who have similarly adapted to the arctic climate.⁹¹ "Winter" closes with the Virgilian "perpetual Spring" image (Georgics II), "And one unbounded Spring encircle all" (l. 1069), representing the Golden Age to come, the afterlife; Virgil's "perpetual Spring" idea was seen in Thomson's juvenile "Upon Beauty," and also governs the poet's description of the past Golden Age in "Spring."

The other Seasons, too, are replete with Virgilian descriptive allusions. In "Summer," the rural descriptions (ll. 352-431) of hay-making and especially sheep-shearing are Thomson's "Scottish Georgic" adaptations of scenes recalled from his youth; in the typical "georgic" mode, they combine "an account of husbandry with pastoral idealism and patriotism."⁹² The "Happy Man" passage (ll. 458-63), describing the joys of rural life, as well as the longer passage on the same theme in "Autumn" (ll. 1235-1373), derive from Virgil's Georgics II.458-542;⁹³ it will be recalled that this pastoral-idealistic theme occurred in Thomson's juvenile "A Pastoral Entertainment" and "Of a Country Life," and also in Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd. Many more descriptive details and incidents of "Summer" (too many to list them all here) likewise come from classical literature, from Virgil and to a lesser extent from Lucretius and Lucan.⁹⁴ Also, many classical proper names occur in "Summer," particularly to set the atmosphere of the tropical paradise ("Pomona," "Pan," "Bacchus," "Flora," "Philomel") where they have an idealising, elevating and distancing effect. The interpolated tales of "Celadon and Amelia" and "Damon and Musidora" are also in classical-pastoral settings, and tend to rely on classical allusion; "Damon and Musidora," especially, invites comparison with the myth of the Decision of Paris

on Mt. Ida, and employs Greek-statue imagery.

"Spring" is the most strongly Virgilian Season in theme, form and language; it is said that fully two-fifths of "Spring" are "distinctively Georgic in character."⁹⁵ This season's love-song, rising from the lower animals up to man, is modelled largely on Georgics III. In the descriptions of the bull and the horse, for example, Thomson uses the same styles as Virgil: mock love-elegiac for the bull, heroic for the horse.⁹⁶ The poet's warning to lovers (ll. 973 ff.), and especially his description of the dejected lover's dream of suicide by drowning (ll. 1067-73) likewise echo Virgil (Georgics III), who also alludes to the tale of Hero and Leander.⁹⁷ Again, numerous descriptive details are adaptations of Virgil, such as the ploughing (ll. 32-43) from Georgics II.330-1, and I.45-6, 213, 98; and the robbed birds' nest (ll. 714-28), from Georgics IV.511-15.⁹⁸ Other probable Virgilian details include: the bees (ll. 508-15), from Georgics IV; vegetable germination (ll. 561-71), from Georgics II; and the birds' concert after the storm (ll. 580 ff), Georgics I. The influences of Ovid's Metamorphoses and of Lucretius are also discernible in "Spring."⁹⁹

"Autumn," in addition to the "Happiest he" passage, contains many other descriptive adaptations and echoes of Virgil; some are: the rain and flood (ll. 311 ff), from Georgics I.322-7;¹⁰⁰ "innoxia" (St. Elmo's Fire, l. 1161), Aeneid II.680-6; the ruined bee-hive (ll. 1172-1200), Georgics IV.228-30;¹⁰¹ "shooting stars" and meteors as omens (Aurora Borealis, ll. 1108 ff), Georgics I; the vineyard (ll. 683-706), Georgics II; and, the hunt-scene (ll. 360 ff), Georgics III. Among other classical influences on "Autumn" are Juvenal, Pliny and Lucretius.¹⁰²

In addition to Thomson's large debt to the classics themselves, his debt to his predecessors in English neoclassical literature is also important; his own classical background disposed him to admire and emulate the religious-descriptive poetry of Milton, as well as, to an extent, the poetry of the pastoral descriptive tradition in English, that of Pope, John Philips, Gay, Hinchcliffe, and of his contemporary Anglo-Scots. This secondary element of Thomson's borrowing from English and Scottish neoclassical poetry in The Seasons, particularly the vital influence of Milton, is unfortunately too large a topic to explore here. It is most important to remember that Thomson's deep-rooted classical orientation, absolutely basic to The Seasons and to his later works, is the product of his broad Scottish Humanistic education. From this firm foundation, Thomson went on to develop his own unique adaptations, in religious-descriptive and didactic poetry, of the classics he so well knew and loved.

This survey of The Seasons according to its various generic aspects--descriptive (Chapter V), religious-didactic and philosophical, socio-political, neoclassical-- cannot begin to convey the complexity of Thomson's vision, his blend of these various elements. They cannot, in the final analysis, be separated from one another without some loss of a sense of the poem's rich texture. Thomson's integration of these diverse themes was usually very successful, sometimes not so smooth; his eclectic mode has given rise to a "problem" of the "unity" of The Seasons which has never been satisfactorily resolved. While the eclectic or miscellaneous mode was certainly not original to Thomson, he took the contemporary aesthetic values of "unity-in-variety," "beauty-in-diversity," to new heights. His extensive use of realistic, dy-

namic and closely-observed natural description in poetry was his particularly Scottish contribution to the British poetic tradition.

* * *

The diversity of purpose governing the multi-aspected Seasons naturally called for a stylistic and linguistic versatility beyond the conventions of formal Augustan English. Thomson seems to have recognised this as soon as he began "Winter"; he set out at once to develop an appropriate medium for his poem. He happily chose the blank verse form for The Seasons, for a variety of reasons.

First, it must be recalled that Thomson was a native Scots speaker, and his relative unfamiliarity with spoken English when he began The Seasons might have influenced his choice of the less-restrictive blank verse form, which was not so heavily dependent on any standardised pronunciation as rhymed verse. Also, many of his contemporary Anglo-Scots were experimenting with blank verse, such as David Mallet (and later, John Armstrong and Robert Blair). Thomson was bolder later in his career, after he had been living in London for many years; his Castle of Indolence uses an intricate, Spenserian rhymed verse-form. But there are a number of other good reasons why Thomson chose blank verse for The Seasons.

Thomson certainly had his chief models in mind when he chose blank verse: Milton, the Scriptures and Virgil. The elegant, lyrical prose of the Authorised Version, as well as the economic, expressive Latin hexametres of the Georgics and Eclogues, impressed him with their dignity and decorum. Powerful Miltonic use of blank verse in

English, allowing freedom from the restraint of rhyme in order that dynamic description and didactic message might be rendered most precisely, probably ultimately persuaded Thomson to attempt the form himself. Shaftesbury, whom Thomson had read in youth, "had commended Milton for throwing off 'the horrid Discord of jingling Rhyme.'"¹⁰³ Shaftesbury's "Letter Concerning Design" relates aesthetic taste to political attitude;¹⁰⁴ Milton's "taste" for blank verse, representing "freedom from neo-classical restraints,"¹⁰⁵ has thus been linked specifically with Whiggish liberalism and the cause of liberty,¹⁰⁶ such as Thomson espoused. The Preface to the 1738 edition of Milton's Areopagitica,¹⁰⁷ attributed to Thomson, likewise praises Milton's libertarian sentiments. Thomson's choice of blank verse may thus have been, to an extent, a matter of Whig political principle; it was natural to one "with such strong dislike for limitations of every kind."¹⁰⁸

However, Thomson's blank verse is by no means simply an imitation of Milton's; Dr. Johnson remarked that, "His [Thomson's] blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton or any other poet than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction are of his own growth." Johnson said of The Seasons, that it is "one of the works in which blank verse seems properly used; Thomson's wide expansion of general views, and his enumeration of circumstantial varieties, would have been obstructed and embarrassed by the frequent intersection of the sense, which are the necessary effects of rhyme."¹⁰⁹ Thomson's blank verse does not press relentlessly forward as does Milton's in Paradise Lost; rather, its rhythms are more natural and varied, in keeping with The Seasons' subject-matter. It often "a-

chieves a more breathless and excited rhythm" than Milton's,¹¹⁰ as Thomson imitates in language and syntax the changing, transforming "hidden structure" or pattern of the natural scene he describes.¹¹¹ Rhyme does not interfere with the continuous processes and actions of nature which he portrays; less-restrictive, more open blank verse, allowing greater syntactical flexibility, is simply the most "natural" and appropriate form for such poetry of nature.

Like Thomson's versatile blank verse form, and his bold manipulation of syntax, his "special diction" also "derive[s]" from his constant, almost obsessive effort to reveal the patterns he perceives as he 'sees' the world."¹¹² Thomson's development of a unique poetic language was, perhaps, likewise rooted in his naïveté about formal English usage, but soon grew to exemplify that new "freedom" of poetic conception which allowed his genius to flourish. Thomson's poetic language in The Seasons is no more purely Augustan English than is the variety of themes and modes he employs in the poem. It is a decorously "eclectic" literary language, which parallels to a great extent the different Seasons genres, i.e. georgic-neoclassical, Scottish-descriptive, religious-didactic and scientific. Patricia M. Spacks notes that Thomson's,

dependence on varied sorts of language, used often in conjunction with one another, is itself another representation of the 'order in variety' theme. Each kind of language points to a distinct way of perceiving; the juxtaposition of varied dictions insists that many different modes of perception must merge to express even approximate truths about nature.¹¹³

Thomson's experimentation with words goes along with his experimentation with many conceptions and visualisations in the poem. Ralph Cohen, too, especially appreciates the experimental or "empirical"

nature of Thomson's language.¹¹⁴ Thomson "does not scruple to take liberties with the language: he coins new words, uses old ones in unusual senses, forms fresh compounds, turns adjectives into adverbs, and forces the construction of verbs, inverts the natural order of sentences, and at times neglects their grammatical construction."¹¹⁵ Thomson "in short has created a kind of new language for himself."¹¹⁶

Thomson, to whom literary English was a "foreign language" (or at least, a less-familiar language than his native Scots and even his early-acquired Latin), found it an inadequate vehicle for his diverse descriptive poem of religion and nature, and found it necessary thus to experiment with language, ultimately to create a new poetic diction for his new type of poetry. His language-potential was not merely bi-lingual (Latin, English) but tri-lingual (Scots); in seeking accuracy and comprehensiveness, he succeeded in stretching English poetic diction, through Latinate "neo-auration" (much as Gavin Douglas had done), through the exploitation of Biblical and homiletic elements and scientific terms, and, importantly, through use of Scots or northern forms and connotations derived from his Scottish linguistic heritage.

Thomson's literary language in The Seasons has its faults, such as the occasional tendency to verbosity as, groping for the "correct" or most precise word or phrase,¹¹⁷ he seems to try out several grand-sounding alternatives, as well as the tendency to pomposity or rhetorical flourish,¹¹⁸ but these faults, like his strengths, are rooted in his Scottishness. That Thomson's originality of diction, his experimental poetic language, was somehow especially "Scottish" was recognised even in his own day, as the English poet William Somerville

(who did not approve) advised Thomson to:

Read Philips much, consider Milton more;
 But from their dross extract the purer ore.
 To coin new words, or to restore the old,
 In southern bards is dangerous and bold;
 But rarely, very rarely, will succeed,
 When minted on the other side of Tweed.
 Let perspicuity o'er all preside —
 Soon shalt thou be the nation's joy and pride.¹¹⁹

Happily, Thomson ignored Somerville's advice, and continued to follow his Scottish and experimental instincts in the matter of language, and proved himself that very rare Anglo-Scottish "success." He succeeded in demonstrating the ideal of "progressive" adaptation which informs The Seasons, by ingeniously applying it to language, adapting Augustan English literary language, the better to "control" nature through poetic art.

In dealing with a poem of The Seasons' length and complexity, it is perhaps inadequate to attempt to analyse the various aspects of the language separately (as it was less than adequate to analyse the poem's diverse themes in isolation from one another); infinite illustrations could be given, of the types of diction Thomson employs and of his blends of different types of diction, but here only a few examples, where one or another type predominates, must suffice to demonstrate Thomson's linguistic versatility and skill.

The most often noted-- and censured-- characteristic of Thomson's language in The Seasons is its pervasive Latinity. In formal Augustan English "public" poetry, some Latinisms would of course be expected, as a means of setting the elevated, neoclassical tone. Also, the use of strongly Latinate English was a Miltonic trait; Thomson followed

as well, Milton's practise of forming many compound-words (especially adjectives), often using Latinate words,¹²⁰ to describe more accurately. Thomson's Latinate language in The Seasons, however, surpasses even Milton's in density. Further, Thomson, to a greater extent than Milton, employs words in their original Latin sense; he seems at times to choose words directly from the Latin, words which have not already been filtered through literary English, to achieve maximum precision. An example is the word "cogenial" ("Winter," l. 6, where the poet hails the season's "cogenial horrors"), rather than the standard Latinate English version of the word, "congenial." "Cogenial" seems to indicate a more personal, one-to-one relationship between himself and the familiar Scottish season he addresses, than does the more generalising "congenial";¹²¹ the distinction Thomson conveys, though fine, is nonetheless real. In addition to such directly conceived Latinate words, much of Thomson's Latinate diction derives from his classical mentor, Virgil; particularly the more descriptive scenes which Thomson adapted from the Georgics are replete with Virgilian Latinisms. Thomson's use of such Virgilian language was better appreciated in his own day than in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as it could subtly and succinctly evoke a Virgilian "atmosphere," with its connotations of rural "nostalgic progressivism," to which the common audience (lacking today) would favourably respond.¹²² Thomson's strongly Latinate English "came naturally to a Lowland Scot"¹²³ to a great extent. Latin had, of course, long been the "second language," the formal diplomatic language of Scotland; Latin directly influenced Middle Scots,¹²⁴ and while Scots had weakened by the eighteenth century, Latin maintained its close relationship with Scottish literature as the "ideal" literary language.¹²⁵ English ran a poor third until the

eighteenth century. Latin continued to be taught in schools such as the Jedburgh Grammar School side-by-side with English grammar, in a mutually-reinforcing learning process. Thomson as a youth in Scotland was, at school and at Edinburgh University, steeped in classicism; his humanistic education and cultural bias "inclined him to choose those words which had a Latin root,"¹²⁶ over southern English words, in seeking both descriptive precision and rich connotation; Latin had been a formal literary language in Scotland long before the Augustan English trend, rendering Latinate English most decorous for the elevated, serious poetic subjects of The Seasons, religion and nature. Thomson was less familiar even with colloquial English (English outside of formal, conventional poetic diction) than he was with Latin. Thomson's language in The Seasons has consequently occasioned problems for those of a different linguistic background than his own; countless critics have charged him with obscurity, vagueness, imprecision and pomposity,¹²⁷ usually because of the strong Latinate element of his language. His "aureation" was not merely an attempt to create "heightened dignity,"¹²⁸ however; Thomson drew upon Latin especially to enrich the expressive, descriptive power and precision of literary English. He actually added to the stock of "poetical" diction in English, in a process eminently comparable to Gavin Douglas's enrichment of literary Middle Scots. Far from being forced or stilted, Thomson's Latinate diction was perfectly natural to him, and it usually succeeded in conveying exactly what he intended.¹²⁹ So persistent has been the Scottish Humanistic bias in education, that the "educated Scot" even today would have little problem with Thomson's Latinate diction.¹³⁰

If Thomson seemed occasionally to use more or more grandiose words and more complex constructions than would seem necessary, it was often due

to his classical rhetorical training in Scotland.¹³¹ Such a fault usually occurred in his more "public," Augustan voice where abstract ideas and bombastic pronouncements left no room for natural description (witness Liberty, and to an extent, the dramas), and where the sonorous effect of the words overpowered their sense and proportion. Rhetoric, or effective, persuasive speech and writing, had become something of a Scottish preoccupation by the eighteenth century: one recalls Professor William Hamilton's censure of Thomson's florid Psalm-exercise, which was a "wholesome censure no doubt, and a common censure in Scotland. The Scottish student has always been prone to rhetoric...."¹³² Rigorous rhetorical training, along with the strong classical emphasis in general, persisted in Scotland longer than in England. In choosing to write primarily descriptive poetry, Thomson was working in the classical rhetorical mode of Imitation ("setting forth the nature of a 'thing' in words"-- and Thomson placed new emphasis on these "things" themselves in his realistic descriptions);¹³³ he sought to describe as fully and accurately as he could. His rhetoric was liable to fail him when he left the basis of descriptio, or, occasionally, when in his enthusiasm for comprehensiveness of expression he simply said too much, and lost the ability to "discriminate."¹³⁴ Still, Thomson's neoclassical, Latinate linguistic strength, within English poetry, remained one of his most effective rhetorical tools.

Passages demonstrating Thomson's Latinity abound in The Seasons, and are as varied as the classical tradition itself; some are virtually Virgilian paraphrases, some are Miltonic or pastoral-conventional, and others, like the following passage, are Thomson's own brand of natural description, employing a large proportion of carefully-chosen Latinisms. The passage describes the coming of a spring shower:

...'Tis silence all,
 And pleasing expectation. Herds and flocks
 Drop the dry sprig, and mute-imploring eye
 The falling verdure. Hushed in short suspense,
 The plummy people streak their wings with oil
 To throw the lucid moisture trickling off,
 And wait the approaching sign to strike at once
 Into the general choir. Even mountains, vales,
 And forests seem, impatient, to demand
 The promised sweetness. Man superior walks 170
 Amid the glad creation, musing praise
 And looking lively gratitude. At last
 The clouds consign their treasures to the fields,
 And, softly shaking on the dimpled pool
 Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow
 In large effusion o'er the freshened world.
 The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard
 By such as wander through the forest-walks,
 Beneath the umbrageous multitude of leaves.
 But who can hold the shade while Heaven descends
 In universal bounty, shedding herbs 181
 And fruits and flowers on Nature's ample lap?
 Swift fancy fired anticipates their growth;
 And, while the milky nutriment distils,
 Beholds the kindling country colour round.
 Thus all day long the full-distended clouds
 Indulge their genial stores, and well-showered earth
 Is deep enriched with vegetable life;
 Till, in the western sky, the downward sun
 Looks out effulgent from amid the flush 190
 Of broken clouds, gay-shifting to his beam.
 The rapid radiance instantaneous strikes
 The illumined mountain, through the forest streams,
 Shakes on the floods, and in a yellow mist,
 Far smoking o'er the interminable plain,
 In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.
 Moist, bright, and green, the landscape laughs around.
 Full swell the woods; their every music wakes,
 Mixed in wild concert, with the warbling brooks
 Increased, the distant bleatings of the hills, 200
 The hollow lows responsive from the vales,
 Whence, blending all, the sweetened zephyr springs.
 ("Spring," ll. 161-202)

("A persistent problem in examining The Seasons is that its effects usually depend on units about a hundred lines long: too long for quotation or detailed analysis.")¹³⁵

The great abundance of Latinate words is noteworthy here: "expectation," "imploring," "verdure," "suspense," "lucid," "general," "im-

patient," "superior," "gratitude," "consign," "prelusive," "effusion," "umbrageous multitude," "universal," "anticipates," "nutriment," "distils," "full-distended," "indulge," "genial," "enrich," "vegetable," "effulgent," "rapid," "radiance," "instantaneous," "illuminated," "interminable," "concert," "gems," "increased," "responsive," and so on. There are also several words of Greek root, such as "musing," "myriads" and "zephyr." Most of these Latinate words represent standard English words with a Latin root, to which Thomson was naturally drawn; others represent the more important tendency of the poet to choose words, apparently directly from the Latin, using them in their original Latin sense (for example, "indulge" in the sense of "yield, give up"; "gems" in the sense of "buds"). Many are multisyllabic, with the Latinate prefix or suffix further limited the meaning and allowing even greater accuracy. These were simply the most precise descriptive words Thomson, who was less familiar with English than with Latin, had with which to work.

Thomson intended this passage as a rather broad, generalised description of the pattern and process of the spring shower, rather than a minutely-observed scene; he wanted to show the effects of the shower on all nature, on "glad creation" and the "freshened world," in a concise yet comprehensive way. Typically, this mild, temperate "Spring" scene is rather more stylised and idealised than many of the more realistic inclement scenes in "Winter" and "Autumn," yet scenes of both types do occur in each Season. Thomson's use of Latinisms here achieves precisely the desired result. For example, the epithet "plumy people" (l. 165) is typical of Thomson's use of periphrasis to point out a particular group (without going into individual descriptions) within the larger landscape.¹³⁶ Periphrasis, or an indirect,

circumlocutionary way of saying something, in few but meaningful words (as Despauter defined it),¹³⁷ is based in logic, and is one rhetorical means of ordering, classifying, putting an element of a complex scene in perspective. Thomson follows this periphrasis with a more detailed description of the group's (birds') actions. This illustrates a Virgilian-type economy of poetic language, and also represents the Georgics theme of controlling the landscape-- here, by the poet's controlling the reader's perception of the poetic, imaginative landscape. Thomson's periphrases were used, "not to escape vulgarity, but precisely and evocatively....The periphrasis serves not only to evoke the 'sublime' thrill; it so controls and directs the reader's associations that he shares the thrill. The mere noun is incapable of either..."; "Thomson needed these periphrases and must have found them even if Milton had never written...."¹³⁸ "Milky nutriment" (l. 184), including all types within the group of life-giving sap, is another such periphrasis, as is the "umbrageous multitude of leaves" (l. 179), which economically conveys the depth and breadth of the shade and the sheer numbers of all types of leaves which create such density. The Latinate multisyllables further suggest the massing, spreading effect of the many leaves. Another specifically Virgilian Latinate usage is "gems" (l. 196); Thomson uses the Latin word which means both flower-buds and jewels, to suggest the jewel-like colour and sparkle of the dewy buds.¹³⁹ Thomson's frequent inversions of syntax (for example, l. 177; ll. 174-5; l. 198; and so on) also point to his constant awareness of Latinate constructions. His use of Latinisms does, to a great extent, lend dignity and classical importance to the natural processes he so describes, associating them with the Georgics and the classical milieu in general, and adding a fresh response to the

experience of the ancients.¹⁴⁰ But more significantly, Thomson's "aureation" conveys much more precisely (especially to the classically-tuned ear) each aspect of the scene which the poet describes: this is the manifest beauty of Thomson's Scottish Humanistic heritage.

If Thomson's education in the Humanities and classical Rhetoric so strongly influenced his poetic expression, his upbringing as a son of the manse and Divinity-student was also very influential. Language derived from Christian Neoplatonism and Physico-theology, as well as from the classical-Christian poetry of Milton, is in abundant evidence in The Seasons; more directly, the very language of the Scriptures is there, as is the forceful pulpit-rhetoric of old-style Scottish Calvinism. All of these religious influences on Thomson's language were discernible, it will be recalled, as early as the poet's juvenilia. The Seasons' motivation being primarily a religious one, both prayerful and didactic functions operate; the persuasive force of traditional rhetoric is enhanced by the rhetoric of the Bible and the sermon. Both the rigorous homiletic tone, and the "mystical" enthusiastic tone, representing two aspects of Thomson's deeply-engrained Scottish Calvinistic emotional response, echo throughout The Seasons. The Scriptural allusions which occur in the poem are almost all from the Old Testament, with few exceptions:¹⁴¹ most notable allusions are to Job, Genesis, Ruth, Ecclesiastes and Psalms. Even the predominantly neoclassical, Latinate passage quoted above (the "Spring" shower) shows the influence of Psalm language, for example, as it describes the rain as, "shedding herbs / And fruits and flowers" (ll. 181-2); also, the scientific image of "distillation" blends with the Scriptural imagery here.¹⁴²

Thomson's stern rhetorical, religious-didactic voice is heard in the vividly concretising language of such passages as "Summer" (ll. 318-51) on "Creative Wisdom" and the vanity of those who presume to disregard it ("Let no presuming impious railer tax / Creative Wisdom..."); both the message and the manner of the passage, which J. Logie Robertson calls a "specimen of Thomson's 'preaching' style,"¹⁴³ express the old-style Scottish Calvinistic negative rhetoric of fear and trepidation. The passage concludes with a forceful insect-parable, typical of the highly visual, image-full Scottish sermon style:¹⁴⁴

Thick in yon stream of light, a thousand ways,
 Upward and downward, thwarting and convolved,
 The quivering nations sport; till, tempest-winged,
 Fierce Winter sweeps them from the face of day.
 Even so luxurious men, unheeding, pass
 An idle summer life in fortune's shine,
 A season's glitter! Thus they flutter on
 From toy to toy, from vanity to vice;
 Till, blown away by death, oblivion comes
 Behind and strikes them from the book of life.
 ("Summer," ll. 342-51)

This passage illustrates Thomson's blending of Latinate descriptive language ("convolved," "luxurious," and the periphrasis "quivering nations") and his own brand of concise descriptive epithet ("tempest-winged") with the mounting intensity of the language of the pulpit. The several characteristically highly-visual metaphors of people "fluttering" like insects in an atmosphere of "shine" and "glitter," from "toy to toy," then "blown away" and struck from behind from the "book of life" build up, work through cumulative force rather than any attempt at accuracy of description in the parable: in its overall emotional impact, the comparison between vulnerable insects and men is rhetorically effective. The adverbial "even so" fairly booms with didactic empha-

sis, making clear the comparison and imitating the sudden, frightening force of death's ("Fierce Winter"'s) blow; the conventional seasonal symbol of man's death as "Winter" is apt, and contrasts effectively with the "Summer" context of the parable, also adding emphasis. Parallelism, alliteration and repetition ("from the face of day"; "from toy to toy"; "from vanity to vice"; "from the book of life") reinforce the intensifying message of vain man's inexorable march to death, and the final spiritual exile ("from") of oblivion.

Another notable passage of homiletic rhetoric, the conclusion to "Winter" (ll. 1028-69), has been justly compared with Robert Blair's

The Grave:¹⁴⁵

...Behold, fond man!
 See here thy pictured life; pass some few years,
 Thy flowering Spring, thy Summer's ardent strength, 1031
 Thy sober Autumn fading into age,
 And pale concluding Winter comes at last
 And shuts the scene. Ah! whither now are fled
 Those dreams of greatness? those unsolid hopes
 Of happiness? those longings after fame?
 Those restless cares? those busy bustling days?
 Those gay-spent festive nights? those veering thoughts,
 Lost between good and ill, that shared thy life?
 All now are vanished! Virtue sole survives—
 Immortal, never-failing friend of man, 1040
 His guide to happiness on high. And see!
 'Tis come, the glorious morn! the second birth
 Of heaven and earth! awakening nature hears
 The new-creating word, and starts to life
 In every heightened form, from pain and death
 For ever free. The great eternal scheme,
 Involving all, and in a perfect whole
 Uniting, as the prospect wider spreads,
 To reason's eye refined clears up apace.
 Ye vainly wise! ye blind presumptuous! now, 1050
 Confounded in the dust, adore that Power
 And Wisdom—oft arraigned: see now the cause
 Why unassuming worth in secret lived
 And died neglected: why the good man's share
 In life was gall and bitterness of soul:
 Why the lone widow and her orphans pined
 In starving solitude; while luxury
 In palaces lay straining her low thought (cont'd)

To form unreal wants; why heaven-born truth
 And moderation fair wore the red marks
 Of superstition's scourge; why licensed pain,
 That cruel spoiler, that embosomed foe,
 Embittered all our bliss. Ye good distressed:
 Ye noble few! who here unbending stand
 Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up a while,
 And what your bounded view, which only saw
 A little part, deemed evil is no more:
 The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
 And one unbounded Spring encircle all.

1060

("Winter," ll. 1028-69)

Thomson's lengthy address certainly does preach the hard lesson of Blair's Grave, of mortality and the vain, delusive earthly life (cf. Thomson's "Winter," ll. 322-53 on the same theme); like Blair, Thomson ultimately holds out hope to the faithful of the final resurrection and afterlife, but not without making it plain that life on earth is brief and difficult, and that death is inevitable. Again the poet employs vivid, highly effective visual imagery to make tangible his moral message: the conventional metaphor of man's life compared with the passing of the seasons (rendered in few yet accurately-chosen adjectives, "flowering," "ardent," "fading," "pale") and the deliberately sentimental portraits of the Job-like "good" and patient man and the "lone widow," calculated to excite sympathy. Blair, too, used abundant and emotive visual imagery to illustrate his stern sermon, likewise based on Job; much of his description focused on human characters and their various responses to death, and he also employed a great deal of imagery from the natural world. Thomson's liberal use of exclamations in direct address is typical of such sermon-rhetoric, and can also be found in The Grave. The series of parallel, insistent questions ("Ah! whither now are fled...?") is another effective rhetorical device; the answer is blunt, devastating: "All now are vanished!" (l. 1039-- the three unstressed single-syllabled words imitate the

rhythm of the knell, followed by the accented exclamation "van'ished," emphasising the finality of death). The poetic sermon is carefully-structured and remarkable in its concision. It is logically coherent, as the tone alternates persuasively from the grim warning of mortality, to enthusiastic, benevolistic interpretation of Providence (God's "great eternal scheme," couched in Christian Neoplatonic terms), to a severe harangue to the "vainly wise" who lack faith in Providence, and finally to the resolute encouragement offered to the faithful. Not only Scottish Calvinistic pulpit-rhetoric, but also Augustan didacticism operate in this passage: the abstracts "Virtue," "luxury," "heaven-born truth," "moderation," "superstition," and "licensed pain" take on concrete substance as the poet demonstrates his concern for the general, public good as well as for individual spiritual welfare. Thomson is in effect reiterating Pope's "partial evil - universal good" maxim here. The poet draws "Winter" itself to a close with marvellously apt seasonal symbolism (incorporating the Virgilian "eternal Spring" ideal), as "The storms of wintry time will quickly pass, / And one unbounded Spring encircle all."

A different sort of religious passage, from the "Hymn on the Seasons," illustrates direct Scriptural influence on Thomson's language in The Seasons:

Nature, attend! join, every living soul
 Beneath the spacious temple of the sky,
 In adoration join; and ardent raise
 One general song! To him, ye vocal gales,
 Breathe soft, whose spirit in your freshness breathes:

40

...
 And ye, whose bolder note is heard afar,
 Who shake the astonished world, lift high to Heaven
 The impetuous song, ...
 His praise, ye brooks, attune, ye trembling rills;

...

(cont'd)

Ye headlong torrents, rapid and profound;
 Ye softer floods, that lead the humid maze
 Along the vale; and thou, majestic main,
 A secret world of wonders in thyself,
 Sound his stupendous praise...

...
 Soft roll your incense, herbs, and fruits, and flowers,
 In mingled clouds to him...

...
 Ye forests, bend; ye harvests, wave to him-

59

...
 Ye that keep watch in heaven, as earth asleep
 Unconscious lies, effuse your mildest beams,
 Ye constellations!...

...
 Bleat out afresh, ye hills; ye mossy rocks,
 Retain the sound; the broad responsive low,
 Ye valleys, raise; for the Great Shepherd reigns,

...
 Ye woodlands all, awake: a boundless song
 Burst from the groves...

...
 Ye, chief, for whom the whole creation smiles,
 At once the head, the heart, the tongue of all,
 Crown the great hymn!...

81

...
 Still sing the God of Seasons as they roll.
 For me, when I forget the darling theme,
 Whether the blossom blows, the summer-ray
 Russets the plain, inspiring autumn gleams,
 Or winter rises in the blackening east,
 Be my tongue mute, may fancy paint no more,
 And, dead to joy, forget my heart to beat!

("Hymn," ll. 37-99)

This substantial passage (abbreviated here) is closely based on Psalm 148, in language and structure as well as in theme; it is typical of Thomson's more enthusiastic, exuberant poetical "praising" passages in The Seasons. Even this paraphrase is not purely Psalm-like, however; it, like the poet's other religious passages, illustrates subtle linguistic blending. Latinisms abound: "attend," "ardent," "general," "impetuous," "profound" (note its use in the original Latin sense, describing literally deep water), "humid," "stupendous," "unconscious," "effuse," "constellations," "retain," "responsive," "inspiring," and so on. The passage is a hymn of praise, rising up through all cre-

ation, directly addressed in the Biblical "Ye"; repetition of the poet's appeal to each of "Ye" creatures, adds rhetorical force to the enthusiastic Psalm (the tone is also heightened with a perhaps too-liberal use of exclamation marks). Alliteration is strong, enhancing sound-effects and forward, intensifying movement ("thou, majestic main, / A secret world of wonders in thyself, / Sound his stupendous praise," ll. 52-4, and so on). Thomson's characteristic compounds also occur: "scarcely-waving," l. 43, "long-resounding," l. 85; "summer-ray," l. 95. Natural description is inherent in the religious and rhetorical purpose of this passage, and shows Thomson in one of his happiest modes; typically, vigorous verbs and verb-forms are abundant and well-chosen, and nature is portrayed in joyous process.

Another type of diction which Thomson employs, more sparingly but to good effect in The Seasons, is the language of science. Thomson's addition of scientific vocabulary (frequently based on Newtonian concepts learned in Scotland), contributes to the didactic function of the poem, as well as to its description. An example is the "rainbow" passage from "Spring":

Meantime, refracted from yon eastern cloud,
 Bestriding earth, the grand ethereal bow
 Shoots up immense; and every hue unfolds,
 In fair proportion running from the red
 To where the violet fades into the sky.
 Here, awful Newton, the dissolving clouds
 Form, fronting on the sun, thy showery prism;
 And to the sage-instructed eye unfold
 The various twine of light, by thee disclosed
 From the white mingling maze. Not so the swain;
 He wondering views the bright enchantment bend
 Delightful o'er the radiant fields, and runs
 To catch the falling glory; but amazed
 Beholds the amusive arch before him fly,
 Then vanish quite away... ("Spring," ll. 203-17)

Again, Latinisms ("immense," "proportion," "dissolving," "instructed," "various," "disclosed," "radiant," "amusive") and even a Scotticism or Scottish expression ("meantime," l. 203) occur, as well as several compact and imaginative descriptive epithets ("bestriding earth," "grand ethereal bow," "showery prism," "various twine of light," "white mingling maze," "falling glory," "amusive arch") which strike a delicate balance between real and ideal, visual and abstract-- like the rainbow, light itself, which hovers between a visual, palpable phenomenon and a mysterious, intangible, atmospheric beauty. Thomson pays specific tribute to Newton (l. 208), and uses such scientific language as "refracted" and "prism," adding realism and demonstrating his own "sage-instructed eye," his knowledge of and admiration for the laws of nature; he simultaneously portrays the swain's wonder at the beauty of the strange phenomenon, a wonder which Thomson himself never lost. The description thus has double the impact.

Classical, religious and scientific influences on Thomson's diction do not, however, fully account for the extraordinary immediacy of most of the descriptive passage in The Seasons. The poet required a still-broader, more flexible and expressive literary language-- and he set out to forge it. Thomson's original use of language comes in large part from his background as a Scots speaker; "the poet kept until the end of his life some features of the vocabulary and accent of his fellow-countrymen North of the Tweed,"¹⁴⁶ and he surely knew at least some Scots literature (and, of course, oral tradition including the ballads). This is not to say that Scotticisms and northern archaisms abound in The Seasons, though some are there; rather, the poet's habits of mind, his choice of certain types of descriptive language owe much

to those certain traits of Scots speech and literature which contribute to its acknowledged expressive power. These characteristics include: heavy alliteration (which Thomson uses especially strongly in passages describing vigorous action in nature) as well as assonance and consonance, and a general tendency to choose onomatopoeic words whose sound-effects enhance their meanings; "concreteness and realism,"¹⁴⁷ and detailed, "intimate" literary representation¹⁴⁸ (which he achieves through dynamic personification and "illusive allusion," and through careful, close observation); preoccupation, and tendency to experiment freely, with verbs and verb-forms, the better to describe in terms of process and transformation (he shares this descriptive energy with the ballads, and also with the Middle Scots Makars, notably Gavin Douglas); and flexibility of syntax which comes from being "trilingual" (as Scots and Latin syntaxes both differ from standard English-- Thomson increasingly explored "disarrangement of syntax" as one means of achieving economy of language).¹⁴⁹ Thomson did not hesitate to choose more commonplace or unusual words, to use alongside of Latinate or formal, poetic English ones, if they conveyed more precisely what he intended to describe; he was also skilled at coining new words, and especially compound epithets, to gain precision and concision. These compounds were mostly used as adjectives (joining adverb with participle); he occasionally joined two nouns, suggesting the archaic, periphrastic "kenning" (for example, "summer-ray," "Hymn," l. 95, with its compact connotative force; or "forest-walks," "Spring," l. 178). He also freely exchanged parts of speech when he felt it expedient. Similar compounds and transfers were to some extent a Miltonic trait,¹⁵⁰ but Thomson displayed unprecedented boldness in his experimental use of

diction and syntax.

These effective "Scottish" and/or innovative characteristics of Thomson's language can be seen even in such predominantly Latinate passages as the first quoted above, the "Spring" shower. Some alliteration occurs to reinforce description ("drop the dry sprig," l. 163, imitates the sound of a light fallen object; "softly shaking," l. 174, suggests the gentle action; "kindling country colour," l. 185, strengthens the imagery of burning, "fired fancy," with the sound of crackling flames). Consonance and assonance also contribute to the descriptions ("hollow lows," l. 201; the assonance of the long "o" recreates the animals' sound and, in its shape, adds to the "hollow" idea. The repeated "low" also emphasises both the echo-effect of the sound, and the "low" depth of the valley itself. This phrase first occurred in Thomson's juvenile "Of a Country Life," l. 10, as "hollow lowings"). Onomatopoeic words include "trickling" (l. 166), "shaking" and "shakes" (ll. 174 and 194), "patter" (l. 177), "twinkling" (l. 196), "warbling" (l. 199), and "dimpled" (l. 174; originally "dimply," 1728-38). Unexpected but effective descriptive images are "kindling," "fired," and "smoking," to depict the burning imagination's enlivening of the colourful, transforming landscape. Compound-words function in various ways, both condensing and intensifying the description: "forest-walks" (l. 178), "mute-imploring" (l. 163), "well-showered" (l. 187), "gay-shifting" (l. 191), and "full-distended" (l. 186). Note the frequency of verbal forms in Thomson's language, particularly the variety of participles acting as adjectives and adverbs; "the heavy stress on participles makes the natural world itself seem to partake in some vast action."¹⁵¹ Participles as nouns (gerunds) also recur ("bleat-ings"), as well as such unusual verb usages as "hold" (as, "to remain

in"), "indulge" (in the original Latin sense of "to yield") and, "looking" (l. 172, "looking lively gratitude," with "looking" given the double sense of man's "viewing" or seeing action, and of his "grateful" countenance, in the implied, adjectival interpretation). Similarly, Thomson often uses adjectives with adverbial force (for example, "Man superior walks," l. 170; "earth / Is deep enriched," l. 188; "radiance instantaneous strikes," l. 192; "sun / Looks out effulgent," l. 190; "shower is scarce to patter heard," l. 177); Milton used this device, but far less frequently than does Thomson.¹⁵² This unusual usage sets up a certain ambiguity as to whether these words (called "quasi-adverbs," OED) modify their nouns, or whether they are simply contracted adverbs and thus refer to the verbs. In fact, while they are, grammatically, inverted adjectives, they also add a new dimension to the description through the tension they create, contributing to the interpretation of the verb as well, and drawing noun and verb into closer, active relationship. "Man superior walks" indicates that man is "superior" to the rest of earthly creation, and also describes his manner of walking, as with his intelligence he oversees the world. The "shower is scarce to patter heard" connotes both the sparse quantity and the gentle, quiet sound or quality of the falling rain. "Radiance instantaneous strikes" describes the suddenness of its action, and "aureates" the quick brilliance of the "radiance" itself. "Earth / Is deep enriched" refers both to the depths of the earth and to the quality of the shower's enriching. Such devices as this, which occurs very frequently throughout The Seasons, are what some critics have viewed as "vague" or indecorous and incorrect characteristics of Thomson's language, but instead they should be recognised as examples of the subtlety, complexity and originality of the poet's descriptive

language, as he portrays the natural world-in-process. Incidentally, Thomson's deletion of the adverbial suffix "ly" in such forms also calls to mind the Middle Scots contraction of certain adjectives in the "clipped adjectival form,"¹⁵³ such as "contrair," "extraordinair," and "necessair," which were likewise transposed, placed after their nouns; such variations in Thomson's poetic language give it further archaic, vernacular flavour. Thomson's preoccupation with all verb-forms (including the "illusiv e allusion" of dynamic personification) is possibly the most notable characteristic of the poet's experimental poetic diction, throughout The Seasons; this is his key to the vigorous, transformational description of nature-in-process, of the living landscape, which links him with his Scots forebears in both art and folk-poetry who excelled at describing scenes of action and movement, and which is his own highest achievement.

There are numerous passages in The Seasons which support this conclusion. While the above "Spring" shower passage is couched in Thomson's Latinate, neoclassical manner and is thus somewhat distanced and stylised, passages of more pure and immediate description, such as those more clearly influenced by the poet's own Scottish experience, show an even greater sense of energy and vitality, and underlying "Scottish" linguistic influence. The following brief examples will illustrate this peculiar quality of "race" or native vitality, which Dr. Johnson had recognised in Thomson's descriptive language. The first of these passages demonstrates Thomson's humanitarian sympathy, and describes the hunted hare's vain search for refuge from her predators:

Poor is the triumph o'er the timid hare!
 Scared from the corn, and now to some lone seat
 Retired—the rushy fen, the ragged furze
 Stretched o'er the stony heath, the stubble chapped,

(cont'd)

The thistly lawn, the thick entangled broom,
 Of the same friendly hue the withered fern,
 The fallow ground laid open to the sun
 Concoctive, and the nodding sandy bank
 Hung o'er the mazes of the mountain brook.
 ("Autumn," ll. 401-9)

Heavy alliteration reinforces the natural description: "rushy fen... ragged furze," "friendly hue...fern" (the "r" and "f" alliteration suggests swift movement through the varied undergrowth, and imitates the initial rough, then gentle, rustling sounds as the hare moves through the landscape); "stretched...stony...stubble," and "thistly lawn...thick...broom" ("st" and "th" suggest the hare's forcing past obstructions in the rugged undergrowth); "mazes of the mountain brook" (softer "m" connotes the slow, gentle winding of the stream). In general, the alliteration facilitates the sense of rapid yet cautious forward movement of the hare's search for hiding. Thomson's word choices tend to be onomatopoeic: "stubble," "ragged," "chapped," "thistly," "entangled." He also follows the practice, often seen in Scots poetry, of listing or cataloguing the elements of the varied landscape, while at the same time describing them with apt adjectives and effective alliteration; the concise cataloguing or quick shifting of the descriptive focus from one place to the next, also imitates the hare's breathless movements. The setting is probably Scottish: hints are "thistly" (the national flower, though not exclusive to Scotland), and the Scotticism "chapped" (or, having been dealt a blow, cut down, a variation of "chopped," Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue). "O'er," which occurs frequently in the poem, is of course conventional poetical diction, but also reflects current Scottish pronunciation of "over," according to James Beattie.¹⁵⁴ The Latinism "concoctive" stands out amid the more colloquial descriptive language here; it is another

of Thomson's "quasi-adverbs," and conveys the sun's mysterious power as well as the complex process of natural chemistry taking place in the "fallow ground." While the descriptive force of this passage has survived revision, there was perhaps some "loss of race" through the poet's re-working here; J. Logie Robertson cites the phrase, "scared from the corn" (l. 402), which had been (1730-38) "shook from the corn,"¹⁵⁵ as an example of Thomson's substitution of a rather "tame" word for a more "robust" one. Still, the passage is a concise and vivid recreation of the hare's frantic search for camouflage in a varied and difficult landscape; typically, the emphasis is on action and movement, with subtle use of sound-effects and unusual, well-chosen modifiers.

Another passage, describing a "Scottish" scene¹⁵⁶ of the river in spate, likewise demonstrates Thomson's skill at dynamic natural description:

Wide o'er the brim, with many a torrent swelled,
 And the mixed ruin of its banks o'erspread,
 At last the roused-up river pours along:
 Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes,
 From the rude mountain and the mossy wild,
 Tumbling through rocks abrupt, and sounding far;
 Then o'er the sanded valley floating spreads,
 Calm, sluggish, silent; till again, constrained
 Between two meeting hills, it bursts a way
 Where rocks and woods o'erhang the turbid stream;
 There, gathering triple force, rapid and deep,
 It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through.
("Winter," ll. 94-105)

This passage was original to "Winter" (1726, ll. 133-42). The Scots adjective "chapt" (see "chapped," above) appeared here in the original version (1726-38), describing the bare, treeless, rugged mountain; it was altered with "loss of race" to "rude" (l. 98) in 1744. Otherwise, the passage appears happily to have lost little "race" in revision, and even to have gained a certain amount of descriptive impact. Thomson

retained the most effective alliterative line, "Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes" (with its strong caesuras and suggestion of the northern alliterative line, and recalling another such line in "Winter," l. 394, describing the wolves "Burning for blood, bony, and gaunt, and grim"). To this line he prefixed the line, "At last the roused-up river pours along"; the additional "r" alliteration further enhances the sense of the river's movement and sound. The "d" alliteration ("dreadful down") suggests falling, colliding forcefully, as do the assonance ("u") and consonance ("b" and "t") of the phrase "tumbling through rocks abrupt," l. 99. Thomson's characteristic coupling of the participle with the quasi-adverb "abrupt" concisely conveys the river's action on and amid the rocks, in addition to the situation of the rocks themselves; "abrupt" is probably used in the geological sense of "suddenly cropping out," OED, deriving from its Latin sense of "breaking," i.e. interrupting the river's flow. Even the rhythm of the phrase adds to its descriptive force; the smooth participle "tumbling" contrasts sharply with the contracted "abrupt" (transposed to come at the end of the line, imitating the water's sudden impact with the rocks). As the river slows down ("Then o'er the sanded valley floating spreads, / Calm, sluggish, silent," ll. 100-101), "s" alliteration predominates, suggesting smoother, more gentle action; onomatopoeia ("sluggish") also plays a part. The river regains momentum after having been "constrained" between two hills (the weighty Latinate "constrained" creates a concise image of the compacted, forceful river). The "turbid" stream is flooded as the released river "boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through"; in this line, the poet repeats, with slight variation, the energetic caesura pattern noted in l. 97. He also lists in this line, in well-chosen, onomatopoeic verbs, the river's

actions. Again, Thomson has demonstrated his consummate skill at describing, with a strong sense of dramatic pacing, the dynamic events of nature.

Not all of Thomson's revisions of The Seasons were so successful as this. Serious "loss of race" did occur in a number of revised passages, as Dr. Johnson recognised, especially with the removal of some of the poet's more flavourful Scottish diction; J. Logie Robertson agrees¹⁵⁷ that "vitality and vigour" were lost in some of Thomson's revisions. The poet's substitution of more predictable or conventional, "tame" words or lines for more unusual, active and accurate ones, might well have been in deference to English taste,¹⁵⁸ as well as to avoid the possible embarrassment of Scotticisms; it was an attempt to describe, perhaps more thoroughly and clearly (if less interestingly) to a wide-ranging and largely English audience. Many of Thomson's revisions grew too verbose, and not only the original diction, but the effective alliteration and other sound- and syntactic-effects, became submerged. Examples are the "frost" sequence ("Winter," ll. 695 ff.) and the "sea storm" ("Winter," ll. 157-75), where the vivid descriptive core is nearly lost in excess verbiage. Further, Thomson's large-scale revisions such as the addition of so much geographical and socio-political material (especially in 1744) were not always well-integrated, and occasionally detracted from the descriptive basis of the poem. The weight of the added, second-hand material and abstract comment often tended to slow the flow of natural process of each Season, and in some ways the entire poem grew distorted, misshapen.¹⁵⁹ Still, the Scottish descriptive skill is there; the fundamental pattern of transforming natural imagery remains, and can certainly be found even in the final (1746) version of The Seasons. Indeed, the majority of Thomson's

smaller-scale revisions did no great harm, and occasionally even improved upon the original description as the poet developed his own poetic language.

Thomson's many careful revisions of The Seasons fortunately did not expunge all Scotticisms or northern archaisms. G. Gregory Smith criticised Thomson's allowing this to happen: "He has more than once, and with the strongest incongruity, even in diction, let the roughness of the bothie invade his work."¹⁶⁰ There are several different types of "Scotticisms" or Scots analogues which occur in the poem. There are the many words which James Beattie listed as archaic or merely "poetical" in eighteenth-century England, but which remained a part of everyday speech in Scotland at the time, including such words found in The Seasons as, "warble," "swain," "yon"; Beattie's list also included many "poetical" words derived from Latin or Greek which occur in The Seasons, having come naturally to the classically-educated Thomson.¹⁶¹ A number of other words which are not strictly Scotticisms but which come rather from standard English also appear, which the Scots-speaking poet was probably disposed to choose owing to their particular Scots associations of sound or sense. Thomson must have felt (even if on a subconscious level) that these words could convey an enhanced or "double" meaning, where the Scots connotations added to standard English definitions. Some of these words will be examined here. Most important, of course, are the distinctively Scottish or northern usages, some removed in revision, others remaining, such as J. Logie Robertson pointed out in his 1908 Oxford Standard edition and especially his 1891 annotated edition of Thomson.¹⁶² Not surprisingly, most of these occur in "Autumn" and "Winter," Thomson's more "Scottish" Seasons; also, most

tend to occur in passages of detailed, realistic natural description. It is worthwhile to consider all of these types of "Scotticism" closely, as they greatly enrich the English descriptive poetry of The Seasons.

J. Logie Robertson notes that, "raised" ("Autumn," l. 702, "Round the raised nations pours the cup of joy") is "Probably a Scotticism for 'excited by wine.'"¹⁶³ He also lists "baffle" ("Winter," l. 266, "Baffle the raging year"; "Autumn," l. 716, "from the baffled sense / Sinks dark and dreary") as possibly related to the modern Scots "baugh," meaning "dull, or with the edge off."¹⁶⁴ "Baffle," the origin of which is uncertain, and which may have come to Scots from the French, is even closer to the older Scots "bauchle" (OED) and to the modern Scots "bauf" or "baff" (Scottish National Dictionary, "to beat or strike"), and Thomson's usage of it in "Winter" seems to be derived from the additional Scots meaning of "to struggle with," especially with reference to battling an illness or to animals, suffering uneasily (SND). "Baugh" is also a Scots curling term, meaning "dull" ice (SND), the opposite of "keen," one of the poet's favourite words in The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence. Thomson uses "keen" as a standard adjective ("sharp"), and in the more unusual archaic sense as a verb ("Summer," l. 1259, "ices over," and also in the Castle II.L.4) as well as a quasi-adverb ("Winter," 1726, replaced by "ice," 1730 ff., l. 426). Robertson also lists "whelms" ("Winter," l. 273, "O'er the hapless flocks... / The billowy tempest whelms") as a Scots analogue, beyond its standard English connection with "o'er" (i.e. "overwhelms"); he relates it to the Scots "whummles" (or "whemmles," SND), meaning to overturn or capsize.¹⁶⁵ He points out that "cheek" ("Winter," ll. 709-10, "A stronger glow sits on the lively cheek / Of ruddy fire") is possibly

related to the Scots usage of "cheek" as the hearth, or side of the fireplace.¹⁶⁶ The onomatopoeic participial adjective "bickering" ("Winter," l. 725, "Arrests the bickering stream") is said by Robertson to have come from the Celtic, meaning "skirmishing"; Léon Morel also points this out as a Scotticism, and both Robertson and Morel refer to Professor Walter Skeat for this information¹⁶⁷ (OED holds that the origin of the word "bicker" is unknown). "Bicker" is also found in the Castle. In addition to its standard English meaning of "to quarrel," and the noise thereof, "bicker" in Scots and northern dialects also means to move noisily and quickly (SND). As a noun, it is defined in Scots and dialect as a "short rapid run" (OED); a further Scots usage defines it as an encounter with missiles, rocks, and so on (OED), such as, figuratively, the water of the stream which Thomson describes would strike the rocks. Thus by combining the various English and Scots meanings and connotations of "bicker," Thomson was able to suggest both the sound and the action or movement of the "bickering stream." Finally, Robertson notes that Thomson's use of "friends" ("Winter," l. 310) might be in the Scottish sense of "relatives," as James Beattie defined it in Scotticisms.¹⁶⁸

These notable Scotticisms pointed out by Robertson are not the only Scottish usages or derivatives to be found in The Seasons. "Ken," for example ("Summer," l. 178, "angel's purer ken") is of course an archaic poetical word in English as well as a Scotticism, though Beattie lists it as a word to be avoided.¹⁶⁹ It may first have come to Thomson's mind in the Scots sense of "knowledge" or "mental perception" (OED); he probably felt that its poetical use, meaning "vision" or "view," was permissible, and therefore retained it in The Seasons. The word "tedded"

("Summer," l. 361, "Wide flies the tedded grain") is usually defined as "spread out to dry," but an unusual, particularly Scottish usage seems to have meant "scattered," as Thomson used it here (OED cites the use of "ted" as "to scatter" in Alexander Scott's Poems, S.T.S. xxi.23; SND calls its use in the Edinburgh Evening Courant, 1787, for "scattered," an "erroneous" usage, but it was evidently a Scottish usage nonetheless). The verb "flounce" ("Winter," l. 285; "Spring," l. 824, related to the Scots "flounge"-- SND and Chambers Scots Dictionary) was noted in the juvenilia for its Scots associations. J. Logie Robertson also points out that "flounce" is an "imitative word" (onomatopoeic), "akin to" the English "flounder."¹⁷⁰ "Chapped," noted above ("Autumn," l. 404) is also a Scotticism (DOST), as is "clammy" ("Spring," l. 116, SND). "Lass," or young girl ("Autumn," l. 154), is chiefly a Scottish and northern English dialect usage. Thomson also retained in all editions the word "ravine" ("Spring," l. 340, "with hot ravine fired, ensanguined man"), being the obsolete Middle English form of "rapine,"¹⁷¹ and related to the modern Scots "rave" (Chambers, to "take by violence") or "rive" (SND, rip, tear; steal). The adverbial "meantime" ("Winter," l. 54 and l. 617, "Spring," l. 203) occurs three times in The Seasons; it is an expression frequently heard in modern Scottish speech. Thomson uses it chiefly to make the transition to passages of natural description. The verb "recks" ("Winter," l. 92, "And much he laughs, nor recks the storm that blows") derives from "reckon," which Beattie lists as a Scotticism,¹⁷² and which means "to pay heed to"; Scots "reck" is "to matter" (SND, OED) and is a "poetical" usage in English. The onomatopoeic, standard English adjective "grumbling" ("Winter," l. 76, "woods / That grumbling wave below. The unsightly plain / Lies a brown deluge") is possibly

related to the Scots "grumme" (SND) which has the double-meaning, exploited by the poet here, of "to grumble at" (from "grum" or "grumlie," grim, sullen) and also to make muddy, turbid (i.e., the juxtaposed muddy, flooded plain which is a result of the flood). Here, sound adds to sense, and the Scots connotation enhances the standard English definition of "grumble." A similar onomatopoeic adjective is "brawling" ("Winter," l. 69, "Brawling brook"). Like "bicker," "brawling" combines sound (it is used in standard English, and comes from the Middle English for "to quarrel noisily") with movement (its Scots definition is "to gallop," SND) to describe the brook. Thomson's coinage "friskful" ("Spring," l. 837, "lambs / ...in friskful glee") was possibly suggested to him by the Scots "frisksome" (SND, "sportive"); he used a variation of this, "friskish," in his 1726 Preface to "Winter."

While these Scotticisms and northern derivatives or words with Scots connotative value remained in The Seasons even after several careful revisions, many more such words were removed over the years, often resulting in "loss of race." For example, the weaker English expletive "Ah" was substituted for the Scots exclamation "Ay" ("Spring," 1728-38, l. 1086) in 1744. The word "bootless" ("Summer," 1727-38, l. 236, dogs "bootless snap" at the wasp, i.e. to no avail) occurs in both English and Scots, but its archaic use as a quasi-adverb, as Thomson used it, might have been more particular to Scotland, or retained there longer in common use (in addition to Shakespeare, OED cites its use in James I's Kingis Quair.lxx, and in Walter Scott's Triermain.III.i). For the sky "begreying" with clouds ("Summer," 1727, l. 1648) Thomson substituted "all ether saddening" (1730-38), then "All ether softening" (1744 ff). "Begreying," apart from its pseudo-archaic sense of "growing grey,"

also carried the connotation of the Scots "begratten" or "begrutten," meaning "tear-stained, lamenting" (SND and Chambers; DOST gives "begrett, begrouttin" from the verb "grete," "to weep"), with its suggestion of mood similar to the rejected "saddening," and with the added connection of tears with the coming rain. "Softening," the poet's final choice, certainly represents a "loss of race" here. Similarly, "'glomerating" ("Autumn," 1730-38, "'glomerating tempest grows," l. 333) was replaced in 1744 by "mingling" ("mingling tempest weaves its gloom"). The participial adjective "'glomerating," building-up or gathering, comes from the Latin root "glomus" (ball), and also carries the modern Scots connotation of "to grow dusky" (SND) from "glom" or "gloam" meaning gloom, and related to "gloaming." Thus, "'glomerating" would have carried for Thomson the meaning, not only of the storm's build-up of clouds, but also of its darkness, its gloomy mood. Again, there is "loss of race." The apt and alliterative "louring" ("Winter," 1726-38, l. 120, "Late in the louring sky"), meaning to become overcast, was removed in 1744. "Louring" is found in both English and Scots, though its English usage is chiefly poetical-archaic. Its analogue is found in the Roxburghshire Word Book as "loory."¹⁷³ Thomson replaced "louring" with the adjective "pallid," which represents a "loss of race"; it is a tame and indeed "pallid" substitute. One further "Scotticism" (this one, accidental) remains to be mentioned; the Scots metathesis of "thatched," "thacht," occurs only in the first edition of "Winter," 1726 (l. 182). This may have been simply a printer's error (the printer of this edition of "Winter" was Archibald Campbell, a Scotsman in London), but it might have been the poet's misspelling; similar usages occur in Thomson's juvenile MS and in his early letters. This error was removed at once, before the

second edition appeared.

Even with these Scotticisms, or "racy" English words bearing Scots connotations, removed from The Seasons, those remaining indicate that Thomson's Scots linguistic heritage was hardly abandoned; on the contrary, Scots words-- their sounds and meanings-- were a positive force in his poetic expression. Over the years of revisions, he made the effort to remove some Scotticisms and northern usages which may not have been as effectively connotative or clear to English readers as to Scots readers, but he allowed many to remain, as if he could not bear to part with such expressive and, to him, accurate descriptive language, especially where Scots connotations could enhance standard English definitions. With these, he stretched and enriched English poetic diction still further. This was daring for an eighteenth-century Scottish poet in England (as William Somerville had warned), but for Thomson it proved successful-- he had broken down the barriers of formal Augustan poetic English, in the cause of descriptive power.

As has been suggested in this and the previous chapter, The Seasons incorporates many kinds of poetry. It is a preaching and a teaching poem, a poem employing natural description, in the Scottish tradition and based on Border experience, unprecedented in English poetry in quantity and quality. It is a personal poem and a public one. It is a moral, philosophical, patriotic and parti-political poem. It is both neoclassical and new. Each of its various themes derived, to a great extent, from the poet's Scottish experience; they are clearly products of his uniquely Scottish culture. Thomson had to develop a broader, more versatile literary language for his eclectic poem, a poetic diction drawing not only upon his command of Latin, his reli-

gious beliefs, and his scientific knowledge (all of which were based in his Scottish upbringing and education), but also, to a great degree, upon his Scots linguistic heritage. The Seasons indeed must be recognised as a fundamentally and pervasively Scottish poem.